Bringing Gender In: The Promise of Critical Feminist Pedagogy

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INTRODUCTION

> "...classroom learning embodies selective values, is entangled with relations of power, entails judgement about what knowledge counts, legitimates specific social relations, defines agency in particular ways, and always presupposes a particular notion of the future" (Giroux, 2011: 6)

Entrepreneurship has developed as highly masculinised over hundreds of years (Ahl, 2004), underpinning the mainstream, contemporary emphasis on individualism and creative destruction that positions successful entrepreneurs as white, Western males (Ogbor, 2000), modern-day warriors (Gomez and Korine, 2008) and the new heroes of the economy (Marchesnay, 2011). This chapter explores the dilemmas and tensions of challenging such accounts through actively acknowledging gender in entrepreneurship education (EntEd). During my PhD research (focused on EntEd in the UK) I became increasingly uncomfortable with the gender dynamics - or rather, the *lack* of awareness of such dynamics - in the university EntEd classrooms that I observed. I have subsequently written about the potential

damage that a gender-blind and/or gender-neutral approach can do to both male and female students and have argued for gender to be foregrounded in EntEd (see Jones, 2014 and 2015).

Gendered notions create a template of the ideal entrepreneur, linked to practical or vocational outcomes and to developing an entrepreneurial mind-set; a mind-set that has been criticised as highly masculinised (Ahl, 2002; Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Jones 2015). Traditional EntEd also reifies particular activities and behaviours and is arguably institutionalised as a belief system in universities (Farny, et al, 2016). Lewis (2006) describes how decisions to keep gender out of a particular domain can result in a gender-blindness which suggests neutrality, but which reproduces the masculine norm of entrepreneurship. However, bringing gender in may also reinforce negative gendered perceptions of 'deficient entrepreneurial femininity' in relation to 'efficient entrepreneurial masculinity'. Both approaches run the risk of perpetuating suggested essentialist differences between men and women. 'Efficient entrepreneurial masculinity' may feel as tight and uncomfortable to some as 'deficient entrepreneurial femininity', emphasising behaviours and attitudes that women must change in order to be deemed successful (Bird and Brush, 2002; Ahl, 2006; Hughes *et al,* 2012). If gendered orders are interpreted as an individual shortcoming this may also result in a requirement for individuals to change to adapt to the gendered entrepreneurship order, rather than changing this order. Such concerns have led to calls for feminist approaches to entrepreneurship research (Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Calas *et al*, 2009; Henry *et al*, 2016). Thus creating awareness for how to address the gendered entrepreneurship discourse requires reflection. This chapter outlines a critical feminist approach to teaching, which draws upon critiques of entrepreneurship research and experiences of bringing these debates into the classroom.

To explore these issues, in this chapter I outline my educational philosophy, some of the ways that I bring gender into the classroom and some dilemmas this poses for me. My main concern is my (and my students') engagement with the mainstream entrepreneurship literature, which is seemingly unavoidable given the context. Such literature often uses gender as a variable, comparing men and women as homogeneous groups (with women traditionally positioned as deficient). Entrepreneurial success is often linked to economic imperatives and, in this respect, women are positioned as underperforming (Marlow and McAdam, 2013). There *is* an emerging critique of the gender-blindness and evacuation of historical and cultural context in such narrow framings (Calas *et al*., 2009; Marlow and McAdam, 2013) and I draw on such critiques in my teaching. However, I am mindful that the criticism, discussion and debate that I encourage in class could be undermined by the 'lessons learnt offstage' (Miller, 1998), when students are continuously confronted with mass media constructions of entrepreneurship via, for example, television programs like The Apprentice and Dragons' Den. I argue that employing critical feminist approaches, and actively reflecting on our current practices, can help us and our students to challenge mainstream accounts of entrepreneurship that underpin much traditional teaching and begin to alter the gendered entrepreneurship discourse.

