A LOOK AT HUSBANDS, VENTURES, AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

Scholars have examined the work and family lives of women entrepreneurs (Buttner, 1993; Jennings & McDougald, 2007; Loscocco, 1997; Shelton, 2006) from a variety of perspectives. However, the influence of the husband of the female entrepreneur has received little attention (Brush et al., 2009), although spouses play important roles in entrepreneurial ventures (Jianakoplos & Bernasek, 2008, Garcia et al., 2007; Winkler & Ireland, 2009).

This study aimed to fill this gap in the literature by examining the impact of the husband of the female entrepreneur through his influence on their marriage.

Method

A multiple case study methodology with twelve cases was employed, with each case consisting of a female entrepreneur and her husband, in order to foster a mix of depth and breadth. The sample size of twelve couples was judged to be adequate based on an examination of similar research designs (Agapiou, 2002; Blanchard et al., 2009; Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2008; Zuzic, 2003).

The twelve couples were recruited from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland using both cluster and convenience sampling approaches. Data was collected in a two phases process utilizing open-ended qualitative questionnaires and semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

Results and Implications

Although the launch of the wife’s venture may decrease or enhance the husband’s role as a leader and provider depending upon the gender role ideologies of the two spouses; in all cases, an additional role as supporter of his entrepreneur wife and her venture opened up for the husband. His willingness to embrace this support role improved the marriage contract in all cases, with the surprising result that the wife’s venture can serve as a basis for the improvement in a troubled marriage. The female entrepreneurs in this sample tended to have positive and fulfilling psychological contracts with their ventures; however, changes in the marriage contract had a greater impact on the psychological contracts of women with traditional gender role ideologies than those with egalitarian gender role ideologies.

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