

## Networking among female ethnic minority entrepreneurs

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**Abstract.** The labor market in the multicultural society is a major arena where the interrelation of gender and ethnicity is expressed in processes of discrimination, sexism and racism. For women from ethnic minorities, one way to avoid these problems is to work in migrant enterprises. As this may ease tensions related to ethnicity, it does not solve gender-related problems like the subordination of women and the perception of female migrants as 'just' daughters, mothers and wives by male co-migrants. Female ethnic minority entrepreneurship may be the way to escape such processes.

In the Netherlands, 25% of all ethnic minority entrepreneurs are female. However, little is known about their socio-economic background and the way they perceive their businesses. Moreover, there is a theoretical haphazardness concerning the phenomenon female ethnic minority entrepreneurship. Although recently researchers have opted for an integral theory called the 'mixed-embeddedness' approach as to explain ethnic minority entrepreneurship through a combination of personal, socio-cultural and structural factors, the role of gender still seems to be underexposed in this theory. Likewise, the literature concerning entrepreneurial networking has hardly interfered with both gender and ethnicity.

Therefore, this paper provides a state of affairs concerning the research and literature on ethnic minority entrepreneurship, gender and networks. It argues that a better understanding of female ethnic minority entrepreneurship requires further scientific attention and that a contribution needs to be made to theory development regarding the interrelation of ethnicity and gender in entrepreneurship and in entrepreneurial networks particularly.

*Key words:* Networks, entrepreneurship, multiple identity, gender, ethnicity.

### Introduction

Because of increasing migration within the globalizing economy, ethnic minority entrepreneurship has become a key issue in political sciences, human geography and management. It has been estimated that by 2050 25% of the Dutch population will consist of people with other national

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and ethnic backgrounds (CBS, 2000). This development has an enormous impact on the way business is conducted and will result in more 'multi-cultural' approaches that will redefine traditional ways entrepreneurship is undertaken in the Netherlands and other multicultural societies. Currently, ethnic minority entrepreneurship is mainly understood as a way to provide self-employment to minority groups, enable successful integration of ethnic minority groups in the economy and the society as a whole and to impose lesser financial burdens on the modern welfare state. However, ethnic minority entrepreneurship has recently in particular become a valuable asset to the dynamics and innovatory potential of the economy. Based on their specific knowledge and skills, ethnic minority entrepreneurs are able to play a much more significant role in the future economy given the right social and economic preconditions (Van Naerssen, 2001).

A major void in current research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship concerns the role of female entrepreneurs. Conventionally, female ethnic minority workers have been considered as a source of low cost labor and exposed to low wages mostly involving manual and low paid work (Westwood, 1987; Raghuram & Hardill, 1998). However, ethnic minority women, especially those of the second generation, have become more and more conscious of the constraints imposed by social and economic conditions. There are some examples documented of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs who have been successful in establishing a flourishing business in a still predominantly male and highly patriarchal world of migrant entrepreneurs (Westwood & Bhachu, 1987; Gite & Baskerville, 1996; Petronilia & Matimba, 1999). Because of their skills and high level of education, they have been able to start up flourishing small and medium-sized companies (Raghuram & Hardill, 1998; Dhaliwal, 1998).

The process of starting a business is highly interactive and it is the combination of personality as well as environmental factors that motivates people (Shabbir & Di Gregorio, 1996). The success of ethnic minority female entrepreneurs depends on the extent, type of and way in which they participate in social and personal networks that are related to the immigrants' access to the labor market, access to credit, information and employees. The way these networks look like and are being used are dependent on the different identities and backgrounds of the persons concerned.

In order to fill this empirical gap, a research project is being conducted in the Netherlands on female ethnic minority entrepreneurship. The purpose of this paper is mainly to explore the issues surrounding female ethnic minority entrepreneurship by initially describing the research context which provides an insight into the multicultural society in the Netherlands related to the phenomenon of female ethnic minority entrepreneurship. Subsequently, it will elaborate in some depth on a theoretical framework using a network approach in relation to the fields of ethnicity and gender. Finally, the paper will briefly outline some research issues that are addressed within this project and the used methodology.

