

## **'The Impact of Spousal Relationships on Business Venture Success'**

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## Objectives

This study seeks to explore whether the spousal relationships of entrepreneurs have an impact on their business ventures by focusing upon the concept of Relationship-Inferred Self-Efficacy (RISE).

## Prior Work

The focus of the entrepreneurship literature has traditionally been on individual entrepreneurs, their personal characteristics, motivation and their ability to identify and create opportunities. Little attention has been paid to the spousal relationships of those entrepreneurs and their contribution to the success of the entrepreneurial venture. This research seeks to address this gap in the literature.

## Approach

A sample of 31 entrepreneurs and spouses were interviewed using an unstructured method. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using template analysis, chosen because it provides flexibility in its approach and has fewer specified procedures.

## Results

The data suggests the unique dynamics found in the entrepreneur / spouse relationship can introduce many forms of enabling qualities which contribute to the success of the entrepreneurial ventures. These include RISE, which provides belief from another if self-belief is waning during difficult times; an identity bubble, which allows the entrepreneur to be him- or herself without the pressures of socially constructed identity, which ensures that the entrepreneur is protected from humdrum everyday activity allowing her or him to focus on their business venture.

## Implications

These findings add a qualitative dimension to the existing literature. Whilst Relationship Inferred Self-Efficacy (RISE) has previously been discussed within the context of the coach/athlete dyadic relationship it has not been considered within the entrepreneur/spouse context. The identity bubble has strong links to the socially constructed entrepreneurial personality.

## Value

This paper makes a novel contribution in that it explores entrepreneur/spousal dynamics utilizing an in-depth focused qualitative methodology.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Using a *relational lens* (Flemons & Cole, 1992), we explore the important role of the unique relationship dynamics of the entrepreneur and his or her spouse in strategic decisions and subsequent success relating to their entrepreneurial ventures. The complexities of love and work have been examined by a range of authors (Marshack, 1993, 1994; Kanter, 1977; Near, Rice & Hunt, 1980 & Rapoport & Rapoport, 1979) who indicated that the two systems of love and work cannot be separated; hence spousal relationships can be legitimately investigated in a way that has been traditionally ignored within the field. In order to explore the dynamics of spousal relationships and their impact on entrepreneurial ventures, insights into the notion of romantic relationships ought to be gained. Humans seek romantic relationships for many reasons, mainly to satisfy needs whether physical, emotional or social (Simpson et al, 2001) and, within these broad categories, myriad distinct needs and desires can be combined with the unique composition of each individual to explain why the process of examining relationships can become complicated (Lackenbauer & Campbell, 2012). Additionally, lifespan development is problematic considering that as we develop and grow over our adult years, our needs and desires will (not unusually) change in all areas of our lives (DeMaris, 2010). Healthy, supportive relationships can help safeguard each individual from the stresses and strains of everyday life given evidence of individuals in close romantic relationships living longer than those who remain single and live alone (Iida et

al, 2008) as the degree of intimacy between the individuals and the complexity of their unique dynamics develops positively in line with the relationship (DeMaris, 2010). Shared responsibilities can be divided and allocated, communication can improve, each other's quirks are more readily accepted and habits and discussion of ideas and a joint future can be more fruitful. Of course, the opposite can occur where a relationship takes a negative turn.

In terms of the business activity (or not) of the spouse, three types of couples may be involved in entrepreneurial ventures, as identified by de Bruin (2006: 201): (1) the solo entrepreneur with a supportive spouse; (2) dual entrepreneurs, i.e. couples with entrepreneurial ventures that are independent of each other; and (3) copreneurs where both spouses are actively involved in the business. This paper focuses on the solo entrepreneur with a supportive spouse identified by de Bruin (2006), thus allowing the line of enquiry to be demarcated more directly and more detailed material for analysis and discussion to be pinpointed. Rowe & Hong (2000) identified wives' unpaid contributions to family firms; hence this research gap enabled more focussed and specific research into the non-working spouse's contributions to the business. Typically, spousal support is offered in the form of social support (Lo, Stone, & Ng, 2003) between individuals, classifiable into two categories: physical and emotional (Bolger et al, 2000). Even if s/he has no intention to have any formal role in that business, the spouse may frequently assist initial start-up activities such as securing and establishing premises or completing paperwork (Anderson et al, 2005), although such functional support could be provided by anybody with the physical capability and relevant skills. Given that such support is clearly important as is the provision of emotional support to mitigate stress and worry at an often difficult time, emotional support and its impact on the entrepreneurial venture is particularly apposite for research. Blenkinsopp & Owens (2010), alluding to spouses providing emotional support (see Anderson et al, 2005; Poza & Messer, 2001), thus pinpointed the need for further exploration of the "under-recognised and under-researched resource" (Blenkinsopp & Owens, 2010:366), although as a concept support is subjective and can mean many things to many individuals (Carels & Baucom, 1999). The main purpose of this research is to identify what both small business owners (SBOs) and their spouses interpret as support and the impact they believe it has on the business venture.

