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Gender, (class) and Higher Education

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Re-thinking Female Entrepreneurship
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About Me

- Former Small Business Advisor and EU Business Support Project Manager.
- Before working in HE worked in micro and small businesses.
- First person in my family to go into HE.
- Main research interests: Gender and entrepreneurship education, gender and class in HE and the broader enterprise culture.
- Today I will focus on Gender and entrepreneurship education

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"…language is not a neutral system which refers to 'real' objects in the 'real' world, but instead… it is through language that the world is given meaning…In this way, language is ideological because it makes what is cultural appear to be 'natural'…"

(Hollows, 2000:44)

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Jones, S. (2014) Gendered Discourses of Entrepreneurship in UK Higher Education: The fictive entrepreneur and the fictive student. *International Small Business Journal 32 (3),* 237-258.

Jones, S. and Warhuus, J. P. (2018) "This class is not for you" An investigation of gendered subject construction in entrepreneurship course descriptions. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *25*(2), 182-200.

Gendered Discourses of Entrepreneurship: The Fictive Student and The Fictive Entrepreneur

(Jones 2014)

- Bourdieu and Passeron's concept of the Fictive Student.
- HE disciplines = gendered, Entrepreneurship = masculinised.
- How this underpins the Fictive Entrepreneurship Student and the Fictive Entrepreneur in HE entrepreneurship education and policy.

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“This class is not for you” An investigation of gendered subject construction in entrepreneurship course descriptions. (2018)

Entrepreneurship & Gender

Historical function

E-ship definitions

Abilities/skills

Entrepreneurship Education & Gender

?

Module Descriptions

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Entrepreneurship Education:

Module Descriptions

Fictive Entrepreneur

Fictive Student

Students

Is this for me?

Will I do well in this module?

Career path?

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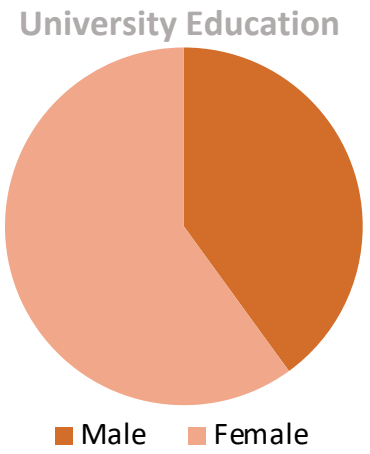
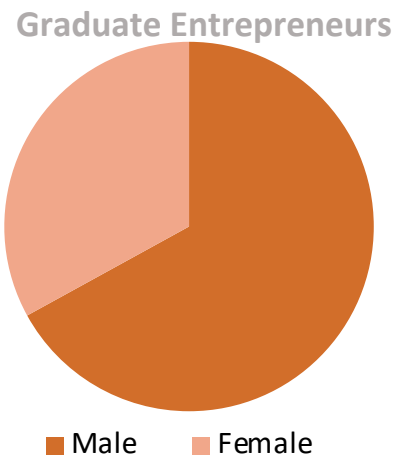
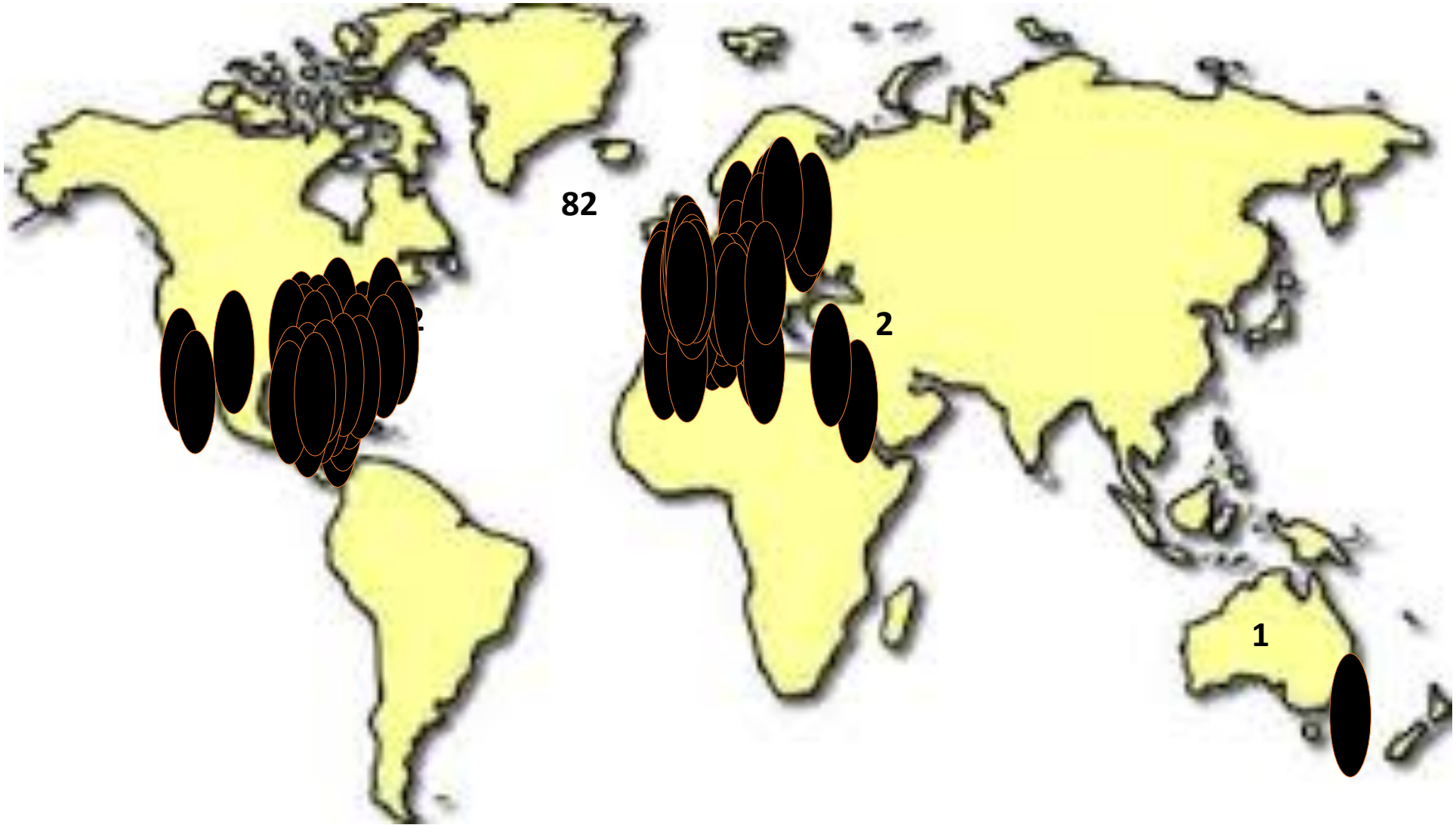