## **Research context**

The phenomenon of female ethnic minority entrepreneurship is a complex one. It is to be understood against the background of the multicultural society and the associated tensions. The interlinking grids of differential positioning in terms of class, race and ethnicity, sex and sexuality, ability and stage in the life cycle, tend to create in specific historical situations hierarchies of differential access to a variety of economic, political and cultural resources (Saharso & Schuster, 1995). The central problem of this research contributes to concern labor market processes and practices of social inequality pertaining to gender, ethnicity and their interrelation.

Among the problems that females from ethnic minorities face in society are both unemployment and gender respectively racial discrimination on the labor market. Women, especially those of the second generation, are becoming more and more conscious of these problems. Autonomous entrepreneurship may offer a solution. The European organization *New Opportunities for Women* considers entrepreneurial activities developed by migrant women to be beneficial, as a tool to diminish unemployment among these minority groups.

Research on the experiences of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs and the possibilities and problems they encounter in operating their businesses can contribute to a better economic integration of ethnic minority females in society. Moreover, this knowledge may be used by Ministries of Social Affairs and Employment and of Economic Affairs as to formulate policies that stimulate female ethnic minority entrepreneurship and successful networking. Furthermore, the results of this study might be used by female migrants and women organizations as a guidance for entrepreneurship and the establishment of networks.

Previous studies relevant for this project have been conducted in the UK and in the US (Ibarra, 1993; Gite & Baskerville, 1996; Dhaliwal, 1998; Raghuram & Hardill, 1998; McGuire, 2000; Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). However, so far there has been little attention in the Netherlands for female ethnic minority entrepreneurs and their networks. Although there are some anecdotal findings in the Netherlands (Roemer, 1992; Hermans, 1995; Wassink, 1997; Smulders, 1998; Ploumen, 2001), gender constitutes a major void in current research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial networks, both theoretically and empirically.

## **Female ethnic minority entrepreneurship: Some theoretical insights**

### *Entrepreneurship in mainstream approaches*

Currently, research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship is rather fragmented, and lacks a strong theoretical foundation. Within the international business discipline, entrepreneurship has been a rather young and fruitful research area at the borderline between international business and entrepreneurship studies. Entrepreneurship is generally regarded as a stimulus for economic flexi-

bility, growth and as a catalyst for technological progress and market innovation. Entrepreneurship has been defined as the combination of innovative, proactive and risk-seeking behavior that creates value for companies (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). The mainstream economics approach to entrepreneurship focuses on the contribution to economic development. Regarding the different facets of entrepreneurship, Schumpeter (Van Praag, 1996) stressed the concept of innovation in creating and responding to economic discontinuities and Casson (Van Praag, 1996) focused on the judgmental decisions regarding the co-ordination of scarce resources in which the entrepreneur is specialized. Another line of research has dealt with the psychological characteristics of entrepreneurs (Shapiro, 1984; Carsrud, 1989), their search for opportunities, their proactive and risk-taking behavior (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). In this context, the concept entrepreneurial identity is an important one which refers to an ongoing process of identity formation by entrepreneurs. This means that people 'organize in' the relevant or requested entrepreneurial identity and 'organize out' or marginalize irrelevant identities (Doorewaard & Brouns, 2003) and thus regulate their activities based on the internalized attitude of the archetype of the entrepreneur who is «*someone who takes care of his or her activities according to his or her own standards of what is good or bad for the business*» (Doorewaard & Brouns, 2003, p. 12).

