The impact of social dominance orientation on female entrepreneurial intention

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Abstract

Purpose – Understanding the factors that influence entrepreneurs throughout the entrepreneurial process has been a vital topic of entrepreneurial research. Despite societal changes, male entrepreneurs still outnumber females. The purpose of this paper is to develop a greater grasp on the factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

Design/methodology/approach – Utilizing social dominance theory and social cognition theory, the authors suggest that a female entrepreneur's social dominance orientation (SDO) and mentorship experiences will influence her social and conventional entrepreneurial intention.

Findings – The authors' theorizing suggests SDO can lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy which in turn can lower conventional entrepreneurial intentions but increase social intentions in some women. However, if the entrepreneur has mentoring, the effect could be dissipated.

Originality/value – This paper is one of the first to examine the impact of SDO on entrepreneurial intentions, and builds on the work of other scholars.

Keywords Self-efficacy, Social dominance orientation

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Entrepreneurial ventures are a fast-growing employment opportunity for women globally (Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). Yet extant literature suggests that entrepreneurial ventures by men far surpass those begun by women, despite changes in society (Delmar and Davidsson, 2000; Marlow *et al.*, 2008; Manolova *et al.*, 2012; Minniti *et al.*, 2005). There are two main types of entrepreneurial ventures that women start: conventional and social. Much of the research on gender differences has been focused on conventional entrepreneurship based on business creation for profit (Ahl, 2006). However, the empowerment of female entrepreneurship through social entrepreneurship has become a focus from start-ups to large companies (Johnstone-Louis, 2017). Both types of firms recognize the untapped economic contribution of female entrepreneurs to have a "multiplier effect" to children and communities (Elborgh-Woytek, 2013). Scholars identified gender-specific barriers that may inhibit some females from pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors (barriers to credit, gender-based discrimination, and legal and customary male-based regimes; Ahl *et al.*, 2016; Kabeer, 2005, 2011; Lewis, 2014; Nussbaum, 2011). For many women, entrepreneurship is an expression of social change instead of economic activity (Calas *et al.*, 2009). Datta and Gailey (2012) found social entrepreneurship provides social value and empowers women, especially those women living in oppressive economic societies. Our purpose is to research the role of perception in what drives some women into social entrepreneurship and away from conventional entrepreneurship.

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Many social, educational and financial resources go into the training and development of entrepreneurs to assist them in launching a successful enterprise (Vanevenhoven and Liguori, 2013). Yet perception and cognitive factors help to drive new venture creation (Edelman and Yli-Renko, 2010). Langowitz and Minniti (2007) suggest that the differences in perception, between men and women, largely contribute to the entrepreneurial intention difference between genders. One of the principle avenues of research in the literature has been that gender stereotypes, as well as hegemonic masculinity, may discourage female entrepreneurs (Gupta *et al.*, 2008, 2009; Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016). Extant literature suggests the differences between male and female entrepreneurial propensity is partly influenced by socially embedded gender stereotypes (deBruin *et al.*, 2007; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Greene *et al.*, 2013; Gupta *et al.*, 2008).

A great amount of research has been developed on how these perceptions and stereotypes may limit female entrepreneurship. For example, Gupta and Bhawe (2007) argued that proactive personality and stereotype threat (when people feel compelled to conform to social stereotypes) limited entrepreneurial intentions. Gupta *et al.* (2009) found that men and women can perceive entrepreneurship as possessing masculine characteristics in terms of aggression. Gupta *et al.* (2008) would confirm gender stereotypes when implicitly related to entrepreneurship.

As scholars have changed our notions of what entrepreneurship is and have considered different types of entrepreneurship, we have noted that there are various gender differences. Conventional entrepreneurship is often viewed as a masculine undertaking (Ahl, 2006), whereas social entrepreneurship is often considered more feminine (Datta and Gailey, 2012; Zahra *et al.*, 2009). Women are more likely to start social ventures than conventional ventures (Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016). These findings are replicated by Gupta *et al.* (2019), who found that men are more attracted to high-reward enterprises, whereas woman toward communal. Likewise, Hechavarría *et al.* (2017) found that women are generally more likely to support social outcomes than men. Basically, some women tend to buy into myths and stereotypes that prevent them from pursuing conventional entrepreneurship. According to Gupta *et al.* (2019), despite the work done on why women generally are attracted to social vs conventional entrepreneurship, more work is needed examining why these trends exist.