THE CRITICAL TENSIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

"…feminist and Freirean teachers raise conflicts for themselves and for their students, who also are historically situated and whose own subjectivities are often contradictory and in process. These conflicts have become increasingly clear as both Freirean and feminist pedagogies are put into practice." (Weiler, 1991: 451)

I am relatively new to lecturing, having completed my PhD in 2011, when I got my first lectureship. However, I had spent many years working as an educator in community arts and adult education contexts (many of which involved working with all-female cohorts and other marginalised groups such as the long-term unemployed and young, male offenders). This sensitised me to the underlying gendered (and classed, and raced) assumptions of students, employers, local government and welfare services, and social institutions more broadly. In the late 1990s and early 2000s I trained women returners in formal ICT qualifications. This context challenged women's position as less interested in technology, while at the same time acknowledging that mainstream college computer classes were often all-male by default.

Critical reflection on my role as an educator, with the potential to reproduce mainstream assumptions and attitudes, prompted my interest in critical pedagogies. Freire (e.g. 2000), Shor (e.g. 1996), Giroux (e.g. 2011), hooks (e.g. 2014) and McLaren (e.g. 2015) argue that educators can and *should* challenge unreflexive, neutral and ahistorical representations and teach students to transgress the institutional positioning to which they are subjected (hooks, 2014). Such approaches also align with feminist pedagogy. Indeed, feminist pedagogy is "critical, oppositional, and activist" and "grounded in a vision of social change" (Weiler, 1991: 456).

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As a critical feminist educator I seek to develop teaching approaches that allow spaces for students to challenge the gendered, normative assumptions inherent in traditional approaches to entrepreneurship. This chimes with the broader feminist view that gender binaries are based on socially constructed differences between men and women, which have developed to the disadvantage of women (Stanley and Wise, 1990). I do not want to be party to the

reproduction of damaging gendered discourses and am mindful of Naidoo's (2004: 9) argument that:

"(university) education establishes a close correspondence between the social classification at entry and the social classification at exit without explicitly recognizing and in most cases denying, the link between social properties dependent on social origin..."

As such, far from challenging gendered assumptions, universities can reproduce them. Margolis *et al* (2001: l8) further argue that education systems perpetuate "an uneven distribution of cultural as well as economic capital. In the process, they endorse and normalize particular types of knowledge, ways of speaking, styles, meanings, dispositions and worldviews". In my engagement with critical pedagogy I seek to actively resist such normative approaches. Doing so involves encouraging students to share their life-world and experiences in the classroom, and in their engagement with the reading and debates as they progress through my courses. I actively encourage them *not* to suspend their disbelief (Jones, 2012) and to honestly engage with the concepts and theories I present.

Mainstream accounts of men and women's entrepreneurial aspirations and/or success often use gender as a variable - something which is increasingly criticised by feminist researchers (Hughes *et al,* 2012; Henry *et al*, 2016). Using gender as a variable has the potential to homogenise women's experiences, attitudes and abilities as it actively searches for and emphasises differences between men and women. Such approaches disappear the social context and structures that may constrain or enable different men and women in this domain. The construction and reproduction of gender binaries and essential differences between male

and female entrepreneurs also chimes with Steele and Aronson's (1995) concept of stereotype threat. Stereotypes have the potential to interfere with performance in the stereotyped domain by increasing self-consciousness, and encouraging an over-cautious attitude and low expectations in those positioned as inferior.

Such concerns also underpin my reflections on bringing gender into the classroom and how, as educators, we can consciously consider gender. I argue that mainstream EntEd has kept gender out, in its positioning of entrepreneurship as gender-neutral, value-free and meritocratic (Jones, 2010). Indeed, many educators consider EntEd an unsuitable context for consideration of gender and/or ethnicity (McKeown *et al*, 2006). Thus, the neutrality and value-free status of EntEd is preserved, so as not to trouble mainstream notions of the primacy of agency in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success.

STEREOTYPE THREAT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Stereotype threat theory developed from studies in social psychology and is concerned with abilities linked to particular groups such as black students (Steele and Aronson, 1995; Aronson et al, 2002), women (Murphy *et al.*, 2007), and the working class (Croizet and Claire, 1998). It represents a threat to the social identity of an individual and occurs "whenever individuals' behaviour could be interpreted in terms of a stereotype, that is, whenever group members run the risk of substantiating the stereotype" (Croizet and Claire, 1998:589). In this context the social identity is that of woman, and women's suggested deficiencies within the setting of entrepreneurship.

