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WHAT DO INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND MIXED EMBEDDEDNESS HAVE IN COMMON? In search of an integrative framework to study female immigrant entrepreneurship

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Introduction

Female entrepreneurship (FENT) scholarly has long been presented as one primarily driven by necessity (Garg & Agarwal, 2017; Chreim et al., 2018; Cardella et al., 2020), outlining the fragilities and gendered social processes that push women into entrepreneurial pursuits as mainly a means to find independence (Korzenevica et al., 2022), self-assurance (Isidore et al., 2012), financial relief (Ghosh et al., 2018), or even a more balanced lifestyle to keep looking after the family (Foley et al., 2018; Kaciak & Welsh, 2020). Existing research in the field has also identified differences between the motivations and barriers to female self-employment in developing and developed countries (De Vita et al., 2014; Panda, 2018).

Although many scholars have examined various institutional elements that influence FENT (Ahl, 2006; Brush et al., 2009; Ahl & Nelson, 2010; Henry et al., 2016; Kazumi & Kawai, 2017; Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2021), only a few have shed light on the factors influencing immigrant women businesses' establishment in a foreign environment (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Chreim et al., 2018; Dabić et al., 2020), especially regarding issues of cultural assimilation and integration among pre-existent networks with native citizens, co-national first-generation immigrants, second and third generations of immigrants and other ethnic communities in the event of multicultural, global cities.

In addition, the extant empirical literature on immigrant female entrepreneurship is primarily comprised of descriptive studies, hence lacking a multilevel model to investigate the drivers behind women's motivation to migrate, their process of starting a business in another country, and the perceived causes that most contribute to the longevity and success of their enterprises in such countries (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). Moreover, there are only a few papers covering the spatial dimension (Poggesi et al., 2016) and the role of both formal and informal institutions in the existing literature on FENT (Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2020), another gap this study aims to fill.

Based on the evidence these factors differ when compared to their male immigrant counterparts, as well as to other native-born women in the country of settlement (Chreim et al., 2018), and given that "no single theoretical framework provides a comprehensive view of female entrepreneurs' businesses endeavors" (Chreim et al., 2018, p. 2), this paper aims to propose an integrative framework between Institutional Theory and Mixed Embeddedness to analyze immigrant women's entrepreneurial process.

Considering Chreim et al. (2018) suggestion to adopt a multi-theoretical lens to deepen the understanding of women's entrepreneurial practices abroad and the argument of Corrêa et al. (2020) that the broad entrepreneurship scholarly is yet to devise a model to solve Granovetter's (1973, 1985) embeddedness' inconsistencies, we subsequently review the role Institutional Theory has to play in gender studies within the field of immigrant entrepreneurship, putting the spotlight on how this theory has evolved and how it can shed new light to the Mixed Embeddedness in approaching female immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon.

Literature Review

1. Institutional Theory in Female Entrepreneurship Studies

In the transition from the 1950s to the 1960s, organizations, previously seen in an isolated way, started to be analyzed as a connected structure, interdependent on the environment where they were inserted, mainly due to the growing popularization of the General Systems Theory (GST) proposed by Bertalanffy in 1968 (see Bertalanffy, 2009) (Holanda, 2003).

Institutional Theory then emerged amidst the 19th-20th centuries from the understanding that organizations were more than mere production systems. Economists, political scientists, and sociologists (e.g., Menger, Willoughby, and Spencer), sought a theoretical apparatus capable of tackling some of the biggest issues of the time: a) similar characteristics shared among companies geographically distant from each other; b) the linkage between organizational behavior and the satisfaction of rational interests, the exercise of free choice or to a set of habits, conventions, and routines; c) how formal rules and organizational goals affect organizational members' behavior d) how laws, rules, and other types of regulatory and normative systems come into being; e) how different cultural beliefs shape the organizational environment and its operations (Scott, 2014).

Due to this diversity of concerns and the different theoretical approaches that it inherited from its founders, Institutional Theory ended up splitting into three main strands: 1) The Economic Strand or Historical School, founded by Gustav Schmoller, but whose leading representative was Carl Menger, followed by several institutional economists (e.g. Thorstein Veblen, John Commons, and Westley Mitchell); 2) The Political Science Strand, whose reference authors were J. W. Burgess, Woodrow Wilson, and W. W. Willoughby; 3) The Sociological Stand, the most recent among the three, since it appeared in the mid-1970s, from the diffusion of four different lines headed by: (a) Spencer and Sumner, Davis, Friedland and Alford, (b) Cooley and Park, Hughes, Freidson and Abbott; (c) Marx, Durkheim and Weber, Parsons, DiMaggio, and Powell; (d) Mead and Schutz, Berger and Luckmann, Meyer and Rowan (Scott, 2014).

The third approach, based on a functionalist epistemology, is the one adopted in this paper, as it incorporates individuals and their social action (Weber, 2004) at the core of the interactions that constitute institutional arrangements. Its characteristics and assumptions are discussed throughout this subsection, with emphasis on the authors of the last two lines (c and d) of this strand (Scott, 2014).

Despite the differences and variations in focus, the Institutional Theory distinguishes itself from other organizational theories by admitting the organization-environment interaction from the perspective of cultural elements (e.g., values, symbols, myths, belief systems, and professional programs), instead of taking the environment as the only determinant of organizational structure (Holanda, 2003). Thus, the institutional perspective is not limited to the analysis of technical and financial pressures present in economic systems, since it also seeks to understand the influence of social and cultural aspects on the institutional context in which organizations are embedded (Machado-da-Silva & Fonseca, 2010). Such positioning finds support in the thought of the European sociologists Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, who rescue the role of social action, i.e. any human conduct whose motivation occurs from an external event (Weber, 2004), within a social system composed of both the individual as well as the environment and society, which represents an integrated whole whose ultimate goal is to maintain a state of balance between the parts, so that the harmony of the total system is preserved.

In this sense, Berger and Luckmann (2004) state that the social order exists solely as a product of human activity, where there can be found the sharing of common meanings necessary for the institutionalization process to happen within the three systems of action predicted by Parsons (1951)—personality, society, and culture.

Institutionalization can be thus defined as a formal or informal rule created by individuals to regulate their interaction in a society, i.e., a coercive structure (Holanda, 2003). Scott (2014) also understands an institution as a social process that tends to be permanent but not immutable, guided by regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements relative to symbols, behaviors, activities, and resources. Consequently, an institution can sometimes restrict actions and acts by enabling activities and actors.

This paper adopts the definition of Greenwood et al. (2008), which refers to the understanding of institution as a perennial social practice in a given organizational field. This concept is also associated with the definition of institutional elements brought by Scott (2014), in which institutions are composed of regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars that provide stability and meaning to social life together with activities and resources. Scott (2014) makes no distinction regarding the importance of each pillar for studying the institutionalization phenomenon. For him, the regulatory pillar establishes actions to restrict or enable behaviors in a given context through processes governed by rules, monitored actions, or punitive or compensatory sanctions. The operationalization of this pillar may occur through both informal and formal mechanisms.

The normative pillar, in turn, is related to the idea of prescription, evaluation, and obligation to which the members of a social context are submitted, establishing guidelines for collective actions regarding social rights and obligations (Scott, 2014).

Finally, the cultural-cognitive pillar is strongly connected to the conception of socially constructed reality since there is the alignment of cultural knowledge based on a process of subjective interpretation that is simultaneously shaped by external aspects. In this sense, there is an interaction between the actors and the actions that are shared because they are considered right (Scott, 2014). In Table 1 there can be found a summary of the three institutional pillars and their main features.

