

A Discourse Analysis on Research Texts on Copreneurs

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Abstract

The Small Over the previous few years, a considerable number of articles have been written about the rapid spread of entrepreneurship, the area of copreneurs are still under research field. Departing from a social constructionist approach, this study examines how entrepreneurial couples are constructed in research articles. The Methodological approach of this study is supported by discourse analysis. Discourse analysis was enabled to disclose the hidden motivations behind the text to interpret that text. Findings reveal that seven hegemonic statements : the love bond between a husband and wife grows stronger with involvement in a copreneurial venture, socially constructed men and women, the division of business and household responsibilities is traditional, blending of work and family dimensions creates new opportunities for tensions, conceptions of the female entrepreneur as problematic, female copreneurs and challenges of being in business with spouse and key patterns of couples in multiplex relationships. These influences reproduce the notion of essential gender differences and the idea of the female as the weaker sex. The findings of the study are dependent on the particular context in which the articles are constructed. This means that their results and assumptions cannot be generalized to other contexts uncritically. By discussing research findings, the study opens the avenues for alternative ways of theorizing and researching entrepreneurial couples. Suggestions for alternative research practices include the adding of an institutional approach to the research agenda, such as family policy, and legislation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Copreneurs, Discourse analysis, entrepreneurial couples, hegemonic statements.

Introduction

With the exponential growth and evolution of entrepreneurship research in recent decades, new jargon has emerged to explain different aspect of entrepreneurship. Copreneurship is one such term. It is a new term for an old pattern of work: husbands and wives or couples with marital or marital-like relationships working together in the same business. Copreneurial couples have primarily been examined in the field of family business. Simply defined, a family business is managed by one or more family members. Copreneurs are an important sub group within this broad grouping. Over the previous few years, a considerable number of articles have been written about the rapid spread of entrepreneurship, the area of entrepreneurial

couples are still under research field. According to Cole, Johnson (2007), “married business couples who own and work together had been discussed but not specifically addressed until more relevant literature emerged in the 1980s. Business relationships between husbands and wives jointly in business are well considered historically. Not until the late 1980s, however, was this business relationship described specifically in an entrepreneurial context. In 1988, researchers coined the term “copreneurs” where couples who are both passionately and professionally involved; they are responsible and committed couples who own a business together. Jaffe (1990) and Nelton (1986), were the first researchers to observe the increase in copreneurial ventures which describe a

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couple's unique characteristics and potential hazards of the couples' dual relationships of combining a personal, romantic relationship with a practical, business one.

Copreneurs are a subgroup of the broader coentrepreneur group. Coentrepreneurs are any combination of two or more parties involved together in the functions of a business irrespective of gender and division of work tasks and functions among them. "Involvement" is taken to consider ownership and management; for example, two sisters involved together in owning and operating a business would consider entrepreneurs, as would a separated or divorced heterosexual couple.

A small portion of the research concentrated on the self-employed, and even less research focused on investigating marital partners living and working together (Björkman & Coyle-Shapiro, 2009). The dual-roles of copreneurial couples made separation of the aspects of family and business more difficult (Eddleston, Otondo, & Kellermanns, 2008; Fletcher, 2010; Werbel & Danes, 2010). In family businesses where cohabitating couples work together, also known as work-linked couples, the spouse must be fully aware of the importance of both domains (Halbesleben, Zellars, Carlson, Perrewé, & Rotondo, 2010). A founder's passionate commitment to the new venture was necessary for success (Fahed-Sreih & Morin-Delerm, 2012). (Blenkinsopp & Owens, 2010). Most of these studies have not explored the interaction of a couple as a contributor to the perception of success, as was recommended for a more robust understanding. Interpersonal aspects of the couple living and working together, the dyad of the couple needed to be explored (Kenny, 2011; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). (Bjuggren, Duggal, & Giang, 2012; SBA, 2012), (Basco & Rodriguez, 2009), (Dyer, Dyer & Gardner, 2013; Fletcher, 2010; Gudmunson et al., 2009), (Dyer et al., 2013); Small businesses play a vital role in the economy and many small businesses are family-owned and often operated by couples. One-third of all family businesses are copreneurial. More satisfaction occurred among male family business owners who were

