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AUTHOR(S): SMITH, R.

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Assessing the contribution of the 'Theory of Matriarchy'

in entrepreneurship and family business

Abstract

Objectives: The literature on gender and entrepreneurship is expanding and maturing in its level of theoretical sophistication and subject coverage. At the same time, our nuanced understanding of how gender influences entrepreneurial action also expands, as does our appreciation of how men and women do entrepreneurship. It is widely acknowledged that although the theories of entrepreneurship and small business are cognate literatures, entrepreneurship has primacy. The heroic male entrepreneur is the master narrative against which we measure other forms of entrepreneurship. The role played by wives and partners is often unstated. In our eternal quest to theorise and explain entrepreneurial action in its entirety, we seldom consider the explanatory power of the sociological theory of 'Matriarchy'. Consequentially, this study presents and discusses important aspects of the theory applicable to our understanding of the diverse nature of gendered enactment within entrepreneurship and small business in which entrepreneurship provides the action to be measured and small business, the setting in which it is encountered.

Prior Work: The work primarily concentrates on the theoretical aspects of Matriarchy as well as building upon the extant literatures of entrepreneurship, gender; and small and family business.

Approach: The literature on Matriarchy is presented and analysed in conjunction with appropriate texts from the above literatures. The readings construct a theoretical framework to be tested against narratives of Matriarchal figures encountered via research. This unusual qualitative methodology allows us to test and develop the utility of the theoretical framework. The resulting vignettes are both illuminating and enlightening.

Results: Stories of Matriarchs illustrate how gender differences impact upon entrepreneurial identities and the everyday practicalities of doing business. Whilst the male head of the family may be the titular business owner, many privately defer to the Matriarchal voice which acts as a positive driving force in business binding a family together.

Implications and value: The theory of Matriarchy offers another powerful explanatory variable in how gendered relationships influence entrepreneurial identities and in making the theory the focal point we can avoid some of the common assumptions we make when we concentrate on entrepreneurship as the key variable. In perpetuating heroic entrepreneurial narrative as success stories we as the ultimate consumers of such socially constructed fiction are also complicit. This article influences how we as authors of such narratives narrate stories of women in family business.

Originality: The paper challenges the universality of traditional renditions of family businesses as entrepreneur stories. It re-examines and challenges accepted wisdom building up a discussion, which confronts accepted theories of entrepreneurship and family business.

Key words: Bourdieu, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial role modeling, family business, matriarchy.

Assessing the contribution of the 'Theory of Matriarchy' in entrepreneurship and family business

1. Introducing the research agenda

A fascinating issue in the entrepreneurship literature is the disparity between theory and practice in relation to our understanding of how gender issues impinge upon familial issues. Families are complex constructs and according to Gibb-Dyer (2003) family is the missing variable. Much research ignores, or glosses over, the role of family in owning, or managing, business enterprises (Litz, 1997) despite the complex interaction patterns (familiness) that evolve between family firms and their immediate environs (Habbershon, 2006). Litz urged us to rethink the grounding assumptions that undergird traditional organizational research in the business domain. This distinction between work and family life in family business settings is blurred as are the enacted roles of individual family members, making it difficult to attribute responsibility for aspects of entrepreneurial leadership (Hisrich & Brush, 1984). The default leadership position need not be masculinity. Of particular interest is the role played by women as matriarchal figures acting entrepreneurially and the concept of matriarchy as a legitimate form of power. The matriarch has had limited exposure in the entrepreneurship literature (Campbell, 2002: Raffey, 2000). Campbell argued for an alternative 'Matrilineal' entrepreneurial narrative. Moreover, de Bruin, Brush and Welter (2007) urge call for a framework for coherent research on Women's Entrepreneurship; whilst Chau, Chrisman and Steier (2003) highlight the need to extend theoretical horizons in family business research. There is a gap in the gender literature on entrepreneurship relating to the role of matriarchy in small/family business as part of the embedded family approach (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003).

In Western societies, men are hero figures because of the myth making process associated with the cult of the entrepreneur (Ahl, 2006; Drakopoulou-Dodd & Anderson, 2007). This casts a long shadow over businesses. We seldom hear of the roles wives or partners play in unfolding entrepreneurial drama. Men are positioned as publically acclaimed masculine

figureheads (Schwartz and McDonald, 2004) of family businesses in an age when accepted social convention dictates that entrepreneur stories credit men with master status (Smith, 2009). This underplays the contributions of women who contribute to the choreographing and enactment of entrepreneurship within such businesses. In perpetuating the ensuing narrative as success and entrepreneur stories, we the ultimate consumers of such socially constructed fiction are complicit in privileging the lone heroic entrepreneur (Landsberg, 1982).

Research into familial sharing of entrepreneurial responsibility is sparse which begs the question - how does one achieve this sharing when convention dictates that there is only room for one entrepreneur in a family, or business? One credible model is the co-entrepreneurial couple or co-preneurs (Marshack, 1993, 1994; Cole & Johnson, 2007; Farrington, Venter, Eybers & Boshoff, 2011). Co-preneurship works well in small and family business contexts because it offers a genuine power sharing model feeding upon personal needs, complimentary skills, shared histories and dreams and values, even post divorce (Cole & Johnson, 2007; Venter *et al,* 2011). Another piece of the conceptual jigsaw is the 'Integrated approach' (Brush, 1992) whereby women combine paid employment as an entrepreneur with unpaid domestic employment as mother. Another useful heuristic is reading family business narratives as performance or play enacted by couples (Hamilton & Smith, 2003) as each actor takes their turn as in a 'Play'. According to Butler (1990) gender is a performed identity or enacted behaviour. Motherhood can be viewed as an entrepreneurial identity (Leung, 2011) which influences entrepreneurial role modelling and counters stereotypical characterisations (Greene, Han & Marlow, 2011). Another solution is role playing, not in the sense of make believe, but of performing expected acts, actions and antics when the need arises. The power of role modelling (Scherer *et al,* 1989) and role playing in influencing entrepreneurial performance is under researched. Other entrepreneurial roles, such as the matriarch, can be accommodated within family businesses and indeed form part of the emerging shared responsibility model.

At present the popular ideological conception is that men and women behave differently. Indeed, Birley (1989:32) remarked that "*Throughout history, according to the norms of particular cultures, the roles of men and women in society have tended to be quite different*". Although the nature of these roles is gradually changing in Western economies - within particular cultures and families, gendered roles are notoriously resistant to change particularly in relation to succession issues (Lansberg, undated). It is helpful to consider different roles the family of an entrepreneur play in this sharing of entrepreneurial responsibility without usurping the role and identity of the entrepreneur as head of the family business. Identifying entrepreneurial roles and elements of role playing within the business family and the family business would help. Therefore, in this article we consider:-

- The role of the entrepreneur in a family business; and
- The roles played by (M)others in family business.

