

Chapter 8

Sociocultural Factors and Female Entrepreneurship in the Innovative Service Sector in Catalonia: A Qualitative Analysis

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1 Introduction

Female entrepreneurship has been considered an important and increasing element of economic development [Brush et al. 2006; Langowitz and Minniti 2007; Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development (OECD) 2004, 2009]. Currently, female entrepreneurship is at a disadvantage, as demonstrated by the significant differences between female and male entrepreneurial initiatives. The entrepreneurial activity in Spain has suffered a very significant downturn; in the last year the total entrepreneurial activity (TEA), one of the best-known indicators of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor project (GEM), was 5.4 % for the male population and 3.2 % for the female population, with accumulated reductions of 33 % and 47 %, respectively, in the last 3 years (Güemes et al. 2010).

Previous literature on female entrepreneurship identified the main characteristics of female and male entrepreneurship, emphasising environmental factors such as public policy or access to financial resources. However, the influence of social and cultural factors on female entrepreneurship has been understudied.

Research into the relationship between sociocultural factors and entrepreneurship is not new (Aldrich and Zimmer 1986; Berger 1991; Davidsson 1995; Thornton 1999),

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but the focus has been more on economic and technical aspects than the significant role played by social and cultural factors in entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, in recent years, there has been an increase in this research (Audretsch et al. 2011; Hayton et al. 2002; Korsgaard and Anderson 2011; Steyaert and Katz 2004; Thornton et al. 2011), and the findings suggest that entrepreneurship is embedded in a sociocultural context, revealing that it is a societal phenomenon rather than a purely economic activity (Steyaert 2007).

Moreover, the environmental factors are more significant in female initiatives than in male initiatives (Alsos and Ljunggren 1998; Baughn et al. 2006; Carter 2000). Recent investigation reveals a secondary role of female entrepreneurship in society (De la Vega et al. 2009; Güemes et al. 2010) and reflects how social and cultural factors might have a greater impact on female entrepreneurship than on male entrepreneurship (Jennings and McDougald 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the main sociocultural factors and their impact on female entrepreneurship in the innovative service sector in Catalonia (Spain) and to establish differences to male initiatives using the institutional approach (North 1990, 2005) as a theoretical framework. Based on a comparative case study, the principal findings suggest that social networks, role models, entrepreneurial attitudes and family context are important determinants of female entrepreneurship. Family context is, in particular, a crucial factor, which might have a larger impact on women than men.

The research contributes both theoretically, with the creation of knowledge in a less researched areas such as female entrepreneurship in Spain, and practically, through the development of sustainable support policies for female entrepreneurial activity.

After this brief introduction, the structure of this chapter is as follows. First, the conceptual background is presented along with the main characteristics of the institutional economics. Second, the research design and data method are described. In the next section, the main findings of the study are discussed. Finally, the implications, both theoretical and practical, are drawn in the conclusions.

2 Female Entrepreneurship and Sociocultural Factors from an Institutional Perspective

Nowadays, there is literature increasingly dedicated to the study of female entrepreneurship. These researches start from the moment in which the inclusion of women in the job market takes on greater importance and significance (Goffee and Scase 1990). Previously, research papers on female entrepreneurship were developed within the framework of feminist theories, with aims that were more pragmatic than academic, such as obtaining advantageous political and social results for women (Hurley 1999).

The study of female entrepreneurship has focused on a wide variety of themes among which a number predominate: (1) the principal characteristics of female entrepreneurs or their differences or similarities regarding intentions, motivations and self-efficacy as compared with those of their male counterparts (Brush 1992; Brush et al. 2006; Gatewood et al. 2003; Sexton and Bowman-Upton 1990; and Welter et al. 2006); (2) access to financial resources, where it is observed that, although the criteria for evaluation used by the financial institutions may be the same for women and men, there exist differences in the negotiation process or in the presentation of guarantees of return (Alsos et al. 2006; Brush 1992; Carter and Rosa 1998; Carter et al. 2007; Gatewood et al. 2009; Kim 2006; Marlow and Patton 2005); (3) management practices, growth and strategies for success (Carter and Cannon 1991); (4) economic and noneconomic entrepreneurship support programmes that, it may be observed, have had positive effects on female entrepreneurship (Alsos and Ljunggren 1998; Carter 2000; Nilsson 1997); and (5) social and cultural factors, given that in recent times there has been a marked increase in the study of gender differences in network structures, networking behaviour and the effect of social and cultural factors (Gatewood et al. 2009; Greve and Salaff 2003; Sorenson et al. 2008; Thornton et al. 2011).