A potential argument could come from social dominance theory (SDT), which explains why these stereotypes exist. Scholars have found that individuals possess stable beliefs about traditional gender and race roles, which Sidanius and Pratto (1999) call social dominance orientation (SDO) and are the result of myths that society believes. Society often encourages males to be aggressive, risk-taking and competitive, whereas females are usually encouraged to be more community orientated, passive and less aggressive (Eagly *et al.*, 2000; Murray, 2001). Society generally encourages prejudice against women who possess the qualities necessary to succeed as conventional entrepreneurs (aggression, competitiveness, ambition, control, etc.), whereas it encourages some women to have communal traits associated with social entrepreneurship (gentleness, sensitivity, affection, sympathy, etc.) through the use of myths (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Although these factors are not inclusive of all antecedents impacting new venture creation, extant literature suggests that these constructs will be highly influential (Langowitz and Minniti, 2007).

Our paper contributes to the extant literature in several ways. The first contribution is that we use SDT to examine the intentions of female entrepreneurs through the reduction of self-efficacy related to conventional entrepreneurship. This contributes to the literature in that we examine why stereotypes exist and why they may lead to different behaviors. The second contribution is to examine the differential relationship between social and conventional entrepreneurship caused by SDO through influencing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Third, we propose that mentorship may moderate the relationship between

SDO and entrepreneurial intentions. This contribution builds on the contributions of others as to how social relationships can influence both identity and self-efficacy (Das *et al.*, 2017; Javadian *et al.*, 2018).

Theoretical development

The growth of many economies has been attributed to the activity and behaviors of entrepreneurs (Baumol, 1990; Miaoulis *et al.*, 2005; Thomas and Mueller, 2000). New business ventures are often the result of entrepreneurial start-ups that expand businesses, create new employment opportunities and generate economic growth. Due to the complexities of this process, Davidsson and Gordon (2012) suggest that studying new business creation requires longitudinal studies that define new business ventures with multiple criteria including the generation of income, provision of product or services, completion of gestational activities and continued operation of the business. The clear conclusion for entrepreneurial researchers is that new business creation is not the result of a quick, impulsive process but rather a developed, challenging experience surrounded by risk and uncertainty (Krueger *et al.*, 2000).

Scholars have struggled to understand the participation differences between conventional and social entrepreneurship. A potential explanation may be that the motives between social and conventional entrepreneurship are different. Conventional entrepreneurship is driven by profit; social entrepreneurship is based on increasing social outcomes (Santos, 2012). Yet there may be an overlap as economic outcomes form part of the mission of the social firm; there is a hierarchy as firms need to meet economic concerns before they can reach social ones. As Dacin *et al.* (2011) argue, "social entrepreneurs balance both sets of priorities. A social value creation mission does not necessarily negate nor diminish a focus on economic value" (p. 1205). It is also true that those individuals who form social entrepreneurship may focus more on social outcomes and have more of a post-materialist view of the world (Dacin *et al.*, 2011; Smith *et al.*, 2013). These trends, and the stereotypes surrounding them, partly explain why some women are attracted to social entrepreneurship rather than conventional entrepreneurship (Hechavarría *et al.*, 2017; Gupta *et al.*, 2019). If the type of entrepreneurship they enter into is partly based on stereotypes, then why do these stereotypes exist? In essence, these stereotypes generally exist as myths because individuals tend to hierarchically divide society. People usually propagate these myths either to suppress others or to accept their lower level in society. Sidanius and Pratto (2012) argue that:

> SDT defines legitimizing myths (LMs) as consensually shared ideologies (including stereotypes, attributions, cosmologies, predominant values or discourses, shared representations, etc.) that organize and justify social relationships. LMs suggest how people and institutions should behave, why things are how they are, and how social value should be distributed. Because they are consensual and closely associated with the structure of their societies, LMs often have the appearance of being true. Consequently, those who reject them take risks and have work to do in explaining how and why they disagree (p. 426).

SDO is the extent to which people buy into legitimizing myths (Sidanius and Pratto, 2012). It emerges through a combination of personality and interaction with the environment and explains, in part, why individuals would perceive the world as enforcing stereotypes (Sidanius and Pratto, 2012). SDO may explain why some woman are likely to engage in social entrepreneurship, whereas others are likely to engage in conventional entrepreneurship.

