Exploring intersectionality issues in entrepreneurial finance:

Policy responses and future research directions

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Main Message

Entrepreneurial finance scholars (and policy-makers) need to adopt an intersectional approach to their analysis (and policy-making) and pay more attention to the interplay between the owner-manager characteristics of ethnicity/race, gender, and social class.

Shorter Title of the manuscript

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Key points

Since most literature on entrepreneurial finance treats ethnicity/race, gender, and class separately, an intersectional approach to analysis is complex, whether social (race, gender, social class) or situational characteristics (entrepreneur versus migrant/social or health care worker).

Women, ethnic minorities, and working-class people are disadvantaged when seeking finance.

We integrate the literature and proposes intersectionality as a framework for policy-makers, since the interplay between these characteristics can be addressed to develop innovative methods of finance.

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E.F.M. classification code: 800 (Small Business).

INTRODUCTION

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008, the ensuing Governmental austerity measures, and the emergent changing global trade relationships and migration regimes following 'populist' plebiscites in the UK and the US have engendered a new imperative for societies to make better use of the talent amongst their populations to enhance their competitive edge. Within this context, ethnic women entrepreneurs can be considered to be an underutilized resource. In an ever-interconnected world economic system, entrepreneurship is vital for the wellbeing of an economy, and ethnic entrepreneurs play an important role. 13 per cent of UK new ventures are started by ethnic entrepreneurs and the take-up of ethnic women's entrepreneurship (25.9 percent) is lower than British women (29.1 per cent) (Johnson and Kimmelman, 2014), with some notable exceptions including Thais, Filipinas, and Vietnamese (Villares-Varela et al., 2017). Ethnic women are underrepresented because they perform a supporting role rather than operate independently (Carter et al., 2017). The promotion and support of ethnic women entrepreneurs has the potential to enhance social and economic cohesion (ibid). However, despite proactive policies to promote ethnic women entrepreneurs, their participation rates have remained relatively low (Muravyev et al., 2009). One such explanation for this trend is that 'superdiversity' amongst ethnic groups (Vertovec, 2007; Carter et al., 2017) masks heterogeneity, rigidities, and limits the application of policy analysis and the ensuing prescriptions. Therefore, ethnic women entrepreneurs inevitably have divergent expectations and experiences based on their culture, regional variations, religious beliefs, and skill sets. This suggests the need for a more holistic study of the literature on intersectionality to gain a deeper and insightful knowledge of ethnic women's experiences in accessing entrepreneurial finance.

The entrepreneurial finance literature is ‘segmented’ (Cumming & Johan, 2017), while studies on access to finance for ethnic women haves been subsumed under the general heading ‘ethnicity’. Yet intersectionality, an important aspect, overlooks ‘grouping enclaves’ within ethnic communities giving rise to complex and interlinked challenges. As a result, it simplifies deep-rooted rigidities and experiences amongst the heterogeneous section of the ethnic population. This anomaly calls for a better and deeper understanding of the socio-economic context of ethnic minorities in general and entrepreneurial attributes in particular, an approach suggested by Marlow (2014). The existing specialist body of literature on intersectionality is both complex and fragmented. The term intersectionality incorporates multiple, and a multitude of, themes and attributes. Therefore, it is not surprising that such a ‘hard to reach’ segment of research to date has not been fully examined due to its complexity of the interconnected nature of gender, race, and ethnicity. However, given the interconnectivity of global markets and the emergence of hyper-competition, economies need to optimise their operational capabilities by empowering all segments of productive capital. Indeed, gender has been shown to be crucial to economics and the functioning of economies (Nelson, 2016). Indeed, to promote ethnic women’s entrepreneurship, access to entrepreneurial finance is essential. While the GFC has reportedly led to considerable credit constraints, the democratization of entrepreneurial finance has been enabled by a form of Schumpeterian creative destruction as new innovative financing techniques have formed and have started to compete with one another. For too long the supply side has been talked down, risking the ‘moral hazard’ of funding, giving rise to risk aversion amongst lenders. Research over the last two decades has been dominated by studies of barriers to accessing external finance for small businesses. The focus on ethnicity, however, in the literature is silent where entrepreneurial finance is considered holistically through the lens of intersectionality. Prior literature has indicated financing constraints for people within certain groups, in particular women and ethnic minorities (Hussain et al., 2011). There are various explanations for these constraints in the literature which we have outlined in the following sections. Recent reviews called for intersectional approaches in both women's and entrepreneurship and migrant entrepreneurship research (e.g. Ashe & Treanor, 2011; Ram et al., 2017).

