GENDERED LANGUAGE, GENDERED CHOICES? STUDENT RESPONSES TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Questions we care about (Objectives)

This paper examines how students select entrepreneurship education classes. Our prior work (Jones and Warhuss, 2017) finds that entrepreneurship course descriptions use predominantly masculinised language. We therefore ask the following questions: *i*) what impact does gendered language have on student perceptions of an entrepreneurship course? *ii*) What clues from course descriptions do students use in their selection of entrepreneurship courses? *iii*) What do students prefer when given a choice between a masculine-framed and a feminine-framed entrepreneurship course description? *iv*) Does the national-level cultural context affect student choices? *v*) Is there an alternative to the highly masculinised action-oriented entrepreneurship course description?

Approach

The research is based on our prior research, which analyzed 86 different course descriptions from 25 countries and found that the gendering of language became more masculine as analysis moved from course descriptions for 'about' courses, to 'for' and 'through' type courses. Historically, entrepreneurship has been constructed as a masculinised activity. It is therefore argued that there is a need to critically engage with the westernised, masculine typified behaviours upon which entrepreneurship is based, given an increasingly ethnically diverse and female dominated HE environment. However, in constructing entrepreneurship courses educators arguably have an 'ideal' student in mind. We therefore argue that course descriptions offer insights into educator constructions of the 'Fictive student', the student to which the curriculum is addressed. Despite the importance of course description to both educators and students, no prior research has focused students' use of course descriptions to select the 'right' courses for them.

Results

To investigate the potential impact of gendered language on student course choices, we deploy a three-phase data-collection approach based around a set of fictitious masculine and feminine-framed course descriptions for each of these three types of courses, developed using the gendered language identified in our previous research. First, we recruited 25 American and 25 Danish business students and used a survey tool to capture their demographic data and assess their entrepreneurial experiences. Second, the students were asked to choose between a masculine and a feminine (and for the 'about' course also a neutral) framed course description, as part of a think-aloud protocol exercise. Third, after making their course selections, students participated in focus group discussions (two focus groups, each with 6-9

students, for each regional data segment.) The analysis of the data is guided by the Gioia methodology for qualitative research and aided by the use of the Nvivo software tool.

Implications and Value/Originality
Our research raises significant questions, and challenges previous assumptions, about the gendered implications of different types of entrepreneurship education and the influence of course descriptions on students' choices. Yet, we find no other studies like this in terms of focus, scope or comparison.

Key Words: gender, language, course descriptions, think-aloud protocol

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the gendering of entrepreneurship in university entrepreneurship education (EntEd). It extends knowledge of the masculinization of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006) into education and contributes to growing literature on critical entrepreneurship studies (CES). We analyze student responses to fictional EntEd course descriptions that use masculine-typified, feminine-typified and neutral language. In doing so we provide unique insights into student responses to gendered language and its impact on course choice.

Today, most university students are women (OECD, 2013), yet they account for only a third of graduate entrepreneurs (Martínez et al., 2007). This disproportionate state is often explained by entrepreneurship's masculinized image, which can act as a barrier to women (Ahl, 2006; Gupta et al, 2014). Indeed, there are ongoing calls for universities to examine and audit their approaches to attracting students to EntEd (Rae et al., 2012). In doing so, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) would be better informed about who engages with, and benefits from, EntEd. This research addresses such concerns, offering insights on student EntEd course choice.

For feminist scholars, gender refers to socially produced distinctions between men and women (Acker, 1990). Subsequently, we take an approach that distinguishes gender from mainstream use as another term for biological sex. As such, we explore socially constructed notions and, in this context 'sex' "denotes the grouping of people into male and female categories whereas the term gender refers to the meanings that societies and individuals ascribe to these categories" (Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008:811).

Our previous research (Jones & Warhuus, 2017) found that university EntEd course descriptions mobilize gendered language and discourses depending on their approach. Three main approaches have been identified in EntED. The first are courses *about* entrepreneurship as an academic subject and social science phenomenon. In contrast, courses teaching skills *for* entrepreneurship, and courses focused on students learning *through* entrepreneurship experiments and practical participation, focus on preparing students to *become* entrepreneurs (Heinonen & Hytti, 2010; Pittaway & Edwards, 2012). Our research suggests that there are variations in the way that different approaches, and their suggested outcomes, are described, and this is reflected in the gendering of language used, with about-type courses using more feminine language and through-type courses using highly masculinized language.

We therefore ask four questions: i) What response does gendered language elicit in students? ii) How do such responses impact on their course preference? iii) Does the national-level cultural context affect student course choice? iv) Is it possible to write a feminized course

description and would students prefer it when given the choice? This is all the more important, given that the positive, inspirational impacts of EntEd are greater for women than men who pursue university EntEd (Packham et al., 2010). Course descriptions could therefore, act as a barrier for some students in exploring their entrepreneurial potential and developing skills and knowledge that are highly prized in broader society.

