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Gendered Discourses of Entrepreneurship in UK Higher Education: The Fictive Entrepreneur and the Fictive Student

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Introduction

This article challenges contemporary notions of entrepreneurship education policy critically evaluating which students are most likely to benefit from Higher Education (HE) entrepreneurship education. The underpinning questions informing this discussion explore, 'how entrepreneurs and students are positioned in policy and theory and what are the implications of such for female students in respect of their entrepreneurial ambitions?' In so doing, it extends the concept of the 'fictive student' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994) to explore the suggested links between this fictive student and the 'fictive entrepreneur' as constructed in policy and research. Through critical discourse analysis, it is suggested that fictive subjects are created and embedded through and within entrepreneurship discourses. This standardises thinking in the field and has the potential to create the conditions that are named (Foucault, 1977) as identity

and power are manipulated through discursive processes (Anderson and Warren, 2011). In exploring the socio-cultural context of entrepreneurship in the UK, it argues that the social reality of entrepreneurship reproduced in UK policy and HE practices is linked to the masculinised theoretical and political foundations of entrepreneurship education and that this has the potential to impact on micro-level practices in HE. The conceptual linkage between macro-level entrepreneurship discourses and their potential micro-level effects is currently under-researched (Watson, 2009); this masks how discourse structures knowledge and social practice to create real world consequences (Sunderland, 2004; New, 2004).

Enterprise in HE has been on the political agenda since the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) launched the EHE initiative the 1980s, aimed at creating an 'enterprise culture' (Ball, 2006). Since that time, UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have increasingly been tasked with preparing graduates for employment (Mackney, 1995). However, a focus on meeting employer needs has developed to include an emphasis on equipping graduates to become 'entrepreneurial' (Brown, 2004; Armstrong, 2005a) with a view to creating innovative and high-growth graduate businesses (Galloway and Brown, 2002; Universities UK, 2002). In this respect, policy is a driver for the introduction of entrepreneurship throughout the HE curriculum, to support graduate careers and economic growth. However, the discourses of entrepreneurship have developed from a masculinised discursive space, being based on a tradition of male scholars researching male entrepreneurs, which effectively positions entrepreneurship as an activity linked to socially constructed masculinised norms (Marlow, 2002; Ahl, 2004; Bruni *et al*, 2005; Lewis, 2006; Marlow *et al* 2009). The number of female undergraduates is increasing – both in the UK and internationally - but, although there has been a six-fold increase in graduate self-employment since 1996 (Broad, 2007), male graduates are still more likely than their female counterparts to pursue entrepreneurship (Connolly *et al*, 2003; Martinez, *et al* 2007; Harding, 2007). Some argue that differences in entrepreneurial aspiration are linked to self-efficacy (Zimmerman *et al*, 1992; Zimmerman, 1995; McGee *et al*, 2009) and that a lack of appropriate role models is reflected in the perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy

of undergraduates (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Wilson *et al*, 2007). Whilst acknowledging these arguments, which focus on the micro-level of individual perception and intentionality, this paper takes a macro-level perspective to explore the social reality of the UK policy context and how this positions entrepreneurs and students through the effects of discourse and organisational structure.

Following this introduction, the article discusses gender as a social construction and reviews related literature, outlining how entrepreneurs and students have traditionally been constructed and the gendered implications of this in the context of HE. It goes on to present the research methodology, with a brief discussion of the discourse analysis approach taken. The findings are then described and followed by a discussion of the gendered implications of the dominant discourses identified. Finally, the limitations of the research are discussed and conclusions drawn.

The social construction of gender

Gender refers to socially produced distinctions between men and women and the related social roles ascribed to men and women rather than a set of immutable characteristics linked to biological sex (Acker, 1994; Bradley, 2007). At the macro-level, gender represents a social category or class disposition (Moi, 1999; Swann, 2002; Ekert and McConnel-Ginet, 2003) which is used to structure societal institutions and organisational practices (Skeggs, 1997). At the micro-level, gender is a contextualised performance (Butler 1990; Ahl, 2004), being 'part of the routine, ongoing work of everyday, mundane interaction' (Weatherall, 2002 p.102). Much entrepreneurship research assumes that gender (masculinity and femininity) is a stable attribute of humans and can be applied uncritically to men and women (Nelson and Duffy, 2011). Gendered labels and assumptions interact with institutional contexts generating a variety of enabling and constraining conditions, with the result that gender is multidimensional (Lansky,

2000); acting as a form of symbolic capital that supports and reinforces status (Bourdieu, 1986; Windle, 2009) and as a collective form of regulation (Skeggs, 2004).

Bruni *et al* (2005, p.423) suggest that the performance of gender and entrepreneurship requires the 'constant shuttling between different and dichotomous symbolic spaces' such as those related to age, ethnicity and class. The acknowledgement of this intersectionality militates against treating gender as a mutually exclusive category for analysis (Crenshaw, 1989), helping us to recognise and highlight the multiple dimensions and positions of women (after Crenshaw, 1991) which are often rendered invisible in enterprise and education policy (Rouse and Kitching, 2006). This foregrounds social position as relational and makes visible the 'multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it ' (Pheonix and Pattynama, 2006 p.187) and vary according to social context. Intersectionality is increasingly drawn upon in feminist research (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Shields, 2008), allowing us to move away from generic, essentialist conceptualisations of gender towards research that recognises the distinctiveness of positioning which can lead to 'multiple inequalities' (Verloo, 2006).

