

ECSB Webinar  
24th February 2011

**Women Entrepreneurship:  
A reflection on the agenda**

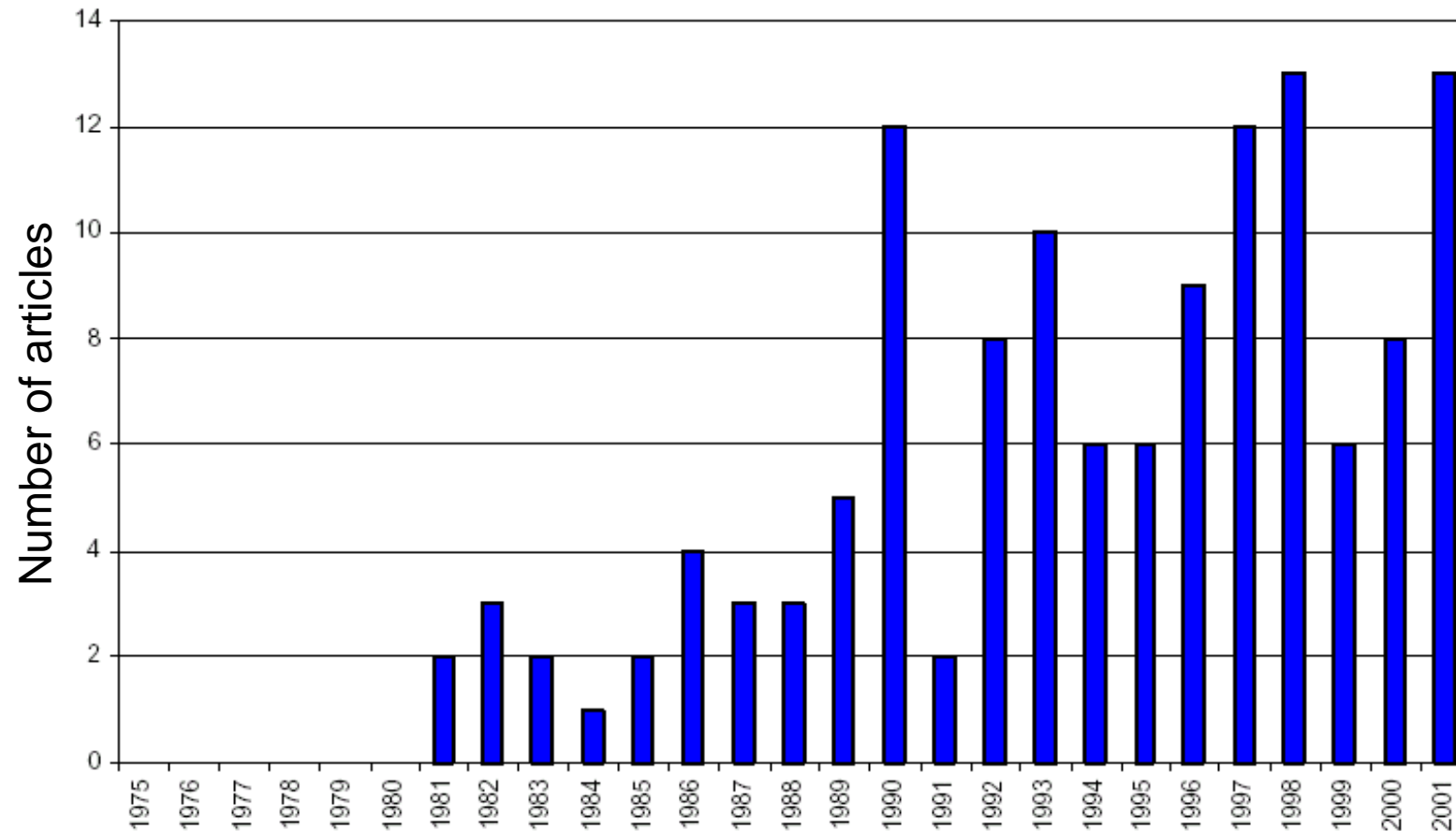
Dr. Cristina Díaz García  
Universidad de Castilla La Mancha (Spain)