Table 1 - Three Pillars of Institutional Theory

	<i>Regulative</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Cultural-Cognitive</i>
<i>Basis of compliance</i>	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken-for-grantedness Shared understanding
<i>Basis of order</i>	Regulative rules	Binding expectations	Constitutive schema
<i>Mechanisms</i>	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
<i>Logic</i>	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
<i>Indicators</i>	Rules Laws Sanctions	Certification Accreditation	Common beliefs Shared logics of action Isomorphism
<i>Affect</i>	Fear Guilt/ Innocence	Shame/Honor	Certainty/Confusion
<i>Basis of legitimacy</i>	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible Recognizable Culturally supported

Source: Scott (2014, p. 60)

Because of the three institutional pillars, the institutional environment analysis involves a multilevel perspective that considers both its general and immediate aspects (Scott, 2014) and its local, regional, national, or even international interrelations (Machado-da-Silva & Fonseca, 2010). Hence organizational fields may be defined as a group of organizations constituting a recognized area of institutional life (e.g., key suppliers, consumers of resources and products, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products). In other words, when acting together, there is a greater tendency for interaction between these agents, since they share common meanings when compared to agents that are

external to the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 2005). Therefore, the organizational field initially emerges from an environment with institutions working in isolation, but as new arrangements are formed, and the connections between its agents become stronger, a higher level of institutionalization is achieved (Scott, 2014).

Machado-da-Silva et al. (2010) discuss the organizational field from six theoretical perspectives, which are all summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 - Theoretical Perspectives Relative to Organizational Fields

Theoretical Perspective	Authors	Key Elements	Description
Field as the totality of relevant actors	DiMaggio; Powell.	Signification and Relationship	Set of organizations sharing systems of common meanings and interacting more frequently among themselves than with actors from outside the field, thus constituting a recognized area of institutional life.
Field as a functionally specific arena	Scott; Meyer.	Social Function	Set of similar and different interdependent organizations that are operating in a functionally specific arena, technically and institutionally defined, in association with their exchange partners, sources of funding and regulatory bodies.
Field as a center of dialog and discussion	Hoffman; Zietsma; Winn.	Debate for Thematic Interest	Set of organizations, often with different purposes, that are recognized as participants in the same debate surrounding specific issues, plus those concerned with the reproduction of institutional practices or arrangements related to the matter.
Field as an arena of power and conflict	Vieira; Carvalho; Misoczky.	Domination and Power of Position	Field as a result of the dispute for its domination in a dynamic marked by (re)allocation of the resources of power of the actors and by their position in relation to other actors.
Field as an institutional sphere of disputed interests	Fligstein; Swedberg; Jepperson.	Power and Cognitive Structures	Constructions produced by power-holding organizations that influence the rules of interaction and dependence in the field owing to their interest which, in turn, are reflections of their position in the social structure.
Field as a structured network of relationships	Powell; White; Owen-Smith	Structural Articulation	Set formed by relational networks that are commonly integrated and intertwined, emerging as structured and structuring environments for organizations and individuals revealed from topological and structural cohesion studies.

Source: Machado-da-Silva et al. (2010, p. 34)

The process of homogenization that leads organizations to establish patterns of similarity among one another may be classified into competitive isomorphism and institutional isomorphism (Meyer, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 2005). While the first is linked to market competition, the second deals with the different pressures that permeate organizations in response to political, normative, legitimation, social, and economic order issues. The social ordering aspect, in turn, is divided into three subtypes: coercive, mimetic, and normative (DiMaggio & Powell, 2005). It is worth noting that the fact companies establish homogeneous behavior patterns does not imply they have limited capacity to act within their field, as the influence of isomorphic mechanisms is present in all organizational fields along with a competitive drive (Machado-da-Silva & Fonseca, 2010).

Whereas Coercive Isomorphism consists of coercively, persuasively, or as a form of belonging being willing to follow a sort of “protocol”, mostly through legal and fiscal adjustments and affirmative policies (DiMaggio & Powell, 2005), Mimetic Isomorphism occurs when organizations try to emulate “models of good practice” or “examples of success” in response to environmental uncertainties. Normative Isomorphism, on the other hand, relies on the formalization of professionalization standards to retain talents and build on professional networks, fostering communication between organizations along with their competition for status.

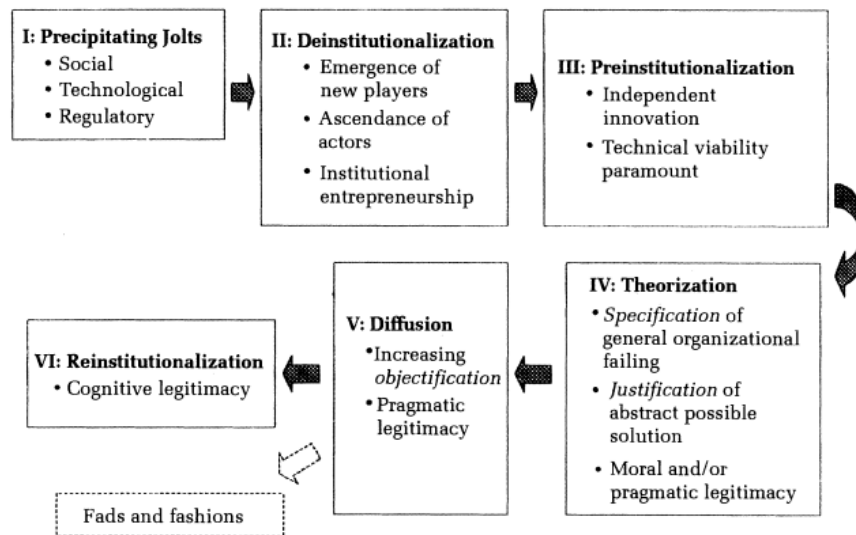
Within the discussion of isomorphism, another point of convergence between the coercive, normative, and mimetic mechanisms refers to the search for the legitimacy of organizations. From an institutional perspective, legitimacy plays an essential role in organizations’ survival and perpetuation (Scott, 2014). Whilst Meyer and Scott (1983) base the said concept on cognitive aspects, Scott (2014) defends the idea of legitimacy as a condition that reflects cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws. Suchman (1995), in turn, understands legitimacy as a generalized perception of

that an entity's actions are desirable, adequate, or appropriate within a system of socially constructed norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.

On the other hand, institutional change represents a legitimized practice rupture or discontinuity due to social, technological, or legislative-regulatory changes (Greenwood et al., 2002; Tolbert & Zucker, 2014). Just as Greenwood et al. (2002) defend changes to happen in stages, so too do Mahoney and Thelen (2009) when they postulate changes tend to occur steadily over time—never abruptly—since these are the result of standardized behaviors of both institutions and the social context.

After the precursors of change, the institutionalization process proceeds to a deinstitutionalization phase, marked by the presence of new actors—especially entrepreneurs—who start a new pre-institutionalization process by introducing new ideas, innovations or refashioning a practice considered to have failed in the past. The theorization phase, in turn, uses this failure to support change, given there is a specific need to implement new practices. Subsequently, the diffusion is marked by social consensus until it culminates with a reinstitutionalization when the new ideas are widely adopted, thus legitimizing the change. The whole process is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Stages of Institutional Change



Source: Greenwood et al. (2002, p. 60)

Admitting organizations are mainly studied through a deterministic perspective within traditional Institutionalism, one that dictates how individuals should behave, a renewal of the theory has emerged—Neoinstitutional Theory—, initiating discussions on the ability of the subject to promote changes in the organizational field from the concept of the institutional entrepreneur (Arruda, 2016).

The term institutional entrepreneurship originated in the works of Eisenstadt (1980) and gained prominence in Organizational Theory through the studies of DiMaggio in 1988 (Avrichir & Chueke, 2011). Nevertheless, the concept it entails traces its roots back to the 19th century, when economic historians made a counterpoint to classical and neoclassical economic approaches by showing how economic structures change over time and how the capitalist institutions and the process of industrialization evolve through the actions of individuals embedded in a permanent involvement with their social and cultural background (Jones & Wadhvani, 2006).

By then, sociologists like Sombart (2002), Weber (1957), and Simmel (1971) were trying to postulate an ideal type of individual social actor that would deviate from the *homo*

economicus present in the economic strand of entrepreneurship theory (Vale, 2014). For Weber (1957), this type of man would begin to change trading methods due to cultural stimuli and would be gifted with an ethical quality (e.g., resilience, asceticism, discipline, self-control, and commitment to success) different from what existed in their peers. In his account, this process began to occur everywhere, at a certain period, because of a process of rationalization, which is why he depicts the entrepreneur as someone who may transform the archaic structures of society to introduce a modern condition.