This article is organized as follows. In Section 2 we examine intersectionality theory and apply it to the entrepreneur. In Section 3 we then move on to review the entrepreneurial literature critically adopting the theoretical lens of intersectionality to establish the deficiencies in extant research. In Section 4 we conclude the paper, and offer some policy recommendations, future research directions: including a proposed framework for policy research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Intersectionality

Though intersectionality theory emerged from the legal literature (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), its findings transcend other disciplines where discrimination in access to financial and physical resources is experienced by a specific group, such as ethnic women. An intersectional approach elucidates the inherent complexities of ethnic women's social position by conceptualizing race, education, networks, gender, and power relations. Intersectionality theory, introduced by Crenshaw's (1989) seminal legal article, is perhaps most apposite for entrepreneurial finance research given its focus on discrimination in particular when there exist a category of person who is not captured as 'black man' or 'white women', i.e. black women, and its application could be extended to ethnic women entrepreneurs who have been relatively under-researched in the entrepreneurial finance literature which often merges this category into the term 'ethnic'. Based on Crenshaw's analysis, observing that there is a 'tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis' (ibid, p.139) rather than considering the 'interaction of race and gender' (p.140), on legal cases in which African-American women plaintiffs had not been treated as a separate class distinctive from white women or African-American men. In other words, "Discrimination which is wrongful proceeds from the identification of a specific class or category; either a discriminator intentionally identifies this category, or a process is adopted which somehow disadvantages all members of this category." She observed (ibid, p.144) that "antidiscrimination doctrine" has a "narrow scope", consequently, and does not "embrace intersectionality" that captures multiple impediments. We would add the examples of access to finance or other support. The studies that focus on "the centrality of white female experiences in the conceptualization of gender discrimination" overlook a range of contributing variables (ibid, p.144). Crenshaw (1989) concludes:

> "It is somewhat ironic that those concerned with alleviating the ills of racism and sexism should adopt such a top-down approach to discrimination. If their efforts instead began with addressing the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary, then others who are similarly disadvantaged would also benefit. In addition, it seems that

> placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action." (p. 167).

She later argues, in applying intersectionality theory to violence against women, that a "focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). And "Yet intersectionality might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics" (ibid, p. 1245). The same analysis has the potential to examine how the theory of intersectionality could be applied to an examination of multiple inequalities, and the contributing factors of the finance gap for ethnic women entrepreneurs.

Perhaps one of the most useful definitions of intersectionality is "a relational framework for mapping different inequalities, as well as an analytical concept that helps unveil overlapping inequalities and the power relations associated with difference *and* space dimensions" (Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012, p. 127). Since the seminal contributions of Crenshaw on intersectionality (1989, 1991), considerable interest has been shown in this theory across a multiplicity of academic fields. Corlett and Mavin (2014) review intersectionality literature, with a particular focus on organization/management, and link it to identity and the concept of identity work. Brah and Phoenix (2004) examined the intersection between social class, and other categories. Nash (2008, p.89) considered four 'tensions' in intersectionality research, i.e. "the lack of a defined intersectional methodology; the use of black women as quintessential intersectional subjects; the vague definition of intersectionality; and the empirical validity of intersectionality", suggesting that if these "paradoxes" can be "resolved" to "strengthen … its explanatory power" (p.14). Similarly, in a critical vein, McCall (2005) cautions the use of methods and methodology within intersectionality research. Other authors, such as Davis (2008), acknowledge that there is also 'confusion' about intersectionality and its definition, but therein lies its strength. Other reviews (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Hancock, 2007; Shield, 2008; Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012; Woodhams & Lupton, 2014) have made further helpful suggestions as to how to improve intersectionality research, with most notably Cho et al. (2013) proposing some future directions as to strengthening the intersectional approach, in particular offering "a template for fusing … three levels of engagement with intersectionality into a field of intersectional studies that emphasizes collaboration and literacy rather than unity."