These issues are important because they move the research dynamic away from the family business and the role attributed to the traditional entrepreneur. In an era in which academics and practitioners stress the powerful influence of family in all aspects of business it is timely to revisit the dominant logic of narratives including the ubiquitous entrepreneur story, which influence how we perceive and conceptualise family business. A more contingent, storytelling approach is required (Smith, 2009). The traditional entrepreneur story is generally a restrictive, one sided rendition particularly if the male entrepreneur in a family business does not cast himself in a heroic role. Narrating a traditional entrepreneur story may pose a dilemma. Heroic renditions do entrepreneurship a disservice because entrepreneurs are helped by significant others. This is worthy of further exploration because it necessitates the telling of a very different entrepreneurial narrative to masculine hero-stories. In such instances, entrepreneurship theory is of little use to us in explaining atypical scenarios. A different explanatory heuristic is required and the 'Matriarch' archetype offers a plausible explanation. Consequentially, the research question is - *how can the theory of matriarchy help explain gender issues in entrepreneurship and family business settings?*

This article is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews a variety of literatures to draw out related themes of patriarchy, mothering, matriarchy, and explores the notion of habitus within a family business setting. Section 3 deals with issues of method and methodology relating to retrospective ethnography. Section 4 presents retrospectively authored narratives and discusses important points from the analysis; whilst section 5 considers how matriarchy contributes to the entrepreneurship and family business literatures. .

2. Revisiting the literature in search of an explanation

There is an expanding literature in respect of female entrepreneurship of which invisibility and discrimination are key themes (Wilson *et al*, 2007)[1]. To counter this women often capitalise upon their immediate environs in which they exercise control. Often these occur naturally in familial and matriarchal settings. Issues of gender and family business and how they relate to entrepreneurship theory and practice are well researched although Neergaard, Frederiksen and Marlow (2011) suggest there is a tendency to 'shoehorn' diverse analyses into pre-decided themes. Various theoretical lenses have been adopted to better understand such interrelated phenomenon albeit there is tendency to focus on the contextual and the processual (Ucbasaran, Westhead & Wright, 2001). Quite often these are practical, practice based themes as detailed in table 1:-

Table 1 – An overview of gender research in entrepreneurship and family business

Issues	Explanation / Authors	Meaning
Method / pedagogy	Methodology (Westhead & Cowling, 1998); and Historical perspectives (Vinnell & Hamilton, 1999).	These concentrate upon approaches not respondents experiences.
Behaviour	Do men and women do business differently? (see Birley, 1989; Ahl, 2006; Wellington, 2006; and Storey *et al*, 2010). There are sector(al) differences where women are absent from higher performing sectors where differentiating influences arise from subtle gender influences. Agency (Morck & Yeung, 2003, 2006 Habbershon, 2006); Self-efficacy (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007).	Behaviour is a strong overarching strand of research (see Chau, Chrisman & Sharma, 1999). The tone of the literature is accusatory.
Business	Family business succession (Davies & Harveston, 1988; Stavrou	These studies concentrate on

[1] Wilson *et al* discuss gendered difficulties found by women in business, ranging from obtaining finance; being subject to discrimination; not being treated as credible; not being taken seriously; being patronised, ignored; not to mention difficulty in penetrating established male dominated networks.

processes	& Awiercz, 1998; Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000; Sharma *et al*, 2001; and Bagby, 2004). Intrapreneurship in small businesses (Carrier, 1996); Entrepreneurial propensity (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Opportunity identification (DeTiene & Chandler, 2007); Owner-manager attitudes; Gender and finance (Carter *et al*, 2007; Harrison & Mason, 2007); and Strategic behaviour (Kelly, Athanassiou & Crittenden, 2000).	processes and highlight gender biases (Bird & Brush, 2002) emphasising how they skew the processes to the detriment and disadvantage of women in business. The processes are viewed as masculine.
Social / ethereal	Status (Nelson & Levesque, 2007); Kinship (Kara, Tracey & Phillips, 2006); Childhood perspectives (Birley, 2001); Altruism (Kara, Tracey & Phillips, 2006: Birley, 2001); Francis and Sandberg (2000) examined the role of friendship in entrepreneurial teams; .Social dynamics (Bygrave & Minniti, 2000); Justice and injustice (Carsrud, 2006: Barnett & Kellermanns, 2006); (Dis)unity in families (Stewart, 2003; Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004: Multi-generational perspectives (Davies & Harveston, 1998); Corbetta & Salvato, 2004); and kinship-blood ties (Peredo, 2003).	Although such studies do 'tell us so much' about the role of gender in entrepreneurship and family business by virtue of the informed narratives of the respondents / researchers they do not 'drill down' enough into the realism of the lived 'gendered' practices that constitute entrepreneurship.

Collectively such studies inadvertently set up an 'adversarial' assumption within gender research that men and women do not act in concert together. However, Mitchell *et al* (2003) stress the need to rethink the people side of entrepreneurship; and Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio (2004) debunked the traditional model of economic rationality which suggests that entrepreneurship is universal and a-gendered arguing that 'men' and 'women' are positioned within entrepreneurial practices. We thus consider Patriarchy, Matriarchy and the 'Entrepreneurial Family' to challenge accepted constructs and position matriarchy within these practices. This is important because Guiso and Rustichini (2011: 2) argue that entrepreneurship is a very masculine occupation predicated by testosterone levels; and that the role adopted by men and women differ according to whether they operate in patriarchal or matriarchal settings. Yet, we seldom consider collocated bi-archical action; or of the effect of oestrogen levels on entrepreneurial proclivity. Ridley-Duff (2008: 5) discusses an alternative gendered discourse in which masculine and feminine identities are not regarded purely as power orientated socially constructed constructs but as part of a complex socialisation process entered into by both sexes; and Reed (1996) and Mulholland (1996) interweave the theme of entrepreneurship with patriarchy. However, it must be stressed that patriarchy and matriarchy are ideal typical social constructs seldom found in reality. Nevertheless, an understanding of them is central to answering the research questions.

