

# Conceptualizing Intersectionality

Entrepreneurship through an Intersectional Lens: Research, Challenges,  
and Future Directions

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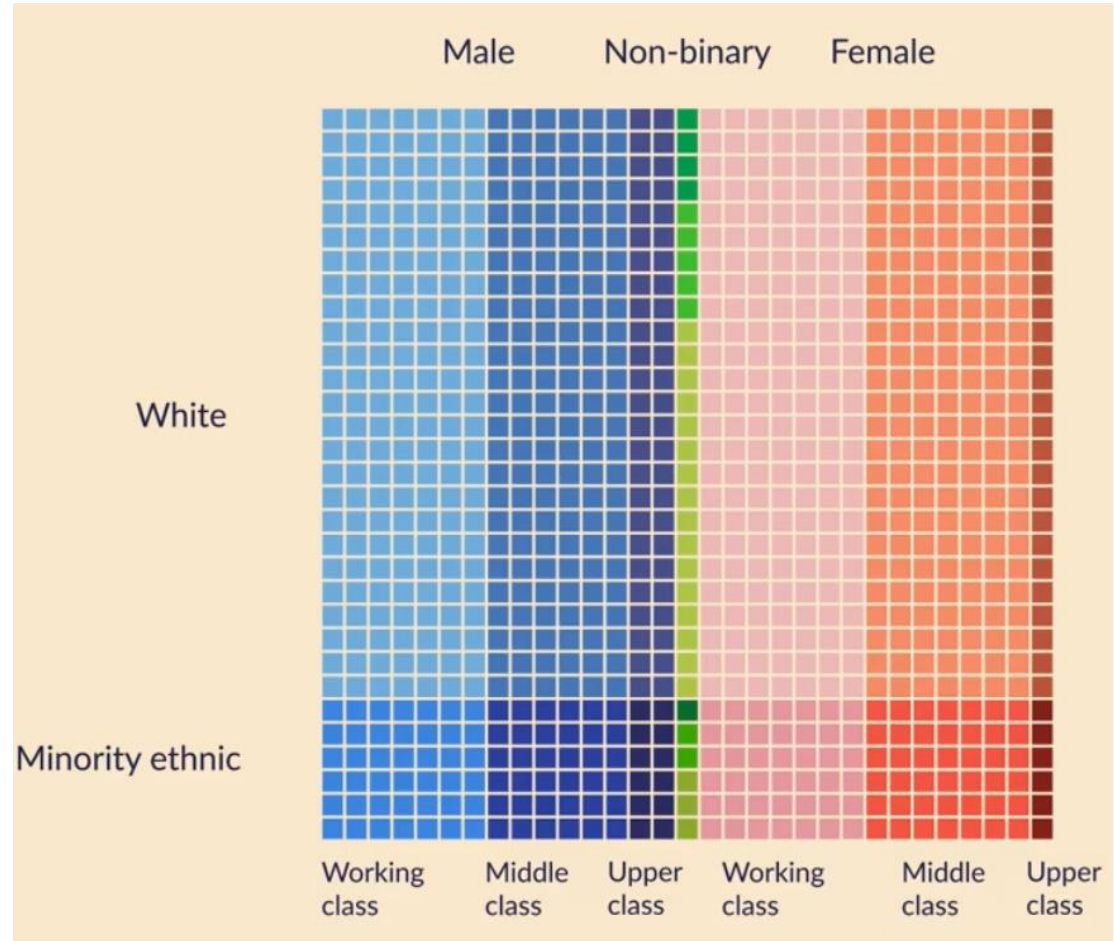
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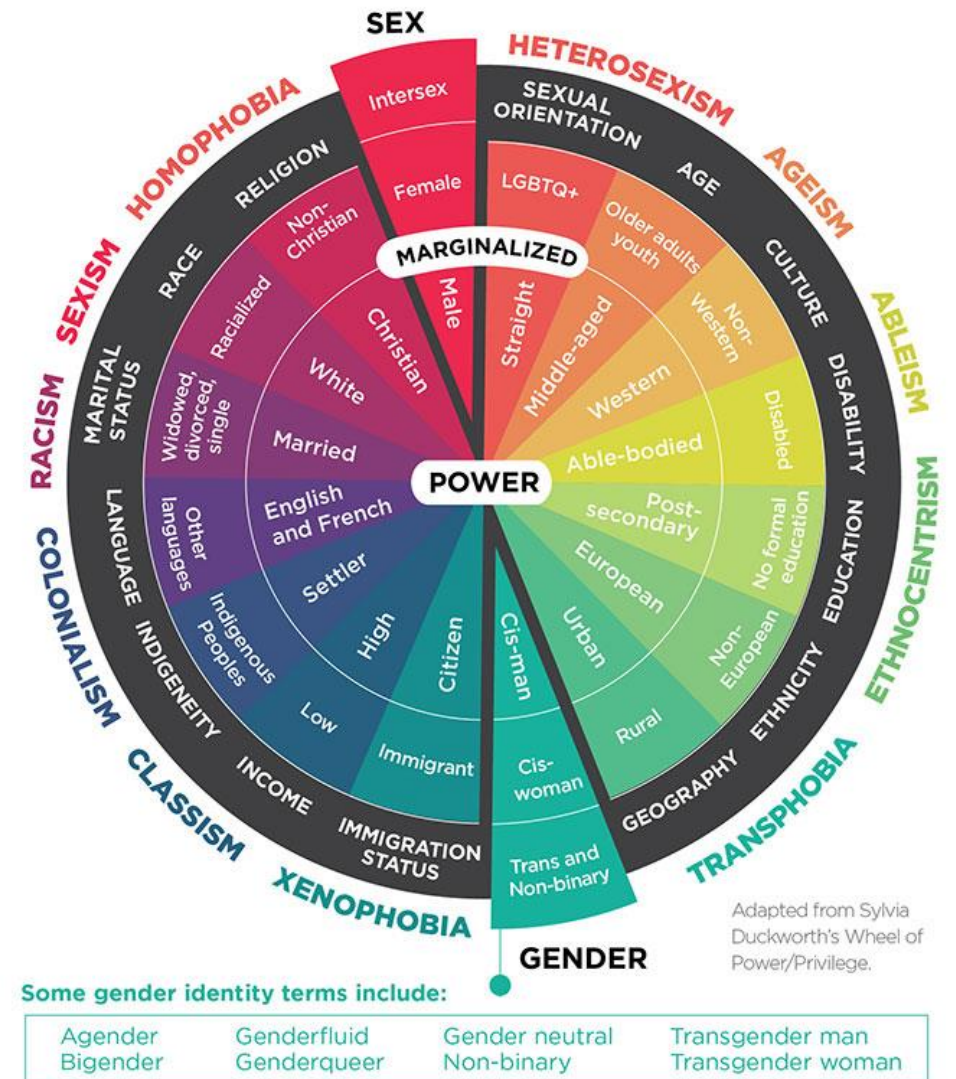
# Defining Intersectionality (1)