In analysing the positioning of subjects within a particular social context, this paper draws on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1977) which emphasises: the interplay of *habitus*, or the socially constructed self (Lawler, 2004); *capital*, in the form of resources which confer 'power, status or authority on their holders' (Maton, 2004a p.37); and *field*, or the social setting in which habitus and capital operate (in this case, the field of HE). The forms of capital identified by Bourdieu (1986) are economic, social, cultural (including education) and symbolic (including resources associated with masculinity and femininity). These forms of capital provide a set of resources that individuals can draw upon in order to enhance and maintain their position in society and a set of expected behaviours and norms which men and women are encouraged to reproduce as they 'do' gender in particular contexts (Bourdieu, 1998). Socially constructed masculine and feminine typified characteristics can be appropriated and performed by anyone but there are differing rewards and punishments for those who 'cross' gendered boundaries as 'social

responses reserve rewards for specific behaviour from specific populations' (Godwyn and Stoddard, 2011 p.116).

The making of the fictive student

In their writing on academic discourse, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990,1994) outline the symbolic power and positions at play between educator and student using the notion of the 'fictive student'. This represents the student to which the curriculum is addressed; the student-in-the-head of the educator (after Holland *et al*, 1998). As such, conceptualisations of the student and the entrepreneur, upon which policy-makers and educators draw, are fictive constructions, reproduced through the dominant discourses of entrepreneurship used in policy, practice and theory. Dominant discourses are those that indicate institutionalised and taken-for-granted ways of thinking, being socially accepted and having precedence over other discourses (Foucault, 1981). These discourses have the power to shape social reality and to produce the conditions that they name (Foucault, 1977) and through repetition and reproduction these discourses have created arbitrary, fictive settlements around the suggested skills, behaviours and abilities of entrepreneurs and HE students

Much research on fictive student constructions in education focuses on the concept of 'fictive kinship' as a 'cultural symbol of collective identity' (after Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 2) and it is often used to explore ethnicity and education (Fordham, 1991; Foster, 2005; Arendt, 2006; Millane, 2010). This kinship is described as fictive because 'there is no real reason for the assignment of certain educational attitudes and endeavours as 'not Black.'' (Arendt, 2006 p.8). There is also no real reason to assign certain behaviours as 'not feminine', only that these have been socially constructed over time and now appear to be settled and, therefore, unquestionable. Although Fordham and Ogbu (1986, p.2) suggest that fictive kinship can have positive outcomes that 'invert negative stereotypes and assumptions' this paper argues that, in HE entrepreneurship education, collective notions about the similarity of women and

entrepreneurs to each other has *negative* outcomes for female students, linked to their positioning in the 'devalued sphere of the feminine' (Marlow and Patton, 2005 p.721) and entrepreneurs' positioning in the symbolically privileged sphere of the masculine (Ahl, 2002; Lewis, 2006).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1994, p.17) suggest that '(Academics) are able to justify their disdain for the real student since only the fictive student deserves their respect, and a handful of 'gifted students'...prove the fiction exists'. These fictive subject positionings make it easier for a young, white, middle-class male student to be recognised as a 'gifted' student because 'the characteristics of his position sit most snugly with his other subject positions' (Grant, 1997 p.105). This is linked to conceptualisations of the fictive entrepreneur – the ideal which is presented in the classroom - and which only the handful of gifted, fictive students are able to achieve. Bourdieu (1991 p. 166) argues that the dominant discourses in any field utilise symbolic power in the form of symbolic capital and collective notions of habitus to construct reality and that this makes it 'possible for there to be a consensus on the meaning of the social world, a *consensus* that contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order'.

Education's impact on the gendered segregation of aspirations is well documented (Gaskell, 1992; Arnot *et al*, 1999; Reay, 2001; Hayes, 2002; Reay *et al,* 2005) and how it acts as a barrier for women to move into historically male-dominated roles with higher earning potential (Charles and Bradley, 2002; Ayalon, 2003) and this has proved resistant to change since the 1960s (Bradley, 2000). Gendered segregation within HE also results in a hierarchy of disciplines where '...mathematics, technology and science are better choices than humanities and social sciences' (Ayalon, 2003 p.277). In this way subject areas are gendered, with technical or 'hard' science fields positioned as masculine and areas such as health-care and the arts positioned as feminine (Charles and Bradley, 2002). Sayer (2005) argues that forms of capital tend to be closely related for men but are less so for women. This leads to asymmetry of status making it

more difficult for female students to convert the symbolic and cultural capital of higher education into the economic capital of a high status, highly paid career (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). HE discipline therefore, has the potential to accumulate masculine privilege (or symbolic capital) linked to taken-for-granted, socially constructed and fictive notions of the entrepreneur.