## **2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: FAMILY, SPOUSAL SUPPORT, RELATIONSHIPS AND FORMS OF CAPITAL**

### **2.1 The role of the family**

Aldrich & Cliff's (2003:573) "family embeddedness perspective" described how developing trends of family configurations (smaller families, single parents, older mothers etc) contribute to the emergence of opportunities such as single portions of convenience foods or more flexible childcare facilities. Astrachan & Shanker (2003) identified how the lack of a universally agreed definition of a family business has made gathering accurate and effective data more difficult. Chrisman et al (2003: 442) highlighted the contribution of financial and human resources to be essential to the creation of new ventures and, recognising that "existing entrepreneurship research has not totally ignored family firms", identified the selectivity of approaches to family research. Hence the potential loss of "critical family related factors" when examining new venture creation and the resultant missed opportunity to expand our understanding of the social and relational aspects that may make significant contributions to entrepreneurial ventures. Kellermans et al (2008) suggested that the difference between family firms and non-family firms stems from the interaction of two systems – business and family – by examining family firms' chief executive officers' (CEOs) entrepreneurial behaviour and the concentration of their decision-making within the hands of one individual. Conversely, Olson et al (2003:630) concluded that inter-relational activities, in other words family dynamics, are a fundamental part of the success of family businesses, supported by Philbrick & Fitzgerald (2007:618) who stated that: "multiple family members, especially those who have been the most invisible, ... contribute to family business sustainability".

Anderson et al (2005) proposed that entrepreneurs do, indeed, utilise the resources made available to them through networks and particularly family members. Copreneurship describes those couples who have joint responsibility for owning and managing a business (Barnett & Barnett, 1988) and, whilst its literature spans over 20 years, is scant compared to both the family firms and the entrepreneurship literatures which Fitzgerald & Muske (2002) attributed to the difficulty of gathering data and identifying the number of copreneurship establishments. de Bruin (2006:202), describing copreneurship as "an important subset" of the family firms literature, suggested there is much to learn from exploring the dynamics of this smallest type of family firm (Blenkinsopp & Owens, 2010). The copreneurship literature adopts a predominantly gendered approach to the discussion drawing upon samples composed of the traditional configuration of men taking on the more senior roles and women assuming the bulk of domestic and childcare responsibility in addition to business activities (Barnett & Barnett, 1988; de Bruin & Lewis, 2001; de Bruin, 2006). Kadis & McClendon (1991) suggested two specific areas that often contribute to the success of this type of business: interpersonal bonds (cf Bowlby, 1969) and behavioural exchange by proposing that, as the bonds are formed in adulthood through shared experience, they are stronger, have improved quality and are, therefore, more difficult to break. Behavioural Exchange theory

(Thibault & Kelly, 1959) assumes that individuals have a set of 'things' that we all want (i.e. love, sex, support) and within relationships individuals trade with their spouses for those things. Building on Litz (1995), Fletcher (2010: 452) developed a typology of copreneurship based on "ownership and management structural dimensions" consisting of four categories of copreneurship: (i) copreneurial management, (ii) copreneurial ownership, (iii) first generation copreneurship and (iv) intergenerational copreneurship. Millman & Martin (2007) identified five common characteristics which were demonstrated by the female members of the copreneurial ventures: self-efficacy, confidence, self-worth, strategic ability and the need for achievement.

## 2.2 Spousal support & hidden contributions

Gillis-Donovan & Moynihan-Bradt (1990) highlighted the trend for women to make contributions (unpaid labour (business related), household management and/or parental duties and responsibilities) to a business despite not having a formal business role. Indeed, Rowe & Hong (2000) concluded that wives made an economic contribution to the family regardless of being employed by the business or not, an in-kind contribution that was often made by controlling the family budget, assisting with occasional 'free employment' for the business and using networks to increase revenues. Poza & Messer's (2001) typology of spouses of CEOs from successive generations of family firms comprised 'The Jealous Spouse', 'The Chief Trust Officer', 'Business Partner/Copreneur', 'vice-president of human resources, finance, and facilities', 'the Senior Advisor & Keeper of the Family Values' and 'the Free Agent'. Danes & Olsen (2003) found that business tensions included a lack of role clarity, confusion over authority, unequal ownership, unfair compensation, failure to resolve conflicts and unfair workloads, with wives reporting higher tensions than husbands particularly with regard to lack of role clarity and unfair compensation. Jimenez (2009) introduced the notion of 'emotional leadership', suggesting that the emotional support provided by the matriarchal figure of the family becomes tangible in the form of leadership when those skills are applied to business tensions. van Auken & Werbel (2006) found that spousal commitment to a new business venture impacted on firm performance. Bolger et al (2000) suggested that the need to ask for and receive support can be detrimental to an individual's self-esteem or self-efficacy, suggesting that providing invisible support helps to disperse resultant negative issues. Carels & Baucom (1999) suggested that the *feeling* of being supported is often more important than any actual support being received.

