



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

Regendering Science. For an inclusive research environment

PLOTINA Final Conference  
BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Promoting gender balance and inclusion  
in research, innovation and training



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# Job positions in entrepreneurial founding teams. The role of gender

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## Aims of the contribution

Entrepreneurship scholars have proved that gender does matter (Jennings and Brush, 2013). Our paper has two aims. First, we assess whether characteristics of founders (i.e., previous work expertise, age, educational background) and contextual factors (i.e., discipline of competence, year of inception) predict the formation of entrepreneurial teams with a predominance (or not) of female entrepreneurs. Second, we analyze the internal structure of entrepreneurial teams, in terms of job positions by women entrepreneurs in order to assess the presence of a gender bias in the allocation of female roles within ETs.

## Description of the research

### Introduction

Entrepreneurial team (hereafter ET) is a central phenomenon in entrepreneurship research (Cole, 1959) with about 80% of new ventures founded by groups of two or more individuals (Aldrich et al., 2004; Kollman et al., 2017; Lechler, 2001; Ruef, 2010; Watson et al., 1995). Extant literature indicates that ventures founded by teams perform better (in terms of survival rate, growth and innovation) than those started by single founders (Cooper and Gimeno-Gascon, 1992; Lechler, 2001; Stam and Schutjens, 2006; Yang and del Carmen Triana, 2017; Zhou and Rosini, 2015). This is explained by a high degree of variety of resources and capabilities of team members (Kamm and Nurick, 1993; Sandberg, 1992).

If previous works have focused on the outcome implications of ETs, limited knowledge is still available on the process of team formation. When co-founders come together to build a new venture an important choice they are asked to take is deciding how to structure the organization by formalizing task positions (Jung et al., 2017). The identification of task-roles and responsibilities (Pugh, et al., 1968) and the allocation of job positions among founders are, thus, important aspects of structuring new organizations.

With our paper, we intend to join this conversation, by introducing the gender lens in order to assess if venture creation and job roles allocation within new organizations are associated to particular behavioral and sociological characteristics of individuals.

### Materials and methods

Our empirical analysis is based on data about proponents and entrepreneurial ideas submitted to Nuove Idee Nuove Imprese (NINI), an Italian business plan competition organized by an association comprising local Chambers of Commerce, industrial associations, bank foundations, and universities located in the Province of Rimini and the Republic of San Marino. Since its foundation in 2002, NINI has gathered 400 business plans and awarded more than €500,000 to 43 projects. For the purpose of our paper, we exploit a dataset of 161 new business ideas (and 560 team members) presented at the NINI competition from 2010 to 2017 .

The empirical investigations of this paper rely on variables at the project and individual levels. We conduct a quantitative analysis using data about the entrepreneurial ideas retrieved from the accompanying business plan submitted at the NINI call for ideas. We integrate these data with the

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characteristics of the proponents codified from their CVs: gender, age, citizenship, education, professional experience and roles within the entrepreneurial team.

To address our research question, we first provide a set of descriptive statistics and, then, we draw on a methodology used by Ellison and Glaeser (1997) to analyse geographic industry concentration and adopted by Kaiser and Muller (2015) to study the composition of new venture teams and the presence of a gender bias. According to this approach, we compare the degree of heterogeneity computed for the actually observed teams in the sample with a benchmark, namely, a “random matching” generated through simulations, comprising a random assembly of startup teams among the participants we observe in our data. Such a comparison enables us to establish if “the observed degree of heterogeneity is statistically significantly different from the degree of heterogeneity in a situation where teams are randomly assembled. Thus, our benchmark is a situation where founders do not systematically look for teammates” (Kaiser and Muller, 2015, p.793).

## **Results**

Our preliminary results show that 32.68% of teams are founded by female entrepreneurs. In terms of distribution, there is not a clear trend over time for the participation of women in venture creation, with values ranging from 23.8% to 46.3%. In terms of team size, instead, our findings show a lower share of women in larger teams (those composed by five and more individuals). When we analyze the distribution of female entrepreneurs in terms of educational level, lower shares of women with bachelor degrees (25%) and PhD (23.33%) characterize our sample, with the highest value (60%) for the secondary school. In terms of disciplines of education, the majority of female entrepreneurs of our sample belong to humanities and natural sciences, while ICTs and engineering are the less represented. Finally, when we consider the effect of other mechanisms in support of entrepreneurship, we find a lower share of women in projects in incubators and a lower share of incubated projects with women in the ET.

The next steps of the analyses will require the cleaning of data for professional background in order to assess, first, how actual and previous job experiences can be antecedents to ET formation with women presence and, second, whether the distribution of job positions in the ETs of our sample is different from a random distribution.

## **Conclusions**

Entrepreneurship needs to be contextualized and gender provides a way of understanding the role of sociocultural dynamics in business ventures and team dynamics (Welter, 2011). Women have diverse experiences, expectation, motivations that are reflected in their entrepreneurial activities (Henry et al. 2016). The goal of the paper is to investigate the existence of a gender bias within entrepreneurial activities and to highlight which factors may explain the role of females in entrepreneurial teams. The paper has important policy implications related to the role of female in entrepreneurial teams.

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