



## Women as Economic Actors: New Sources, Theories, and Methods


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## **Women as Economic Actors: New Sources, Theories, and Methods**

### **Abstract**

Women, as economic actors, perform different activities in a myriad of contexts, while dealing with the expectations of their societies and organizations. Following the increasing number of studies about women, this special issue reflects on the nature and extent of the challenges posed by their activities in Argentina, China, Colombia, and Sri Lanka since the late 1970s. This special issue is a joint interdisciplinary effort to move forward with analyzing the changes and transformations of their economic and entrepreneurial activities.

**Keywords:** Women, Intersectionality, Entrepreneurship, Work, Emerging economies

## **Les dones com a agents econòmics: noves fonts, teories i mètodes**

### **Resum**

Les dones, com a actores econòmiques, realitzen diferents activitats en una infinitat de contextos, alhora que tracten les expectatives de les seves societats i organitzacions. Tenint en compte l'augment del nombre d'estudis sobre dones, aquest número especial reflexiona sobre la naturalesa i l'abast dels reptes plantejats per les seves activitats a Argentina, Xina, Colòmbia i Sri Lanka des de finals dels anys setanta. Aquest número especial és un esforç interdisciplinari conjunt per avançar en l'anàlisi dels canvis i transformacions de les seves activitats econòmiques i emprenedores.

**Paraules clau:** dones, interseccionalitat, emprenedoria, treball, economies emergents

## **Las mujeres como agentes económicos: nuevas fuentes, teorías y métodos**

### **Resumen**

Las mujeres, como actores económicos, realizan distintas actividades en una gran variedad de contextos, al tiempo que se enfrentan a las expectativas de sus sociedades y organizaciones. Atendiendo al aumento del número de estudios sobre mujeres, en este número especial se reflexiona sobre la naturaleza y el alcance de los desafíos de las actividades económicas de las mujeres en Argentina, China, Colombia y Sri Lanka desde finales de los años 1970. Este número especial es un esfuerzo interdisciplinario conjunto para avanzar en el análisis de los cambios y las transformaciones de sus actividades económicas y empresariales.

**Palabras clave:** mujeres, interseccionalidad, emprendimiento, trabajo, economías emergentes

## Introduction

In an interview after winning the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2023, Claudia Goldin mentioned that ‘empowerment’ has two parts: one related to giving control, education, and protection to a person and another in which activities are done within a community (French Gates 2024). As guest editors for this special issue, this sentence reflects our aim: to present recent research on the activities of women in emerging economies, building up an interdisciplinary community that explores questions, sources, and methods to further explain how women have taken a diversity of paths to be part of industry and business, as leaders, workers, consumers, shareholders or investors and explore how their cultural, social, and economic background has shaped their pursuits.

Understanding the wide range of literature written about women (Bilmoria and Piderit 2007; Dean et. al. 2024; Ginalski et.al. 2024), when we planned this special issue, we were interested in studies that found women in diverse spaces: either an economic sector or an industry, or within a particular organization, whether this refers to sectors or sizes—micro, small, and medium-sized companies and large national and transnational companies. Following the term “quiet revolution”, coined by Goldin to describe the dynamics of the gender gap in the US labor market while developing an understanding of the impact of context, education, and health policies on women (Goldin 2021, 2006, 1995; Goldin and Katz 2000). We sought research articles that identify change and transformation over time of these roles, highlighting the special vocation of this journal.

While we named the issue "Women as economic actors", we understand that women worldwide are not exclusively defined by

gender. As presented by intersectionality scholars (Hill Collins 2015), we encourage that women are conceptualized in all their complexity as economic and social subjects. We proposed the perspective of intersectionality (Hill Collins 2015 and Viveros Vigoya 2022) as a valuable resource to understand women’s identities, experiences, and the way societal inequalities emerge through multiple social categories which create “interlocking axes of oppression”, such as race-ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, national origin/citizenship status or ability/disability, among others.

Our framework resulted in a special issue covering two regions, Asia and Latin America, and exploring women in four emerging economies, Argentina, China, Colombia, and Sri Lanka. These bring distinct cases and approaches that balance the usual emphasis on developed economies.