Allied to stereotype threat is the concept of stereotype lift (Walton and Cohen, 2003), whereby those identified as belonging to a superior group are emboldened in their expectation of success. This results from awareness that there is an *outgroup* who are positioned negatively in relation to a particular domain. Those who belong to the *ingroup* gain a boost in performance and confidence from their positioning (Steele and Aronson, 1995). Aronson *et al*, (2002) argue that ongoing exposure to stereotype threat can lead to the domain in question (in this case entrepreneurship) being perceived as less valuable or desirable by groups stereotyped as underachieving in that domain (in this case women). It has also been suggested that, when women suspect they may be one of only a few, or the *only* woman, involved in an activity they experience stereotype threat. Sekaquaptewa and Thompson (2003:68) argue that "being the only member of one's gender in a group is a different experience for women than it is for men" and this negatively affects women's desire to enter careers or sectors that are perceived as male-dominated.

Of course, many educators are already informed and concerned about the impacts of gender. However, Drudy and Chathain (2002) suggest that teachers' concerns about gender are often located in the structural and curriculum levels rather than in classroom practice. Indeed, feminist educational theory is historically grounded in practice. This is because:

> "interest in a feminist pedagogy, arose initially not from theoretical debate
> in education or teaching, but rather from practical concerns of feminist
> school teachers and university lecturers, wishing to address gender and other
> equality issues in the class- and lecture-rooms." (Weiner, 2004:2).

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To support reflection on critical, feminist teaching practices and to offer some practical examples, the following section outlines some of the approaches I take and how students respond to these.

INSIGHTS FROM A GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP CLASSROOM

In 2012 I developed an undergraduate module *Gender and Entrepreneurship*. It is based on my PhD research (Jones, 2011) and my ongoing research on gender, entrepreneurship and EntEd. The module explores the gendered dynamics of entrepreneurship in different contexts. It is based on feminist ideas, drawing upon social constructionism and sociology. Each week we look at a different aspect of entrepreneurship e.g. history and definitions, the role of education, different business sectors, international contexts, etc. I take a social feminist perspective, focused on the role of social structures such as the family, education and the media, and how these can shape the opportunities, experiences, aspirations and motivations of men and women differently. Social feminism therefore, "…(recognises) difference but in a context of equality. This difference arises essentially from socialization processes which shape gendered forms of behaviour" (Marlow and Patton, 2005:721).

I also draw on a social*ist* feminist perceptive, which critiques the "historical reproduction of patriarchal capitalism" (Calas *et al*, 2009:562), framing entrepreneurship as: "gendering processes under patriarchal capitalism; gendering knowledge/subjectivities; interconnecting gender/ratioethnic/class processes reproducing global neoliberalism" (ibid: 565). As such, the

module is highly theoretically driven, with the underpinning perspectives becoming clearer as students progress, through engagement in class activities and discussion. I also employ the principle of 'deliberate vagueness', which "allows and requires the (student) to impose their own system of relevancy" (Wengraf 2001:122).

It is a level two, 10 credit module (aimed at second year students). As a university-wide elective it attracts a range of students. This year I had students from Psychology, Communication Studies, Management, Modern Languages, Economics, Computing and Philosophy. I also have many international students and this year welcomed students from Australia, Austria, China, France, Italy, South Korea, Taiwan and the US. Such student diversity enriches the discussion and debate as we progress through the module.

However, although it is an elective, students are not always initially invested in its focus. I do an anonymous exercise in the first class, which encourages honesty about reasons for taking the course, and students' concerns and hopes. Many students enrol because there are no exams and/or because it runs towards the end of the teaching day and is the only class that does not clash with their core modules (and they *have to* take electives). This year the majority of my students chose the module because of timing. Giving space for honesty and openness right from the start, sets the tone for the rest of the course. As they progress, students are also encouraged to be honest about their responses to the reading, classroom resources and tasks, and also to bring in their own artefacts[1] to share and discuss with the group (this might be a TV program they have watched or a blog they have read, which resonates with them). They are also encouraged to share their own personal experiences, and to reflect on whether and how the debates and research we explore, might affect them in their

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[1] In this context an artefact is defined as "An object made by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest" (Oxford English Dictionary)

day-to-day lives, now and in the future. In many respects, I see this course as a rehearsal for some of the gender dynamics and institutional structures students may encounter as they progress through their careers. It offers opportunities for students to learn how to recognise and analyse such dynamics and to respond to them in a critical but thoughtful way.