The paper starts by considering the impact of gendered language, before exploring its influence on entrepreneurship discourses and how these might play out in EntEd. We then outline how students and universities use course descriptions to choose and promote EntEd courses. Next, we describe our methodology, before presenting and discussing emerging findings and their implications.

THE IMPACT OF GENDERED LANGUAGE

The word 'sexism' was coined in the 1960s (Miller & Swift, 1987) and the negative impacts of gendered language have been debated ever since (e.g., Lakoff, 2004 [1975]). Three main perspectives on the development and impact of gendered language are suggested: essentialist, environmentalist and constructionist (Leaper & Bigler, 2004). Essentialists view men and women as intrinsically different in their use of language, while environmentalists view environmentally gendered cues and norms as having the strongest influence on perceptions of and use of gendered language. Rather than viewing students as essentially 'male' or 'female', or as passively receiving and complying with gender cues, we take a constructionist approach, viewing students as 'active agents who seek to extract and understand the important social categories in their environment" (Leaper & Bigler 2004:130).

Gender is not a proxy for biological sex and we should not presume that men will necessarily relate to masculine language and women to feminine language. However, men and women can have different responses to the cues they receive from gendered language, given different environmental and social influences, and related gendered expectations. (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). We therefore, take a social feminist stance, which allies to our constructionist approach in recognizing "…difference but in a context of equality. This difference arises essentially from socialization processes which shape gendered forms of behavior." (Marlow & Patton, 2005:721).

This paper focuses on the impact of gender in the written word rather than the spoken word. There are three types of audience for written communication – audience as cognitive entity, audience as discourse community and audience as simultaneously social and cognitive – but in varying balance (Rubin, 2013:10-20) and we focus on the latter aspect here. This also links with our constructionist approach, in that we recognize both the social and cognitive aspects of the 'translation' process involved in deciphering the tacit messages within gendered and gender-neutral language. In line with this, we also draw on structuralist arguments that,

"…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)

The use of, and responses to, gendered language can be subtler than the obviously sexist of using 'he' when talking about entrepreneurs or using terms like 'businessman'. It can take more nuanced forms, in language that is often (subconsciously) linked to gendered stereotypes and assumptions. For example, Bem's Sex Role Inventory (1974) is widely used to investigate the tacit assumptions linked to gender, with words such as 'competitive', 'assertive' and 'risk-

taking' associated with masculinity, and words such as 'gentle', 'yielding' and 'shy', with femininity. When we add to this the unspoken assumption that masculinity and femininity directly correlate with the male and female sex categories, we can see how entrepreneurship might be positioned as a masculinized activity which is, by association, more accessible to those who relate to and/or enact masculine behaviors. Gender-binaries, gender hierarchies and gender cues are so pervasive that social cognition is said to be imbued with an 'automacity of gender' (Lemm et al., 2005:220).

Indeed responses to gendered language have also been shown to prompt the assignment of gender to non-specified subjects, where subjects are often presumed to be male - the 'male as human' approach (Merritt & Kok, 1995). This echoes De Beauvoir's (1949) argument that women are the second sex, seen as the 'other' to the male; an attitude which is still prolific today in terms such as 'female entrepreneurship' (Högberg et al., 2016), which tacitly positions 'male' entrepreneurship as the unspoken norm or 'default'. Thus masculinity is defined 'relationally, against the feminine' (Hennen, 2005) with masculinity being privileged and uncritically equated with excellence (Bourdieu, 1998).

With these issues in mind, since the 1980s there has been a call to use gender-neutral, and/or gender-free language in texts such as such as policies and text books and in some cases this has been mandated in, for example, in job advertisements (see Maggio, 1987 and UNESCO, 1999 for examples of guidelines). Such arguments move beyond the suggestion that gendered language is biased and sexist and argue that gender-neutral language has more clarity and precision and is less ambiguous (Kabba, 2011).

THE GENDERING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Building on considerations of the impact of gendered language more generally, we can trace the gendering of the entrepreneurship discourse in its historical and cultural development. The way that society understands entrepreneurship has been influenced by those who have developed it as a theoretical concept. In the twentieth century the development of entrepreneurship theory was greatly influenced by Schumpeter's conceptualization of economic development (Schumpeter, 1934). His ideas on entrepreneurship and 'creative destruction' have been described as 'the fulcrum for an attempt to draw a large canvas setting out the forces that shaped Western culture' (Zassenhaus, 198:179). Sawyer (1952:9) writes of how Schumpeter 'invoked the influences of the drive to do, to win, to create, to found a dynasty, a private kingdom' and 'the will to conquer; the impulse to fight, to prove oneself superior to others, to succeed for the sake, not of the fruits of success but of success itself'. Gomez and Korine (2008:37) suggest that, for Schumpeter, 'the entrepreneur takes the place in modern society held in ancient society by the warrior'. This view is still prevalent in today, with television programs such as Dragons' Den and The Apprentice presenting entrepreneurship as combative, status driven and all-conquering, with humiliation and rejection being the 'price' of failure (Swail et al., 2013).