Sombart (2002) also identifies the capitalist spirit found in Weber (1957) with the entrepreneur; nonetheless, unlike the latter, who saw Puritan religious asceticism as the driver of transformations, Sombart (2002) considered that the impetus for capitalism derived from marginalized social groups, which becomes relevant to the discussion of ethnic entrepreneurship.

Simmel (2006) goes even further when he approaches the entrepreneur as an actor excluded from society. This author seeks to understand the dynamics of macro social reality (i.e., an established intricate interweaving of multiple relationships between individuals) by analyzing the interactions between individuals—deemed as atoms of society—in constant exchange and association with one another. This vision is still not only highly ingrained in the General Systems Theory (GST) principles, but also resonates with the other concepts of Institutional Theory covered in this subsection (e.g., legitimacy, isomorphism, institutional change, and organizational field).

Li et al. (2006) stress other characteristics pertaining to the institutional entrepreneur arising from or used to operating in emerging markets, which proves to be of great value to the vast majority of works covering immigrants moving from developing countries to start their businesses in developed nations. For the authors, institutional entrepreneurs from this original context play a similar role to the disruptive entrepreneur in the Schumpeterian sense (1997), for they help to establish new market institutions that drive institutional change, which makes them different from traditional entrepreneurs.

In this regard, several studies placing immigrants as institutional entrepreneurs started to appear in the entrepreneurship scholarship (Dabić et al., 2020). North's (1990) New Institutional Economics (NIE) have been prevalent in the empirical research, although mainly through a top-down logic, investigating how institutions shape ethnic marginalized groups' interactions in a given society as well as immigrant venture-creation and growth (Dabić et al., 2020). Urbano et al. (2011), for instance, have uncovered the role of socio-cultural factors in the survival of transnational enterprises by using multiple case studies from Spain. Similarly, Baltar & Icart (2013) concluded formal and informal institutional rules have greatly influenced the location decisions of firms and immigrant entrepreneurs' motivations for starting transnational businesses because these provide the frame for developing profitable opportunities.

By and large, Aliaga-Isla & Rialp (2013) also highlighted how Institutional Theory might shed new light on the institutional context affecting immigrant enterprises by comparing specific policies and formal institutions present in the regulatory pillar within developed nations that promote and/or constrain immigrant business venturing. Brzozowski et al. (2014), for example, have identified immigrants' citizenship status is closely related to a home country's institutional support for foreigners creating new businesses.

Regarding Female Entrepreneurship (FENT) scholarly in particular, a similar pattern in the topics covered with Institutional Theory has been identified. For instance, Xie et al. (2021) explored how combinations of multiple institutional conditions hold sway on female businesses' creation and growth and discovered the cognitive pillar is decisive for prompting FENT in times of scarce financial resources, confirming previous studies that showed women were more likely to keep their entrepreneurial intentions in the presence of a

supportive and welcoming external culture (Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2010).

In addition, female entrepreneurs' expectations of growth are susceptible to socio-cultural forces in that these can influence women's recognition of the legitimacy of entrepreneurship as a way to improve their financial status and social prestige (Delmar & Shane, 2004; Milanov et al., 2015), even though their businesses' growth could not be effectively achieved without strong external regulatory and normative environments as well, which was not the case concerning their entrepreneurial willingness solely (Xie et al., 2021).

Regarding the cognitive pillar as well, emotional aspects surrounding female entrepreneurial activity are also neglected to the detriment of financial achievement, not infrequently taken as the only type of outcome one might attain from running a business, which ignores the more personal and psychological outcomes highly valued by the great majority of female entrepreneurs (Selvarajah et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2019). Interestingly, immigrant women's financial prosperity has proved to be dependent on the social and cognitive attributes of their owners, in particular on their ability to speak both their mother tongue and that of the country of settlement's, pursue an independent drive—an attribute of great importance to women refugees (Huq & Venugopal, 2021)—, build rapport and become trusted among local communities, possess the emotional intelligence to foster positive working relationships, and learn out of their migrant entrepreneurial experiences in a constant commitment to their self-development (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Vershinina et al., 2019; Acevedo-Duque et al., 2021; Patrickson & Hallo, 2021).

Interestingly, Minniti (2010) compared female entrepreneurship in developing and developed nations in order to analyze countries' differences concerning the survival of women-owned businesses in their three institutional pillars: macroeconomic or regulatory (e.g., regulations, GDP, maternity leave coverage); meso economic or normative (e.g., technological and demographic characteristics); microeconomic or cultural (e.g., personal and cultural variables). The author found out that a significant portion of the gender gap in start-up activity is associated with differences in self-perception (i.e., having the necessary skills and knowledge to be firm founders) and with the GDP per capita of the country.

Minniti's (2010) findings add to Lee's (2009) previous cross-country study, discussing how women-owned business performance in the service industry was more influenced by product/service competency and managerial factors than social structures (e.g., family support and succession and communication ability), especially in developed countries (e.g., the U.S.) providing regulatory support in comparison to developing nations (e.g. Korea).

Prior to that, Boden and Nucci (2000) had already alerted that issues concerning women's business formation and survival ought to be considered within prevailing macroeconomic conditions. The authors undertook a retrospective, cross-sectional analysis of both male and female business-owners' characteristics between 1980–1982 and 1985–1987 cohorts and brought to light the amount and quality of human capital acquired during wage employment as a major factor affecting the performance of new entrepreneurs. Since the 1982 cohort was better educated, more likely to have had prior, paid managerial experience, and had more years of prior, paid employment experience, the authors posit that what has been largely overlooked by policymakers has not been female entrepreneurs' access to debt and equity capital, rather, it has been the changes in both product and labor markets over a given period (e.g., tightening and loosening of labor markets and the changes in wage earnings between employed men and women) which have influenced the opportunity cost perception of being self-employed, has imposed more binding financial constraints on the initial scale of women's businesses relative to men's (i.e., considering women's lower average wage earnings, they have less accumulated capital to support the openness of their business independently), and have determined women's fewer years of general work

experience and lesser exposure to managerial occupations, which suggest a higher demand for entrepreneurial education and training (or mentoring) targeted at the would-be female entrepreneurs.

Following this mentality, some academics argue in favor of entrepreneurs with an immigration background having superior capabilities and resources (e.g., enhanced levels of international knowledge, language skills, and cross-country relationships) that allow them to easily expand to foreign markets (Sun & Fong, 2021; Vinogradov & Jørgensen, 2017; Morgan et al., 2018). Consequently, Middermann (2020) recognized immigrant entrepreneurs as an important determinant for entrepreneurial growth and economic development, for they possess natural cognitive advantages and higher levels of proactive behavior, which lead to a more favorable evaluation of international business opportunities.

In contrast to this logic of female entrepreneurship by necessity, De Luca and Ambrosini (2019) explored immigrant mixed networks' (with other foreigners and/or locals) role not only in business management, but also in the development of transnational social activities. Policies that encourage associations, provide opportunities for gathering and exchanging with native residents, and improve the presence of immigrant women in local institutions may have the unexpected consequence of increasing immigrant women's participation in self-employment, not out of a lack of alternatives, but as a path to self-fulfillment and empowerment.

In this regard, Poggesi et al. (2016) commented that although women face more difficulties than men (e.g., in access to credit, developing strong networks, balancing work and life), female business owners across different countries (both developed and developing ones) play an important role in the societies in which they operate, by contributing to employment and wealth creation, meaning that women are more interested than men in the non-economic results of their firms and that there still need to understand how local traditions and norms, the power of religion, social segregation, and societal legitimation enable them to act as institutional entrepreneurs and affect their behaviors towards entrepreneurship.

Ten years earlier, Jones and Wadhvani (2006) had stated it would be necessary to observe the concomitant influence of religion, nationality, and affiliation on minority groups' status so as to fully comprehend how these might exert some impact on business venturing. Their viewpoint was shaped by the defense of a macroeconomic analysis associated with embeddedness and social networks to advance the studies in entrepreneurship theory, an idea disseminated since the 1990s through the development of modern economic sociology (Vale, 2014).