Members of the non-hegemonic group may tolerate discrimination because they accept the dominant groups' myths. Our contention is that women high in SDO may accept the myth that men are more aggressive and therefore those women are less likely to become conventional entrepreneurs due to lowered self-efficacy (Pratto *et al.*, 1997). SDO could

actually increase the willingness of female entrepreneurs to participate in social entrepreneurship and fits the hegemonic group's perceptions of what women should do (Umphress *et al.*, 2007). Scholars have found that minorities are just as likely to buy into discrimination and not respond to opportunities both professionally and academically (Umphress *et al.*, 2007). We will also examine how mentorship influences the relationship between SDO and entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Proposition development

SDT offers an explanation of the role of bias and discrimination in the formation of entrepreneurs. The theory's basic assumption is that individuals hierarchically divide society (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). According to the theory, a small number of hegemonic groups wish to maintain the hierarchy and to do so, they create myths, systems of control and discrimination to prevent change. Hegemonic groups possess the majority of socially desirable values and use those values to justify an established hierarchy. Those who are at the bottom of society lack certain characteristics that would make them socially desirable and discrimination, by society against them, is therefore justified (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999).

These traditional social characteristics span age, race, social class, nationality, regionalism, estate, linguistic group, religion and arbitrary roles (such as sports teams; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). According to SDT, people in positions of power create a system of myths and notions that keep the socially undesirable down by developing stereotypes and hegemonic systems of control (Pratto *et al.*, 1994; Sidanius *et al.*, 1996). Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argue that these stereotypes may be passed down through law, economy, education, certain aspects of social and religious life, and family/clan and may create self-perpetuating systems.

Scholars have found consistent support for SDT and active discrimination against various social groups (e.g. blacks and women; Aquino *et al.*, 2005; Duckitt *et al.*, 2002; Kemmelmeier, 2005; Pratto *et al.*, 1994; Sidanius *et al.*, 1996; Van Hiel and Mervielde, 2004). For instance, scholars have found that individuals with SDO are more likely to believe African–Americans to be less competent, less warm and less likely to succeed – even when the individual is African–American (Aquino *et al.*, 2005; Umphress *et al.*, 2007). Scholars have found that investors are more likely to invest in businesses that are owned by white individuals and less likely to invest in minority run businesses, in part, due to the investors' erroneous beliefs about white superiority developed through myth (Gutierrez, 2017) and could explain firm performance (Jaiswal, 2018).

SDO is an individual variable describing attitudes that individuals have toward their willingness to tolerate hierarchy (Umphress *et al.*, 2007). In other words, individuals who are high in SDO are more likely to tolerate discrimination and more likely to adhere to socially defined characteristics (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Entrepreneurship, for instance, has been described as risk-taking on the part of the entrepreneur. Scholars have found that social legitimation may influence the attraction that men and women feel toward entrepreneurship (Santos *et al.*, 2016). Accordingly, the entrepreneur needs to be risk-taking, bold, decisive, analytical and inquisitive (Carter *et al.*, 1996).

Entrepreneurial intention is the combination of personality traits, perceptions and experiences of a potential entrepreneur that lead to the creation of a new venture (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984; Gorgievski and Stephan, 2016; Liñán and Fayolle, 2015; Pitt, 1998). The focus on enterprise creation is seen in developed countries and transitional economies where barriers to entry can be extensive (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1995). Entrepreneurial intention precedes a long process of new business creation (Wong and Lee, 2004). Intention must precede any entrepreneurial behavior (Fayolle *et al.*, 2006). Historically, intention has been considered the best predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 2001; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Those characteristics that are considered more masculine in nature, such as aggression, risk-taking and decisive behavior, are usually important to starting a business (Murray, 2001). Some scholars have found that female entrepreneurial endeavors are considered less legitimate due to the societal myth that women should be less aggressive (Marlow and McAdam, 2013). We propose that SDO may reinforce female's perception that aggression, risk-taking and decisive behaviors are more masculine in nature and may lower their conventional entrepreneurial intentions (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017; Greene *et al.*, 2013; Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016; Marlow, 2014; Marlow *et al.*, 2008; Marlow and McAdam, 2013; Murray, 2001). Since conventional entrepreneurship is generally perceived to be a masculine aspect, it makes sense that someone who has high SDO would believe that conventional entrepreneurship should be a male-dominated domain (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017; Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016). These beliefs can be passed on by the hegemonic media and business, which encourage the belief that men are naturally more competitive and aggressive than women (Marlow, 2014). Accordingly, females who have higher degrees of SDO may have lower levels of conventional entrepreneurial intention because they are likely to buy into the myth that females are less acquisitive, analytical and willing to take risks (Ahl and Marlow, 2012). Thus, we propose the following:

P1. Potential female entrepreneurs' levels of SDO are negatively associated with their intentions to become conventional entrepreneurs.