Contemporary thinkers continue to engage with these historically masculine-framed and gender-blind ideas of entrepreneurship, refining and developing present day understandings of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship and leading to arguments that entrepreneurship and enterprise are social constructions, co-opted and re-imagined to suit the perceived needs of a particular place and time (Ahl, 2004; Chell, 2008). However, it is also argued that such discursive constructions of the entrepreneur can 'confer significance on the "world-making" actions of men alone' (Fowler, 2005:5).

This gendering of the discursive space of entrepreneurship is not only related to specific definitions, functions and personalities of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. The fact that entrepreneurs are active participants in society (and therefore function in the public sphere rather than the domestic) places entrepreneurship in a historically masculinized context endured from the age of Enlightenment when "ideas about 'humanity' meant 'males' to the exclusion of women, and pronouncements on the 'human race' meant white Europeans to the exclusion of darker people" (Buechler, 2008:4). This masculinized normative context is also a world-wide phenomenon (Bosma & Levie, 2010) crystallizing around institutional and governmental approaches to the support of entrepreneurship and enterprise generally (Baughn et al., 2006). The historical context therefore continues to shape modern day perceptions of entrepreneurship. Combined with the visibility of today's highly successful (and seemingly exclusively male) entrepreneurs, the historically masculinized entrepreneur delineates the social reality of entrepreneurship and enterprise in such a way as to be unquestionable. It seems counter-intuitive, but historical concentration on the male entrepreneur creates a sense of gender-neutrality given that the male experience is traditionally positioned *as* the 'human experience' (Lewis, 2006). For this reason researchers such as Ahl (2004 & 2006), Carter and Marlow (2007) Elam (2008) and Ahl and Marlow (2012) suggest that there is a need to critically engage with the very concepts upon which entrepreneurship and enterprise are based; concepts that effectively normalize westernized, masculine typified behaviors as entrepreneurial (Ogbor, 2000) which, in an increasingly ethnically diverse and female dominated HE environment, is problematic.

Given its high status and the fact that the most visible and lauded entrepreneurs around the world are male, entrepreneurship is not only positioned as a masculinized activity but also as an aspirational and valorized activity (Ahl, 2006; Ogbor, 2000) and this is also evident in the self-employment literature (Georgellis & Wall, 2005). The language used in, for example, job advertisements, evidences the pervasiveness of gendered occupational stereotypes. Research has shown that the language used in advertisements can actively discourage female applicants, particularly where it is perceived as constructing the successful applicant for the role as masculine (Gaucher et al., 2011). Gaucher et al. (2011:109) suggest that, '…perceptions of belongingness (but not perceived skills) mediated the effect of gendered wording', highlighting that there is a need for applicants to feel accepted, rather than experienced or qualified, when applying for such roles. They conclude that gendered wording functions to maintain traditional gender divisions and that this has implications for gender parity within the job market. In light of this, we explore whether this may also be the case where gendered wording is evident in entrepreneurship education course descriptions.

Gender and Entrepreneurship Education

The experiences and perceptions of entrepreneurship, developed at university, are an important precursor to entrepreneurial intentions and activity. In the UK, self-employed women are more likely to have a degree than female employees (Brooksbank, 2006) and self-employed males (NCGE, 2006). However, across European HEIs, male graduates are twice as likely as their female counterparts to have set up a business within four years of graduation (Martínez et al., 2007). This gender disparity has not lessened over time and there are ongoing calls for more women to become entrepreneurs (European Commission, 2012).

With contestation around what entrepreneurship is (Pittaway & Cope 2007; Trivedi 2014) and with its tendency to privilege traditionally masculinized behaviors and attitudes, there is a

danger that, in seeking to encourage entrepreneurship, we are encouraging students to develop and internalize masculinized behaviours (Jones, 2014 & 2015). Indeed, business students may already *be* conditioned to see masculine language as the norm, compared to the general population (Malach-Pines and Schwartz, 2008), and this 'asymmetric gender social representation…hinders the acceptance of women as a social group.' (Fernandes and Cabral-Cardoso, 2003:77). For these reasons, Simpson (2006:183) suggests that we should feminize business schools through challenging 'hegemonic discourses of masculinity that underpin management education and set alternative orientations against this'.