The conceptual phase of the business development process has been largely ignored in the study of entrepreneurship (Carsrud, 1989). Timmons (1982) notes that an inherent controversy within entrepreneurship research and theory concerns the role of concepts. This controversy centers on whether the concept is the crucial factor in venture creation or not. For venture creation is also highly influenced by external factors and information available to entrepreneurs (Carsrud, 1989). In other words, the socio-economic context of opportunities is very important in entrepreneurship (Carsrud, 1989).

Only recently scholars have understood the need for integrative typologies and paradigms of entrepreneurship. Comparisons of psychological, societal and economic factors that motivate the start-up of new enterprises are important topics in recent research by Thomas and Mueller (2000). Furthermore, many scholars devise that a lot of organizational and behavioral models include underlying assumptions about capitalism and the Protestant work ethic (Weber) which are not applicable to every culture or group. It is assumed that there is a greater propensity towards entrepreneurship in some societies than in others. Yet, the roles of culture and ethnicity largely remain implicit in these theories of entrepreneurship (Thomas & Mueller, 2000; Rath, 1999; Aldrich, Jones & McEvoy, 1983).

### *Ethnic minority entrepreneurship*

The literature on ethnic minority entrepreneurship mainly fills this void and does create room for theorizing on the relevance of culture and ethnicity for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Different approaches and perspectives can be distinguished in the studies on ethnic minority entrepreneurship.

Within the *socio-cultural approach* it is argued that minority groups have specific values

and migrant resources that are pertinent for the development of and participation in entrepreneurship (Bonacich, 1973; Light, 1984; Aldrich, 1979). Examples of such value orientations and specific migrant resources are high ambition, good business skills, family and migrant solidarity, useful and stable networks and credit associations. These values and migrant resources are seen as the most important ones for the set up and survival of immigrant business (Bonacich, 1973; Light, 1987; Aldrich, 1979). In short, the socio-cultural approach focuses on the influence of the entrepreneurs' ethnicity on their norms, values and behavior.

A *structural-situational approach* on ethnic minority entrepreneurship emphasizes contextual or external factors. Entrepreneurship is considered a reactive process based on the idea that minorities are structurally disadvantaged, face barriers and limited employment opportunities on the labor market. Migrant groups try to survive in the economy by seizing 'the opportunity structure' (Light, 1979) and getting through the 'blocked mobility' (Van Naerssen, 2000). Local and national opportunities and difficulties are being researched within this approach.

The *middleman minority theory* (Bonacich, 1973) also argues that immigrants are disadvantaged in the labor market. This theory claims that low economies of scale and instable markets are conducive to immigrant entrepreneurship (Waldinger, 1995; Rath, 1999). Minorities find economic niches in certain under-served migrant communities and migrant entrepreneurs, due to their inner orientation and internal solidarity, also create employment opportunities for their co-migrants.

Recently, some researchers have opted for a more integral theory called the '*mixed-embeddedness*' approach' (Waldinger, 1995; Rath et al., 2000). This approach explains ethnic minority entrepreneurship through a combination of personal, socio-cultural and structural factors. Mixed-embeddedness stresses the need to look at the personal perception of the migrant of the entrepreneurial climate, 'ethnic resources' and networks as well as important environmental factors (Polanyi, 1957; Portes, 1995; Kloosterman, Van der Leun & Rath, 1999). The blind spots however within these theories are that they have either a very general implication without focusing on the micro-level or ignore specific categories. Accordingly, most of the studies in this field seem to have a gender bias implying ethnic minority entrepreneurship as predominantly male.