The making of the fictive entrepreneur

Although a seemingly modern concept, entrepreneurship theory is rooted in ideas developed over 300 years ago by Cantillon and Say (Swedberg, 2000), with a masculinised-bias suggested by the long line of male thinkers who have contributed to the development of entrepreneurship theory (Jones, 2008). In this way, early formulations of entrepreneurship theory positioned entrepreneurs as outstanding individuals and a sense of high status has increasingly been accorded to these special people. Higher status roles or more sought after positions are often in traditionally male-dominated professions (Bourdieu, 1998) and this is reflected in the current asymmetry of men and women who are recognised as entrepreneurs.

In the twentieth century entrepreneurship theory was greatly influenced by Schumpeter (1934) for whom, 'the entrepreneur takes the place in modern society held in ancient society by the warrior' (Gomez and Korine, 2008 p. 37). Godwyn and Stoddard (2011, p.106) suggest that such visions of the fictive entrepreneur reward gendered characteristics and use imagery typically associated with masculinity. This combative, status driven and all-conquering entrepreneur is still prevalent in the contemporary business culture which continues to engage with these historically masculine-framed ideas of entrepreneurship, refining and developing present day understandings of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship and leading to arguments that the contemporary demotic vision of the entrepreneur is a social construction (Ahl, 2002; Chell, 2008; Anderson *et al*, 2009).

Although no universally agreed definition of the entrepreneur or entrepreneurship has emerged from this long history of development and debate, the concentration of male commentators within an exclusively male discursive space has emphasised certain forms of masculinity (which, through essentialist, gendered social constructions are linked to males) and the discursive fit between masculinity and entrepreneurship. This perpetuates traditional constructions of the fictive entrepreneur focused on the 'heroic male' – fighting against the odds; 'the maverick' – who does things differently and breaks the rules; and the 'self-made man', pulling himself up the social ladder against the odds of his poor educational and/or fiscal background (Jones 2011). Such masculinised constructions of the entrepreneur underpin the suggested skills, abilities and behaviours that HE entrepreneurship and enterprise education seeks to develop (Jones, 2011). The cultural arbitrary has therefore, historically legitimised the interests of white, Western males as a dominant group (Ogbor, 2000) and this is potentially difficult for female students to challenge (Reay, 2001).

Methodology

This paper explores the social reality of the field of HE entrepreneurship education, how this social reality is mediated through policy and research discourses and how these impact on the positioning of female undergraduates as potential entrepreneurs. It draws upon a realist ontology in accepting that there *is* a reality that exists outside of our experience or knowledge and that this reality consists of structures and mechanisms (including discourses) which, although we may not be aware of them or could be said to have knowledge of them, can and do inform individual and institutional practices. A feminist epistemology is also employed, in the acceptance of the social construction of taken-for-granted, dualistic and essentialist notions of gender. Although there is debate about the compatibility of realism and social constructionism (Tsoukas, 2000; Nightingale and Cromby, 2002), Ahl (2004, p.21) argues that drawing on both in research is entirely reasonable, because 'social constructionism… is an epistemology, not ontology and although it suggests that that there is no way to get objective knowledge about the world, independent of the observer, it does not claim that a world independent from our

observation does not exist'. It also draws upon Bourdieu's notions of subject positions as relational and dependent upon the symbolic links between language and collective positioning and how these affect the capital that certain groups can accrue and transform in particular contexts. This is a critical approach, exploring ideas of power and legitimation within HE entrepreneurship education agendas; acknowledging that 'education is one of the key sites for the...inequitable distribution of material assets' (Maclure, 2003, p.187).

Sample

In order to explore dominant discourses that drive the development of HE entrepreneurship education a set of policy and policy-related documents were identified for analysis. This was a purposive (Marshall, 1996) and, as this is a rapidly changing area, no document older than 2002 was analysed. In 2002 *The Davies Review* was published which repositioned enterprise and entrepreneurship in HE and acted as the impetus for the establishment of the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (which has since become the National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education). Documents that focused on key areas of policy and research were purposefully identified and search keywords included: student enterprise; enterprise; entrepreneurship; graduate enterprise; graduate entrepreneurship and HE. Analysis of grey literature (such as policy reports) acknowledges the many nested and vested interests and agendas at play in the wider field of influence on HE, recognising that practices in this field are strongly influenced by political and economic imperatives (Armstrong, 2005). For a list of documents analysed see table 1.

Table 1 about here

Analysis

Discourse analysis of the documents was undertaken (after Fairclough, 1989, 1993, 2003 and Sunderland, 2004), using Brine's (2008) three-stage, ten-step analytical approach (see Table 2.). The documents were scrutinised for themes and arguments linked to rationales for entrepreneurship education in HE and who might benefit, noting the subjects in each text e.g. students, entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship educators, people from ethnic minorities, etc. and their positioning relative to each other and to the wider political and theoretical debates. The language used to describe and delineate particular groups (including imagery and metaphor) was also analysed, as was the number of times that particular groups were mentioned in documents. This represents a corpus based approach which combines quantitative processes, such as frequency information, and functional, qualitative, interpretation with the ultimate aim of 'uncovering ideologies and evidence for disadvantage' (Baker, 2006 p.5).