Bird and Brush (2002) argue that the founder's gender perspective influences organizational processes and therefore the foundation of new organizations. Feminine founders are thought to perceive the world as a web or network of relationships making them more prosocial. Feminine founders tend to guide moral decisions in an effort to preserve connections, as well as show recognition for others (Gilligan, 1982, p. 30). For feminine founders, responsibility usually involves caring that focuses and responds to individual needs (Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988). Feminine founders generally consider the interdependencies of relationships and encourage helping others, avoiding harm or assisting others in recovering from harm. Researchers have found that many social entrepreneurs are members of a population that has been found to be disadvantaged (Zahra *et al.*, 2008). Often these populations consist of female entrepreneurs who have a high understanding of the population and a specific need to be addressed through the social entrepreneurial venture (Renko, 2013; Vanevenhoven and Liguori, 2013). Women high on SDO may accept such myths because women are thought to be more communal in nature (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Feminine entrepreneurs usually reflect a power motive that involves self-mastery or a desire to contribute to the social good rather than self-benefit (Bird and Brush, 2002). Social entrepreneurship is the use of entrepreneurship and business to solve social problems (Renko, 2013). Social entrepreneurship has gained attention in literature due to its potential to resolve cultural, environmental and social challenges, such as discrimination, poverty and pollution (Wry and York, 2017). Social entrepreneurship involves private and public organizations designed to focus on social benefits above corporate profits. Social entrepreneurship is making international impact in developed countries, as well as third world countries, by encouraging innovative solutions through the contributions of individuals. Social entrepreneurship can create opportunities for the underprivileged often breaking social barriers that inhibit advancement (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Estrin *et al.*, 2013; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006). It can expand a social segment into an international community. Social entrepreneurs can develop social capital and norms that can be utilized by conventional entrepreneurs (Zahra *et al.*, 2008).

We speculate that the relationship between social entrepreneurial intentions and SDO is the opposite of the relationship between SDO and conventional entrepreneurship. Hechavarria and Ingram (2016) found that women were more likely to start social entrepreneurship businesses. Hechavarria and Ingram proposed that hegemonic ideas

drive these women, who are thought to be more communal in nature, into social entrepreneurship; thus, those women who are more competitive in nature were less likely to start social entrepreneurship firms. The organizational processes are more open to negotiation and less apt to be legalistic. Empathy and social awareness are often stereotyped as communal/feminine traits (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). These traits may emerge from the myths provided by those who wish to maintain the current social order (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Some females often exhibit more of a community spirit than males allowing them to have greater entrepreneurial intention for social entrepreneurship (Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016).

SDO provides a framework that can explain these findings. Social entrepreneurship is focused on empathy, community, quality of life and morality, which are considered by some classical feminine qualities (Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016). Each of these attributes aligns more closely with traditional communal traits of women rather than agentic traits of men, such as aggression, competitiveness, ambition, etc. This would suggest that women are more likely to possess traits that would lead them to have social entrepreneurial intention. Building on Mair and Noboa (2006), Hockerts (2017) found that exposure to social problems (i.e. volunteering and working in environments that interface with social problems) increase social entrepreneurship intention. These positions and careers are often occupied by women. Unlike conventional entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship usually lacks a motive for pure financial profit – in social entrepreneurship, the profit provides a positive social impact. The social entrepreneurial venture's reason for existence is usually to provide a long-lasting, transformational, positive change in the lives of others (Katre and Salipante, 2012).