Spousal capital as a resource for couples starting a business was explored by Matzek et al (2010: 64) who found support for their hypotheses that "gender-based family roles would underlie involvement in business roles" and that "spousal involvement in the firm would predict spousal dedication to the firm", thus identifying both key significant areas of support provided by the spouse and the positive effects of support from a spouse but that not all support, however well intended, results in a positive outcome. Iida et al (2008:460) suggested that support may be "inappropriate, untimely, or excessive", particularly when couples are presented with high stress situations, finding correlations between four factors: *recipient factors* (request for support), *provider factors* (provision of support), *relationship factors* (the context of the relationship) and *stressor factors* (levels of stress associated with an event) and surprisingly found a negative correlation between recipient factors and provider factors when associated stress factors were high, suggesting conflict in providing support when the providers had other important goals.

## 2.3 Social relationships

The importance of entrepreneurial networks and relationships adds an important component to the relational aspect of entrepreneurship activity and provides a new avenue for exploration and the possibility to identify more specific areas that have subsequently informed this study. Dimov (2007) suggested that fundamental attribution error affects our perception of the business owner and his or her success. Causal attribution has been researched in depth by personality psychologists, focussing on how individuals identify and apply attributions or explanations to events and behaviour (see Porac et al, 1983; Ledma & Poppe, 1994; and Bastounis & Minbas-Poussard, 2012). Holmes (2000:447) suggested that "social interactions embedded in ongoing close relationships were not being captured" by existing research and posits that traditionally relationship research has traditionally focused on how humans attract a mate and, therefore, left a mass of untapped information and knowledge. Holmes (2000) also proposed that some causal conditions within a dyadic relationship are born from the "conjunction of the partners' attributes" (p449) rather than each individual spouse's activities. Oyamoto et al (2010) examined the symmetry of the balance of power and influence in a relationship which have better quality and success than asymmetrically balanced ones.

Early organisational literature exploring the impact of family life on economic performance and success focussed on the traditional employee / employer configuration (see Karnes, 2009). Miller et al (1999:253) suggested a number of links between spousal support and family firm financial performance but recognised that: "the family can serve as both a resource and a constraint to the family business", hence introducing a situational context to support provision. Jennings and McDougald (2007:747) highlighted how entrepreneurship research has "neglected the impact of entrepreneurs' personal lives on their business-related endeavours". The immense work-family interface literature provides a wealth of information relating to

social support within business (see Greenhaus et al, 2003; Mark & McDermid, 1996; and Jennings & McDougald, 2007) and resource allocation (see Procidano & Heller, 1983; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; and Voydanoff, 2005). Gudmunson et al. (2009) explored the contribution of emotional spousal support at the start-up phase of a family business and differed from this study in that it: (a) focussed on the start-up phase of business ventures; (b) used quantitative methods for data collection and analysis, and (c) considered the effect of emotional spousal support on the business owners' work/family balance. Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) examining levels of stress within social contexts, Gudmunson et al (2009) measured stress levels reported by business owners, finding that emotional support can have one of two effects: as an enabling resource or as a restraint by diverting energy away from the start-up process, supported by Danes et al's (2009) contention that 'family capital' may positively and / or negatively affect business performance with COR theory stating the importance of the situational context of social support (ibid), explaining partly Gudmunson et al's results (2009).

## 2.4 Capital (social, human & psychological)

'Capital' was a recurring term during the search of the four related fields detailed previously, being "the value of assets and resources available for a specific need" (Envick, 2005:41), taking many forms including social, spousal (Matzek et al, 2010), human (Werbel & Danes, 2010), family and financial (Danes et al, 2003) all adding value and potentially acting as enablers to business ventures.

<b>Networks &amp; Social Capital</b>	<b>Networks &amp; Relationships</b>	<b>Networks</b>
		<b>Network ties</b>
		<b>Cooperation</b>
	<b>Network processes</b>	<b>Development</b>
		<b>Capability</b>
		<b>Dynamics</b>
	<b>Social capital</b>	<b>Social capital</b>
		<b>Governance</b>

