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Changing Places Through Women's Entrepreneurship

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abstract

In this article, I focus on entrepreneurship as a gendered geographic process to examine how changes in people and place are linked. Although entrepreneurship is a process that is marked by deep stereotypical gender divisions, it is also one through which people can change the meaning of gender and the way in which gender is lived. In addition, entrepreneurship links people and place in a number of ways, most notably through networks of social relations in place. I discuss four geographic studies of women's entrepreneurship, each undertaken in a different country—Botswana, India, Peru, and the United States. These studies demonstrate that whereas entrepreneurship per se or access to microcredit alone is seldom sufficient to change the position of women or gender relations in a place, women are using entrepreneurship to change their lives and those of others and, in the process, are changing the places where they live. Key to this transformative process are programs of governmental and nongovernmental organizations and women's grassroots actions that are aimed at building women's skills, confidence, and business networks.

Acknowledgments

246 This article began life as a plenary address for the Second Global Conference on Economic Geography, held in Beijing, China, 25–28 June 2007. I thank Henry Yeung and Weidong Liu, the conference co-organizers, for the opportunity to give this plenary talk to economic geographers from around the world (some 40 countries were represented at the conference) and for their unflagging support of the feminist themes it embraces. I also greatly appreciate the constructive comments of two reviewers. The research described in the U.S. case study was supported by the Sloan Foundation and by the National Science Foundation (grant SBR 9730661).

If two items I came across recently are any indication, the press, or at least the market-oriented press, seems convinced that the future of the world's economy is in the hands of women. One was a headline in *The Financial Times*, which announced "Forget Asia: Women Are the Drivers of Global Growth" (de Thuin 2006). The other, an article in *The Economist*, "Womenomics Revisited" (2007, 88),¹ concluded, "Men run the world's economies, but it may be up to women to rescue them" (there is some ambiguity in this statement, but as I understand it *The Economist* is saying that it is up to women to rescue the world's economies, not to rescue men).

These news articles focused on women's centrality to *national and global economic growth*. While retaining an emphasis on the importance of women to economies, I want to move the discussion about women's economic impact away from the national and global scales to focus instead on the locality. In addition, I want to move the discussion away from economic growth per se (e. g., increasing the GDP) to focus on livelihoods, which encompass not only economic well-being but also, and necessarily, other dimensions of the well-being of women, their families, and communities.

At the heart of economic geography is the relationship between people and place, but neither people nor place—nor the interaction between them—is unitary or static. Neither people (agents) nor place (context) appears on the stage *de novo*, *pregiven*; rather, they emerge together, shaping each other through their interactions. In this article, I draw upon studies of entrepreneurship as a gendered geographic process, undertaken in various places around the world, to sketch out the argument that women's entrepreneurship is reshaping places in ways that differ from the impacts of place that are usually attributed to entrepreneurship. The focus on gender highlights an important characteristic of places as well as of people: although both gender identities and places are fluid and fungible and therefore have the ability to interact dynamically, both are also characterized by inertia and constrained by prevailing cultural norms. As a result,

¹ This article is about the desirability of increasing female labor force participation so as to increase nations' gross domestic product (GDP). It calls for improving access to child care and revising tax laws that penalize second earners so as to encourage and enable more women to join the paid labor force.

change is neither automatic nor necessarily progressive in the sense of disrupting existing power relations. One theme that I explore is the potential significance of entrepreneurship to effect change in gender relations.

Economic geographers have been interested in entrepreneurship mainly because they see it as the engine of economic growth and therefore as a prime source of (a certain kind of) change in places (Malecki 1994, 1997); convincing data have shown that the most important indicator of a vibrant national economy is the number of new firms that are created, regardless of their size or eventual success (Acs, Carlsson, and Karlsson 1999). Studies of entrepreneurship in economic geography and other disciplines have tended to focus, however, on a particular subset of entrepreneurial activities, namely, those that are associated with technological innovation and export economies and have tended to neglect informal-sector and nonbasic activities (this critique was further developed by Blake and Hanson 2005). In addition, most of the energy that economic geographers have devoted to understanding entrepreneurial processes in place has been focused on a particular kind of place, namely, industrial districts. I see this traditional emphasis on certain kinds of people-place entrepreneurial interactions as unnecessarily limiting to understandings of people-place relationships, and I attribute this state of affairs, in large part, to the absence of any gendered analysis of entrepreneurship in economic geography. A second theme that I explore is how theories of gender may enhance understandings of entrepreneurship and economic geography.

It should already be clear that my interests lie not so much in understanding entrepreneurship's role in driving regional or national economic growth or in creating and sustaining clusters of similar industries. Instead, I focus on women's entrepreneurship as one way of thinking about how people and places recursively shape each other through their interactions. I am curious about how people's relationship to place enables entrepreneurship, how entrepreneurship is changing the meaning and practice of gender, and how entrepreneurship enables people to change structures of opportunity in places. In short, I seek to understand how women are using entrepreneurship to change their own lives and those of others and, in the process, are also changing the places where they live.

Although gender of course encompasses women and men, I focus here on women for a number of reasons. First, women's businesses have been largely ignored in the literature on entrepreneurship, most of which has been about men and their enterprises (Brush and Hisrich 1999; Starr and Yudkin 1996). Second, when mentioned, women's businesses have been dismissed as insignificant because they are viewed as being too small or in sectors of the economy (services and retail) that supposedly matter too little to economic growth (Baker, Aldrich, and Liou 1997; Rosa and Hamilton 1994). Third, despite this academic neglect, women's business ownership worldwide has been growing rapidly—more quickly than men's (Lowrey 2006; OECD 2004)—and entrepreneurship has become a key livelihood strategy for many women. Fourth, economic geographers, in particular, should be interested in women and their businesses because together they throw the relationship between people and place into distinctly sharp relief. Finally, in countries around the world, women remain subordinate to men; how, then, can women be the “drivers of global growth” and the “rescuers of the world economy”? The question bears scrutiny.

The remainder of this article has five sections. In an effort to situate the discussion of women entrepreneurs and place within the larger context of economic geography, the first section looks briefly at the object of study and the goals of economic geography. Through brief discussions of gender and then gender and entrepreneurship, in the second section I lay out the bases for my proposition that women's entrepreneurship has the potential to change places. To ground and contextualize these ideas, the third section provides a

snapshot of four case studies of women's entrepreneurship, each undertaken in a different country. In the concluding section, I reflect on insights from these studies and consider some implications for the practice of economic geography within and outside academe.