- **Two essential ingredients**
  - Heterogeneity
    - Our identity is more than just the sum of our various characteristics



# Defining Intersectionality (2)

- **Two essential ingredients**
  - Heterogeneity
  - Social Power
    - Social processes and hierarchies produce disadvantage in complex ways, meaning multiple disadvantages interact

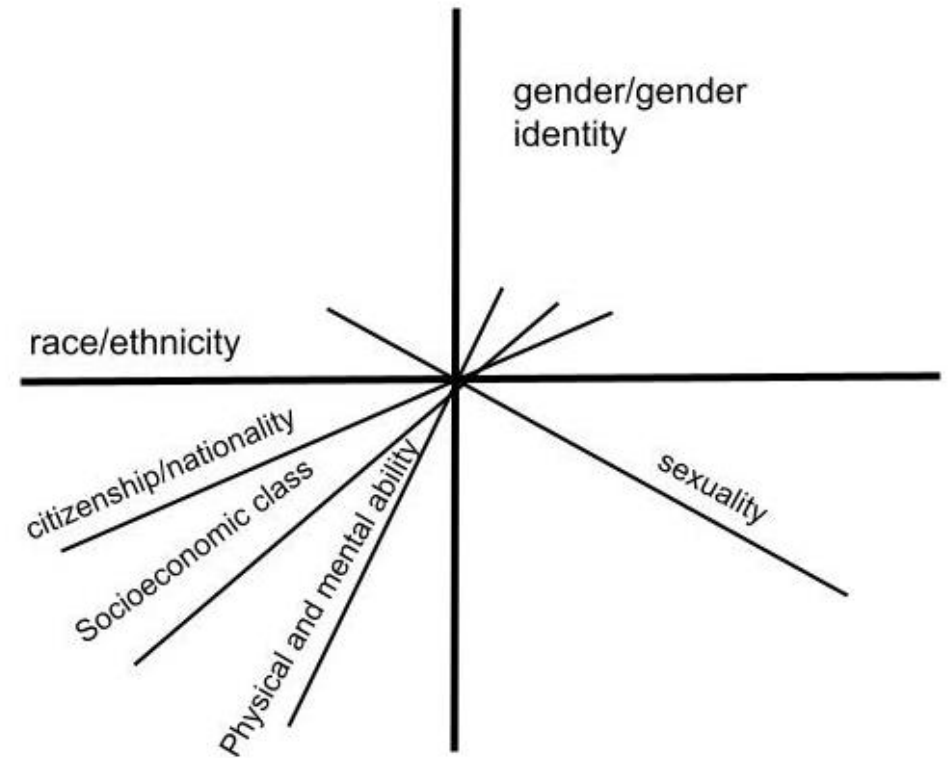


# Defining Intersectionality (3)

*"Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city.*

*The main highway is 'racism road'. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression"*

*(Crenshaw, 2001)*



# How intersectionality shapes social position and opportunity

- Separate systems of domination (like racism, sexism, classism) overlap and reinforce one another.
- This overlap creates a matrix of domination that shapes:
  - People's **opportunities**
  - People's **experiences**
  - People's **perceptions**

→ These dynamics directly influence entrepreneurial participation and success.



# But how do we use intersectionality?

- How does one actually **think intersectionally**?
- What does it mean to design **an intersectional study**?
- **Which categories** (e.g., gender, race, class) **are essential**? → Are some always central, or do they depend on the context and research question?
- How to **avoid essentialism** while still using categories meaningfully?
- **How to analyze intersections** once relevant categories are selected?
- **Is using intersectionality enough to make research critical and cutting-edge - or are additional theories/tools needed?**

*(Davis, 2014)*

# How does one actually think intersectionally?

Initially, intersectionality as methodology was encompassed by the easy procedure of “**asking the other question**”, described by Maria Matsuda:

*The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call “ask the other question”. When I see something that looks racist, I ask, “Where is the patriarchy in this?” When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, “Where is the heterosexism in this?” When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, “Where are the class interests in this?”*

—(1991, 1189)

# What does it mean to design an intersectional study? (1)

**01** **Situating yourself:** do not entail a list of identity categories, but rather involve developing a narrative about how your specific location shapes you (your thinking, theoretical preferences, intellectual biography) in specific ways - ways which will be relevant with respect to the research you are doing.

*"In my study of a US grassroots feminist organization grappling with issues of racism, I found that **my own positionality as a white woman inevitably shaped the research process**. My discomfort discussing racism with other white women, my complicity in shared silences, and my own unconscious biases influenced the questions I asked, the ways I interpreted responses, and even the things I initially failed to notice. I used this self-awareness not as an excuse but as a critical tool, turning my position into a site of analysis."*

*(Davis, 2008)*

*(Davis, 2014)*

# What does it mean to design an intersectional study? (2)

## 02 Complicating Gender

Intersectionality challenges the idea that gender can be treated as an isolated category. Instead, gender is always interconnected with other social differences (e.g., race, class, age, sexuality), and these relationships must be included in the analysis.

This strategy invites researchers to **start with a “gendered” example and then layer additional differences**, complicating and deepening their interpretation.

*"A magazine advertisement featuring young women of different ethnic backgrounds in lingerie might first appear to be about gendered beauty standards. However, an intersectional analysis would reveal how age, race, and heteronormativity simultaneously shape the idealization of certain bodies, highlighting which differences are rendered visible or invisible."*

*(Davis, 2014)*

# What does it mean to do an intersectional study? (2)

Before McCall (2005), **intersectionality was mostly used theoretically** (especially in feminist theory and critical race studies) without clear methods for doing systematic empirical research. She identified two existing approaches to intersectionality and introduced a third, intercategorical approach, aimed at developing a more systematic methodology.

Approach	Description	Example
<b>Complexity of Categories (Poststructuralism)</b>	Showing that categories like "woman" or "Black" are not simple – they are messy, unstable, and overlapping.	Feminist theorists showing how "gender" changes meaning depending on context.
<b>Crossing Identities (Crenshaw)</b>	Studying people who belong to more than one marginalized group.	Studying Black women specifically – not just "women" or "Black people."
<b>Intercategorical Approach (McCall)</b>	Comparing multiple groups systematically across multiple dimensions (e.g., race, gender, class) to reveal structural relationships.	Comparing Black women, White women, Black men, and White men to see how their experiences differ across race and gender simultaneously.