older and married (Prottas & Thompson, 2006). In female-led copreneurial firms, the most satisfied couples were in the middle 30s; however, there were variations in the length of either the cohabitation or the marriage of these couples. Wives perceived higher levels of stress than did husbands in copreneurial couples (Danes & Olson, 2003; Wu et al., 2010). In copreneurial couples, both spousal support and coworker support may originate from the same individual and have an even larger effect on the marital relationship. Copreneurs may be the link that is missing between the study of entrepreneurs and the study of the family business (Blenkinsopp & Owens, 2010). As the smallest unit of analysis, copreneurs should provide new insight into the dynamics of larger family businesses (Hedberg & Danes, 2012). Entrepreneurial couples tend to see their business as much more of a lifestyle choice and as a way of life than their non-copreneurial counterparts (Baines and Wheelock, 1998); Fitzgerald and Muske (2002), (Roha and Blum, 1990); and (Smith, 2000). Business success was measured in terms of a number of employees, business profit and sales as well as the manager's subjective view of the success of the business, had some influence in determining which copreneurs remained in business, which copreneurs discontinued working in the business together (Muske and Fitzgerald, 2006). Copreneurs have been described as having a unique opportunity to achieve control and satisfaction in both the work and family domains. They are incorporating family values, seeking to nurture family relationships, finding greater intimacy, and injecting human concerns into a business (Cox, Moore, & VanAuken, 1984; Jaffe, 1990; Thompson, 1990; Ward & Arnoff, 1990).

The study of copreneurs is an opportunity to expand our understanding of the dialectical system of psychology by utilizing an integrated systems perspective that incorporates social exchange theory, developmental theory, and family systems theory (Riegel, 1976, 1979). A husband and wife advertising team, defamed couples who share ownership, commitment, and

responsibility for business as copreneurs (Bamelt and Bamett, 1988). Exploring the main characteristics of companies in the five couple-categories revealed three key patterns of couples in multiplex relationships: unofficial copreneurs, traditional copreneurs, and multiple generation copreneurs (Fletcher, 2010).

In this setting, departing from a social constructionist understanding of entrepreneurial couple, this study examines how the entrepreneurial couples are constructed in research articles and reviews literature addressing couples from same entrepreneurial ventures perspective of understanding their contribution to the existing knowledge.

Methodology

Over the last 30 years, research emphasis in the area of entrepreneurship has moved away from purely descriptive explorations toward a clear effort to embed research within highly informed conceptual frameworks that recognize the gendered nature of entrepreneurship (Henry & Marlow, 2013). Despite this, however, the research methods adopted do not appear to have shifted in parallel. Indeed, extant literature continues to report methodological weaknesses, including small sample sizes, the use of inappropriate or gender biased measures, or the inclusion of female-male comparative studies where women's subordinate role is consistently highlighted (de Bruin et al., 2007). Reviews conducted to date have largely adopted a thematic focus (Carter & Shaw, 2006); categorized the level of research contribution (de Bruin et al., 2007); mapped the development of the field (Neergaard et al., 2011) or quantified the research contribution to the wider entrepreneurship field (Jennings & Brush, 2013).

The methodological choice of this study is supported by discourse analysis. In the most simple terms, discourse analysis is a research method that involves studying the use of language. Researchers analyse written texts, spoken discursive sign language, and any other means through which communication is

achieved. Discourse analysts generally pursue to understand discourse's relations to context, power, and relationship (Ruiz, 2009). Discourse analysis does not give a tangible answer to issues based on scientific research, but it gives access to the ontological and epistemological enquiry (Carver, 2002).

The researcher takes copreneurs, entrepreneurial couple, and spouse in the business, female entrepreneurs as keywords to search the literature researching on copreneurs which are published in 17 journals from 1993 to 2017. All the journals are top journals of entrepreneurship and gender, and these journals belong to a certain discourse community with certain discursive practices that perform a strong editing function of the texts. Then the researcher selected 51 articles based on their relevancy. Subsequently, articles numbered and organized this literature, including authors, date of publication, topic, and journal name, contents of research, main findings, key contributions, and research method. Researchers excluded conference proceedings since they serve as an early publication outlet, and many of these papers do subsequently appear in other journals. The selection is limited to scientific journals. Books and book chapters are not included.