The first researchers had tendency to underestimate the influence of social and cultural factors and overestimate the influence of personal and economic factors (Gartner 1995). However, there were authors who demonstrated feminisation in management qualities, establishing that “gender is not peripheral to a researcher’s understanding of management; gender is part of the very conceptualization of management” (Fondas 1997: p. 275). These researchers recognised feminine qualities, even though the authors didn’t define them as such.

There are currently an important number of academics who focus their entrepreneurship theories on the influences of environment. Within such a context, institutional theory provides an appropriate interpretive frame of reference to explain different issues related to entrepreneurship, more specifically the analysis of the environmental factors that condition entrepreneurial activity (Smallbone et al. 2010; Urbano et al. 2011).

North (1990, 2005) develops a wide concept of institutions, which are “a guide to human interaction”. More specifically, institutions are “the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, institutions are the constraints that shape human interaction” (North 1990: p. 3). North distinguishes between formal institutions (laws and regulations, policies, economic rules and contracts) and informal institutions (codes of conduct, attitudes, values and norms of behaviour).

Informal institutions are transmitted socially, shaping part of that which is called culture (North 1990), and, as we have observed previously, within the context of female entrepreneurship, the importance of informal institutions is presented as a key factor to explain the differences between women and men with respect to the creation of businesses.

Many of the empirical studies on institutional economics have considered formal institutions in their research (Chrisman et al. 1990; Lerner and Haber 2001), but in the last papers published, we can see an increasing amount of research into informal

institutions (Krueger et al. 2000; Thornton et al. 2011; Urbano et al. 2011). However, there has been little focus on the specific field of female entrepreneurship (Amine and Staub 2009; Baughn et al. 2006; Brush et al. 2009; Pardo-del-Val 2010).

The premise of our research is that all entrepreneurship is embedded within a social context (Aldrich and Zimmer 1986; Davidsson 2003; Steyaert and Katz 2004) and that, in order to understand female entrepreneurship, it is essential to study societal values, norms, culture and expectations of the capacities of women entrepreneurs.

Various authors share the opinion that entrepreneurship is an embedded phenomenon and, as such, the perception the entrepreneur has of the environment is as important as her relative position within that environment (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010; Jack and Anderson 2002). The beliefs, attitudes or behavioural norms of society (Thomas and Mueller 2000; Zahra et al. 1999) may emphasise the importance of one characteristic or another which would be more appropriate for the success of the entrepreneurial activity (Marlow and Patton 2005).

Linking the existing literature on female entrepreneurship and institutional economics, our research suggests four key sociocultural factors as important determinants of female entrepreneurship: (1) *Social networks* research is a popular topic in entrepreneurship, regarded as the “perennial and potential sapling in women’s entrepreneurship research” (de Bruin et al. 2007: p. 325). Yet, until recently, studies that considered women autonomously or compared them with male entrepreneurs were limited. The previous studies suggested that social networks normally facilitated the predisposition towards entrepreneurship, although not in the same way for both genders (Aldrich et al. 1989; Brush 1992; Greve and Salaff 2003; Kim and Aldrich 2005; Rosa and Hamilton 1994). (2) *Role models* research into entrepreneurship has confirmed the positive relationship between role models and entrepreneurship (Krueger et al. 2000; Scherer et al. 1989; Toledano and Urbano 2008); what remains to be seen is if the relationship is equal for both genders. Given the positive relationship between role models and entrepreneurship, BarNir et al. (2011) observed the effect role models have on self-efficacy while studying, at the same time, whether the effect is different for women as compared to men. Their results indicated that exposure to entrepreneurial role models is positively associated with entrepreneurial career intention, and they demonstrated that exposure to role models has a stronger positive effect on entrepreneurial self-efficacy for women than for men. Similarly, authors such as Schiller and Crewson (1997) suggest that there are differences between the effect that family role models have on men and women, observing that when a mother is an entrepreneur, the entrepreneurial intentions of women are affected, but not those of men. (3) Investigations into *entrepreneurial attitudes* have suggested many reasons to justify why women may consider an entrepreneurial career undesirable. One such reason is a perception that entrepreneurial activity belongs more to the male domain (Ahl 2002; Nilsson 1997), which may be disadvantageous for female entrepreneurial activity (Marlow 2002). In more recent studies, a change in tendency is observed: we can see that men and women with firm entrepreneurial intentions both perceive successful business people as possessing feminine attributes (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010). Similarly, it can also be

