

Women entrepreneurs and their ventures:
Complicating categories and contextualising gender

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Introduction

Within this chapter we offer an overview of critical arguments which analyse the influence of gender upon women's propensity and performance in terms of creating and managing entrepreneurial ventures. Whilst it is now recognised that gendered ascriptions critically influence the entrepreneurial activity of women, the literature has largely focused upon women as a homogeneous category to explain this thesis (Marlow, 2014). Developing a critical discourse exposing the inherent gender bias within the ontological foundations of entrepreneurship theory and practice has been essential to recognise how discriminatory assumptions fundamentally shape understandings of 'who or what' is an entrepreneur (Gartner, 1989). Such debate (Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Henry, Fosse and Ahl, 2015) has exposed the normative stereotype of the entrepreneur to be a white, middle class, middle aged male which conceptually and empirically narrows understanding of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour. Thus, the critical analysis of the influence of gender upon women's propensity for, and experiences of, business venturing has been of fundamental and far-reaching importance in challenging the prevailing axioms which have informed contemporary understanding of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. In addition, this academic focus of enquiry has spilled over into policy debate and development worldwide. Encouraging more women to engage with business venturing is deemed highly desirable to address issues ranging from poverty alleviation in developing nations (Scott, Dolan, Johnston-Louis, Sugden and Wu, 2012), post conflict empowerment (Tobias, Mair and Barbosa-Leiker, 2013), refugee poverty (Al Dajani and Marlow, 2010) unemployment and flexible working in developed economies (Jayawarna, Rouse and Kitching, 2013), and impediments to advancement faced by women in the corporate context (Patterson and Mavin, 2009; Weyer, 2007). Consequently, the analytical exposure of gendered bias within assumptions underpinning entrepreneurial activities has fuelled an academic debate which has grown in scope and complexity (Calás et al., 2007; Carter et al., 2015; De Bruin et al., 2007; Klyver et al., 2013; Marlow and McAdam, 2013; Mavin and Grandy, 2012) and also prompted a wide scale policy response: for example, recent UK government initiatives to fund and support women entrepreneurs through mentoring programmes and facilitating access to broadband Internet (Government Equalities Office, 2014a and 2014b).

As such, this gender turn in entrepreneurship has challenged the existing paradigm of the normative entrepreneur, which is predicated upon traditional conceptions of masculinity. As this debate matures, however, new questions arise regarding a number of assumptions which have shaped its emergence and potentially, limit its contribution. Accordingly, within the field of entrepreneurship, the construct of gender ‘sticks’ to women (Kelan, 2009: 460) whilst men, as ciphers of masculinity, are still assumed to be representative of the ideal entrepreneurial type. Thus, the signifier of the *female* entrepreneur creates a metonymy – a special category which captures and homogenizes those who share just one aspect of their identity – that of their sex (Marlow, 2014). As Hogberg, Scholin, Ram and Jones (2014: 10) argue in their review of ethnic minority entrepreneurship, using narrow identity denominators ‘encompasses the creation of etiquettes and labels that as soon as they are directed against an individual, makes the person synonymous with the category as well as with its associated values no matter how unique he or she may be’. Assuming gender only applies to women who, in turn, experience and reproduce gendered ascriptions as a universal group has two detrimental effects – it reinforces the subordination of women within the gender binary whilst simultaneously homogenizing them on the basis of an assumed shared biological identity. Accordingly, for debate to progress, such assumptions must be challenged.

Within this chapter we contribute to this debate by critically evaluating contemporary analyses of gender, women and entrepreneurship. In addition, we acknowledge the impact of context upon women as gendered entrepreneurial actors and, relatedly, explore notions of intersectionality and positionality, constructs drawn from black feminism which, by contextualising gender amongst other categories of difference, bring to light widespread heterogeneity and nuanced experiences of privilege and oppression within the generic category of ‘woman’. In so doing, we challenge the generic homogenization of women and indicate how diverse socially constructed ascriptions intersect to situate women in differing positions in the socio-economic strata which in turn, impacts upon their entrepreneurial activities. Drawing from such debates, we suggest future avenues for theoretical and empirical enquiry to advance understanding of the relationship between gender, women and entrepreneurship. To achieve these ambitions, the chapter is structured as follows: first, there is an overview of contemporary theorising regarding gender and entrepreneurship and how this influences women’s venturing. This is followed by our second section which further explores the notion of social context and how this influences the enactment of gender and women’s entrepreneurial activity. The third section explores notions of intersectionality and positionality, and finally, we conclude by considering the implications of these arguments for developing a future research agenda in the realms of female global entrepreneurship.