Other research has been conducted in organization studies (Styhre & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2008), and leadership (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), and considers how complicated theorizing in gender research is (Acker, 2012). Intersectionality research is also advocated by various scholars, e.g. Poggesi et al. (2016) in their review article suggest specifically that "future studies could better employ the concept of intersectionality, which allows an in depth understanding of how gender dynamically shapes ethnicity and vice versa."

Intersectionality and the entrepreneur

Our aim is not to provide a comprehensive review of intersectionality theory here, nor to review extensively the prior intersectional research in entrepreneurship. Notable authors here include the important contributions of Fielden and Davidson (2012), one of the earliest to apply intersectionality to entrepreneurship research, and the more recent and particularly important paper by Martinez Dy et al. (2017). In particular, Martinez Dy et al. (2017) provide an extensive review of intersectionality theory and extant literature, especially noting how "it is nevertheless efficacious in revealing how multiple dimensions of social inequality shape experiences of … entrepreneurship, posited as a pathway to ameliorate the effects of such inequalities" or further that:

> "potentially limiting analysis that does not fully recognise gender as a human property with myriad articulations enacted throughout entrepreneurial activity. To progress debate, we engage more deeply with the notion of gender as a multiplicity." (Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018).

Martinez Dy et al. (2014) further review some problematic issues, which they describe as 'tensions and limitations', of intersectionality. Ahl and Marlow (2012) note that feminist theory has not been applied to consider critically the issue of 'subordination' of women in entrepreneurship, who are presented by much research "as failed or reluctant entrepreneurial subjects". We would go further and add that additional intersectional aspects, such as race and social class, exacerbate the subordination.

ENTREPRENEURIAL FINANCE: APPLYING INTERSECTIONALITY

Conducting any critical analysis of access to entrepreneurial finance for ethnic women is contingent on examining various complex, intertwined factors that permeate their gender and geographical location. The failure to increase their participation in entrepreneurship through the Women's Enterprise Task Force (2007-8) and other initiatives has, therefore, led to an increasing awareness of the need to recognize their diversity. Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality theory lends itself to be refined to examine this critical research imperative and provides a broader conceptual framework to undertake a radical and complex analysis of power, asset ownership, the societal context, and the location of an individual within the business environment, hence reducing levels of analysis to an individual rather than a collective level. This approach may provide a set of discursive, political and business strategies which overcome structural barriers to access finance and mobilize entrepreneurship amongst ethnic women.

Gender

Our analysis here considers how women (and later, more specifically, ethnic women) could access 'alternative' finance, i.e. not just bootstrapping (Jayawarna et al., 2012; see also Brush et al., 2006, 2017; Hill et al., 2006; Irwin & Scott, 2010; Lam, 2010; Jayawarna et al., 2015), including microfinance (Milana & Ashta, 2012). Studies, such as Greenberg and Mollick (2017), have examined the implications and limitations of crowdfunding for women entrepreneurs but they have not adopted an intersectional approach, although they have offered the concept of "**activist choice homophily**, in which the basis of attraction between two individuals is not merely similarity between them, but rather perceptions of shared structural barriers stemming from a common social identity based on group membership" to establish "why women are more likely to succeed at crowdfunding than men and why women are most successful in industries in which they are least represented." It also helps to have an understanding of the process of business angel investment (Paul et al., 2007) in terms of how Greenberg and Mollick's (2017) activist choice homophily could be applied successfully to other types of financing instrument other than crowdfunding, i.e. to business angel investment. Other authors have, however, raised the importance of adopting an intersectional approach in entrepreneurship research (such as Henry & Marlow, 2014; Knight, 2014; Benson, 2016; Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). However, the jury is out whether intersectionality is applicable to entrepreneurial finance? Are the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying extant research on this topic are alien to the more social theory based intersectionality theories? Wingfield and Taylor (2016), for example, have analysed "racial counterframes as a means of defining various aspects of the entrepreneurial experience", including what they define as '*intersectional counterframes*' that relate to both race, gender and other characteristics. Henry and Marlow (2014) suggest the need for a 'post-structural' feminist approach to research on women's entrepreneurship. Race, class, and gender are considered to be intersectional characteristics of African-Caribbean women entrepreneurs (Knight, 2014). Knight (2014) observes a lack of intersectionality in the women's entrepreneurship literature, which "essentializes and homogenizes women's entrepreneurship", and argues that the parallel studies on ethnic/immigrant entrepreneurs "underestimate… the experiences of racialized women who are entrepreneurs in their own right." Finally, Benson (2016), acknowledges a phenomenal rise in black women's entrepreneurship, and argues that future research must "better understand what makes black female entrepreneurs unique in their own right" and "the multiple dimensions of black women's experiences as business owners." Women entrepreneurs in developing countries are unexplored (Sandhu et al., 2017).