Thinking About Economic Geography

Within and among each of the 40 countries that were represented at the Second Global Conference on Economic Geography, definitions of economic geography are many and varied. Among English-speaking geographers, the subfield has a strong tradition of seeing its core mission as being rooted in "the central problems and predicaments of contemporary capitalism," to use Allen Scott's (2006, 56) phrase, which he took as the starting point for his thoughts on an agenda for economic geography. Within this framework, the relationship between economic growth/development and territory has been of central concern, often with the goal of identifying what governs productivity, knowledge transfer, and economic development (Feldman 2000; Storper 1997, 2005; Malecki 1991; Gertler 2003).

248 Others, notably several authors in Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen and Helen Lawton Smith's (2006) volume assessing the field of economic geography, have argued for shifting the focus away from economic growth and development toward such dimensions as quality of life, work-life balance, and sense of community (Sheppard 2006; McDowell 2006; Hanson 2006). I see this shift in focus as being linked to a view of economic geography that centers on, or, at least, begins with, livelihoods. Eric Sheppard (2006, 11), for example, understands the goal of economic geography as "accounting for and redressing unequal livelihoods," and Roger Lee (2000, 195) began his dictionary entry on *economic geography* by saying that the subfield is "the geography (or, rather, geographies) of people's struggle to make a living." Lee went on to say that substantive economic geographies, as opposed to the field of inquiry, are "irreducibly practical, irreducibly material, irreducibly social, and irreducibly geographical" (196) while also being "discursive notions and practices informed and shaped by prevailing power/knowledges" (196). Discourse and ideology hold interest for me mainly as they shape the practical, material, social, and geographic dimensions of livelihoods. In this emphasis on the practical and material, I echo the thoughts of Julie Nelson, a feminist economist, who views economics as the study of provisioning (1993) or of "how humans try to meet their needs for material goods and services" (1992, 119).

As the studies I describe in a later section indicate, a focus on livelihoods is certainly not incompatible with concerns about forms and processes of contemporary capitalism or with concerns about economic growth/development and territory. These different views of what economic geography is all about are complementary. From a livelihoods perspective, the starting point of an economic geographic analysis is the individual and the household, rather than larger social and institutional structures; such structures, however, quickly become an integral and important part of the analysis. The salient point here is that an interest in livelihoods leads one to pose questions about people and place.

Gender, Entrepreneurship, and Place

Through brief discussions of gender, gender and entrepreneurship, and the role of gendered entrepreneurship in changing places, in this section I lay out the bases for my proposition that women's entrepreneurship is changing places.

Gender

More than 20 years ago, feminist historian Joan Scott (1986) observed that gender is based on perceived differences between women and men and signifies unequal power

relations that are based in these perceived differences. Since then, scholars of gender have stressed that gender always intersects with other axes of difference, such as age, ethnicity, race, or class, which also structure relations of power between and among people. Andrea Nightingale's (2006, 171) definition of gender as "the process through which differences based on presumed biological sex are defined, imagined, and become significant in specific contexts" owes much to Judith Butler's (1996) view of gender as performance and calls attention to the context-dependent malleability of gender. Feminist geographers like Nightingale emphasize that the processes that shape gender, as it is inflected by other dimensions of difference, develop through everyday practices in place and are territorially grounded. As a result, the meanings and practices of gender vary from place to place as well as among different groups of women in the same place (Pratt and Hanson 1994).

This view, which sees gender meanings and practices as being contingent on geographic context and on the other axes of difference that shape power relations, stands in contrast to the view that gender is an innate, unchanging, universal source of a male-female binary. I agree with Linda McDowell (2004) that these two divergent views of gender have to be held together in tension because each has salience for understanding social and economic processes. Many people and institutions continue to treat all women (or men) according to preconceived beliefs about femininity and masculinity, assuming that certain abilities and behaviors are the norm for each gender. Because such stereotyped ideologies and expectations about gender remain powerful, they must be placed alongside the recognition that the categories "woman" and "man" are so heterogeneous, porous, and fluid as to be of questionable value. The persistence of traditional gender ideologies in the face of the tremendous diversity and, to a lesser extent, malleability, of lived gender relations is evident in labor market processes, including those surrounding entrepreneurship.

Gender ideologies that associate women and femininity with the private space of the home underwrite gender divisions of labor within and outside the home, divisions that classify certain forms of work as acceptable and others as unacceptable for women (or men). In Indonesia, for example, street vending is ruled improper for women because women should not be on the street after dark (Silvey and Elmhirst 2003); in Gambia, women tended to rice when it was a subsistence crop, but men took over control of rice when the crop became commodified with the introduction of irrigation (Carney 1993); and in the United States, long-distance trucking, with its long temporal and spatial separations from home, is a distinctly male preserve.

Although stereotyped gender ideologies and power relations have clearly saturated labor market processes, the world of paid work continues to be a place where traditional power relations and meanings of gender are contested and changed. When European and American women first entered the labor force in large numbers in the 1970s, scholars thought that women's presence in the workplace—a public space—and their associated income-earning ability would erode patriarchal cultures and prompt a fundamental transformation of gender relations (Chafe 1978). Neither the pace nor the extent of altered gender relations in or out of the labor market has matched these high expectations, but some change is evident. For example, measures show some reductions in gender-based occupational segregation (Jacobs 1999)² and in the gender wage gap (English and Hegewisch 2008) in the United States. Yet despite women's growing presence in some male-dominated lines of work, strong presumptions continue to govern who is considered

² Jerry Jacobs (1999) pointed out, however, that declines in the index of occupational segregation during the 1990s owed more to changes in the relative sizes of occupations than to the mixing of men and women within occupations.

a legitimate worker in a particular type of job (McDowell 1997, 2006), and a significant gap remains between the earnings of women and men (English and Hegewisch 2008).³ With the rise in women's business ownership, entrepreneurship is one place in the labor market where, despite the durability of gendered structures, women are contesting their subordinate location in the gender hierarchy. As I explain in more detail in the following section, therefore, I see women's entrepreneurship as a site of change in the meanings and practices of gender.

Entrepreneurship, Gender, and Feminist Analysis

The processes that create (and change) gender are inextricably linked with those that create (and change) entrepreneurship; gender inequalities are both the reason for and the result of the processes that are entailed in launching and sustaining a business. Likewise, entrepreneurship processes are both the cause and consequence of gender hierarchies. In a number of ways, therefore, feminist theory can enhance understandings of entrepreneurship and its role in changing places. Likewise, understanding entrepreneurship as a thoroughly gendered process can shed light on gender relations.