The students are predominantly female, with around twenty per cent being male. I am always aware, in bringing in statistics about gender and entrepreneurship (which invariably benchmark women against men) that I am in the position of promoting stereotype threat for my female students, whilst potentially promoting stereotype lift for my male students. For this reason, I bring in exercises (two of which are outlined below) that support critical engagement with the gender stereotypes underpinning entrepreneurship. This encourages them to consider, not only individual characteristics of entrepreneurs, but also to engage with the socio-political, historical and cultural context within which entrepreneurship takes place, and how these might be influenced by gendered structures and institutions. I always offer counter arguments to any theories that I present, to highlight the lack of certainty and stability in these debates and to draw out *what* students think and *why* they think the way they do. This involves highlighting the debates and contestation of theories we engage with, such as Bem's Sex Role Inventory (1974) or Hakim's Preference Theory (2000). Students can find this destabilising but I emphasise the need to navigate this area and come to their own, informed conclusions, rather than me being the 'expert'.

In the following I outline some incidents and interventions that I have found useful over four years of teaching the course. In some respects, they can all can be viewed as forms of feminist consciousness-raising, as I use them to support students in developing a critical awareness of culture (Sowards and Renegar, 2004).

Separating Biological Sex from Gender

This is a typically feminist approach and supports exploration of common gender stereotypes associated with men and women which, although often based upon biological essentialism, can be separated from cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity. I use an exercise early on, based on Bem's (1974) Sex Role Inventory (SRI), to explore student perceptions of the gendering of entrepreneurship. However, instead of calling it the Sex Role Inventory I call it the Entrepreneurial Personality Index and ask students to score their perceptions of entrepreneurs using a 1 -7 score (with 1 being almost never and 7 being almost always). Bem's SRI consists of socially gendered characteristics that are commonly associated with men and women, in the form of traditional ascriptions of masculine and feminine behaviours[2]. Most students score the masculine characteristics as highly congruent with entrepreneurship, and the feminine as least congruent. However, it is worth noting that students from Chinese and other East Asian backgrounds often identify feminine-typified behaviours as congruent with entrepreneurship. This has led to illuminating discussions about whether collective cultures encourage more communal and collaborative approaches to entrepreneurship than Western ones.

This exercise acts as a starting point to explore whether students subconsciously view entrepreneurship as masculine and leads to discussions about where these perceptions have come from (often it is the lessons learnt offstage). We also consider, given that the BSRI is over 40 years old, if any of these have changed over time and why. We discuss the argument that they are often based on biological distinctions, which drive socially gendered distinctions

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[2] It also includes androgynous characteristics

based on expectations of what it is to male or female and, in turn, masculine and feminine. This also opens up opportunities to identify potentially damaging stereotypes for both men and women – e.g. masculinity (and men) seen as aggressive and femininity (and women) seen as weak.

The exercise usually causes tension and disagreement. Often students will argue that the suggested gendered behaviours are outrageously sexist and outdated and they question the relevance of using the SRI today. Male students can be offended by the proposed masculine behaviours of individualism and insensitivity, while female students challenge the view that they lack leadership ability and independence. This leads us to consider feminine *men* and masculine *women*, highlighting the importance of separating biological sex from gender (in terms of masculinity and femininity). It can take a while to work through the notion that these *are* stereotypes and represent societal *perceptions* of masculinity and femininity and prescribed gender roles as they commonly (uncritically) relate to men and women. This fruitful discussion lays the foundations for bringing in theories of stereotype threat and stereotype lift later in the module. Student feedback suggests that this has a significant impact, and many of them draw on these debates in their individual assignments.

To further emphasise the separation of biological sex from gender, I then ask them to use the SRI to reflect upon two business case studies: a social enterprise and a for-profit business, both focused on children[3], to see if the words they use to describe the entrepreneurs here are different from those previously chosen. Here students tend to focus on traditionally feminine characteristics. I then reveal that both businesses were founded by men and we discuss the pros and cons of presenting a masculinised or feminised business brand to the world, and

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[3] The examples used are Mary's Meals - a social enterprise that provides free school meals to students in disadvantaged communities worldwide and Ella's Kitchen, a company that makes organic food for babies and toddlers

whether this might have different consequences for men and women. Often discussion turns to whether these are simply human characteristics that have been ascribed to men and women due to binary, essentialist approaches and how notions of femininity or masculinity may vary historically and between cultures.

