

# Gender and Entrepreneurship: An Annotated Bibliography

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## Abstract

Entrepreneurship, from a gender perspective, is not only an academic topic of growing interest but also a topic of policy importance across many nations. In an effort to describe the scope of scholarly inquiry into this topic, we have constructed an annotated bibliography of 563 scholarly contributions covering the period 1979 to the present. These contributions were selected systematically, and they represent 16 different categories of research.

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## Introduction

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Entrepreneurship, from a gender perspective, is not only an academic topic of growing interest but also a topic of policy importance across many nations. Regarding the policy importance of the topic first, consider the following European initiatives and policy directives.

From the perspective of the European Union (EU) countries, the European Commission (EC) noted:<sup>1</sup>

Gender equality has been a key principle of the EU ever since the Treaty of Rome introduced the principle of equal pay for men and women in 1957. Using the legal basis provided by the Treaties, the Union has adopted thirteen directives on gender equality since the 1970s. These have ensured, among other things, equal treatment concerning access to work, training, promotions and working conditions, including equal pay and social security benefits, as well as guaranteed rights to parental leave.

Attention to gender issues might be dated as far back as the EC's equal pay directive in 1975. Gender issues, especially with regard to women entrepreneurs, have remained a centerpiece in European dialogues.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-07-426\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-07-426_en.htm)



For example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted [2004, p. 6]:

[It is critically important to] improve the factual and analytical underpinnings of the role of women entrepreneurs in the [EU] economy . . . women entrepreneurs play an important role in the entrepreneurial economy, both in their ability to create jobs for themselves and to create jobs for others.

The World Bank recently echoed the sentiments of the OECD in this regard (Sattar, 2012, p. 63):

Entrepreneurship . . . is important from the perspective of job creation, private sector development, and wealth creation [in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia]. Women's participation in entrepreneurship can enhance the expansion of these economic goods and simultaneously lead to less inequality in the two largest subgroups in the population: men and women.

In addition, the OECD recently offered the following policy perspective about women entrepreneurs (Adema et al., 2014, p. 21):

Policy makers wishing to strengthen the economic impact of women entrepreneurs need a better understanding of the factors contributing to the growth and success of female-owned firms . . . Policies that foster female entrepreneurship often come under the umbrella of programmes for small enterprises. However, they are likely to impact relatively strongly on women entrepreneurs, since most run small businesses. A mix of general policies for SMEs and instruments explicitly targeting women can be effective in prompting interest and entry into entrepreneurship.

From the perspective of the United States, President Barack Obama recently acknowledged, in *A Strategy for American Innovation* (The White House, 2015), the importance for the federal government to invest in the building blocks of innovation, to fuel the engine of private-sector innovation, and to empower a nation of innovators. Therein, he

emphasized that one vehicle for empowering a nation of innovators is to ensure opportunities for underrepresented minorities and women in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In this monograph we attempt to contribute to scholarly thought about the nexus between gender and entrepreneurship by offering in the following table, **Annotated Bibliography on Gender and Entrepreneurship**. In an effort to be systematic with respect to the contents of this table, we employed the following search criteria to identify the relevant literature. We first began with two of the oldest and most complete literature reviews in the literature — Birley (1989) and Brush (1992) — and then we considered those scholarly efforts in those reviews based on the criterion that each have 25 or more citations to date in Google Scholar. Second, we searched for all publications that referenced Birley (1989) and Brush (1992), and we also identified the journals listed in these two reviews. Regarding the former, we included in our bibliography table each of those articles; regarding the latter, we searched each journal and included each relevant article in print to date. To supplement this search process, we imposed two additional “checks” in an effort for completeness.<sup>2</sup> We searched both the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) websites for reports on the topic of gender and entrepreneurship, and we included in our bibliography any references that had not previously been identified.<sup>3</sup> Our bibliography summarizes 563 scholarly contributions.

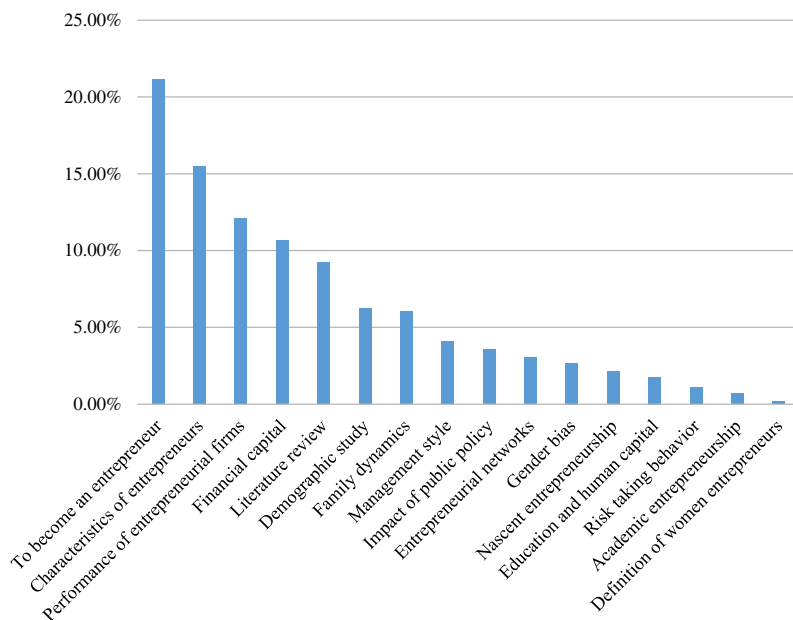
There have been a number of excellent literature reviews in recent years published in various academic outlets — 52 by our count — and we note each of these reviews in our literature table.<sup>4</sup> We believe that our review is more complete than other efforts, and as well, our review places each contribution to the literature into one of 16 descriptive categories. Our categorical taxonomy of the literature is subjective. We formulated it based on key phrases published in either the abstract

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<sup>2</sup>We sincerely apologize for any contributions to the literature that are missing from our review. Such voids were unintentional.