**Table 1:** Networks and Social Capital (*Adapted from Jones et al, 2011*)

### 2.4.1 Social capital

Jones et al's (2011) typology of international entrepreneurship research 1989-2009 suggested five clear focal themes – venture type, internationalisation, organisational issues, entrepreneurship, and networks / social capital – the latter linking strongly with this study and categorised (Table 1) as second and first order themes. Envick (2005:43) defined social capital as "providing individuals with an important credential that can be directly converted into tangible assets" and extended the importance of 'other' capitals to entrepreneurial success by introducing psychological capital, which has its roots within the school of positive psychology and comprises four constructs of hope, confidence, resilience and optimism (ibid: 44). Adler and Kwon (2002:17), meanwhile, defined social capital as "goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilised to facilitate action". Both definitions suggest that, rather than being viewed as just a 'concept', social capital has become a valuable entity. Envick linked social capital to exchange theory (cf Foa & Foa, 1980) such that a group member may suffer a loss by making a contribution to the group but in return will gain reciprocally from another member's contribution. Indeed, exchange theory has been applied to romantic relationships (De Maris, 2007; Frisco & Williams, 2003; Joyner, 2009), considered to be 'cooperative venture[s]' in which a spouse 'exchanges the same types of 'commodities' with the other partner" (De Maris, 2010:451), despite unfairness and inequity in exchanges (Mirowsky, 1985). However, exchange theory does not appear within either the small business or entrepreneurship literatures. Six broad classes associated with exchange theory are love, status, services, information, goods and money (Gorgievski et al, 2011: 2) which, when linked back to De Maris (2010), the two most important classes in the business owner / spouse dyadic would be 'love and services' which, if converted into emotional and practical support (respectively), can be classified as social capital, which is then exchanged between the business owner and his/her spouse and, subsequently, contributes to venture success.

### 2.4.2 Human capital

Bosma et al's (2004) identified human and social capital to be important to both start-up and subsequent entrepreneurial performance and conceptualised both emotional support from the spouse and the presence of the spouse as a form of social capital, finding that those entrepreneurs who enjoyed emotional support from a spouse would earn approximately 40% more than those who did not. Although neither considering this finding significant nor further analysing it, they lent support to the proposition that spousal support can have an impact on business ventures. Sustainable Family Business Theory (SFBT) analyses complex and dynamic interactions between family and business and emphasises sustainability rather than revenue and gives equal consideration to both the family and the business (Stafford et al, 1999). Danes et al (2009) considered how

human capital, financial capital and social capital have contributed to family firms, combining the three as 'family capital' and extending SFBT to SFBT II by focusing on processes enabling optimal management of the three capitals given their positive and / or negative effects on business performance. SFBT II does not, however, focus on dyadic non-business relationships (but rather formal relationships) but does recognise, to some degree, the dynamic between the business owner and his or her spouse. Their later empirical study on SFBT II found that spouses as "critical stakeholders" can potentially put strain on new ventures if there is sustained conflict within the work / family interface by passing on their emotional states (and strain) to new venture business operators, thus having a negative impact on the success of the new business venture, which they considered to be "socially contagious" (ibid: 435), sometimes leading to failure to start up (Werbel and Danes, 2010).

#### **2.4.3 Psychological capital**

Envick suggested that psychological capital is important when considering the challenges that entrepreneurs must face in the quest for success, thus linking to the work of Weitzel et al (2010) in which the mindset of the business owner at the start-up phase of new business ventures is key to its subsequent success up whether due to high levels of selfish behaviour (Weitzel et al, 2010) or strong psychological capital (Envick, 2005) and potentially mitigating the spill-over effects of spousal strain (Werbel and Danes, 2010). The bulk of the support literature is situated in the athlete/coach dyadic and the terminally ill/spouse dyadic – the former being similar to the small business owner/spouse dyadic as one takes part in the activity and the other provides the support. Jackson et al (2010), adopting an interdependence theory perspective used, psychometric measures to examine the role of efficacy beliefs of both athlete and coach (tennis player's self efficacy, other efficacy (confidence in their coach's ability) and Relationship Inferred Self Efficacy (RISE), an estimation of the coach's confidence in the tennis players ability)). By linking these measures to interdependence theory, the notion of partner effect arises: if the coach measures higher on their belief in the athlete than the athlete's belief in themselves then this can have a positive effect on the athlete's confidence and subsequent performance (see Kenny et al, 2006). Jackson et al (2010) demonstrated that indeed the partner effect (if my coach believes that I can do it then I will) was evident and more pronounced for the tennis players than the coaches. Millman and Martin (2007) identified five themes important within the copreneurship dyadic – including self-belief – and Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2008: 1116) suggests that the concept of RISE can be applied to the business owner/spouse dyadic:

*"and his belief in me. He doesn't think there's anything I can't do. Even I know there are things I can't do (laughs). If I tell him I'm going to become a doctor tomorrow and do brain surgery, he'll say "okay, sounds great" (p1116).*

Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2008) focussed on the spousal support received by executive women and identified six themes on the types of support perceived with the theme from which the above quote comes being the 'Esteem' theme linking to esteem support (Xu and Burleson, 2001) which provides individuals with good reason to believe in themselves in the same way that others do. Jowett (2007) defined three relationship constructs within dyadic relationships: closeness (emotional links), commitment (explicit intent to stay) and complementarity (mutually interested behaviours) – the 3Cs. Jackson et al (2010: 1039) proposed that "significant partner effects would indicate that relational perceptions (i.e. 3Cs) stem from the partners cognitions, signifying that outcomes are dependent on the partner". By contextualising this within the business owner field, and the notion mooted earlier by Dimov (2007) that no business owner operates independently, we would argue that collectively a social error is made in believing that a business owner's success is due to his or her own individual efforts when in reality it could be as a result of the combined efforts of their spouse despite her or him not having any formal role within the business.