Several other authors take an intersectional approach when researching Muslim women entrepreneurs in the Netherlands (Essers & Benschop, 2007, 2009; Essers & Tedmanson, 2014). First, Essers and Benschop (2007), adopting a discursive method, examined Moroccan/Turkish women entrepreneurs' "life stories" and find diversity in 'the degree of conformity' in terms of femininity/masculinity, ethnicity and entrepreneurship. They also report Moroccan/Turkish women entrepreneurs, have different boundaries in terms of their religion, gender, ethnicity, and their role as entrepreneurs (Essers & Benschop, 2009). Third, Essers and Tedmanson's (2014) postcolonial study of Turkish entrepreneurs explains how these women are 'Othered' and how it affects their 'multiple identities'. Although these authors do not focus on entrepreneurial finance (which is beyond their scope), nonetheless they are excellent examples of the application of intersectionality to the field of entrepreneurship: though clearly from a more sociological perspective.

Few studies have linked gender, ethnicity, and education – the latter, a measure of human capital, perhaps being a proxy for social class – but the exceptions (Scott & Irwin, 2009; Irwin & Scott, 2010; Sena et al., 2012) have, of course, not adopted an intersectionality lens for their analyses. Indeed, Sena et al. (2012, pp. 475-476) observe that "Women of non-white ethnic background are less keen to approach external funders than their white counterparts: the gap is quite large, being equal to 3.8 [percentage] points". Further, "Altogether these results confirm our expectation that women are reluctant to seek external finance when trying to enter into self-employment. In particular they avoid approaching external funders if they are from an ethnic background, if they are not married and if they do not hold a formal qualification." (p.478). Roper and Scott (2009) examined both ethnicity and gender in their econometric model, using Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data, of the link between shortage of start-up finance and start-up. They found that ethnic minorities perceived fewer start-up barriers and that there was limited "evidence of any significant connection between the gender and ethnicity effects" (p.159). Finally, they found that ethnic women were 'more likely to perceive barriers to start up' than ethnic men. Previous reviews have offered 'coherent' frameworks to undertake women's entrepreneurship research (De Bruin et al., 2007). Stead (2017) addresses 'gendered assumptions' and the notion of 'belonging' in women entrepreneurs' identity, with belonging being "relational, dynamic, gendered and in continual accomplishment". New firms experience gender variations in financing (Watson et al., 2017).

A primary preoccupation of policy for women entrepreneurs has and continues to be resources, for example finance (see, for example, Wilson et al., 2004). Policy for women in Nordic countries, primarily adopting feminist approaches (Ahl & Nelson, 2015; Yazdanfar & Abbasian, 2015; Ahl et al., 2016; Pettersson et al., 2017), have been extensively reviewed. Pettersson et al. (2017) found that economic growth, which they attribute to be 'non-feminist' with women considered as resources to be exploited, is a primary objective of much entrepreneurship policy. Ahl and Nelson (2015) compare US and Swedish women entrepreneurship's policies, again report that economic growth rather than gender equality is the principal motivation of such policies. However, (Ahl et al., 2016) review suggests in Nordic, women's entrepreneurship policy has evolved over time, conceptualizing – and discussing challenges faced by – '*FemInc.ism*' which they define as "feminist action through enterprise". Finally, Yazdanfar and Abbasian's (2015) survey found significantly higher uptake of advice by women than men in Sweden, with gender differentials in advice also is reported by other authors (such Irwin & Scott, 2009; Robson et al., 2008). Terjesen et al.'s (2016) review of public policy for various types of entrepreneurs suggests that women represent about a third of entrepreneurs, and tend to establish undercapitalized and less growth-oriented businesses. Such findings are problematical in that they correspond to observations by other authors, grounded on feminist approaches to entrepreneurial finance, that criticize the underlying 'assumptions' of extant research, such as women being considered to exhibit a form of "weakness and lack" and further "rather than addressing the gender blindness endemic within entrepreneurship; this aspect tends to generate ontological biases that are associated with the epistemological limitations which perpetuate female disadvantage" (Marlow & Swail, 2014). Other authors proposed 'gender-sensitive entrepreneurship programs' (e.g. Warnecke, 2016) but they tend not to adopt intersectional approaches to their analysis since gender, rather than race or other social characteristics, is their primary preoccupation. The most impressive cross-national analysis of women's entrepreneurship policy straddles thirteen countries (Henry et al., 2016b).