<sup>3</sup>All identified SBA reports we later published as journal articles.

<sup>4</sup>Of course, most contributions to this body of thought include, as introductory material, a literature review.

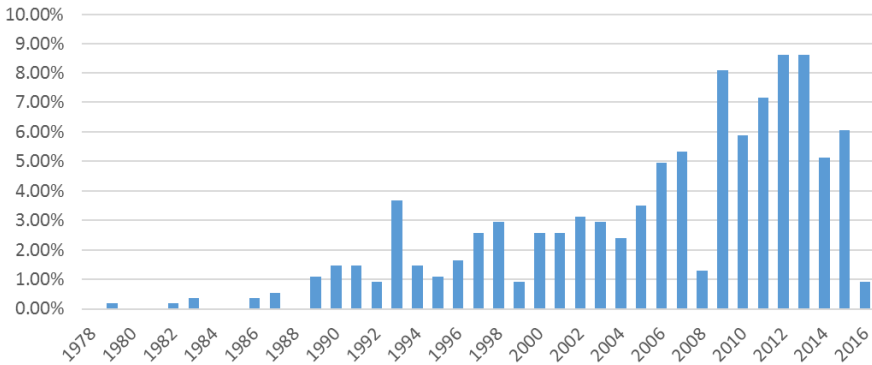


**Figure 1:** Distribution of the literature, by category.

of a journal article, the article’s statement of its purpose, or the article’s summary.

Given our categorization scheme, Figure 1 shows the distribution of the literature, in percentages, by our self-defined categories. Clearly, scholars have focused on some broadly defined topics more than others. The largest number of entries (21%) in the table deals with the topic that we call: *To become an entrepreneur*. Entries in this category are followed by what we call: *Characteristics of entrepreneurs* (15%) and *Performance of entrepreneurial firms* (12%). Of course, any given contribution to the literature will likely address several topics, but we have imposed our judgment as to the broadest categorical fit.

We refrain from interpreting the relative topic emphasis in Figure 1 to mean that some topics are more important than others; on the contrary, the distribution might simply reflect the fact that data are more readily available on some topics than other. The distribution might also reflect the tastes and preferences of journal editors.



**Figure 2:** Distribution of the literature, by publication year.

Regarding the growing interest in the topic of gender and entrepreneurship, which we alluded to above, consider Figure 2. In that figure we illustrate how the volume of this body of literature has increased over time. We show the percentage of the literature reviewed herein by year of publication. Statistical analysis aside, the trend is visually positive. Keeping in mind that only a portion of publications in 2016 are shown in the figure, one might generalize that this body of literature has approximately doubled during this decade.

There are a number of possibilities why this increasing trend in the volume of publications on gender and entrepreneurship might exist. The possibilities include, but are not limited to, the establishments of new journals focused on the intersection of gender and entrepreneurship<sup>5</sup> to the growth of special issues of existing journals on this topic. Regardless of the reason, the growth of the literature on gender and entrepreneurship is a phenomenon of this decade.

Certainly our attempt to review broadly and adequately the gender and entrepreneurship literature will not be the last. Hopefully our effort, as reflected in this monograph, will become a building block

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<sup>5</sup>To the extent to which this trend does reflect the establishment of new journals, and to the extent that a portion of the new journals have not yet gained the full attention of scholars in this field, our selection criteria might have caused us to miss what could become foundation articles in this body of thought. Again, our apology.

toward future research endeavors. Such future research endeavors might address the following three issues, among others.

First, some may disagree with our literature categories, and if so, we hope that others will offer competing taxonomies to better characterize the current and future literatures.

Second, our reading of the literature emphasized that there is a paucity of research related to the minority status of entrepreneurs. This is likely due to limited data, but because a number of the studies in our bibliography table were based on survey data future surveys might address minority status in greater detail. If this is done, minority status should go beyond a minority/non-minority or white/non-white dichotomy of entrepreneurs. To the extent possible it should also include, as Smith-Hunter and Boyd (2004a) did, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American entrepreneurs. Native American entrepreneurs is the least studied area.

And third, it was also clear from our reading of the literature, specifically the literature on the performance of entrepreneurial firms, that most scholars could systematically identify gender differences in performance but were limited in their ability to explain why those differences existed. Those scholars who attempted to offer explanations (e.g., Coleman, 2005) based their arguments on differences in dimensions of human capital (e.g., education or experience). More research is clearly needed in this regard. Researchers might ask, for example, if there are particular categories of education or types of experiences that drive performance.

Our final comment regarding future research on gender and entrepreneurship is with reference to Figure 1. We wonder how such a figure might look as a next decade of research is published. As we discussed at the beginning of this introduction, gender issues related to entrepreneurship are becoming the focus of public policies. Thus, it would not be surprising to see a greater percentage of future research fitting in the category of *Impact of public policy*.

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