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

We set clear sampling criteria for participants, in order to ensure the SBO and his/her spouse had sufficient experience to be able to comment on the interaction between their relationship and the business. The SBOs had to have started their business from scratch, actively owned and managed it, have a long-term partner (spouse) with whom they had been in a relationship at the time of the start-up, the 'spouse' must not have been formally involved in the establishment or running of the business and the business had to have been running for a period of more than 2 years.

SBOs were generally happy to be interviewed, and talk about themselves and their business, though male SBOs often expressed initial reservations about talking about their romantic relationships but these were alleviated by reassurances on confidentiality and anonymity. However, the SBOs' spouses were more reluctant to be interviewed – male spouses especially. An awareness of the level of sensitivity required during the interviews, coupled with a foreknowledge of the topic, can help to alleviate a participant's reluctance to discuss sensitive issues (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), so we assured participants they could halt the interview at any point if they felt it had taken a direction they were uncomfortable with.

No	Category	Gender	Business Area	Age
BoM 1	Business Owner	Male	Manufacturing	54
BoM 2	Business Owner	Male	Property	58
BoM 3	Business Owner	Male	Portfolio Entrepreneur	64
BoM 4	Business Owner	Male	Land and property	79
BoM 5	Business Owner	Male	Training	47
BoM 6	Business Owner	Male	Publishing	51
BoM 7	Business Owner	Male	Portfolio entrepreneur	63
BoM 8	Business Owner	Male	Digital media	47
BoM 9	Business Owner	Male	Contract broker	56
BoM 10	Business Owner	Male	Digital media	40
BoM 11	Business Owner	Male	PR	62
BoM 12	Business Owner	Male	Civil engineering	48
BoM 13	Business Owner	Male	Portfolio entrepreneur	65
BoM 14	Business Owner	Male	Training	48
BoM 15	Business Owner	Male	Property	53
BoF 1	Business Owner	Female	Recruitment	43
BoF 2	Business Owner	Female	Training	47
BoF 3	Business Owner	Female	Design	42
BoF 4	Business Owner	Female	Engineering	56
BoF 5	Business Owner	Female	Publishing	37
BoF 6	Business Owner	Female	Property	35
BoF 7	Business Owner	Female	Portfolio entrepreneur	33
BoF 8	Business Owner	Female	Retail	51
CSF 1	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 1 / home maker	57
CSF 2	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 3 / retired	62
CSF 3	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 2 / retired	56
CSF 4	Current Spouse	Female	Home maker – SBO not interviewed	32
CSF 5	Current Spouse	Female	Home maker – SBO not interviewed	45
CSF 6	Current Spouse	Female	Home maker – SBO not interviewed	47
CSF 7	Current Spouse	Female	Home maker – SBO not interviewed	53
CSF 8	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 5 / home maker	47
CSF 9	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 8 / retail	43
CSF 10	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 10 / home maker	42
CSF 11	Current Spouse	Female	Of BoM 14 / home maker	50
CSM 1	Current Spouse	Male	Of BoF 1 / police officer	47
CSM 2	Current Spouse	Male	Of BoF 2 / manufacturing	51
CSM 3	Current Spouse	Male	Of BoF 3/ Property	49
ExS 1	Ex Spouse	Female	Home maker	41
ExS 2	Ex Spouse	Female	Home maker	47
ExS 3	Ex Spouse	Female	Home maker	33
ExS 4	Ex Spouse	Female	Education	29

**Table 2:** Total participants for the research

Eisikovits and Koren (2010) identify five modes of data gathering for dyadic analysis, suggesting the most appropriate mode to use in various situations. We initially followed the mode of conducting both separate and joint interviews with the same participants, allowing each spouse to tell the story in their own words whilst also providing the couple with an opportunity of presenting a shared account of their experience (Stamp, 1994). We undertook a pilot study to test out the proposed methodology, working with five couples drawn from the first author's network. Locations, dates and times for the interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience. The duration of interviews (both individual and joint) was between 32 and 76 minutes. To limit discussion between SBO and spouse regarding the detail of the interviews we arranged to conduct all three interviews consecutively, with the joint interview always last. By interviewing them separately we hoped to minimise social desirability effects (Paulhus, 1991), as each spouse had the opportunity to tell the story from their own perspective (Gillham, 2005). A semi-structured interview format was used which allowed for greater flexibility, and we developed a framework which allowed us to explore themes while ensuring enough structure to allow for comparability of responses. Each interview began with a number of demographic questions; their age, how long the business had been in operation and how long they had been in the relationship with their 'spouse'.



