

Book Review: Research Handbook on Gender and Innovation by Gry Agnete Alsos, Ulla Hytti, and Elisabet Ljunggren

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Alsos, Gry Agnete, Ulla Hytti, and Elisabet Ljunggren, eds. *Research Handbook on Gender and Innovation*. Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2016. xiv + 284 pages. Hardcover, \$175.00.

The new anthology, *Research Handbook on Gender and Innovation*, brings together a diverse set of perspectives on innovation, its influence on the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and theoretical approaches to understanding the interplay between gender and innovation. The editors, Gry Agnete Alsos, Ulla Hytti, and Elisabet Ljunggren, are all Nordic academic specialists in entrepreneurship, which imparts a distinctly European sensibility to the book. This offering greatly expands the current literature on gender and innovation, most of which focuses on women's entrepreneurship rather than the ways in which gender is analyzed.

First and foremost, all of the authors clearly define what they mean by innovation, some sticking to traditional definitions while others expanding the definition to encompass new concepts. This is an important step in understanding how innovation can be understood in a new light that takes gender into account. In accepted discourse, both academic and popular, innovation is often coded as a masculine activity focusing on technology and products. Pushing back against this concept, the authors Foss and Henry approach the theoretical aspects of this field in several ways—that is, as “gender-as-variable,” “gender-as-relationship,” and “gender-as-process”—with a particular focus on the latter two perspectives (p. 17).

The scope of the articles covers entrepreneurship, organizational contexts, policy, and design. In particular, the section on “Gender and Innovation in New and Small Businesses” pushes the reader to consider innovation outside of a Euro-American purview, which I found to be the most interesting application of the examination of gender as it pertains to innovation in unrecognized contexts. From a theoretical perspective, the authors draw on different traditions, for example, Amble, Axelsen, and Snerthammer write about an action research project that partnered with a group of women interested in making immediate changes to their work structures, while Kvidal-Røvik and Ljunggren make use of Foucault in a novel way to understand popular discourse. In addition, Poutanen and Kovalainen expand the classic theory of tokenism into an examination of intersectionality as seen through the lens of process tokenism.

Another interesting aspect of this collection is that due to the practical applications of the research, authors such as Aidis and Bijedić et al. are able to make policy recommendations based on empirical data. Also, by framing this as gender research, the authors generally avoid the trap of limiting their studies to women. This is especially apparent in Lindberg et al.'s evaluation of the inclusivity within traditionally masculine industries that results in recommendations that go beyond promoting women's involvement to asking people in the industry to reimagine masculinity itself.

As an anthropologist, the articles that are the most enlightening for me are those which ground the exploration of gender and innovation in the specific cultural and material contexts of people's lived experiences, principally those based on case studies, but other social scientists with an organizational bent will appreciate the chapters with more of a meta-analysis outlook. Overall, the editors balance these two types of research, making the book pertinent for most researchers of entrepreneurship and innovation. The book also provides multiple entryways for researchers to incorporate a gendered perspective into their own work. Furthermore, students who have evinced an interest in innovation could benefit greatly from reading this book, although I do hesitate to recommend it for the general student. Lastly, the literature review is extensive—with the majority of sources offered in English—and it will be helpful for those looking to build upon the research offered herein.

This book stretched my own boundaries as a gender specialist with limited knowledge of entrepreneurship and the innovation process. It has helped me to make better sense of organizational structures in American culture and given me much about which to think. The *Research Handbook on Gender and Innovation* has its limitations, at times assuming the universal nature of markets, governments, and nonprofit organizations, but as a whole, the book impressively expands the current literature, and offers the reader a number of ways to consider the role of gender in innovation and gendered innovation.

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