“From *Dagongmei* to Entrepreneurs: Unpacking the Emergence of Businesswomen in Shenzhen (1978–2000)” by Yuan Jia Zheng focuses on the emergence of female entrepreneurship in China, particularly in Shenzhen, from 1978 to 2000. It explores the roles of female workers (*Dagongmei*) transitioning into successful businesswomen despite challenging working conditions. The author adopts macro- and microeconomic approaches to analyze female labor participation in Shenzhen's manufacturing sector.

“Unveiling Entrepreneurial Identities: Perspectives from Women Entrepreneurs in the Global South” by Manesha Peiris, explores the concept of entrepreneurial identities, specifically focusing on women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka from the 2000s. The research emphasizes the importance of understanding the structural barriers that hinder women's agency in entrepreneurship and the need for

policies that promote an inclusive environment for women entrepreneurs. Overall, the findings contribute to the broader discussion on the complexities of women's entrepreneurship in non-western contexts and the micro-level coping strategies women employ to establish their presence and legitimacy as entrepreneurs.

"Mind the Gap: How Media in Colombia Shapes the Gender Divide" by Ana Pirela-Rios and Ana María Tribin-Urbe, analyzes gender biases in Colombian digital media using text mining techniques, focusing on language usage related to women, men, and migrants, specifically Venezuelan immigrants between 2015 and 2022. Findings reveal that legacy newspapers often depict women in caregiving roles and men in contexts of insecurity and crime, with positive tones more common for women and negative ones for men. The study illuminates societal perceptions shaped by media language and identifies challenges for both male and female migrants pertaining to xenophobia and gender biases in destination countries.

"From Eccentric to Professional: The Representation of Women Entrepreneurs in Business Magazines (Argentina 1986-2010)" by Magdalena Garmendia, focuses on the representation of women entrepreneurs in *Apertura*, an Argentine business magazine, between 1986 and 2010. Women entrepreneurs are frequently portrayed as atypical or incomplete due to extraordinary circumstances or exceptional personalities. However, from the mid-1990s, a shift occurred towards depicting them as assertive, autonomous, and professionally ambitious, marking a change to a more professional narrative. Despite the predominance of male representations, since the 2000s, there has been an increase in the visibility of women entrepreneurs in the magazine, aligning with the rise in female entrepreneurial activity in

Argentina during that period.

The four contributions in this issue present a variety of perspectives on the study of women.

The five authors are women who hold the nationality of the country they are studying. Three of them hold PhD degrees, one is studying for a PhD, and one recently completed her Master's. Two are economists, one is an engineer with management studies, one a political scientist, and one an economic historian. The shared nationality and interdisciplinary background adds a unique proximity and view of the challenges and nuances of the context they analyze, and a perspective that clearly comes up in their narratives.

The level of analysis varies across the cases: while the Sri Lankan study emphasizes micro-level analysis, the work on China deals with the macro - and micro-level analysis, and the cases of Argentina and Colombia focus on meso- and macro-level analysis. The articles cover a total of 44 years. Zheng's study of China spans 22 years (1978-2000), Garmendia's study of Argentina covers 14 years (1986-2010), Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe's article on Colombia examines eight years (2015-2022), and Peiris' study of Sri Lanka covers the last two decades.

In Latin America, the countries of Argentina and Colombia, are examined at the national level, through studies about media content. The article about China focuses on one city, Shenzhen, in Guangdong province, and its special economic zone. The piece about Sri Lankan entrepreneurs covers several regions of the country (mainly Western Province, but also Eastern, Southern, and Northern) and ethnicities (mainly Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamil).

The articles show women occupying positions at different levels of the hierarchy and in non-



corporate organizations expanding the scope of previous scholarship. Particularly, Zheng and Peiris, zoom in on women as workers (blue-collar and self-employed), and owners of both big formal enterprises and informal and small ventures. The studies did not cover consumers, shareholders, or investors, which we suggest for future research, particularly in emerging countries and from a historical perspective. Two of the articles, Garmendia and Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe provide a larger cultural context, which helps to understand how women were constructed simultaneously as economic and social subjects, as they examine women's depiction in the media, as entrepreneurs, and migrants.

