

A review of and future agenda for research on identity in entrepreneurship

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Entrepreneurial identity
Entrepreneurship
Founders
Role identity
Social identity
Venture identity
Identity work
Multiple identities
Bibliometric analysis

ABSTRACT

Research on identity in entrepreneurship represents a central, dynamic, and quickly growing field of research. Yet, rapid growth has led to a diversity of theoretical conversations and methodological advancements that has yielded a largely disjointed body of existing work. To advance research in this area, we systematically review 180 articles on identity(ies) in entrepreneurship from the last 20 years. We conducted a bibliometric analysis using terms in the keywords, titles, and abstracts of identified articles to examine the co-occurrence of these terms. We then develop an organizing framework that reflects four unique conversations within the body of research—distinctions, variations, constructions, and intersections—and highlight the key research questions and themes studied with each conversation. We chart a path for future research that reflects the broad spectrum of views in the literature and propose new opportunities for research that takes a network-based approach, explores post-emergent venture states of identity, and moves the study of identity to the digital world of online communities.

Executive summary

Over the years, academics and practitioners have shown increased interest in identity in entrepreneurship. This rise in interest reflects a mounting awareness across scientific and professional fields in understanding the influence of identity on entrepreneurs and other undertakings central to entrepreneurship. This is evidenced by the volume of articles focused on identity in entrepreneurship (180), the number of citations connected to this work (> 20,000), and the relative importance of identity in entrepreneurship across premier entrepreneurship and management conferences, book chapters (Crosina, 2018) and edited volumes (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2018), special issues (Leitch and Harrison, 2016), and dialogues in premier journals (Pan et al., 2019; Wry and York, 2019). Despite this rise in interest, existing research on identity in entrepreneurship remains fragmented, making it difficult to synthesize the diverse theoretical conversations that exist within this stream of work.

In this paper, we systematically review this body of scholarship in order to provide a foundation of knowledge and structure around the diverse conversations that have evolved over the past two decades of research on identity in entrepreneurship. We applied bibliometric analysis, a method that uses bibliographic information (e.g., keywords, titles, and abstracts) to summarize a field of research and to organize the historical and ongoing conversations occurring in the literature (Baker et al., 2020; Donthu et al., 2020). Our review revealed four distinct conversations (*distinctions*—how entrepreneurs and their corresponding identities are distinct from

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2020.106049>

Received 4 December 2018; Received in revised form 12 August 2020; Accepted 21 August 2020
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other groups, *variations*—variations or varieties of identity types among entrepreneurs, *constructions*—construction, creation, and evolution of entrepreneurial identities, and *intersections*—intersection of the identities of entrepreneurs and other entities) occurring in the field that each focus on a unique set of research questions and topics of interest.

Our review of this body of research suggests the importance of bridging conceptual and empirical advancements to better understand the identity(ies) of entrepreneurs. We find several differences across conversations as well as areas of overlap and highlight areas where existing theory and methods appear limited or underdeveloped, representing major opportunities for future research. We emphasize how these conversations could advance by adopting more cross-conversation theoretical and methodological engagement and discuss three new areas of research that appear ripe for development. Specifically, we propose adopting new perspectives by taking a network-based approach, exploring post-emergent venture states and other perspectives of identity, and moving the study of identity to the digital world by studying online entrepreneurial communities. We conclude that future research should consider varied and multiple theoretical lenses and methodological approaches when exploring identity in entrepreneurship. We hope our review spurs additional scholarship that encompasses all the distinctive, integrative, and evolving features of identity that are central to entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs, or founders and owners, launch every organization. Understanding who these important individuals are is, perhaps, one of the most fundamental objectives in the field of entrepreneurship (Carland et al., 1984; Reynolds, 1997). Prior research in this area predominately centered on identifying traits and characteristics that differentiated entrepreneurs from other individuals or professions (Busenitz and Barney, 1997). Over the past few decades, however, a new and growing body of literature has placed more emphasis on identity-based perspectives of entrepreneurs. This research, which we generally refer to as focused on identity in entrepreneurship, has yielded a wealth of insights into how the categorization and self-definitions of entrepreneurs develop (Grimes et al., 2018; Phillips et al., 2013) and influence key motivations (Cardon et al., 2009), behaviors (Murnieks et al., 2014; Powell and Baker, 2017), decisions (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011; Mathias and Williams, 2017), strategic responses (Powell and Baker, 2014), venture outcomes (Mathias and Williams, 2018; O'Neil and Ucbasaran, 2016), and other important consequences (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Meek and Wood, 2016; Navis and Glynn, 2010; Wry and York, 2017).

Despite a robust dialogue across entrepreneurship and management journals, existing identity research in entrepreneurship has remained largely disjointed, making it difficult to take stock of what we know. Specifically, the diversity of theoretical approaches (e.g., social identity, role identity, organizational identity, personal identity, and identity work), methodologies, and research questions addressed adds richness to the literature but creates fragmentation among streams of work. For example, a recent debate between Wry and York (2019) and Pan et al. (2019) makes it clear that important differences exist in how scholars view particular identity perspectives (i.e., role and personal identities vs. social identities). Further, although we have gained an appreciation for the different theories that help us understand identity(ies) of entrepreneurs, previous work has focused heavily on a few identity theories and generally has not integrated them, creating an artificial barrier in our understanding of related and often parallel constructs (Crosina, 2018; Kašperová and Kitching, 2014; Powell and Baker, 2014, 2017). Although several scholars have made strides to address the resulting problems with theoretical integration (Gruber and MacMillan, 2017; Powell and Baker, 2014, 2017; Shepherd and Williams, 2018) and definitional clarity across levels of analysis (Navis and Glynn, 2011), the field remains disjointed. These combined deficiencies signal a need for a comprehensive synthesis of the literature and a framework that considers the broader array of different 'identities' available in an entrepreneurial context.

To provide such a synthesis, we surveyed the literature and discovered 180 articles exploring identity(ies) in entrepreneurship. We leveraged bibliometric analysis to systematically review this body of scholarship and develop a framework that reflects four unique conversations within the body of research on identity in entrepreneurship—*distinctions*, *variations*, *constructions*, and *intersections*. In providing this systematic review and theoretical framework, we offer several important contributions to the literature. First, we identify, integrate, and explain the primary areas of conversation concerning identity and entrepreneurship, including various identity types, theoretical constructs, antecedents, and outcomes. One advantage of this synthesis is that it allows for a broad-based and inclusive view of the literature (i.e., not focusing just on one theory or level of analysis). A second advantage is that it uncovers potentially hidden conversations and themes and does not 'take sides' on debates within the literature because the authors' own words in the articles in our review empirically ground our synthesis. Our review reveals four distinct conversations occurring in the field that each focus on a unique set of research questions and topics of interest.

Our second contribution is in noting where these conversations draw from one another or have thematic bridges that are common across them. By observing the differences in these conversations as well as their areas of overlap, we highlight where theoretical or methodological approaches in one conversation may be fruitfully applied to another conversation and therefore expand our understanding of identity in entrepreneurship. As a third contribution, we leverage this review to chart a new path for future research. Specifically, to advance identity in entrepreneurship, we propose adopting new perspectives by taking a network-based approach, exploring post-emergent venture states and other perspectives of identity, and moving the study of identity to the digital world by studying online entrepreneurial communities. We also suggest new methods to address these, and potentially many other, lines of future inquiry.

We begin by discussing the importance and uniqueness of work on identity in entrepreneurship and why we need a review of the literature. We then explain our bibliometric and thematic approach to systematically reviewing the literature, which we use to offer an improved understanding of it. Finally, we set forth an agenda to guide future research.

2. Why study identity in entrepreneurship?

In order to better understand entrepreneurship, scholars historically examined how personality and psychological traits impacted the entrepreneurial process, particularly attending to how entrepreneurs differed from other businesspeople, such as managers and executives. These efforts produced a large, but mostly irreconcilable, body of research (Powell and Baker, 2014) because entrepreneurs represent an eclectic and heterogeneous group who do not possess a unitary personality type or a specific set of psychological traits.

Realizing entrepreneurs and their corresponding ventures are diverse, scholars largely moved away from personality characteristics to instead utilize identity-based theories to better understand entrepreneurs and their actions. Identity theories seek to answer the questions of “who am I?” or “who do I want to be?” (Ashforth et al., 2008; Powell and Baker, 2014, 2017).

Identity research in entrepreneurship draws from and builds upon broader foundational work on identity (for reviews see Hogg et al., 1995; Stryker and Burke, 2000). By adopting an identity-based lens, entrepreneurs have been recast not simply as individuals who create a venture but also as individuals who fervently pursue entrepreneurial activities that provide significant self-meaning (Murnieks, 2007). This identity perspective helps explain the diverse motivations driving entrepreneurs, including their distinct decision making and strategic actions. When salient or central, identity can predict the behaviors an entrepreneur adopts (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011: 945). Thus, identity research in entrepreneurship offers a theoretical framework and greater insight into the entrepreneurial process by incorporating explanations of who entrepreneurs are and what they do.

Despite identity being a major topic for entrepreneurship scholars, little agreement exists about the core nature of the identity of entrepreneurs (Baker and Powell, 2020; Crosina, 2018). Although all work identities are nested and multi-faceted, entrepreneurship has fundamentally unique implications with regard to identity, which makes deep integration of constructs and definitions difficult. For instance, unlike the typical employee, entrepreneurs ‘do it all’ in their organization, reflecting someone who is a “jack-of-all-trades” (Lazear, 2004) or who “wears many hats” (Mathias and Williams, 2018). Entrepreneurs can find meaning as they engage in a wide range of entrepreneurial activities, and accordingly, form one or more role identities (Stryker and Burke, 2000) associated with a specific sub-set of entrepreneurial activities (Cardon et al., 2009) or with multiple entrepreneurial activities (Mathias and Williams, 2018). Moreover, whereas other individuals’ group memberships (e.g., environmentalist) may have little influence on their organizations, entrepreneurs’ identities systematically shape key venture decisions and outcomes (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011; Powell and Baker, 2014). Unlike employees who identify *with* organizations (Ashforth et al., 2008), many entrepreneurs are identified by their organizations (Galvin et al., 2015). Entrepreneurs serve as the creators and curators of their venture identities, so much so that at times, ventures are often synonymous with their founders, rendering it difficult to disentangle the identity of entrepreneur and venture (Fisher et al., 2016; Navis and Glynn, 2011), as the venture is oft-considered an “extension of the founder” (Cannella et al., 2015: 437). Further, how entrepreneurs develop their identities, and how their identities change over time, remain critical yet understudied topics (Leitch and Harrison, 2016).