Additionally, different types of EntEd course may attract particular students and incentivize them to become entrepreneurs to varying degrees. In examining EntEd in UK universities, Levie (1999) identified two main types of course; *about*-entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurship is studied as a 'social phenomenon' in a 'detached manner' (Laukkanen, 2000:27) and *for*-entrepreneurship, focused on 'what to do and how to make it happen' (Laukkanen, 2000:26). More recently, a third type *through*-entrepreneurship has been suggested as promoting 'personal involvement and learning through participation in entrepreneurial activities' (Heinonen & Hytti, 2010).

In constructing such different courses, educators arguably have an 'ideal' student in mind when writing course descriptions. Course descriptions also delineate learning outcomes and how student knowledge, behaviors and abilities will change as a result. Subsequently, we argue that course descriptions offer insights into educator constructions of the 'Fictive Student', the student to which the curriculum is addressed; Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that examples of 'ideal' students who take an educator's course merely confirm this fiction exists and perpetuate the continuation of these practices.

THE ROLE OF COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND HEIS

The course catalogue and individual course descriptions within it, are important documents for any university. For students, the course description is equivalent to a product declaration. In many cases the course description is the most comprehensive body of information available to students and are an important precursor to course choice (Wilhelm & Comegys, 2004). Indeed, an exploratory survey we conducted with Danish students found that, of 73 students surveyed, 72 (99%) used the course descriptions with 51 (70%) indicating they *only* used the course description to select their courses.

Course descriptions have some limitations as a dataset (Pittaway & Edwards, 2012). At many institutions they are cumbersome to revise with long approval processes (Liddy, 2012) and change slowly. However, they have been used to study course selection (Babad & Tayeb, 2003; DellaGioia, 2008; Wolf, 2009) and practices in EntEd (Pittaway & Edwards, 2012: Warhuus & Basaiawmoit, 2014). Despite the limitations, they are the only texts available where educators address their audience—the Fictive Student—and, in their own words, express an understanding of what entrepreneurship is and what the Fictive Entrepreneur is like *before* students' choose courses. Thus, in a previous study (Jones & Warhuus, 2017) we examined 86 course descriptions from HEIs in 21 countries. Our discourse analyses indicated that it is more common for educators to describe an *about*-course in gender-neutral terms and that course aims and learning outcomes are more generally academic. However, the masculinization of the entrepreneurship discipline is evident *through*-courses, where students engage directly with the entrepreneurial process. This might be linked with the supposed passivity of 'thinking' or learning *about* rather than actively 'doing' entrepreneurship. It may also be that, in order to emphasize the 'doing' rather than the 'thinking', more active than passive words are used, and

these are invariably positioned as masculine in many cultures. The masculine language also emphasized the intellectual and visionary capacities needed to be successful and the competitive environment in which these individualized activities take place. In light of this, we argue that an analysis based on course descriptions is an unobstructed way to achieve a focus on the role of the EntEd in reproducing or challenging traditionally gendered constructions of entrepreneurship.

METHODOLOGY

Based on our previous research we created a suite of course descriptions consisting of seven one-page documents. They were based primarily on masculine and feminine words and phrases identified in existing course descriptions and covered combinations of gendered language and course types as illustrated in Table 1.

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neutral**
About	3	4	5
For	1	2	
Through	7	6	

Table 1: Cours**e catalogue descriptions based on gender orientation and course type** Note: The numbers indicate the order in which the course descriptions were presented in the participant package provided to the students.

With the differences in our previous work, and the relationship between culture and gender in mind, there was a strong justification for carefully considering the study setting(s). Two considerations drove this process. First, we sought nations that were different and yet comparable and, second, we wanted nations and cultures where English was the first or second language and institutions where most or many courses were taught in English. We used Hofstede's (2006, 2001) studies and the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) to identify suitable nations. In this case we identified nations scoring differently on Hofstede's femininity-masculinity index[1], and with similar scores on the GLOBE gender egalitarianism index[z] As a result we chose Denmark (DK), and the United States (US). Within these nations we selected business students, because entrepreneurship is generally viewed as a business discipline and, thus, choosing an entrepreneurship course is likely to be viewed as a 'real' consideration.

We introduced participants to the data production session, without revealing the course type or gendered nature of our research. Any concerns and practical issues were addressed at this point. The participants were then given a 16-page package consisting of: a front page; a table of contents; a consent form; a survey of entrepreneurial experience and exposure; step-by-step instructions and the seven course descriptions; and, a four-question survey about the course selections they had just made. Participants were asked to read the course descriptions and were prompted to make a total of five choices, as follows: i) Between a feminine and masculine framed For-type course; ii). Between a feminine, a neutral and a masculine framed About-type course; iii).The participant was then told that the neutral-framed course in #2 would not be offered this semester and, if the neutral course was selected as preferred, the participant would have to choose between the masculine and the feminine framed courses instead; iv) Between a

[1] the degree to which a culture will be driven by competition and winner-take-all type success [high score] vs. [low score] the degree to which success can be measured as quality of life and standing out is less admirable

[z] the degree to which a culture minimizes gender inequality.

feminine and a masculine framed Through-type course; v) To state an overall preference by "deselecting" two of the three courses chosen in choice 1, 2 and 4, above.