1: Embedding entrepreneurship --> embedding masculinity?
2: Wider understanding of gender in HE is ignored in entp. edu.
3: Lack of entp. definition, lack of discipline-specific texts, and educator pressures lead to adoption of default masculine material by powerful educators.
4: Do male students identify more easily with the masculine language, and feel like the 'right' fictive student.



85 module descriptions from 81 universities in 21 countries



Analysis – English Language Descriptions

Gaucher et al, 2011

Updated & Adapted

Ahl, 2006

Bem, 1974

Masculine	Feminine	Neutral
1. self-reliant	2. yielding	3. helpful
4. defends own beliefs	5. cheerful	6. moody
7. independent	8. shy	9. conscientious
10. athletic	11. affectionate	12. theatrical
13. assertive	14. flatterable	15. happy
16. strong personality	17. loyal	18. unpredictable
19. forceful	20. feminine	21. reliable
22. analytical	23. sympathetic	24. jealous
25. has leadership abilities	26. sensitive to the needs of others	27. truthful
28. willing to take risks	29. understanding	30. secretive
31. makes decisions easily	32. compassionate	33. sincere
34. self-sufficient	35. eager to soothe hurt feelings	36. conceited
37. dominant	38. soft-spoken	39. likable
40. masculine	41. warm	42. solemn
43. willing to take a stand	44. tender	45. friendly
46. aggressive	47. gullible	48. inefficient
49. acts as a leader	50. childlike	51. adaptable
52. individualistic	53. does not use harsh language	54. unsystematic
55. competitive	56. loves children	57. tactful
58. ambitious	59. gentle	60. conventional

Masculine/Feminine word count: 9:1

Masculinity Words Compared to Entrepreneur Words

Bem's masculinity words	Entrepreneur
Self-reliant	Self-centered, internal locus of control, self-efficacious, mentally free, able
Defends own beliefs	Strong willed
Assertive	Able to withstand opposition
Strong personality	Resolute, firm in temper
Forceful, athletic*	Unusually energetic, capacity for sustained effort, active
Has leadership abilities	Skilled at organizing, visionary
Willing to take risks	Seeks difficulty, optimistic, daring, courageous
Makes decisions easily	Decisive in spite of uncertainty
Self-sufficient	Independent, detached
Dominant, aggressive*	Influential, seeks power, wants a private kingdom and a dynasty
Willing to take a stand	Stick to a course
Act as a leader	Leading economic and moral progress, pilot of industrialism, manager
Individualistic*	Detached
Competitive*	Wants to fight and conquer, wants to prove superiority
Ambitious*	Achievement oriented
Independent*	Independent, mentally free
Analytical*	Exercising sound judgment, superior business talent, foresighted, astute, perceptive, intelligent