Given the wide array of research questions involved and perspectives taken, scholars describe the identity of entrepreneurs as a “multi-dimensional phenomenon” (Vesala et al., 2007: 49), “the set of identities that is chronically salient to a founder in her or his day-to-day work” (Powell and Baker, 2014: 1059), “the set of behavioral expectations associated with the business owner role” (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009a: 1251), or “the constellation of claims around the founder, new venture, and market opportunity as to ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’” (Navis and Glynn, 2011: 480), among many others (see Crosina, 2018). Our intent is not to collapse these unique and varied approaches for studying identity in entrepreneurship into a singular definition for what *an* entrepreneurial identity ‘is.’ Instead, we propose that identity in entrepreneurship holds highly distinctive features and meanings among entrepreneurs that influence their thoughts and actions throughout the entrepreneurial process. As Ireland and Webb (2007) note, “In many ways, entrepreneurship is a process of identity construction. Entrepreneurs establish ventures based on and driven by self-identities” (916). Thus, given the importance of identity to entrepreneurship and the varied array of topics considered, we suggest that a review that accounts for the dynamic and complex nature of identity in entrepreneurship and elucidates the unique conversations and bridges among them is warranted.

3. Overview of the review process

3.1. Identifying articles for the review

To locate articles with a focus on identity and entrepreneurship, we leveraged recent review articles published in the *Journal of Business Venturing* as a guide (e.g., Fisher et al., 2017; Matthews et al., 2018; Sutter et al., 2019). We first conducted a targeted search of premier journals using the Financial Times (FT) list of 50 top journals in business for relevant articles on identity in entrepreneurship. To ensure our review was rigorous and thorough, we then broadened our search to include additional management and entrepreneurship-specific journals not on the FT top 50 journal list that might contain articles relevant to our review. In this step, we utilized EBSCO, Science Direct, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar to find articles with the following words (and their derivations): founder, entrepreneur, identity, identification, and venture. We also reviewed the reference lists of articles and searched for in-press articles at 16 high-quality management and entrepreneurship journals through the end of 2019.¹

To meet our inclusion criteria, articles needed to focus on identity and entrepreneurship as main rather than peripheral topics.

¹ *Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Strategic Management Journal, Journal of Management, Organization Science, Journal of Business Venturing, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Journal of Management Studies, Research Policy, Organizations, Journal of Small Business Management, Family Business Review, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Business Research.*

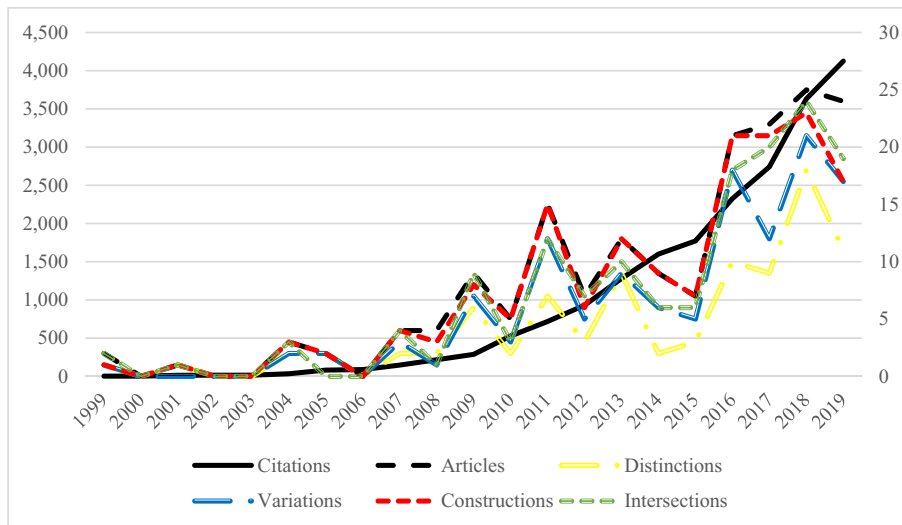


Fig. 1. Rate of publications and citations of identity in entrepreneurship articles in the review.

Once we identified an article, we determined if the article focused on an entrepreneur's, his/her venture's, and/or an entrepreneurial team's identity(ies). We excluded several articles that exclusively centered on either identity or entrepreneurship but not both. We excluded articles centered solely on the broader area of 'organizational identity,' but we included articles that focused on 'venture identity' in an entrepreneurial context. We utilized a three-person review to determine article fit, consistency, and ultimately, inclusion in our study (cf. Matthews et al., 2018; Sutter et al., 2019). Our comprehensive search covered 20 years and resulted in 180 articles across numerous disciplines, journals, and research fields. We indicate the articles included in our review with an asterisk in the reference section and list them in the Appendix. Ultimately, this review revealed that, from many perspectives, identity represents a dynamic and quickly-growing area of entrepreneurship scholarship. Fig. 1 highlights the significant growth in this research area over the past twenty years.

3.2. Bibliometric analysis

To systematically review prior work, we employed bibliometric techniques (Baker et al., 2020; De Bakker et al., 2005; Okubo, 1997). Bibliometric techniques use bibliographic information (e.g., abstracts, titles, and keywords) as an input to develop "representative summaries of the extant literature" (Donthu et al., 2020: 2) and help to provide "a full description of the content of the research effort and its development" (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004: 983). We leveraged VOSviewer, a software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks, to analyze the complete set of articles in our review and to yield clusters representing the underlying structure of the literature. Specifically, we used the bibliometric tool to analyze the titles, keywords, and abstracts of the articles (as written by the authors), pull the most frequently used terms, and map them according to their interrelationships with one another. This bibliometric analysis process yielded 4 distinct clusters (see Fig. 2) where clusters represent terms that co-occur together. Larger circles indicate more frequently used terms, and the color-coded lines indicate the co-occurrence of terms.

3.3. Interpreting the bibliometric analysis

After we mapped the raw data, we then interpreted the four clusters of terms to elucidate the conversations occurring within the identity in entrepreneurship literature, as prior work shows that such co-occurrence of terms "depicts the conceptual or knowledge structure of the literature" (Donthu et al., 2020: 2). As part of the interpretation process, we mapped the terms in Fig. 2 in each color-coded cluster to articles containing those terms. For example, Lewis's (2013: 252) study on "women's search for [and construction of] an authentically driven entrepreneurial identity" and Phillips et al.'s (2013: 134) study about tie construction as "a form of narrative identity work" are highly-cited articles using the red circle term "identity work" in the article titles, keywords, and/or abstracts. A single article can contribute to more than one conversation, as it can contain terms from different conversations (colors in Fig. 2). For example, Jain et al. (2009) uses terms "identity work" (red), "academic entrepreneurship" (green), and "role identity" (blue), which indicates that it contributes to multiple conversations.

Consistent with coding procedures in other entrepreneurship review articles (e.g., Grégoire et al., 2011), our human-centered process involved two authors evaluating each cluster based on the terms co-occurring in the cluster and the articles linked to those terms. We explored the first cluster (shown in yellow), which contained terms such as "family/family business," "founder," "firm," "level," and "difference." The two authors read the full articles in which these terms appeared to determine how they fit together. In analyzing the articles using the terms in the first cluster, the two authors found that articles in this cluster generally sought to explore

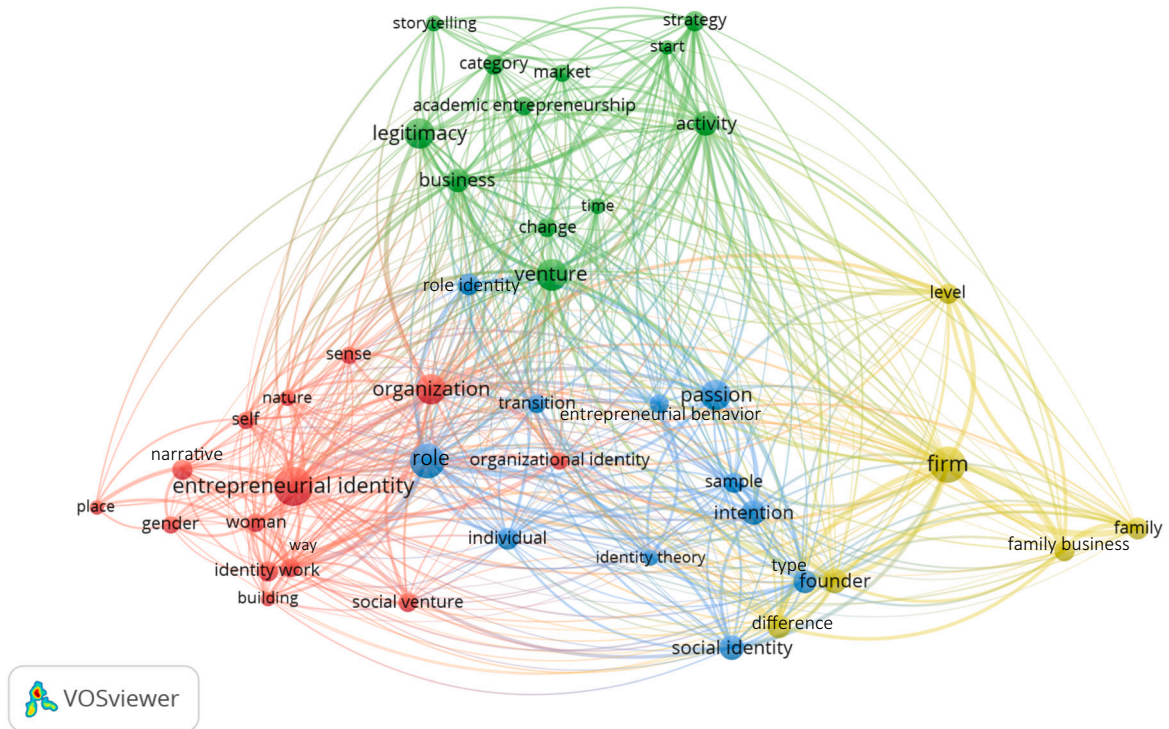


Fig. 2. Visual bibliometric map of identity in entrepreneurship articles in the review.