2.1. Patriarchy

To understand the theory of matriarchy, we must first understand Patriarchy (Davies, 2010) which is dependent on female subordination. As a social organizing system, patriarchy places the male head of a family as the primary authority figure. Thus, fathers hold authority over women, children, and property, institutionalising male rule, hegemony and privilege. Patriarchy literally means "*rule of fathers*" (Ferguson, 1999: Green, 2010). Elbert (1988: 19) defines Patriarchy as the "*…organisation and division of all practices and signification in culture in terms of gender and the privileging of one gender over the other, giving males control over female sexuality, fertility and labour*". According to Greer and Green (2003: 2) the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism is a central theme of feminist literature and that despite the increasing interest in the study of women in business and female entrepreneurs, studies often lack "*a theoretical framework either of feminism, or of entrepreneurship* (Hurley, 1991). However, Hamilton (2006) and Kantor (2002) found evidence of patriarchal strategies and practices in family business settings. Thus, researchers must be sensitive to difference by gender and other forms of identity when applying entrepreneurship theory cross culturally because the role of women in maintaining patriarchy is often overlooked albeit Neergaard, Frederiksen and Marlow (2011) identify a need for women to balance work, family expectations and obligations. They warn that entrepreneurial activities may reinforce, or disrupt, the gendered division of labour in capitalist patriarchy in which entrepreneurship is embedded within masculine discourse thereby positioning men as the normative entrepreneurial actor constructing women as 'other' (Ahl & Marlow, 2011). Indeed, de Bruin *et al* (2007) stress that womens' entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours are organized around:

- The micro (motherhood or household/family context);
- The meso (structures, institutions and e.g. occupational networks);

- The macro (norms, culture, and national strategies) level.

Furthermore, for Mirchandani (1999) research on female entrepreneurship would benefit from the theoretical insights on gendered processes in work settings found within feminist theory. Howarth *et al* (2010) acknowledge the contributions of 'invisible' members, women and couples in family firms and argue that women's businesses make a critical contribution to family incomes and preserve a traditional family form, embedded in the system of patriarchy - making it necessary to consider mothering in entrepreneurial families. Likewise, Lewis and Massey (2011) argue for a move away from studies of "*visible women*" (those running businesses as owner-managers or as active partners/co-preneurs) to examining the invisible within small firms who do crucial work in unacknowledged, unformalised roles but are often unseen and unpaid. Typically the unseen are the wives of owner-managers who contribute "*behind the scenes*". There is an obvious research gap in terms of the effect on patriarchy of women's hidden labour in male-led family businesses.

2.2. Mothering and matriarchy in business families

Consideration of mothering is necessary because of the implicit assumption that the matriarch is the female head of the family and has (m)otherly qualities, albeit a matriarch need not adhere to the construct of the "*Good-Mother*" (Holdsworth, 1988). Kantor (2002) highlighted theoretical weaknesses in the ability of researchers to represent issues relevant to women's success in the small business sector; and in particular to appreciate how gender is socially constructed through diverse roles; self-employment plays for women; power and empowerment. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) suggest families play a pervasive part in the formation of entrepreneurial propensity and that entrepreneurship is embedded within business families at a tacit level where children learn from the experience of other family members. This necessitates consideration of the role of entrepreneurial families and matriarchal figures in perpetuating small business (Leach, 1991), particularly the role of

mothers in influencing entrepreneurial propensity (Scherer *et al,* 1989). Research by Schindehutte *et al* (2001) into female entrepreneurs and their children in entrepreneurial families examined implications for family life; career aspirations; and entrepreneurial perceptions. Similarly, Aldrich *et al* (1997) documented the effects of passing on privilege that self-employed parents imbue their children with; whilst Delmar and Gunnarsson (2000) argue self-employed parents of nascent entrepreneurs contribute to the entrepreneurial proclivity of their children. Such research concentrates upon the family from a long-term strategic perspective and not the everydayness of entrepreneurial practices within family business settings. The research of Stanley (2000) bears testament to the influence of family values in the reproduction and perpetuation of entrepreneurial and family business values.

Gender expectations continue to play a significant configuring role in the way women operate in business. The study of Moult and Anderson (2005) into the actions of mature women who benefit from "*windows of entrepreneurial opportunity*" due to reduced domestic responsibilities is helpful. Although they looked at mature women performing the role of entrepreneuse, (Hamilton & Smith, 2003) the finding may apply to mature women within family businesses who employ flexible work practices, choose where to work; when to work; and with whom; as well as managing their familial roles (Kirkwood & Tootell, 2008).

2.3. Enter the matriarch as heroine

After much reading, an appropriate heuristic device was found in the sociological theory of 'Matriarchy' as posited by Bachofen in his seminal text Das Muttrecht[2]. Matriarchy has long been of interest to Sociologists (Briffault, 1931; Fromm, 1934). As a social institution,

[2] The work of Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815-1887) is influential. His criticism of the naturalness of the traditional patriarchal family is controversial. For an overview see http://www.e-cademic.de/data/ebooks/extracts/9783110227086.pdf. Bachofen noted a tendency in patriarchal Germany towards "*mother veneration*". According to Zuk (1979) Erich Fromm appreciated the tension and creative interplay between patriarchy and matriarchy and posited dominant character types within contemporary capitalist societies, including 'The Matriarch'. Fromm developed Bachofen's theory being critical of conservative versions of matriarchy, appreciating that it could be appropriated progressively. Building upon Bachofen's insights of women, he argued that women's nature develops from social practices, specifically mothering and its production of nurturing maternal character traits such as maternal love and compassion. For Fromm, matriarchy represents a certain set of institutions, attitudes, and values opposed to Capitalist patriarchal society introducing creative tension. Veblen also took matriarchy seriously (Riesman, 1995).

matriarchy is held in disdain by many anthropologists (Sanday, 1998) because it stands in direct opposition to patriarchy (Nickles & Ashcraft, 1981). Theories of matriarchy (from Gynaikratie or rule by women) are regarded as suspect, being considered sweeping in nature and at best developmental. They possess a "*false assumption"* regarding male dominance and of a biased agenda against the feminine gender born of matrist and patrist argumentation (Childe, 1951). Matriarchy need not be the opposite of patriarchy but an everyday practice and theory of future possibilities (Goettner-Abendroth, 2005). According to Kellner (undated) it is common for male orientated psychology to present women's situation from a male perspective excluding women's experience from their theoretical positions thus privileging male self-development, experience and relations (to father, mother, siblings, and others) over women. Mills (1987) presented her analyses of motherhood, sisterhood and womens' self-development to counter the exclusion of women from male theory. The shadows of male inspired logic are visible in entrepreneurship theory and result from male andocentric ways of thinking[3]. Matriarchy became a political weapon to be wielded against the established order of things, i.e. against male domination in industrialised societies as women wrest power from men[4]. Sanday (1998: 1) calls for "*a configuration of the term matriarchy not as a construct based on the gender division of political power, but one based on gendered divisions in the socio-cultural and cosmological orders*". Nevertheless, the possession of power remains a central tenet of matriarchy, irrespective of the ideological underpinnings. A reading of the theories of matriarchy identified issues of power, role and voice as being important.