Gicheva and Link (2015), though not adopting intersectionality in their analysis, suggest that women receive less investment for technology. Adding other intersectional dimensions (such as race and social class) to this analysis would have provided more interesting results. Henry et al. (2016a) suggests that intersectional approaches rarely figure in women's entrepreneurship research because most entrepreneurial studies are predominantly quantitative and based on big surveys that compare gender differentials; this finding suggests a case for future research to be in-depth qualitative with more feminist underpinning. It is, however, ironic that much women's entrepreneurship literature, which tries to overcome the 'gender blindness' in entrepreneurship research (Marlow & Swail, 2014), is itself colour-blind when it comes to the race and ethnicity of its protagonists. A stirring call to arms is, therefore, Marlow's (2014) proposal for a 'critical feminist stance' with consideration of 'discrete gender critiques to inform a broader and far-reaching appraisal of the entrepreneurial project dominating the contemporary socio-economic context.'

Entrepreneurial finance for women entrepreneurs in Russia and Ukraine upgrades Brush et al.'s 5M model, macro/meso and money being the primary foci of the research, to include "motherland" reflecting the Slavic context of the study (Iakovleva et al., 2013). Coleman and Kariv (2013) link gender, financial strategy and firm performance and, though adopting the large-scale survey approach noted by Henry et al. (2016a), they find gender differentials in financial strategies but with performance not varying by gender at the start of the lifecycle. However, there were clear gender differentials in performance over the long term. Signalling theory is adopted in empirical and theoretical studies to examine gender differentials in financing decisions by bank and investment funds respectively (Eddleston et al., 2014; Alsos and Ljunggren, 2017). The literature review presented suggest, while granted that these studies do not attempt to use an intersectional approach, however, analysing the data intersectionally to consider ethnicity and social class.

Race and ethnicity

Recently a plethora of authors have applied intersectionality to ethnic entrepreneurship (e.g. Ram et al., 2017; Agius Vallejo and Canizales, 2016; Barrett and Vershinina, 2017; Fielden and Davidson, 2012; Kovalainen and Österberg-Högstedt, 2013; Romero and Valdez, 2016; Valdez, 2011; Verdaguer, 2009). Romero and Valdez (2016, p. 1553) critique prior research that privileges 'one social group, ethnicity, to the exclusion or downplaying of others, such as race, class, and gender.' Following Verdaguer's masterly intersectional analysis of Latin(o/a) entrepreneurs along the lines of ethnicity, gender and social class, Agius Vallejo and Canizales's (2016) study examines start-up by LA-based Latin(o/a) entrepreneurs in terms of the intersection of their race, class and gender by examining how their human and social capital contribute to their business formation, and consider 'ethnicity' as a resource for co-ethnic markets; they find that women's gender and race are critical when they have broken out to serve a mainstream market. Verdaguer (2009) and Valdez (2011) both take an intersectional approach to consider how race/ethnicity, social class and gender all play intersectional roles in US based entrepreneurship. Further, Kovalainen and Österberg-Högstedt (2013), when researching health and social care workers' entrepreneurial identity, found that these are "fluid, changing, layered and overlapping … they are malleable, evolving, interconnected, and intertwined," at the intersection of malecentric entrepreneurialist and feminine care identities. Barrett and Vershinina's (2017) intersection of ethnicity and entrepreneurialist identities of Leicester-based Polish migrant entrepreneurs, situated in a Bordieuian *habitus*, are "multilayered and nuanced nature." Social capital has been identified as a key attribute of ethnic entrepreneurs (Deakins et al., 2007), with Deakins et al. (2009) later examining variations along geographical, sector, and market levels but with little evidence on finance or intersectionality issues, and Ishaq et al. (2010) observing racial discrimination in small retail 'corner shops' in Glasgow.