## Example from research: Intersectional oppressions in the workforce

McCall (2005) examines how gender, race, and class intersect to shape economic opportunities and workforce participation among African American women in the United States. The research highlights that African American women, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, face compounded barriers such as:

- **Gender oppression:** Underrepresentation in leadership roles and persistent wage gaps compared to men, even in the same industries.
- **Racial oppression:** Experiences of racial discrimination in hiring practices and workplace treatment, limiting access to high-paying jobs.
- **Class oppression:** Limited access to education and professional networks due to economic hardship, restricting upward mobility

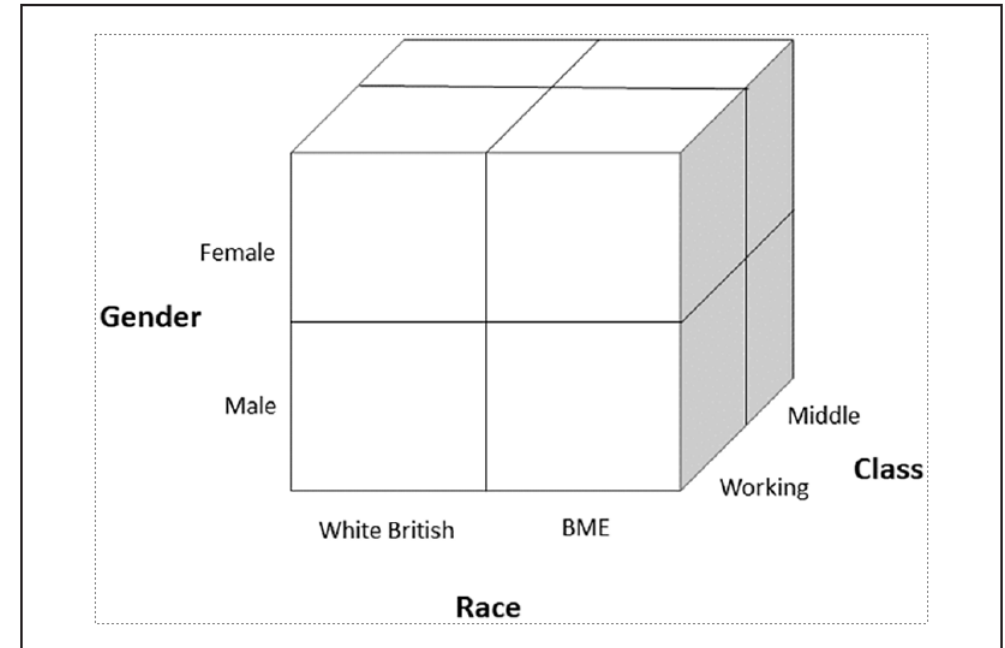


Figure 1. Matrix of privilege/oppression

Source: McCall (2005)

# How to analyze intersections once relevant categories are selected?

Before McCall Intersectionality research was mainly qualitative. She proposed using quantitative methods to compare multiple groups systematically, analyze patterns across race, gender, class, etc., reveal the structural relationships between categories.