250 Entrepreneurship is an activity that has traditionally been associated with men (Bird and Brush 2002), no doubt because men still constitute the majority (about two-thirds) of business owners worldwide (Allen, Langowitz, and Minniti 2006) despite the rapid increase in women's business ownership already mentioned. Simply by being entrepreneurs, then, women in one sense are transgressing gender norms (Hanson 2003), and some women, particularly those who run businesses in male-dominated arenas like engineering or trucking, are distinctly conscious of the ways in which their business ownership is challenging gender norms (Hanson and Blake 2005). At the same time, the unequal power relations that shape and, in turn, are shaped by gender stratification in the wage and salary labor market also structure opportunity within the realm of business ownership. In countries around the world, women's businesses, compared to men's, are disproportionally in the retail and service sectors and are underrepresented in construction, wholesale trade, and finance, insurance, and real estate (Rosa and Hamilton 1994; Hanson and Blake 2005). Moreover, women's businesses are generally smaller, with fewer employees and lower gross sales, less access to capital (Cliff 1998; Blake 2006), and a poorer growth in revenue (Morris, Miyasaki, Watters, and Coombes 2006) than men's businesses; women's enterprises also provide their owners with lower incomes than do men's (Allen and Truman 1991; Clark and James 1995).

These generalizations mask the enormous variability within women-owned (and men-owned) businesses while obscuring the many similarities that exist between women- and men-owned ventures.⁴ Almost all businesses everywhere are small, few earn their owners vast amounts of money, and only a small proportion ever grow rapidly. The large variation in business characteristics has produced considerable debate over what counts as entrepreneurship. Some scholars want to reserve the term *entrepreneur* for someone who takes a new idea and creates an entirely new industry or transforms an existing one—someone like Bill Gates and Microsoft in the United States or Shi Zhengrong and Suntech in China. People who do less than that by owning a business are disparagingly referred to as (the merely) self-employed (Aronson 1991 described this debate).

³ In 2007, women who worked full time in the United States earned 80.2 percent of men's earnings (English and Hegewisch 2008).

⁴ Helene Ahl (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 94 research articles on gender and entrepreneurship; she concluded that aside from the sector and size differences that I have mentioned, women's and men's businesses are basically similar. See also Brush and Hisrich (1999).

The difference turns on innovation and scale. A “true entrepreneur” must be innovative, but defining what constitutes an innovation turns out to be extremely difficult. At what scale must an innovation be realized to qualify it as the basis of entrepreneurship? A new shoelace that is adopted by makers of running shoes worldwide? A new recipe for roasted groundnuts served at a market food stand in Kakamega, Kenya? (See Blake and Hanson 2005 for a discussion of what counts as innovation and why this question matters to places.) As a result of these definitional difficulties, many scholars have defined entrepreneurship in terms that are coincident with owning a business (see, e.g., Gartner 1989; Light and Rosenstein 1995), such that someone is considered an entrepreneur if she or he owns a business, assumes the risks associated with ownership, deals with the uncertainties of coordinating resources, and is in charge of day-to-day management of the business. This is the definition I have adopted.

Note that in this definition, the line between formal and informal economic activities is blurred, as indeed I have found to be the case in my U.S.-based empirical work, described in a later section. Informal activities, a large proportion of which entail self-employment, are generally understood to be those that are not registered with authorities; they therefore escape not only governmental regulation but also data collection by censuses and, as a result, are difficult to track systematically. Informal enterprises often mingle personal and business assets and liabilities and do not provide workers with benefits (Hays-Mitchell 2006). These features are not limited to informal-sector businesses; they characterize many ventures in the formal sector as well.

The point I want to emphasize is the value of recognizing the importance of informal and informal-like formal economic activity for people's livelihoods and potentially for changing places. As Cathy Rakowski (1994) pointed out in her review of the literature on informal-sector debates, informal work (consisting mainly of small-scale self-employment) is no longer considered to be simply marginal. Within the developing world context in which these debates have been situated, informal work provides employment and training, supplies needed goods and services, and helps broaden the distribution of wealth. The same may be said of informal work in the U.S. context as well.

Despite the inclusive, “non-elite” definition of entrepreneurship that I described earlier as being widely used, studies of entrepreneurship, especially those concerned with economic impacts on place, have focused mainly on technologically innovative, high-growth, export-oriented businesses (e.g., Malecki 1994; Simmie 2002). An analysis informed by feminist theory sees significance in the heretofore ignored and undervalued, which often equates with the lived experience and everyday activities of women within and outside the marketplace. A feminist analysis thus brings to entrepreneurship an interest in the contributions of small- (as well as larger-) scale enterprises and in the links between unpaid caring work and income-generating work. Because it recognizes the context specificity of experience and impacts, feminist analysis also seeks to understand how contextual elements, which for geographers largely relate to place, affect and are affected by entrepreneurial processes.

Entrepreneurship Changing Places

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a local process (Birley 1985; Romanelli and Schoonhoven 2001; Cox 1998) but rarely studied as such; that is, hardly any studies, aside from those on the inner workings of industrial districts, have examined the relationship between entrepreneurship and place. Recognizing entrepreneurship as a local process raises the following questions: What about the person who takes a new idea and instead of transforming an industry, transforms a place? Can this person be considered entrepreneurial? At what geographic scale must this transformation take place? What about

changes that alter the life of a household or a neighborhood instead of a larger region, such as Silicon Valley?

I want to come at this question of how entrepreneurship may change the life of a household, a neighborhood, or a larger place a bit differently from the way this question is usually considered. Entrepreneurship is most often thought to change places by bringing employment, boosting exports, and increasing the tax base. While recognizing the importance of these contributions of entrepreneurship to places, I want to consider how women's entrepreneurship has the potential to change places in other ways, such as through impacts on the quality of life of the community (including expanded opportunities for women) or by bringing about shifts in gender relations. That is, gendered subjectivities and power relations do not only shape entrepreneurship; they are also produced through and can therefore be changed by entrepreneurial processes. Because entrepreneurship is coded as male, entrepreneurship itself, as well as studies of entrepreneurship that unconsciously associate it with masculinity (e.g., through the use of all-male samples that are unquestioningly treated as the entrepreneurial norm), is implicated in the construction of gender. Through changes in their means of livelihood and associated interactions with their communities, women business owners are expanding the gendered meanings of entrepreneurship, helping to destabilize its associations with masculinity, and potentially creating new subjectivities for themselves, new livelihood opportunities for other women, and broadened conceptions of gender within their communities and beyond.