seen that the motivation and self-perception of women entrepreneurs is similar to that of men (Birley et al. 1987; Catley and Hamilton 1998; Fischer et al. 1993; Rosa and Dawson 2006; Schreier 1973). However, what is different is that society assigns higher management competence to men and more empathy, flexibility and communication skills to women (Brush et al. 2009; Fairlie and Robb 2009). Following this line, investigations have been conducted with the aim of determining whether the perceptions and beliefs regarding the empathetic attitudes of female entrepreneurs were due to physiological or intrinsic characteristics of women or whether they were determined by socialisation (Aldrich et al. 1989; Minniti and Nardone 2007; Shelton 2006; Yusuf and Saffu 2005).

Another reason that entrepreneurial activity is seen as less desirable for women than for men is found in the relationship between the perception of female entrepreneur's own capacities and the environment in which women or men must develop their entrepreneurship. In a society where the female role is tied up closely with family responsibilities, the idea that entrepreneurial activity is less desirable is instilled in women (Baughn et al. 2006; Langowitz and Minniti 2007). Kantor (2002) further comments on the existence of gender roles and responsibilities within society that limit female entrepreneurship but not male entrepreneurship. He defines the concepts of "women exclusive constraints", distinguishing them from others, such as "women intensive constraints", limitations which affect men as much as women, though they affect the latter in a more relevant manner. The fourth sociocultural factor that determines female entrepreneurship is (4) *family context*. The integration of family in entrepreneurship has been examined by various authors over the last decade, suggesting the need to include this dimension in conceptualisation and analysis (Aldrich and Cliff 2003). Prior to the inception of this concept, the embeddedness approach had ignored one of the institutions to which all entrepreneurs are related, the family.

Authors like Williams (2004) conducted studies on whether the family, in particular the maternal role, affects female entrepreneurship, observing that while it is not conclusive that the time dedicated to the care of children influences the success of a business, social responsibility is an important element in the decision to create a company.

The situation in Spain has changed greatly in the last century. The family context for the woman has been modified as her participation in the labour market has increased, allowing her to gain experience and finance, but placing unfair labour practices (the glass ceiling) in her path, all of which may motivate female entrepreneurs to create their own businesses. As authors such as Brush (1992) note, female entrepreneurship is often motivated by the failure to achieve the desired work situation.

Furthermore, the relationship between family members has undergone changes in the last half century: it has developed from the traditional family model that includes a father and mother and where the woman might work professionally, to today, where a widely diverse set of household types exist (with children, without children, children with just one parent, elderly fathers, etc.). As Bianchi (2000) pointed out a decade ago, all of these changes may cause variations in the time dedicated to a professional activity and to the family, as well as its influence on female entrepreneurship.

The new family relationships bring with them new needs (persons to take care of the children, of the parents, etc.), and, as various authors have pointed out, “these changes in the social bonds between family members are creating entrepreneurial opportunities” (Aldrich and Cliff 2003: p. 588), which may also in some cases promote female entrepreneurship.

3 Methodology

This research uses a qualitative methodology based on case studies following Eisenhardt (1989, 2007) and Yin (1989, 1994). It is worth noting that this methodology is being used more often within the field of new venture creation (Rosa and Dawson 2006; Urbano et al. 2011).

The methodology of case study, which involves the examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, is the design recommended for studying a complex and under-explored area (Eisenhardt 1989, 2007; Yin 1989, 1994).