Sometimes students will share their own experiences of friends or family members who have been affected. For example, one male student's brother wanted to take time off to care for his new son, but was actively discouraged by his family and work colleagues, who thought it would damage his career and he would not enjoy it. This personal example provided a lightbulb moment. Why is it then considered a *good* thing for women to 'damage their careers'? Ah! because, as the SRI suggests, femininity (and in an uncritical sense, women) 'love children' and are not ambitious and men, in their conferred masculinity, are 'insensitive to others needs' and 'individualistic"! This then prompted recognition that, although many people conflate women with gender, men are also gendered subjects. Indeed, this theme develops throughout the module, with male students often disclosing their hopes and fears for fatherhood.

In both of these exercises I try to subvert the symbolic power of language (Bourdieu, 1991), which combines with official discourses from the field of entrepreneurship to mask taken-for-granted gendered constructs and position them as neutral (Bruni *et al*, 2005). Throughout our lives, we internalise expectations linked to prescribed gender roles and this informs our aspirations and expectations (Bourdieu,1998). This internalisation of gendered discourses informs individual choices and shapes societal norms, resulting in the arbitrary structures of society being accepted as somehow natural. The exercises also emphasise students' experiences and the cultural assumptions that they bring with them from *outside* the

classroom. It starts to sensitise them to the debates and what they mean for *them*, as well as for entrepreneurship more broadly. Furthermore, it builds a sense of trust and experience-sharing within the group, whilst also emphasising that there are no right or wrong answers and many different views exist on the subject. Students also begin to appreciate and understand how theory (which many of them *do* struggle with, initially) can be an explanatory device, which is very much linked to the 'real world' and can help them make sense of it.

The 'F' Word

Student understanding and/or mistrust of feminism varies from cohort to cohort. Last year's cohort was particularly wary of feminism. Indeed, in my opening 'hopes and fears exercise' several students disclosed that they hoped it wouldn't be "too feminist" or "trying to turn us all into feminists". Female students may argue feminism smacks of 'special pleading' and 'victimhood', suggesting they are not good enough to succeed without special support. They often argue that supposedly feminist literature and policy positions women as underperforming. I must admit this is something which I struggle with too, especially given my concerns about stereotype threat. I do feel that, in engaging with mainstream entrepreneurship research, I could be seen as suggesting my female students will only get so far and then there will be barriers in their way (often linked to motherhood, or motherhood potential). Some male students view feminism as a form of man-hating that belittles men's success and positons men as 'bad'. Both male and female students consistently argue that "times have changed" and that there is more gender equality, with more women in senior positions, than ever before and so feminism, or consideration of the impacts of gender inequality, is outdated and not wholly relevant to them.

It seems that many students experience 'gender fatigue', a result of "(n)avigating the ideological dilemma around gender neutrality and discrimination" (Kelan, 2009: 167), with a major aspect being "a reluctance to acknowledge the persistence of gender inequities" (Kelan and Dunkley, 2010: 28). As a result, to consider gender seems passé and/or is reduced to an individualised level rather than being a pervasive, structural concern (Gill, 2014). Such responses also suggest a post-feminist response, which is seen as a back-lash to feminism. McRobbie (2004:255) argues that "by means of the tropes of freedom and choice which are now inextricably connected with the category of "young women," feminism is decisively aged and made to seem redundant". In this context it is presumed that women have the freedom to choose their careers and are free from any structural constraints in doing so, given legislation to address sexism and gender-discrimination. Post-feminism presumes that "'all the battles' have been won" (Gill, 2014: 511), echoing the sentiments expressed by many students, both male and female.

To think through these ideas, I use an article from the New York Times (Miller, 2014), which presents research by Correll *et al* (2007) and states that: "employers rate fathers as the most desirable employees, followed by childless women, childless men and finally mothers. They also hold mothers to harsher performance standards." Students are usually surprised that childless women would be preferred over childless men, and start to think about how it might underpin opportunities and choices to pursue entrepreneurship (and their own careers). This is particularly linked to the motherhood 'penalty'. Furthermore, being seen as more valued employees (and potentially better remunerated) might actually *discourage* fathers from leaving companies to pursue entrepreneurship, as they potentially have more to lose. It is also a way of thinking about the effects of gender as it links to social identity and the life course and therefore, how its effects change as people progress through their lives.