Important to this process are the networks of social relations in which people are embedded. These networks shape the identity of entrepreneurs and institutions and are crucial for the exchange of tacit information (Thornton and Flynn 2003; Murphy 2006). Some scholars (e.g., Grabher and Stark 1997) have argued that entrepreneurial networks are so important that the unit of observation should be the network, not the individual. Other scholars have documented that personal networks tend to be gendered, in that the other people in women's networks are more likely to be women than are the other people in men's networks (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Hanson and Pratt 1991). Although the literature on the gendered nature of entrepreneurial networks is small, studies have found that such networks are similar to other personal networks in that, compared to their male counterparts, women owners are more likely to exchange information with other women and are less likely to have network access to people in powerful positions (Aldrich, Brickman Elam, and Ray Reese 1996; Weiler and Bernasek 2001; for a review of gender and entrepreneurial networks, see Hanson and Blake 2009). Because the personal contacts that constitute entrepreneurial networks are embedded in, span, and connect places, such networks are one aspect of geographic context that is important in shaping entrepreneurs' identities and enabling entrepreneurship.

If entrepreneurship is to have a transformational impact on opportunities for women and on gender relations in place, it must do so through altering power relations not only in people's interactions within their personal networks but also in their interactions with institutions. Organizations and institutions (like banks, fraternal organizations, and local economic development boards) often structure opportunities differently for different groups of citizens in a place, and this different treatment is based on a stereotyped, categorical understanding of gender (Blake 2006). As Saras Sarasvathy, Nicholas Dew, Velamuri Ramakrishna, and Sankaran Venkataraman (2003) pointed out, institutions are routinized, habitual patterns of action and interaction; they serve to establish stability in expectations. One source of that stability is the gatekeeping function that institutions provide, ensuring that behaviors (like running a business) that deviate from an expected norm (like the norm that auto-body shops and trucking firms are run by men) are prevented or discouraged through lack of support.

How can entrepreneurship alter unequal power relations and gendered subjectivities? Put another way, how can entrepreneurship empower women? Maxine Molyneaux (1985) distinguished between practical and strategic gender interests; the former describes women's efforts to enhance their own and their families' livelihoods and doing so while not disturbing prevailing gender norms or power systems. Strategic gender interests, however, require challenging and "changing the rules of the game rather than playing by them" (Hovorka 2006b, 57) and will effect shifts in the gender balance of power.

Sylvia Chant (2006) pointed to the potential for "power over resources" to improve people's lives, particularly women's lives, and running a business, however small, enables some women to have more power over resources. In arguing that scholars and policy-makers need to take a more holistic conceptualization of poverty—one that is not fixated so tightly on income and consumption but encompasses the role of self-esteem, agency, power, and well-being—Chant suggested that attention should focus on how much power women have over household resources: "Power over resources may be more important than levels of resources in influencing people's capabilities to cope with hardship" (138).

Feminist geographers have described the difficulties of empowering women in certain contexts. For Saraswati Raju (2005, 194), empowerment entails "undoing internalized oppression" and must involve challenging oppressive structures of patriarchy, making women more aware of their own capabilities, and enabling women to gain access to resources and become agents of social change. In her assessment of a project in 174 villages in northern India to increase women's empowerment, Raju recounted that women there reported feeling more empowered by being enabled through the project to enter the public domain; nevertheless, gendered power relations remained unchanged. She observed that women avoid confrontation and adopt what she has called "incremental pragmatism" to make changes where possible even if doing so does not change power structures.⁵

Richa Nagar and Amanda Swarr (2005) acknowledged that women's empowerment is bound to be limited because gender is context specific to some extent. They showed how the empowerment of disenfranchised women in India and South Africa is made partial and contradictory by "the connectivities and divergences in the ways that a dominant discourse of empowerment is interpreted, critiqued, and/or reappropriated by grassroots activists in line with their own political agendas and context-specific realities" (292). The evidence from the case studies described in the next section suggests that in some places an important part of empowering women—in however limited a way—entails connecting women to networks that are aimed specifically at changing gendered subjectivities.⁶

To sum up, exploring gender and entrepreneurship offers new ways to understand the relationship between people and place. Because people's identities are formed through the interactions of everyday life in place and such interactions can lead to altered gender subjectivities, as identities and subjectivities change, so, too, can the gender relations and the opportunities open to individuals in those places be transformed. As in all studies of gender and place, there is a tension between the mutability of identities (of people and place) and the stereotypical, categorical view of gendered identities that governs the interactions of many people and institutions. As the studies described in the next section

⁵ In the U.S. context, Debra Meyerson and Joyce Fletcher (2000) made a similar recommendation in terms of shattering the glass ceiling in the workplace; they stated that the most effective approach will be "incremental changes that discover and destroy the deeply embedded roots of discrimination" (133).

⁶ J. K. Gibson-Graham (that is, the pen name of Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson; 2005) also pointed to the importance of changing subjectivities, although the focus of their project is not on gender but on moving people away from individual entrepreneurial activities toward more collective, cooperative ventures. They noted that "perhaps the greatest challenge is to create new subjects" (20).

demonstrate, entrepreneurship is a process that is marked by deep stereotypical gender divisions, but it is also one through which people are changing the meaning of gender and the ways in which gender is lived.

Studies of Women's Entrepreneurship

In this section, I briefly describe four studies of women's entrepreneurship that geographers⁷ have undertaken in different places around the world. Several interlocking questions motivate this exploration. How does entrepreneurship allow women to change their own lives and those of others through their businesses? How is place implicated in this process? How are women (and men) entrepreneurs changing the structures of opportunity in the places in which their businesses are located? Through what processes does entrepreneurship lead to changed gender subjectivities, norms, and practices? Although I recognize that variation within women's (men's) businesses can be greater than that between woman-owned and man-owned businesses, I do not deal directly with this variation here because my primary interest in this article is on how entrepreneurship can be a means of reducing gender-based inequality.

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The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), which has been collecting data from around the world since 1999, offers a global overview of women's entrepreneurship (Allen, Langowitz, and Minnitti 2006) within which to situate these four studies. The GEM 2006 study collected data on 152,255 people (half of them women) in 40 countries, which were divided into two groups: low/middle-income countries (with per capita incomes of less than \$20,000) and high-income countries (with per capita incomes of more than \$20,000). Within each country, people were selected to constitute a representative sample of the country's population.