Case-study research can be based on single or multiple case studies (Yin 1989, 1994); to guarantee reliability and validity in the analysis of cases, multiple sources of evidence should be used to analyse the same factor. In order to fulfil the precept of reliability, a pilot phase is carried out before obtaining the final data: we analyse two companies (one created by women and one by men) to validate the designed protocol for the semi-structured interviews. We use the same protocol for all cases so to provide stable and consistent results while also obtaining information from secondary sources and developing a database with the information obtained from the analysed cases.

This research utilises a multiple case study design following a theoretical replication to explore the main sociocultural factors that influence female entrepreneurship in the service sector in Catalonia (Spain) and to establish the differences with regard to male initiatives.

The selection process began with contacts with ten entrepreneurs, who in the last 3 years had created their own businesses in the services sector in Catalonia, one of the regions in Spain with the largest number of businesses (18.5 %)¹ and one of the four regions with a services sector, which generates almost 70 % of its business volume, and with one of the highest entrepreneurship indices of European Union countries (De la Vega et al. 2009). From among these ten entrepreneurs—five women and five men—three women and three men were selected, and within these two subgroups we included one immigrant entrepreneur, with the goal of obtaining the greatest diversity of information (Eisenhardt 1989) from the point of view of the study on the effects of sociocultural factors on female entrepreneurship. Table 8.1 provides a summary description of participating cases.

¹ INE (2012).

Table 8.1 Characteristic and basic profiles of the cases of study

| Case studies | Case 1 | Case 2 | Case 3 | Case 4 | Case 5 | Case 6 |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| <i>Entrepreneur profile</i> | Female, 28 years old, single, Barcelona (Spain) | Male, 45 years old, married, one daughter, Salamanca (Spain) | Female, 31 years old, married, two children, Barcelona (Spain) | Male, 24 years old, single, Barcelona (Spain) | Female, 40 years old, married, two children, Santiago de Chile (Chile) | Male, 42 years old, married, two children, Qingtian (China) |
| <i>Business activity, year of constitution and location</i> | Publicity and brand communication strategies, 2009, Barcelona | Sales of computers and computer components, repair service and technical assessment, 2010, Abrera (Barcelona) | Fashion design and cosmetics, 2009, Igualada (Barcelona) | Travel agency, 2010, Sabadell (Barcelona) | Food industry, 2008, Barcelona | Textile and accessories, 2010, Barcelona |
| <i>Entrepreneurship support programmes</i> | Makes use of noneconomic entrepreneurship support programmes | Makes use of noneconomic entrepreneurship support programmes | Makes use of economic and noneconomic entrepreneurship support programmes | Does not make use of entrepreneurship support programmes | Makes use of economic and noneconomic entrepreneurship support programmes | Does not make use of entrepreneurship support programmes |
| <i>Education level, previous experience</i> | University studies and masters. Previous experience in the sector | Professional studies and incomplete university studies. Without previous experience in the sector but possessing ample knowledge due to personal relationships and hobbies | Nonuniversity professional studies. Previous experience in the sector | Currently studying at university. Possesses some understanding of the sector, thanks to the work-study programmes he participated in at various companies | Basic, nonuniversity studies. Currently undertaking language studies. High level of previous experience in commercial activities | Basic, nonuniversity studies. Previous experience, related to current activity, gained in businesses owned by his fellow countrymen |

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

| Case studies | Case 1 | Case 2 | Case 3 | Case 4 | Case 5 | Case 6 |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Reasons for entrepreneurship</i> | Self-fulfilment and personal improvement, desire to create a business | Self-fulfilment and personal improvement and the desire to reconcile professional and family environment. His previous occupation kept him away from the family home | The impossibility of finding a financially satisfactory job and the desire for self-fulfilment | Started his business when opportunity presented itself | Difficulty finding adequate, reasonably paid employment | Aspirations of having his own business |
| <i>Antecedents and key characteristics</i> | Began her professional career working for an important advertising agency where she was assigned major brands, but she wished to apply her knowledge to small- and medium-sized companies and to have more direct contact with people and their needs | Worked as a salesman in multinationals. A year and half ago, he had a daughter and wished to spend more time with his family while doing something he enjoyed | For some time had already considered the idea of creating something which was her own, but it was not until she was without work and having trouble finding another job that she decided to start her own business | During his participation in the university work-study programme, he met a colleague and they made plans to start up a business once they had finished their studies. However, there was opportunity to obtain a well-located store and so they decided to advance their plans | Had worked in many businesses and diverse occupations—restaurant industry, domestic work, shops, etc.—but the moment arrived when finding employment became difficult and she decided to start her own business | Had been working at companies run by fellow Chinese, saving money in order to start his own successful business, which is the reason he moved from his country of origin |
| <i>Interviews</i> | November 2009 to June 2010 | November 2009 to June 2010 | November 2009 to June 2010 | November 2009 to June 2010 | January 2011 to July 2011 | January 2011 to July 2011 |
| <i>Lasting</i> | 90–120 min on average | 60–90 min on average | 45–120 min on average | 90–120 min on average | 90–120 min on average | 45–60 min on average |