An emergent conclusion from these studies is the sheer complexity of an intersectional approach to analysis whether in terms of social characteristics (for example, race, gender, social class) or situational characteristics (entrepreneur versus migrant/social or health care worker). Few studies, with the notable exception of Kushnirovich (2016), have themselves considered the role of migrant or ethnic investors. Fielden and Davidson (2012) offered an early intersectional analysis of ethnic women owner-managers in England's North West, particular focusing on discrimination – specifically as 'intersectional' ethnic women – in terms of social support both formal and informal and 'emotional' and 'instrumental'. It is especially worth noting that, although Crenshaw (1991) focuses on violence against African-American women, her earlier seminal article (Crenshaw, 1989) explicitly reviews discrimination, e.g. in the workplace, and how intersectionality explains the failure to address these legitimate grievances of the black women who experienced discrimination because of the intersection between their race and gender.

Social class

Entrepreneurial finance, as with much entrepreneurship literature, appears to have adapted a class-blind approach with some exceptions (for example, Audretsch et al., 2013; Blanchflower and Oswald, 1998; Bonacich, 1988; Burke et al., 2008, 2014; Dale, 1986; Honig, 1998; Lipman, 1965; McClelland, 1965). These studies have adopted various considerations of social class with Blanchflower and Oswald (1998) finding a correlation between inheritances and entrepreneurial start-up. The sociologist Dale (1986, p.430), on the other hand, drawing on Hakim (1984), highlights that the social class of entrepreneurs (in this case, the 'self-employed) is important because they are often self-employed, not 'owning their own means of production' nor 'having considerable self-direction and autonomy within the work process'. We would particularly stress the *currency* of this classical work (Hakim, 1984; Dale, 1986) considering the debates concerning the exploitation of subcontractors – and misclassification as self-employed, when they are in reality hidden underpaid and exploited employees – in the gig economy by companies which appear to exist only in the form of apps.

Social and human capital is an excellent measure of social class and has been explored in relatively few papers, with one notable exception (Anderson and Miller, 2003). They found evidence of higher human and social capital amongst those from the upper classes, leading to better business performance (ibid).Social class is hence a more difficult intersectional component to pin down in entrepreneurship, never mind entrepreneurial finance research. For one thing, social class is not a protected characteristic in the UK Equality Act (2010) but it is intertwined with ethnicity and gender. We might, therefore, propose that, just as middle-class African-American women and working-class African-American women have different experiences, the experiences of upper-middle class Muslim women (for example, working in hospitals or general practice as physicians) is qualitatively different from those of working-class Muslim women. That does not, however, for one minute suggest that discrimination experienced by Muslim women – whatever their social class – is not on the basis of either their religion, race, gender or an intersectional combination of all of these characteristics. Social class is just another complexity that Crenshaw (1989, 1991) would add to the mixture of discriminatory practices that are enacted by structural oppressive social forces against women of colour; and which has been addressed by the wider intersectionality literature. We use social and human capital as two significant proxies for social class; these, according to Bourdieu (1986), are convertible into financial capital. Those people in higher social groups possess stronger reserves of both social and human capital than those from lower socio-economic groups, which impinges strongly on the acquisition of entrepreneurial finance. Social capital is also important in rural areas (Moyes et al., 2015) where, of course, there are many entrepreneurs from lower socio-economic groups. It is, however, beyond our scope to review the quite extensive literature on small business, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial finance in deprived neighbourhoods, aside from suggesting that incorporating social class into future intersectional analyses would help to build upon this established body of research.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We, first, have examined studies of intersectionality theory and then explored how it has been applied it to the entrepreneur. We have reviewed the entrepreneurial literature critically adopting the theoretical lens of intersectionality to establish the deficiencies in extant research. While our aim has not been to undertake a comprehensive review of intersectionality theory, nor to review extensively the prior intersectional research in entrepreneurship, we have suggested that entrepreneurial finance research ought to adopt a more intersectional lens.

