ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPITAL: THE EFFECTS OF HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation
Pret, Tobias; Shaw, Eleanor; and Carter, Sara (2014) "ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPITAL: THE EFFECTS OF HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS (SUMMARY)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research. Vol. 34 : Iss. 8 , Article 3. Available at: https://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol34/iss8/3

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Principal Topic

Household and family have a strong influence on entrepreneurial behaviours and practices. Entrepreneurship scholars have, however, largely overlooked the impact of household and family on entrepreneurs’ ability to access resources and pursue opportunities. This study seeks to address this research gap by exploring the perspectives of women entrepreneurs and members of their households. Furthermore, by investigating successfully operating female entrepreneurs, we challenge the gender-biased assumption that entrepreneurship is a masculine process. Our study seeks to reveal how entrepreneurs utilise the resources of household and family to exploit opportunities and engage in entrepreneurship. We draw on the growing body of research on entrepreneurial capital, to explore the dynamic between entrepreneurs’ access to different types of resources and venture success. Specifically, we adopt Bourdieu’s (1977; 1986) theory of practice to investigate the interplay between economic, cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital.

Method

Set within the context of the UK craft industry, our study investigates eight female craft entrepreneurs and members of their households. By adopting the household as unit of analysis, we contribute to the growing body of context-focused entrepreneurship research. Heeding the call for more methodological diversity, we conduct an interpretative phenomenological analysis (Cope, 2011). We collected rich empirical evidence through semi-structured interviews, observations and other documents to triangulate our data. By interviewing participants on three occasions over the course of twelve months, our study adopts a longitudinal design, which is regarded as underrepresented within entrepreneurship research.

Results and Implications

Our study reveals ways in which household and family members affect entrepreneurs’ behaviours and practices by providing them with economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. We also show that emotional support is especially important and that women entrepreneurs rely on their household members’ continuous support over time. Thus, we observe that the loss of family members’ support deprives entrepreneurs of necessary resources, which indicates a downside of social embeddedness. Our study develops Bourdieu’s (1977; 1986) conceptual framework to account for the importance of family members’ emotional support. Furthermore, we demonstrate that household members not only facilitate and impede entrepreneurial processes, but also help shape them over time.

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