In general, we are taught that women are kinder, more interested in helping others and more socially aware (Dyer and Whetten, 2006; Rudman and Glick, 1999). Part of the behaviors that we see from this type of myth building is the preponderance of women in fields such as social work, education and nursing – fields that require compassion and other social awareness. Social entrepreneurship is concerned with the betterment of society and is based, in part, on compassion and aiding society (Renko, 2013). Additionally, social entrepreneurship is generally based less on acquisition than conventional entrepreneurship and more on improving the lives of others; therefore, we believe social entrepreneurship should have an opposite relationship to conventional entrepreneurship regarding SDO. Accordingly, we propose the following:

P2. Potential female entrepreneurs' levels of SDO are positively associated with their intentions to become social entrepreneurs.

SDO and social cognition

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as the conviction that an individual can successfully accomplish a behavior expected to produce the needed outcome. Self-efficacy can be generalized or it could be devoted to a task or activity such as entrepreneurship or leadership (Bandura, 1989, 1992, 1997). Thus, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is often studied as the specific perceived behavioral control necessary to produce entrepreneurial intentions. As Wilson *et al.* (2007, p. 389) argue, self-efficacy "reflects an individual's innermost thoughts on whether they have the abilities perceived as important to task performance, as well as the belief that they will be able to effectively convert those skills into a chosen outcome" (as cited in Bandura's, 1989, 1997 self-efficacy literature). Perceived self-efficacy motivates people more than objective measures of their abilities and self-efficacy plays a key role in our behavioral intentions and then later behaviors (Bandura, 1997), including career motivation (Day and Allen, 2002). Individuals generally pursue goals in which they believe they have a chance of completing. Bandura and his colleagues have recognized a vast difference between the desire to achieve a goal vs an evaluation that one could achieve a goal. Thus, people with higher degrees of self-efficacy will be more likely to set challenging

goals, persist during difficult times and have greater commitment and immersion in their field of interest (Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, self-efficacy plays a key role in the selection of careers, including the intention to start a business (Bandura, 1986; Markman *et al.*, 2002).

Vanevenhoven and Liguori (2013) have urged scholars to develop experiential entrepreneurial education programs because entrepreneurship is something learned through experience. It is also important to note that social cognition theory suggests that people develop ideas about their ability to complete goals less by performance and more by observation. Enactive mastery occurs when people start performing a task, but until that happens, environmental factors have salience. Bandura (1986) argues that it was from the environment that we gain most of the cues of what we could accomplish. Bandura and Locke (2003) have argued that "one direct way of altering perceived self-efficacy is to introduce a trivial factor devoid of any relevant information whatsoever but that can bias perceived self-efficacy" (p. 88). It is for that reason why educators in both social and conventional entrepreneurship, in general, and educational entrepreneurship, in particular, stress providing positive mental models to students (Vanevenhoven and Liguori, 2013).

Scholars have generally found that males have higher conventional entrepreneurial self-efficacy than females (Wilson *et al.*, 2007; Zhao *et al.*, 2005). Kickul *et al.* (2008) found that "self-efficacy seemed to have a stronger effect on entrepreneurial interest for girls than for boys, and that having an entrepreneurial mother or father had a significant and positive effect on girls' (but not boys') levels of the entrepreneurial interest" (p. 321). Scholars have found contradictory results for the role education plays in increasing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Shinnar *et al.* (2014) found that a course in entrepreneurship increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy for males, but not females.

SDO can provide a partial explanation for these findings. Individuals who have high SDO may buy into the myths perpetuated by society. In terms of gender, men are generally viewed as more aggressive and risk-taking than women (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Since risk-taking, aggression and willingness to innovate are the antecedents of starting of business, it would make sense that females with higher degrees of SDO would have lower levels of conventional entrepreneurial self-efficacy, as they believe that aggression is a male concept. Individuals with high SDO would thus likely believe that women lack the ability to start businesses due to conventional entrepreneurship being highly agentic (male characteristics).

Likewise, we should expect the reverse with social entrepreneurship. The prosocial motivation provides direct contact (feedback) to beneficiaries regarding the benefits and impact (Grant, 2007). Females are generally expected to embrace this prosocial behavior due to the myths spread by society (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Prosocial motivation involves the desire to exert effort to benefit other individuals (Batson, 1987). Mair and Noboa (2006) suggest that empathy influences the attitudes toward behavior; moral judgment can influence social norms and self-efficacy (Hockerts, 2017). These attitudes can be explained by the various mental models that societies use to maintain hierarchy (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). We should expect that women high in SDO would have higher degrees of entrepreneurial self-efficacy toward social matters.