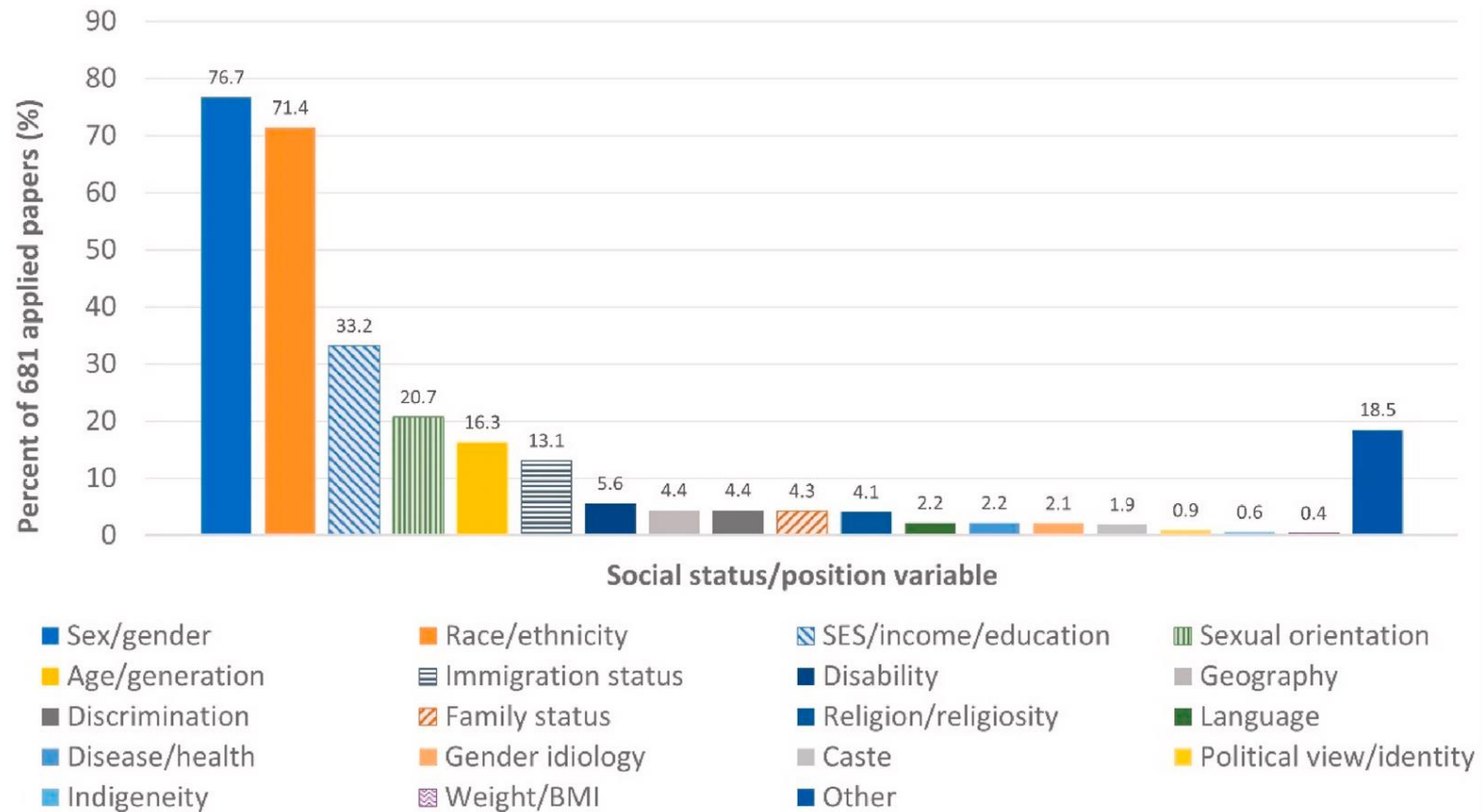


Figure 2. Social positions used in quantitative intersectionality analyses

Source: Bauer et al., 2021

# Is using intersectionality enough to make research critical and cutting-edge - or are additional theories/tools needed?

- **Intersectionality provides a critical framework, but it is not sufficient by itself.**
- **Intersectionality must be applied actively:**
  - With **critical reflexivity**,
  - Through **context-specific analysis**,
  - And in combination with other **theoretical and methodological tools**.
- In the field of entrepreneurship research, for example, **we can combine intersectionality** with e.g.:
  - **Resource-based perspectives**, to study how access to entrepreneurial resources is unevenly distributed;
  - **Institutional theory**, to explore how formal and informal institutions reproduce or challenge inequalities;
  - Critical entrepreneurship studies, which already question dominant assumptions of individual merit and self-reliance;
  - **Social capital theory**, to understand how networks and support systems are shaped by intersectional identities.

# Empirical Insights from the ECOOM Student Entrepreneurship Group

*Intersecting Identities in Student Entrepreneurship*

Erika Branca

# What do we know?

## Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) **is key for predicting entrepreneurial behaviour.**

## Systematic differences in ESE

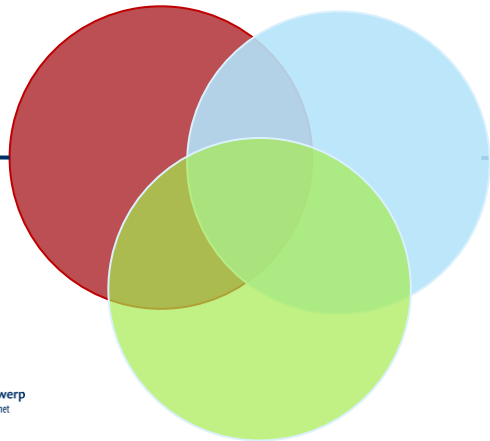
**Women, migrants, and lower-class** individuals often report lower ESE.