*Larger circles indicate more frequently used terms, and the color-coded lines indicate the co-occurrence of terms.

differences between entrepreneurial founders and other individuals, notably family firm founders and owners. For example, [Miller et al. \(2011\)](#) discuss the distinctiveness of the role identities of lone founders versus family owners/CEOs. The two authors then shared these insights with the other co-authors, who read the abstracts to assess the fit of this interpretation with their own. After a back-and-forth discussion with the entire author team, we agreed that the articles using terms in this cluster explored how entrepreneurs (and their corresponding identities) differed, or were distinct, from other groups. Thus, we refer to this conversation (i.e., yellow cluster) as *distinctions*.

Within the second cluster (shown in blue), terms included “identity theory,” “social identity,” “role identity,” “role,” “intention,” “transition,” “passion,” “individual,” “entrepreneur* behavior,” “sample,”² and “type.” As we explored articles using these terms, we found that scholars were studying how entrepreneurs’ unique passions, motivations, and intentions led to considerable variations among entrepreneurs. These scholars often invoked particular identity theories, such as social or role identity to explain why a variety of types of entrepreneurs exist. For example, [Cardon et al. \(2009\)](#) introduced specific variations in entrepreneurs’ role identities (founder, developer, and inventor) whereas [Fauchart and Gruber \(2011\)](#) examined the existence of three pure types of founder social identities (communitarians, missionaries, and darwinians). We thus refer to this conversation (i.e., blue cluster) as *variations*.

As we explored the third cluster (shown in red), terms such as “building,” “narrative,” “gender/woman,” “nature,” “organization/identity,” “place,” “self,” “sense,” “way,” “social venture/enterprise,” “entrepreneurial identity,” and “identity work” emerged. In interpreting the underlying articles that used these terms, we found scholars focused their conversation on the construction, creation, and evolution of entrepreneurial identities, or how entrepreneurs construct and negotiate identities. For example, [Martens et al. \(2007: 1107\)](#) discuss how identity constructions “are invoked within narratives” as entrepreneurs acquire resources, [Chasserio et al. \(2014\)](#) analyze how women build an entrepreneurial identity, and [Lundqvist et al. \(2015\)](#) draw from entrepreneurial learning theory to explain how entrepreneurial identity develops and evolves. We thus refer to this conversation (i.e., red cluster) as *constructions*.

Finally, the fourth cluster (shown in green), includes terms such as “venture,” “business,” “market,” “category,” “activity,” “change,” “start,” “story*,” “strategy,” “time,” “legitimacy,” and “academic entrepreneurship.” The articles using these terms focus on the interface between the identity of the entrepreneur and that of the venture (or market category). For example, [Navis and Glynn \(2011\)](#) examine the entrepreneurial identity as a function of the founder, the venture, and the market opportunity. As these efforts

² Some terms, such as “sample,” were not diagnostic for determining the content of the conversations. We kept them here to reflect the raw data input and the non-human-coded output in [Fig. 2](#) of the bibliometric analysis. Indeed, reading the articles was necessary to move from articles using specific terms to the conversations in which they are embedded.

explore questions at the intersection of identities of entrepreneurs and other entities (employees, teams, firm, category, collectives), we refer to this conversation (i.e., green cluster) as *intersections*.³

Together, the efforts of our bibliometric analysis yielded four distinct clusters of terms, which we interpreted as conversations about distinctions, variations, constructions, and intersections. Fig. 1 indicates the number of articles with keywords that fall into each cluster each year. Though we organize our review according to these four conversations, our intent with this structure is not to classify specific articles into specific categories; indeed, many articles speak to multiple conversations. Instead, we leverage this organizing framework to provide a comprehensive overview of how different conversations of identity in entrepreneurship have emerged as the field has evolved. Importantly, we use this structure to better understand where we have been, provide clarity about the key themes and research questions in the field, and perhaps most importantly, chart a path for where future research could be going. We delve into each of these four conversations, as summarized in Table 1, in the following sections.

4. Distinctions

4.1. Distinctions of identity as entrepreneurs

The study of identity in entrepreneurship emerged from a tradition similar to that of most new fields—exploring what makes entrepreneurs *distinct* from other groups of individuals. Initially, scholars examined how personality and psychological traits impacted the entrepreneurial process, particularly attending to how entrepreneurs differed from other business types, such as managers and executives, or the personality characteristics that distinguished successful from unsuccessful entrepreneurs. However, in the late 1990's, scholars (e.g., Baron, 1998: 277) began to question the efficacy of such efforts and asserted that “the conclusions of 30 years of research indicates that there are no personality characteristics that predict who will be a successful entrepreneur.” Accordingly, entrepreneurship turned away from research focused solely on personality and began to adopt theories of identity (Powell and Baker, 2014: 1428), with much of this initial work focused on insights toward establishing a more comprehensive and robust explanation for the *distinctions* of entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs, predominantly between family identity(ies) and non-family, entrepreneurial identity(ies). Fig. 1 and Appendix A indicate that although the conversation on distinctions has roots in the earliest work on entrepreneurship and identity, work in this area began to coalesce in the mid to late 2000s with continued growth in the 2010s.

4.2. Family business and identity

A prominent theme in the research conversation of *distinctions* involves the role of family as a central influence on the identity of entrepreneurs and their corresponding ventures (Bingham et al., 2011; Sundaramurthy and Kreiner, 2008). For example, in addressing the unique crossroads of ‘family’ and ‘business,’ earlier work identified a “family business meta-identity,” or “who we are as a family business” (Reay, 2009; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009a). This research indicates that the balance between family and business can create tensions and conflicts not only at an organizational level but also at an individual level, as entrepreneurs balance the conflict associated with having a family identity and a business owner identity (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009a). Here, identity scholars operate from the assumption that the dynamics and entrepreneurial process of family business “are different” from those of nonfamily businesses (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009a: 1257) and that the “meta-identity reflects the distinctiveness of the family business” (Reay, 2009: 1267). This area of research adopts a perspective that views identity as a source of distinctiveness. As such, these earlier studies stem from the fundamental premise that family business owners possess a unique set of behavioral expectations (and corresponding identity(ies)) from nonfamily owners and that those differences warrant exploring.

Following this work, several studies then built on this notion by showing how these distinct identities shape the priorities owners have for their businesses, and accordingly, the strategies and financial successes of those ventures. For example, extending Shepherd and Haynie (2009a), Miller and LeBreton-Miller et al. (2011) illustrate how family firms represent an extreme case of founders “managing” multiple identities, as they balance their identification with family and commercial stakeholders. They assert for this reason lone founders (non-family owners) possess an “entrepreneurially-oriented” identity, whereas family founders possess a “blended identity” that is less entrepreneurially-oriented. These identities shape founder decisions in important ways—with family founders choosing conservation (i.e., non-growth) strategies and lone founders choosing growth-based strategies (Miller et al., 2011). In turn, these strategies—guided by entrepreneurs' identities—produce mediocre financial returns for family firms and superior financial returns for lone founder firms (Miller and Breton-Miller, 2011; Miller et al., 2011).

At the same time, despite the family's negative impact on *financial* performance, firms with greater family involvement exhibit a stronger collectivistic identity orientation, leading to better corporate *social* performance than nonfamily firms (Bingham et al., 2011). Zellweger et al. (2013) similarly theorize that family founders attend to “identity fit” between the family and firm, which motivates concerns for their corporate reputation and leads the family to pursue nonfinancial goals. Aligning with and extending this work, Cannella et al. (2015) discover that the distinct identities of lone-founder and family founder firms guide those organizations to forge partnerships and select board directors from similar types of firms. The authors find lone-founder firms' select directors with a more individualistic and entrepreneurial identity, since their identity aligns with their shareholder-wealth maximization goals, and family firms select those with a more familial and communitarian identity, since their identity aligns with their familial goals. In this

³ We distinguish our definition of intersections from those of critical race theorists, who consider intersections as “a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power” (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1990, 1995).

Table 1
Thematic patterns of identity in entrepreneurship in the review.

Conversations	Themes	Bibliometric terms ^a	Research questions	Example articles
Distinctions (yellow cluster)	Family business and identity	Family, family business, firm, founder	Examines identity as a source of distinctiveness by exploring the unique identities of entrepreneurs, especially the distinctions between family and non-family entrepreneurial identities.	Reay, 2009; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009a; Miller et al., 2011; Zellweger et al., 2013; Cannella et al., 2015
Variations (blue cluster)	Variations in role identities of entrepreneurs	Identity theory, role identity, passion, role, intention	Explores the notion that entrepreneurs' role identities can be many and varied by examining the unique passions, motivations, and intentions for pursuing entrepreneurship, drawing on role identity theory.	Cardon et al., 2009; Hoang and Gimeno, 2010; Murnieks et al., 2014; Mathias and Williams, 2017; Oo et al., 2019
	Variations in social identities of entrepreneurs	Social identity, type, individual, entrepreneurial behavior	Investigates how entrepreneurs' membership in a group guides their social motivations, self-evaluations, and frames of reference, drawing on social identity theory.	Fauchart and Gruber, 2011; Falck et al., 2012; Obschonka et al., 2012; Sieger et al., 2016; de la Cruz et al., 2018
	Variations in identities of entrepreneurs drawing from multiple theoretical perspectives	Identity theory, role identity, role, social identity, type, (com)passion, intention	Integrates identity theories (e.g., role and social identity) and/or brings new theories to bear (e.g., personal identity theory, identity control theory) to explain variations in identities of entrepreneurs and their influence.	Powell and Baker, 2014; York et al., 2016; Conger et al., 2018; Gruber and MacMillan, 2017; Wry and York, 2017
Constructions (red cluster)	Identity work	Entrepreneurial identity, self, identity work	Examines how entrepreneurs form, revise, and lose identities.	Down and Reveley, 2004; Jain et al., 2009; Grimes, 2018; Newbery et al., 2018
	Gender dynamics	Gender, women	Reveals how masculinity influences entrepreneurial identity and how gender/feminist identities are negotiated and managed throughout the entrepreneurial process.	Nadin, 2007; Essers and Benschop, 2009; Lewis, 2013; Marlow and McAdam, 2015
	Identity narratives	Narrative, organization, organizational identity, sense (of self, making, giving)	Studies how entrepreneurial narratives influence entrepreneurial identities, including how entrepreneurs leverage narratives to build identity, acquire resources, and/or acquire venture legitimacy.	Martens et al., 2007; Down and Warren, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Phillips et al., 2013; Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018
Intersections (green cluster)	Ventures	Venture, business, legitimacy, change, story telling	Explores how, and with what consequences, entrepreneurs enact their values and beliefs in the new venture legitimization process.	Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; O'Neil and Ucbasaran, 2016; Fisher et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017
	Hybridization	Academic entrepreneurship, change, venture	Examines how entrepreneurs balance multiple conflicting venture identities, such as for hybrid social or academic ventures.	Jain et al., 2009; Moss et al., 2011; Meek and Wood, 2016; York et al., 2016
	Markets and Categories	Market, legitimacy, category	Looks at the intersections of identity dynamics at multiple levels, such as how entrepreneurial identity unfolds in the context of market category emergence.	Navis and Glynn, 2010, 2011; Lee et al., 2017; Irwin et al., 2018

^a By "terms," we mean any word in the titles, keywords, and abstracts of the articles in our review (as written by the authors). The terms listed here are those most-used in the bibliometric analysis. Authors are listed in chronological order.

way, the distinctions conversation evolved from focusing just on the identity of the family firm founder/leader (relative to non-family founders), which has remained an important part of this conversation, and began taking a broader view by exploring how multiple family members' (both owners and/or managers) involvement and identification processes influence the strategic direction of the firm.