Clearly, women (and later, more specifically, ethnic women) have sought to access 'alternative' finance, rather than just bootstrapping. While other authors have raised the importance of adopting an intersectional approach in entrepreneurship research (such as Henry and Marlow, 2014; Knight, 2014; Benson, 2016; Wingfield and Taylor, 2016), few studies have linked gender, ethnicity, and education/social class. A primary preoccupation of policy for women entrepreneurs has and continues to be resources, for example finance.

Intersectionality has been applied to ethnic entrepreneurship more generally, but this study focuses on women in particular. An emergent conclusion from these studies is, therefore, the sheer complexity of an intersectional approach to analysis whether in terms of social characteristics (for example, race, gender, social class) or situational characteristics (entrepreneur versus migrant/social or health care worker). Given that much entrepreneurial finance literature considers (or sometimes tiptoes around) the question of discrimination in lending decisions (primarily motivated by ethnicity or gender, but not as clearly as by social class) then intersectionality is an entirely appropriate theoretical lens and methodological approach by which to analyse discriminatory bank lending practices and, therefore, propose innovative policy interventions to overcome detriments caused not just by individual protected characteristic (e.g. gender, ethnicity) but also intersectional ones. Indeed, entrepreneurial finance scholars, whether emerging from the entrepreneurship field or the finance field, have virtually omitted intersectionality theory. As scholars in these fields, we are just as guilty of overlooking this important theory but this article seeks to address our negligence. Social class is hence a more difficult intersectional component to pin down in entrepreneurship, never mind entrepreneurial finance research.

Our primary policy recommendation is that we propose intersectionality as a framework for policy-makers in terms of ways by which they can address the inter-play between these characteristics in the case of crowdfunding and angel investment and other innovative finance schemes. These two specific cases of sources of funding that still may not provide sufficient finance, for example, to ethnic women are particularly pertinent. We propose that policy-makers examine the extent to which crowdfunding and angel investors do meet the finance gap that ethnic women continue to report. They should also commission further research, adopting an intersectional lens that provides comprehensive understanding of why such lending or investment decisions take place in the way in which they do.

Intersectionality as an analytical framework, therefore, would enable such research-informed policy. Hence policy-makers could work with finance providers/intermediaries (in this case, angel investors as direct investors, but also crowdfunding platforms as intermediaries) to improve the finance provision for ethnic women entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, there are major challenges in such a task which must bear in mind the complexity and nuances of adopting such an approach.

We now briefly offer a proposed framework for future policy research that would incorporate intersectionality (gender, ethnicity/race, and social class) into an examination of access to entrepreneurial finance for ethnic women from lower socio-economic groups. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is a dynamic and complex one that includes 'interdependent actors and factors' (Stam, 2015), and is applicable in terms of financing small firms. Therefore, future policy research needs to be underpinned by a coherent understanding of this 'entrepreneurial financing ecosystem' (Block et al., 2018). In so doing, it can also focus on the position of entrepreneurs (specifically, ethnic women entrepreneurs but potentially those with additional intersectional characteristics, e.g. social class – or religion, which was beyond our scope). Explaining and positioning, for example, ethnic women entrepreneurs within the entrepreneurial financing ecosystem enables policy-makers and finance providers (the 'actors') to understand how they are interconnected. In addition, how the 'factors' are influenced by intersectional issues would also need to be addressed by such a framework.

Intersectionality as a theory has not to date been explored in the entrepreneurial finance literature, and we call for the theory to be tested on a sample of ethnic women entrepreneurs to address how their interconnections with the 'actors and factors' mentioned above explain their access to, or rejection from, entrepreneurial finance. Practically, however, this novel policy framework is of immense support in assisting ethnic women entrepreneurs (and others e.g. working-class women of any race/ethnicity) to access finance and the 'actors' (such as retail banks and business angels) to overcome their aversion to lend or to invest.

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