Contemporary overview – gender, women and entrepreneurship¹

Theoretical Trends

The association between gender, women, entrepreneurial propensity, new venture creation and business ownership has been recognised in mainstream theorising since the latter part of the twentieth century (Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2015). On one hand, it emerged in conjunction with an increased interest in entrepreneurial behaviour and activity as an individualised socio-economic approach reflecting the growth of contemporary neo-liberalism (du Gay, 2004; Goss, 2005; Jones and Spicer, 2009). On the other hand, it should be recognised that entrepreneurial women were not suddenly produced by this research ‘gaze’ which increasingly illuminated their experiences beginning in the late 1980s. On the contrary, women have been active entrepreneurs throughout history; for example, in the British context they dominated the brewing trade of the 14th century, were renowned speculators during the emergence of capital markets in the 17th century and have undertaken a critical role in family enterprises over history (Kay, 2012; Herbert and Link, 2012; Marlow and Swail, 2014). Thus, entrepreneurial women are not a new phenomenon; however, the manner in which gender influences and constrains such activities is of more recent interest for the reasons described above.

When reviewing this field, there has been a notable shift in the sophistication of prevailing debate as the emphasis has moved from *women* as deficient entrepreneurs to critical feminist analyses of the influence of gender upon perceptions and practices of entrepreneurship (Henry et al., 2015). As such, we can see change in the unit of analysis within extant research over time; so, prior to the mid-2000s, the overwhelming focus was almost exclusively upon individual woman’s experiences of business ownership, generally articulated as explorations of female entrepreneurship (see Mirchandani, 1999 and Marlow, 2002 as exceptions). As the unit of analysis within the debate was the woman herself, her perception of entrepreneurship as a career option and her approach to managing her business were of critical interest. The field of entrepreneurship – how it was represented, researched and interpreted – was tacitly presumed to be a neutral activity, or, in other words, a meritocratic site of agentic activity available and accessible to all. The hegemonic masculinity of the phenomenon was rendered invisible (Ahl, 2006). In taking this ontological stance, structural issues such as gender-related disadvantages constraining access to entrepreneurial resources, labour market segmentation (channelling women towards lower order service sector start-ups), and domestic responsibilities (resulting in a greater propensity for part time home-based firms) were confused with agentic deficiencies. This confusion was exacerbated by the tendency to use sex as a variable such that the

¹ A longer version of the arguments presented in this section can be found in Marlow (2014).

entrepreneurial activities of men and women were compared across a range of performance indicators, with women inevitably positioned in deficit such that their enterprises were condemned as *smaller* than, *weaker* than, *lacking* growth orientation or pejoratively dismissed as home-based, part-time, or lifestyle businesses (Ahl, 2006; Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Marlow and McAdam, 2013). It is a maxim well observed that almost every detrimental business term has been visited upon the hapless female entrepreneur to explain her alleged deficiencies as a business owner/manager (Marlow, Carter and Shaw, 2009). To treat female entrepreneurs as deficient in this way was problematic as it confused sex [a biological category] with gender [a social construction which devalues femininity and ergo, women] and reproduced gendered stereotypes when associating typical small firm performance profiles [marginal, volatile, and growth averse] with female deficiency.