Several methodological issues were identified during the pilot study. However, it became clear that prior to the interviews the couples had already discussed what may be asked of them and had established a 'joint perspective' on the interview topic. It made no difference if the joint interview took place first, or after the individual interviews – all three interviews tended to produce similar accounts. As participants acknowledged having discussed the interviews and what they might say, we felt we were getting a joint 'story'. Given this, and as we had found it difficult to recruit couples who were both prepared to be interviewed, we decided to abandon our self-imposed requirement to interview couples and instead simply sought to recruit SBOs and spouses of SBOs. We also interviewed several former spouses of SBOs. As Table 2 shows, of the 41 participants interviewed, only 20 were couples (i.e. we interviewed both the SBO and his/her spouse).

The data was analysed using template analysis (King, 2006) as it provides flexibility, has fewer specified procedures and allowed us to tailor it to match our requirements (King, 2012). The technique of template analysis includes a process of coding themes in order to provide structure to the data provided by interview transcripts, codes being "labels which identify text within data that allow it to be related to themes within that data" (King, 2006:257). The codes are then arranged in hierarchical order highlighting the relationships between the themes, effectively organising them in a meaningful and useful manner. The initial template reflects a hierarchical structure of both 'a priori' and 'emerging' themes which are then divided into lower order codes. The themes and codes identified during the template development process primarily describe what is stated in the data rather than interpret it. King suggests this process requires "little or no analysis by the researcher of what the interviewee means" (2006:257) though there is an element of interpretation required in order to make sense of the data and formulate an acceptable and workable coding template. The development of the final template took place in two stages. Firstly 'a priori' themes were identified from the literature. Secondly the emerging themes were identified after a lengthy iterative process of reading the interview transcripts and modifying and re-modifying the developing themes. There were elements of both selectivity and openness (King, 2012) during the template development process.

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The final template is presented in the table below. Samples of participant quotations have been used to illustrate each theme along with both short quotations (to help demonstrate a particular point) and more lengthy passages (to contextualise the shorter quotes). In order to assist with the anonymity of the data where participants have made references to either individuals or businesses by name, these have been replaced with standard brackets and an explanation / description (i.e. [spouse's name], [business name]). This paper focuses upon the domains highlighted in orange in Table 3, while other domains will be explored in future papers.

<b>'A Priori' Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
I Domains	1 Home 2 Business 3 Children
II Human capital	1 Attitudes 2 Values
<b>Emerging themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
I Psychological wellbeing	1 I can do this 2 I can do this because you love me
II Identity	1 Putting on a show 2 I'm just being me

**Table 3:** The final template – highlighting this paper's foci

##### 4.1 'A Priori' theme I: Domains

The notion of domains is discussed within both the family firms and the copreneurship literature and was, therefore, identified as an 'a priori' theme for this paper. The view that each family unit has clearly defined areas for which each family member takes responsibility has a long history and is often discussed where gender is a focus of the research (see Marshack, 1994; Dane & Olson, 2003; de Bruin & Lewis, 2001). Only the business sub-theme is discussed below.

##### 4.1.1 Business (D2)

All participants' spouses did not have any formal role in the business activity: but the phenomenon of *unrecognised* 'hidden contributions' or unpaid labour (Astrachan & Shanker, 2003) emerged, with many male SBOs referred to their spouse helping with particular elements of the business (e.g. administrative duties



including document preparation, dealing with clients out of hours and help with the delivery of goods) but not formally recognising these as contributions to the business, for example from the interview with BoM5:

Researcher "So does [spouse's name] ever help you with the business?"  
BoM5 "No not really"  
Researcher "So she doesn't do anything business related at all?"  
BoM5 "Well I suppose - er let me think, well she sometimes helps me with lo documents - I hate having to do all of that kind of stuff and she's good at it so s does it for me - but that's not working in the business is it? That's just helping r out"

Current spouses concurred that often their contributions were not seen as having an impact on the business, whereas, all of the female SBOs recognised their male spouse's efforts:

*"He is always doing things for me - oh let me see now I've said that [laughs] erm - yeh he does - he will do deliveries - nip to the shops for office supplies - I mean for home - not the real office - he makes suggestions for book covers - I mean that's a big one for me - we have designers who look after that but I always run them past him - I mean show them to him - and I always take on board what he says - there wouldn't be much point in asking otherwise would there? [laughs]" (BoF5).*

#### **4.2 'A Priori' theme II: Human Capital**

Human capital is described as the value of skills, abilities, knowledge and experience that a person possesses (Envick, 2005) and, indeed, Bosma et al (2004) discussed how the attitudes and values of spouses can make a contribution to the success of new business ventures. The two themes of attitudes and values were discussed by a number of participants, both SBOs and spouses, with no gender differences.