## Reasons for lower ESE

- Exposure to **discrimination** and **stereotypes** undermines **confidence**.
- **Unequal access** to economic, social, and educational resources.
- **Structural barriers limit opportunities and reinforce feelings of incapacity.**

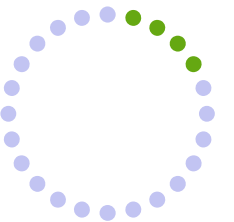
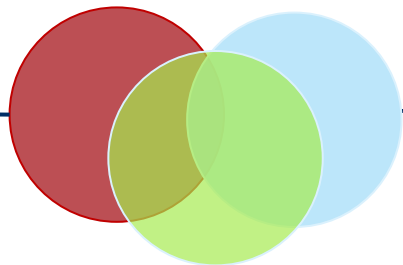
# What do we not know?

- How this **diminished self-perception, stemming from multiple forms of oppression**, might play a role in entrepreneurship
- How **gender, migration, and social class interact simultaneously to shape ESE.**
- **How differences in ESE**, shaped by intersecting identities, **influence entrepreneurial behaviour.**

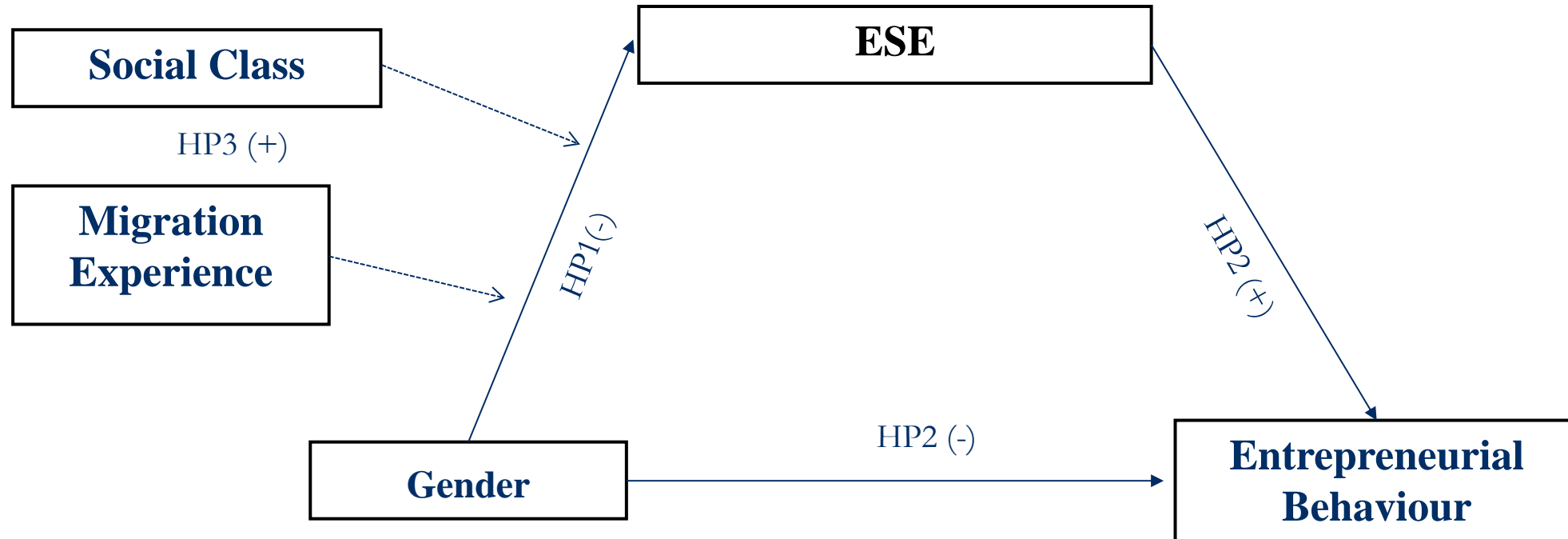


# How the paper address the gap

- Considers **gender, migration background, and social class as mutually constitutive**, not as separate additive variables.
- Highlights how **power relations and social inequalities are internalized and affect ESE and subsequent behaviour.**
- Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 2011, 2020), which posits that entrepreneurial behaviour is influenced by **attitudes** toward the behaviour, **subjective norms**, and **perceived behavioural control**, aspects which can be affected by how individuals **internalize systems of inequality.**