Major Findings

Main findings based on the analysis reveal six hegemonic statements:

The love bond between a husband and wife develops stronger with involvement in a copreneurial venture.

Having a spouse as a business partner could make for a good partnership; if both parties share the same business-related interests and have the same aims for their company, then it can be concrete, equitable partnership. Studies show that spouse relations play a significant role in business ventures and family is necessary throughout the business as they always provide emotional strength to the entrepreneur, and her family backs her up through every struggle. In the literature, it can be identified that business ideas sometimes collide with family norms, and at other times business ideas seem to agree, but at all times

the availability of spouse is a very important part of this business (Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop 2013). Specifically, Powell and Eddleston (2013) hypothesize that emotional support from family members is positively related to entrepreneurial success.

Entrepreneurs can test out their ideas on a variety of people, from family and friends to former employers and work colleagues. The spouse represents trusted people whom the entrepreneur can discuss the entrepreneurial idea, to whom concepts can be presented; ideas can be tested out on them, without the entrepreneur being frightened of possible negative outcomes (Klapper 2008). Furthermore, the entrepreneur is looking for feedback, for critical comments and reflective thinking, without being faced with a competitive or possibly offensive response from a spouse (Klapper 2008).

According to Vадnjal and Vадnjal (2013), 121 female business owners were surveyed to examine the role of family support with the emphasis on spouses; the results confirm that support from husbands is very significant. Mostly, emotional support is evident (Vадnjal and Vадnjal 2013). To continue a business effectively, one has to live and breathe it. Many hours are spent at business, and even the hours spent at home are often occupied by thinking of issues surrounding the business. In that sense, the spouse has to bear it and be her moral strength and support. It can be a lonely experience for women when struggling with issues regarding their business, and they do not have many people with whom they can share their problems, doubts and worries. In this sense, a husband's moral support is vital.

Showing interest in the business requires being a good listener. The female business owners seek a trusted ear into which to pour their thoughts and concerns. Women generally discussed the decision of pursuing entrepreneurial careers with their husband, and expected a certain blessing from them, before taking on the final decision (Vадnjal and Vадnjal 2013).

Gordon (1986) observed that women do have different experiences of business ownership and that the male counterparts should not be

used to stand for the universal, as women have a different voice and a different experience of love, work and family.

Socially constructed men and women

Traditional attitudes, through which women are considered as subordinates to men or as having stereotyped roles to perform, continue via widespread practices in many countries. The result of such discrimination against the physical and mental integrity of women serves to deprive them of equal enjoyment, and fundamental freedom (De Mel, Peiris and Gomez 2013).

In many countries around the world, with the inequality in power relations based on gender relationships, and the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women within the family and at community and political level, women are put in a secondary position in comparison to men (Ranasingha 2009). This, in turn, leads to the use of power and control over women, both physically and mentally. Therefore, men do not appreciate women who have higher status than them.

Researchers claim that the building networks remain a persistent structural barrier for women, and not all networks are accessible to women (Durbin 2011, D'Exelle and Holvoet 2011). Sonfield and Lussier (2005) reveal that women have been found to be more dependent and have a greater concern for others, particularly their families, whereas men tend to be more independent.

Female entrepreneurs' decisions are largely shaped by the social and cultural constraints which surround them. While the respondents in the study use various negotiating tactics, such as role-sharing and making a person feel guilty, the most common way in which respondents negotiate gender roles is by internally negotiating. Looking at how these internalized perceptions form and are communicated, many of the women view entrepreneurship as more than just an economic activity, but as a social process within which they are embodied, as entrepreneurship is predicated by their life, rather than solely being a way to earn money.

The division of business and household responsibilities is traditional.

The man's task is to protect women and children and to provide for them materially, and in this role, men dominate all aspects of business and public life. However, as in the case above, apart from their traditional role, women are supposed to do everything else. From this viewpoint, the women are particularly equipped to cross the boundaries of the traditional roles played by women and to bridge and connect the world.