The GEM found that, worldwide, more than one-third of all entrepreneurs are women (a figure that does not include informal-sector activity) (Allen, Langowitz, and Minnitti 2006). Among both women and men, rates of involvement in entrepreneurship are higher in the low/middle-income countries than in the high-income ones.⁸ Table 1 presents GEM data on the incidence of entrepreneurship in low/middle-income countries, high-income countries, and three of the four countries in which the studies that are discussed in this section were carried out; because the GEM did not collect data in the fourth country (Botswana), data for South Africa are included in the table instead. According to the GEM, almost everywhere men are more likely than are women to be entrepreneurs, and the gender gap is larger everywhere for ownership of established businesses (those that have existed for more than 3.5 years, or 42 months, than for owners of nascent businesses (those that are less than 3.5 years old), suggesting gender-based differences in the processes of entrepreneurship.

The GEM study also examined people's motives for entrepreneurship, distinguishing between those who "want to exploit a perceived business opportunity (opportunity entrepreneurs)" and those who "are pushed into entrepreneurship because all other options for work are either absent or unsatisfactory (necessity entrepreneurs)" (Allen, Langowitz, and Minnitti 2006, 7). Although most early-stage entrepreneurs everywhere see themselves as opportunity driven, the proportion of entrepreneurs who are motivated by necessity is higher (especially among women) in low-/middle-income countries than in

⁷ I explicitly selected studies by geographers because of my interest in links between entrepreneurship and place.

⁸ Ingrid Verheul, André van Stel, and Roy Thurik (2006) used data from the 2002 GEM for 29 countries to examine the impact of factors on rates of female and male entrepreneurship at the country level.

Table I

Proportion of the Adult Population Engaged in Entrepreneurship, by Gender, 2006

	Early Stage Entrepreneurial Activity		Established Business Owners		Overall Entrepreneurial Activity	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low/middle-income countries	14.6	10.7	3.7	2.0	18.3	12.7
High-income countries	7.6	4.0	7.2	5.6	14.8	9.6
India	11.6	9.2	7.3	3.8	18.9	13.0
Peru	41.0	39.3	14.1	10.6	55.1	49.9
South Africa	5.8	4.8	2.1	1.4	7.9	6.2
United States	12.7	7.4	7.7	3.2	20.4	10.5

Source: Allen, Langowitz, and Minnitti (2006), adapted from Tables 1 and 2.

Notes: The adult population is defined as people age 18–64. Early-stage businesses are those that have been in operation for 42 months or fewer. Established businesses have been in operation for more than 42 months.

high-income countries. And everywhere the proportion of opportunity entrepreneurs is higher for men than it is for women.

The studies in Botswana, India, Peru, and the United States all focused on women entrepreneurs, but they varied in the questions that drove the research and especially the degree to which the authors were interested in the linkages among entrepreneurship, women’s empowerment, and place; they also varied in the types of women’s businesses studied, including whether the businesses were in the formal or informal sector. All underscored—to a greater or lesser degree—that entrepreneurship is a collective endeavor that necessarily depends on geographically proximate (as well as distant) resources, such as immediate family members, friends, relatives, neighbors, employees, and others, as well as governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private-sector institutions (banks of various stripes, law firms, and agencies aimed at promoting women’s entrepreneurship). In this respect, all of the studies linked women’s entrepreneurship to place. They also underscored the potentially transformative impact of entrepreneurship on women, on gender ideologies, and on the places that are home to women’s businesses, but they pointed to different avenues to achieving these impacts.

Botswana

Alice Hovorka (2006a, 2005) conducted a detailed study, in Gaborone, Botswana, of 109 urban commercial agricultural enterprises, roughly half of which were owned by women. Most were formal, registered businesses, with one-quarter (20 of the woman-owned and 7 of the man-owned businesses) operating informally. In Botswana, as elsewhere, entrepreneurship is seen as a male domain, and gender-based segregation marks the waged labor market and molds the type, scale, and profitability of businesses. Although women and men are equally represented as owners of commercial agricultural ventures in Gaborone (the 109 businesses in the study represented 95 percent of all such enterprises in Greater Gaborone), and although Hovorka’s sample included high-, medium-, and low-income woman-owned enterprises, women’s agricultural businesses here would, on the whole, be considered by most standard measures to be less successful than men’s. Compared to men’s enterprises, women’s are more likely to be located on the home plot of land, on smaller plots, and on land that is less desirable for farming; they are also more likely to be smaller in scale, to be less capital intensive, to employ fewer people, and to yield lower incomes.

In all these ways, commercial urban agriculture in Gaborone reproduces women's subordinate position within Botswana society. Women's reduced access (relative to men) to education, capital, and other resources and opportunities underwrites the relatively marginalized position of their businesses. As Hovorka (2005, 294) put it, "people's ability to create productive and sustainable urban agricultural systems is premised on who they are, where they are located [within the urban area, in terms of the land tenure system there], and how they interact with the environment in that location," which is premised, to a large extent, on who they are (i.e., men or women).

Yet Hovorka (2006a) demonstrated how, through their entrepreneurship, many of these women, including those in the lowest income group, are gaining power over resources and changing gender relations. Their motivations for business ownership range from survival to increased income and status. The context of rapid urbanization and agrarian change in Botswana has provided openings for women to transform their lives, sometimes only in small ways, but sometimes in larger ones. These women are using the traditional association in Botswana of women with poultry to raise broilers commercially, creating businesses that not only increase their income but also extend their social networks beyond family and neighbors and increase their power and status within their households and in the community.

A number of processes are enabling women's empowerment, in the sense that these entrepreneurs pursue strategic, not just practical, gender interests. A governmental program that provides low-interest loans to women has helped to increase the number of women who have been able to launch their own businesses. Because entrepreneurship is a sociospatial process, in that literally seeing and knowing other entrepreneurs is an important motivation for others to start businesses, as more women become business owners with the help of governmental loans, increasingly more become interested in following suit. Although there is no formal network or program in Gaborone to link women entrepreneurs, informal networks of small-scale poultry producers have developed, through which the women share information and experiences. These women know each other as neighbors, family, friends, or friends of friends through spatial proximity or word of mouth, "help each other with production, and rely on a trial-and-error experimentation method to gain insights on issues" (Hovorka 2006a, 220). A local poultry supplier also helps with technical support and on-site visits. Participation in these networks has led to increased yields and incomes among the lowest-income women (Hovorka 2006b, 2005). Through this variety of mechanisms, Hovorka concluded, these women's commercial agricultural enterprises are "not only a means of addressing women's practical needs, but also a means towards longer-term, strategic change in women's circumstances and positions in society" (Hovorka 2006b, 56).