2. Mixed Embeddedness in Immigrant Entrepreneurship Studies

The original concept of embeddedness was created by Polanyi (1957) to understand how social interactions impact behavior and institutions (Vale, 2014; Corrêa et al., 2020). Out of the need to create an "economic theory capable of providing criteria for evaluating the relative significance of economic and non-economic variables to social theory" (Macdonald, 1971, p. 8), Granovetter (1985) gave birth to modern economic sociology by introducing Polanyi's (1957) concept to entrepreneurship study.

Deriving from the contributions of industrial sociology and economic geography and invoking the classic question of sociological theory about how social relations can influence behavior and institutions (Jones & Ram, 2007), Granovetter (1985) postulated that an entrepreneur's economic behavior would be preponderantly conditioned to the consequences of their embeddedness in their social network. Following his challenging proposition to the neoclassical idea that economic activity would be atomized, autonomous, or under-socialized

(i.e., little influenced by the relational context), this author defended the peculiarity of economic activity to be widely embedded in over-socialized structures within modern industrial society.

In retrospect, Granovetter (1973, 2005) resumes the propositions of Simmel (1955, 1971) when he sees the entrepreneur as an individual who connects and interacts with different groups or social networks. The author thus conceives two types of ties capable of uniting individuals: (a) strong ties, found in closer, cohesive, and united social groups, capable of generating solidarity and promoting trust; and (b) weak ties, found in more fragmented and porous social structures, capable of connecting an individual to different realities, allowing access to differentiated information. “Individuals with few weak ties would be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and, as such, confined to news and provincial views of their close friends” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1368).

The concept of embeddedness is consequently based on two distinctive dimensions: relational and structural. Whilst the first concerns the personal relations of a given social actor, the second, more comprehensive and subtle, concerns the broader social structure in which a given actor is embedded. So, it would then be necessary to acknowledge an entrepreneur’s personal relationship structures and how these fit into a broader structure of social relationships to understand network behavior thoroughly.

Albeit Granovetter’s efforts not to associate his relational structures with the notion of “market”, by insisting “on the intrinsically relational nature of all social action” (Krippner & Alvarez, 2007, p. 231) grounded on Methodological Individualism (Raud-Mattedi, 2005), the ‘problem of embeddedness’ persisted through a utilitarian logic inherited from economic studies (Carvalho, 2002), ending up “resurrecting a distinction between the anonymous market and the social economy, suggesting that the former is embedded in the latter” (Krippner & Alvarez, 2007, p. 231), as clearly evidenced in Corrêa et al.’s (2020) theoretical essay. In this sense, Granovetter (1992) would not have escaped the predominant economic view that posits “economy as inert to the influence of other social structures” to the detriment of those driven by the market, which places social relations in modern society as almost an epiphenomenon of it, i.e., arising from it (Corrêa et al., 2020).

The aforementioned ‘problem of embeddedness’ is not new to the entrepreneurship field, though. In the same vein, Sexton and Smilor (1997) criticized the negligence of some current approaches that deem entrepreneurs exclusively as autonomous decision-makers, thus disregarding a whole line of reasoning that incorporates the entrepreneur in a given context or social conjuncture.

Other critics of the embeddedness approach included the lack of a unified theoretical body (Graça, 2012; Krippner & Alvarez, 2007); theoretical vagueness in defining and applying the embeddedness concept” (Krippner & Alvarez, 2007, p. 220); and complete disregard for state influence, since “Granovetter does not develop an analysis of the role of the state in the economy” (Raud, 2007, p. 214), a deficiency unfortunately too found in literature reviews of mixed embeddedness’ empirical studies (Ram et al., 2017).

Acknowledging that and reacting against the widespread previous belief that the rise of migrant-origin entrepreneurs could be explained almost solely by their solidary co-ethnic social capital networks — a logic largely defended in Light’s (1972) pioneering work in immigrant entrepreneurship —, Kloosterman et al. (1999) sustained the socio-economic position of the entrepreneurial immigrant (and consequently, their propensity for upward social mobility) could only be properly understood if considering not only their embeddedness in social networks of immigrants—which find themselves circumscribed almost exclusively to fellow countrymen or coethnics—but also by a ‘mix’ comprised of social relations, socio-economic factors, as well as the political and institutional context of the host country.

The ‘mixed’ found in the ‘mixed embeddedness’ (ME) approach then consists of integrating the embeddedness of predominantly economic opportunity structures in a broader societal context, i.e., in entrepreneurs’ social networks, in an overarching interactionist dynamic model that takes into account both the variation in the composition of the migrant population (e.g., with respect to human, social and financial capital being treated as strategic resources) and the shifts in the opportunity structure which impact on where openings for businesses occur and how they develop over time.

By and large, Kloosterman and Rath (2003) insisted on a more balanced overview of immigrant entrepreneurship, one that would not simply recognize ethnic entrepreneurs as social actors embedded solely in an external business context. Such context would still be comprised firstly of markets and the analysis of a particular configuration creating a supply of immigrant entrepreneurs to compete with established indigenous firms, including large-scale corporates; but would also admit it suffers a significant influence of the state, with its regulatory regime simultaneously creating a demand for them with which all businesses ought to comply (Kloosterman & Rath, 2003).

Perhaps it is the very analysis of social capital what differs most in the application of mixed embeddedness from embeddedness alone, and therein lies the major adaptation in its application if compared to its original cases of application in Europe, where analysis of the impacts of relationships between co-ethnics in relation to social mobility and performance of these entrepreneurs were prioritized (Kloosterman, 2010).

It is argued that Waldinger (1990) has been the precursor of such an interactionist model whereby minority businesses are seen as resulting from the interplay of ethnic resources (e.g., community social capital) and opportunity structure (e.g., market environment), with them both being subject to the entrepreneur’s management strategy (Ram et al., 2017). However, Waldinger’s (1990) seminal works on ethnic entrepreneurs and immigrant businesses were too simplistic in describing opportunity structures, hence Mixed Embeddedness deviates from it in three central elements, registered in Table 3.

Table 3 - Kloosterman’s (2010) interactionist model’s differences from Waldinger’s (1990)

Elements of Distinction	Definitions
1) Foreign market disadvantages to migrant firms	Limitations of ethnic social capital, such as unfamiliarity with the local market, racist discrimination, and poor access to resources generally make migrants enter market sectors where there are few demands on capital and expertise, granting them a livelihood sustainable only by brutally hard work and breaking regulatory measures to reduce costs
2) European tradition <i>versus</i> an American free-market outlook	Following Andersen’s (1990) comparative analysis of international variations in welfare capitalism, Kloosterman and his colleagues introduce the state regulatory regime in his ‘mix’ and thus emphasizes decisive contrasts between the deregulated states of the Anglo-American context and the relatively highly regulated European business scenario in an attempt to protect the position of indigenous entrepreneurs from several advanced economies in the EU.
3) More dynamic opportunity structures	Whereas Waldinger et al. (1990) admitted migrant firms would be more prone to enter stagnant sectors, Kloosterman assumed a whole new set of more promising opportunities had opened up with the progress of industrialization in the western world and the accompanying manufacturing employment structural decline after the 1990s, which prompted an employment growth in service activities and required the input of highly-skilled workers in conjunction of a wide range of cognitive-cultural in-person services. Opportunities then emerged both for migrant entrepreneurs with high and low levels of human capital in global cities, causing shifts not only in opportunity structures driven by technological developments and changes in global trade, but also by adjustments in regulatory framework (e.g., neoliberal policies shifting provision from

	state to market) or in socio-cultural practices (e.g., outsourcing of household tasks becoming more accepted).
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Source: the author, based on Kloosterman (2010), Ram et al., (2007), and Jones et al. (2014)

With these three distinctions in mind, Kloosterman (2010) has expanded the concept of opportunity structures within such an interactionist approach by including several other determinants in the analysis of immigrants' entrepreneurial activities, namely: technological innovations, socio-cultural practices, networking with the indigenous population and not just with co-nationals, and shifts in global trade. The popularity of ME is thus grounded in European scholars' avid interest in going beyond US-dominated models exclusively reliant on the so-called 'ethnic resources' of migrant entrepreneurs (Jones et al., 2014). In Kloosterman's (2010) interactionist model, the resources variable is split between a low (secondary schooling or less) and high level (vocational or academic schooling) combined with low and high levels of financial capital, and homogenous and heterogeneous social networks.