Table 2 about here.

Dominant discourses identified

Several discourses emerged from the analysis providing insight into the 'unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas' (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 389) that drive the HE entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education agenda in the UK and the European Union. These have the potential to shape the social reality of the wider field, constructing and reproducing uncontested fictive settlements around 'the entrepreneur' and 'the student'. These settlements contribute to, and define, power relations that legitimise particular ways of thinking and being linked to these fictive subjects.

The fictive entrepreneur as homogeneous: the entrepreneurial mindset

Entrepreneurs are presented as a group throughout the documents and rarely referred to in the singular, positioning them as homogeneous, with similar characteristics and with a similar 'entrepreneurial mindset'. This suggests there is a right way of *being* an entrepreneur and, as

problematised earlier, this has traditionally been linked with white, Western, masculine-typified behaviours and abilities. This is emphasised by suggestions that women and those from ethnic minorities need support to develop this mindset as they are less likely to have developed these particular ways of being, requiring extra help to change their attitudes to entrepreneurship (BERR, 2008). All students have to inculcate these suggested entrepreneurial behaviours in order to have the right frame of mind for success. Consequently, there are assertions of certainty around the skills and knowledge required to be entrepreneurial that are reproduced in uncritical and ahistorical ways. This ignores wider debates around the instability and still developing definitions and approaches to entrepreneurship and enterprise and its teaching and learning.

The required entrepreneurial skills, abilities and knowledge are clearly delineated in Gibb's Benchmarking Template of Potential Key Outcomes (2005, pp. 11-12) which is used in Botham and Mason's 2007 report and in Herrmann's 2008 report. The metaphor of the 'entrepreneurial mindset' resonates throughout these documents, highlighting the acceptance of this discourse and its reproduction in the wider field (this term having first appeared in the title of the 2004 EC document). This entrepreneurial mindset, and the allied metaphor of the 'entrepreneurial life-world', suggests an acceptance of psychological and trait-based ideas of entrepreneurship. This emphasises agency and takes little account of the environment in which entrepreneurship occurs or the way that institutions and societal structures may impact on an individual's ability to develop and apply this entrepreneurial mindset. Repeated talk of an entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial life-world also suggests the construction of an entrepreneurial habitus or set of entrepreneurial dispositions and related capital. This provides entrepreneurial legitimacy (De Clercq and Voronov, 2009) to white, Western males as they are positioned as more able to transform the symbolic capital of their education, ethnicity and masculinity into the economic and cultural capital inherent in being collectively positioned as entrepreneurial. A concentration on developing entrepreneurial mindsets also ignores arguments that entrepreneurial traits, abilities and behaviours may have developed *after* embarking on entrepreneurial activities,

being an outcome rather than a precursor of entrepreneurial endeavour (Carter, *et al* 2003; Chell, 2008). If 'reality is constructed by means of repetition' (Ahl 2004, p.8) then this phrase, which appears in eight of the documents - with a further two documents echoing it in phrases such as 'entrepreneurially-minded' (BERR, 2008) and 'entrepreneurial cast of mind' (Moreland,2006) - has a clear impact on the suggested social reality of entrepreneurship.

The fictive entrepreneur as expert

These documents privilege the knowledge of visible and successful entrepreneurs over students and educators and promote the inculcation of this knowledge as the primary aim of entrepreneurship education (Gibb, 2005; Moreland, 2006; Herrmann, 2008; Volkmann *et al*, 2009). Given that visible and successful entrepreneurs are often positioned as uninterested in education or uneducated (Business Zone, 2007) this privileges their practical or embodied knowledge over academic knowledge, suggesting that entrepreneurship *cannot* be learnt but is an innate behaviour. Entrepreneurs and other external experts are positioned as *more* important than educators, with educators rarely appearing as highly visible subjects. Where educators *are* specifically mentioned they are deficient, lack motivation and need extra training to improve their skills and knowledge (EC, 2006, p. 8). In line with the emphasis on external stakeholders, much talk about educators focuses on their engagement with businesses and how they involve business people in teaching (EC 2006, p. 12), privileging the role of educators *other* than HEI staff such as 'practitioners and entrepreneurs' (EC 2007, p. 1). This emphasises the multiplicity of stakeholders and external influences on HE entrepreneurship education with 'mentoring and coaching from people with business experience' suggested as a basic element in all entrepreneurship training (EC 2007, p. 4), de-emphasising the role of educators. A lack of fit is suggested between the fields of business and HE, with HE educators positioned as not speaking or understanding the language of entrepreneurship and suggestions that they lack direct experience of enterprise and/or entrepreneurship because they work in academia. This constructs a dualistic sense of culture clash between academic and vocational approaches in both entrepreneurship and HE policy, suggesting an either/or approach that privileges the

practical/vocational and de-emphasises academic/theoretical knowledge. It also creates an unacknowledged tension which educators and HEIs have to negotiate, namely that entrepreneurship education is being 'taught' in an academic environment that policy-makers and highly acclaimed and visible entrepreneurs (such as Alan Sugar and Richard Branson) suggest is unsuitable for developing the behaviours and attitudes that entrepreneurs have developed *outside* formal education.