Together, the distinctions conversation highlights the presence of family and nonfamily entrepreneurial identities, explicates why these identities influence important strategic decisions, and ultimately, advances how identity impacts critical venture outcomes (e.g., financial or social performance). In so doing, much of this work draws heavily from the family business literature to highlight the fundamental differences between family and nonfamily entrepreneurs, indicating that “there are important *distinctions* that make the two identities [family and nonfamily] unique” (Cannella et al., 2015: 438, italics added).

5. Variations

5.1. Variations of identities of entrepreneurs

In addition to work on how and what makes entrepreneurs *distinct* from other groups of individuals, scholars have also examined how entrepreneurs differ from one another. This focus on *variations* of identities of entrepreneurs flows neatly from work in the broader entrepreneurship literature which explains “that differences among entrepreneurs and among their ventures are as great as the variation between entrepreneurs and nonentrepreneurs” (Gartner, 1985: 696; Gartner, 1988). Like the conversation on distinctions, work on variations has roots in early research on identity and entrepreneurship, but research in this conversation started to coalesce in the late 2000s and early 2010s and has grown substantially in the 2010s.

Researchers have drawn from theories of identity in psychology and sociology, primarily role identity theory and social identity theory, to explain how entrepreneurs' unique passions, motivations, and intentions lead to considerable identity variations among entrepreneurs. We briefly discuss each of these theories and how it has been used in entrepreneurship to understand variations in entrepreneurs' identities.

5.2. Variations in role identities of entrepreneurs

Role identity theory represents one of the most studied areas of identity in entrepreneurship. Role identities reflect the positions we take on in relation to others that define who we are (Caza et al., 2018; Stets and Burke, 2000). Role identity theory notes that individuals can categorize themselves into different relational categories through a process of self-categorization (Stets and Burke, 2000) and these self-categorizations carry expectations that can be internalized and enacted, driving certain kinds of behavior (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker and Serpe, 1982). Role identity in entrepreneurship research began to coalesce in the late 2000s and early 2010s, and one key area examines a wide range of potential role identities entrepreneurs possess within the context of their own ventures; for example, possessing an “inventor” (Cardon et al., 2009), “innovator” (Hoang and Gimeno, 2010), “developer” (Cardon et al., 2009), “manager” (Mathias and Williams, 2017), or “founder” (Ahsan et al., 2018) role identity. These role identities shape fundamental decisions and actions of entrepreneurs, thus rendering them particularly critical for understanding the direction of new ventures. With respect to entrepreneurial role identity, the literature converges around two general approaches: the *multiplicity* of entrepreneurial role identities and *the* entrepreneurial role identity. These approaches emerged at roughly the same time and have developed in parallel with each other—growing significantly in the last decade.

A first approach—the *multiplicity* of entrepreneurial role identities—examines the variety of entrepreneurial role identities entrepreneurs can assume within their ventures. This topic represents a highly studied area of role identity research in entrepreneurship (e.g., Mathias and Williams, 2017; Oo et al., 2019). This work acknowledges the important variations of micro-identities nested within the notion of what it can mean to be an entrepreneur. For example, a stream of work highlights that although an overall role of ‘being an entrepreneur’ exists, important and consistent variations in potential entrepreneurial role identity types also exist, such as inventor, founder, and developer (Cardon et al., 2009, 2013). Entrepreneurial activities associated with different roles vary considerably and entrepreneurs tend to gravitate toward one or more specific entrepreneurial role identities associated with different sets of activities necessary during the entrepreneurial process or within the daily operations of a firm.

Another early and central area of research invoking role identities is entrepreneurial passion, which reflects intense positive feelings directed toward specific sets of entrepreneurial activities associated with different role identities that are meaningful to the self-identity of the entrepreneur (Cardon et al., 2009; Cardon and Kirk, 2015), incorporating identity centrality as a core dimension (Cardon et al., 2009, 2013). Identity centrality “refers to the relative importance that an individual places upon a focal identity compared to other identities,” which contrasts with identity salience, or the “the readiness to act out a focal identity” (Murnieks et al., 2014: 1590; Stryker and Serpe, 1994). The combination of identity centrality and positive affect potentially focused on multiple role identities involved in entrepreneurial passion helps explain different behaviors and outcomes of entrepreneurs (Cardon et al., 2013; Collewaert et al., 2016; Huyghe et al., 2016; Murnieks et al., 2014; Murnieks et al., 2020; Oo et al., 2019; Stroe et al., 2018).

Identity salience is also important for entrepreneurs, since certain venture situations may make different role identities more salient (i.e., more ready to be acted upon), thus resulting in entrepreneurs thinking and acting in highly-varied ways depending on the myriad role identities they must assume (Mathias and Williams, 2017). Importantly, the conversation on variations of identities of entrepreneurs also centers on the notion that an entrepreneur wears many “hats” and therefore must navigate multiple venture-related role identities (e.g., manager, investor, entrepreneur) not only over the course of the venture but also within the course of a single day (Mathias and Williams, 2017). Great attention has been paid to *which* role identity(ies) (or set of role identities)

entrepreneurs can possess and how they navigate these multiple role identities, as these can have profound impacts on critical outcomes. Therefore, scholars have exerted vast efforts to identify and espouse variations of different role identities entrepreneurs can assume.

A second approach—the entrepreneurial role identity—focuses on the broad-based, entrepreneurial role identity (Lahti et al., 2019). This work does not necessarily deny the possibility of multiple entrepreneurial role identities but instead focuses on the entrepreneurial activities associated with possessing a “founder” (Hoang and Gimeno, 2010), “entrepreneurial” (Lundqvist et al., 2015; Murnieks, 2007), or “business owner” (Demetry, 2017) role identity. This approach asserts that entrepreneurs can assume different role identities that may reflect an aspirational state of being or becoming an entrepreneur (Libaers and Wang, 2012; Pfeifer et al., 2016). Scholars suggest this entrepreneurial role identity can also arise unintentionally, when some individuals do not set out to pursue an entrepreneurial career but instead incidentally discover that entrepreneurship conveys who they are (Oo et al., 2019; Shah and Tripsas, 2007). For instance, individuals discover many entrepreneurial opportunities through engaging in a hobbyist activity; these “accidental” or “user” entrepreneurs (Shah and Tripsas, 2007; Von Hippel, 1986, 1994) rarely embark with intentions of firm formation. Rather, their development of an idea and experimentation within a user community leads to a gradual realization that they can commercialize their product solution and adopt an entrepreneurial identity. Similarly, an entrepreneurial role identity can also emerge through “labors of love,” in which individuals take a part-time or freelance hobbyist activity and eventually adopt an entrepreneurial identity as they convert this activity into full-time work (Demetry, 2017; Warnick et al., 2018). We discuss related research in more detail in the constructions section below.

5.3. Variations in social identities of entrepreneurs

Although entrepreneurship scholars initially focused on role identity theory, scholars quickly recognized the utility of social identity theory for understanding entrepreneurs and their ventures (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011). Social identity in entrepreneurship research emerged in the late 2000s and early 2010s. In social identity theory, self-categorization is associated with group categories, as opposed to roles (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Social identities reflect individuals' views of themselves as members of social categories or groups (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Possessing a particular social identity means having common characteristics with others in a group or being an “in group” member because of shared similarities with one group and differences with another (Stets and Burke, 2000). Social identity theory is concerned with intergroup relations and explains how individual and group actions derive through self-categorization and social comparison processes (Hogg et al., 1995).

The social groups that entrepreneurs belong to and identify with can be extensive—religious, family, community, ethnic, capitalist, employer, institutional, academic, and workplace peers, among many others (Barrett and Vershinina, 2017; Goethner et al., 2009; Obschonka et al., 2012; Webb et al., 2009). For example, entrepreneurs can experience social identities based on their association with family members (Cannella et al., 2015; Miller and Breton-Miller, 2011), gender networks (Greenberg and Mollick, 2017), women-owned organizations (Greene and Brush, 2018; Grimes et al., 2018), social enterprises (Hall-Phillips et al., 2016), family teams (Brannon et al., 2013), workplace peers (Obschonka et al., 2012), online communities (Mollick, 2016), and social class (Li and Gustafsson, 2012).⁴

Although scholars generally view entrepreneurs as autonomous and independent individuals, these social groups can greatly shape entrepreneurial behavior. Accordingly, social identities reflect the meanings derived from these memberships and give way to entrepreneurs' prototypical behaviors (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011) and strategic decisions (Cannella et al., 2015) throughout the entrepreneurial process. This foundation underpins a substantial portion of entrepreneurial social identity research and infers that identifying as a member of a social category persists over time. Collectively, existing work reports that an entrepreneur's internalized membership in a particular social group can greatly shape the formation and course of a venture. Whether or not an entrepreneur is tightly-coupled to a family, uniquely identified as a member of a specific gender, or indirectly synonymized with a particular organization or social category, perspectives from social identity yield a sizable contribution to our understanding of entrepreneurs and the formation of identities that are central to entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial identity research employing a social identity lens generally takes one of two approaches. The first explores between-entrepreneur social identities. These approaches highlight the differences in social motivations by comparing different entrepreneurs. As a prominent example, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) suggest that entrepreneurs' social category membership guides their social motivations, self-evaluations, and frames of reference. These social identities influence whether entrepreneurs focus on serving self-interests, supporting a community, or advancing a cause, and thus, guide the creation and development of their ventures. Sieger et al. (2016) build on this work to validate this typology of social identities, and Harlow and Chadha (2019) added ‘guardian’ to the types of social identities identified by Fauchart and Gruber (2011). Other scholars highlight a variety of unique social identities that serve as inspiration for behaviors within their ventures. For example, Obschonka et al. (2012) note how scientists' social identity or group identification with their workplace peers in academia influences their transition from employment to entrepreneurship. Moreover, considerable work demonstrates the importance of peers in social identity processes during critical and impressionable stages of learning entrepreneurship (Falck et al., 2012).