# Why studying women entrepreneurship?

- One of the fastest growing populations of entrepreneurs around the world, contributing jobs, revenues and well being to all societies.
  - Gender gap in start-up rates, growth stages...
- Gender issues have become an increasingly prominent concern of academics and policy-makers

“Enduring area of research” (Blackburn and Kovalainen, 2009)

# Total number of published articles on women entrepreneurship 1975-2001



Fuente: Greene et al. (2003)

**There are also hurdles in researching within this area or, at least, in publishing...**

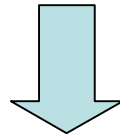
# General aim of this webinar

Showing how women entrepreneurship research has developed over time, illustrating this with...

- A science perspective, using Chua's (1986) categorization
- An empirical/theoretical perspective, referencing some examples of publications on women entrepreneurship within the different approaches (including my own research).

# Starting point

All research is based on some underlying assumptions  
(sometimes hidden)  
about what constitutes 'valid' research



What do we mean by gender?

Which issues are worth of studying?

Which research methods are appropriate?

Which importance has the context in the phenomenon studied?

Which are the implications for theory, practice and policy-support?<sub>5</sub>

# Assumptions of the nature of social science

- ***Ontological:***

What is the form and nature of reality?

Is reality external from conscious (given) or a product of individual consciousness?

- ***Epistemological:***

How can knowledge be acquired and how can the truth be found?

- ***Methodological:***

How can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?

# One categorization of alternative inquiry perspectives- Chua (1986)

- Positivism
- Interpretivism
- Critical

# Positivist Research

- Reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties.
- Reality is independent of the observer (researcher) and his/her instruments.
- Scientific method of research → It attempts to test theory to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena.

## 1. Positivism

# Conceptualization of gender

Dualistic conceptualization of gender as an essential attribute, that is, as an explanatory variable differentiating between women and men → Gender=sex

Common conceptualization in publications

## Positivism

# Common flaws: The theoretical work

- It usually lies on theories that favour the individual explanations → Limitation in the research questions → Social and institutional aspects (context) affecting the business are seldom discussed and, therefore, remain under-theorized

## Positivism

# Common flaws: The theoretical work

- The result: “women do poorly” → the discourse positions women as secondary and reinforces this perception in the audience
- The solution: at the individual level even for structural factors (education, networks)

Positivism

# The empirical work

Mostly quantitative studies

## Common flaws

Generally constructs and methods are “gender-biased”

Questionnaires’ (Likert scales) limitations are not considered

Emphasis in interpretation of statistically significant differences

If this is your choice...

1. Concentrate in theories that emphasize **the conditions for entrepreneurship** for both men and women, that are more responsible of differences than the individuals per se.
2. Include the **structural variables** (context) in your research model, that is, how women are embedded in different levels
3. Be careful with the **interpretations** of quantitative results

Ahl (2006)

Positivism	
Current research object	Expanded research object
Individuals or individual firms	Impact of social order (comparison different s.o.)
Díaz (2007) Díaz & Brush (2012) Díaz & (2009) Manolova	Baughn, Chua & Neupert (2006) Carter et al. (2007)

How intangible resources (human and social capital) besides financial capital and structural variables impacted on performance for men and women-owned businesses.

The quantitative analysis shows that gender has a simple effect on performance, but it is less robust when other factors are included in the model. This study shows that this relationship is more complex, because gender has an indirect effect through other variables such as number of hours devoted by the entrepreneur to the firm. Gender also has a moderating effect since the intention to grow has a less positive effect on performance in the case of women-owned firms.

Positivism	
Current research object	Expanded research object
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Díaz (2007) Díaz & Brush (2012) Díaz & C. (2009) Manolova (2007)	Baughn, Chua & Neupert (2006) Carter et al. (2007)

The results of the quantitative study indicate possible sources of gender differences and suggest factors that require further investigation. The qualitative approach expands our understanding of the quantitative study in two ways: first, suggesting that we have to make sense of businesses through another lens (work, personal goals, growth, financial capital –bootstrapping-, performance) and second, implying that we have to be conscious that we can find heterogeneity among women.