The mistrust of feminism is an issue I have to address in the classroom, given the module's theoretical underpinning. It is an opportunity for me to explain my social feminist perspective and again, for students to challenge, debate and discuss feminism as politically, theoretically and personally diverse. I offer an overview of different types of feminism to illustrate that it is not monolithic, although at its most basic level it simply seeks to promote equality between men and women. We also explore post-colonial and black feminisms, which critique other forms of feminism as Western, white and middle-class. Indeed, later in the module, I facilitate a session on intersectionality and entrepreneurship drawing on the work of Crenshaw (1989) and others to explore multiple inequalities and heterogeneous perspectives.

Bringing Theory to Life

The module is highly theoretically driven and I am eager for students to critique and apply these theories. I start encouraging this early on, based on the premise that we often uncritically engage with mass media and accept many of the headlines and discussions on social media about men and women, and gender. In order to help students become more critical media consumers, and to support engagement with developing issues around gender and entrepreneurship, I ask them to bring in artefacts to share[4] Anything and everything is acceptable if it resonates with them and their engagement with the module. As well as news articles, students have shared YouTube videos, blogs, photographs, advertisements and TV programs such as The Apprentice.

This supports both their group and individual assignments. In their group assignment they research and develop a case study of two entrepreneurs to compare and contrast though a

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[4] See Berglund and Wigren-Kristoferson (2012) for a more detailed account of using artefacts in EntEd.

gender lens. These are not necessarily a man and a woman and many groups choose to analyse two women or two men and how they might 'do gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987). To support this, I run a workshop on different ways of analysing gender in the media such as content analysis and semiotic analysis (see Gill, 2007). They can choose who they analyse and how they analyse, and the format and structure of their case study.

For their individual assignment students are asked to identify and critically engage with five artefacts that link to our discussions and debates. I stress that they do not have to agree with the theories we cover. However, I am 'deliberately vague' about exactly what type of sources they should use and also the way that they might relate these back to the module and their own reflections.

This does seem to develop critical reflection and female students often choose sources that support disclosure of concerns about their future within an organisation, or the impact of motherhood on their career. Likewise, male students often consider the impact of masculinity and their perceived role as a future breadwinner and/or father, who wants to be involved with his children's upbringing.

Most students suggest they leave the module with a more critical approach to the gendered discourses they may encounter. Our students are future leaders, employers and employees and I hope that my approach will also help them to feel more confident and assertive if they encounter situations that they do not agree with. I also hope they have different shared and personal experiences, and a new vocabulary to draw on, to help them challenge gendered discourses (and other forms of) overt and covert discrimination.

Student Reflections

At the end of the module students complete a feedback survey. Here are some of the most recent comments, which give me hope that my critical, feminist approach does help them link theory and practice to develop a critical approach to gender:

"Really improved my critical thinking on this module and came across things I otherwise wouldn't have, even in a topic I am so passionate about outside uni."

"I enjoyed the content of this module especially as there is a lot of current news which is related to the content of the module which made it a lot more enjoyable as the theory is relevant."

" I enjoyed…the encouragement to voice our opinions on any part of the module"   .

"I liked the magazine/newspaper articles we read as it helped put the theory we had learnt into practice."

"It was interesting because it was very relevant to the real world."

However, in their individual assignments I do sometimes see manifestations of stereotype threat. This is particularly obvious where female students mention that "if I became an entrepreneur, I am likely to be less successful…." or "women do worse than men at entrepreneurship". However, both male and female students seem determined to challenge

gender bias when they enter the workplace and /or reach positions of power. That said, many still argue we should not focus too heavily on gender, as this is becoming less important in the workplace; we should judge people by what they have achieved and what they do, rather than their social identity. However, I do feel that it is my duty to open up these areas, so that students can engage with them and think about how they might respond if they encounter them in the future. I also hope that they become more critical of the gendered, neoliberal construction of the 'ideal worker' (Acker, 1990) and the 'entrepreneurial self' (Bröckling, 2016).