# Conceptual Model



Source: Authors' elaboration

# Hyphotesis Development

- **H1:** *The relationship between **gender** and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is moderated by **migration status and social class**, such that the negative impact of gender on ESE is amplified for immigrants and individuals from lower social classes.*
- **H2:** *Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) **mediates** the relationship between **gender and entrepreneurial behaviour**.*
- **H3:** ***Migration status and social class moderate the relationship between gender and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) and also its subsequent impact on entrepreneurial behaviour**; such that the negative impact of gender on ESE - and consequently on entrepreneurial behaviour - is amplified for female immigrants from lower social classes.*

# Data collection and Methodology

## DATA COLLECTION

- 2023 wave of the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey (GUESSS) (Sieger et al., 2019),
- Plus a **follow-up survey** conducted in 2024.

## THE SAMPLE

- Belgian student sample.
- Final after data cleaning: 923 students.

## THE METHODOLOGY

Analyses were conducted using SPSS (Version 25), incorporating the PROCESS macro by Andrew F. Hayes (Version 4.2), which is widely used for path analysis involving direct and indirect effects..

## Gender identity and minority status

<b>Gender</b>	Captures participants' gender identity, including male, female, non-binary options and other, to account for and reflect gender diversity.
<b>Perceived minority status</b>	Explores whether participants identify with one or more minority groups, such as ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or skin colour.

## Race

<b>Nationality</b>	Captures participants' country of origin, offering insight into their geographical and cultural background.
<b>City of study and City grown up in</b>	Provides context about participants' cultural and social environment, offering a deeper understanding of their lived experiences.
<b>Immigrant and International Status</b>	Differentiates participants based on migration background (e.g., first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants, international students, or mixed categories).
<b>Ethnic/Cultural Background</b>	Captures participants' self-identified ethnic or cultural heritage using broad categories (e.g., Sub-Saharan African, Southern European).
<b>Language Proficiency</b>	Assesses fluency in the dominant local language as a potential barrier or enabler to social integration and participation.

## Class Measures

<b>Family Socioeconomic Status</b>	Participants rate their family's standing within the community in terms of wealth, education, and occupation.
<b>Self-Perception of Class</b>	Participants assess their relative standing compared to peers in their educational or community environment.

## Regression Results – Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE)

Variable	B Coefficient	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
<b>Gender</b>	<b>-0.2079</b>	-0.3653	-0.0506
1 <sup>st</sup> Gen Immigrant	-0.2616	-0.6419	0.1186
2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen Immigrant	-0.0156	-0.2922	0.2610
International Student	0.0512	-0.1733	0.2758
Immigrant & Int. Student	-0.9365	-1.9164	-0.0435
<b>Social Class</b>	<b>0.1861</b>	0.1421	0.2302
Int1: Gender x 1 <sup>st</sup> Gen Immigrant	0.2391	-0.4392	0.9175
<b>Int2: Gender x 2<sup>nd</sup> Gen Immigrant</b>	<b>-0.5484</b>	-1.0164	-0.0804
Int3: Gender x International Student	0.2385	-0.1870	0.6640
Int4: Gender x Immigrant & Int. Student	-0.2943	-2.2093	1.6208
<b>Int5: Gender x Social Class</b>	<b>0.0148</b>	-0.0694	0.0991
Study Level	0.0119	-0.0851	0.1089
Study Domain	-0.0263	-0.0464	-0.0061
Entrepreneurial Parents	0.1478	0.0486	0.2469
Minority: sexual orientation	0.1292	-0.1629	0.4214
Minority: disability	-0.1817	-0.5647	0.2013
Minority: ethnic	0.0629	-0.2732	0.3990
Minority: skin colour	0.1977	-0.2007	0.5961
Minority: religious	0.4138	0.0452	0.7824
Constant	-0.2862	-0.4424	-0.1299
Sample	923		
R-sq	0.1254		
F(9, 4535) =	6.8134		
p-value	0.0000		

Notes: N = 923

## Regression Results – Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Behaviour

Variable	B Coefficient	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Gender	<b>-0.0587</b>	-0.1124	-0.0050
ESE	<b>0.0881</b>	0.0636	0.1127
Study Level	-0.0118	-0.0492	0.0256
Study Domain	0.0086	0.0007	0.0164
Entrepreneurial Parents	0.0554	0.0165	0.0943
Minority: Sexual Orientation	-0.0507	-0.1646	0.0633
Minority: Disability	0.0422	-0.1076	0.1921
Minority: Ethnic	0.0001	-0.1216	0.1219
Minority: Skin Colour	0.2168	0.0631	0.3705
Minority: Religious	0.1176	-0.0208	0.2559
Constant	-0.2862	-0.4424	-0.1299
R-sq	0,0892		
F(10, 912) =	8,9287		
p-value	0.0001		