A second approach to studying entrepreneurial social identities involves exploring within-entrepreneur social identities. These efforts acknowledge that each entrepreneur belongs to a variety of different social groups, which can exert conflicting demands on the

⁴ These also represent linkages between the research on *variations* (blue in Fig. 2) and the other conversations in Fig. 2. For example, association with family members (and family business) connects to the conversation (in yellow) on *distinctions*.

entrepreneur, for example, between those in the sporting community (communitarian) and their self-interest (darwinian) (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011). To help understand these identity tensions, Powell and Baker (2014) introduce the idea of congruence and incongruence to reflect whether or not entrepreneurs can pursue multiple social and role identities simultaneously in the pursuit of their venture goals. They suggest that whether an individual's identities are singular, congruent, or incongruent has profound implications for their firm's strategic responses.

In addition, other articles demonstrate that outcomes associated with entrepreneurs' social identities vary considerably. For instance, Murnieks et al. (2019) report that entrepreneurs who experience greater congruence with their social identity develop more positive emotions, and Brändle et al. (2018) highlight the important role of social identity on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Entrepreneurs' social identity also influences their intentions to take on entrepreneurial actions, such as commercializing new technology (Goethner et al., 2009), recognizing informal opportunities (Webb et al., 2009), or engaging in work (Steffens et al., 2018). Moreover, researchers acknowledge that the creation of a new startup, the number and types of markets served, and the capabilities and resources deployed to produce goods are all partly determined by different types of social identities that entrepreneurs find important (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011). For example, Phillips et al. (2013) show entrepreneurs invoke ethnic social identities to build homophilous ties with distributors, suppliers, and customers. Brannon et al. (2013) examine social identities of entrepreneurial teams and their influence on the probability of achieving the first sale. Ultimately, entrepreneurs' social identities profoundly influence business performance (de la Cruz et al., 2018).

5.4. Variations in identities of entrepreneurs drawing from multiple theoretical perspectives

Although role and social identity theories have traditionally been viewed as independent areas of research for work on identity in entrepreneurship, this approach has rightfully been challenged on both theoretical and practical grounds. Indeed, Fauchart and Gruber noted in 2011 that “future research could attempt to integrate both identity concepts [role and social identity] to further refine researchers' understanding of the effects of founder identity on emerging firms” (954). Powell and Baker (2014: 6, *emphasis in original*) echo this through their “observation of identities that are simultaneously role *and* social identities.” Themes drawing on multiple theoretical perspective on identity in entrepreneurship did not gain much attention until the mid 2010's.

A few recent articles have helped lay the groundwork for future research that integrates multiple theoretical perspectives on identity. The work of Powell and Baker (2014, 2017) has been highly-influential and spurred increasing use of the term “founder identity” to reflect work which draws from both role and social identity theory. Integrating role and social identity theories, they define founder identity as “the set of identities that is chronically salient to a founder in her/his day-to-day work,” and show how entrepreneurs leverage their role identities as a means to express their social identities (Powell and Baker, 2014: 1406). They build a process model that helps explain the structure of founder identities and find that variations in founders' identities drive fundamental differences in how entrepreneurs respond to adversity. In their more recent work (2017), the authors move from individual identities, where prior research has largely focused, to explore collective, group-level phenomenon of how and why identity processes shape whether and how new venture teams move forward with their organizations.

York et al. (2016) similarly link social and role identity theory to understand the coupling of commercial and/or ecological logics. Gruber and MacMillan (2017) also integrate theories of role and social identities to demonstrate the utility of such integration for understanding a broad array of entrepreneurial behavior. Further, at a team level, researchers show the centrality of an entrepreneur's role identities and social identities influence who they initially hire in their ventures, as entrepreneurs might make hiring decisions to enhance or preserve their most central role or social identity (Stewart and Hoell, 2016).

In addition to bridging role and social identity theories, researchers have recently begun using additional identity theories to explore the variations in identities of entrepreneurs. For example, Wry and York (2017) develop theory about social entrepreneurs' configurations of entrepreneurial identities based on different individual role identities and personal identities, the self-meanings individuals possess about “who they are *across* situations and relationships” (Burke, 2004; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Wry and York, 2017: 440). Later work addresses how social identity theory might further advance this area (Pan et al., 2019). Shepherd and Haynie (2009a) use identity control theory—which links identity and behavior due to individuals' needs to confirm important identities (Cast and Burke, 2002)—with respect to conflicting social identities, and Conger et al. (2018) use identity control theory to understand engagement in prosocial activity and evaluation of prosocial opportunities. These authors not only bring new theoretical perspectives to the examination of variations among identities of entrepreneurs but further highlight the importance of using multiple theoretical perspectives when exploring complex questions regarding entrepreneurs and their identities.

6. Constructions

6.1. Constructions of identity in entrepreneurship

In a third conversation, scholars leverage a more reflexive theoretical lens of identity to explore questions of how entrepreneurs form, maintain, and negotiate identities over time. We refer to this conversation as *constructions*, given that articles using terms in this cluster focus on activities that coincide with becoming an entrepreneur. Constructions research has long been—and remains—one of the most significant conversations within research on entrepreneurship and identity, outpacing other conversations for most of the 2010s (see Fig. 1). Examining the constructions of entrepreneurial identities contributes to understanding the processes that shape entrepreneurial actions and outcomes over time. Our review revealed three themes vis-à-vis the constructions of identities: *identity work*, *gender dynamics*, and *identity narratives*.

6.2. Identity work

A dominant view from existing research builds on the idea that identities are constructed (Bruni et al., 2004; Kovalainen and Österberg-Högstedt, 2013; Lewis, 2013; Newbery et al., 2018). Although there exists a litany of terms such as “identity play,” “identity management,” “identity formation,” and “identity projects” that offer similar propositions about the formation and change in identity, over the past two decades, scholars have come to use the nomenclature *identity work* to frame and explain this process. Identity work has been defined as individuals' engagement in forming, maintaining, or revising an identity to ensure coherence and distinctiveness (Brown, 2015; Snow and Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

In the context of entrepreneurship, identity work reflects the extent to which individuals engage in a range of behaviors, attributes, and thoughts to purposely form, maintain, strengthen, or revise an entrepreneurial identity to ensure coherence and distinctiveness (Essers and Benschop, 2009; Marlow and McAdam, 2015). Identity work involves a process of developing or changing identities and is important because it enables individuals to be more efficacious in their entrepreneurial endeavors (Celuch et al., 2017; Grimes, 2018). Research on identity work emerged in the late 2000's and remained constant in the decade that followed. Indeed, more recent articles cite *identity work design*, or the freedom and ability to infuse personal values into a new venture, as a primary reason for becoming an entrepreneur (Hsu et al., 2019).

Identity work in entrepreneurship centers on both external forces and internal factors. Earlier studies focus on external forces that push entrepreneurs to adapt their identities to fit certain social contexts. For example, Down and Reveley (2004) suggest that entrepreneurs' social contexts shape their need to achieve authenticity and legitimacy to create and sustain entrepreneurial goals (e.g., opportunity identification, venture creation). These findings locate the impetus for identity work outside the entrepreneur because entrepreneurs engage in identity work in order to gain acceptance from audiences to secure resources for their ventures, or to remain distinctive in social settings with established norms.

Other articles later built on these ideas to explore identity work in settings that constitute specific cultural norms (Vesala and Vesala, 2010), such as artisan work sites (Demetry, 2017; Stinchfield et al., 2013; Werthes et al., 2018), educational institutions (Achtenhagen and Johannisson, 2013; Donnellon et al., 2014) socially oriented industries (Kovalainen and Österberg-Högstedt, 2013), and geographical regions (Anderson et al., 2019; Dodd and Hynes, 2012; Gill and Larson, 2014). Scholars of these articles contend that entrepreneurship is an inherently social endeavor, and entrepreneurs engage in identity work to adapt to their social environment, especially in settings that call for such actions (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). This work implies that identity is a mechanism that bridges entrepreneurs with their social environment, and identity work is a conduit in this process (Nadin, 2007). Taken together, these findings suggest that the “key site” of identity work and its source is an entrepreneur's social world (Down and Reveley, 2004: 237). Grimes (2018: 1693) summarizes this point by noting that the practices of “identity work are often understood to be triggered by external events or demands that destabilize individuals' identities.”

Over time, research on identity work also began to explore internal factors that shape entrepreneurs' decisions to form or shift their identities. In line with mainstream scholarship that adopts an identity work perspective, entrepreneurship research assumes that individuals are “reflexive subjects” that actively undertake actions to shape who they are and what they do (Marlow and McAdam, 2015: 792). Indeed, a persistent view of entrepreneurs suggests they operate as deliberate identity crafters that execute identity work to meet their internal needs, as well as external needs (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). As Hsu et al.'s (2019) study of business founders notes, entrepreneurs are a prime example of identity crafters because they have considerable agency in constructing their identities relative to others, given that they are less constrained by bureaucratic norms often found in established firms. Hence, a significant portion of their motivation for identity work resides *within* and not *outside* the entrepreneur. For example, research shows that identity work can emerge from an entrepreneur's social orientation (Jain et al., 2009), social identity (Chasserio et al., 2014), or level of experience (Newbery et al., 2018). Therefore, in addition to the influence of external forces, identity work may also reflect an internal state of being or becoming (Hsu et al., 2019; Pfeifer et al., 2016).

6.3. Gender dynamics

Another important theme that emerged early but rapidly evolved in the constructions conversation involves the role of gender as a primary influence on the identity of entrepreneurs (Bruni et al., 2004; Fernandes and Mota-Ribeiro, 2017; Masika, 2017). Numerous studies emphasize identity construction among women entrepreneurs (Chasserio et al., 2014; Essers and Benschop, 2009; Fernandes and Mota-Ribeiro, 2017; Hytti et al., 2017; Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Pijpers and Maas, 2014). An entrepreneurial identity is often assumed to be naturally male and thus masculinized, with accounts primarily focused on male entrepreneurs' successes (Giazitzoglu and Down, 2017; Hamilton, 2014; Lewis, 2013; Smith, 2010).

