WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURS' SOCIAL NETWORKS (SUMMARY)

Kim Klyver
Stanford University, USA / University of Southern Denmark, Denmark, kkl@sam.sdu.dk

Recommended Citation
Klyver, Kim (2009) "WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURS' SOCIAL NETWORKS (SUMMARY)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research: Vol. 29: Iss. 8, Article 3.
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol29/iss8/3

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SUMMARY

WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURS’ SOCIAL NETWORKS

Kim Klyver, Stanford University, USA / University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Principal Topic

This study investigates entrepreneurs’ involvement of females in their social networks. It adds to previous research on social networks and gender by shifting the focus from the gender of ‘ego’ to the gender of ‘alter’. Most gender research in entrepreneurship is trying to explore if and how women adapt different practice throughout the entrepreneurial process than their male counterparts, and if and how women are disadvantaged as entrepreneurs. One of the often mentioned differences between female and male entrepreneurs is their social networks.

A small body of literature focuses on differences in social networks between female and male entrepreneurs. Although the empirical results still are inadequate, some consistency has emerged. However, so far interests within entrepreneurial networks have mainly been on gender of ego, and not gender of alter. In this study, focus is on gender of alter, and specifically we are interested in what influences entrepreneurs’ involvement of females in their networks. Building on homophily theory, social support theory, relational theory and the concept of emotional closeness, five hypotheses are developed.

Method

This study is based on a representative sample of 239 female and male entrepreneurs identified through the Danish Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). The name-generator approach is used to identify up to five members of the entrepreneur’s social network. The returned and completed questionnaires identified together 957 instances of relationships between entrepreneurs and their alter. The relationship between entrepreneurs and their alter is the unit of analysis. Bivariate and multi-variate statistics are used to test for involvement of women.

Results and Implications

It is found that female entrepreneurs are more likely than male entrepreneurs to involve females in their network substantiating previous research. In addition, it is found that involved females more often than involved men are family members and that involved females more often than involved men provide emotional support. Finally, it is found that female entrepreneurs compared to male entrepreneurs are less likely to involve female family member and more likely to receive emotional support from females. The study support the idea of females’ networks being dependent on emotional closeness, meaning that females appreciate and prefer relationships to whom they are both closely and emotionally attached.

CONTACT: Kim Klyver; kkl@sam.sdu.dk; (T): +1 650 725 1673; Stanford University (Scandinavian Consortium for Organizational Research) / University of Southern Denmark.