The fictive student as 'not-knowing'

Undergraduates are positioned as having little experience of, or knowledge about, entrepreneurship and enterprise on their entry to university, something that Collins *et al* (2004) dispute in their research with first year students. Indeed, throughout the documents, students are positioned as deficient and 'not-knowing', lacking in the skills and knowledge of business and business ownership, with suggestions that this is a major barrier to graduate entrepreneurship. This leads to calls, highlighted earlier, to help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset and to appreciate the life-world of the entrepreneur (Gibb, 2005). The fact that the benchmark against which these groups are being judged is contestable and unstable is not acknowledged. Likewise the arbitrary and historically socially constructed nature of these concepts is not considered and there is an air of certainty when advocating entrepreneurial mindsets which belies this contestation. The emphasis on helping and encouraging students to appreciate the life-world of entrepreneurs further emphasises the 'deficient student', highlighting the lack of importance accorded to the student life-world. This has potential negative impacts on HE entrepreneurship education and can 'render students invisible; ignoring the way that the (student) sees the world ' (Grenfell 2004, p.78).

A focus on the entrepreneurial mindset emphasises the delineation and development of an entrepreneurial habitus in students whilst positioning students as currently not having the *right* mindset required to be entrepreneurial. There is agreement, in the wider literature, that entrepreneurship *can* be learned and developed (Carter *et al*, 2003; Kuratko, 2005; Greene and

Rice, 2007), that it is not an innate, individual capability (Ahl, 2002; Chell, 2008) and that entrepreneurship education can influence student attitudes towards their chances of entrepreneurial success (Chowdhury and Endres, 2005, Gupta *et al*, 2009). However, the insistence on developing an entrepreneurial mindset implies a belief that all entrepreneurs have the 'same' mindset and that this is measurable, desirable and achievable for *all* students.

The fictive female student as the wrong kind of knower

The non-negotiable imperative of developing an entrepreneurial culture, with its indicative and prescribed entrepreneurial mindset, leads to deficiency discourses linked to particular groups. Women are positioned as needing extra help and support, because they are the 'wrong kind of knower' (Maton, 2004b) and need to be instilled with 'confidence, skills and knowledge... and to increase their understanding of how they could grow their businesses.' (BERR, 2008 p.47). This suggests women do not understand the opportunities which entrepreneurship might offer and do not have the necessary confidence or knowledge of their male counterparts and is emphasised by the normalisation of the white male as the entrepreneur in documents and the lack of mention of white males or men as a group (except as benchmarks for the under-performance of women and those from an ethnic minority). Women and people from ethnic minorities are also seen as discrete groups, effectively rendering women, ethnic minority students invisible.

Women are positioned as passive, with things being *done* to them in order to make them more entrepreneurial (BERR, 2008, Herrmann, 2008; Volkmann *et al*, 2009) - echoing Fairclough's ideas about women's representation not as 'agents of action' but as 'goals of action' (Fairclough, 1993 p. 181). Indeed in the BERR document (2008, p.10) women are problematised as a group as they have the 'lowest aspirations and the most reservations about entrepreneurship' and 'on measures of enterprise culture, women score consistently lower than men'. In addressing this lack of aspiration there is an emphasis on how women can be improved or persuaded through training and support. The BERR document makes a commitment to ensure 'that the progress

we have made with young people feeds through to other sections of society, particularly girls and women.' (p.35) suggesting that by 'young people' the authors actually mean young white men. This also supposes that white men have this confidence, knowledge and understanding 'naturally', *without* support and that white men are somehow better at developing knowledge and confidence Again, this ignores contestations around the socially constructed, gendered and culturally constrained access to resources symbolically linked to white, Western masculinity and the asymmetry of their conversion into high status roles and economic capital.

Deficiency discourses suggest that students as a whole, and women in particular, need to change in order to be considered enterprising or capable of entrepreneurial success. There is little discussion regarding how representations of entrepreneurship may influence perceptions or act as barriers other than an acknowledgement of irresponsible entrepreneurship as a perceptual barrier. While the EC and BERR documents do acknowledge social constraints - such as lack of networks or access to finance - as barriers which might impinge on women's business ownership, there is a general consensus that if women became more skilled and developed the prescribed entrepreneurial behaviours then these barriers would automatically be overcome.

Discussion

The discourses identified effectively construct a fictive entrepreneur and student that standardises thinking around the rationale for entrepreneurship education in HE. In portraying fictive, taken-for-granted and pervasive subjects, these discourses combine to bring HE practices into line and create the conditions that they name. This constrains possibilities for students who do not accept or adapt to them and rewards students who *do* develop a sense of kinship with the fictive entrepreneur. Bourdieu's theory of practice shows how agency and structure are implicit in each other and play out differently in the social structure of particular fields rather than being dualistically set in opposition or one having automatic precedence over