The issue covers various sizes of companies, including micro, small, and medium-sized ones. In emerging economies, the latter are relevant, not only because they comprise a larger percentage of the universe but because they have been providing a larger share of women with employment opportunities in the context of high rates of unemployment and a less-skilled workforce. The industries that are examined comprehensively in the issue are large-scale manufacturing in China, and several sectors, including agriculture and fishing, food and restaurants, services, and technology in the study about entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. The article about Argentina explores the narration of the female entrepreneur. Some examples about the sectors that they are involved in are the real estate business, automotive sales (born in Argentina and operating in the US), and technology (systems engineers).

## Paths of Women

This issue shows how studies using different methodological approaches can be complementary to understanding the myriad of roles that women play as economic actors.

Some of them provide an in-depth look, while others provide breadth. We invited the authors to explore the diversity of paths that women, as economic actors, have undertaken and how they have been influenced or shaped by institutional, field, organizational, community, and familial contexts. The articles in this issue reveal the interplay of responsibilities that women have had in the economy (paid and unpaid labor). Our takeaway is that collectively they support and align themselves with scholarship that underscores the importance of processes. These processes can be analytically divided as focusing on the individuals, and as focusing on the collective.

We 'bring women in' by naming them as a collective (without additional references) in a strategic way. We have been inspired by efforts, from previous generations of scholars and activists who have sought to advance the common goals of different groups of women that come together in coalitions under a monolithic banner (Collins and Bilge 2020). The articles reveal the importance of tracing women's professional trajectories, individually or as a group, to understand their present moment, as entrepreneurs or executives.

From the articles as a group, we learned that a long-term perspective is paramount to make sense of key topics for the development of entrepreneurs and executives and their organizations, such as technical and managerial skills and knowledge, creation of networks, and access to financial resources. In terms of capital, in their trajectories, women accumulate social, cultural, human, and economic capital. This might seem obvious but it is not considering the contemporary bias in looking at entrepreneurs' success.

A long-term view anchored in social structure, at the level of the individual trajectory, allows us to make sense of how women make business

decisions at particular times (ages and stages of their professional/entrepreneurial and personal lives). It also, informs us about where they are made: spaces within the social hierarchies. As such, these decisions are contingent on the relative power of the person making them vis-a-vis the dominant group. A long-term view underscores the importance of change and transformation in the spirit of this journal and the attention to social positionality from an intersectional perspective.

We identify a process perspective for women in collective terms that understands their activities in distinct spaces (paid and unpaid labor) in a long-term view and considers social structures. Women exercise their activities in the economy (and society) not as unrestricted individual agents but as part of groups and broader social structures, such as large fields of organizations, economies, and societies. They are members of organizational hierarchies and labor markets, both internal and external. Women who climb workplaces and society's ladders are, when they arrive, the tip of the iceberg. They are, in many cases, exemplars of processes of social mobility (even, when they belong to elites to begin with).

For instance, in the case of successful Chinese entrepreneurs, Zheng brings attention to macro and historical processes that started in the late 1970s and played a part in the emergence of female entrepreneurs after 1990. The author documents how lower-class, unskilled, migrant women were incorporated in large numbers in the 1980s as workers in growing manufacturing companies. Zheng highlights individual factors such as drive and working harder than others as responsible for the success of entrepreneurs. Most importantly, her historical analysis uncovers how the processes of female advancement in the organizational and manufacturing industry ranks of Shenzhen

are collective.

Although the debate between agency and structure is hardly new, neither aspect should be neglected. Historical and sociological scholarship has documented and analyzed similar processes of social mobility in other countries and regions. For instance, the case of Irish and Italian immigrants in New York City and New England in the US in the late 19th and 20th century (Loscocco 2017). Following Bird (1976) in uncovering entrepreneurial women stories, Lewis (2009) documents, as well, the economic activities of women in the 19th century, showing domestic tales that became entrepreneurship on a small scale, in many cases supporting their family economies and local communities.