Scholars have demonstrated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is an important antecedent to entrepreneurial intentions (Vanevenhoven and Liguori, 2013). We propose that entrepreneurial self-efficacy should mediate the relationship between SDO and entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, based on the theorizing above, we propose the following:

P3. Potential female entrepreneurs' levels of SDO are (a) negatively associated with their conventional entrepreneurial self-efficacy and (b) positively associated with their social entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

P4. Potential female entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between SDO and (a) conventional entrepreneurial intentions and (b) social entrepreneurial intentions.

Mentorship

Mentorship refers to a one-on-one relationship between a protégé and a mentor (authority figure), which is intended to advance the personal and professional growth of the less experienced protégé (Blickle *et al.*, 2010; Kalbfleisch and Keyton, 1995; St-Jean and Audet, 2012; Wanberg *et al.*, 2003, p. 1897). Mentors ideally provide vicarious experience, learning and other potential career development resources (i.e. coaching, sponsorship, protection, fostering visibility, counseling and role modeling; Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1995). Mentors are especially important in providing the knowledge that individuals can succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavors, as well as providing practical education and training to budding entrepreneurs (Vanevenhoven and Liguori, 2013). Scholars have consistently found that the level of entrepreneurial intention increases with mentor interactions (St-Jean *et al.*, 2018). It is also important to note that individuals can overcome their SDO through education and the production of more accurate mental models (Kulik and Roberson, 2008). Minorities are more likely to take on activities where they have been shown that minorities can thrive (Sidanius *et al.*, 1996).

Johnson and Smith (2016) indicate the effects of strong mentoring are remarkable, profound and enduring, "having the capacity to transform individuals, groups, organizations, and communities" (p. xiv). As previously stated, women and men generally perceive their environment differently (Edelman and Yli-Renko, 2010; Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). Scholars have long researched the role that mentorship plays in both career and success (Carroll *et al.*, 1988; Fagenson, 1988). Individuals who have experienced mentors often have higher satisfaction and career success (Bozionelos, 2004; Day and Allen, 2002).

Mentoring plays a key function in entrepreneurship. The resources provided by mentors for burgeoning entrepreneurs may include such guidance as financial knowledge, social networking, motivational encouragement, idea refinement, special knowledge or simply friendship (Bozionelos, 2004). Mentors can provide a safe zone for a budding entrepreneur by providing vicarious experience, which is an important factor in aiding a potential protégé to develop confidence in one's own ability to achieve the intended results, self-efficacy and self-confidence. According to Bandura (1997), vicarious experience can increase self-efficacy. Krueger and Brazeal (1994) have found self-efficacy positively associated with entrepreneurship. It is possible that a mentor could provide opportunities for enactive mastery experiences to lead protégés to success, learning through performance accomplishments (Bandura and Adams, 1977; Shepherd and Krueger, 2002). Accordingly, scholars and practitioners have indicated the necessity of building mentoring relationships to budding entrepreneurs (Johnson and Smith, 2016; Kalbfleisch and Keyton, 1995).

The increased satisfaction and career success coming from having a mentor can be for multiple reasons. Mentors and protégés exchange many resources – including advice, money, better training and positive reinforcing experiences (Fagenson, 1988). When a protégé sees someone similar to themselves succeed, it would make sense that their self-efficacy would be increased (Bandura, 1997). Since mentors and protégés tend to have similarities (Ensher *et al.*, 2002), it would make sense that female protégés with mentors would have greater confidence that they could succeed, overcoming SDO in conventional entrepreneurship.

When the female entrepreneur has a mentor, we should expect that they would have verbal persuasion, enactive mastery opportunities and vicarious experience (Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1995). This experience should lessen the impact of SDO on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Thus, we propose the following:

P5. Mentoring will moderate the relationship between potential female entrepreneurs' levels of SDO and their (a) conventional entrepreneurial self-efficacy and (b) social entrepreneurial self-efficacy such that the direct association between levels of SDO and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (both conventional and social) will be weakened (Figure 1).