During the selection process participants were asked to follow a Think-Aloud Protocol (TAP), where they recorded a 'voice memo' on a smartphone, and were asked to 'say anything that goes through your mind' as they were reading and deciding which courses to choose. In making their choices they were also asked to explain *why* they chose as they did and how *certain* they were that they had made the right decision.

Afterwards, the participant packages were collected and arrangements for transfer of the voice recordings were made. Following that, most of the students participated in focus group debrief sessions. Each focus group was facilitated by a researcher and audio recorded.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

We collected 50 student accounts and five focus group sessions. Analysis is ongoing and in the following, we present analyses based on 50 participant-packages (survey answers and five course selection choices), plus content analysis (of 20 transcribed TAPs) and discourse analyses (of 12 TAP recordings), presenting an equal number of randomly selected female and male DK and US students.

National differences

The US and Danish students are comparable in terms of age (average age is 22), major (business), and predominately male (80% of US students, 56% of DK students). This is broadly in line with the male/female ratio studying business courses in these nations (Amundsen, 2016; Zlomek, 2016). Relevant to this study may be differences in the students' work experience and exposure to parent's self-employment. For example, 84% of the DK students vs. 28% of the US students, had a part-time job, and 44% of DK cases vs. 64% US had at least one parent who was, or had previously been, self-employed.

Collectively, the 50 participants made 211 choices between course descriptions, with the gender distribution as indicated in Table 2.

	DK	**US**
Masculine	43%	43%
Feminine	44%	51%
Neutral	12%	6%

Table 2: Course selection by gender and nationality Note: the portion of Neutral choices is likely to be underrepresented as the option is available only in two of the five choices made (choice 2 and 5).

Although the proportion of female students is lower in the US cohort, US students prefer feminine-framed descriptions more often than DK students, and DK students prefer the masculine courses about one and a half times more often than US students. This is surprising, given the more feminine Danish culture. We presume that there are a number of factors involved. First, there are other cultural differences, such as power distance (DK/US: 18/40), uncertainty avoidance (DK/US 23/46), and the GLOBE assertiveness index (DK/US 3.6/4.4). These differences may be more pronounced in educational settings than in the business settings. where most national culture data originates. The more in-depth TAP suggests US students

deliberately looked for clues about both *what* and *how* to learn that suggested fewer surprises. They were also far more sensitive to language perceived as intimidating.

In the fifth and final choice, each student was asked to state an overall course preference. Forty-eight answered this question and here the overall picture, in Table 2, was confirmed; the final choice for a feminine-framed course was DK 38% vs US 58% and none of the US students had the neutral option as their final choice. Regarding course type, an interesting trend is observed in Table 3.

	DK	**US**
About	25%	8%
For	13%	33%
Through	63%	58%

Table 3: Final course selection by course type and nationality

The Danish students were more open to taking an *about*-course than the US ones, and less interested in acquiring skills or experiences of *being* an entrepreneur. Indeed, while US students in focus groups shared the view of 'practical' as positive, a DK student said the reason for deselecting the *through*-course is that he 'would like a little bit more academic approach' and while at the university, he wanted to obtain 'solid knowledge'.

Male/Female differences

By regrouping the participants by sex rather than nationality (Table 4), we explored how male and female students responded to gendered course descriptions.

	Total choices 1-4		***Final*** choice 5	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Masculine	40%	45%	40%	45%
Feminine	51%	46%	40%	52%
Neutral	9%	9%	20%	3%

Table 4: Course selection by student sex and course description gender. Note: the portion of Neutral choices in 'Total choices made' is likely to be underrepresented as the option only is available in two of the five choices made (choice 2 and 5).

There appears to be a pattern where female students identify more readily with the neutral- and feminine-framed description than the masculine. However, the high proportion of males choosing feminine-framed courses (46% initially and 52% in their overall final choice) suggests that this is nuanced and biological sex and gender should not be conflated. This also suggests that both males and females can find feminine-phrased course descriptions more attractive (or perhaps be alienated by masculine language—see TAP analysis below). Using overtly masculinized language could therefore, repel students who *are* interested in entrepreneurship and *would* consider choosing a course, but who are more sensitive to the tacit messages of competition, individualism and professor 'power' implied by such language. Finally, there are indications that male students find it difficult to distinguish between neutral and masculine language when offered a choice. The female students appear more sensitive to the nuances of gendered language, more often choosing the neutral option as their final choice. In terms of course type, the most preferred overall by both sexes, but in particular males (see Table 5) was *through* courses.