the other - a form of 'regulated improvisation' (Bourdieu, 1977 p. 78). Teaching-learning interactions (based on the interpretation and operationalisation of education policy imperatives) frame the regulated rules of the game i.e. what forms of capital and habitus are valued, supported and can be exchanged by whom within HE and the wider field of entrepreneurship. Likewise, the wider field is driven by policy that positions the fictive, homogeneous and gender-neutral student (and women and ethnic minorities) as not-knowing; contradicting and masking the student life-world and privileging the fictive entrepreneur over the real and knowing student. When these discourses combine, this positions white female students as doubly deficient, and ethnic minority, female students as triply deficient. This highlights a need for a less dualistic approach to policy and research, emphasising a both/and conceptualisation of agency and structure rather than an either/or approach which effectively confines those who do not already have - or fail to develop – an entrepreneurial mindset to failure or to lesser modes of entrepreneurship (in an economic and symbolic sense) such as social or lifestyle entrepreneurship. These discourses also combine to emphasise a lack of fit between the habitus and forms of capital that female students, generally, bring to, and accrue within, the field of HE and the habitus and capital of the successful, fictive entrepreneur. This implies a gendering of entrepreneurial habitus and capital which belies the supposed gender-neutrality of much HE education policy and challenges the suggested meritocratic principles of entrepreneurship education as a form of activity that all students can and should benefit from (EC, 2008).

The dominant fictive templates of the entrepreneur, and of the student who will benefit from entrepreneurship education, are more accessible to white, male students who are positioned as naturally embodying the desired behaviours and abilities through the symbolically powerful fictive kinship implied by the traditional linking of entrepreneurship and masculinity. The inclusion of entrepreneurship education within a HE discipline therefore has symbolic repercussions and these are potentially more powerful for students in disciplines positioned as masculine or feminine, being linked with the assumed natural abilities inherent in collectively

constructed gendered behaviours and forms of capital. This represents an area of gender tension, highlighting the complexities and struggles of the social space of HE. The uncritical reproduction of these standardised ways of thinking can inform how student success is framed, based upon their individually/and or collectively perceived fit with the fictive entrepreneur and the fictive student. Female students (and male students who do not accept this form of masculinity) can potentially struggle to position themselves within the gendered discourses at play as they try to negotiate symbolic representations of the fictive entrepreneur and the fictive student that delineate who benefits from entrepreneurship education and ultimately succeeds as an entrepreneur. The decision by certain students *not* to accept this fictive template and to choose *other* ways of being suggests a form of resistance, within the constrained conditions created by and embedded within the dominant discourses of entrepreneurship. There is, however, a danger that students who do not accept or reflect mainstream dominant discourses are positioned as naturally deficient and in need of persuasion and extra support. This can potentially justify arguments for *stronger* persuasion and *greater* support which further strengthen the economic and political legitimacy of these symbolically violent fictive subjects. This is, therefore, a more complex process than mainstream theory and policy pronouncements may suggest. The mainstream literature, in its acknowledgement of the importance of entrepreneurship and enterprise education for *all* HE students, is currently silent on the potential gendering of entrepreneurship and enterprise and there is little engagement with the contestation and instabilities around what entrepreneurship and enterprise education 'is' (Pittaway and Cope, 2007) and how this might inform the process of embedding 'it' in HE.

There are also suggestions that the 'choice' to pursue entrepreneurship is gender-neutral and linked to the learning of behaviours which are framed as 'entrepreneurial dispositions', only available and rational to those who either have the traits 'naturally' or who find it easier to fit this suggested 'entrepreneurial habitus'. Indeed, these dispositions are gendered and raced in the wider field by assertions around the lack of female entrepreneurs and that women and ethnic minorities generally find entrepreneurship more problematic than white males. The privileging of

agency presents this as a 'problem' linked with the gendered and/or 'raced' habitus, highlighting this lack of fit and placing the responsibility firmly on individuals who make the 'wrong' choices (McRobbie, 2009). Rather than identifying how collective or structural issues might change, the solution is to change the dispositions of women and ethnic minorities to make them 'fit' better with those of the masculinised, westernised concept of the 'true' entrepreneur. This concentration on the unconstrained will to power of the individual also masks the symbolic power of the social consensus implicit in collectively constructed notions of white and ethnic minority women, students and entrepreneurs. A concentration on individual agency further suggests that the capabilities and skills needed for success are personal and within the individual (e.g. the fictive entrepreneur and student), rather than a result of structural positioning, which makes their realisation more or less possible for different groups of students with different class dispositions (or habitus) and access to differing forms of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital.

Entrepreneurship is *not* a meritocratic form of endeavour, although entrepreneurship policy and research continues to suggest that it is. The hegemonic entrepreneurial context of UK and EU entrepreneurship education policy and theory, underpinned by hundreds of years of construction of the successful, true and homogeneous entrepreneur with the correct entrepreneurial mindset reproduces masculinised normative templates even when, in the case of the BERR and EC documents, it is suggested they provide a supportive context for female entrepreneurship. The intersectionality of gender with undergraduate student status and the invisibility of black and minority ethnic female students in policy documents also suggests that female students who do not fit the unspoken entrepreneurial benchmark of the white, middle class male potentially come up against the 'multiple inequalities' suggested in the intersectionality literature (Verloo, 2006). The invisibility of female students from a BME background highlights the importance of intersectional approaches which recognise the relational aspects of people's social position and that this can change depending upon the context – in this case higher education. As these contextual relationships and intersections are

not acknowledged in the documents it makes it all the more important for critical discourse analysis approaches to highlight the reproduction of socially constructed, arbitrary and taken-for-granted notions in government policy, so that they can be challenged.