Commented [MOU2]: Exactly – by norms of the entrepreneurial self, which are gendered (see Bröckling 2005)

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THE PROMISE OF CRITICAL FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

The term pedagogy refers to "deliberate attempts to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations" (Giroux and Simon, 1989:23). It is argued that dominant (or mainstream) pedagogy "provides a complex system for the production of "goods" - that is, forms of recognised and legitimate affect, meaning and value" (Worsham, 1998: 241). Critical pedagogy is "nourished by a strong dissatisfaction with things as they are" (Masschelein, 1998: 521) and recognises that education is *not* a natural, ahistorical phenomenon but should be understood in its socio-historical and political context (Biesta and Tedder, 2007). The central aim of critical pedagogy is therefore, to challenge and transform wider society for justice and equality. In doing so it raises

> "questions about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity
> and merit for many students, and about the way belief systems become
> internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very

aspiration to question or change their lot in life." **(**Burbules and Berke,

1999:50)

In advocating exploration of the historical and socio-political context of the curriculum, and by placing student knowledge and experience firmly at the centre of teaching, feminist (and other) debates can be brought in, in a way that actively supports feminist goals. Indeed, Avis and Bathmaker (2004:308) argue that:

"a rethinking of critical pedagogy that draws upon feminism… would… refuse

an essentialist reading, and would recognise the complexity, contradictions and

messiness of educational practice."

Others such as Oberhauser (2002) suggest critical pedagogy can help students think critically about knowledge production, countering ahistoricism and supporting them to negotiate their own positioning on their own terms. This acknowledges the "importance of position and identity in the creation and dissemination of knowledge" (Johnstone, 2000:271) and supports educators and students to recognise that "human possibilities are not fully occupied by the dominant forces or trends of any age" Shor (1996:3).

Critical pedagogy also seeks to expose the *hidden* curriculum, defined as the lessons learnt, which are not necessarily explicit or consciously intended by educators (Martin, 1983), including the reproduction of wider values, beliefs and unspoken, social norms (Margolis *et al*, 2001). This involves not only lessons learnt in class, but also lessons learnt from students' engagement with wider society. As such, the hidden curriculum deals with the "forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies and social practices related

to authority, behaviour and morality" (McLaren, 2003:86). In this way it reflects "deeply held beliefs" (Bain, 1990:29). which can have unintended negative consequences linked to gender (Myer, 2010), ethnicity (Hartlep, 2010), and/or class (McLaren, 2007). Therefore, without a critical, reflexive approach, an unintended consequence of bringing gender in might be that we perpetuate and reproduce the very stereotypes that we seek to challenge. A critical, reflexive approach includes acknowledging the effects our conscious pedagogic choices, may have on our students. It requires acknowledging our own beliefs and values about entrepreneurship, as this underpins our teaching (Bennett, 2006). Critical educators have moved from reflective practice (after Schon, 1983) to *reflexive* practice; "an 'unsettling,'i.e., an insecurity regarding the basic assumptions, discourse and practices used in describing reality" (Pollner, 1991:370). Furthermore, reflexive *praxis* requires "self-conscious and ethical action based on a critical questioning of past actions and of future possibilities" (Cunliffe, 2004:408). To ignore such concerns risks *conferring* gender identity upon certain students (Holt, 2012), underpinned by mainstream consensus that the symbolic links between masculinity and 'real' entrepreneurship represent a true and fair identity (Hamilton, 2013).

However, there is a danger that uncritically and unreflexivley acknowledging differences between men and women, particularly where they are traditionally underpinned by essentialist notions linked to biological sex, could further entrench taken-for-granted, masculinised notions of entrepreneurship. To mitigate this, Kenway and Modra (1992:142) argue for a feminist imperative in revising curricula (and, I would argue, education practices) to include and value:

> "the range of experiences of girls and women, while at the same time
> recognizing that the definitions of femininity and masculinity which are

formed and promoted…should encompass a wide range of possibilities which make (men and women) not only "equally human"…but equally free in the public and private sphere."

The implication is that education systems contribute to the closing down of possibilities for both men and women and that this is linked to "curricula steeped in Anglo-Saxon, middle class, male values which deny multiple aspects of (students') home and community culture" (ibid:144).