The assumption that arose from this body of research, reflecting the epistemological presumption of female deficiency, was that women needed 'fixing'. As Taylor and Marlow (2009: 1) conclude, the underpinning subtext rests upon the notion of 'why can't a woman be more like a man?' and relatedly, 'what can be done to make this happen'. This liberal feminist agenda assumed a male template to which women should aspire, and this argument was replicated in emerging policy directives. Thus, reports such as that published by the United Kingdom Small Business Service (2003) advocated addressing female deficiencies such as risk aversion, lack of confidence and poor entrepreneurial orientation through dedicated support and advice, in order to enable more women to create new ventures and so contribute to national and personal socio-economic growth. This debate encompassed almost an evangelical moral tone inciting women to develop an entrepreneurial spirit in order to exploit their potential and so create new ventures which in turn, would generate employment and economic growth and so, offer a social welfare contribution to society (Small Business Service, 2003).

The prevailing focus upon the agentic essence of entrepreneurship was subject to increasing scrutiny in the early 2000s; thus, critical work by Ogbor (2000) and Ahl (2006) raised a number of challenges to orthodox theorising. Analysing institutional and discourse biases, each author drew attention to the socially constructed processual nature of entrepreneurship and in particular, how this privileged certain subjects as idealised normative entrepreneurs. As such, Ogbor raised a broad critique of the entrepreneurial field and particularly, the failure of prevailing literature to recognise the institutional biases embedded within the discourse in that ascribed characteristics such as race, class and gender inherently shape how entrepreneurship is accessed, understood and enacted. Ahl (2006) developed a post-structural feminist critique which questioned the alleged gender-neutrality of the entrepreneurial discourse. She argued that entrepreneurship is embedded in masculinity; the textual representation of the entrepreneur is inevitably male, which, in turn, positions women as outsiders or intruders to this

field. However, as Ahl points out, much of the extant literature drawn from the ‘gender as a variable’ approach actually failed to find many significant differences between men and women firm owners. Yet, given embedded gendered assumptions, the quest for difference persisted (and persists) with small variations exaggerated to satisfy social expectations of male dominance and female deficit (see Kepler and Shane, 2007; Klapper and Parker, 2011).

A more theoretically informed debate has since emerged to challenge notions of entrepreneurship as a gender-neutral meritocracy and women as deficit actors (de Bruin et al., 2007; Calás et al., 2007; Marlow and Patton, 2005). This analytical shift to *gendering entrepreneurship* (Gherardi, 2015) rather than separating and categorising women as problematic entrepreneurs marked greater engagement with theoretical criticism rather than the previous focus upon descriptive comment. The theoretical debate and repository of empirical evidence pertaining to gender, women and entrepreneurship has clearly grown in terms of complexity and substance over a relatively short period of time (McAdam, 2012). We have moved from a focus upon the individual woman and her supposed entrepreneurial deficiencies with research defined by small samples and atheoretical description (Carter and Shaw, 2006) to more sophisticated analyses centred upon gender and how this generates broader socio-economic disadvantages for women – including entrepreneurial activity (Henry et al., 2015). In turn, this debate has been increasingly informed by feminist theory to analyse and explain how women fit into the contemporary entrepreneurial turn whilst challenging the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning entrepreneurship discourse (Ahl and Marlow, 2012).

However, denotations of gender remain a proxy for femininity (Kelan, 2009). As such, within the mainstream entrepreneurship field, only women are afforded a gender, which is used as categorising device and until recently, has positioned women in deficit (Marlow, 2014). Given the negative values associated with femininity, women are generically disadvantaged as gendered subject beings given that as humans, we become visible and comprehensible through our ascribed gender (Butler, 1993). In addition, the epistemological privilege afforded to masculinity establishes what constitutes knowledge and who can be a legitimate ‘knower’ (Harding, 1986). Harding argues that the authorisation process is embedded in masculinity, as ‘the voice of science is male, history is written from a male stance, [and] the subject of the authoritative sentence is assumed to be male’ (1986: iv). Offering uncritical authorisation to a dominant form of knowledge generation and analysis decides what may be defined as normative (Harding, 1986; Allcock and Potter, 1993; Kelan, 2009). This process of valorisation and subordination is largely hidden by assumptions of gender-neutral scientific enquiry, buttressed by logic and rationality. Only by rebalancing the current gender agenda to fully and separately acknowledge the assumptions fuelling masculinity as a default setting can we

challenge these presumptions and, in so doing, analytically expose how both women and men 'do' gender and 'do' entrepreneurship.

