PRACTICE AND PERCEPTIONS: GENDER, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND BOURDIEU’S FORMS OF CAPITAL (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

PRACTICE AND PERCEPTIONS: GENDER, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND BOURDIEU’S FORMS OF CAPITAL

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Principal Topic

Explanations for the extensive variation in rates of entrepreneurship across countries and gender have been biased by the dominant paradigms of the field, the limits of the resulting research designs, and ultimately by the lack of comprehensive framework for predicting and understanding the decision to start a business. I propose an alternative view of entrepreneurship based soundly on contemporary social theory, in particular on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice. The resulting theoretical model presents a set of theoretical propositions and hypotheses that fit well with existing evidence from the field entrepreneurship and other studies of gender and work.

Method

The proposed theoretical model is tested on data from 2 sources: the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2000 and 2001 databases, the World Bank, and the International Social Survey program (ISSP). Conclusions were based on the results of a 2-level random coefficient model, investigating the relative impacts of micro- and macro-level correlates of nascent entrepreneurship.

Results and Implications

The key findings of this study strongly support a Practice Theory view of entrepreneurship. Bourdieuian capital structures (a.k.a. social position) explain most of the gender variation and a large extent of the variation across countries. Country characteristics also explain a good portion of the country variation. Perceptions, social ties, and national gender culture are significant correlates of nascent entrepreneurship, net of all other micro- and macro-level factors. The variation in rates of nascent entrepreneurship is more extensive across countries than across gender. Micro-macro interactions are also explored.

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