Brooks (2002) argued that the family matriarch has a positive role in business because of a natural cosmology of family merges with business. Sanday (1998) further suggests that matriarchy is manifested in social practices influencing the lives of both sexes. This aligns

[3] Also of interest is the anthropological category of 'Matrifocality' and the Matrifocal family (Brogger & Gilmore, 1997). These exist naturally within a system of Patriarchy either through circumstance, or because of the strong personality of the female head of a family.

[4] Nzegwu (1997) likens researching matriarchy to chasing shadows because it has become conflated with (1) the agenda of a new generation of feminist writers; and (2) abstract philosophical arguments surrounding pre-history and mythology directed towards proving (Amazonian) women ruled primitive societies.

matriarchy with the life giving theme of regeneration, not subjugation and with the above literature. This interpretation does not associate matriarchy with exclusive female rule but with a knitting together of "*social ties in the here-and-now*" (Sanday, 1998: 1) thus placing women at the centre of everyday life (Sanday, 2002). It 'need not' be an all or nothing argument! Nevertheless, in everyday life, matriarchy exists at many levels.

Martin (2004) links the matriarch to "*Family Governance*" thus matriarchs operating within a family business setting exercise dual governance over family and business. Success in family business does not rest solely on good or prudent business practices, but on the influence of the familial matriarch acting in council with siblings (Jaff & Lane, 2004). Control is a central theme in '*Matriarch Stories'* and matriarchy as evidenced by the work of Bertrand and Schoar (2006) who tell of a dominant matriarch amending a family business charter to ensure that if any of her children wished to sell their stake in the business they had to consult the others first. Another expected role performed by matriarchs is as principal storytellers in authoring family history (Hearn, 1996). Similarly, Satyaraju (2008) acknowledges matriarchal leadership in business. Evidence of the existence of the matriarch as a strong lady in business comes from other non-academic sources[5]. For Webster (1975) the key elements possessed by a matriarch are power and control, whilst Adler (1982) recognised the spiritual nature of the practice (i.e. that which transcends the religious and accommodates family wellbeing). Kirkland (1928) identified a male weakness [perhaps born of mothering] for worshiping the matriarch stressing that matriarchy is thrust upon the mature women by circumstances and destiny and not by choice. Matriarchy (as motherhood) carries implicit

[5] Matriarchs are powerful, behind-the-scenes promoters of equality, cooperation, and empathy among members of the next generation. Hearn (1996) tells of a matriarch who dominated and ruled with a subversive matriarchal leadership style; and Chun (1997) discusses a legacy of growing up within a family business run by a strong matriarchal figure born of a long line of female business founders. There is evidence for the matriarch in film and media. In the movie '*A Steady Grind*' the matriarchal heroine Eloyce, performs the role of 'reluctant entrepreneur' stepping into the breach to lead the family scrap yard business upon the death of her husband. The film deals with family and business crises as the business becomes an extension of family. Matriarchy is a hidden facet of American Working Class family history. Also, in the Australian television drama 'The Business', actress Sarah Pierse plays the fictitious 'Van; a matriarch who is variously described by critics as monstrous, vicious, grotesque, self-deluded, psychopathic but redoubtable – "*Having clawed her way up from her dirt poor origins to preside over a middle class empire in the suburbs*". Van is a woman operating in a male environment. Pierse described her character as "*the awful women I'd like to be'*.

assumptions - that a woman has a family to rule and has children; and that the woman is in a mature, powerful life-phase. Matriarchal practices can be culturally specific and manifested as archetypal socially constructed stereotypes[6] as detailed in table 2.

Table 2 – Matriarchy and cultural specificity.

Specific matriarchal cultures	Cultural stereotype
Asian cultures. Japan Malasyia, Thailand and the Philippines. See Raffey, 2000; Hatcher, Terjersen & Planck, 2007.	Raffey articulated how women in family businesses in the Philippines perform a specific entrepreneurial role within their culture. Her study of female Filipino managers and entrepreneurs within patriarchal business elites demonstrates the acceptance of the 'guardian role' women play[7]. As a matriarchal cadre these women wield substantial (unofficial) power; exert ethical leadership; and act as a "*voice of reason*". Hatcher *et al* refer to the narratives of Thai women as being one of responsibility and connection relative to knowing ones place and taking the right path.
White Anglo-Saxon cultures. See Erikson, 1969; Enstam, 1981; Brogger & Gilmore, 1997; McHugh, 2006.	Erikson (1969: 286) posited the entrepreneurial stereotype of the self-made 'Mom' arguing that Americans venerate the ideal type of character embodied within the social constructs of the "*Mom*" and her "*Self-made-man*". Both exert a strong psychosocial influence, crowding out and suppressing competition, shaping American culture as role models. Daughters adopt the personality of the self-made-mom. As strong personalities, Mom and her self-made-man shape familial ideals. The matriarch is a heroic figure in American frontier mythology[8] and the stereotype is evident in Iberian cultures e.g. Spain and Portugal.
Black cultures. (Haug, 1994).	In many black cultures the stereotype of the 'Momma figure' predominates.

Although entrepreneurialism is a masculine behaviour that subordinates work (Whitehead, 2001; Collinson & Hearn, 2001), Strauss (2008) found that in the majority of cultures women are the dominant partners outside work. Strong, mature women socialise children into business by becoming visible role models, making matriarchy a powerful alternative story with near universal applicability. In such studies, dominant metaphors expressing the relationship between female entrepreneurs and their businesses included love, passion, duty, commitment, responsibility, joy and ferocity. A strong parenting theme emerged as nurturing and protecting. This emotive aspect of the entrepreneurial character of mature women in business suggests men and women entrepreneurs posses different storytelling priorities. For Powers (2000) the matriarch archetype as a heroine in Western literature is a culturally

[6] The matriarch is but one of many feminine archetypes including Amazons and Crones. Amazons are feared and worshipped. These archetypes mirror the stages of womanhood as the young Amazon warrior matures into a matriarch, a 'women of age', possessing wisdom and power (Walker, 1985).

[7] These modern matriarchs achieve cultural acceptance by combining maternal imagery with authoritative-autocratic leadership. Paradoxically, these business divas are expected to dress and present themselves in a very feminine form defined by cultural heritage via power dressing.

[8] McHugh wrote her moving narrative from a personal perspective centred around her matriarchal grandmother who stepped up to the reigns of the family business upon the death of her grandfather, heroically raising a large family whilst running the business.

acceptable role model; and Catano (2001) identified changes in the roles played by men and women in the master narrative of the self-made.