The issue of causality has also been considered regarding to what extent gender as a variable can be effectively identified as a definitive influence upon entrepreneuring (Gill, 2011). This debate introduces notions of intersectionality and context, which serve to usefully complicate simplistic gender categories and so will be discussed in more detail later. Adopting such perspectives illustrates that previous work has been embedded in generic racist and heteronormative assumptions that uncritically position gender subordination as universal; moreover, it presumes the mature, developed, Western economy to be the normative entrepreneurial site (Bruton, Ahlstrom and Obloj, 2008; Imas, Wilson and Weston; 2012). Consequently, unless gender theorising within entrepreneurship adopts a critical feminist perspective, refutes universality and explores contextual influences, it is in danger of producing, at best, a blunt instrument which assumes that gender only applies to women and homogenises disadvantage, whilst at worst, in making such assumptions, reproducing the subordination it purports to critique.

Empirical Evidence

In substantive terms, there exists an increasing evidence base describing women's entrepreneurial behaviour that, in turn, offers empirical illustration of theoretical arguments. Thus, based upon the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Kelley, Brush, Greene and Litovsky, 2013) we know that in almost every economy, women-owned firms are in a minority (Marlow, Hart, Levie and Shushal, 2013). Within developed Western economies, the 2008 global economic recession and related cuts to public sector spending has prompted a rise in women's business ownership (McKay, Cambell, Thompson and Ross, 2013). In the case of the United Kingdom, for example, the coalition government (2010 – 2015) have focused spending cuts on welfare benefits and lower paid public sector employment redundancies disproportionately affecting women and so pushing increasing numbers into self-employment (ONS: 2014). Effectively, previous patterns of churn have been disrupted as those who would normally select back into employment from poorly performing self-employment or seek employment due to benefit cuts no longer have such options (ibid).

It has been suggested that the minority status of women as entrepreneurs reflects a lack of entrepreneurial orientation and competency (HM Treasury, 2008). Yet, a more nuanced analysis suggests that within developed economies, this differential reflects the articulation of a range of gendered disadvantages (Marlow, 2002). So for example, women's lower participation in the labour

market per se, labour market segmentation constraining the accrual of knowledge, resources and networks necessary for new venture creation, and a lower presence in sectors conducive to self-employment [for example, construction] combine to constrain women's entrepreneurial activity. Domestic responsibilities and related time constraints are additional limitations upon the development of viable ventures (see McAdam, 2012 for an overview). Similarly, such gendered constraints also act to channel sectoral choices and operating profiles; thus, women are over-represented in lower-order service sectors and as owners of home-based part-time ventures – characteristics which affect sustainability, growth and returns (Jayawarna, Rouse and Kitching, 2013). However, caution is required; whilst it may be accurate to describe women-owned firms as small, service sector marginal operators, the majority of ventures operated by the self-employed and small firm owners reflect this profile. Very few firm owners desire to grow their firms and indeed, very few do so (Anyadike-Danes, Hart and Du, 2015). Women are, however, underrepresented in growth-oriented sectors; at the same time, negative gendered stereotypes militate against the accrual of the resources necessary for growth should this be sought (Carter, Ram, Trehan, Jones, 2015). The propensity for constrained performance profiles should not, however, be confused with female deficit. Analyses by Robb and Watson (2012) indicate that when sector and resources are matched, there are no significant performance differentials which can be attributed to the sex of the owner, whilst Saridakis, Marlow and Story (2014) find women to be as motivated by economic returns from venture ownership as their male counterparts. Thus, in this analysis, gendered ascriptions disadvantage women – but biological sex is not the source of such deficit.