Accordingly, much of the initial work in this area explores how women navigate and overcome gendered assumptions and stereotypes regarding being an entrepreneur in order to feel accepted and connected to entrepreneurial practices tied to gender (Bruni et al., 2004; Stead, 2017). Gendered assumptions emerge and play out as entrepreneurial norms tied to masculinity and structural forces of feminism interact, requiring women entrepreneurs to choose between their various identities. In some cases, women feel forced to distance themselves from what they perceive as negative stereotypes associated with identities surrounding womanhood to enact more masculine characteristics associated with entrepreneurship (Nadin, 2007). García and Welter (2013) note that women can mitigate these concerns by constructing entrepreneurial identities that “redo gender,” wherein high-status women challenge gender differences by adding new values to established gendered norms specific to entrepreneurship.

As research in this area advanced, other studies began to focus less on how women “fit into” masculinized entrepreneurial roles and more on emphasizing the unique and important differences of women as entrepreneurs in certain industries that can serve as a

means of authenticity and differentiation for female-led firms (Lewis, 2013). For example, Greenberg and Mollick (2017) show that women can overcome gender liabilities in entrepreneurship by forming strong social connections and collective identities with other members of disadvantaged groups, helping alleviate gender disparities in funding, especially in male-dominant industries. Crosina's (2018) review conceptualizes identity construction among women entrepreneurs as a source to overcome gender gaps and legitimacy constraints that limit women entrepreneurs' ability to secure resources needed to grow a venture. Additionally, Greene and Brush's (2018) book on women entrepreneurs articulates the importance of incorporating feminist theories and perspectives to document feminist values by informing research on how "being female" shapes identity processes and actions for female entrepreneurs.

This evolution of perspectives suggests identity is best understood as a function of repertoires embedded in invisible historical and cultural structures tied to gender that seek to challenge the dominant discourse of entrepreneurship as "embodying particular forms of masculinity" (Hamilton, 2014: 703). This theme within the conversation about identity constructions touches on the gender work required by women entrepreneurs and adds to the juxtaposition of masculinity and femininity in entrepreneurship research. Together, this discourse suggests gender is an important aspect in the construction of identities in entrepreneurship.

6.4. Identity narratives

A final theme within this conversation centers on the rhetorical strategies entrepreneurs use to construct identities. Much of this work focuses on identity narratives, which are the verbal or written accounts that tell others about the narrator (i.e., the entrepreneur) and illustrate *how* identity formation and change are achieved. Research in this area emerged in the mid 2000's but grew substantially after 2009. Entrepreneurial identity narratives shape the interpretation of an entrepreneur and their venture's potential (Lee et al., 2017; Martens et al., 2007; Phillips et al., 2013). As such, narratives concerning entrepreneurship are a powerful force that can pull into a cohesive message, via a story, many of the components that make entrepreneurs more legitimate (Marlow and McAdam, 2015) and connected (Phillips et al., 2013).

Across studies, scholars articulate the importance of entrepreneurial narratives in identity processes (Chasserio et al., 2014). For example, Steyaert (2007) depicts how entrepreneurial identities form through storytelling, which functions as a tool to express identity to audiences. Entrepreneurs can use narratives to enact greater sensemaking to stakeholders, which can increase the odds that their identity claims will be accepted. For example, Stigliani and Elsbach (2018) illustrate how founders invoke labels in their narratives that provide entrepreneurs more ability to make sense of the formational stages of a business or industry. Research also demonstrates that narratives help coalesce different capital resources that legitimize and connect entrepreneurs (Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Phillips et al., 2013).

The diversity in use of identity narratives in entrepreneurship research also advanced over time because of the flexibility it affords. Entrepreneurs express identity in many forms for different reasons and narratives reflect these different modes of expression. Several studies demonstrate the repertoire of narratives tied to identity formation in entrepreneurship. For example, Down and Warren (2008) explore the role of clichés, associated with bravery, risk, ambition, and self-sufficiency, in identity construction. Jones et al.'s (2008) study of social entrepreneurs illustrates how individuals use contradictory discourse tied to identity and social activism to construct a social entrepreneur identity. Others articulate the importance of entrepreneurial stories of past cultural experiences that spur strategic homophilous ties through identity formation (Phillips et al., 2013). Further, Clarke and Holt (2017) highlight how entrepreneurs use metaphors through drawing to convey their stories of heroism that lead to the development of an entrepreneurial identity as it forms or changes, illustrating the evolution of different modes of narratives.

Additionally, research in this area indicates that some entrepreneurial individuals, such as scientists (Karhunen et al., 2017), chefs (Demetry, 2017), or social activists (Jones et al., 2008), use narratives to construct an entrepreneurial identity tied to occupations beyond entrepreneurship until their ventures become larger and more diversified, while others choose to avoid this self-referential claim entirely. Rouse's (2016) study illustrates how nascent entrepreneurs use narratives to exit traditional work roles in order to adopt entrepreneurial roles. She suggests this process involves emotional experiences of loss and gain and dis-identification from a prior work identity and identification with a new entrepreneurial identity. These studies reflect the evolution of this stream of work and propose entrepreneurs become emboldened by identity narratives (Anderson and Warren, 2011) because narratives allow entrepreneurs the means to craft and express their identities to others.

7. Intersections

7.1. Intersections of identity in entrepreneurship

The final cluster of terms (green in Fig. 2) involves the integration of multiple theoretical lenses of identity of entrepreneurs and other entities (employees, teams, firms, and collectives) to explain entrepreneurial actions and outcomes. We refer to this conversation as *intersections*. Studies here examine the interplay between the identity of the entrepreneur and their venture (or market category or collective), exploring questions such as how entrepreneurs navigate tensions that arise from identities that seem contradictory (e.g., York et al., 2016), and/or manage the interface between the identity of the entrepreneur and other venture members (e.g., Cardon et al., 2017). Research on intersections began with the earliest work on identity and entrepreneurship and, in recent years, has been the most prominent conversation. We proceed by discussing three themes in the conversation about intersections of identity in entrepreneurship: *ventures*, *hybridization*, and *markets and categories*.

7.2. Ventures

An overriding theme in the research conversation of *intersections* shifts the perspective from the identity of the entrepreneur to the identity of the venture *and* entrepreneur. Themes related to one's venture or business have dominated the identity intersections conversation since 2009. This research articulates the importance of venture identity and draws on the literature on organizational identity, which refers to the collective set of shared beliefs about the central, distinctive, and enduring features of an organization (Albert and Whetten, 1985). The context of entrepreneurship is unique because it relates to the “the central, distinctive, and enduring” attributes of ventures that are often not fully formed and that shape entrepreneurial actions (Moss et al., 2011). For example, in some of the earliest work in this conversation, Gartner et al. (1999) found that devoting additional time to determining and/or reformulating the identity of the business proved detrimental to venture survival. Further, the entrepreneur plays an important role in crafting a venture's identity (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001).

Entrepreneurs often use stories to forge venture identities. More recent work in this conversation focuses on how storytelling plays a critical role in the process that enables new ventures to not only emerge but also gain legitimacy (Fisher et al., 2017). Beyond storytelling, scholars note that different audiences influence the identities ventures take on and share to gain legitimacy (Lee et al., 2017). For example, Irwin et al.' (2018) study asserts that ventures draw upon different levels of identity to influence strategy and achieve legitimacy. In some cases, founders may emphasize a specific distinct identity to optimize funding opportunities (Greenberg and Mollick, 2017), whereas in others they may balance a distinct venture identity with an industry identity to ensure coherence (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018). Other studies focus on the vital role of entrepreneurs as they change direction and “pivot” their venture's identity (Grimes, 2018; Hampel et al., 2020).

This research also highlights the unique and nested nature of venture identities in entrepreneurship. In particular, it demonstrates a tight coupling between the entrepreneur and his or her venture's identity that makes identity unique in entrepreneurship. Research within the intersections conversation has long noted that because entrepreneurs devote themselves to their ventures, they often define themselves by the same attributes that define their ventures (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). For example, Tesla is primarily recognized and defined by its innovative founder, Elon Musk; accordingly, Tesla's identity is inextricably linked to Musk's identity. Distinct from other firms where employees merely identify as organizational members, researchers often describe a venture identity as an intermingling between the founder and their venture that possesses fuzzy boundaries (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011). Most recently, for example, Zuzul and Tripsas (2020) explore how air taxi founders' identities of “revolutionary” or “discoverer” contribute to their ventures' inertia or flexibility as they seek to affirm their identities through the actions of their organizations.

This intermingling is more complex when different audiences are involved in venture legitimation processes, as complex relationships can interfere with the founder and venture identity formation and venture survival (Fisher et al., 2017). For instance, O'Neil and Ucbasaran (2016) discovered that a founder's values and beliefs can influence decisions about how to gain legitimacy from different audiences. In some cases, this process can involve dissonance, where the entrepreneur feels inauthentic when catering to different audiences. As such, identity processes across levels of analysis and audiences that confer legitimacy add complexity to studying identity, as entrepreneurs must manage tensions that arise when venture identities seem inconsistent or incompatible with either the founder's identity or other competing identities embedded within the venture.

7.3. Hybridization

Well established research on venture identity has also found that several critical factors contribute to the initial and subsequent development of venture identities (Navis and Glynn, 2011). The extent to which an entrepreneur's and the venture's identity align is largely determined by venture type. One type of venture that has received considerable attention, especially in the past decade, is a social venture, since it integrates multiple identities that infer competing norms tied to profit maximization and social maximization. For example, a prominent theme at the intersection of identities in entrepreneurship considers the importance of hybridization processes in the formation of a venture identity (McMullen, 2018). Hybridization focuses on the coalescence of two unique organizational forms, such as that of a conventional nonprofit and for-profit venture (Battilana and Lee, 2014; York et al., 2016). Scholars refer to these types of “hybrid” businesses as social enterprises, as they span the boundaries of an organization by infusing multiple identities into their actions and purpose (Moss et al., 2011).

