GENDER AND FIRM INNOVATIVENESS: ON THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS’ CAREER HISTORIES AND THE ACQUISITION OF DIVERSE SKILLS (SUMMARY)

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GENDER AND FIRM INNOVATIVENESS: ON THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS’ CAREER HISTORIES AND THE ACQUISITION OF DIVERSE SKILLS

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Introduction

Despite the importance of innovation for firm performance and also the creation of new jobs and wealth, gendered studies of innovation, entrepreneurship, and growth remain scarce. The main objective of our study is to develop and empirically test a model of the effect of gender on firm innovativeness.

We extend nascent work on this topic in two key ways. First, we invoke an inclusive conceptualization of innovation by studying its different types (i.e., product, process, market and organizational) and also its’ different degrees of novelty (i.e., new-to-firm versus new-to-market and incremental versus radical). Second, extending a recently developed entrepreneurship theory, we suggest that differences in the scope of innovation exhibited by male versus female-headed firms can partially be explained by key differences in the knowledge diversity and career paths of the individuals heading such firms. Specifically, we call attention to differences in the extent to which male and female entrepreneurs are likely to possess skills indicative of being “jacks and jills of all trades”.

Data and Methods

We analyze a large sample of 300 male and 600 female highly-educated entrepreneurs, the data which were collected through a representative, random sampling of individual households in Germany.

Our hierarchical Poisson regression analyses invoke multiple measures of firm innovativeness, multiple indicators of the “jack-of-all-trades” concept, and numerous control variables. Conducting a Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition of our regressions, we are able to determine the extent to which any observed differences in the innovativeness of male versus female-headed firms can be accounted for by differences in the degree to which male and female entrepreneurs resemble jacks-of-all-trades.

Contributions

Our preliminary findings reveal that the ventures headed by men tend to exhibit a greater scope of innovation than those headed by women. They also indicate that this is partially attributable to differences in the extent to which male and female entrepreneurs possess various skills indicative of being a jack-of-all-trades. Our analysis further suggests that the relationship between such skills and firm innovativeness is inverted U-shaped, i.e. being a jack-of-all-trades appears to be beneficial up to a certain point but then becomes detrimental.

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