Femininity of Entrepre

Bem's femini
Gentle
Loyal
Sensitive to the nee
Shy*
Yielding*
Gullible*
Sympathetic, affecti understanding, wa compassionate, ea hurt feelings, soft tender, loves children,* does not use harsh language,* cheerful,* childlike,* flatterable*

List of Masculine and Feminine Words Coded in Studies 1 and 2

Masculine words	Feminine word
Active	Affectionate
Adventurous	Child*
Aggress*	Cheer*
Ambitio*	Commit*
Analy*	Communal
Assert*	Compassion*
Athlet*	Connect*
Autonom*	Considerate
Boast*	Cooperat*
Challeng*	Depend*
Compet*	Emotiona*
Confident	Empath*
Courag*	Feminine
Decide	Flatterable
Decisive	Gentle
Decision*	Honest
Determin*	Interpersonal
Dominant	Interdependen
Domina*	Interpersona*
Force*	Kind
Greedy	Kinship
Headstrong	Loyal*
Hierarch*	Modesty
Hostil*	Nag
Implusive	Nurtur*
Independen*	Pleasant*
Individual*	Polite
Intellect*	Quiet*
Lead*	Respon*
Logic	Sensitiv*
Masculine	Submissive
Objective	Support*
Opinion	Sympath*
Outspoken	Tender*
Persist	Together*
Principle*	Trust*
Reckless	Understand*
Stubborn	Warm*
Superior	Whin*
Self-confiden*	Yield*
Self-sufficien*	
Self-relian*	

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Types of Modules

	"About" module	"For" – Focus on developing skills	"Through" - Develop idea to business plan or other simulation	"Through" -Actual venture creation
Masculine high / Feminine none or low				
Masculine high / Feminine high				
Masculine low / Feminine none				
Masculine low / Feminine low				
Feminine low / Masculine none				
Feminine high / Masculine none or low				
No Gender codes				

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Description-level analysis

	"About" module	"For" – Focus on developing skills	"Through" - Develop idea to business plan or other simulation	"Through" -Actual venture creation
Masculine high / Feminine none or low		XXXXX	XXXXXXXX	XX
Masculine high / Feminine high		XX	XXXXX	
Masculine low / Feminine none	XXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX	X
Masculine low / Feminine low	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX		
Feminine low / Masculine none	X	XXXX		
Feminine high / Masculine none or low	XX	X		
No Gender codes	XXXXXXX	XXX	X	

What does this mean?

- Value of About modules as an entry point in HE – more inclusive because broader.
- Through modules may exclude certain groups of students.
- The closer modules get to practice the more masculine the language – not just ‘action’ – intellectual, visionary, competitive, creative capacities.

Led to Further Research

- Involved 100 students and explored the module selection process (Denmark and US)
- Developed highly masculine and feminine, and gender neutral module descriptions based on language in previously analyzed module descriptions (TAP)
- Explored cultural and gendered aspects of the module selection process.

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Some Emerging Themes

- **Emotional Responses to Gendered Language:** Gendered language evokes an emotional response in students. Hinges on a sense of assertiveness, strictness and risk of failure in the masculine-framed courses and one of student-focus, support and openness in the feminine-framed descriptions. This varied between DK and US.

- **A Masculine Norm:** Lewis (2006: 454) argues that 'One of the luxuries of belonging to the privileged gender group is that one's own gender is often invisible to oneself'. When masculinity is the norm, neutral language may look the same to a member of the privileged group. Women were more attuned to the differences between neutral and masculine descriptions. Men commented on their similarity.

Some Emerging Themes

- **The Intersection of Gendered Language and Culture:** US students (men and women) appreciated the 'closeness' of the professor, talking to them directly as a student in feminized descriptions. Danish students felt it was too close (power distance).

- **Reframing Entrepreneurship as a Feminized Activity:** Early indications that students with a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship – gained through prior experience - and who also engage with extra curricula, entrepreneurial activities, find feminine course descriptions more appealing, compared to those with no 'real' experience.

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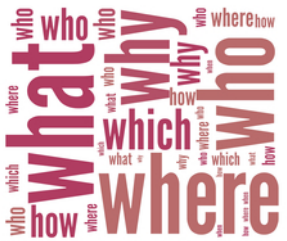
Potential Implications

- Suggests that gendered language *does* sensitize students to the 'fictive' or ideal imagined student, who will benefit from and do well on these courses.
- Suggests educators should consider alternative ways of framing entrepreneurship courses. It is possible to find approaches that do not privilege masculinity and risk alienating both male and female students.
- Could help educators to reflect on how their own attitudes and beliefs about entrepreneurship, and their 'ideal' entrepreneur and student, are reflected in their course descriptions, and how the learning environment they promote might be perceived by students as a result.
- Implications for higher education and business support community more generally and the use of, and responses to, gendered language.

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