#### *Ethnic minority entrepreneurship and gender*

Female ethnicity can be described as subjective identities which are always situated in relation to others according to all social division dimensions like sex, but also class, gender, ethnicity and age. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1995) see 'women' as fluctuating identities and claim that the category 'women' is historically and discursively constructed in terms of gender, always in relation to other categories which themselves change. Hence, gender should not be understood as a 'real' social difference between men and women, but as a mode of discourse which relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference as opposed to their economic positions of their membership in ethnic and racial collectivities. This implies that the identities cannot just be ascribed by either class, gender or ethnicity. Rather, it is a changing perception of the self and other, constantly acquiring new meanings and forms through interactions

with social contexts and within historical moments (Ghorashi, 1997). As well as identity should be seen as processual and multiple, it must also be considered as 'constructed, multi-faceted, negotiated and situational'. An additional aspect is the potential of identities to be either combined or in conflict with each other, dependant on certain circumstances and times. Thus female ethnic entrepreneurs have different, multiple identities, that influence each other in a process of 'contingental articulation' depending on the context and time (Saharso & Schuster, 1995; Denis, 2001). Moreover, these identities are subject to change: «*Identity is always in process, always subject to reproduction or transformation through discursive practices that secure or refuse particular posited identities*» (Clegg, 1998, p. 29), and identity formation of the female ethnic minority entrepreneur is bound up with the social world in which she participates (Doorewaard & Brouns, 2003).

With regards to the link between gender and entrepreneurship i.e. entrepreneurial identity, several studies provide insights into the motives, areas of activity and success rates of female entrepreneurs. Women seem to start their own enterprises because of frustration at hitting the 'glass ceiling', dissatisfaction with slow career advancement and unmet career expectations, corporate downsizing (Buttner, 1993; Moore & Buttner, 1997), as well as a desire for more flexibility (Royal, 1998). Also, the start up of their own business is seen as a way of integrating family and career needs (Moore & Buttner, 1997; Buttner, 1993). Thus, motives can consist of positive i.e. offensive (pulls) or negative i.e. defensive (pushes) reasons (Poutsma & Van den Tillaart, 1998). Since female entrepreneurs often lack specific education, women are more likely to start businesses in a service related area, public relations, sales or educational services (Hisrich, 1989; Carsrud, 1989). Several studies found that women are rated significantly lower on attributes of successful entrepreneurship (Buttner, 1993; Royal, 1998; Aldrich, 1989). This is probably based on perceptions people have of women's lack of fitness for entrepreneurship which can result into a bias in the capital funding process (Buttner, 1993; Smulders, 1998; Hisrich, 1989) which is aggravated by a lack of financial track record in business. Besides, most of the time, enterprises are conceived as a masculine world offering status and power to men.

The labor market in the multicultural society is a major arena where the interrelation of gender and ethnicity is expressed in processes of discrimination, sexism and racism. For women from ethnic minorities, one way to avoid these problems is to work in migrant enterprises. As this may ease tensions related to ethnicity, it does not solve gender-related problems like the subordination of women to men and the perception of female migrants as 'just' daughters, mothers and wives by male co-migrants (Westwood, 1987). Female ethnic minority entrepreneurship may be the way to escape such processes. Hitherto, little research has been conducted on the phenomenon female ethnic minority entrepreneurship. Shabbir and Di Gregorio (1996) studied the experiences of Pakistani female entrepreneurs that just had started their businesses. Their results revealed that women started their business in order to achieve three types of personal goals: personal freedom, security and satisfaction. Additionally, they found several structural factors affecting these women's ability to start a business. Furthermore, a few case studies were conducted on female entrepreneurs within the Asian community in Great Britain by Splinder Dhaliwal (1988) and Parvatti Raghuram and Irene Hardill (1988). They found that upward mobility and pastime or a challenge were the

most mentioned motives for independent females to start a business. The Asian communities were simultaneously conceived as repressing and as a source of opportunities (Raghurum & Hardill, 1988). Ethnicity and gender were used as entrepreneurial tools (Raghurum & Hardill, 1988). Thus, female ethnic minority entrepreneurs engage in what Giddens (1991) called the 'dialectic of control' with history and social structure. This means the ability of the weak to turn their weaknesses against the powerful by improvising, innovating and strategizing (Raghurum & Hardill, 1988).