Ahl (2006)

Positivism	
Current research object	Expanded research object
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Díaz (2007) Díaz & Carter (2009) Díaz & Brush (2012) Manolova et al (2007)	Baughn, Chua & Neupert (2006) Carter et al. (2007)
<p>Growth expectancy among men is significantly and positively associated with outside advice achieved through networking. Among women entrepreneurs, growth expectancy is significantly and positively associated with perceived benefits from prior experience.</p> <p>Women have different socialization experiences and, as a result, conceive of their new venture growth differently</p>	

# Positivism

Ahl (2006)

Current research object

Expanded research object

Individuals or individual firms

Impact of social order (comparison different s.o.)

Impact of specific norms supporting women's entrepreneurship on the relative rates of women to men engaged in entrepreneurship in different countries.

These specific norms are themselves related to both a country's general support for entrepreneurship and its level of gender equality.

Baughn, Chua & Neupert (2006)

Carter et al. (2007)

How the effects of gender socialization on bank lending practices can help explain some of the dissatisfaction reported by women in their dealings with banks.

# Interpretive Research

Access to reality (given/socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings.

The studies attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them and how the phenomenon influences and is influenced by the context.

And, they do not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focus on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges.

Interpretivism

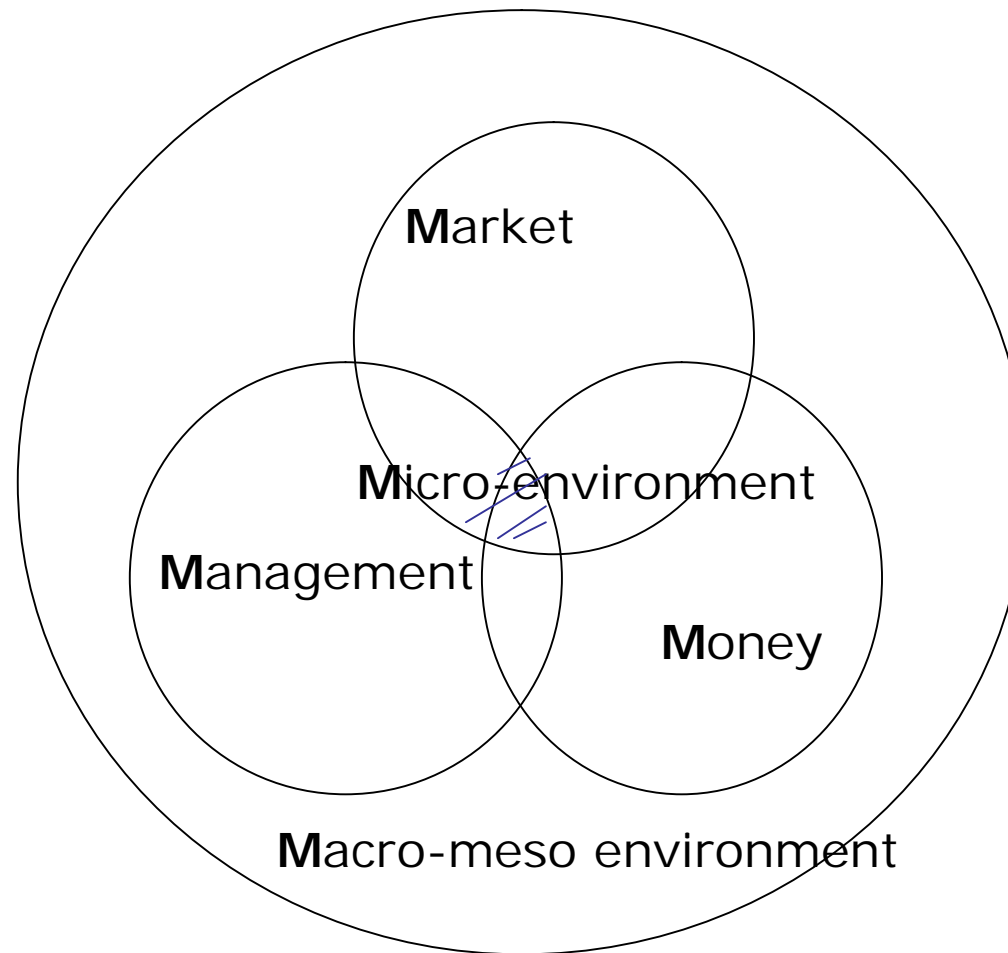
# Conceptualization of gender

Gender as a social construction and a multilevel structure, which includes:

- cultural beliefs and distributions of resources at the macro level,
- patterns of behaviour at the interactional level, and
- roles and identities at the micro level

(Ferree, Lorber and Hess 1999; Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Risman 1998).

