GENDER AND ACADEMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP - THE EFFECT OF STRUCTURAL FACTORS ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic
There has been a growing interest in understanding gender issues in academic entrepreneurship. In this study we focus on the incubator context and how related institutional structures work in relation to women’s entry into academic entrepreneurship. The principal question is to what extent structural characteristics in the entrepreneurial eco-system surrounding incubators influence the likelihood that women may engage in the commercialization of university science by becoming incubatees. Theoretically, we embed our arguments in institutional theory and develop hypotheses related to (1) the share of female faculty at the closest university, (2) gender norms in the primary industry of the new venture project, and (3) the prior experience of the incubator in dealing with women incubatees.

Method
The empirical data comes from a unique database consisting of over 1400 venture projects in 19 Swedish incubators that are part of the nationally financed incubator program. For this study, we select and examine 793 venture projects that made an entry into one of the incubators between 2006 and 2009. The database contains specific information about the venture projects, the incubators, the universities and the surrounding entrepreneurial eco-system. We use multivariate statistical techniques to analyze the data.

Results and Implications
The research finds that the share of female faculty at the closest university is a strong predictor of the likelihood that a woman champions a new incubator venture project. Moreover, there are strong industry effects where projects championed by women entrepreneurs are more likely to be found in the life science industry while they are less likely to be found in the ICT industry. Furthermore, incubators with a proven track-record of hosting women entrepreneurs have a positive effect on the subsequent entry of women entrepreneurs into the incubator. In all, the findings provide unique theoretical insights into how structural characteristics in the entrepreneurial eco-system surrounding incubators influence the likelihood that a woman champions a new incubator venture project. Based on the findings, the paper also address implications for how incubators and universities can build up structural capital to promote the rate of female academic entrepreneurs in the regional and national economy.

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