India

In Ahmedabad, India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the world's oldest and perhaps most respected organization for self-employed, largely informal-sector women, grew out of a textile union in the early 1970s (Rowbotham 1998; Rose 1992). In concert with the GEM findings reported earlier, Bipasha Baruah (2004) argued that whereas people in the developed world choose self-employment while having the option for wage/salary work, people in the developing world turn to self-employment for survival, because they have no other options. Most entrepreneurs in India, therefore, are in the informal sector, which accounts for 93 percent of the total labor force and 64 percent of the GDP (Jhabvala and Subrahmanya 2000). Women's subordinate position in India shapes and is created, as it is elsewhere, by their relatively poorer access to education and to livelihoods and also through certain forms of Indian-specific gender-based dis-

crimination that sanctions, for example, violence against women, child marriages, the dowry, and the ostracism of widows (Baruah 2004).

Governmental and NGO programs have promoted microentrepreneurship among the poorest of the poor as a livelihood strategy where other livelihood means are meager. The provision of microfinance has been the main approach for encouraging microentrepreneurship, with the goal of enabling women to generate incomes. The very design of such programs is premised on the traditional gender relations that by denying many women access to opportunity they are rendered ineligible for conventional bank loans. At the same time, the nature of traditionally gendered social relations, whereby women develop strong ties mainly with each other within the community, make even relatively poor women borrowers a good risk for microfinance loans in which the collateral is held by a group of women who know each other. Access to credit may enable women to launch small ventures that enhance their livelihoods (meet practical gender needs in Molyneaux's 1985 terminology), but neither credit nor microentrepreneurship alone necessarily promotes women's strategic gender interests.

Katharine Rankin (2002, 12) has criticized development agencies that provide microfinance to women with the expectation that small loans and self-employment will fundamentally alter gender power relations; "the implication [of such policies] . . . is that women's associations through microfinance generate not just social and economic capital, but also collective consciousness of, and resistance to, oppression." In Rankin's view, "credit programs that leave ideological structures intact . . . cannot in themselves catalyze social change" (18). Baruah (2004, 2005) and others (e.g., Feiner and Barker 2007) would agree that in South Asia the focus on access to credit and income generation has not resulted in any fundamental changes to women's position in society; it has not promoted changes in women's identity or any "collective consciousness of their subordinate location" (Rankin 2002, 17) that may lead them to challenge the existing distribution of resources, power, rights, or the gender division of labor (Baruah 2005). Simply having an income does not necessarily lead to women's empowerment or to changes in their subjugated position in Indian society.

Only through grassroots organizations like SEWA that organize self-employed women and emphasize "psychological empowerment rather than immediate income generation" (Baruah 2004, 622) have women managed to gain the skills and confidence that enable them to challenge—however partially—the gender hierarchy.⁹ SEWA has succeeded in the difficult task of organizing microentrepreneurs across many worksites and many industries. Addressing head-on the ideology of women's seclusion and women's "feelings of fear and helplessness" (Baruah 2004, 607), SEWA has moved beyond providing credit to helping women form cooperatives through which the members acquire training in skills regarding how to run a business and gain access to markets and interest-bearing savings accounts. SEWA has also organized campaigns for change at the city, state, and national levels (Rowbotham 1998) and has succeeded in helping women to gain their right to be street vendors, to obtain some basic social security, and to increase their access to low-cost housing and transportation. Baruah (2004) viewed grassroots organizations like SEWA as promoting and effecting the empowerment of women entrepreneurs, originally in Ahmedabad and now throughout South Asia, through programs that directly seek to change women's identities—from identities rooted in the status quo, accepting of subor-

⁹ Nagar and Swarr (2005, 275) described a meeting they had with SEWA representatives, in which they learned of SEWA's continued difficulties in addressing communal and patriarchal violence.

dination and feelings of helplessness, to identities rooted in having some degree of control over resources and the ability to change one's future.

Peru

Maureen Hays-Mitchell (1995, 1999, 2000, 2002) has been studying women entrepreneurs for more than 20 years in shantytowns in and around Lima, Peru. Women's paid work there resembles women's paid work in Botswana and India (and the United States and elsewhere) in that "[i]t is characterized by employment relations and work conditions that place [women] at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy . . . [in occupations that] tend to be gender-segregated and poorly remunerated. . . . [In Peru, women] predominate in such activities as street-vending, domestic service, industrial homeworking, food preparation, and repetitious manual production" (Hays-Mitchell 2002, 77). Women's businesses in Peru are mostly in the informal sector and are therefore dismissed as irrelevant to the success of the larger economy (whether urban, regional, or national). Yet the equivalent of some 40 percent of Peru's GDP and 40 percent to 80 percent of Peru's urban employment comes from the informal sector.

- 258 Hays-Mitchell's analysis was set within the context of the neoliberal structural adjustments prescribed by the International Monetary Fund, which have, since the 1980s, had devastating consequences for the livelihoods of Peru's poor, especially those of poor urban women. Hays-Mitchell described the work of five NGO-sponsored women-focused microenterprise programs that, like SEWA in South Asia, provide credit and training to self-employed women. A significant aspect of these programs is their connection with an existing women's group, such as a mothers' club, a street vendors' union, or an informal credit cooperative (2002, 77). Significant, too, is that through participation in these programs, women's understandings of themselves and of the possibilities open to them begin to shift. Hays-Mitchell (1999) documented the transformative effects of the women's collectives of microentrepreneurs:

In offering women the opportunity to access economic resources as well as to disentangle their identities from those of their families, gender-focused micro-enterprise development programs provide the space for poor urban women to construct and negotiate clearly defined identities (individualized *and* collective) that reflect who they truly are—women who do not simply have problems and needs (that is, passive victims [of structural adjustment]) but who perceive choices and possess the capacity to act on them (that is, active agents). (267)

To emphasize further the profound nature of the changes that the women have experienced, she quoted one of the women microentrepreneurs: " 'I have come to understand that I don't have to suffer the things that happen around me. . . . The worst thing is not knowing this . . . not knowing that you can do something about your life. . . . That is like slavery' " (Hays-Mitchell 1999, 267).

These changes in women's identities have fueled changes at the community level as well as at the individual/household level (Hays-Mitchell 2000, 2002). They have led to changes in women's business practices and increased women's earnings. Larger incomes have led to improved nutrition and health care for the women and their families. Improved access to resources and greater control over their labor has given the women entrepreneurs greater awareness of their rights as citizens and greater authority at home and in the community. The women have grown more outspoken about changes that are needed in their communities and, in some cases, have been elected to leadership positions, through which they champion education, health care, and community issues.