Social aspects, institutional factors, gender and ethnic-racial gaps, and supportive environment are also revisited within ME, since the approach has evolved to encompass the micro level of individual entrepreneurs (with their resources); the meso level of local opportunity structure, and the macro-institutional level of embeddedness (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). The interplay between these three levels builds a larger, dynamic framework, encompassing organizations in the neighborhood, city, and national sphere (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

At the individual level, different factors of the mixed embeddedness would signal potential barriers or promoters of distinct opportunity structures. Thus, such analysis calls for a deepening of the understanding of the relationships between individual agency, structural and institutional inequalities, and collective social boundaries (Romero & Valdez, 2016). These are exemplified by the fact immigrants are commonly pushed toward self-employment due to their socio-economic conditions upon arrival in the new country and barriers such as xenophobia, poor labor legislation, and overall working conditions, lack of language or even technical skills (Cruz et al., 2020).

Social capital, by implication, is deemed as part of the human capital construct, often included in the personal resources available to the immigrant entrepreneur. The same occurs with economic capital; to a certain extent, they reinforce each other. For instance, economic capital facilitates the acquisition of technical and intellectual skills, thus favoring the accumulation of human capital, which, in turn, may facilitate the establishment of new social ties, thus reinforcing social capital (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). These relationships are consequently always approached in a multilevel perspective, i.e. considering interpersonal and inter-organization relationships, whether locally or transnationally, seeking to delineate the specific configuration of the integration process of these entrepreneurs, how they prioritize the relationships established and the networks constituted between coethnics or co-nationals (Rath & Kloosterman, 2000).

Additional to this three-dimensional analysis, other factors contribute to make ME so attractive to researchers of immigrant entrepreneurship to this date. As the 'mixed' in the name suggests, it is far from being a static approach and, not surprisingly, it has evolved since its inception in the late 1990s (Jones et al., 2018) as much as the traditional Institutional Theory has originated Neoinstitutionalism. Efforts have been made to refine some original elements, e.g., more attention has been paid to the time dimension, extending it to the various stages of the entrepreneurial trajectory and/or to longitudinal studies that enable scholars to unfold the upward economic movement of ethnic entrepreneurs as they accumulate more strategic resources in spite of hostile market conditions (Schutjens, 2014).

Alternatively, the variable time may also refer to political and economic changes: rules and regulations may offer either new or more market openings as well as reduce them over time (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). In this regard, some scholars have attempted to insert transnational social capital into the ME approach by investigating how the deregulation programs of the past few decades impacted entrepreneurial opportunities, in the same way as reregulation or law enforcement (Gertner et al., 2015; Solano, 2016; Bagwell, 2018). This advancement proves to be particularly relevant considering the profile of the modern migrant entrepreneur, who is increasingly embedded in social networks straddling different countries and often different continents.

In addition, after the prolonged recession in the wake of the credit crisis, the shifts in the opportunity structures have come to be seen in a new light (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). Markets have not responded uniformly to these shocks, hence investigating how migrant entrepreneurs have fared after 2008 in different cities in different countries, requiring, again, a longitudinal approach, also opened new insights into the resilience of migrant-run businesses (Riva & Lucchini, 2015). In fact, ME’s update of critical variables enables research on a wide array of new questions regarding the entrepreneurship of migrants, the entrepreneurship phenomenon in general, and gender-related entrepreneurship practices (Ram et al., 2017; Kloosterman, 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Rath & Schutjens, 2015).

With respect to the latter, Ram et al. (2017) have proposed a reframe of ME regarding issues of (1) the role of regulation, (2) the incorporation of racist exclusion, (3) gendered structures of migration and labor market processes, (4) market ghettoization, and (5) greater sensitivity to its historical context. Its elements and grounding definitions are further detailed in Table 4.

Ram et al. (2017, p. 7) justify this renewal of ME original model given that “the intersection of ethnicity, gender and other core axes of difference (class, religion, disability) tends to be overlooked” due to the dominant ethnic entrepreneurship paradigm, i.e., a tendency to analyze entrepreneurship mainly at the mesolevel, implying the effect of entrepreneurial portrayal is largely an outcome of ethnic group-based attributes and features (Romero & Valdez, 2016). This results in entrepreneurship research investigating ethnic minority entrepreneurs and women as two groups that deviate from the idealization of the mainstream entrepreneur (white, male, middle-class), almost as if in isolation from each other (Carter et al., 2015). Intersectional approaches then prove to be essential in taking a broader view of an entrepreneur’s social representation, acknowledging distinct yet interdependent identities, such as gender race and social class (Valdez, 2011).

Table 4 – Constitutive Elements of the Mixed Embeddedness Approach

Mixed Embeddedness’ Component	Definition
(1) Regulation	Migration policy regulations on both the drivers and outcomes of migrant entrepreneurship.
(2) Racist Exclusion	Acquisition of host country credentials (e.g., educational background, language proficiency, past entrepreneurial or employment experiences), knowledge of the host country’s entrepreneurial environment and culture, xenophobia, and racist discrimination consequences.
(3) Gendered Migration and Labor Processes	Unveiling gendered social structures, including migration flows, productive labor organization, and reproductive roles in the access to the labor market

(4) Market Ghettoization	Market segregation compelling immigrants to operate in specific sectors usually unwanted by native firms
(5) Historical Context	Counteracting long-lasting immigrant structural disadvantage by analyzing inter-connections between the evolving political-economy and shifts in immigrant livelihoods from the post-World War II period onwards
(6) Institutional environment and wider policy context	Major state activities concerning state legislation to fostering entrepreneurship and the provision of financial incentives

Source: the author, based on Ram et al. (2017)

Now moving on to how ME has been used to investigate female immigrant entrepreneurship before the aforementioned update of the model, Chreim et al. (2018) have observed in their literature review that most studies on the topic still focus on host countries from Western Europe and North America, given their perceived economic development, ease of doing business, well-developed and trustable institutions, and expanding service sector represents an enticing environment where women immigrants can pursue their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Although countries like Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands have been seen as major enablers of favored institutional and regulatory conditions within Europe (Lidola, 2014; Ohlsson et al., 2012; Verduijn & Essers, 2013), the lack of knowledge of governmental resources available for women immigrant entrepreneurs persists as one of the greater barriers to immigration (Pio, 2007), denouncing efforts need still to be made into advocating and effectively promoting institutional infrastructure in the host country (Wang & Li, 2007).

Another aspect considered by immigrant women is an open-minded and multicultural environment (Lidola, 2014), albeit these are influenced by the gender role ideologies and value systems pertaining to the host country, which results in the degree of acceptance and general support for female immigrant entrepreneurs in a given institutional context (De Vita et al., 2014). Higher levels of xenophobia emanating against skin color and Muslim religion in New Zealand (Pio, 2007) and the Netherlands (Essers & Benschop, 2007), for example, have been listed among the interfering conditions to foreign women's acceptance into another country's environment. Such bias may contribute to a "feeling of inferiority" (González-González et al., 2011), for many women from developing countries are deemed as illiterates and male dependants (De Vita et al., 2014), which eventually prevents female immigrant entrepreneurs from networking with local business owners, further constraining them from individual development and venture growth (Verduijn & Essers, 2013).

Worse still, the "double disadvantage" of ethnicity and gender intensifies financial institutions' skepticism about immigrant women's entrepreneurial capabilities (Ghosh et al., 2018; Murzacheva et al., 2020), and it is not unfrequent that male or local guarantors are required in bank loan applications made by female immigrants (González-González et al., 2011; Garg & Agarwal, 2017). Host country policies related to women's entrance into business venturing after immigration thus play a vital role in determining what human and financial capital they are likely to possess, influencing their entrepreneurial progress as well (Chreim et al., 2018).

Female immigrant entrepreneurs may not be able to get co-ethnic community support and hence experience restrictions to their venture's growth if they do not conform to the indigenous community's views of gender roles (González-González et al., 2011). Alternatively, they tend to locate in geographical proximity to other ethnic minorities with

similar backgrounds, forming enclaves that provide clustered and unique resources not available to native female entrepreneurs (Pio, 2007).