## **Female entrepreneurship**

Studies on female entrepreneurship are increasingly growing (McAdam 2013, Minniti 2009). It is especially relevant to learn about the identity and definitions of female entrepreneurs, recognizing that gender is a critical factor as it shapes who can be called an entrepreneur. Moreover, bringing into the analysis the fact that entrepreneurship is no longer a gender-neutral concept (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio 2004), the four studies bring forward the idea that a woman is not a man or the opposite of a man. Rather, they are gendered subjects that stand by their own when performing entrepreneurial, and economic, activities. Women themselves, and researchers and observers, use social categories to make sense of their trajectories and experiences. Equally, women decide, in many instances, which strategies to use depending on their positionality.

Understanding that entrepreneurship is characterized by its dynamic, non-linear, and

emergent nature, it involves phases of exploration, learning, and adaptation to new information and challenges (Bhidé 2003). Despite the growth and success of many women transitioning from low-paid workers or difficult contexts to successful entrepreneurs, challenges remain. For example, Garmendia's study poses the problem of the underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs in the Argentinean press, although there has been an increasing use of empowering narratives. Peiris presents the cultural barriers for women as they seek acceptance as business owners by striking a delicate balance between how they are viewed in their occupation and how they are viewed as women belonging to an ethnic categorization. Moreover, in the case of China, Zheng shows the struggles of women who started a business without education, for later in life, already consolidated as large business owners, completed master's degrees as part of their consolidation of leaders of industries.

It has become a common discussion that female entrepreneurship is an alternative to the lack of opportunities in the labor market (Heilman and Chen 2003; Ahl 2006; Marlow and McAdam 2013). By bringing forward the concept of intercultural entrepreneurship, which refers to the process by which entrepreneurs navigate and integrate diverse cultural practices, class status, norms, and values in their business endeavors, this issue deals with both femininity and context.

Femininity is no less but crucial to entrepreneurial identity and plays a crucial role in intercultural entrepreneurial identity, serving both as a constraint and a source of agency, allowing women to navigate and succeed in their roles by customizing their appearance and behavior. As a result, Peiris highlights women as caregivers and responsible

for households within their families and communities showing how the balance with their entrepreneurial activities is a constant challenge. In the case of Argentina, Garmendia found that during four decades, the narratives about female entrepreneurs have adjusted, providing visibility to female entrepreneurs.

Female entrepreneurship is also proposed as a solution to the glass ceiling effect. Although none of the articles deals directly with the effect of entrepreneurship on career success, some of the individual cases presented in the works about China and Sri Lanka, show the possibilities of self-employment to fulfill an alternative career path. Therefore, it is not difficult to argue that the entrepreneurs presented were able to build sustainable companies as a result of their long-term experience in the industry, which brought them knowledge and skills.

## Migration: An Emerging Topic

Internal and international or transnational migration is an emerging topic in this issue. The studies stress the following impacts of migration: (1) Shapes the context in which women act, (2) changes the sense of belonging (and the perception of others) to a specific community bound by geographical limits, and (3) national or regional origin as a social category reflecting migration paths (in interaction with others such as race-ethnicity).

Migration is an important contemporary global reality that is sometimes invisible in the discussion of female economic leaders, as entrepreneurs and executives, and warrants further look. The number of migrants has been increasing globally, as a result of political, economic, and environmental issues (Pogessi and Mari 2024). Thus, we propose that scholars examining women in the economy build bridges



with those studying women in connection to migration, which has a long tradition in social sciences. For instance, immigration in cities (Liu 2020) and immigrant entrepreneurship (Wiers and Chabaud 2022).

Three of four articles show the importance of considering migration processes, both domestically and internationally, as they change the contexts where women act. Zheng, Peiris, Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Uribe highlight the importance of migration in urban contexts where women work. Peiris documents, as well, migration within Sri Lanka and its impact on relationships between newcomers and established business people. In the case of Colombia, migrants have stayed primarily in Bogota, the capital city, and other provincial capitals.