	Female	Male
About	31%	10%
For	31%	23%
Through	38%	68%

Table 5: Final course selection by student sex and course type

TAP spoken word analysis

Instead of first transcribing the 20 TAP recordings, we opted to retain the richness of the spoken word in the initial analysis. Together, we listened to 12 recordings and coded them for expressions that we found informative and relevant. In total, we coded 415 expressions in Nvivo and created a node for nearly all of them. We then explored the TAP recordings through these nodes in three different ways. First, we explored them for expressions about the course descriptions themselves. Because we were able to isolate these nodes and go back and listen to *how* the student made the statement, we were able to determine whether the statement was a positive or negative comment.

	Feminine	Masculine
Positive	Basic (no prior experience needed) -- ♂,DK,F Encouraging -- ♂,DK,F Focused -- ♂,US,F/T (US focus group) Fun -- ♂,DK,T Helpful -- ♂, US,T Inclusive -- ♂, US,T More advanced -- ♀,DK,F More involved -- ♂,DK,F More personal -- ♂,DK,F More supportive -- ♂,US,T More welcoming -- ♂,US,F Newer approach -- ♂,US,F No right answer -- ♂,US,T Not as technical -- ♂,US,F Not easier but nicer -- ♂,US,T Open -- ♀,US,T Participation (learn through) -- ♂,DK,A Practical -- ♂,US,T (US focus group) Relevant -- ♀,DK,T Speaks to me like a fellow student Writing to me -- ♂,US,A Relatable -- ♂,US,A Specific -- ♂,US,A	Action -- ♀,DK,T Ambitious -- ♂,DK,A Appealing -- ♂,DK,A Challenging -- ♂,US,A Compelling -- ♂,DK,F Concrete -- ♂,DK,A&F/♀,DK,A/♀,DK,T, Exciting -- ♀,DK,A Explicit, -- ♂,DK,F Hard work (= more perceived 'pay off' [learning] for the student) -- ♂,DK,A Higher level -- ♀,DK, F Leadership -- ♂,US,T More realistic -- ♀,DK,T More Professional -- ♀,DK,F/♀,DK,F Relevant -- ♂,DK,A Serious -- ♀,DK,F Strategic -- ♂,DK,F Successful -- ♂,DK,A Very structured -- ♂,US,A

	Feminine	Masculine
Negative	A bit 'lah lah' -- ♀,DK,T A discussion club -- ♂,DK,A A little strange (too personal) -- ♀,DK,F Boring -- ♂,US,A Fluffy -- ♂, DK, F Lacking strategy -- ♂,DK,F Less professional -- ♂,DK,F Lower level -- ♀,DK,T Misty -- ♂,US,A Not academic -- ♂,DK,A Not so impressed -- ♀,DK,T Not that relevant -- ♀,DK,T Softer, more cultural -- ♀,DK,A Too creative -- ♂,DK,A Too loose -- ♂,DK,A Too Soft -- ♀,DK,T Wordy -- ♂,US, A Very soft and social -- ♀,DK,T	A lot of work -- ♂,US,F/♂,US,A/♀,US,F Basic -- ♂,DK,A (too basic) Cold-hearted -- ♀,DK,F Daunting-- ♀,US,F Harsh -- ♀,US,T/♀,DK,T Headsy -- ♀,US,F Intimidating -- ♀,US,T No flexibility -- ♀,US,F One-sided -- ♀,US,F More Technical -- ♂,US,A&F/♀,US,F Strict -- ♂,US, T Super strategic -- ♀,US,F Too focused on start-up -- ♂,DK,T Too much and too intense -- ♀,US,T Very rigid -- ♀,US,F Way too crazy -- ♀,US,T Weird but fine -- ♀,DK,T Weirdly specific -- ♀,US,A

Table 6: Participant's positive and negative statements about selection of feminine and masculine framed courses

Note: ♀=female participant; ♂= male participant; US=United States participant; DK=Danish participant; A=About course description; F=For course description; T=Through course description.

We then went deeper, to analyze the context in which these expressions were used and re-listened to the statements. As an example of this process, we highlight below (Table 7) the way the words 'soft' and 'hard' were used by the participants.

HARD	SOFT
'Tight deadlines' … This class will be <u>hard work</u> (female student; not positive or negative but 'good to know')	Seems soft - 'Not the way I learn well'
'Enhance employability' is good because it is hard to find jobs (female student)	'Too soft' (about learning style) – it seems like learning only happens through discussions (active participation)
'hard work' will lead to significant pay-offs for the student (male student)	Softer – about the course in comparison to the other choices provided – more focus on cultural aspects
'hard work and persistence'…'That is me' (male student)	Soft – about the style of writing in the description, further elaborated on as 'not as concrete' implicitly in comparison to the account given in other descriptions.
'It sounds like a hard class' … 'But hard is not the same as dry' (male student)	

Table 7: Participant's use of the words 'hard' and 'soft'

Third, together we re-listened to all of the nodes, in a more convergent effort to thematically group the statements. During this process, we identified six groups in addition to the statements about course selection (see Table 8). Each node was placed in the group or groups to which the statement was thematically relevant, thus the total number of statements (603) is higher than the number of nodes (415).