Women immigrants' human capital also plays a significant role in their aptitude for entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly their individual characteristics (e.g., education, language proficiency, citizenship status) have a say in one's propensity to become self-employed. Language, in this case, is frequently associated with issues of fluency and accent, since lack of fluency and/or a different accent from the majority population are seen as devaluing in an immigrant trying to enter the mainstream labor market (Mwila, 2013), as well as a hindrance to the growth of the enterprise or to seeking funds from financial markets (Cheng, 2015). On the other hand, language and education challenges may be minimized for the second generation of immigrants, given the fact they tend to have been living in the host country for a longer period than those from the first generation (Ohlsson et al., 2012).

The capacity to communicate in both home and host country languages and cultures is seen as a significant source of human capital and a competitive advantage in business because it enables relationships with varied supply sources (e.g. labor) and market segments (Hedberg & Pettersson, 2012). Likewise, a longer stay in the host community may allow immigrants to get more business experience and build a greater capacity to access financial and social resources (Chreim et al., 2018).

One last element of human capital would be to have a business family background, as this offers women entrepreneurs role models, mentors, a close network in the management domain, and a specific set of business experiences that adds to their entrepreneurial competencies (Aygören & Nordqvist, 2015).

Conversely, the family context has been pointed out as a hindrance to female entrepreneurship in numerous ways, despite motherhood being indicated as a contributing factor to stimulating women's entrepreneurial endeavors in an attempt to provide better material conditions to their offspring. Firstly, women must spend a great portion of their revenues on home expenses, leaving them with less money to reinvest in their own firms (Chreim et al., 2018). In addition, whereas males are increasingly free to defy the status quo ingrained in gender conventions by entering commonly assumed "female sectors", women remain concentrated in a few saturated activities, mostly low-skilled and home-centric (Langevang et al., 2015).

Turning our attention now to the factors impacting the entrepreneurial intention of female immigrants, Munkejord (2017) identified some motivations for women starting their businesses in Norwegian rural areas: a way out of unemployment; a means to avoid underemployment; a means to live in a region of perceived attraction; and a preferred choice for women with dissatisfactory wage labor. Other than these, the said paper revealed the importance of family support and spatial embeddedness among female immigrant entrepreneurs living in that geographical area, along with a prior feeling of belonging to the new region of settlement (Munkejord, 2017).

In a similar vein, Brieger and Gielnik (2021) argued immigrant entrepreneurship is primarily male-dominated and thus tried to uncover the drivers and contextual factors that could explain the gender gap in it through a multi-country study using ME. Their findings revealed that such a gap is primarily caused by the lack of a supportive institutional entrepreneurial environment through policymaking that does not take into account the social reality female expatriates face when they try to find formal employment in a host country, which highlights not only gender-related discrimination when we compare female immigrants with their male counterparts, but also the economic, social, cultural and ethnic differentiation outlined between female natives of the country of settlement's having facilitated access to the labor market in relation to immigrants of the same gender (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021).

Raijman and Semyonov (1997) had already noticed this when they proposed women from developing countries suffered a double disadvantage that might only be uncovered by examining the phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurship from a gendered perspective because of the structural factors that position this type of entrepreneurial activity as one relying more on necessity than on discovering an opportunity. The dual disadvantage would then refer to being a woman and being an immigrant from a less advanced country trying to access a foreign labor market while competing with equally immigrant men. Other authors believe that it would be more accurate to say that there is threefold discrimination in this case: as a woman, an immigrant, and a worker (Parella, 2003; Portes et al., 2010).

However, several authors still reinforce this idea that what makes them self-employed is the job insecurity found in host countries along with limited opportunities for social and labor mobility (Solé et al., 2009; Heilbrunn & Abu-Asbah, 2011; Pio & Essers, 2014; Osorio-García-de-Oteyza et al., 2020). Schrover et al. (2007), on the other hand, represent another group of academics who emphasize that for many immigrant women, self-employment is a way of reconciling their family, personal, professional, and working lives, which prompts them to start their business activities out of personal interests and aspirations.

An Integrative Framework between Institutional Theory and ME

After an extensive literature review, only two papers on female entrepreneurship that used both Institutional Theory and the Mixed Embeddedness Approach in a complementary manner could be found. The first is strictly related to how regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutional forces have been concomitantly propelling and impeding Ghanaian women's entrepreneurship in comparison to men (Langevang et al., 2015). The second uses secondary data analysis of three international indexes to explain the emergence of women's entrepreneurial leadership in relation to the entrepreneurial conditions impacting female self-employment and the outer social perception of FENT (Yousafzai et al., 2015). These works have provided a greater insight into the integrative review proposed in this research.

Langevang's et al. (2015) study, for instance, succeeded in underlining the importance of contextualized understandings of women's entrepreneurship and the significance of viewing entrepreneurial activity as a gendered process embedded in institutions that both drive and simultaneously impede women's entrepreneurial pursuits. However, despite their longitudinally-oriented analysis, they could only list features related to attitudes towards entrepreneurship by women from Ghana in contrast to barriers to their entrepreneurial activity, perpetuating a dualist tendency in immigrant female entrepreneurship previously identified in Chreim's et al. (2018) literature review of the topic.

Similarly, despite Yousafzai's et al. (2015) multi-level analysis of the positive relationship between institutional pillars (regulatory, normative, and cognitive) and the creation of a favorable environment for women's entrepreneurial leadership, based on the mediating role of different institutionalized viewpoints towards FENT in 92 countries, their results shed little light on how the networking connections in which women are socially embedded translate into distinctive non-economic gender differences that pose unique challenges to women's enterprise (Brush et al., 2009). Such a networking process happens because social embeddedness is dependent on the legitimation granted by the existing actors within a given network (aka incumbents) upon the evaluation of a candidate's (outsiders of a given institutional field) suitability to enter that network (Pólos et al., 2002). This implies embeddedness is a contingent phenomenon related to an individual's gradual tendency to

adopt a socially expected behavior, i.e., a candidate's ability to operate in an established system of social norms and expectations (Zuckerman, 1999; Denzin, 2008).

The Mixed Embeddedness approach extends such construct in that it does not stop at an analysis of how capital assets are deployed against a hostile structural environment; by contrast, it recognizes that forms of capital are not purely inherent in the social agents, but are rather “properties ... in many respects conditioned by the structure itself” (Ram et al., 2008, p. 432). Stoyanov (2018, p. 3-4) stresses this is a crucial evolution made by the inventors of ME, as it does not assume agency in each network relates merely to “a battery of resources under the agents' ownership to be brought to bear on the structure”. Yet, Institutional Theory adds to the theoretical model of ME by providing a clearer understanding of how institutionalized social practices, the institutions themselves, and the phenomenon of isomorphism, both in the country of origin (e.g. in the case of transnational enterprises) and in the country of destination, influence the three dimensions of ME: economic embeddedness (agency and structure), social embeddedness and institutional embeddedness, allowing researchers to transcend the individual level of analysis so prevalent in the extant literature—a vicious tendency outlined by both Rath (2002) in relation to case studies on immigrant entrepreneurship and by Vale (2014) in relation to the broad entrepreneurship scholarship—, by moving towards the meso- and macro-organizational levels of analysis as well.

Studies addressing institutional entrepreneurship try to demonstrate how actors develop the ability to see outside the structure in which they are embedded and propose alternative paths rather than just reproducing such structure, setting up a process of change in a way that is ‘external’ to the institutional structures already legitimized (Baratter et al., 2010). The search for the explanation of how institutions arise and how individuals can benefit from them to promote arrangements (Arruda, 2016) caused DiMaggio (1988) to conceptualize institutional entrepreneurs as actors able to create or transform institutions within an emerging field, by performing a social function within the structure in which they are embedded. Therefore, the greater the actors' access to resources, the greater the possibility of promoting environmental changes (Battilana, 2006).