On a broader theoretical level, this paper extends the debate around the construction of an individualised, agential self that exists outside the forces of language, culture or history (Anderson, 2007). Post-modernist theories suggest that there can be a meritocratic 'free for all', through the social positions available to individuals (Skeggs, 1997) but this is to suggest that structural constraints can be easily overcome through individual effort or change. This privileging of agency takes no account of the social embeddedness of entrepreneurial practices (Granovetter, 1985; Thornton *et al*, 2011) or how the accrual of different forms of capital is gendered (Burt, 1998; Reay, 2004; Elam, 2008; Huppatz, 2009) or informed by ethnicity (Anthias, 2007; Shah *et al*, 2010). Dodd and Anderson (2007) argue that the entrepreneur as individualistic agent has led to research which emphasises methodological individualism and the primacy of agency and as a result entrepreneurship is an 'under-socialised' concept. Through 'socialising' entrepreneurship education these uncritically reproduced dominant discourses are challenged and the interplay of structure and agency comes firmly into focus, moving beyond the dualistic structure/agency binary which cannot be understood 'until one takes account of the *durable effects* that the social order exerts on women (and men)' (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 340). Authors such as Giddens (1990) and Beck (1992) have suggested that the reconstruction and repositioning of the agential self is part of broader, individualist notions which focus on meritocracy, the increasing individualisation of responsibility for success and/or failure (McRobbie, 2009; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001) and the wider individualisation of society (Beck et al., 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). Lash and Wynne (1992 pp. 3 – 4) argue that the contemporary individual is characterised by choice and 'forced to live in an atmosphere of risk', where the 'dominant discourses...remain firmly instrumentalist and reductionist'. Clegg (2004 p. 288) suggests that 'the self we are being asked to produce (in higher education) involves considerable difficulty. These difficulties are not merely technical

matters of pedagogical technique, but reflect the profoundly ideological nature of the task itself'. As Bauman (2001, p. xvi) reminds us: 'Risks and contradictions go on being socially produced: it is just the duty and the necessity to cope with them that is being individualized'.

Without critical engagement with the potential instability of debates and discourses in this field, policy makers and educators become complicit in a form of invisible pedagogy, positioning entrepreneurship in a particular, unspoken way that emphasises certain aspects of entrepreneurial theory whilst closing down other areas of debate or dissent. This is an important area for further investigation and has the potential to inform research, policy and practices in challenging the uncontested settlement of entrepreneurship discourses that increasingly urge HE students to inculcate a particular entrepreneurial mindset. As this entrepreneurial mindset is based upon a socially constructed fictive entrepreneur, which only certain fictive students can hope to emulate, the arguments in this paper offer the beginnings of a reconceptualisation and refocusing of the very aims and objectives of HE entrepreneurship education. Ultimately, this paper establishes entrepreneurship education in HE as an important site for interrogating the gendered practices underpinning the seemingly neutral, individualised neo-liberal subject.

Limitations

This research is highly contextual, undertaken in a particular place and time in history (2008-2009 - with an emphasis on the UK) when this nation was facing its biggest financial crisis for many years. The contemporary documents from 2008 – 2009 may therefore, have focused on certain themes and imperatives because of this historical context and sense of economic panic. Furthermore, as this is a fast-moving area, and the UK now has a new coalition government, the issues and debates may have moved on and the language used to position entrepreneurs and students may have changed. However, given the current government focus on austerity and a move away from state support it seems that the individualism suggested by the dominant discourses identified may become increasingly important policy drivers for economic growth and

that the role of HE may be positioned as an even more important site for the development of future entrepreneurs.

A relatively small number of documents were analysed and so this is not a representative sample. However, given that certain themes and arguments resonate throughout these documents and given that the notion of the gender-neutral, homogeneous entrepreneurial mindset was widely mentioned or alluded to, even this small sample highlights certain dominant discourses. Indeed, Mason (1996, p.6) suggests that generalisations drawn from research such as this might be in the form of 'wider resonance'. This wider resonance within the field seems to be supported as, since the discourse analysis took place, the notion of the entrepreneurial mindset has been drawn upon in the general entrepreneurship literature (Mauer *et al*, 2009; Baines *et al*, 2010; Haynie *et al*, 2010; Shepherd *et al*, 2010; Krauss *et al*, 2011) and in HE entrepreneurship education research (Bell, 2009; Kriewall and Mekemson, 2010; Bager, 2011). This suggests an acceptance of the gender-neutral, homogeneous entrepreneurial mindset as an explanation for entrepreneurial aspiration and success that emphasises the 'specialness' of entrepreneurs.