Like the studies from Botswana and India, Hays-Mitchell's studies of women business owners in urban Peru underline the importance of women-focused groups in not simply

improving women's livelihoods but in fundamentally altering women's status in society. Whereas the loan program in Botswana is run by the state, in the Peruvian case, the microenterprise programs were run by NGOs and the state was noticeably absent. Like SEWA in India, the programs aimed at self-employed women in and around Lima explicitly went beyond the provision of credit and sought to change women's gendered identities. In all three countries, women's entrepreneurial networks were central to shifting women's subjectivity, whether such networks were informal, as in Gaborone, or sponsored through programs, as in India and Peru.

United States

I turn now to a study that I have been working on in the United States that was explicitly designed to explore the relationships among gender, place, and entrepreneurship. The emphasis in this example is less on how entrepreneurship can promote changed gender subjectivity than on how people's relationship to place leads to entrepreneurship and how, through their entrepreneurship, women can become agents of change in their communities. The findings come from in-depth interviews with randomly selected male and female owners of formal (registered), privately owned businesses; about 200 such interviews were conducted in each of two places, Worcester, Massachusetts, and Colorado Springs, Colorado.¹⁰ These places are about the same size (600,000 population in the 2000 census) but—because one, Worcester, is an old industrial city and the other, Colorado Springs, is a newer Sunbelt city—have different rates of in-migration. As a result, in Worcester, people have lived in the area much longer and there are fewer newcomers than is the case in Colorado Springs.

The following story of how a 55-year-old woman in Worcester came to start her own (now large and successful) business is illustrative. The woman called her business, which provides a range of services to middle-class older people, "geriatric care management." She got the idea for such a business while working in a large Worcester law firm where she had started as a \$3-per-hour file clerk and had eventually become the administrative assistant running this law firm's estate and trust department. In this gender-typical role, she said she was "doing a lot of troubleshooting for them with their wealthy clients. I used to place people in nursing homes. I used to close down houses. I found hired help for people, paid their bills, flew to Florida to do their tax returns, organized funerals. . . . And I always thought, you know, there's a business out there." In fact, she eventually learned that similar businesses existed in other parts of the country.

A single mother, this woman waited until her children were finished with college; then she quit her job and educated herself about this type of business, which entailed gaining a deep understanding of the federal, state, and local systems that touch the lives of older people in the United States. Geriatric case management was a completely new type of business for the region, and when she started marketing, by talking about her idea with people she knew, including many of the city's business and philanthropic leaders, most of whom were men, she found that they lacked even a basic understanding of this kind of business. Her friends and colleagues would ask, "Why would anyone *pay* you to take care of their mother's checkbook?" and would dismiss the slightest possibility that a business like this could succeed. "Except," she mused, "I had worked in the legal community here for a long time . . . I'd been involved in umpteen community groups for years. So people knew me. I could call lawyers up, estate and trust lawyers in the city. Everybody would see

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¹⁰ Although all businesses in each sample were in the formal sector, many of them shared the informal-sector characteristics described earlier; for example, about one-quarter of all the businesses had no regular employees.

me because they knew me, and they knew I was reliable and honest and etc. I would call 'em up and say listen, I'm starting this business. I want you to know about it."

In the course of my study, I have heard hundreds of stories about launching a business, stories that are like this one in that they point to the importance of the potential entrepreneur's relationship to place in several ways: (1) place-based personal networks that span various spheres of life (work, neighborhood, community, and family) and provide access to resources (customers, suppliers, and financing); (2) the entrepreneur's deep personal knowledge of a place, including knowing the place-specific formal and informal rules that govern what can be done in a place;¹¹ (3) the person's reputation (being known) in a place; and (4) gendered labor market experiences in a place—this woman used knowledge she gained from female-typed jobs (file clerk, administrative assistant) to gain relevant experience, identify a niche, and launch a business. By so doing, the woman moved beyond playing by the (gendered) rules; in fact, she explicitly noted that the men she had talked with prior to start-up had strongly advised her *not* to take such a risky step.

260 The women entrepreneurs in this study, and their businesses, have a relationship to place that differs from that of men: in brief, in both Worcester and Colorado Springs, women and their businesses are more place sticky than are men and their businesses. The women business owners had lived significantly longer in the place before starting a business than had men, were less likely than men to have considered locating their businesses in a different metropolitan area or to consider moving to another one in the future, and their businesses were located closer to home and were more reliant on the local (versus extralocal) market. In terms of their use of networks of support, the women were far less likely than were the men to say that "no one" had helped them in the start-up process and more likely to describe the many ways in which family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors had aided them.

I found that women entrepreneurs in these two places are changing their communities in a number of ways. First, simply by running a business, they are contravening and disrupting prevailing gender ideologies and thereby altering prevailing ideas about gender. Second, an unexpected finding was that when asked how they think of business success, far more women than men responded not in terms of profits or income, but in terms of the importance of their businesses to the well-being of the community. In this regard, these entrepreneurs are blurring the distinction between traditional for-profit and conventional nonprofit organizations and creating a new kind of hybrid enterprise that is beginning to attract the interest of investors and journalists alike (Strom 2007). Third, established women business owners play an important role in mentoring other prospective and emerging women entrepreneurs in the community, a process that is highly gendered (in that women are likely to mentor other women) and geographic (in that it depends on spatial proximity). This process, through which women encourage and mentor other women entrepreneurs, increases the density of woman-owned businesses in a place and can change the gendered structures of local institutions, such as the Chamber of Commerce (Blake 2006). Finally, women and men business owners in the two study areas volunteer in their communities (e.g., in the schools, in children's sports, through community groups) at twice the rate of the general U.S. population. As individuals, they are also using their deep knowledge of their communities—and problems in their communities—to address these problems, by, for example, welcoming latch-key children

¹¹ This point includes knowledge of what type of business is likely to succeed in a place, knowledge of regulations that pertain to the business (e.g., environmental regulations that affect engineering businesses), and knowledge of informal practices (e.g., women entrepreneurs get together once a month at a certain restaurant for lunch).

in their stores after school, not tolerating sexual harassment of customers in a diner, or launching a computer education program for children in public housing projects (Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine 2007).