In this sense, individuals and their relationships are included in the analysis of both the institutionalization process and mixed embeddedness (Peci, 2006). If, on the one hand, conventional Institutionalism transforms organizations into consolidated institutions, on the other, Neoinstitutionalism posits institutions are legitimized social practices subject to transformation (Chaerki et al., 2020). This implies that organizations came to be seen as a population within an organizational field whose institutional context is vertical, although they also remain horizontally interconnected by the mechanisms of reciprocity and redistribution (Corrêa et al., 2020), so that every organization becomes subject to the pressures within this context (Vieira, 2019). While reciprocity occurs “when mutuality between individuals in symmetrical groupings is frequent”, redistribution takes place “where sharing among individuals is common” (Polanyi, 2018, p. 35). These two mechanisms suggest there is a mutual interaction between levels, since society's macrostructures are bridged by organizational fields as much as there are microstructures dependent on individual actors within organizations (Scott, 2014).

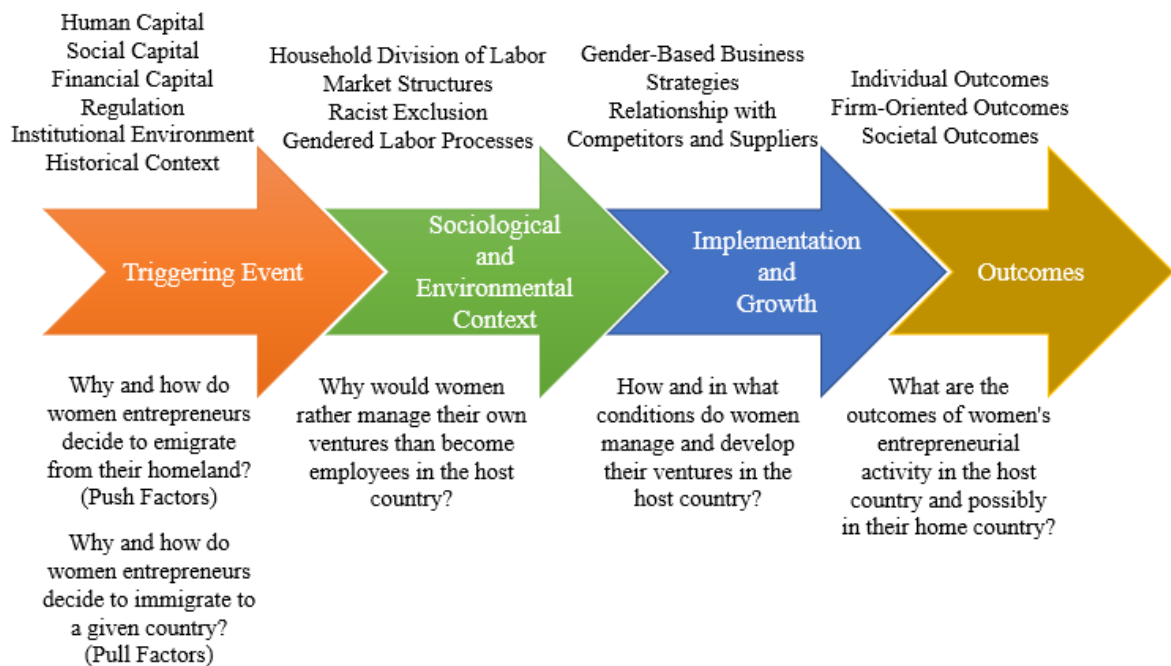
Albeit redistribution can be solely explored at the micro level, since it applies to smaller groups between entrepreneurs, their families, or target groups of customers (Polanyi, 2018), it may also entail macro institutional processes such as “the norms or values prescribing that members of a collectivity should make contributions of taxes or goods or services to some central agency” (Barber, 1995, p. 397), like the government or charities in defense of their fundamental interests (Barber, 1995). In this sense, reciprocity could be compared to the isomorphic practices and behaviors that prompt closer members of a community to develop similar attitudes (Polanyi, 2018) in order to cooperate and build trust,

preserving their relationship’s continuity, stability, and efficiency (Vinha, 2001), whereas redistribution is related to the level of diffusion of such isomorphic behaviors in specific institutional fields, causing them to become uniform and stable over time (Greenwood et al., 2002).

Researchers generally prefer to focus on just one of the two relational levels at a time, however, Brailly et al. (2016) stress economic activities and markets are influenced by both levels, and hence require a multilevel analysis. Jacometti et al. (2014) further insist that adopting such logic in institutional research is more agency-centered and takes into account the influences of some target social actors’ sensemaking and decision-making over the evolutionary process an institutional context undergoes, as opposed to simply trying to explain how institutionalization happens to the detriment of a deterministic view based solely on the institutional context.

In a nutshell, studying embeddedness through these lenses allows unraveling how identity engages in categorization and comparison of social codes for constructing candidates’ legitimacy in terms of in-groups (i.e. incumbents) and out-groups’ (i.e. candidates) negotiation of self-representation, reactivity, relatedness, reflexivity, integration, and proactiveness, since by engaging in these processes, out-groups form perceptions and define others and themselves within the social context (Stoyanov, 2018). This proves to be fundamental to the study of immigrant female entrepreneurship, given the phenomenon is subject to unique factors that constrain and foster these subjects’ entrepreneurial activity and survival, such as the “double disadvantage”, gendered migration flows and labor division, the way productive and reproductive work is organized within the household in spite of women’s employment or self-employment status, their access to financial resources, mentorship and business advice and support etc. (Ram et al., 2017). A summary of such factors is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Immigrant Female Entrepreneurial Process



Source: the author, based on Moore (1986) and Bygrave (2004)

At the individual level, there can be found human, social and financial capital, household division of labor, and individual outcomes. Human capital entails the

sociodemographic characteristics that come from immigrants' intrinsic capabilities, often obtained in the home country, such as educational background, previous family entrepreneurial background, employment history, level of proficiency in the country of settlement's official language(s), and personal capabilities developed in the face of their transition to a foreign country (Chreim et al., 2018).

Social capital, however, represents the resources obtained through networks based on strong and weak ties in the creation of social and cultural infrastructure among family and close ethnic networks from the home country (close co-ethnic relations); among other members of the same nationality but out of the immediate circle in the host country (general co-ethnic relations); among native citizens in the host country; among other nationals from other immigrant ethnic minorities, in case of later generations of immigrants in the host country, accounting for their multicultural environment (Iyer & Shapiro, 1999; Yetim, 2008).

Financial capital, in turn, encompasses the means by which female immigrant entrepreneurs can obtain and learn how to effectively use financial resources to either start or run their businesses, relying on extensive family financial support or formal access to credit from institutions in the country of origin or during their stay in the country of settlement (De Vita et al., 2014). On the other hand, the household division of labor may be defined as the unequal household power relations that are conditioned by women's socio-culturally defined roles (Brush et al., 2009).

Lastly, at this same level of analysis, individual outcomes direct consequences of entrepreneurial activity on businesswomen's relationships and lifestyle, including (but not limited to) their professional independence, their self-esteem, perception of self-worth among family members, male partners, and relatives, improved social relations and social status (González-González et al., 2011; Lidola, 2014).

At the meso level, market structures are referred to as "opportunity structures or market conditions which may favor products or services oriented to the co-ethnic niche or situations in which a wider, non-ethnic market is served. Opportunity structures also include the ease with which access to business opportunities is obtained" (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990, p. 114). Also, racist exclusion is often related to "the role of market in conditioning the potential of migrant entrepreneurs and compelling them to operate in the under-rewarded sectors unwanted by native firms" (Ram et al., 2017, p. 9), in other words, racist exclusion encompasses blockages or barriers to enter particular markets due to xenophobic practices, racial and gender bias, educational and labor market discrimination (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013).

Gendered labor processes, in turn, stands for the fact that industries may be gendered in terms of image (Barrett, 1998), but also be ingrained in the broader gendering phenomenon of "social structures that either facilitate or constrain entrepreneurial activity, (...) how migration flows are gendered, (...) the way in which productive and reproductive work is organized and affects the access to the labor market" (Ram et al., 2017, p. 11). For some authors, labor processes become gendered in the cognitive formation of assumptions about work, power, and the like (Acker, 1990), in the early learning experiences within patriarchal societies (Apple, 2018), or in social closure processes, i.e., more powerful actors (often men, with the support of employers) excluding status inferiors (usually women) in order to monopolize desired jobs (Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs, 2002).