Much of this work examines how hybridization changes identity dynamics in social enterprises creating conflict and diverging logics between multiple identity categories (Conger et al., 2018). For instance, York et al. (2016) reveal that competing ecological and commercial identities motivate entrepreneurs. However, they note it is how founders prioritize, segment, and couple these competing identities that influence why environmentally focused ventures emerge. Hybridization research suggests hybrid identities not only shape individual ventures to take on new and multiplicative forms, but also likely reshape the institutions and ecosystems in which they are embedded (McMullen, 2018). In many ways, research within this theme shows that a venture identity is guided by factors tied to competing identities which, in part, dictate its form (O'Kane et al., 2015) and legitimacy over time (O'Neil and Ucbasaran, 2016).

Another form of hybridization focuses on academic entrepreneurship or university activities that commercialize knowledge through intellectual property creation (Jain et al., 2009; Perkmann et al., 2013). Universities represent establishments that struggle to address the tensions that arise from multiple competing identities focused on commercialization and science (Meek and Wood, 2016; O'Kane et al., 2015). This form of hybridization is perplexing in that the tenets of science and entrepreneurship often contradict in ways that make hybridization complex or unwieldy. Meek and Wood (2016) theorize that misalignments between organizational policies and objectives can emerge and exacerbate underlying tensions between science and commercialization. However, they note

the possibility of hybrid models at universities as a solution to these significant challenges. For example, Jain et al. (2009) suggest role identity modification via buffering (i.e., cherishing preferred values of sciences) and delegating (i.e., establishing relationships with other actors) helps to manage a hybrid role identity focused on science and commercialization. O'Kane et al.'s (2015) study of technology transfer offices finds similar legitimacy challenges that emerge when conflicting expectations arise between dual venture identities focused on science and business. They assert that identity-conformity (i.e., sustaining dominant academic values and norms) and identity-manipulation (i.e., meeting expectations of business values and norms) create and reinforce legitimacy. Developments in this theme consider identities that straddle multiple categories and levels of analysis, and they identify actions that reconcile conflicts that can emerge when different identities compete.

7.4. Markets and categories

A third theme within the conversation on intersections of identities focuses on markets and categories, and this theme has also gained prominence since 2010. For many organizations, a venture identity locates an organization in the broader institutional context (i.e., industry or field), rendering that context a potentially valuable mechanism linked to key organizational outcomes (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Reay, 2009). Within this theme, venture identity is seen as “membership in one or more groupings (or categories)” (Glynn and Navis, 2013: 1127).

These group memberships serve to inform who entrepreneurs and their respective ventures are at a collective level. Navis and Glynn (2010) argue that the legitimization and subsequent emergence of a new market category trigger collective identity claims. These claims, however, can shift from the collective level incorporating all the ventures in a market category to a more distinctive venture identity based on an individual organization within a market category. Evidence from their study suggests that ventures must strike a balance between making identity claims that not only center on strategic conformity but that also stress strategic deviation. More recently, Lee et al. (2017) show that an influx of new incumbents in an emerging market can dilute efforts to enact an existing shared identity which is highly coveted and coherent. Their findings reveal that markets emerge from tensions and trade-offs that exist when actions taken to acquire resources, gain social acceptance, and achieve greater access to new markets encourage ambiguity around a market's collective identity. Stigliani and Elsbach (2018) add to these findings by detailing accounts of the sensemaking and sensegiving process that founders use to forge distinctive venture identities and a coherent industry identity.

This research also documents that membership in one or more groupings (or categories) (Glynn and Navis, 2013: 1127) has many important implications for venture identities (Navis and Glynn, 2010). First, venture identities are often instrumentally tied to their institutions (Navis and Glynn, 2011), shaping the beliefs of internal organizational members (Drori et al., 2009) and interpretations of external audiences, such as investors. Second, choosing to identify with certain social categories can lead entrepreneurs to enact specific strategies and pursue some opportunities while avoiding others (Conger et al., 2018). For example, Conger et al. (2018: 193) show that joining a prosocial category can serve as a “catalyst for reflexivity and varying identity responses” that shapes an entrepreneur's activities. Membership in a category also impacts entrepreneurs' reevaluation of an opportunity or the dissonance or conflict they might encounter while organizing a new venture.

Scholars in this area draw on institutional perspectives to show that legitimization of a new market category leads market actors to shift their attention and corresponding identities in response to changes in the market. As a market legitimizes itself, firms in those markets gain from differentiating themselves and their identities (Navis and Glynn, 2010). As such, venture and market identities allow organizational legitimacy to unfold (Wry et al., 2011) and are the pretext for certain entrepreneurial actions, like gaining market legitimacy (Navis and Glynn, 2010), resolving public goods problems (York et al., 2016), and herding market behaviors (Pontikes and Barnett, 2017). Research on venture identities span several market contexts, resulting in implications for informal institutions (Webb et al., 2009), categories tied to specific business models, such as small family firms (Cucculelli and Marchionne, 2012; Zellweger et al., 2013), academic categories (O'Kane et al., 2015), franchises (Watson et al., 2016; Zachary et al., 2011), or technology (Navis and Glynn, 2010; Pontikes and Barnett, 2017).

8. Cross-conversation synthesis and extensions

To this point, we organized our review based on the four distinct conversations identified by our bibliometric cluster analysis. However, many terms and topics discussed above cross conversations and/or bridge theoretical underpinnings. In the sub-sections that follow, we build from our review by providing examples of this kind of cross-conversation research as well as articulate methodological and theoretical implications of bridging ideas across conversations. In doing so, we draw out the common themes within our review of the literature on identity and entrepreneurship that we use to then identify opportunities for future research.

8.1. Common themes across conversations

Several themes appear to be common across all four conversations. First, research across the conversations has moved beyond a single identity and introduced the idea that *variations* of identities can exist and provide entrepreneurs *distinction* across different social groups. Even notions of what “the entrepreneurial role identity” means vary across articles and therefore across individuals (Baker and Powell, 2020). Entrepreneurs also differ in the extent to which they experience an entrepreneurial identity alongside other work or non-work role identities, such as family role identities (Miller et al., 2011; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009a) or gender identities (Fernandes and Mota-Ribeiro, 2017; García and Welter, 2013; Hytti et al., 2017), either in general or through switching identities within each day or across the life cycle of their businesses or their entrepreneurial careers. The body of work we review above reflects

considerable differences in the type of identities and integration of identities studied, illustrating that entrepreneurs balance and segment multiple unique identity needs and challenges of their ventures with non-venture related identities.

A second theme common across conversations illustrates that the salience and centrality of an identity underpins many formulations of identity in entrepreneurship and helps to explain which identities are espoused, activated, and enacted across situations (Murnieks et al., 2014; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009b), especially when identities compete with one another for the entrepreneur's time and attention (Powell and Baker, 2014). For example, salience guides the action of three founder identities (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011; Murnieks et al., 2019) and, along with centrality (Cardon et al., 2013), can trigger emotions core to entrepreneurship (Cardon et al., 2009), whereas centrality helps entrepreneurs *construct*, bridge, and make sense of competing identities across different contexts (Huyghe et al., 2016; Jain et al., 2009) and *intersections* (i.e., levels of analysis) (Santos and Cardon, 2019).

A third theme shared across conversations demonstrates the evolution of identities as entrepreneur's *construct* and modify identities over time across social contexts. These streams highlight how *variations* of identities of entrepreneurs vary along a temporal spectrum from transient (Farmer et al., 2011; Shepherd and Williams, 2018) to lifelong (García and Welter, 2013; Marlow and McAdam, 2015) and can change or arise as individuals navigate the entrepreneurship process. For example, entrepreneurship scholars suggest that an identity can arise unintentionally, when some individuals incidentally discover that entrepreneurship conveys who they are and eventually adopt an identity tied to entrepreneurship over time (Oo et al., 2019; Shah and Tripsas, 2007). Conversely, entrepreneurs can also carefully craft their identities over time, as highlighted in the *constructions* section.

A final common thread across conversations highlights the role that identities play in influencing outcomes related to entrepreneurs, their teams, ventures, and markets, indicating that identities in entrepreneurship matter in profound ways. At its heart, entrepreneurship is the enactment of identity—how entrepreneurs see themselves and how others see them impact many outcomes, including their own behavior, emotions, and thought processes along with outcomes tied to their teams, ventures, and industries. Identity relates to many aspects central to entrepreneurship, such as opportunities (Mathias and Williams, 2017), affect (Cardon et al., 2009), cognition (Hoang and Gimeno, 2010), venture creation (York et al., 2016), legitimacy (Fisher et al., 2017; O'Neil and Ucbasaran, 2016), resource acquisition (Lounsbury and Glynn, Martens et al., 2007), and market emergence (Navis and Glynn, 2011; Lee et al., 2017). In this regard, identities in entrepreneurship are intertwined, operate across levels, and impact many outcomes, and thus are a vital part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

These common themes identified across the four conversations—that entrepreneurs can have multiple complementary or competing identities that evolve slowly over time, require regulation of attention, and have profound effects on important outcomes—inspire insights for methodological and theoretical sharing among conversations, which we unpack below.

8.2. Future research stemming from cross-conversation integration and extensions

When comparing the evolution of ideas within and across the four primary conversations, several noteworthy opportunities for future research emerged. First, while several papers have keywords that fall into more than one of these conversations, there are opportunities to build stronger theoretical bridges between conversations. In particular, work on distinctions, compared to the other conversations, has slowed over the last decade, yet important questions remain concerning how entrepreneurs are distinct from others. For example, what other differences might we explore other than those between family business versus non-family business or between entrepreneurs and managers-as-entrepreneurs? Could social identity theory be a useful lens to perhaps explore those distinctions?

In addition, at the crossroads of the conversations on constructions (specifically identity work) and intersections resides an emergent scholarly area of the entrepreneurial pivot (Grimes, 2018). Pivoting reflects a change in the idea, or strategy, that is often needed to help nascent ventures come to fruition. Though important, this ignores a critical component of the entrepreneurial process—the entrepreneur. Rather than alter the venture, a change in the identity(ies) of the entrepreneur might be an important action to foster the creation and development of new ventures. Thus, pivoting could be an important theoretical concept to apply to the entrepreneur along with the venture. For example, how and why do entrepreneurs strategically change their identities? When in the entrepreneurial process does this occur and can this differ by industry? Does greater identity pivoting lead to improved venture outcomes?

