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## EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES OF INCUBATOR GENDER DYNAMICS

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## ≈ SUMMARY ≈

**EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES OF INCUBATOR GENDER DYNAMICS**

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**Principal Topic**

In the present study, we contribute to and extend research exploring gender differences within the entrepreneurial context of business incubators by examining how male and female tenants differ in their experiences of incubator loneliness. We focus on loneliness as a relevant entrepreneurial outcome for two reasons. First, the nature of the entrepreneurial process, particularly in early-stage venturing, is often fraught with loneliness as entrepreneurs are expected to dedicate intense amounts of their time and energy into the development and launch of their venture. Second, a key benefit often touted for business incubator tenancies is the social interactions that occur among incubator tenants as well as between tenants and staff (Patton, 2014). Commiserating with individuals who are experiencing similar challenges could ease some of the stressors and loneliness that come along with entrepreneurship (Mulki, et al., 2008). Thus, understanding entrepreneurial loneliness can help uncover methods for facilitating healthier work environments for entrepreneurs in those crucial early stages.

**Method**

To understand and evaluate male and female tenant experiences, we developed surveys to capture a respondent's self-reported sex-role characteristics (Bem, 1981), workplace loneliness (Wright et al., 2006), and multiple controls. Given our goal of comparing female with male incubator tenants, we used a matched-pair design, where the two tenants in the pair were "similar" in important respects (e.g. incubator type, size, etc.) except on gender. Repeated-measures ANOVA tests and regression analysis were used to determine if differences in masculinity and social and emotional loneliness between the genders occurs, and whether incubator type (e.g. high-technology vs. social impact incubators) also plays a role.

**Results and Implications**

Preliminary findings suggest that both women and men experience loneliness in incubators but that women experience greater *social* loneliness whereas men experience greater *emotional* loneliness. Our research draws attention to an important consequence of gendered entrepreneurial spaces -- heightened loneliness. Research from other fields suggest that greater loneliness could lead to reduced entrepreneurial performance, dissatisfaction, weakened venture commitment, and ultimately, a multitude of mental and physical health problems (e.g. Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009; Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). This research contributes to scholarship endeavoring to inform incubator tenants and managers on recruitment, programming, funding, and venture success.

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