# The social embeddness of women entrepreneurship: 5Ms model



# Interpretivism

## **The theoretical work – Gender theory**

There are lot of ways in which gender is constructed, performed, enacted, and limited in contrast to theories that situate it as a fixed, stable, or inherent quality.

Qualitative methodology

## Interpretivism

### The theoretical work – Gender theory

Intersectionality of gender with other social identities explains why the experiences of “women” are not homogenous

At the same time, gender is not merely an abstract social construction but implies power relations between men and women (Bradley, 2007).

Ahl (2006)

Interpretivism	
Current research object	Expanded research object
Individuals or individual firms	How social orders are gendered and the mechanisms by which this gendering is reconstructed
Patterson & Mavin (2009) Nadin (2007)	Nelson, Maxfield & Kolb (2009) Nilsson (2007)

Understanding how the *subjective* individual perceived the development of her entrepreneurial career. Career transition motivations (gendered organizations, personal & domestic circumstances, independence & control) and entrepreneurship as a panacea or a fallacy (flexibility, gendered perceptual barriers present)

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“We focus on the construct of gender and the way that the socially constructed business practices and processes of access to capital may appear neutral and natural but, in fact, may deliver differential consequences to women and men...Rather than continuing to explore differences at the individual level (men vs. women), we propose an exploration of the institutional level to address the fact”.

# Critical Research

- Assumes that social reality is historically constituted and that it is produced and reproduced by people. Although people can consciously act to change their circumstances, their ability to do so is constrained by various forms of social, cultural and political domination.
- Therefore, the main task is social critique, whereby the restrictive and alienating conditions of the status quo are brought to light, aiming to help to eliminate the causes of alienation and domination.

## Critical Research

How the representations of “gender” are constructed in distinct structural and institutional circumstances (ie. in the media/academic literature) aiming to brought to light how this contributes towards a dominant discourse of entrepreneurship that is gender biased, individualistic and discriminatory (Ogbor, 2000; Hamilton, 2006).

# Critical Research

## In the media

Ljunggren & Alsos, 2001  
Achtenhagen & Welter 2003  
Nicholson & Anderson, 2005  
Radtke & Redien-Collot, 2008

Studied the German media. At first glance the discourse appears to favour societal change (positive portraits of WEs, established as role models). However, this changes when analyzing the contents and language used in more detail.

## In academic literature

Ahl, 2002, 2004  
Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio, 2005  
Ogilvie, 2000

Discourse analysis to ask: How is the female entrepreneur constructed in the research literature? How does this literature reproduce the conditions that give way to gender inequalities?  
Understanding of the re/production of gender relations in organizational research and writing

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL**

### **POSITIVISM**

- Which problems do women face in networking?
- How these impact their entrepreneurial activity?

### **INTERPRETIVISM**

- Situated networking: who networks with whom, where, when and with which rationality?

### **CRITICAL RESEARCH**

- How the discourse of business-owners associations' boards mobilizes gender biases that hamper women from achieving decision-making positions?

# INNOVATION

## POSITIVISM

- Which barriers do women face for creating their firms within innovative industries?
- How do women innovate? How can we make more women innovate?

## INTERPRETIVISM

- How is innovation interpreted/ constructed?
- Which interpretation pervades?
- Do power relations impact the construction? Whose knowledge is regarded as valuable to innovation?

## CRITICAL RESEARCH

- How is innovation constructed/ perceived in public policy? How this construction influence the value of women's contribution to innovation and the funds received?

**Good luck!**

**Cristina Díaz García**  
**Cristina.Diaz@uclm.es**

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