The matriarch is encountered in the literature of family business (Cole, 1997; Kaslow, 1998; Posa & Messer, 2001; and Vera & Dean, 2005), albeit at an implicit level. Kaslow (1998) examined the role of women in family businesses and their contention for senior level positions highlighting the dearth of literature on women as originators and CEOs of family businesses. Lansberg (1995) refers to the mature family business matriarch as a 'Chief Emotional Officer' arguing that as the male entrepreneur grows older, the influence of his wife rises as a mediating influence within families. Interestingly, Vera and Dean (2005) found that the daughters of matriarchs often experience difficulties when succeeding their mothers in business standing in mothers' shadow. According to Poza and Messer (2001) the spouses of CEO's play a key invisible role in most family-controlled corporations particularly at times of crises or succession. The spouse often plays a stewardship role as business partner and as matriarch acts as the keeper of family values.

In relation to everyday business practices, Miller (2000: x) argues, families are important avenues for the transmission of capital – material, social and cultural. Miller (2000:64) stresses that in family history research the business and not the individual is the central unit of analysis. Miller (2000: 65) examined the role of wealth creation and the passing on of status in patriarchal and matriarchal families appreciating that family influence differs according to whether one is raised in a patriarchal, or a matriarchal family. Of Matriarchs, Miller (2000: 65/66) wrote:-

- Wives posses high influence in family decisions and control of day-to-day finances;
- Mothers often decided whether a child would go further in education, or not; and that
- Women maintain family links and act as repositories of familial information.

Thus women as familial decision makers both shape and influence family strategies, controlling the allocation of resources. The irony is that although the familial patriarch is seen

as the decision maker it may have been a woman working within the overarching system of patriarchy whose decisions discriminated against female children. This new vision of matriarchy is shaped by the writings of Goettner-Abendroth (2005) whereby matriarchy (in modern matriarchal studies) is viewed from the contemporary analysis of the social realms where the everyday practice of politics, economics and social practices combine irrespective of gender position. In this framework, family business can act as matriarchies of "*social and economic reciprocity*" as "*egalitarian societies of consensus*". This section highlights the role of power/position in relation to matriarchy whilst justifying assumptions about women taking a lead caring role. Thus patriarchy and matriarchy constrain and enable both sexes.

2.4. Matriarchy as habitus in family business settings

By habitus, Bourdieu (1987/1990) means a set of characteristics such as dispositions, attitudes, orientations, habits, values and beliefs learned through socialization. Habitus helps isolate entrepreneurial behaviours from everyday practices. Indeed, Bourdieuian' notions of everydayness, of the 'here and now' and of the natural order are key to understanding the complex role of matriarchy' within family business. Actors within a family business are socialised into their respective roles. Danziger (1971: 76) in discussing socialization makes much of the influence exerted by the 'Parent-child-dyad' - but what of the 'Husband-wife-dyad' in family business? Wilson *et al* (2007) argue that Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1990) helps explain why business ownership is an unfavourable territory for women. The concept of 'practical logic' (le sense practique) which relates to the 'feel for the game' is a practical and productive way of framing and describing the role of mature women within family and the business. Thus matriarchal leadership could be a form of Bourdieuian practice in which matriarchy is theorised via naturalised habitus. Within the dual settings of home and business there is a recurring interplay between habitus, capital and field manifested as matriarchal leadership within the family business. For Bourdieu the embodied differences between men and women appear natural to both actors and observers because of bio-genetic

factors engendering a ‘taken-for-granted-ness‘ centred around our socially constructed view concerning the natural gendered division of labour where women are assigned negative qualities and men positive. These differences appear inevitable and influence thoughts and actions. However, in family business the parent–child and husband–wife dyads naturally extend from the family to the business domain with positive or negative consequences depending on circumstances and familial relationships. As relational qualities they take on a form of human and social capital via which the strongest individual exerts influence. In many businesses, the mother is in the strongest position to exert influence thus softening the assertion of Wilson *et al* (2007) that business ownership is an unfavourable territory. The relational qualities exerted by a strong matriarchal figure become part of their ‘habitus’.

Having reviewed the literature we consider methodology before presenting the findings of the empirical research to interrogate how the literature of matriarchy helps us understand the matriarchal roles discussed and consider how this advances our understanding of entrepreneurship and family business theory.

3. Issues of method and methodology

This section considers methodology and authorial voice. In conducting research into entrepreneurship and family business settings, one would normally design an empirical study to collect data to illustrate or prove a hypothesis and for interview and stories collected in the field to be used to test a thesis. The data collected is used to craft examples of entrepreneurial propensity. One selects the best examples. When conducting actual research one often encounters atypical examples as if by chance, or in readings. The empirical evidence base for this article is built upon seven retrospectively authored case stories constructed by the author from memory using retrospective ethnography techniques (Tilly, 1978; 2007; Watson, 2011). Retrospective ethnography requires the researcher to reconstruct actors' dispositions from the historical records or from lived memory of actual research experiences (Tilly, 2007). Retrospective ethnography prioritizes close and intensive observation in the gathering of

information and insights (Watson, 2011) which were not apparent at the outset. As a methodology it benefits from reflection. The case stories were authored from memory of research encounters where the author encountered situations where with hindsight women fitted the author's profile of a familial matriarch figures.