Role division was found to differ significantly between husband and wife, and it seemed to affect the learning potential of the work environment. Moreover, the roles are strictly divided along traditional gender lines: the men usually lead the outside activities, such as going for airport pickups or drops, looking into all the construction work, organizing tours, looking after the marketing side of the business, participating in various training programmes and conferences, while the women manage money, handle administrative tasks and oversee the hotel kitchen (Surangi 2017). This evidence demonstrates that female entrepreneurs involved in tourism carry out a division of jobs and responsibilities, directly limiting the opportunities for participation, networking and learning.

This finding complies with the literature, as scholars claim that it is still only very few women who try actively to involve their husbands in domestic activities in many countries. Garcia and Welter (2011) identified this situation and explained that the male contribution is still low in terms of domestic work such as washing clothes, childcare, cleaning, cooking, taking care of elderly family members etc., because these domestic tasks are socially considered as feminine tasks. Furthermore, Garcia and Welter (2011), claim that husbands generally involve themselves only occasionally in household activities, usually as a result of being encouraged or pressured by their wife.

The Asian housewife has a special place in the home. She has to be there for the husband who comes home tired after work, look after the children, prepare the meals and keep the house

and garden clean (Kodagoda 2011). She performs all these tasks without any complaint. At mealtimes, women typically eat last, after they have served the men and the children of the household (Kodagoda 2011). As many females are currently employed, there should be a change in the traditional role of the woman as a housewife. However, whatever the position a woman may hold in society, whether she is employed or not, she is nevertheless responsible for domestic work.

Mothers' usual domestic practices were a shared allocation with their husbands, but with the bulk of the tasks taken on by the women.

Blending work and family dimensions create new opportunities for tensions.

Women often face contradictory societal expectations with regard to career development and motherhood (Duberley and Carrigan 2012). Both "at home" and employed/business mothers are affected by this ideology (Johnston and Swanson 2006); they are expected to sacrifice their own needs for those of their children and to commit their time to the care of their children and their leisure activities (Johnston and Swanson 2006). A common factor among all the respondents was that they all wanted to be available to look after their children. A majority described stressful times trying to combine their business with motherhood.

The above excerpts are evidence that these women experience pressure when they are trying to combine business and also be available for their children. These two roles conflict with how they are allocating their time. Consequently, they felt that they were bad mothers. This is similar to the significant findings in Japan (Leung 2011) and the UK (Duberley and Carrigan 2012), in which women discussed the tensions caused when their business required more attention, which took them away from their expected mothering duties.

Many comparative gender studies specifically find that women are more influenced than men in areas such as family responsibilities (Klyver 2007, Blisson and Rana 2001), domestic commitments and child-rearing. This is

strongly supported by the findings of the interview data collected from female business owners. It seems that the notion of being a good mother dominates the female entrepreneurs' stories. At other times, these women explained the stresses caused when the business needed increased attention, which took them away from their mothering duties. They limit their network activities in order to be able to be at home with their children; however, women are less available to their children compared to "full-time, stay at home" mothers (Duberley and Carrigan 2012). Therefore, they have rejected the identity of a full-time "stay at home" mother and created a business as a means of developing a new career identity which combines motherhood and work.

Definition of the female entrepreneur as problematic

In the last two decades, entrepreneurship has received much attention from all domains of society such as academia, economics, research, social work, politics and government (Roomi 2009). Developed countries consider innovation as the main characteristic of entrepreneurship, whereas developing countries identify entrepreneurship as a self-employment solution (Roomi 2009). Both these viewpoints lead to desired socio-economic development for all countries which support entrepreneurship through policies and grants (Roomi 2009).

