Preface

The growth in the number of women entrepreneurs over the past three decades has been described by some as an unbelievable phenomenon. Intricately contributing to this growth phenomenon are the increases in the number of minority women entrepreneurs, whose growth has been described as critical to the overall contributions of women entrepreneurs in the marketplace.

The women business owners in this study are also in the purest sense entrepreneurs. That is, they were involved in the original development of their business or of the current state of their business. The basic thrust of this book is to hold gender constant and analyze the state of a national sample of women entrepreneurs across racial lines. A total of 263 women entrepreneurs (124 minority women entrepreneurs and 139 white women entrepreneurs) responded to the call to participate in this study.

Each woman entrepreneur was initially contacted by mail with a letter to garner her participation in this study. The names and addresses for the women entrepreneurs were obtained from Dun and Bradstreet, a nationally recognized database firm. The company sells information on businesses nationwide to interested parties, including: individuals, private and public organizations, government agencies and institutions. Dun and Bradstreet obtains the information from the businesses themselves, who contact, or are contacted by, Dun and Bradstreet in order to be listed with this database firm. Dun and Bradstreet was instructed on the number of women entrepreneurs needed in each racial stratum. The racial minority categories were over-sampled, to ensure that an adequate response rate was obtained for this sector of business owners.

Women entrepreneurs responded affirmatively to the request to participate by completing a quantitative questionnaire and returning it in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Follow-up in-depth interviews were conducted by use of a qualitative questionnaire with 20% of the original respondents from each group (25 of the minority women entrepreneurs and 26 of the white women entrepreneurs). This was done to clarify, explain and expand on the responses to the original questionnaire.

The book begins with an examination of the place of women in the current marketplace, after taking a look back at the historical contribution of women in the labor market. This is followed by a look at literature related to women entrepreneurs, with a special emphasis on issues related to human capital, networks
and financial capital. The next four chapters analyze the findings from the current study, taking critical and in-depth looks at the two groups of women entrepreneurs. The quantitative findings are interwoven with qualitative explanations and clarifications to form a rich tapestry representing the total perspective of women entrepreneurs in the study.

Later chapters look at the status of women entrepreneurs in the national sphere, followed by various studies which look at women entrepreneurs’ position in the global marketplace. The book concludes with a linking of the study’s current findings to theoretical perspectives, national and international data. In addition, policy implications for improving women’s entrepreneurial position in the marketplace are also provided.