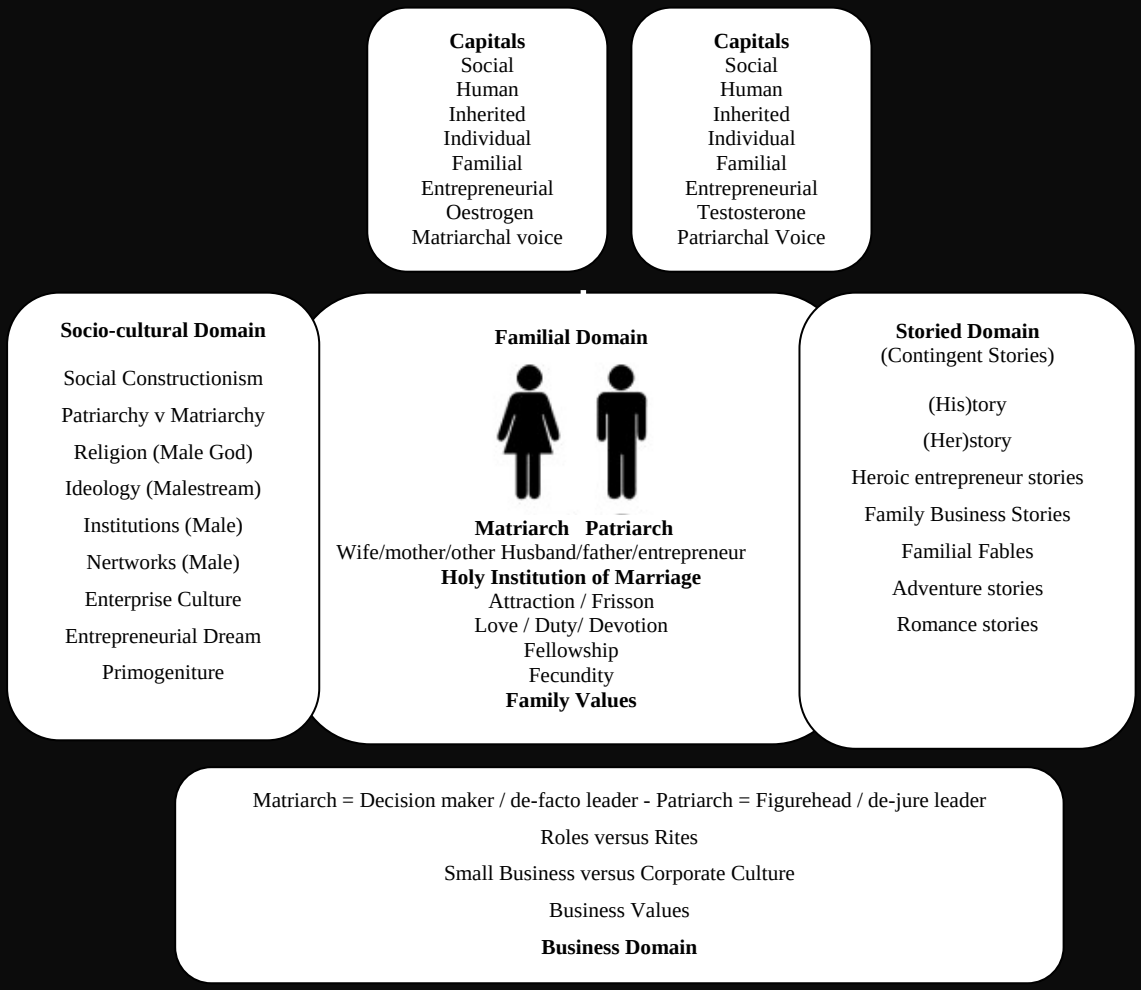
This material for analysis is based upon retrospectively spun stories. These cases were not planned but arose from direct observations (Adler & Adler, 1994). The stories emerged from unobtrusive, naturalistic observation (Robson, 2002; Adler & Adler, 1994) supplemented by conversations with the participants. It was only upon reflection that the author connected the examples and pondered their significance. The examples are personal constructs (Kelly, 1955) - not the stories which the participants would have told but reified narratives of the events from a research perspective[9]. These readings construct a conceptual-theoretical framework to explore the narratives of matriarchal figures encountered via research. The resultant vignettes use a life-story approach (McAdams, 2004) illuminating and giving these often invisible, silenced women a voice.

4. Analysing the cases and telling alternative stories

The review of the literature resulted in the bi-archical model of marital agency in figure 1:-

[9] As a man, I tried to construct the stories honestly but male gender and masculine bias is pervasive and may linger. The dilemma was how to avoid merely restorying the matriarch as an entrepreneur by another name.

Figure 1 – A bi-archical framework of enterprise in family business



Key to figure 1.

The premise around which this framework is constructed relates to the differential set of capitals men and women possess. In **the familial domain**, matriarch and patriarch exist replete with expected social roles and obligations. Each possesses individuated, yet socially constructed narratives of identity, such as wife, mother, husband and entrepreneur. They may, or may not be joined together via the Holy institution of matrimony, but nevertheless collectively possess shared attraction leading to a creative frisson driven by emotions such as love, duty, devotion, fellowship and family values. Fecundity is important for the transmission of such family values because without family, there can be no family business. Co-preneurial relationship exists in **a storied domain,** with many contingent narratives and stories being possible - but invariably, the heroic masculine story dominates. It is, a matter of choice, because family business stories, familial fable and adventure and romance stories are possible alternatives. The telling of such stories is influenced by personal choice and by **the socio-cultural domain** where forces of social constructionism, patriarchy, matriarchy, religion, identity, institutional network, entrepreneurial dream, enterprise culture and primogenitor prevail. In this complex system the matriarch may adopt the role of decision maker and (de-facto) leader whilst the patriarch may adopt a figurehead role as (de-jure) leader. These deeply social and sociological issues also apply to **the business domain** where they are enacted as roles and rites as business values are shaped according to prevailing cultural values. Yet, each story is narrated differently. This storied approach is powerful.

Although patriarchy and matriarchy are ideal typical constructs seldom found in reality, the matriarchy – patriarchy debate is predicated on the premise that one sex dominates all spheres

of family and social life. Therefore, the patriarchal male is supposed to dominate the powerless, subservient female. Conversely in matriarchy, the male is deemed subservient and powerless (henpecked). In reality it is not so polarised. We hear little of the combined power of human, social, individual, inherited, entrepreneurial and familial **capitals** to shape the life chances of couples. Little is said of the biological as in the effects of testosterone, oestrogen or other hormones on entrepreneurial behaviour irrespective of sex or gender. Also, we hear little of the emotive and the emotional. This is surprising given entrepreneurial families and dynasties rely on procreation and the generation of progeny to perpetuate family. Nor do we consider multiple variables such as ideology; religion; social constructionism; institutional theory; network; cultures; and the power of dreams. Table 3 presents the Matriarchal Tales of seven matriarchs observed during the period of research and discusses their stories in relation to the theories of matriarchy[10].

Table 3 – Matriarchal Tales

Case Story	Narrative	Explanation
1 – Anne A Family retail, hotel and property business.	Anne is Company Secretary and her husband Dave Managing Director. Their son Ricky is Manager. Anne and Dave are serial family business owners in a variety of industries. They marketed a range of appliances distributing goods from abroad. Anne made the day-to-day business decisions whilst Dave maintained a strategic overview of the portfolio. They are devoted to each other. Ricky defers to Anne daily. As business expanded a salesman was recruited but additional sales did not materialise as the salesman 'skimmed' clients to set up his own business in breach of trust. To obtain natural justice, Anne took control orchestrating a campaign of damage limitation. She called all customers explaining the issues, vociferously complained to the authorities – restoring order. The company survived and prospered until the market declined and the family started another venture.	This small business story illustrates caring and sharing of business responsibilities. There is a clear division between work and home life but the lines of command are blurred. Anne's voice as mother is imbued with the twin authority as boss. Her roles in other businesses in the portfolio included equal partnership. In family businesses appearances can be deceptive. Anne has dual matriarchal identity as a grandmother (familial matriarch) and as an equal decision maker in the ventures.
2 – Alice Farming and Hoteliers	Alice and Jim entered the hotel business in their late fifties after selling the family farm. They bought the hotel in a run down state. Alice took an active role. As licensee, Jim played the	Alice and Jim lived above their hotel blurring work and family life. Friction was a key variable at work. Although ostensibly the boss, Jim

[10] Due to design fault much of the material presented as analysis is the author's interpretation of the 10 self-authored cases. It was not possible to back up these interpretations with quotes from interviews because the anecdotes often resulted from chance observations. This is an obvious weakness of the research design hence the reason for the propositions and suggestions for further research presented in the conclusions Moving away from the masculine life story approach to the family history approach has benefits for the curious researcher interested in the finer nuances of both entrepreneurial behaviour and family business.