##### **4.2.1 Attitudes (H1)**

Whilst some participants (both SBOs and spouses - current and ex) discussed attitudes between themselves and their spouse, they did not always express congruence of attitudes, related to people, i.e. business associates, family and friends who often caused disagreements and quarrels between SBOs and spouses.

*"I hate some of the women she goes out with - well not hate - well - [laughs] - no not hates but really - really - really - I mean really [laughs] dislike. They fill her head full of crap - I cannot remember the last time she came home after being out with them and we didn't have an argument - you know what it's like with kids - my dad has this and my dad has that - well that's what it's like - "well [friends husband's name] has ordered his new Bentley - GTC this time" - "oh really is he getting the headrests embroidered?" - I mean, for \*\*\*\*'s sake what's that all about? Then she comes home and says "can we swap the Range Rover for a Bentley" - no we can't - \*\*\*\* off" (BoM8).*

##### **4.2.2 Values (H2)**

Where values were discussed, distinction was made between values shared in their private lives and those in business and which was the same for each group of participants (SBO and spouse both current and ex). Some SBOs were prepared to move out of their "value comfort zone" without talking things through with their spouse and some were not.

*"I've found making some decisions really difficult and have talked to [spouse's name] about them - particularly when it comes to staff - I just always want to see the best in people and it's hard when they let you down - so he helps me with that - he will play devil's advocate and that helps me make the decision - I mean he would never tell me what to do but just talking to him about it helps me see what has to be done" (BoF7).*

In contrast, when this quote was presented to participant BoM13, his response was:

*"I don't give a \*\*\*\* - let the \*\*\*\*\*s try I say - I might be a pussycat at home but I'm ruthless at work - have to be - trust me I take no prisoners - mind you the lads aren't like that - right soft arses they are - take after their mother - we're always fighting about this stuff - oh don't get me started on this [laughs] - next question" (BoM16).*

Similarly, SBOs who had been in business the longest all seemed less likely to discuss value-based business decisions with their spouse.

*"There are just some things that we don't discuss - well you can't can you? - I'd be on the phone all day - at the end of the day I'm running a business so I just get on with it" (BoM3).*

Conversely, there was discussion between spouses for all of the value-based decisions made relating to home and family life. A strong theme that emerged for those participants who had acquired significant wealth during their time in business was the value-based 'goodwill factor' in ensuring other people benefitted from that wealth. There were no gender differences within these discussions and where this aspect emerged in the interviews it was within the context of sharing values.

*"We decided early on that if we made a lot of money then we would give a lot of it to charity – I mean we have enough for ourselves – there are only so many things you can buy – you know – material things – and we met at a charity do – God that was a long time ago now [laughs] – but we just think it's the right thing to do – mind you we used to fight about where it went – you know – I mean which charity – but we set a list up and we have monthly direct debits - and - erm and then we have a sum of money at the end of each tax year and we just decide which sort of local ones get that money or – erm – there might of been something in the paper – you know the type of thing" (BoM3).*

One consistent element of these discussions was that they felt they were giving something back for the right reasons and not for "glory" (BoM13).

*"Look – it's like this – see everybody knows I've made a few quid so I can't win can I? If I do give money away I'm a flash git – and well if I don't give it away I'm a tight\*\*\*\* – so that's why it goes anonymously via the solicitor – loads of people do it that way – the charity or whatever gets a letter saying you know – my client wishes you to benefit from x amount of money but they wish to remain anonymous - well something like that – at the end of the day we're doing the right thing – and [spouse's name] deals with that – we agreed that we would do it and she makes sure we do" (BoM13).*

There were no gender differences in this theme. Regardless of the sex of the SBOs, they all felt that they shared values with their spouse and that it was an important element of the relationship.

#### **4.3 Emerging Theme I - Psychological Wellbeing (incorporating RISE)**

All participants clearly discussed their psychological well-being, but not their physical well-being – without doubt, the strongest emerging theme from the interviews with the SBOs and were mainly concerned with self-assurance. From this main theme, two sub-themes were identified; *I can do this* (linked to self-esteem, self-confidence and self- efficacy and *I can do this because you love me* (linked to relationship inferred self-efficacy).

##### **4.3.1 I can do this (P1)**

Consistently, all SBOs (both genders) discussed how they felt they had a strong sense of self-assurance.

*"You can't do what I do without feeling like you know who you are" (BoM13).*

*"When you're trying to secure a deal you need to demonstrate you know what you're doing and what you're talking about" (BoM10).*

Spouses interviewed (both current and ex) all agreed that this element was an attraction to their spouse.

