

Introduction

Let us do a simple exercise: think of a famous entrepreneur. Did you find a name? You thought of a man, haven't you? You must have found many examples. Now, we are going to do a slightly more difficult exercise: think of a female entrepreneur. You cannot find one? No example comes into mind? You have to think harder to find a female entrepreneur than a male entrepreneur? This exercise is intended to show that male entrepreneur models are over represented and thus, they are easier to think of. As shown in previous studies on gender and entrepreneurship (Sundin & Holmquist, 1989, Ahl, 2004, to take Nordic examples), the prototypical entrepreneur is a man. Does this mean that *men and women are planets apart* as far as entrepreneurship is concerned? Why are women less likely to become entrepreneurs than men? Lay psychology would respond in terms of gender differences linked to dispositional factors rooted in the person. Accordingly, women are thought to have fewer of the required entrepreneurial skills. Conversely, a social psychological situational approach would, similar to the authors mentioned above, go beyond essentialist assumptions and explain this difference in terms of the social context features. Women are threatened by a negative stereotype that says "women are less capable of being entrepreneurs than men". This is in line with Nancy Clark's statement that *gender stereotypes are for sure planets apart*.

The main goal of this viewpoint paper is to propose a bridge between the social psychology discipline and the research field women's entrepreneurship. This will be done by showing how social psychology, through its well-developed and supported theories, can contribute to the paradigmatic development of women's entrepreneurship. Taken as a research field, women's entrepreneurship has already brought together theoretical and methodological approaches from diverse academic disciplines through a common research object: economics, strategic management, sociology and others. However, women's entrepreneurship still very rarely refers to social psychology, despite the interest this discipline has for human functioning in interaction situations and despite its potential to address core questions related to entrepreneurial behavior. Given the obvious social nature of entrepreneurship, Carsrud and Johnson (1989) demonstrated their interest in adopting a social psychological approach by investigating entrepreneurship related phenomena. The same holds true for women's entrepreneurship. In this article the authors point out the inadequate transfer of psychological theories in the women's entrepreneurship research. According to them, this is the consequence of four main causes: i) the *assumption of stable entrepreneurial characteristics*, ii) the *poor application of knowledge*, iii) the *confusion of levels of analysis* and iv) the *lack of systematic research*. Even though we do not minimize the importance of the other three reasons, nor do we consider that they have been overcome, we focus on the second reason. The poor application of knowledge implies, in our view, that psychological theories have been and still are misapplied in certain respects in the field of women's entrepreneurship. Indeed, given that social psychology theories do exist, it is more a question of trying to see how we can apply and adapt these theories in the women's entrepreneurship domain. Thus, psychology-entrepreneurship collaboration has the potential to generate clear lines of research through combining social psychologists' theoretical background and entrepreneurship researchers' knowledge while taking into account the specificities of their field of study. Consequently, a twofold interest could be satisfied: on the one hand, a more precise understanding of entrepreneurial phenomena would be reached and on the other hand, relevant social psychology theories' applications would be defined.

In order to pursue the objective of showing how a social psychological approach could provide significant and meaningful advancements in women's entrepreneurship research, we first define the social psychology research scope - we suggest Gordon Allport's (1954) definition - and then we present a selection of social psychology theories particularly relevant to the field of women's entrepreneurship. Finally we will show how experimentation in social psychology, as a tool, can bring convincing answers to some core entrepreneurial research questions. To conclude, we will propose some avenues for future research in women's entrepreneurship, applying the suggested theories.

1. Social Psychology Research

Social psychology research scope is consensually defined as "an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings" (Allport, 1954, p. 5). In other words, based on scientific methods, social psychology is studying the direct or indirect impact of social influence on human behavior. However, since human behavior gives rise to lay explanatory theories (Heider, 1958), social psychologists have become wary of *common sense*, and have systematically applied a scientific approach in its exploration. Common sense can be defined as a socially shared belief that is not based on scientific knowledge. We often hear, for example, that "bad people behave badly". Consequently, from observing antisocial behavior, people draw the causal inference of an antisocial personality. In order to go beyond common sense in testing the perceived causality of events, social psychology is experimentally verifying the hypothesis according to which bad people behave badly. From a social psychological point of view, we are referring to a dispositional (or personological) hypothesis; thus, if individuals behave in a certain manner it