## **Female ethnic minority entrepreneurship and networks**

### *Entrepreneurial networks*

Social networks are among the most important structures in which entrepreneurship is embedded. Social networks are sets of recurrent associations between groups of people linked by occupational, familial, cultural, or affective ties and can even include the local community, a region or an industry. The importance of personal networks, which are constructed from a particular individual's point of view, has recently been discussed in the management literature (Aldrich, 1989; Moore & Buttner, 1997). These networks include embedded ties, i.e. close and special relationships, as well as arm's length ties, i.e. market relationships between the entrepreneur and its business partners. Embedded (strong) ties are based on characteristics such as high frequency of contacts, trust or tacit information transfer. Weak ties are related to characteristics such as infrequency of contacts, price and quantity information.

Insights from ecological organization theory (Aldrich, 1979; Hannan & Freeman, 1989) lay an important foundation for a network perspective on entrepreneurship. Ecological organization theory explains the outcome of business founding processes by an entrepreneur's position in social networks (Aldrich, Zimmer & Jones, 1986). Personal characteristics in terms of professions or positions and networks indicate the availability of resources in the environment and the quality of available information for entrepreneurs (Greve, 1995). It is believed within this network perspective that the diversity of information depends on relations among alters. Close connections among alters may lead to a high degree of redundancy of information (Granovetter, 1972; Burt, 1992).

Networking presumes some identification with others. Similarity of identity characteristics produces common interests and worldviews and best explains the spontaneous ties of interpersonal attraction (Ibarra, 1993). Different studies prove that restricting network interaction to similar others, reduces access to information from disparate parts of the social system (Aldrich, 1989; Granovetter, 1972; Ibarra, 1993) and strengthens peer group enforcement of norms concerning appropriate behavior.

*Ethnic minority entrepreneurship and networking*

When it comes to social capital that stems from ethnic and family resources, 'strong ties', two opposite arguments can be found in the literature. Portes for instance (1995) gives examples of detrimental effects of these sources of social capital. Granovetter's well-known 'strength of weak ties theory' (1972) adds to this idea, and Flap, Kumcu and Bulder recently added the 'too much of the wrong social capital' idea (1999). Dense networks with strong ties may enforce reciprocity. Portes (1995) and Greene (1997) point out that particularly in ethnic minority entrepreneurship the concepts of bounded solidarity, reciprocity and enforceable trust play an important role. Concepts as honor and shame, developed within Islamic studies (Van Nieuwkerk, 1995), contribute to these ideas. In most literature applying network theory to ethnicity and entrepreneurship it has thus been suggested that ethnic minority entrepreneurs are detrimentally stuck and restricted within their strong-tie network because they are socially and financially dependent on this informal network (Flap, Kumcu & Bulder, 1999). Recruitment of employees is often limited to the same ethnic network, which restricts entrepreneurs and makes them more dependent on the skills and knowledge available in their own network. The networks are barely focused on economical or entrepreneurial organizations. Formal institutions hardly belong to these networks because ethnic minority entrepreneurs traditionally have developed of lack of trust in these institutions (Poutsma & Van de Tillaart, 1998). Eventually, ethnic minority entrepreneurs from the second generation applying a weak-tie network tend to be more successful (Poutsma & Van de Tillaart, 1998).

Yet, the 'reactive ethnicity' theory (Light & Karageorgis, 1997) explains exactly why social capital *enhances* ethnic minority entrepreneurship. In this view, ethnic minority entrepreneurship is seen as being energized and stimulated by a large group solidarity or bounded solidarity and thus a greater willingness to help each other.

*Ethnic minority entrepreneurial networks and gender*

A hitherto underresearched subject concerns the role of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs and their place in personal networks. Previous studies on gender and organizational networks found that barriers within work, marriage and family, and organizational social life limit the reach and diversity of women's networks (Aldrich, 1989). Women tend to have more homogeneous networks in terms of kin composition and gender, either because of induced homophily or choice homophily (Ibarra, 1993).