Gender-based business strategies, however, are comprised of the features concerning leadership, the managerial and organizational communication styles of female immigrant entrepreneurs', relative to their preference for the status quo, instead of risky, more disruptive, and aggressive business strategies (González-González et al., 2011). Their relationship with competitors and suppliers also involves an essential dimension of immigrant female entrepreneurship insofar as there is a link between these and the kind of resources available in

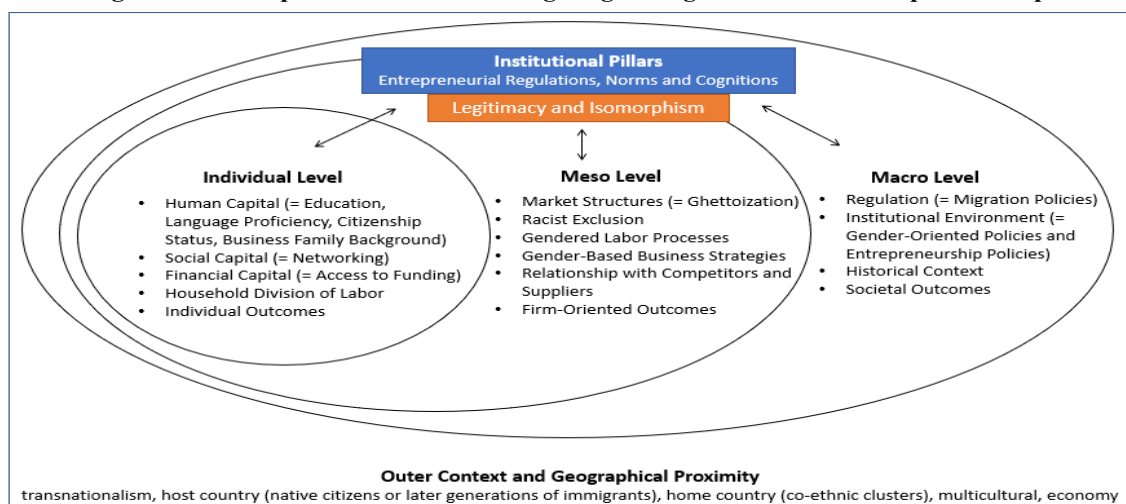
the ethnic-native social network, especially in the access to strategic informal information, coethnic or native financial sources, coethnic or native customers, and also coethnic or native suppliers and/or providers of specialized managerial services. The same applies to the process of establishing trust and emotional support among ethnic or native labor connections in a foreign market (Chrysostome, 2010). Finally, firm-oriented outcomes correspond to the results originating from the survival capacity and long-term competitive advantage resilience of immigrant women-owned businesses in the foreign market (Chrysostome, 2010; Chreim et al., 2018).

At the macro level, regulation entails a “country of operation’s migration policy regulations on both the drivers and outcomes of migrant entrepreneurship”, reflecting the country of settlement’s state entrepreneurial support (Ram et al., 2017, p. 9). The institutional environment, nevertheless, consists of a conscious design of state legislation ranging from the provision of financial incentives towards entrepreneurship to the specific targeting of ethnic minorities for enterprise aid, although this is not exclusive to the knock-on effects of immigration laws, which may have no intended bearing on entrepreneurship but which in practice may limit occupational choice (Ram et al., 2017). Historical context, in turn, is comprised of inter-connections between the evolving cultural, social, political, and economic conditions of the country of settlement and shifts in immigrant livelihoods (Ram et al., 2017).

Ultimately, societal outcomes represent the indirect effects of the entrepreneurial activity of female immigrants to the wider society of the country of settlement, in the form of newcomers’ assistance with their integration into the host society (Lidola, 2014; Pio, 2007) and direct financial benefits to suppliers, landlords, financial institutions (interest on loans), and governments (taxes) (Mwila, 2013). Such outcomes can be extended to the home country in the case of transnational entrepreneurs, who exert some influence both in the level of the close ethnic community and/or at the level of the entire homeland society (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Chreim et al., 2018).

Considering all of these elements, we expanded the existing analytical frameworks by intertwining the original seminal works of Institutional Theory (Scott, 2014; Meyer & Scott, 1983; Suchman, 1995; Meyer, 1979; Dimaggio & Powell, 2005; Brush et al., 2009) and the revised Mixed Embeddedness Approach (Kloosterman, 1999, 2001, 2003; Ram et al., 2017; Chreim et al., 2018) to examine the repercussions centered on the aspects of reciprocity and redistribution resultant of the female immigrant entrepreneurial process. The conceptual model designed for this work is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Conceptual Model for Investigating Immigrant Women Entrepreneurship



Source: the author, based on Brush et al. (2009), Yousafzai et al. (2015), Ram et al. (2017), and Chreim et al. (2018)

Conclusion

This paper's main objective was to provide an integrative framework to analyze immigrant women's entrepreneurial process, given the gap in the extant literature on immigrant entrepreneurship to encompass the specificities and uniqueness that surround the entrepreneurial process undertaken by this group, without limiting itself to a dualist tendency to merely list the constraints and drivers that affect immigrant women's entrepreneurial activity. To attain it, the fundamental concepts concerning Institutional Theory have been covered, such as Scott's (2014) three institutional pillars (normative, regulatory, and cultural-cognitive), legitimacy, isomorphism, institutional change, and organizational fields, and Mixed Embeddedness—a consistent theoretical approach commonly used in the field—has been revisited in a gender-oriented perspective.

It is argued that what prevented such an integrative model from being consolidated was the fact ME alone as a theoretical lens was unable to capture “the redistributive and reciprocity behaviors that exist alongside market behaviors in modern society” (Barber, 1995, p. 406). Therefore, the integrative logic pursued here (realized in the reciprocity or social circulation strategy) is characterized by collaboration between actors and involves integrating information and resources to increase mutual value. Conversely, the redistributive logic is characterized by zero-sum game principles, including competing over fixed resources (Stoyanov, 2018).

In trying to uncover the relational nature of entrepreneurs embedded in macro social contexts, Corrêa et al. (2020) recommended analyzing the ways in which repercussions of the reciprocity-and-redistribution dynamics affected the entrepreneurial trajectory of different social actors, one thing that can only be done by the structuralist dimension of ME in combination with the functionalist epistemological dimension of Institutional Theory. Using the former alone would reflect a similar conflict between agents' decisions and sensemaking being shaped by structures and not necessarily by reciprocity and redistribution relations, which becomes evident in Jones' (2012) and Corrêa et al.'s (2020) criticism of the unsolved problem left in the traditional analytical perspective of embeddedness. Entrepreneurship may be indeed analyzed beyond its market dimension (Corrêa et al., 2020) once Neoinstitutionalism serves as a consolidated guiding principle for the understanding of the phenomenon of isomorphism (i.e. the reproduction of hegemonic social practices) and legitimacy in a given organizational field, and ME is applied altogether to investigate how these processes occur from the individual level, with their due unfolding to the meso and macro levels, based on the structure of social networks and individual agency proposed by Granovetter (1985) and adapted by Kloosterman et al. (1999) afterward.

In this sense, adopting such a multilevel framework of analysis helps understand the gendered social processes underneath migration movements and ethnic businesses whereby female immigrants' relational structures are embedded, especially in their country of destination but also extending to their country of origin (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010). Additionally, it helps tackle “a stagnant evaluation of the dynamics between individual agency and structure” (Rath et al., 2002) in the immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship, in which individual aspects are still prioritized in a reductionist fashion, in spite of the ‘mixed’ added to Granovetter's (1985) embeddedness, representing a step forward to the advance of the extant scholarly on the subject.

One limitation of the model proposed in this paper, though, is that it is still in the phase of empirical testing and validation, meaning there is plenty of room for improvement and adjustments derived from comparative case studies or mixed method designs. Nevertheless, it is expected the discussion raised by this essay allows an in-depth reflection of

how models uncovering the specificities of female entrepreneurship are still scarce in the broad entrepreneurship literature and how new ones may emerge, be expanded, or even reframed through consistent theoretical triangulation, in order to enrich the current perspectives of analysis and position the female entrepreneur as a true network creator.

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