Statement category	Number of statements
Statements about course description	166
Statements about entrepreneurship	18
Statements about 'real' world	21
Statements about the course	163
Statements about the professor	45
Statements about the student	120
Statements about course selection	73

Table 8: Thematic categories of TAP statements

Forced selection away from a neutral-framed description preference

In the TAP recordings, students commented that some of the course descriptions were similar and some found it difficult distinguishing them. Typically, these issues were related to comparisons of the neutral and the masculine-framed About-type course descriptions.

Thus, we set out to see if these statements were supported in any way by the choice patterns of all the participating students. As the reader may recall, in the methodology section, we outlined the five choices that each participant had to make during this session. The second choice was between a feminine, a neutral and a masculine-framed About-type course. The third choice involved those who had chosen the neutral course, being forced to choose between the masculine and the feminine-framed courses instead. Table 9 outlines the participant's choices.

Participants responding to Choice 2 (feminine, a neutral and a masculine framed About-type course)	
Masculine	17
Feminine	9
Neutral	12
Participants responding 'neutral' in Choice 2 (Then forced to choose between the masculine and the feminine framed courses instead)	
Masculine	10
Feminine	2

Table 9: Course selection by participants: Choice 2 and Choice 3 (see methodology section above)

Of the 12 students forced to choose another course, two selected a feminine course and ten a masculine one.

EMERGING THEMES

Although analysis is still ongoing, we have identified some emerging themes and insights. These crystallize around students' emotional responses to highly gendered language, the suggestion of a masculine 'norm' in student perceptions, the possibilities for feminized descriptions and the potential influence of power distance.

Emotional Responses to Gendered Language

Highly gendered language evokes an emotional response in both male and female students – in a way that neutral language does not. Examples of this can be seen above and in these reactions to a feminine-framed course description: US, Male: 'Ferguson more spoke to me, you know, as if a fellow student wrote it, and I liked that...it seems like a friendlier class.' DK, female: "I think it is a little bit strange that it says (quoting from description) "*My* hope is that you will develop". It is like a person is talking to you and that's strange...because *who* is talking to me in this?'. The emotional responses to the explicitly gendered language hinges on a sense of assertiveness and strictness in the masculine-framed courses and one of student-focus, support and openness in the feminine-framed descriptions. However, students respond to these perceptions in both negative *and* positive ways. For example, some equated strictness and assertiveness with clarity, certainty and a sense that they will be challenged, while others equated it with exclusion, aggression and constraint. Likewise, being student-focused, supportive and open was equated with a sense of flexibility, creativity, openness to new and diverse ideas, and positive, collaborative student-student and student-professor relationships by some. For others this evoked emotions linked to uncertainty about what they would learn, worries that the professor was not professional and awkwardness about being addressed so directly in the description. However, some students did appreciate the lack of gender 'noise' in the neutral description. Although all course descriptions were purposely kept to the same word count, one Danish female participant says: "it is very short and just cuts to the chase". Such comments support arguments by Kabba (2011) about using gender-neutral language for clarity and precision.

The 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'. This suggests that, when masculinity is the norm, neutral language may look the same to a member of the privileged group. This may, especially, be the case for males, who are socialized into masculinity. However, in a business school setting, this may also be the case for female students, who may have assimilated (relative to the general population) through attraction to business disciplines. Thus, the students in this study, might be less attuned to differences between, especially, masculine and neutral descriptions. Our findings show that even 'conditioned' senior business students have clear preferences but also that, when forced away from a neutral preference, they default to a masculine option. Further, when given an open choice between all three options (feminine, masculine and neutral) males deselect the neutral option, suggesting that masculine is the default for most of these students (Merritt & Kok, 1995). This suggests that environmental influences, in the ways that male and female students are socialized, may impact on their cognitive approach to deciphering the situational cues in gendered language. This far in our analysis, the female students seem more attuned to these nuances. This confirms the merits of exploring how *consciously* changing the language in course descriptions may encourage students, who respond more favorably to feminized language, to study entrepreneurship. It seems that male *and* female students, with a more masculinized outlook, might not even recognize the subtlety of the change in language. This also emphasizes that we should not conflate female with femininity and male with masculinity and that there may be more influences at play, such as different cultural and institutional factors.