Regarding entrepreneurial networking and gender, Renzulli, Aldrich and Moody (2000) suggest that differences in start-up rates between male-owned and female-owned businesses can be explained by differences in social capital accumulation through network ties. Often, women list their spouses first, close friends second, and business associates third in their network, which suggests that women more rely on personal relationships and strong ties (friends and family) than men do. The advantage of strong ties is that they are more likely to provide assistance in an uncertain or a crisis situation (Ibarra, 1993). Yet, women entrepreneurs may be disadvantaged if they apply a

strong-tie orientation to weak ties since strong ties are usually fairly limited, demand cultivation and maintenance, are inward-looking and focus rather on mental than business support. Diversity of information depends on relations among alters, where close connections among alters may lead to a high degree of redundancy of information (Granovetter, 1995; Renzulli, Aldrich & Moody, 2000). Furthermore it is assumed that especially in dense networks with strong ties reciprocity is being enforced. Assuming that both mental and instrumental support are necessary in networking, a sound balance of both strong and weak ties is most beneficiary for female entrepreneurship (Portes, 1995).

Recently, McGuire (2000) investigated the relationships between gender, race/ethnicity, and networks drawing on network theory and status construction theory which suggests that people take each others' gender, race, and ethnicity into account when forming networks. Her analysis indicates that women and people of color are denied entry to powerful networks and receive fewer network benefits than their white, male, counterparts. McGuire concludes that structural rather than personal exclusion explains ethnic and sex differences in the status of network members.

While McGuire has studied the relations between the concepts of gender, ethnicity and networks, so far, research has hardly dealt with these concepts in relation to entrepreneurship. Therefore, research needs to be conducted concerning the relation between gender, ethnicity, entrepreneurship and networks.

### **An empirical research on female ethnic minority entrepreneurship**

Currently, Dutch research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship mainly focuses on political and institutional aspects (Rath, 1999; Flap, Kumcu & Bulder, 1999; Kloosterman, Van der Leun & Rath, 1999). Research on female ethnic minority entrepreneurship contributes to existing insights of the phenomenon ethnic minority entrepreneurship by applying a gender perspective on ethnic minority entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial networks particularly. Moreover, by mapping the experiences of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs, it will fill the current empirical vacuum that exists on female ethnic minority entrepreneurship.

That is why in an empirical research, which is part of a European project called 'Equal', opportunities and constraints are being explored that female ethnic minority entrepreneurs face in their own biographical and entrepreneurial context. The research will show which conditions are stimulating and discouraging for female ethnic minority entrepreneurship and how female ethnic minority entrepreneurs construct and develop their multiple identities in relation to their entrepreneurship and their networks.

Multiple cases are selected that allow for the study of processes and theories in action (Moore & Buttner, 1997; Swanborn, 1994). Female Turkish and Moroccan entrepreneurs that own a business in the Netherlands are being approached, since these ethnic groups are predominant in both Dutch society and entrepreneurship (Van den Tillaart, 2001) and to some extent mutual cultu-

rally comparable. The cases are perceived in a holistic way and are used to balance between existing theories and new data in an inductive way (Hutjes & Van Buuren, 1992; Raghuram & Hardill, 1998). The selected cases are effective in exploring the complexities, contradictions, and ambiguities revolving around female ethnic minority entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurship related to their identity.

Within the case studies, personal face-to-face interviews are being held as to obtain the female ethnic minority entrepreneurs' narratives. The narrative approach entails the collection, construction and interpretation of life stories in close relationship with the persons involved (Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Czarniawska, 1997). Narrative makes it possible for people to understand the world around them and to construct their identities, even if these narratives can be ambiguous or sometimes contradictory (Du Gay, Evans & Redman, 2000; Ghorashi, 1997). Like this, stories can be captured regarding the active construction and development of the identities of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs (Etter-Lewis & Foster, 1996; Ghorashi, 1997; Czarniawska, 1997). Besides the interviews, additional empirical material is gathered through short informal interviews focusing on special subjects, the attendance of meetings of immigrant and women organizations and by studying documentary material as to gain a broader understanding of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the Netherlands.

