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“Women Entrepreneurship within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields”

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Full Paper Submission Deadline: 31 August 2017

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (the so-called STEM fields) are notably important for innovation and technological development, which in turn are cross-national drivers of social and economic growth. The STEM disciplines are considered major sources of increased competitiveness due to the potential for technological innovation and job creation, provided that technological inventions and developments are transferred and commercialized. For this, entrepreneurial activity plays a crucial role (Di Gregorio & Shane, 2003; O'Shea et al., 2007). A variety of policy initiatives is put forward to support such activity (Rasmussen et al., 2006). Such efforts have been found to be gender biased (Marlow & McAdam, 2012), and women are less seldom than men involved in entrepreneurship related to the STEM fields. Ahl et al. (2015) recognize that there has been a political change, influenced by neo-liberal thought, in which politicians have handed over the welfare state’s responsibilities to the market and they encourage entrepreneurship, not least among women and, if possible, within STEM fields.

The gender breakdown of students entering STEM fields shows about 60% male and 40% female students. At the PhD level the numbers are closer. However, over time,
these women start to drop out of technical and industrial careers. By the time careers reach leadership levels, as few as 15% are women (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). Although governments all over the world try to close existing economic gender gaps, women are still less educated in STEM fields and less often participate in the workforce or owning companies in those areas. These two facts lead to a high number of educational and governmental programs, which try to close the gap and foster women in STEM and/or women in opportunity-driven entrepreneurship.

Although there is a broad number of books, articles and special issues on Women in Entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006; Alsos et al., 2013; Bollough & Abdelzaher, 2012; Brush, 2009; Hughes et al., 2012) and a considerable number on studies on gender aspects in STEM (add current sources), seldom publications dealt so far explicitly with Women Entrepreneurship in STEM fields. In the past women entrepreneurship research was more often narrowed to “innovation” or “technology” (Castillo et al. 2014); Research on women in STEM focused mostly on women’s educational choices (Stout et al., 2011; Simon et al., 2016), women faculty (Xu, 2011) and women in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Following Alsos et al. (2013) we argue that women's activity needs to be understood as embedded in the normative frames and structural factors at play. The ideal type of entrepreneur embedded in notions of entrepreneurial identity is a male prototype, suggesting that normative constructions of femininity do not fit well with this role, posing challenges to women which aim to enter a social space which is unsympathetic to their gendered characterization (Marlow and McAdam, 2014). Marlow and McAdam (2014) show that technology business incubation is a gendered process shaping the identity work by women entrepreneurs who seek legitimacy as technology business-owners, encouraging them to reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur. Also, Politis et al. (2014) find that female academic entrepreneurs face barriers, for example with regards to their exclusion from high-level industrial links and commercial networks. This can be related to Rönnblom and Keisu's (2013) finding about the inevitability of de-politicization processes of the neo-liberal audit culture of innovation in academia and the difficulties of working for political change for women academics. At the same time, this fact can be also related to women's ideas (creativity) being less likely to be implemented to the same degree as men's, since the later have greater decision-making authority within the team (Foss et al., 2013). Recently Xie and Lv (2016) show how social networks of female tech-entrepreneurs have a positive effect on new venture performance, which is negatively moderated by discrimination (direct negative effect) and positively moderated by entrepreneurial alertness (direct positive effect).

Against this background the aim of this Special Issue is to combine the debate on Women in Entrepreneurship with the debate about Gender aspects in STEM and thus addressing both fields in a broader than usual way. In doing so, we achieve to gain new, continuative and contrasting insights through widening the established focus. Finally,
the Special Issue contributes to both research on Women Entrepreneurship as well as research on gender aspects in occupational choice within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics areas.

We welcome high quality manuscripts that link Women Entrepreneurship and STEM. Manuscripts can be both international in scope as well as investigating domestic issues with global relevance. Manuscripts accepted for publication should include implications for business practice. Both conceptual and empirical papers, from different analytical and methodological perspectives, can be submitted. In doing so, we can together build a body of high quality, cumulative research that extends our current knowledge.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to the following aspects:

Situation

- Participation of Women Entrepreneurs in Science/Academia, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) in different contexts and regions
- Characteristics and variations of Women Entrepreneurship within STEM related industries
- The involvement in entrepreneurial activities among women academics within STEM fields

Antecedents and impacts

- Linkages between STEM and Entrepreneurship Education, and the role of gender
- Barriers experienced by women entrepreneurs in STEM – and ways to overcome them
- The influence of gender in STEM related innovation and entrepreneurship policy, including technology transfer, technology incubator programs and venture capital
- Impact of initiatives to foster Women (Entrepreneurship) in STEM
- Economic impact of women's entrepreneurship in STEM fields
Experiences

· Role-Models, Motivation, Networking & Mentorship encouraging Women Entrepreneurs in STEM

· Learning and Opportunity Recognition of Women Entrepreneurs in STEM

· Specific contextual influences and challenges (unconscious biases, discrimination, unwelcoming climates, culture) on women entrepreneurship positioning in STEM fields (e.g. institutions either public – academic entrepreneurship- or private – incubators-, policies, networks)

· Reflexive identity work undertaken by women in STEM fields

· Entrepreneurial legitimacy, the credibility potential of women in STEM fields

· Manners in which mainstream theorizing in STEM fields is steeped within masculinity under a masquerade of neutrality

· Team building and leadership

Important dates

Deadline for submission of full paper is: August 31, 2017. Please send your papers directly to the guest-editors and make sure to follow the Submission Guidelines available at:

http://www.springer.com/business+%26+management/entrepreneurship/journal/11365

Papers should be a maximum of 10,000 words in length.

For informal inquires related to the Special Issue, proposed topics and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives, please send a voluntary abstract (250 words) until March 31st to Katherina Kuschel kkuschel@wlu.ca

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References


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