The classical view of the relationship between entrepreneurial success and place seems to be one that emphasizes economic growth; that is, success is viewed in terms of the size of the workforce, gross sales, profits, and rate of growth, all of which lead to initial public offerings, the “ultimate” mark of success (e.g., Kenney and Patton 2005). By contrast, the view of entrepreneurial success expressed by many of the women in my study suggests a different kind of relationship between businesses and place, one that emphasizes quality of life in the community, which, while not unrelated to the ability of the place to attract investment or to experience economic growth, recognizes place-based needs other than employment and income.¹² What is important is that it is through their identities as entrepreneurs that the women in this U.S. study—like the women in the Botswana, India, and Peru studies—are able to change structures of opportunity in their communities.

Conclusion

Incorporating gender into analyses of entrepreneurship has implications for the meaning and practice of economic geography. Although *entrepreneurship* signals a focus on the individual person, this brief overview of work by geographers on women’s entrepreneurship suggests that the word should instead signal the relationship between people and place (see also Stam 2007). It is this relationship that is at the heart of the entrepreneurial process, whether someone launches a business out of necessity or because she or he sees an opportunity. This observation points to the importance of networks of social relations in place, whether they are informal personal connections or more formalized institutional structures and whether they are highly localized or transcontinental. Women’s entrepreneurship that reproduces the status quo of people (in terms of traditional gender identities) or of places (in terms of gender hierarchies in ideologies, structures, and practices) is undesirable.

As economic geography takes a less claustrophobic and more expansive view of the firm, by looking at cross-firm networks and project-based activities (Grabher 2002), for example, it moves more firmly toward a focus that links people and place. One important element of this move is the recognition that individuals’ personal networks are not confined to the workplace (or the neighborhood) but span and connect multiple spheres of daily life. Although this insight dates to Mark Granovetter’s 1974 book, *Getting a Job*, and has been fundamental to a considerable amount of work by feminist geographers, it has had relatively little impact in economic geography until recently (e.g., Ettlinger 2003). Also necessary, however, is the recognition that most places are more heterogeneous than industrial districts, which have been the main places within which economic geographers have examined people-place relationships.

A gendered analysis of entrepreneurship stresses the need for economic geographers to recognize that the people-place relationship is fundamentally gendered. In their critique of microenterprise programs in the United States, Tracy Ehlers and Karen Main (1998) argued that such programs have failed (i.e., have not created a path to economic independence for the low-income women who are their primary clients) mainly because the training associated with these microcredit programs has assumed a “universal” or disem-

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¹² A study by Eileen Green and Laurie Cohen (1995) corroborated this point. In interviews with a convenience sample of 24 women business owners in Sheffield, England, Green and Cohen found that the goals of these women had more to do with giving something to the community than with profit and growth.

bodied business owner. Another, more geographic, way of stating the problem that they highlighted is that women's relationship to place is often not the same as men's. The training failed because it did not address the structural barriers that women business owners are likely to face in their home places and because it conveyed the message to the nascent women microentrepreneur that the success of her enterprise was up to her alone, when, in fact, success is very much also dependent on her relationship to the place in which she is embedded. As the Ehlers and Main study documented—echoing the work of Hovorka in Botswana, Baruah in India, and Hays-Mitchell in Peru—the simple fact of a women starting or running a business does not necessarily change her subordinate location.

In many places, however, women's entrepreneurship is transforming women's identities and consequently the material and discursive aspects of places in which they live and work. Places and gendered networks of social relations in place are at the heart of this transformative process. Three of the case studies demonstrated the importance of governmental and NGO programs and women's collective action in transforming gender ideologies, meanings, and structures. The fourth, from the United States, pointed to the
262 role of informal mentoring. Access to credit alone is rarely sufficient to change the position of women in a place. Needed instead are grassroots actions—whether formal or informal—that build women's skills, confidence, and sense of belonging; expand women's knowledge of potential suppliers and markets; and connect women with other women business owners. In other words, linking individual women through one-on-one mentoring or in networks and organizations helps to shift their identities, thereby enabling women entrepreneurs individually and collectively to change the material and discursive aspects of the places where they live and work. Although the Botswana and India case studies did not explicitly trace the specific impacts of altered subjectivities on place, they pointed to women's increased authority within and outside the home, increased spatial mobility, and increased economic opportunities, all of which are necessary conditions for altered gender relations to emerge in place.

Certainly, there is still much to learn about how women entrepreneurs are changing structures of opportunity in places; as illustrated by the case studies, the process depends, to some extent, on the nature of the place. Women's businesses help to meet the needs (for food, clothing, education, housing, and health) of their families and others in the community, needs that would not be met if those businesses were not present. Furthermore, in many cases, the businesses that meet these family and community needs would not exist if they were not woman owned. Women owners who are also employers offer opportunities for work, often under conditions that differ from those in male-owned enterprises (Brush 1992). Their position as entrepreneurs challenges gender stereotypes, and their collective position as entrepreneurs can change discriminatory structures, such as regulations that prevent women from street vending in Peru or zoning laws that outlaw home-based businesses in the United States. Their volunteer work in the community, organized or not, is rooted in their understanding of the unmet needs of the place and in their place-specific knowledge of how best to meet these needs.

Although some of these ways by which women entrepreneurs are changing places entail pursuing practical gender interests and do not involve changing the rules of the game, other ways, such as launching the first business of its kind in a place (like the geriatric case management business in Worcester), reconfigure the rules of the game and advance women's strategic gender interests. I suspect that the boundary between these two categories (practical/strategic) is fuzzier than Molyneaux (1985) imagined, and I propose that an item for the research agenda should be improved understanding of the processes that are operating at this fuzzy boundary.

Studies of women's entrepreneurship highlight that economic geographers should analyze place not just as the site of firms or clusters of firms but place as habitat. Thus, we economic geographers need to consider not merely how, for example, different characteristics of place or different spatial arrangements give rise to various forms of economic activity but also how various kinds of economic activity, in turn, shape place in the broadest terms possible. How does economic activity feed civil society and the quality of life in a place? How does such activity open up opportunities for empowerment of the least powerful?

Finally, for me, a focus on gender always raises the issue of difference (and, of course, its twin, similarity). Gender is just one among many sources of difference, and although it is often not the most important basis for difference, it remains a major source of inequality in places around the world. When women push the boundaries of femininity by owning a business, they do so without mimicking men's businesses or adopting male identities. Women do not aspire to *be* men; most of us do not even aspire to run or to save the world's economies, despite *The Economist's* ("Womenomics Revisited" 2007) request for help. We simply aspire to make equality of opportunity a reality for the world's people and to do so in full recognition—and acceptance—of difference.

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