Discourse analysis does have its critics who argue that the turn to language privileges structure and leaves little scope for agency or resistance in the face of these all-conquering, constitutive, discourses (Fairclough, 1993; Newton, 1994; Iedema, 2011); that the concept of discourse is overused and stretched to include almost anything (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011); or used in uncritical ways which are not methodologically or theoretically robust (Reed, 2000; Leitch and Palmer, 2010). However, the theoretical underpinning of Bourdieu's theory of practice and its recognition of separate spheres of reality and interaction (fields) and how agents may respond in different ways according to the intersectional effects of the habitus and capital that they bring to bear on these, forms theoretically robust foundations. This combination of discourse and other research perspectives can provide 'fuller and more explanatory perspectives' (Paltridge,

2006 p.215) whilst acknowledging the complexity of discourses and their potential to inform practice and the shaping of social reality.

Conclusion

This paper extends our knowledge of the highly individualised HE subject by bringing feminist concerns with social categorisation 'back in' to highlight gender as a classed position and challenge individualistic notions of meritocracy and rational choice. The individualistic notions of the entrepreneurial mindset are currently firmly fixed in the powerfully symbolic realm of the masculinised, fictive entrepreneur against whom the fictive female student is found wanting. There is a paradox here, which is currently unacknowledged, because entrepreneurship education is presented as an uncontested way of freeing individuals from structural constraint but, as this paper shows, it is thoroughly embedded within institutional constraints.

HE entrepreneurship education currently encourages students to develop a sense of fictive kinship with the entrepreneurs used as benchmarks of success in policy and practice - privileging certain entrepreneurial skills, abilities and behaviours. Given the masculinised foundations of entrepreneurship theory this is potentially problematic for students (both male and female) who do not accept this socially constructed form of masculinity. In order to be considered as good students, who *can* develop this fictive kinship with entrepreneurs, students must be seen to reproduce the mindset of the fictive entrepreneur – imbued as it is with the symbolic capital of masculinity - which is more easily transformed into the cultural and economic capital required for entrepreneurial success. This can result in students who successfully reproduce these masculinised abilities being rewarded with positive assessments and progress in their modules, with those who resist, or who find this difficult, being penalised. It also polarises education and entrepreneurship and suggests that entrepreneurship cannot be taught - being a form of special activity which only very few students can successfully pursue. This actively contradicts the rationale for offering entrepreneurship education to *all* students across

all disciplines and challenges the meritocratic, individualistic and gender-neutral assumptions that anyone can be an entrepreneur if they inculcate these discursively constructed skills and abilities of the fictive entrepreneur.

Critical discourse analysis suggests that social formations and settlements are arbitrary and that 'things could be different' (Iedema, 2011 p.1172).Through discourse analysis at the macro-level, this paper highlights particular lines of reasoning which can standardise ways of constituting/reasoning about entrepreneurship in HE; the skills, abilities and attitudes that it purports to develop in students; which students are suggested as benefiting from this and why; and the discursively constructed (or fictive) entrepreneur and student upon which this is based. It also argues that these macro-level discourses construct and position the fictive 'entrepreneur' and the 'student' in particularly gendered ways that bring 'the natural world into line' (New, 2004, p.4) through uncritical reproduction and repetition.

The strength and fixedness of dominant discourses and their effects is contested and, as this paper only presents findings from the macro-level of policy and research, it is difficult to explore how these might affect individuals and groups without further empirical research. This could focus on responses to how HEIs and educators reproduce or challenge these discourses when embedding entrepreneurship education within different disciplines. An exploration of how dominant discourses play out within disciplines traditionally positioned as masculine or feminine could analyse whether the gendered positioning of the student affects the entrepreneurship education that they receive and expectations about their ability to put this knowledge into practice. An international comparison of approaches to entrepreneurship education in different HEIs would further develop understandings of whether these discourses are culturally embedded in different nations and if political imperatives and subject positionings vary internationally. Given the time-limited contextual nature of this research it would also be useful to do a longitudinal, historical analysis of influential UK and EU entrepreneurship and enterprise

policy documents - perhaps starting from the Bolton report (1971) - to trace the development of different discourses , analyse how these may have changed over the past 40 years and highlight how these discourses may be arbitrary and contingent upon the temporal, political and economic conditions in which they are socially embedded. The exploration of this has much to tell us about how entrepreneurship and gender are arbitrarily framed in HE, allowing us to envisage that things could, indeed, be different.

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TABLE 1. Documents Analysed

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TABLE 2. Brine's Three-Stage Approach to Policy Analysis (2008)

1. Pre-text stages:

  1) Understanding the general context
      What is known before reading the text?
  2) Identifying the text/s
  3) Locating the text/s

2. 5-step approach to reading the text:

4) Initial impression
   What, and how much, is in the text?
5) Content analysis
   Identify and count key words/phrases
6) Metaphor and imagery
   Identify, categorize, question
7) Subjects
   Identify subjects and their activities
   Identify and consider relations between them
   What does this begin to tell you?
8) Discourse
   Identify relationship/s between subjects
   What argument is constructed about subjects?
   What view of the world, or social structure is
   constructed through the text?
   Who benefits or loses through this construction?
   How does this analysis relate to your analysis of
   other texts?

3. Post-text stages:

9) Moving beyond the text
   Thinking more about the discourse
10) Theorising (including drawing on existing knowledge/
   literature