The Possibility of Reframing Entrepreneurship Education as a Feminized or Gender-Neutral Activity

Although students do respond positively to highly masculinized course descriptions, we have shown it is possible to create a feminized course description for a *through*-type course. Moreover, students can find such reframing attractive. Indeed, there are early indications that students with a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship – gained through prior experience - and who also engage with extra curricula, entrepreneurial activities, actually find the feminine course description *more* appealing, compared to those with no 'real' experience. One explanation for this could be that students who have experienced entrepreneurship may have a broader understanding of the complexities it entails, such as collaboration, sharing of ideas or team work. Subsequently, they may not be attracted by more mainstream, masculinized language emphasizing individualism and competition. Likewise, those students who either had no parental role models - or who *only* had parental role models - but had no direct experience of entrepreneurship and who had not engaged in extra-curricular entrepreneurial activities, were attracted to masculinized descriptions. This suggests that specific types of students, with specific backgrounds and experience of entrepreneurship are attracted to, or alienated by, aspects of gendered language. Although we need to investigate this across the whole cohort, it does seem that something as simple as a shift in the language used can attract different student cohorts, irrespective of their biological sex. If educators and institutions are judged by those students who are more likely to go on to entrepreneurial success, there is an argument for using *highly* feminized language, in order to attract those with greater interest, experience, understanding and motivation.

A Question of Power?

It appears that, for some students - particularly the Danish ones, who are more used to a professor-student relationship with low power distance – the further breaking down of this distance (through the use of feminine language) brings the professor far too close. The US students, however, seem wary of a professor who wields power, valuing one who is concerned about them, wants them to do well, and will *help* them to do well, rather than one who will "automatically fail" them if they do not conform to the professor's demands. It does seem that, as Gaucher et al. (2011) suggest, the language might be mediated by whether students feel they will be accepted and 'belong' in these contexts. Perhaps this is why more US male students responded positively to feminine course descriptions, because they could see that they would 'fit in' and suited their learning style. Likewise, the female students who responded negatively to the feminine descriptions were put off by the suggested supportive, collaborative environment, as it did not fit their perceptions of either entrepreneurship or themselves as business students. However, it is worth noting that, ultimately, the majority of female students opted for a feminine course description as their final choice and the majority of male students opted for a masculine one.

The Emergence of a New Fictive Character

Throughout student TAP recordings many commented on their opinion of the professor that was constructed within the course descriptions. Comments such as this US, female, about a masculine framed description: ' "thinking logically" all these different…it just sounds like <u>not</u> an environment that I would learn in very well. I would just be too concerned about, I-don't-know, getting good grades'; and this DK, male, about a feminine course: 'it just sounds like a discussion club [reading on] yeah, it just sounds like a lot of discussions about ideas and not much learning'; a DK, female, about a feminine course: 'It's a bit more soft and that is not my…eh, preferred way, so it sounds like it is a bit like it is on a lower lever.' point to students

attempts to understand the learning environment and the professor-student relationship created by the professor and this was often positioned in relation to their role as student. For example one student said: "hard work and persistence" I like that. That is me.' indicating that students are working out the professor's preferred relationship with their students and whether that appealed to them. US students responded positively to language that broke down the barriers between professor and student: 'My hope is that you will develop a deep understanding and appreciation for the work done by entrepreneurs' As mentioned above, a US, male student liked that it was 'as if a fellow student had written it' and along with others perceived a student focused and supportive environment. However, it was interesting that some Danish students felt uncomfortable with this 'speaking-directly-to-me' style of writing. We therefore argue that entrepreneurship course descriptions (and perhaps course descriptions more generally) involve more than just the construction of the Fictive Student by the professor. In responding to the language used in course descriptions it seems that students are sensitive to the Fictive Professor constructed in the text and how this suggests a particular learning environment and professor-student relationship. It seems therefore that, for students, the educator is somehow revealed through use of language in the course descriptions. It is conceivable that course descriptions more generally might also have this role; regardless of whether this is the result of conscious effort on behalf of the course's author.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is too early in the analysis process to come to firm conclusions but the emerging themes highlight some surprising and fascinating areas for on-going investigation and clarification. That said, we have identified some patterns and nuances in student responses, which are likely to resonate as our research progresses.

Ultimately, we envisage this research will offer both theoretical and practical contributions, not only for EntEd but also for higher education more generally. It does seem that situational cues, suggested by the gendered language in course descriptions, *do* sensitize students to the type of student who will benefit from and do well on these courses. As educators we may therefore, 'filter out' some potentially enthusiastic and engaged students, who do aspire to entrepreneurship, but who do not even enter our classrooms because they fall at the 'first hurdle' of course selection. This also suggests that educators should consider alternative ways of framing entrepreneurship courses and that it is indeed possible, and perhaps advisable, to find approaches that do not privilege masculinity and risk alienating both male and female students. Doing so would also help educators to reflect on how their own attitudes and beliefs about entrepreneurship, and the role of EntEd, are reflected in their course descriptions and how the learning environment they promote might be perceived by students as a result. It may also be possible to extend this reflection to include how we teach and write textbooks on entrepreneurship.

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