Data were collected over a 20-month period (November 2009 to July 2011), and the interviews were based on three sources of evidence. Firstly, men and women entrepreneurs complying with the basic guidelines were contacted. Secondly, the direct families and friends of the entrepreneurs were interviewed (parents, partners, children and friends) so as to be able to identify the influence of social networks and family context on entrepreneurship and to understand the interdependence between them.

Finally, three entrepreneurship experts offered their views regarding the influence of social and cultural factors on female and male entrepreneurship and the differences between them, lending themselves as a whole to the triangulation of the data obtained.

4 Findings and Discussion

The evidence obtained from the case studies, based on interviews, observations and secondary information, together with the knowledge provided by the literature on the subject, allows us to present a series of propositions on the influence of sociocultural factors, or informal institutions, according to North (1990, 2005), on female entrepreneurship, as well as to establish the existing differences between women and men entrepreneurs. Table 8.2 shows the main characteristics of sociocultural factors or informal institutions in the six case studies.

In the following, we discuss the sociocultural factors, from an institutional perspective (North 1990, 2005).

4.1 *Social Networks*

Evidence from case studies indicates similar points of view of the previous literature, reaffirming differences between the social networks created by women entrepreneurs and men entrepreneurs, as demonstrated by Case 2, in contrast to Cases 1, 3 and 5.

In these latter cases, one can observe that the social networks used most by these female entrepreneurs were family members, but in the case of male entrepreneurs, the importance of friendships, and above all professional contacts, obtained earlier on is reaffirmed, as in Case 2, where we note that:

The contacts my previous job afforded me are something that cannot be bought; they have been of great use to me, especially when obtaining references in order to secure the money necessary to start the company (Case 2).

We have relied exclusively on help from the family; we have to help one another, today for me, tomorrow for you (Case 3).

Table 8.2 Summary of sociocultural factors or informal institute

| Case studies | Case 1 | Case 2 | Case 3 | Case 4 | Case 5 | Case 6 |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| <i>Social networks</i> | Mix of networks made up of friends and colleagues, whom she has met in the course of carrying out her professional activity, and family networks. | Social networks made up exclusively of friends and colleagues. Makes use of these networks in order to obtain financing and technical information | Social networks made up exclusively of family members. Few friends have their own businesses and fewer in the sector in question | Social networks made up exclusively of family members. There are no friendships involved | Social networks made up basically of family members and close friends | Social networks made up basically of family members and fellow countrymen who are entrepreneurs and have similar businesses |
| | Diverse importance of each network according to needs, although the family networks have always been a constant factor with greater or lesser prominence | | | | | |
| Mixed networks (men and women) | Networks made up almost exclusively of men | Does not distinguish between networks according to gender and economic aspects. She consulted basically men | Basically, they discussed with men (father and professional consultants) | The people she consulted regarding economic aspects were basically males | Makes use of networks to obtain financing and labour for his company | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p><i>Role models</i></p> <p>Belongs to a professional association</p> <p>Her father, a businessman. Fundamentally male role models</p> | <p>Does not belong to any professional association</p> <p>Friends who are businessmen and colleagues and acquaintances in the professional environment. Fundamentally male gender</p> | <p>Does not belong to any professional association</p> <p>No noteworthy role models</p> | <p>Does not belong to any professional association</p> <p>Father, who is a businessman, and acquaintances through his father. Basically, male gender</p> | <p>Role models within his community of origin, friends and countrymen who have created similar businesses (women and men)</p> |
| <p><i>Entrepreneurial attitudes</i></p> <p>She has doubts about her capacities because she is young and a woman, traits associated with less experience. Society does not prepare a person for entrepreneurship, an aspect which lately, nevertheless, has greatly improved</p> <p>Reluctant when faced with risks. She believes she makes use of all</p> | <p>Society values the "more social" professions, such as doctors</p> | <p>Society places high value on the activity</p> | <p>Highly values the activity of the businessperson, independently of gender, as a minimum in the sector dealt with</p> | <p>At his country there are biases towards the creation of businesses. He has a high level of confidence in personal capacities</p> |
| <p>Society basically generates workers who work for others. High</p> | <p>Society does not prepare us for entrepreneurship. Low expectations</p> | <p>High levels of self-confidence, vitality and enthusiasm</p> | <p>Women in this society are more inclined to work for others than</p> | <p>The current economic situation isn't important, he</p> |