The idea of “belonging” to a particular community defined by national or regional origin is nuanced and rendered more complex when the migratory trajectories of women participating in the economy in various capacities are unveiled. This is what Zheng shows for migrant workers in Shenzhen, where they have been permanently relocated to Shenzhen but continue to have links to their towns of origin. Peiris, and Pirela-Ríos and Tribin-Uribe, contribute, as well, to understanding how migration shapes professional trajectories and entrepreneurial projects and may occur at different moments of women’s lives.

The national or regional origin as a social category is identified empirically as relevant in two of the articles on this issue. Peiris shows regional origin, which is meshed with race-ethnicity, religion, and language, is central to understanding women’s experiences as entrepreneurs navigating business environments. Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Uribe show how Venezuelan migrants are subject to

bias, which is gendered, within media coverage of two legacy newspapers. Their findings suggest, as other studies have pointed out, that media focuses on migrant experiences as they are arriving and in the early process of integrating.

Media outlets in Colombia tend to report on migrants that are arriving to the country, or are involved in irregular activities.. When the media, and other actors for that matter, do not shed light on migrants who are incumbents in formal employment, or who have arrived earlier and have had more time to (successfully) integrate, it hinders seeing them as economic actors contributing to society through their work. In the case of Venezuelan migration to Colombia, it is not as recent as some observers think: migration started following the first Hugo Chávez’s presidential period (1999-2001), but intensified in the mid-2010s onwards, which is captured by the period that the authors picked.

National and regional origin are social categories, which structure systems of inequality rather than simple identifiers. Patricia Hill Collins and Silma Bilge (2020, 19) discuss how by thinking intersectionally, through social categories, we can uncover how economic outcomes such as “jobs, income and wealth” are distributed differently across social groups. Migrants, documented and undocumented, face barriers in their personal and professional lives, such as in the labor and housing market. Their social positionality, alongside categories such as race and gender, plays a part in the paths they have available to migrate and insert themselves in host countries.

## **Novel Sources, Novel Methods: Media and Text Analysis**

This issue shows the benefits of incorporating new sources, theories, and methods in



examining women as economic actors, and signals spaces for fruitful collaboration between fields, including cultural sociology, economics, management, and history.

Garmendia, and Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe, exemplify the potential of using media sources (magazines and newspapers) to examine women as economic actors. This is novel and useful in emerging economies, where the availability of sources, both historical and contemporary, is sometimes limited, in relative terms.

These authors approach these sources rigorously, albeit from distinct methodological and epistemological positions. They analyze media articles through methods that, broadly construed, focus on the creation of meaning. Garmendia identifies narratives about women entrepreneurs in Argentina through a qualitative approach informed by cultural sociology. Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe use data science techniques that quantitatively extract meaning from text structures, through word count and adjacencies, to examine the relationship between migration and gender. Computational methods are often used in the emerging fields of computational social sciences and the digital humanities and have been criticized by scholars interested in culture because their ability to extract meaning can be limited. This is a long, complex, and worthwhile discussion that falls out of the scope of this paper. For an important exchange see Biernacki (2012) and the third issue of October 2015 of the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* (particularly, Lee and Martin 2015a; 2015b, Spillman 2015). For the moment, we consider that the discussion must remain open and that these methods could be complementary, in the spirit of Spillman's (2015) intervention (with its caveats), and spaces for collaboration should be searched for.

Garmendia, in this issue, contributes to filling the gap for Latin America by examining women from a cultural perspective or including a cultural framework. Her work is inspired by various perspectives, including cultural sociology, which we propose as a field that scholars interested in women in the economy should engage more with.

Cultural sociology has been, since the 1980s, making the case for a deep understanding of culture, where meanings are weaved into the fabric of actors, social interactions, and institutions (Alexander 2006; Lipartito 2013). Culture is not an additional factor that is disconnected from social structures but an integral part of them as scholars interested in meaning have been proposing, supporting it both theoretically and empirically (Alexander, Jacobs and Smith 2012 and the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*). This field has been increasingly examining economic life finding meaning-making central in it (Alexander 2011; Bandelj, Wherry, and Zelizer 2017; Lamont 2009; Tognato 2012; Zelizer 1983, 1997). Other scholars who have studied women in the economy through media are economic historian Susana Martínez-Rodríguez (2022) for Spain and one of the co-editors, cultural and economic sociologist Laura Milanés-Reyes (2011) for the United States.