I therefore argue that teaching that is predominantly based on research that benchmarks women activities against men is particularly damaging, especially where the context, historical background, structural and societal issues are ignored. Current mainstream entrepreneurship text books and literature can actively and uncritically perpetuate the gendered and neoliberal discourses that I seek to highlight and challenge in the classroom. Indeed, given the very real failures of the neoliberal market-based system and the resulting economic crisis, it is imperative that we do not continue with business as usual. It is ethically suspect to continue to present entrepreneurship as a universally 'good' thing (Tedmanson *et al*, 2012) or as a meritocratic form of 'inclusive' capitalism (Dolan, 2012). To engage with mainstream literature and theories uncritically and in isolation, without acknowledging the social, political and historical context, risks individualising 'failure', while positioning female students as inherently deficient. Such accounts imply that women need to change rather than seeking to change the social, political and economic structures within which women are positioned. Unsettling such commonly held beliefs can provide cognitive jolts for our students (Massumi, 2009), opening up new areas for debate and discussion and emphasising that there is more than one 'it' when we talk about entrepreneurship.

Commented [MOU4]: Could you 'speak out' more here – say something about eship literature /textbooks?

As such, a critical feminist approach can help us, not only to challenge and highlight gender roles and stereotypes but, more importantly, it acts as a theoretical/analytical lens that broadens thinking about entrepreneurship and questions its settlement. It also invites us (perhaps, even compels us) to be innovative in our teaching, and to support the emergence of new practices of doing gender/doing entrepreneurship. Indeed, Calas et al (2009) call for the reframing of entrepreneurship from a focus on economic imperatives to a focus on social change. They argue that entrepreneurship theory has been consistently delimiting and reductionist in its development, which has disappeared multilevel, pluralist and socially embedded understandings. Social (and socialist) feminist approaches therefore, broaden conceptualisations of entrepreneurship to account for the "power-laden, contested, and ever-changing social terrains where diverse interests play out" (Calas et al: 555). This helps us to account for the gendered social embeddedness of entrepreneurial aspirations, opportunity recognition, resource acquisition, business growth etc., and acknowledges the historical, political and cultural dimensions of entrepreneurship (rather than just the economic). Feminism's focus on social change is therefore, a powerful pedagogic lens to bring to entrepreneurship education, for educators seeking to challenge and broaden current mainstream conceptualisations.

Furthermore, critical, feminist pedagogies seek to broaden debates, understanding and critique *beyond* the classroom setting. They encourage students to think critically about their own prejudices and those of wider society, and the suggested roles of men and women, more broadly. In particular, a social feminist approach highlights how societal institutions, such as the family and education, perpetuate gendered roles and expectations. It turns a spotlight on how society positions men and women differently, within different cultural and societal

contexts, and how such positions, while appearing natural and common-sense, are often based on socially constructed assumptions. In doing so it questions the broader rationales for entrepreneurship and explanations for suggested difference between men and women's career trajectories more broadly.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In our current neoliberal and, apparently, post-feminist Western society it may seem to us, and to our students, that gender should be kept out of the classroom. However, to bring gender in requires both educators and students to challenge and rethink their previous position on the choices that individuals make - in relation to entrepreneurship but also in relation to broader society. Subsequently, in actively bringing gender in, we may face resistance and resentment from both male and female students. However, a sensitive and critically engaged approach can help students to consider the debates within entrepreneurship, whilst also exploring their wider beliefs, assumptions and social position(s).

Ultimately, I see my module as a set of co-created discussions, critiques, knowledge and resources that everyone (myself included) can draw on as we progress through our careers and lives. University students are positioned as future leaders and it is therefore, important that they engage with and consider the impact of gender (and other socially constructed forms of difference) for individuals and organisations. My hope is that a lasting outcome of the module will be students who can recognise and mitigate for gendered practices in their own lives and also act as agents of change when they can identify, articulate and challenge gender bias in the future. The promise of alternative perspectives, also challenges increasingly individualised accounts of 'success' or 'failure', which promote gender-evacuated

meritocracy and the primacy of agency. Whatever the long-term outcomes, I *am* dissatisfied with current gendered conceptualisations of entrepreneurship and I hope that my approach helps students see that "things could always be other than they are" (Barnett, 1990:155).

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