(continued)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <i>Family context</i> | <p>The family context is basic; it may facilitate access to financing which otherwise would be quite difficult to obtain. It may also make it easier for many women to be able to create their own company and help cope with family responsibilities</p> | <p>The family context is important, especially with respect to motivation. An adequate family context should facilitate reconciliation with family women to be able to create their own company and help cope with family responsibilities</p> | <p>The family context is essential in order to be able to undertake any professional activity in today's world. Women have family responsibilities which, whether imposed on us by society or not, we desire to fulfil; it is not just an obligation</p> | <p>Dedication to family affects male and female entrepreneurs equally. The family context has been very important for the financing, information and support</p> | <p>The family context is basic; without help from family, both economic and general support, it would not have been possible to start her own business</p> | <p>The whole family has a responsibility to the business. The relationship family-business dissolves; one is not understood without the other</p> | |
| | | <p>This entrepreneur quit his previous job in order to be able to combine work and professional life. Nonetheless, he recognises that many women do not have the option to choose</p> | | | | <p>Creating a business has not modified her dedication to her family; I still perform the same domestic. That my children are now older helps me greatly in combining activities</p> | <p>All that is achieved leads to the well-being of the family or of the community, above the interests of the person</p> |

The women's social networks tend to be smaller and consist basically of family members, and male entrepreneurs' social networks tend to be bigger and made up exclusively of men.

Men dominate the top positions in the financial systems, and this may be one of the reasons why women find it increasingly difficult to access financing for their projects and opportunities from their environment. For instance, in Cases 2 and 6, there are social networks that provide the support and financing necessary for entrepreneurship. This is an aspect which has been confirmed in previous literature (Aldrich et al. 1989; Brush 1992; Gatewood et al. 2009; Greve and Salaff 2003; Sorenson et al. 2008; Urbano et al. 2011). The above discussion gives rise to the following proposition:

Proposition 1. *Social networks have a positive effect on entrepreneurship.*

Proposition 1a. *The familiar social networks are more positively related to female than male entrepreneurship.*

Proposition 1b. *The social networks of women entrepreneurs have more gender equality among their members than those of men.*

Proposition 1c. *The strategic social networks are more related to male than female entrepreneurship.*

4.2 Role Models

In our cases of study, it is observed that the role models of the female entrepreneur are found basically within the family, rather than being sought outside the immediate environment, whether her town, community or society generally. As a motivating element, this aspect is fulfilled in Case 5, where role models are entrepreneurs already established in the community, or in Case 6, where role models are found in the family environment as well as among countrymen who have previously created businesses. In Case 2 we observe the importance of role models from outside the immediate family environment. The little influence of the nonfamily member role models is reaffirmed in the case of the Spanish female entrepreneur. This is an aspect mentioned by some of those we interviewed:

Nobody from my family has created a business, we have always served others, but I do know colleagues from Chile and from other countries who have created business (Case 4).

I have businessmen friends I met at my previous job and whom I really admire; I have always wanted to be like them (...) and one day I decided to (Case 2).

I believe that had my father not been a businessman I would have found it more difficult to create my business, but it is what I have always lived (Case 1).