Like their male counterparts, there is no standard definition of what constitutes a female entrepreneur (Moore 1990), except for the fact that she is a woman. The initial research on female entrepreneurs concentrated on their characteristics (Brush 1992). Demographics, psychological traits and business skills are all characteristics that are used to define a female entrepreneur (Brush 1992). However, these characteristics are all based on the research conducted on male entrepreneurs (Bird and Brush 2002, Hytti 2005). To complicate matters even further, the precise definition of entrepreneurship, that "entrepreneurs bring to the market products or services that are new or not already available

in the market (Deakins, D, O'Neill, and Mileham 2006) and that the owner risks uncertainty for the sake of making a profit" makes defining female entrepreneurship more problematic. Since most of the businesses created by women, in general, are in traditional sectors such as retail, hospitality and other low-end services, they do not fall into the category of entrepreneurship (Marlow and Patton 2005, Roomi 2009). The tourism sector is dominated by low-skilled employment, seasonal demand rounds and perceived low levels of innovation and entrepreneurship (c). Marlow (2002) argued that women's subordination within wider society is brought with them into self-employment and that this idea fundamentally underpins the evidence that indicates that enterprises owned by women are located in highly competitive sectors with low margins are likely to remain small and perform poorly. Rural tourism is characterised by low margins and highly competitive small businesses, and copreneurial businesses are typically small in size (typically they have no employees and only provide part-time employment for the owners).

Key patterns of couples in multiplex relationships

Female business owners perform multiple roles and tasks in their businesses. Naturally, their accounts of their efforts to manage the combination of business and domestic duties include moments of stress and conflict as they attempted to allocate time to the demands placed on them in both arenas (Ekinsmyth 2013, Duberley and Carrigan 2012). Sri Lankan women's gender identity has been constructed around the idea of a "dutiful wife and caring mother" (Surangi 2018). Combined with a business system based on gender segregation, the gender role identity in many counties (Surangi 2018) has been regarded as a constraining factor on women's participation in business activities.

Discussion

The subsequent section provides a holistic discussion of the findings in the context of our research objectives. Finally, conclusions are

drawn, and avenues worthy of future research are proposed. 40% were published within the last five years alone, suggesting that gender had now become a legitimate area of scholarly inquiry within the entrepreneurship field. However, it must be recognised that a relatively small percentage of such scholarship is being published in the higher tiered journals, a trend which, in itself, has the potential to restrict the future development of the field.

The majority of papers regarding copreneurs in our review adopt an exploratory or purely descriptive approach, and this is sustained over the three decades. However, the range of research questions investigated expands quite significantly over the review period, commencing with profiles of women and men entrepreneurs, their start-up experiences and management practices/strategies during periods 1 and 2, through to questions that focus on the barriers/challenges women entrepreneurs face, their attitudes/intentions, family influences and training/education. Interestingly, the most popular research topics over the entire 30-year period were finance/access to capital (41 studies), performance (39) and motivation (20).

Conclusion

The analysis of the texts revealed several constructs that were taken for granted about women, men, businesses and the social world. Main findings based on the analysis reveal six hegemonic statements: the love bond between a husband and wife develops stronger with involvement in a copreneurial venture, socially constructed men and women, the division of business and household responsibilities is traditional, blending of work and family dimensions creates new opportunities for tensions, conceptions of the female entrepreneur as problematic, female copreneurs and challenges of being in business with spouse and key patterns of couples in multiplex relationships. These influences reproduce the notion of essential gender differences and the idea of the female as the weaker sex. The research results are moreover dependent on the particular context in which the articles are produced. This means that their

results and assumptions cannot be generalized to other contexts uncritically.

Following the texts reported in this research, studies occupied in overlapping home and business worlds, using the copreneurial agenda seem both feasible and intellectually fascinating. Further research is possible into changing motivations of business owners in copreneurial ventures over time. Moreover, researchers in this study believe it possible to explore further gender-based identities, stereotypes and possibly coping strategies of both female and male copreneurs as this research does not allow for first-hand or authentic experiences. By discussing research findings, the study opens the avenues for alternative ways of theorizing and researching entrepreneurial couples. Suggestions for alternative research practices include the adding of an institutional approach to the research agenda, such as family policy, and legislation.

Despite efforts to produce as comprehensive a review as possible, the authors acknowledge that some articles may have been inadvertently omitted. This is inevitable, given that we limited our review to a specific number of journals over a specific period. Furthermore, as with all reviews, we acknowledge the inherent subjectivity of our critique, although efforts were made to counteract this through discussions amongst the author team to cross check perspectives and gain consensus.

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