Turning to developing economies, we have less evidence regarding the experience of women entrepreneurs. Given the greater scarcity of formal employment and higher incidences of patriarchal cultures constraining education, access to employment and domestic responsibilities, there are higher levels of self-employment amongst women (Kelley, et al., 2013). However, their ventures – reflecting the normative profile in such contexts – are likely to be on a micro scale, extremely vulnerable and volatile (Scott et al., 2012); they are disproportionately concentrated in low value-added sectors, particularly agriculture, catering and small scale market trading. For example, recent political volatility in the Middle East and related geographical movement of refugees has also prompted more women to turn to self-employment as traditional family forms are disrupted and men find it difficult to attain employment (Al Dajani and Marlow, 2010). Simultaneously, in wealthier nations, such as the UAE, entrepreneurship is increasingly encouraged as an economic activity for educated women who are prevented by patriarchal cultural norms from entering mainstream employment (Danish and Lawton-Smith, 2012). There is some evidence that more women are entering self-employment in transitional economies (Welter and Smallbone, 2008) but again, they are concentrated in traditional

feminised sectors and struggle to negotiate patriarchal and overtly corrupt local bureaucracies given their lack of status and resources.

Thus, we know that upon a global scale, more women are entering self-employment as a result of both push and pull factors. It is also evident that gendered influences critically influence their entrepreneurial experiences regardless of context but the socio-economic and cultural-political environment will critically shape women's entrepreneurial propensity and experience. It is to this issue, context, we now turn to explore in a little more detail.

Context

As Wright (2012:8) notes, 'although context has received relatively little attention in the entrepreneurial literature, studying entrepreneurs in the context which they find themselves is central to understanding the entrepreneurial process'. As such, we cannot view entrepreneurial activities as separated from context; reflecting work by Welter (2011) and Wright (2012) there are four broad dimensions of context:

- Spatial – place, location, geography
- Institutional – rules, regulations, policies, status of entrepreneurial activity
- Social – culture, norms, media representation, networks
- Time – attitudes to entrepreneurial activity, life cycle of the firm.

To this list we would also add:

- Finance – availability of formal and informal funding to finance new and growth oriented ventures.
- Economic – market volatility and competition.

This list captures both substantive and tacit environmental influences which shape social attitudes towards entrepreneurs, such as whether they are good or bad for society, physical aspects such as the availability of affordable premises and economic issues such as funding and market viability.

Drawing upon the discussion above regarding developed, developing and transitional economies, quite clearly these aspects will differ sharply in terms of their influence and so in turn, will constrain or enable entrepreneurial activity. Thus, as Bruton et al. (2008) have pointed out, presuming the advanced Western economy to be the natural template or idealised context for entrepreneurship is a myopic view; this approach excludes the majority of the global population whilst encouraging a

narrowed and patronising attitude. In many ways, just as ignoring the influence of gender upon entrepreneurship ensured an ontological and epistemological bias, so does a US/UK/developed economy contextual bias. Thus, acknowledging and accommodating contextual factors is essential to advance debate; in terms of how context shapes the influence of gender upon entrepreneurship, this relationship remains under-researched. This is problematic in terms of theoretical advancement and empirical activity as it assumes a universal construction of gender experienced by a homogeneous population of women and this, in turn, prompts normative conceptual frameworks to analyse diverse entrepreneurial experiences. In addition, existing contextual issues, such as those noted above, rarely acknowledge whether gender is a discrete contextual influence in and of itself or the extent to which these broad contextual aspects should be considered through a gendered lens.

In exploring this debate, Brush, de Bruin and Welter (2009) recognise that how women engage with their context is gendered. Thus, in addition to key contextual aspects such as market, money and management – the three M framework – they suggest this should be extended to include motherhood and meso/macro environment, resulting in a five M framework. By so doing, they acknowledge that gender positions women in different spaces and places in the broader socio-economic context which will critically impact upon their entrepreneurial propensity and experiences. As such, any identification and analysis of context is always already biased if it in fact presumes that entrepreneurship *is* a gender-neutral activity. There is a growing body of literature which explores household dynamics in terms of how women access time, space and resources to create and manage new firms (Jayawarna, Rouse and Kitching, 2013) which offer insight into notions of how household context and gender intersect to facilitate or constrain women's self-employment. This relationship requires greater exploration and acknowledgement. So, for example, Klyver, Neilson and Evald (2013) focus upon the strong collective welfare context in Sweden which offers very good quality public sector employment for women with opportunities for flexible working, child care breaks, et cetera arguing that in such a context, it is counter-intuitive for women to select into uncertain self-employment. Clearly, some will – but far fewer than in neo-liberal or developing economies where such employment opportunities are less available.