These findings are supported by previous studies, which analyse the positive correlation between the decision to become an entrepreneur and having parents who are entrepreneurs (Chlosta et al. 2010; Dunn and Holtz-Eakin 2000; Fairlie and Robb 2007; Hout and Rosen 2000).

They also point out that men and women are both affected by role models, but while these exist for men via the media, they are currently lacking for women, and therefore women need more personal role models (BarNir et al. 2011). Therefore, we suggest the following proposition:

Proposition 2. *Role models positively affect entrepreneurship.*

Proposition 2a. *Family role models are more positively related to female than male entrepreneurship.*

Proposition 2b. *Nonfamily role models are less positively related to female than male entrepreneurship.*

4.3 Entrepreneurial Attitudes

We emphasised in Cases 1 and 5 that management by women is more participative, communicative, empathetic and flexible, and there is more sharing of information and working together as a team. There are similar findings in previous studies (Brush 1992; Eddleston and Powell 2008). The women are of the opinion that their entrepreneurial education is quite reduced and that society generates stereotypes related to their capacities or the types of jobs for the women are prepared. For example:

At times I have found that they have associated the fact that I am a woman and young with a reduced capacity, an aspect which changes once work has begun (. . .) the problem is getting the job (Case 1).

The ideas that people have regarding the jobs which women, and especially women immigrants, are capable of carrying out may limit you at the moment (Case 5).

According to the analysed cases, favourable entrepreneurial attitudes constitute an important factor in explaining entrepreneurship (Cases 2 and 4–6, of which only one is a woman). It is noted that:

Working at other companies I saw that I was missing something, and furthermore I have always worked freelance, helping friends who had businesses, and I had wanted to put something of my own together (Case 1).

It was natural; when I had saved up enough money I would begin my own business (Case 6).

Therefore, we propose the following:

Proposition 3. *Favourable entrepreneurial attitudes have a positive effect on entrepreneurial activity.*

Proposition 3a. *The favourable entrepreneurial attitudes of women are more positively related with the creation of businesses than those of men, especially in non-technological sectors.*

4.4 Family Context

In our case, we observe that in Cases 1–3 and 5 all the female entrepreneurs and one male equally demonstrate the need to reconcile dedication to family and business. Some of their answers were:

Women have the obligation and the need to combine their professional activity with taking care of the family (Case 1).

Creating my own business has not altered my dedication to my family; I still do the same household chores, but at different moments, and, furthermore, having children who are older has helped greatly to combine everything (Case 5).

The family context is basic; it can bring money or facilitate access to financing as in my case, or in others help in the care of the children (Case 1).

These findings are supported by previous studies, which suggest that working women still bear the main responsibility for household chores, even when they work full-time outside the home, and this fact is seen as discouraging female entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Cliff 2003; Williams 2004).

We observe that in the cases presented in this paper the importance of a family context, which favours female entrepreneurship, becomes essential, whether it be to provide the financing necessary to undertake a business venture, as motivation or help in taking care of the children. It is evident that the family context may have a greater impact on female entrepreneurship than on male entrepreneurship (Jennings and McDougald 2007), and the need for the family embeddedness perspective on entrepreneurship becomes essential (Aldrich and Cliff 2003; Brush et al. 2009). Therefore, we suggest this final proposition:

Proposition 4. *The family context conditions entrepreneurship.*

Proposition 4a. *The family context is more negatively related to female entrepreneurship than male entrepreneurship.*

Proposition 4b. *The traditional family context is negatively related to female entrepreneurship.*

5 Conclusions, Limitations and Implications

The aim of this paper was to analyse the main sociocultural factors and their impact on female entrepreneurship, as well as to present their differentiation among female and male entrepreneurship in the innovative service sector in Catalonia. The results reaffirm the importance of the influence of sociocultural context on the female entrepreneurship. Moreover, as we propose in consideration of the environment observed, informal factors benefit our understanding not only of female entrepreneurship but also of male entrepreneurship.

We have combined the literature on female entrepreneurship and institutional economics (North 1990, 2005) and the information obtained from the case studies

according to Yins's qualitative methodology (1989, 1994, 2003). Then we have suggested four propositions derived from our study, in order to propose a theoretical model to explain the influence of the sociocultural factors on female entrepreneurship (see Fig. 8.1).