Discussion

We propose that female entrepreneur's SDO may influence the entrepreneur's intention toward social entrepreneurship opportunities and away from conventional entrepreneurship through entrepreneurial self-efficacy. We propose that mentorship moderates the relationships between SDO and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. We also examined the role of the mentor in developing intentions on the part of female entrepreneurs. In doing so, we have provided a view of the entrepreneur, as well as the mentor. Our model provides a broader picture of the individual in their social surrounding and different relationships. In doing so, we provide an explanation why stereotypes exist and why people buy into them. We also suggest a possible way to overcome these beliefs.

This paper makes the contribution of SDO into the entrepreneurial intention literature and the literature on female entrepreneurship. Despite scholars have written about many aspects, there is still a need to explain why female conventional entrepreneurship still lags behind male conventional entrepreneurship – even in more highly developed countries – whereas female social entrepreneurship thrives (Kelly and Williams, 2018). The explanation provided is that the residue of previous sexism and hegemonic forces combine to provide false narratives to females that they are not as aggressive or competitive as males and therefore not as inclined toward conventional entrepreneurship. Although there is tremendous merit to these explanations, and others, SDO explains why these false narratives exist. This paper seeks to explain why gender bias is present and why prejudices exist in entrepreneurship, going beyond explanations within the literature that focus on stereotypes.

Our paper focuses on why these stereotypes and myths exist. SDT could provide an explanation for myths that are used as a form of control and subtle signs of discrimination. For example, Bendell *et al.* (2019) propose that in certain industries, such as technology, aggressive risk-taking was a key reason why males were more successful than female in conventional entrepreneurship, even though females used more goal setting, but goals with less risk. Bendell *et al.* (2019) noted that given the "masculine orientation" (p. 123) of the technology industry, women may be less encouraged or accustomed to setting aggressive goals. Likewise, Gupta *et al.* (2019) found that conventional entrepreneurs that were "low-growth entrepreneurs are perceived as more similar to women than men, and higher on communality than agency" (p. 131). Furthermore, they also found that non-traditional men and women have problems entering into high growth entrepreneurship. They also found that modern sexism, a more subtle approach to bias, also had a relationship in separating entrepreneurship and females. These findings would be congruent with SDT.

We also extend the literature in that we consider the role of the mentor in female entrepreneurship. Discrimination and false narratives often remain in society due to the dominance of various influential actors. We argue that a mentor can make the difference in that a non-biased mentor could encourage female entrepreneurship through vicarious

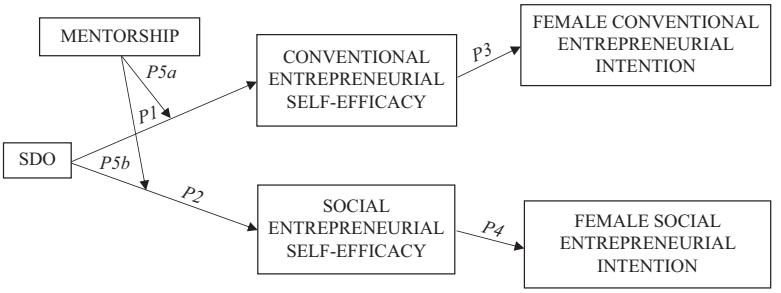

Figure 1.
Relationships of propositions (P) in theoretical model

experience, social persuasion and mastery opportunities. As we have seen in other studies, the benefits of an entrepreneurial mentor should be obvious (St-Jean *et al.*, 2018). Vicarious experience is an extremely important consideration in building self-efficacy through the shattering of incorrect perceptions about ability (Bandura, 1997). However, a word of caution is that although role modeling can have beneficial aspects, it can also lead to narratives that may encourage gender stereotypes through the use of successful female entrepreneurs as role models (i.e. vicarious experience; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). We suggest that mentorship should go beyond vicarious experience and mentors should consider other ways to build entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Limitations, future research agenda and theoretical implications

There are several limitations to the model above. The model proposed here is not comprehensive. There are variables of interest, in both personality and other life variables that can influence the relationships proposed. We speculate that someone who has a high locus of control and proactive personality – both of which are related to entrepreneurial intentions – can overcome SDO similar to conscientiousness. Likewise, life or situational variables, such as the lack of other work opportunities, can influence the relationships proposed. It is common for many women to go into entrepreneurship due to a lack of opportunity elsewhere. Like other variables that are attitudinal or based on personality, situational moderators can weaken the relationship between attitude and behavior. Another issue that scholars may grapple with is whether mentoring increases or decreases the relationship between SDO and social entrepreneurship, as research indicates both relationships may be true. Scholars need to consider these outcomes in future research.