*"It was one of the things that attracted me to her in the first place – I mean she's beautiful but it was more than that – you know what I mean – she oozes confidence - she just has that – the French call it something don't they – je ne sais quoi – well that's her" (CSM3).*

They all rejected a suggestion they put on an act to help them through the difficulties of running a business.

*"Nah – you can't fake stuff like that – I've just been really lucky – I've always been around people who were nice" (BoF3).*

*"I don't think you can put that on – I mean there have been times when I've not been sure about a situation – you know like a deal or something – but that's different – I always know I can do something – no it's not that – it's – erm – ha [laughs] it's like that advert with all the fit women on – what do they say? – 'Because I'm worth it' – is that it? Well I am always worth it – why would I think any different?" (BoM14).*

Where self assurance was discussed in relation to the male SBOs, it occasionally seemed to have a negative effect on the relationship by presenting itself in the forms of overconfidence and 'always being right' syndrome. This was consistent for comments from both the SBOs and the spouses.

*"He can be a right cocky \*\*\*\*\* – always thinks he's right – he says he's confident but it isn't it's being cocky – you can tell when it's smoke and mirrors with him – thinks if he acts confident then I'll fall for it but I know him too well" (CSF5).*

The contributions from the male spouses were delivered with affection and almost a sense of pride.

*"She has always been confident – hardly ever – oh hang on – no very rarely is there negativity about her – even when it's all gone belly up – she's just ... mind you, she always takes the dog out more on her own when things are wrong – so maybe she just doesn't want me to see it – you know" (CSM3).*

The SBOs (male and female) discussed how self-efficacy was an issue for them, particularly when they were going through a period of change and entering new phases of the development of their businesses.

*"Sometimes when we're switching direction or doing something different I can have a little wobble [laughs] – you know – a – well – a 'can I do this moment?' – I know we're working as a team and it's not just me who's doing it but the responsibility is mine isn't it?" (BoF4)*

Spouses also recognised that there were times when the SBO would be unsure about the new direction of their business or often just small changes that were necessary.

*"I know when something's bothering him and I know when to ask and when not to – generally – he will – erm – yeh he will tell me – if there is something new then he'll drop it in to the conversation rather than directly ask me about it – that's when I know he'll be thinking if it's the right thing or if they can do it" (CSF7).*

#### **4.3.2 I can do this because you love me (P3)**

Having somebody who believed in them was important to most of the SBOs of both genders in this study.

*"I've been on my knees at times, especially at the beginning when I was starting out, and I wasn't sure if it was the right thing, [spouse's name] would be the one who picked me up and told me I could do it" (BoM14).*

*"oh he always told me he believed in me, when I was deciding whether to do it or not he told me to, he just said 'you're brilliant at it and you will be successful' oh it makes me want to cry now just thinking about it" (BoF2).*

The current spouses interviewed also clearly recognised the contribution they make.

*"he can be a right pain in the – well you know [laughs] – the rest of the world thinks he is the bees knees and can rule the world but when he's at home with me – well – I think he would kill me for saying this – but he can be like a little boy – sort of – well always looking for reassurance – asking me "do you think I can do this?" – he can – and always does – but it's just – I don't know - like he has to ask – he's always been the same" (CSF7).*

The ex spouses also recognised that they had been supportive and encouraging during times of change; however, all of them did not feel that this had been effective.

*"I was always telling him that he was capable of stuff – whenever there was a change he would come home whinging about whether they could do it – and I would tell him they could – but it wouldn't make any difference – no matter what I said" (ExS4).*

One of the most touching moments came from one of the dyadic interviews and neatly summarises this theme.

Researcher	<i>"So is there anything in particular you think [spouse's name] does that makes the biggest difference to you running the business?"</i>
BoM3	<i>"That's a toughie really – I mean it's everything – I'm going to have to think – no – no - I don't have to think – I think it's simple really – I'm strong because she loves me"</i>
CSF2	<i>"Really?"</i>
BoM3	<i>"No I just made it up so I looked good [sighs] – yes – really"</i>
CSF2	<i>"All the years we've been married and you never said that"</i>
BoM3	<i>"Well I have now"</i>
CSF2	<i>"That's lovely – thanks [starts to cry]"</i>
Researcher	<i>"I'll go put the kettle on and give you guys a moment"</i>

## 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In exploring whether entrepreneurs' spousal relationships on their business ventures, we found that the unique dynamics found in the entrepreneur / spouse relationship can introduce many forms of enabling qualities which contribute to the success of the entrepreneurial ventures. These include RISE, which provides belief from another if self-belief is waning during difficult times, which allows the entrepreneur to be him- or herself without the pressures of socially constructed identity, ensuring that he or she is protected from humdrum everyday activity allowing her or him to focus on their business venture. Whilst RISE has previously been discussed within the context of the coach/athlete dyadic relationship it has not been considered within the entrepreneur/spouse context. The identity bubble has strong links to the socially constructed entrepreneurial personality.

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