Concerning the main findings of the study, it is observed that social networks are important to the promotion of entrepreneurship, and in the case of female entrepreneurs, these networks are basically made up of family and friends, who do not provide them with the necessary contacts to access easily financing or help in identifying opportunities. They must, for example, depend on the family in order to obtain the money that they do not obtain from financial institutions. There are strategic differences into social networks between female and male entrepreneurs. Of further importance are role models, who, in the case of female entrepreneurs, are from within the family; they are not found in their community or in society. This latter aspect differs from that observed among male entrepreneurs and female immigrant entrepreneurs. A third important sociocultural factor relates to the favourable entrepreneurial attitudes which Spanish society inculcates. As a result, the lack of entrepreneurship education (a problem, nevertheless, which is being gradually resolved with the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills in secondary and higher education) means that society continues to emphasise directly or indirectly attitudes and responsibilities tied to the family and which often instil in women the notion that entrepreneurial activity is less adequate or less desirable than other activities. This study found that family context is a crucial factor in the development of female entrepreneurial activities, one which, in light of the information obtained, may not be considered as simply another sociocultural factor of female entrepreneurship, but rather a factor which also affects the rest.

Different implications can, therefore, be drawn. From a political point of view, the research results may contribute to the creation of knowledge in an underexplored area such as female entrepreneurship in Spain, which could help politicians in the development of a sustainable entrepreneurial support infrastructure that might better meet the needs of female as well as male entrepreneurs. From the academic point of view, this study contributes to an understanding of sociocultural factors (Davidsson 2003; Downing 2005; Urbano et al. 2011) or informal institutions, based on the work of North (1990, 2005), which affect female entrepreneurship in the service sector in Catalonia (Aldrich and Cliff 2003; de Bruin et al. 2007; Brush et al. 2009). To conclude, we believe that the study presented here might provide a starting point for future research into female entrepreneurship. The limitations of the research project also indicate the next steps to take; for example, our framework could be applied to other contexts and other methodologies could be employed (Perren and Ram 2004). It might also be interesting to test empirically the propositions derived from this research, using quantitative techniques and wider samples of female and male entrepreneurs. It would then be possible to reach more generalised conclusions regarding the influence of sociocultural factors and especially of the family context on female entrepreneurship.

Another direction for future research, along the same lines as BarNir et al. (2011) and Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno (2010), would be the study of how gender

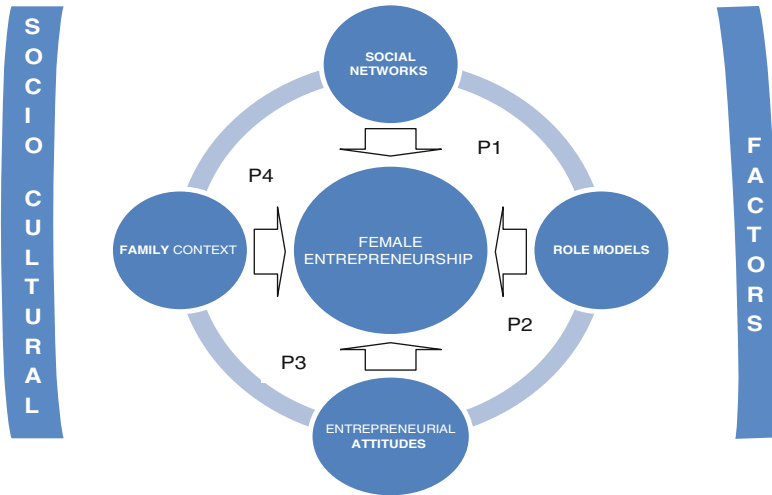


Fig. 8.1 Sociocultural factors and female entrepreneurship

interacts with the relationships between the various sociocultural factors studied and entrepreneurial intention.

Following the studies initiated by authors such as Brush et al. (2009), we wish to reaffirm the importance of establishing a framework which includes dynamic elements that move with the time and locus of research and dependent on the vital stage at which women starts an entrepreneurial process.

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