This is a 'family in business'.	amiable barman. Alice and their children became employees. She adopted a 'hands on' management style as a business dynamo. With time and money to reinvest she oversaw a total refurbishment inside and out. They reintroduced weekend dances, revamped the meal menus and undertook other marketing innovations. Initially business blossomed and Alice hired a new chef. Trade expanded resulting in price rises but as novelty wore off so did custom. Alice hired doormen, charged entrance fees. Custom tailed off. They redecorated the public bar and banned profane language but fell foul of bar room politics. A confrontation with key customers led to a customer boycott. Cast in the role of the villain after revoking sponsorship of the village football team Alice sold up at a loss, to start another business.	constantly deferred to Alice. This ran contrary to his farming experience where he was the decision maker. In the hotel trade, women often act as arbitrator. Alice handled this role well with Jim's backing. The frisson between them is palpable. Alice has dual matriarchal identity as a grandmother (familial matriarch) and as an equal decision maker in the ventures.
3 – Alison Entrepreneur and property owners. Not a family business.	Alison and husband Bryan are serial entrepreneurs with an entrepreneurial portfolio ranging from oil to property and hotels. In their early fifties they have two grown up children not involved in the business. Alison is company secretary/book-keeper but is an entrepreneur in her own right buying and selling antiques. She manages the hotel and property portfolio. Her father was an independent trader. She is proud of her entrepreneur husband and fully supports him by being available and arranging business matters in his absence. Her favourite story relates to how she personally collected debt owed to them by calling on all the businessmen who had reneged on a deal and embarrassing them into paying.	Although Bryan is macho, Alison shapes the business strategy and the acquisition of property. Alison works tirelessly ensuring that the businesses run smoothly acting as confidant and advisor. The couple operate using their own capital. Bryan is calm and collected and Alison has a fiery temper. Both are devoted to each other. Alison is a matriarch with obvious matronly qualities and by dint of her hubristic personality. She is matronly being of mature and dignified stature and is in charge of her own domestic and business affairs.
4- Annette Property magnate and hotelier – family business.	Serial entrepreneurs Annette and Alec are married, in their early 60's and are from business families. They have grown up children - two are now in business. The couple have a property portfolio, a hotel business and a building company. Alec has owned and managed a succession of small businesses and Annette has day-to-day charge of the portfolio. Alec has other professional interests.	The couple are soul mates and complement each other completely. Both work hard, working evenings and weekends to complete tasks. The bond between them is palpable. Annette is the matriarch in charge of the family business due to the authority she wields resulting from her combined familial and business positions.
5- Ariel Entrepreneur/Market Trader – a 'family in business'.	Ariel is married to her second husband Seb. Both are in their early 60's. Ariel has experience of managing hotels, pubs and shops and Seb as a tradesman. They both operate a lucrative Market Traders business - buying and selling second hand goods and trading in other commodities (not all legal). Seb's father was a small businessman but Ariel had no business experience. Her son's family help in the venture.	The couple make a good team – seldom arguing. Seb is calm, dependable and unflappable. Ariel is fiery and prone to expressing herself volubly. She exudes 'Matriarchal' power by virtue of her outspoken communicational nature. She is the obvious boss.
6 – Antonia A jewellery manufacturer employing family members.	Antonia is in her late forties and is married to Axel. Both started as Market Traders, trading in Jewellery but now own and operate a successful manufacturing company. Axel is ostensibly the entrepreneur and CEO because Antonia does not court publicity. Antonia is the creative designer behind their success and takes an active part in the day- to-day running of the business as a reluctant entrepreneur.	In this entrepreneurial fairytale of corporate entrepreneurship Antonia mothers family and employees. She has no desire to adopt the mantle of entrepreneur and is happy leading and expanding the family business. She is a matriarch due to her combined familial and business authority.
7 – Agnes	Agnes is the CEO of this family business and	In this story of corporate

The matriarch of a fourth generation family business.	globally recognised brand. A graduate, she is married with young children. She had a successful career prior to running the family business. She is now a Director. Her mother and grandmother also held powerful roles within the company helping their husbands run the business. Her reign has seen the company expand exponentially.	entrepreneurship Agnes strikes a matriarchal profile as a mature and articulate professional woman. Her matriarchal power stems from her family position; academic credentials; and her maternal role.

All the women were mature and confident ranging from mid-forties to sixties with grown up children. All are in settled relationships and are grandmothers adopting an advisory/mentorial role. These very different scenarios involved the wives of small-businessmen performing a strong and palpable leadership role, whilst their husbands as entrepreneurial figureheads remained silent in the background. These stories evidence strong matriarchal leadership manifested communicationally as a direct and authoritarian voice (Danziger, 1971). Such spousal communication manifests as a direct command which others (family included) ignore to their peril[11]. In demonstrating entrepreneurial and spousal leadership (Posa & Messer, 2001) the matriarchs draw upon their life-experience. Matriarchal leadership is a form of "Entrepreneurial Capital" (Firkin, 2003) which accrues through life experience and is exercised in times of need. Matriarchal leadership within an entrepreneurial environment and in a family business setting is a socially accepted act which overrides patriarchal norms. The positive actions of the respondents embody matriarchy as everyday social practice (Sanday, 1998: 1). All respondents transcend the construct of co-preneurial couples as advocated by Marshack (1994). None operate within obvious 'Matricentric families' where women control every aspect of life, but in well functioning 'nuclear' families. These were not classic shared entrepreneurial experiences as in Marshack's co-preneurial couples, or Hamilton and Smith's performed plays. The respondents operated via a shared understanding and do not compete for, nor desire, the title entrepreneur. The inference is of equal partnership and entrepreneurial status, when this is not always the case.

[11] None of their husbands could be described as weak men having proven themselves in business and the silence of the men should not be mistaken for weakness because they are comfortable with the directive influence of their partners. Couples in long term relationships seldom contradict the commands of the other in public - such discussions are conducted very much in private. They stand side by side with their partners through thick and thin, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health as is contractually expected of married couples. These are powerful vows and in family business the business is ultimately an extension of marriage.