## Reflections on Intersectionality

This issue contributes, as it was one of its objectives, to understanding women as economic actors from a perspective that is informed by intersectionality. We assess the strengths and limitations of some of the articles, which are inspired by an intersectional perspective, even when they did not fully inscribe themselves in it. A useful recent definition is that of Collins and Bilge (2020, 220):

“Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytical tool, intersectionality views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age—among others—as interrelated and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences.”

Intersectionality is a burgeoning and diverse approach with a long history spanning to the 1960s and includes the concerns of feminism and gender (which are not free from debate and criticism, particularly from a black feminist perspective) (Davis and Dent 2019). In this way, many of the questions and concerns that were discussed by Hannah Dean, Linda Perriton, Scott Taylor and Mary Yeager (2024) are relevant to the discussion.

The articles in this issue, complementing each other, unpack the realities of women who occupy different social positions. This is the case even as a fully-fledged intersectional analysis is, in our view, achieved only by Peiris. The articles as a group highlight the significance of social categories of gender, class (connected to social origins and education), race-ethnicity (connected to religion and language), national origin/citizenship status, age, and life stage (including marital and parental status). These interlocking categories are useful for understanding how women are navigating different institutions, organizational contexts, and interpersonal spaces.

Two studies bring in elements of an intersectionality perspective focused on a micro level of analysis: Peiris about entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, and Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe about migrants and gender bias in media coverage in Colombia. For future research, we

propose that other levels, such as meso (organizational) and macro (institutional), are brought in more fully.

Peiris examines 44 Sri Lankan entrepreneurs and businesswomen focusing on their experiences, social interactions, and strategies for being accepted and belonging to the business communities where they conduct their business. The author examines each woman’s position through an intersectional framework that includes the social categories of gender, age, life stage, and race-ethnicity. The entrepreneurs themselves use these categories to make sense of their experiences.

The author analyzes phenomena—and mobilizes concepts—such as experiences, identities, interpersonal interactions, and group membership within a (business community), which are at the micro level. From an intersectional perspective, this is an interpersonal domain of power, which as Collins and Bilge (2020, 15) conceptualize it, “... refers to how individuals experience the convergence of structural, cultural, and disciplinary power. Such power shapes intersecting identities of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and age that in turn organize social interactions.”

Peiris develops a robust intersectional view of these entrepreneurs’ experiences by 1) thoroughly exploring their social positionality, 2) connecting their positionality with the types of strategies they use, 3) underscoring their reflections about their experiences, actions, and strategies, and 4) using a process and long term view that follows their trajectories through life history interviews. Two elements are worth highlighting as the foundations of the study: It is grounded in feminist methods, and the roots and the content of the social categories used are explained through a historical review of norms (that emerge from institutions) detailing the

accepted roles of women in their families and their occupations.

Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe, analyze migrants and their depiction in the media. Their analysis is carried out at the micro level, as well, because they examine gender bias, which is present in interpersonal relationships (Ridgeway 2011; Collin and Bilge 2020,15). What constitutes a micro level of analysis is or might be different across disciplines and even fields. We understand the micro level, which focuses on personal social interactions and interactions within groups, as micro-foundations, mainly from a sociological perspective (Cook 2000). This sociological understanding is compatible with how notions of bias and stereotypes can be part of a conversation in the media (Jacobs and Sulik 2003).