The cases center on the construction and development of their identities, in relationship to their entrepreneurship and networking, where the process of 'contingental articulation' is the underlying thought. During this final phase, the analysis of the narratives will focus on the interrelation of gender and ethnicity in the context of entrepreneurial networks.

## **Conclusions**

Among the problems that females from ethnic minorities face in society are both unemployment and gender respectively racial discrimination on the labor market. Women, especially those of the second generation, are becoming more and more conscious of these problems. Autonomous entrepreneurship may offer a solution to these problems.

The success of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs depends on their participation in social and personal networks.

Previous studies on gender and networks within organizations found that barriers within work, marriage and family, and organizational social life limit the reach and diversity of women's networks. Women tend to have more homogeneous networks in terms of kin composition and gender, either because of induced homophily or choice homophily. Different studies prove that restricting network interaction to similar others, reduces access to information from disparate parts of the social system and strengthens peer group enforcement of norms concerning appropriate behavior.

The literature applying network theory to ethnicity and entrepreneurship implies that ethnic

minority entrepreneurs are detrimentally stuck and restricted within their strong-tie network because they are socially and financially dependent on a rather informal network. Recruitment of employees is often limited to the same ethnic network, which restricts entrepreneurs and makes them more dependent on the skills and knowledge available in their own network. The networks are barely focused on economical or entrepreneurial organizations. However, large group solidarity may also enhance ethnic minority entrepreneurship.

Gender constitutes a major void in current research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial networks. This void gives cause to conduct empirical research concerning the relationship between the ongoing and changing female ethnic minority entrepreneurs' multiple identities, which are constructed by salient characteristics of ethnicity, gender and entrepreneurship, and their networks.

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**Resumo.** Numa sociedade multicultural o mercado de trabalho é uma arena onde a interrelação entre género sexual e etnicidade é expressa via processos de discriminação, sexismo e racismo. Para as mulheres de minorias étnicas, uma forma de evitar estes problemas é trabalhando para companhias que lidam com as questões da emigração. Isto pode reduzir as tensões relacionadas com a etnicidade, mas não resolve os problemas relacionados com o género sexual, tais como a subordinação das mulheres e a percepção de que as mulheres emigrantes são 'apenas' filhas, mães e esposas de emigrantes homens. O empreendedorismo por minorias étnicas do sexo feminino pode ser a forma de escapar a tais processos.

Na Holanda 25% dos empreendedores pertencentes a minorias étnicas são mulheres. No entanto, pouco se sabe sobre o seu background socio-económico e sobre a forma como elas percebem os respectivos negócios. Além do mais, existem algumas lacunas teóricas no que respeita ao fenómeno

do empreendedorismo por minorias étnicas do sexo feminino. Apesar do gosto recente pela perspectiva designada *mixed-embeddedness*, para explicar o empreendedorismo por minorias étnicas através de uma combinação de factores pessoais, socio-culturais e estruturais, o papel do género sexual parece ainda pouco explorado nesta teoria. De igual forma, a literatura sobre redes de empreendedorismo tem contribuído pouco para o conhecimento sobre género sexual e etnicidade.

Assim, este artigo oferece uma revisão destes assuntos no que respeita à investigação e literatura sobre empreendedorismo por minorias étnicas, género sexual, e redes. Defende-se a necessidade de criar mais conhecimento sobre empreendedorismo por minorias étnicas do sexo feminino, assim como a de contribuir para o desenvolvimento da teoria no que respeita à interrelação entre etnicidade e género sexual no empreendedorismo e, particularmente, em redes de empreendedorismo.

*Palavras-chave:* Redes, empreendedorismo, identidade múltipla, género sexual, etnicidade.