

# Aotearoa Centre for Enterprising Women research snapshots

Unlocking the entrepreneurial potential of women in Aotearoa New Zealand through research and education.

No. 5

## Where Gender Meets Social Entrepreneurship: Building Knowledge from Many Contexts and Intersections

Given how many women participate in social entrepreneurship (SE) and its potential for female empowerment, gender dimensions are under-researched in SE literature. The COVID pandemic proved SE was critical to meeting social needs. As the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals loom, a wide and timely journal Special Issue encompassing "Gender and social entrepreneurship: building cumulative knowledge" explores SE's intersection with gender. The guest editors selected five papers, criss-crossing Global South and better-trodden Global North contexts and using diverse methods. Their editorial\* highlights contributions to theory and (especially educational) practice and maps future research directions.

Papers one and two probe SE intentions and the role of context. The first\*\* uses life story interviews with 30 UK social entrepreneurs. It traces how pro-social values develop across experiences of family, work and life, and how these women perceived the desirability and feasibility of social venture creation. Practically, it advocates vocational, community-based experiential learning to develop capacity. The second study quantitatively compares male and female higher education students in Portugal. Females were less attracted to entrepreneurship but more confident in doing it. Practical suggestions include developing protocols with social purpose entities for internships and encouraging student volunteering.

Paper three pivots to entrepreneurial ecosystems, drawing on in-depth interviews with 24 women from eight Latin American countries. It brings out a responsibility for universities when ecosystem support is underdeveloped and less female-friendly. Latin American universities should inculcate a "DNA" of entrepreneurial culture that values gender equity and social impact by integrating SE education across all disciplines and taking a gender perspective. The fourth paper shows that "weaving together social capital" empowers women artisan entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Holistic partnerships are advocated, combining personal mentoring with education on social and community issues.

Capping the four research papers is a conceptual piece on feminist entrepreneurship for climate action. The authors contribute the concept of "climate just entrepreneurship", where climate entrepreneurship, social enterprise, circular economy, doughnut

economics, and gender equality and justice intersect.

For future research, the guest editorial suggests, first, that approaches sensitive to gender and socio-cultural context would illuminate how SE intentions are formed and realised. Second, more research on what ecosystems support gendered SE. How might socio-cultural and institutional contexts, including gender norms, feed initiatives to make ecosystems stronger and more inclusive? Third, new research might ask if the community role of social entrepreneurs pile an unpaid "third shift" of work onto the second one of care responsibilities, that COVID increased. Does ethnicity/race take an added toll if, for instance, cultural expectations further tax Māori women in Aotearoa-New Zealand? Conversely, culture can empower. The Māori concept of Mana Wāhine (women's prestige/authority/power) illuminates women's role as social change agents. Foregrounding gender and other identities could address the call for intersectional study of SE. Combining country contexts, particularly using mixed methods research, will ultimately reveal patterns in what it takes to nurture SE for sustainable development.

\* The full editorial by Anne de Bruin, Robyn Eversole and Chris Woods is available as "Guest Editorial: Gender and social entrepreneurship: building cumulative knowledge", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 2024, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-03-2024-228> (open access).

\*\* The first paper is "Antecedents of women's social entrepreneurship: values development and the perceived desirability and feasibility of social venture creation", *ibid*, pp. 7-26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-03-2023-0072>. Like de Bruin and Woods, its author, Dr de Magdalene, was part of the ACEW team when working on this article.