Developing this theme, Al Dajani and Marlow (2013) focus upon the entrepreneurial activities of displaced Palestinian women creating home-based enterprises in Amman, Jordan. One very particular gendered aspect of context in this instance is the patriarchal culture which dominates; this restricts women's freedom of movement and socio-economic participation. This aspect, combined with the displaced status of their families and communities positions women in very specific circumstances – experiencing poverty but with few opportunities for economic engagement. Exploiting traditional

craft skills, however, enables them to produce heritage goods within the home which are sold to intermediary contractors. This entrepreneurial process, shaped and constrained as it is by economic, social and cultural contextual influences has nevertheless, enabled women to generate independent incomes and gain increased status within their communities. Quite evidently, civil war, displacement and wide scale social fragmentation such as is occurring in countries such as Syria and Iraq is generating considerable numbers of refugees for whom self-employment is the only available option. Thus, exploring new contextual influences reflecting volatility, poverty and status is essential.

From these very brief vignettes, we argue that the influence of context requires greater recognition and exploration. It is critical to understand how entrepreneurial activity unfolds per se (Zahra and Wright, 2014) but less recognised is how gendered influences are embedded within context which in turn, produces and reproduces gendered assumptions and stereotypes. Recognising and exploring this issue is essential to move beyond notions of gender as universal and women as homogeneous. To develop this theme, we now explore notions of intersectionality and positionality.

Intersectionality and Positionality

Intersectionality is a theoretical paradigm originating in black feminism that has refined monolithic conceptions of gender and come to be accepted as a cornerstone of contemporary feminist scholarship (Hancock, 2007; Kelan, 2014). It theorises the interplay of social categories of difference, such as race/ethnicity, gender, class and socio-economic status, as they relate to social hierarchies, and analyses their impacts upon lived experience. The theory was developed to highlight the experiences of people at particular neglected intersections of categories (originally, black American women) as unique and yet unaccounted for in either mainstream feminism or critical race studies (Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005). Crucially, these early accounts of intersectionality posited the categories of race, gender and class as co-constructed, and central to accounts of the social (e.g. Combahee River Collective, 1977; Hill Collins, 1990/2000). The paradigm has now been expanded and analytically applied to a variety of additional categories of difference, including sexual orientation, disability, body size, age, and geographic location, implemented across a number of disciplines (Bowleg, 2008; Kelan, 2014; Oleksy, 2011). It is today generally regarded as a foundational feminist concept used in both academic and popular discourse to theorise and explain oppression on multiple bases, heterogeneity within groups of women and variability across populations.

In regards to entrepreneurship, intersectionality has been used to study various combinations of intersections, such as race, class and gender (Harvey, 2005), gender, ethnicity and religion (Essers and Benschop, 2009; Essers, Benschop, and Dooreward, 2010), and gender, ethnicity, national origin and national context (Verduijn and Essers, 2013). In a similar manner to early intersectional work, these scholars point out that separate analyses of, for instance, women's entrepreneurship and immigrant/ethnic minority entrepreneurship, fail to highlight significant phenomena that are the result of intersectional issues, such as the unique challenges experienced by immigrant Muslim women entrepreneurs in the Netherlands (Essers et al., 2010). Thus, they introduce an intersectional perspective to investigations of entrepreneurial activity in order to bring these issues to light, while also illustrating the ways in which the politics of entrepreneurship are simultaneously affected by considerations of both gender and ethnicity.

Although early debates on marginality tended to attempt to prioritise the effects of one category over others, or utilise an additive approach that assumed step-wise increases in inequality with each additional stigmatised identity (see Anthias, 2008; Bowleg, 2008), contemporary intersectionality has returned to its roots, explicitly conceiving of exclusionary categories, and the social inequalities they precipitate, as interdependent and mutually constitutive (Bowleg, 2008), such that "classes are always gendered and racialised and gender is always classed and racialised and so on" (Anthias, 2008: 13). As the processes of their co-production are complex, it is commonly acknowledged that the effects of the categories may be mutually reinforcing or contradicting (Acker, 2006: 442; Anthias, 2013).