Matriarchy provides a very powerful sense-making framework to help us better understand these stories of entrepreneurship and small business. Out of love and family honour the matriarchs take care of the mundane and the less trivial – despite being entrepreneurial in their own right. They act as gatekeepers to their men's entrepreneurial networks, controlling access. They note-take, mediate, pass messages, make decisions, whilst juggling their own entrepreneurial sidelines. All strike hard bargains and spot money making opportunities. Whilst their men bask in entrepreneurial glory, the matriarch appears content to guide, exert control and manage the family in an entrepreneurial manner when necessary for the family business. Western traditions of storytelling (in which entrepreneur stories are embedded) organise stories around 'agency' and emphasise individual goals and achievements. McAdams (2004) discusses the collectivist life theme of agency versus communion. In life stories, there is a better balance between conformity to social norms and group work consequentially matriarchal tales emphasise communion. Matriarchal tales are communion narratives in which the matriarch tells a collectivist story of self, partner, family and business.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework of habitus (1987: 1990) is useful as a sense-making device to help us better understand these very different stories. In each case the mature women engage with different family dynamics where the boundaries of work and family are blurred. Building up the businesses, they spend a considerable part of their lives in the business as opposed to the home resulting in the family habitus temporarily shifting from home to business. From this framework a number of propositions arise worthy of further research.

Proposition 1 - The matriarchs multi-task and perform many roles simultaneously e.g. wife, mother and company secretary.

Proposition 2 – The matriarchs are expected to be doting mothers, caring wives, managers, problem-solvers, employees and de-facto entrepreneurs by virtue of their organisational abilities and obvious drive.

Proposition 3 – In such relationships, the husbands spend time supervising other elements of the business portfolio or performing other masculine roles.

Proposition 4 - There is an obvious gendered disparity between their roles and job titles because they all perform more duties within the business than their job titles suggest.

Proposition 5 - The matriarch performs a leadership role in family and business crises. Matriarchal leadership is often contingent upon an obvious leadership void to fill, or crises to avert.

Proposition 6 - The women respect their husbands as entrepreneurs and proprietors.

Proposition 7 - The husbands accept their wives authority in an environment where business habitus merges with their everyday habitat.

Proposition 8 - The male entrepreneurs rely heavily upon wives in business.

To return to the theme of discrimination (Wilson *et al*, 2007) none of the matriarchs appear to suffer discrimination within the confines of their businesses. Being at the prime of their life and in happy successful marriages, finance is not an issue. Matriarchal action can be socially reconstructed as an extension of/and inseparable from the motherhood role in keeping with Sanday's modern matriarchy. In contemporary societies the most likely place to witness 'Matriarchs' in action is within family businesses where the boundaries between nurturance, power and politics are fuzzy. Being a matriarch in family business is about selflessly performing an entrepreneurial role, not adopting the entrepreneurial identity. Matriarchy operates at an invisible level to those not privy to the day-to-day running of the business. Another directive driving force is the preservation of familial pride and honour. Matriarchy enables women to take control, earn credibility and demand respect. All the matriarchs exude charm and personal charisma. All demonstrate matriarchal traits of taking control (Webster, 1975) and governance (Martin, 2004). They evidence spiritual leadership, guiding their families through difficult times, exercising the matriarchal impulse to author family history (Hearn, 1996). They act as a "*Voice of reason*" (Raffey, 2000).

Exercising female voices is a key theme in *Matriarchal Tales*. Within families, mothers exert a dual role encouraging and nurturing but also issuing orders, threats, and generally nagging and hectoring family into action. They enact other social roles such as 'being bitchy and loud' (see Deaux, Winton, Crowley & Lewis, 1985 for a discussion bitch stereotype). Although these roles are clearly negative, they are necessary and are accepted behaviours expected of a strong mother. The 'Matriarch' holds a privileged position in the gendered hierarchy of work and a strong matriarch acts as a families' conscience. This is not always a popular role but such behaviours are socially gendered forms of leadership and governance.

5. How the 'Theory of Matriarchy' contributes to the literatures

This article addresses the invisibility and the "*behind the scenes*" nature of women in family businesses by considering the matriarchal role. Consequentially, it expands our knowledge of roles and power positions women can take in family enterprise and the contextual processes through which these are enabled and constrained. To return to the guiding research question - *how can the theory of matriarchy help explain gender issues in entrepreneurship and family business.* As demonstrated by the very different stories narrated above it clearly can and does. The category of '*Matriarchal Tales'* is useful because matriarchal voices are often exercised at a narrative level and we become aware of them as stories. Matriarchal tales are a distinct form of entrepreneur stories which can be narrated without challenging the veracity of contemporary entrepreneur stories. Matriarchal narrative (Campbell, 2002) is an alternative format in which the matriarch shares centre stage with their partner. The type of power position represented by matriarchy enables and constrains women in business. These mechanisms enable women to openly opt for this position rather than being forced into the role of entrepreneur. Male entrepreneurs in family businesses can devolve power without disturbing the equilibrium. Whilst at a theoretical level the article may only constitute an incremental development; at a narrative level the contribution has immense importance. It presents an exciting opportunity for female entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship scholars for

whom heroic entrepreneurial narrative does not resonate to tell a different story embedded in an entrepreneurial, familial 'habitus'. These alternative narratives of enterprise challenge the prevailing hegemony of male centric entrepreneur stories influencing accepted convention and theory.

This article contributes to our knowledge and understanding of the literatures of family business and entrepreneurship by challenging the dominant logic of entrepreneur stories demonstrating how women can develop an alternative set of entrepreneurial skills and identities within the claustrophobic confines of family business. This study clarifies the role played by strong women within family businesses and the tension between matriarchal and patriarchal dominance in which it may be politic for the male entrepreneur to defer to an equally entrepreneurial spouse. At a practical level, matriarchy is an ideal platform for women to exert influence in a family business where everyday business is an extension of family. The woman who rules the family rules the business.

As this study was based on chance observations it is not possible to provide a deeper exploration of the mechanisms (antics, narratives and ploys) through which matriarchal leadership is achieved. Clearly, as a theoretical standpoint and as a heuristic device the concept of matriarchy has explanatory power relative to how women perform an entrepreneurial role within family business. This merits further empirical research. This research highlights the role of wives and partners play in an entrepreneurial (ad)venture and challenges the status quo because many entrepreneurial roles can be accommodated within family business including the matriarch. Using a narrative methodology based on readings and field observations in family businesses allowed various scenarios with a strong matriarchal presence to emerge. The narratives present a very different entrepreneurial heroine. It extends accepted wisdom relating to how we read theory and practice in entrepreneurship and family business. The analysis demonstrates that matriarchy provides a liberating route for future generations of female entrepreneurs. It need not be hidden female entrepreneurial practice. This article confirms the analysis of Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio

(2004) that gender and entrepreneurship are both enacted and performed as "*situated practices*" in different symbolic spaces. Matriarchy is a symbolic space where the matriarchal voice counteracts the patriarchal tail[12].

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[12] The "Patriarchal Tail" comment is used to denote the demonic association of patriarchy.

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