# Moderated Mediation

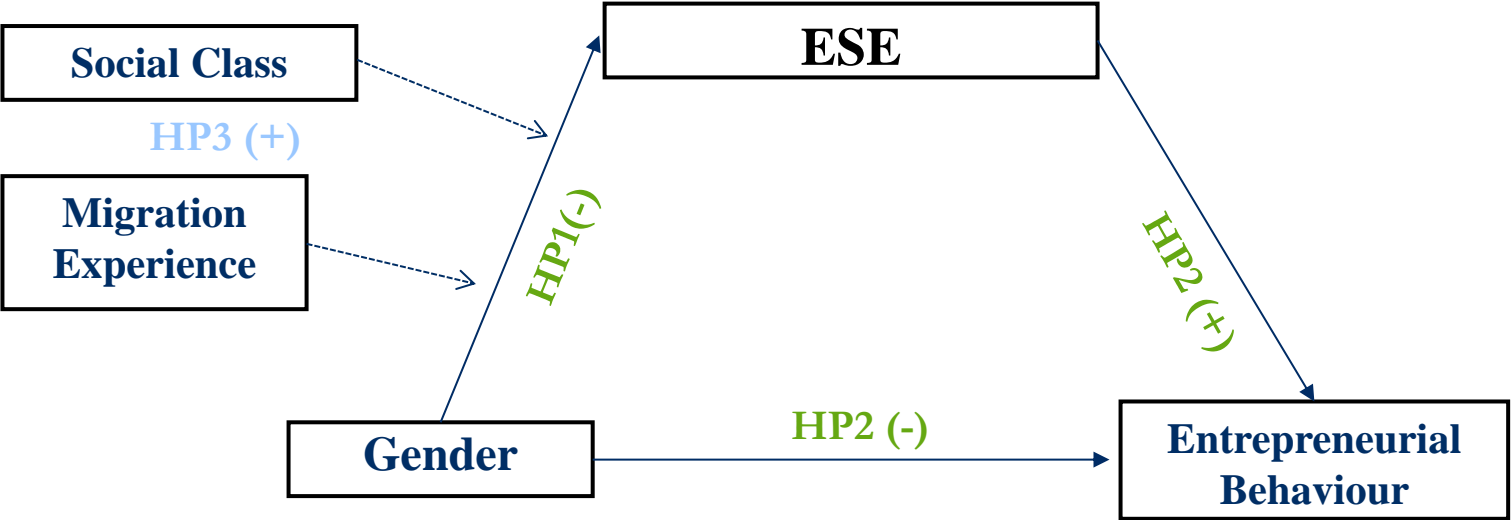
Table 5. Indirect effect of Gender via ESE

	Indirect Effect	BootSE	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Native (migration=0)	-0.0183	0.0080	-0.0358	-0.0048
1 <sup>st</sup> Gen-Immigrant (migration=1)	0.0027	0.0316	-0.0508	0.0741
2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen-Immigrant (migration=2)	-0.0666	0.0269	-0.1229	-0.0176
International Students (migration=3)	0.0027	0.0176	-0.0283	0.0413
Immigrant & International Students (migration=4)	-0.0442	0.0681	-0.1758	0.0998

Table 6. Index of Moderated Mediation

Moderator / Group	Indirect Effect	BootSE	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Index of moderated mediation	Migration Status	-0.0483	0.0260	-0.1028
	Social Class	0.0013	0.0039	-0.0069
	Native	-0.0183	0.0080	-0.0358
Conditional Indirect Effects by Migration	1 <sup>st</sup> Gen	0.0027	0.0316	-0.0508
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen	-0.0666	0.0269	-0.1229
	International Students	0.0027	0.0176	-0.0283
	Immigrant & International Students	-0.0442	0.0681	-0.1758

# Results



H	Summary
H1	Gender negatively affects ESE; this effect is stronger for migrants and lower-class individuals.
H2	ESE mediates the relationship between gender and entrepreneurial behaviour.
H3	The negative impact of gender on ESE, and consequently on entrepreneurial behaviour, is amplified for female immigrants.

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# Thank you!

# Time for Q&A