This leads us to the following predominant set of critiques of the intersectional approach, which, despite its popularity, has been the subject of significant debate across the disciplines in which it has been applied (Davis, 2008). Scholars have pointed out that a key limitation of intersectionality is that it has overwhelmingly been used to theorise experiences of oppression and structural constraints, to the detriment of an analysis of privilege and agency (Geerts and van der Tuin, 2013; Nash, 2008). This is despite the fact that, as discussed, the effects of various aspects of social belonging could lead to nuanced experiences of privilege and disadvantage that differ from context to context, rather than simply multiplying or amplifying oppression in every case. Another significant limitation arises from the challenges inherent in operationalising such a complex construct, which has resulted in a lack of methodological consensus (Bowleg, 2008; Martinez Dy, Martin and Marlow, 2014; McCall, 2008) as well as the concern of some scholars that extending the concept to include ever-growing numbers of categories of difference could possibly draw attention away from the 'most salient' differences (see Davis, 2008) or prevent general analytical claims from being made.

In response to such valid concerns, the concept of translocational positionality as developed by Anthias (2001a, 2001b, 2006, 2007, 2008) may be a means by which to take the concept of intersectionality beyond the methodological challenges it currently presents. Anthias argues that intersectionality is a “social process related to practices and arrangements” that gives rise to particular forms of positionality (2006: 27). The construct of positionality is two-fold: it combines social position, as outcome, with social positioning, a processual set of practices, actions and meanings (2001b: 634). It is conceptualised as comprising the space at the intersection of structure and agency (2001a: 635). Importantly, positionality is said to be translocational, or, in other words, “in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradiction” (2008: 5). As such, it moves away from the idea of given groups or categories, and towards broader social locations and processes (2008), of which the most salient for a particular investigation can be brought to the analytical fore. Thus, it addresses and rectifies some of the most prominent conceptual limitations of intersectionality, namely its tendency to lend itself to conceptions of categorical belonging as fixed, a general inattention to agency and privilege, and the challenges of attempting to consider the impacts of all possible categories of difference.

A further strength of the positionality construct is its explicit linkages to resource allocation, which has obvious benefits for the study of entrepreneurship. The body of work by Anthias elaborates upon the notion of social hierarchies from which intersectionality emerged, noting that social positions are characterised first by a hierarchical “pecking order” and second, by unequal resource allocation. Resources are here conceived of broadly to include both tangible and intangible resources, among them economic, political, symbolic and cultural; thus, resource allocation includes the unequal allocation of power, authority and legitimacy, which is then naturalized and made to seem invisible (2001a: 635). Whilst entrepreneurship scholarship generally acknowledges the heterogeneity of resources to be highly relevant to entrepreneurial activity, it focuses primarily on differences in belief about the value of resources (Schumpeter, 1934; Kirzner, 1979; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, as cited by Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001: 756) rather than unequal distribution of, and access to, the resources themselves. Hence, in a number of relevant ways, positionality directly answers the calls for context made by contemporary entrepreneurship scholars. It can be used to articulate how particular spatial, social, economic, political and cultural conditions affect individuals and groups within and outside of certain social positions and boundaries in different ways. With the understanding of social hierarchies and unequal resource distribution it advances, it can be used to coherently explain such phenomena as why women entrepreneurs are perpetually seen in deficit as compared to men, whilst also complicating universal notions of gender that have too frequently been generic and prescriptive.