We consider that Pirela-Rios and Tribin-Urbe make contributions to an intersectional examination of women in the economy in this issue, and highlight some avenues that should be followed by other studies, qualitative or mixed methods, which might examine them in depth. First, they compare explicitly through the data available, men's and women's depictions, and identify bias for both groups. The study serves as a helpful reminder that gender is not a category that belongs only to women. Gender is (primarily) constructed in opposition, and involves men and women. In this regard, we suggest that scholars aim to examine more closely how gender structures systems through heteronormativity, bringing men as part of a gendered analysis, as well as other people who do not inscribe in the binary (Seidman 2016, 201-25). This allows to further connect to the scholarship about masculinities, which has been growing in the last decade (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Connell 2020; Gutmann 2018; Messerschmidt 2018). Equally, for analyzing women and men as

economic actors and problematizing neutral norms in the workplace and in the construction of the ideal incumbents of positions, it is relevant to engage with the literature on gendered organizations (Acker 1990, 2006; Martin 2020).

Second, they bring two key issues to the forefront for women in the economy: citizenship status and or national origin, and migration (which are further discussed in the section on Migration).

The limitations of their work are that through their methods, as the critics of computational methods argue, they are not able to explicitly identify how migrants are stigmatized, the semiotic and narrative mechanisms at work, and the potential role that social categories such as race-ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation, among others play in these processes (see the debate about these methods that is referenced above). Ordóñez and Ramírez Arcos (2019) is a useful example of how a close, systematic, and qualitative reading of media articles can show what are the specific ways in which migrants are described as actors, point out the narratives that actors use to explain their actions and the possible consequences that this might entail for their future and that of the countries that host them.

The article about Shenzhen's Dagongmei is very interesting through an intersectional perspective as it uncovers processes of social mobility and the relevance of class and social origin in the study of the trajectories of businesswomen and entrepreneurs. It shows the importance of archival sources. For future analysis, it would be interesting to complement this study with an examination of the processes by which (initially) unskilled workers were able to climb organizational hierarchies and arrive first at higher ranks within the organizations and then as leaders of their ventures. Equally, it



would be interesting to see a fine-grained intersectional analysis that was able to assess how other social categories come into play (or not) in these women's professional and personal experiences.

Finally, we consider that the article about Argentinean entrepreneurs shows us how an in-depth qualitative analysis of narratives complements what might be gathered through quantitative text analysis techniques. It also shows the challenge of an intersectional analysis of media coverage about women as economic actors in business outlets, particularly in a way that rigorously considers meaning-making about their social characteristics, which allows us to understand them as robust social categories, as we have mentioned. This may be also the case with other secondary information that has not been gathered specifically for this type of analysis. The author examines how women have been portrayed as entrepreneurs in *Apertura* magazine, and the pieces, we imagine, do not have the information that allows her to categorize them, as a corpus and systematically, by their race-ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class (especially in cases of social mobility). In future research, we encourage scholars to find creative ways of triangulating information through secondary and primary sources outside of media coverage that may contribute to a deeper analysis.

## Future directions

In proposing this issue, we aimed to find studies that contribute to studying women in the economy from distinct disciplinary perspectives. In the following lines, we aim to sketch future directions in research, inspired not only by the contributions of authors in this issue but also by our proposal on where the research agenda should be moving. Our

inspiration was that there is a gap to fill and a potential for enrichment in understanding women in the economy.

We identify, for instance, that there is potential for a deeper and more comprehensive conversation between scholars who have examined women in different positions in the social and organizational hierarchies. Scholars studying women on boards of directors and higher ranks of corporations and large for-profit organizations have emerged mainly from management, business history, and organizational studies. Those who have studied women in the workplace at lower hierarchical levels are concentrated in disciplines or fields such as sociology, economic sociology, women's studies, feminist studies, and race, class, and gender, where there has been strong attention to social inequality and the social positioning of women in hierarchies. We suggest that students of women in business tap into the wealth of established scholarships in many countries, including the UK and the US, on blue-collar work, professions and occupations, social inequality and mobility, migrant entrepreneurship, work integration, and other related issues.

We propose, as well, that cross-national comparisons are made intentionally and within the initial methodological design. Particularly, the comparison of experiences of women in emerging economies in different regions could illuminate common issues, and complete a set of cases. To sum up, we propose that an intersectional and interdisciplinary perspective continue to be used to enrich the analysis of women as economic subjects, searching to address collectively some of the most difficult challenges.



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