We believe that scholars should consider several avenues for future research. First, we suggest that scholars test the model, as our paper is conceptual. Going forward, we suggest that scholars seek to measure the SDO of potential women entrepreneurs. Research has attempted to understand whether entrepreneurial behaviors are learned or produced by the environment. We argue that other moderators can affect the relationship between SDO and entrepreneurial intentions. Moderators could be organizational, country based or personal. For example, from an organizational perspective, would losing one's job encourage a female to start a company, despite having SDO? From a country perspective, could a poor economy drive the need for entrepreneurship due to little opportunities available? Another issue could be a person's belief whether they are competent in their work or if their work has meaning. This could lead a person to overcome SDO. Likewise, we should expect that a female from a family of entrepreneurs, even if they have high SDO, would likely be driven toward entrepreneurship. Our model could potentially explain some of these relationships by using well-known constructs. Another potential issue that should be researched would be why women are still underpaid in self-employment (Lawter *et al.*, 2016). Finally, scholars should examine the role of both gender and culture in these relationships.

Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argue that institutions can either enhance or diminish the impact of SDO. Our focus is on social relationships in this paper, but going forward, an examination of institutional settings may play a role. For example, the extent to which a country has right-wing politics, authoritarian beliefs or strong religious beliefs may enhance SDO. Some scholars have portrayed SDO as a personality variable. As such, there are elements within society that may trigger or weaken SDO. Likewise, we speculate a country with liberal attitudes, a judicial system that protects minorities and a lack of traditional religious beliefs may influence SDO and both types of entrepreneurship.

In addition, scholars should examine the interaction between SDO and other attitude/personality variables. We speculate that a mentor, who has high conscientiousness, proactivity and agreeableness, may provide mentorship since they would be "compelled" to do the right thing, even if they hold negative opinions of females. The reverse is

also true; a mentor who has personality traits such as psychopathy, narcissism and neuroticism may strengthen the relationship between SDO and lower conventional entrepreneurship self-efficacy. Likewise, we speculate that females with higher degrees of internal locus of control, proactive personality and conscientiousness may still have entrepreneurial intentions similar to people exhibiting prosocial behavior despite unfavorable social exchange relationships.

We also urge scholars to research the role of mentors in building entrepreneurial intentions. We argue that such research is long overdue and may further clarify exactly why there are fewer female entrepreneurs than males. We hope that such a research agenda may help enlarge the number of entrepreneurs, which in turn will have a positive impact on the economy.

Practical implications

Bias and prejudice, within both potential entrepreneurs and society, need to be attenuated. It is critical that we not only are aware of the existence of bias and its effect on entrepreneurship, but that we intentionally address and eliminate bias to ensure the success of wealth creation and entrepreneurial endeavors. Yet despite the gains over the last 50 years toward building greater equality, we still have issues of bias and notions of a glass ceiling (Hechavarria and Ingram, 2016).

The practical implication that can be gleaned from the paper is the importance of mentors in developing entrepreneurial intentions. Mentors and education have been found to develop self-efficacy and, in the process, expand what we can and should do (Bandura, 1997; Vanevenhoven and Liguori, 2013). In many different endeavors, scholars have noted the role of mentors in building and shaping individual's beliefs about their abilities. We would recommend that schools in secondary and collegiate education use their various student organizations to foster mentoring. We also suggest that teachers use experiential learning to develop self-efficacy.

In addition, we suggest that regional developers provide mentoring and social network opportunities for female entrepreneurs. We believe that an understanding of the entrepreneurial ecosystem would be important. Withholding mentorship can play a role in determining whether businesses get started. We urge regional developers, universities and K–12 schools to encourage mentoring programs, select unbiased mentors and recognize the negative role of SDO to increase the level of successful entrepreneurial endeavors. A potential way would be for female entrepreneurs to provide emotional and material support in the ecosystem.

Conclusion

We make several proposals in the paper related to SDO and female entrepreneurial intentions. Our purpose is to explain the impact of gender bias and stereotypes on conventional and social entrepreneurial intention. We emphasize the moderating impact of mentorship on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and ultimately entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, this study highlights the impact of SDO on social and conventional entrepreneurial intention. Future research is also proposed.

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