The notions of intersectionality and positionality reveal important differences across the social ascriptions and lived experiences of people who are generally considered to belong to a wider categorical group, as well as highlight those people whose experiences are marginalized within a group itself. In addition to their widespread application, the theories are continually being critiqued, developed, and expanded, for example, to include the notion of privilege (Nash, 2008; Martinez Dy, et al., 2014). For the study of entrepreneurship, this opens up a number of interesting research possibilities, such as exploring how the privilege conveyed by normative identities can function as an entrepreneurial resource. The question thus arises: can intersectionality be used for critical gender investigations of men and male subjects? In a sense, by virtue of its focus on women as marginalised subjects, it is already used to critique the unearned privilege that men receive in patriarchal societies. However, it has predominantly been used for explicit analysis of women's experiences and not frequently for those of men, although it has informed some investigations of black men (e.g. Doyal, 2009; hooks, 2004). The concepts are also arguably broad enough to transcend binary conceptions of gender and can therefore, be used as such to explain the experiences of not only women and men, but also transgendered, genderqueer, and nonbinary individuals from a variety of demographic backgrounds. What seems essential to using intersectionality and positionality in a way that preserves their roots is that their use must be politicised; in other words, that intersecting social hierarchies and the power dynamics implicit to them must be taken into account. Although not necessarily limited to analyses of marginalised subjects, an intersectional or positional analysis implies an inherent awareness of issues of social hierarchy, marginality and inequality, as well as an intention to challenge and rectify those inequalities. Thus, as black feminist theoretical tools, they should be regarded as non-neutral, historically embedded as they are in a politics of liberation and an intellectual tradition based upon the principles of social justice.

Thus, interesting research questions abound when adopting an intersectional or positional approach as a means by which to address the notion of context in entrepreneurship studies. Aspects of intersectionality could be used to frame variability in entrepreneurial activity and experiences among groups of women, or the particular social conditions and challenges faced by women facing particular obstacles to employment and/or self-employment as a result of their marginalised positionalities (e.g. transgender identity, lower socio-economic status, disability, etc.). Conversely, including an awareness of privilege as well as disadvantage enables the exploration of questions regarding women from certain social positions are able (or not) to mobilise certain resources, such as, for example, labour market privilege (Jayawarna, Rouse and Kitching, 2013) when they enter into entrepreneurship. Translocational positionality could be used to explore immigrant or transnational entrepreneurship (Drori, Honig and Wright, 2009), as well as the entrepreneurship of refugee women as outlined above. It may also be useful in the development of alternative contextual frameworks with

which to analyse the entrepreneurial activity of the most marginalised, for whom Imas, Wilson and Weston (2012) explain that traditional conceptions of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur simply do not apply. From these limited examples, it is clear how intersectional and positional perspectives are able to contextualise and give conceptual shape to the variety of social conditions in which entrepreneurial activity is embedded, thereby intervening in and advancing existing theories of entrepreneurial context, and offering significant explanatory power.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically evaluated the existing academic literature on women, gender and entrepreneurship. It has highlighted how, although women have long been engaged in entrepreneurial activity, their efforts were not recognised in mainstream theorising until the growth of contemporary neo-liberalism and its attendant individualised approach to promoting social and economic progress interpellated them into entrepreneurial discourse. Whilst early debates focused on women as deficient entrepreneurs in comparison to men, critical feminist analyses have moved the conversation to the influence of gender upon entrepreneurial practices and how they are perceived by individuals and wider societies. In particular, women are found to encounter structural obstacles to entrepreneurship as a result of their feminine gender ascription, due to its systemic effects upon gender role expectations as well as upon access to material, cultural and political resources. This is complicated further by women's wider social positionalities in intersecting hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and class or socio-economic status, as well as other characteristics and positions, such as sexual orientation, disability, and geographic location, that result in nuanced and complex experiences of marginality as well as, in some cases, privilege. Additionally, attention has been called to the ways in which the concept of gender should not be limited to analyses of women, as the social meaning it carries has significant implications for the lives of men as well as those who transverse or defy the gender binary. This theoretical development of the relationship between gender and entrepreneurship complements the recent contextual turn of the field, in which spatial, temporal, institutional, social and economic concerns are acknowledged as not only relevant, but essential to understanding the nature of entrepreneurial activity in its wide variety of forms. Taken together, a contextual approach with a well-developed critical understanding of the effects of gender can help to advance an ambitious but necessary future research agenda that strives to accurately represent and comprehend the diversity of experiences of entrepreneurial women around the world.

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