Second, our review of the four primary conversations occurring within the literature highlight areas where methodological advancements in one conversation might help advance other conversations. For example, in the *distinctions* and *variations* conversations, some methodological issues merit further discussion. First, identities in entrepreneurship can vary over time (i.e., temporal variation) and levels of analysis (i.e., level variation) (Cardon et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2016). Thus, empirically assessing changes in identity processes over time and/or the extent to which micro-level phenomenon (e.g., individual role identities) relate to macro-level outcomes (e.g., venture growth) and vice versa represent important advancements. A few studies have made important strides in this regard (Drnovsek et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2011; Oo et al., 2019), however, future research that is longitudinal and/or multi-level is needed. In order to develop research to examine such relationships, researchers could turn to work in the conversation on *constructions* where such longitudinal work is common (Grimes, 2018; Shantz et al., 2018; Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018) and the conversation on *intersections*, where multi-level work has begun to take place (Greenberg and Mollick, 2017; Navis and Glynn, 2010).

Third, our review of this body of research also suggests the importance of marrying conceptual and empirical advancements to better understand the identity(ies) of entrepreneurs. This may involve both inductive qualitative methods that allow flexibility and development of rich and descriptive theoretical insights, such as those in the *constructions* conversation, along with deductive advancements that expand validity and generalizability of important relationships, such as those in the *variations* conversation. We encourage theoretical advancement that leads to developing testable measures and applying methodologies that capture identity

processes across a larger population of entrepreneurs. For example, Cardon et al.'s (2009) conceptual article established a theoretical foundation for passion associated with three distinct role identities, which Cardon et al. (2013) followed with a scale development effort to ensure accurate and valid measurement of passion tied to the role identities. Similarly, Fauchart and Gruber's (2011) article inductively derived three types of social identities from their qualitative study, which was followed by a scale development effort (Sieger et al., 2016).

Fourth, we encourage future research to draw strong connections with the conversations on *distinctions*, *variations*, and *intersections*, where scholars have developed and validated new measures of identity in entrepreneurship, used large samples of entrepreneurs, and advanced methods that have broad applications within and outside of entrepreneurship. We also advocate for more qualitative inductive work such as what has been done on *constructions* and elsewhere to yield rich, deep, longitudinal, and multi-level insights. Such qualitative and quantitative efforts would help establish the impact of key constructs and aid in future efforts (e.g., via meta-analysis) to further synthesize and advance research on identity in entrepreneurship.

9. Future research opportunities for new conversations

9.1. Overview of areas for future research

Our review suggests that we as identity scholars in entrepreneurship have studied many things well and thoroughly—in particular, we have generated a reservoir of knowledge around the antecedents to entrepreneurial identities, the various forms they take, and their initial impact on the course of new ventures. Indeed, Fig. 1 highlights that each of the conversations we identified has grown substantially over the past two decades. However, in assessing the literature, we also discovered areas where our theory and methods appear limited or underdeveloped, representing major opportunities for future research. Thus, in contrast to the prior section which emphasized ways to extend the four existing conversations, here we highlight three key areas that appear ripe for developing altogether new conversations.

9.2. Adopting a network-based perspective

Though identity reflects an inherently social concept, dependent upon others for meaning and purpose, we see promise for an approach that builds on recent work (e.g., Cardon et al., 2017; Murnieks et al., 2019; Powell and Baker, 2017) to explicate how others—those beyond the entrepreneur—influence identity in entrepreneurship. For example, research trying to understand collective identity formation and influence (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2011; Patvardhan et al., 2015) in entrepreneurship has been extremely limited. Moreover, endeavors to understand the larger configuration of how individuals connected in different ways help form and shape identity in entrepreneurship could give scholars the opportunity to integrate theories beyond social and role identity, which our review shows feature dominantly, such as *network identity and identification* (see Partanen et al., 2018). Network identity could reflect “an extension and meld of personal identification, relational identification, and social identification” (Ashforth, 2016: 367), exploring how the various actors and entities connected to a new venture comprise a “network.” By re-envisioning identity in entrepreneurship as a network, or web, of inter-connected actors and entities—the entrepreneur, founding team members, employees, investors, suppliers, customers, among others—we could gain insights that extend past the idiosyncratic identities of entrepreneurs and their ventures to better understand what identities are formed, how this formation occurs (with what influences from and between different stakeholders at different points in the entrepreneurial process), and with what consequences for entrepreneurs, their firms, and/or other network members.

Adopting this network-based approach could also expand our existing methodological toolkit for studying identity in entrepreneurship. Not until recently have scholars looked for answers concerning identity in entrepreneurship beyond samples of entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs, such as recent studies that include entrepreneurial parents (Lahti et al., 2019), early employees (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018), or community members (Shantz et al., 2018). We urge researchers to follow suit with these recent efforts. Entrepreneurship is not the story of an idealized and mythological lone founder operating independently, but is instead about the coordination and interaction of many actors and entities in the pursuit of opportunities. Future work could examine how variations in an entrepreneur's network shapes the formation and changes in founder identities. We need methods and theories that account for the various actors involved in these pursuits, which a network-based identity approach could offer.

9.3. Exploring the post-emergent stages of entrepreneurship

Recent studies advance how entrepreneurial identities evolve over the course of the venture, including the conversation around *constructions*, which underscores this notion. However, the emphasis has been primarily on the identities of entrepreneurs at the pre- or early venture stages. How identity unfolds during post-emergent stages remains less well understood. In this vein, the interface of identity and failure appears a particularly promising line of inquiry (Shepherd and Williams, 2018) with potentially unique contextual implications. For example, research indicates that differing cultural views of entrepreneurship influence the extent to which certain geographical regions embrace entrepreneurship and the failure that can accompany it (Cardon et al., 2011; Shantz et al., 2018). In supportive contexts, surrounded by encouraging and like-minded entrepreneurial others, individuals may wear entrepreneurial failure as a badge of honor, proudly incorporating it as part of one's entrepreneurial identity. Conversely, in less-supportive contexts, individuals may downplay or avoid identifying as entrepreneurs, especially when these individuals experience a failed venture. To date, however, entrepreneurial identity scholars have primarily focused on how identity impacts venture-related

outcomes rather than how venture-related outcomes impact entrepreneurs' identities.

We also see a post-emergent perspective adding to our knowledge of venture identities by showing that identity claims can change as founders' ventures grow and are introduced to new and unfamiliar audiences (Wry et al., 2011). For example, as a venture grows it is often decreed with new expectations from diverse audiences, encouraging new narratives that match organizational claims around "whom we claim to be as a venture" with audiences' expectation of "whom we expect you to be as a venture." Such dynamics are likely to take place when key events change an organization (Clark et al., 2010). For example, as a venture grows, a variety of investors (e.g., institutions, stockholders, venture capitalists) expect ventures to conform to a diverse set of expectations (Fisher et al., 2017), leading some entrepreneurs to choose not to grow (Baker and Powell, 2019). In other instances, as the entrepreneurial process develops a venture identity might evolve that causes tension between founders' and audiences' aims for the venture. For example, the emergence and shift in Facebook's identity indicates the sorts of tensions that can arise when audiences include regulators and other control agents whose goals differ drastically from the founder. In the case of Facebook, questions surrounding "who Facebook is?" and "what Facebook does?" emerged, threatening core aspects of their business model/purpose and raising questions about the entrepreneur at the helm (Davies and Chambers, 2018). Combining a post-emergence perspective with a network perspective could yield valuable insights surrounding how entrepreneurial identities of individuals and organizations change due to changing expectations and identity claims of the network of stakeholders of the organization, as well as events that occur internal or external to the venture (e.g. performance success/failure, global pandemics).

9.4. Moving the study of identity to the digital world

As more organizations operate at the nexus of social media (i.e., online communities) and venturing, external audiences that may not even transact with a business may play a significant role in organizational outcomes and processes (Fisher, 2019; Hall-Phillips et al., 2016). We see promise in exploring online communities, their influence in the formation of venture and/or individual identities, and the opportunities or challenges that come with managing boundaries and social relations between ventures and audiences in digital contexts (Autio et al., 2013). Interacting with certain online communities may reshape the way entrepreneurial-related identities form, yet there is little understanding of how entrepreneurs harness online communities to attract new members, manage identities, or respond to venture-related challenges or opportunities. Gathering knowledge about these communities could help us better understand identity processes in relation to ventures and entrepreneurs in the digital economy.

We see great promise in researchers adopting new methods to tackle identity-based questions stemming from these online communities. For instance, online communities may allow for unobtrusive data collection opportunities, giving researchers the ability to explore how entrepreneurs build online communities around themselves, their products, or their firms over time. Further, given the recent pandemic, entrepreneurs have been forced to adapt their business models with new mobility restrictions and distancing strategies imposed around the world. How entrepreneurs navigate this new world and maintain operations and customer relationships using online platforms during this period of environmental uncertainty could have important, and potentially long-term, identity implications. It appears possible that this pandemic could expedite the increased influence of online platforms on identity in entrepreneurship and conceivably alter the identification processes among entrepreneurs. If so, our methods may need to adapt to take a more virtual approach to studying identity, such as virtual ethnographies, synchronous focus groups with entrepreneurial teams, or online diaries. This would serve not necessarily to replace in-person research, such as interviews, but to augment these sources, as more of 'identity-making' potentially shifts to digital mediums. Such efforts could compare with recent work that explores the processes of how identity and entrepreneurship unfold among *physical* communities devastated by crises and disasters (Dinger et al., 2019; Williams and Shepherd, 2016).

9.5. Conclusion

Although many articles have begun to advance both theoretical variety (e.g., Conger et al., 2018; Wry and York, 2017) and multiple theories in a single article (e.g., Gruber and MacMillan, 2017; Powell and Baker, 2014, 2017; York et al., 2016), our review highlights many articles that draw from a single identity theory or perspective. This narrow focus helps to build our understanding within that specific perspective, yet also inhibits developing a holistic understanding of identity in entrepreneurship. More theoretical integration better reflects the reality of how entrepreneurs navigate their identities and creates new opportunities as researchers bridge the conversations identified in our review. In light of calls for theoretical integration in this area, looking back at our research, we have found that although we are grateful that this article's reviewers encouraged us to do so, not all reviewers have taken kindly to authors' taking such an integrative approach. This may explain why few scholars have taken up these calls (Powell and Baker, 2017; Wry and York, 2017). Similarly, in our work as reviewers, we see a number of authors that either conflate, confuse, or attempt to bridge different identity theories without explicitly explaining their motivation to integrate theories.

We encourage authors to engage deeply with varied and multiple theoretical lenses when considering the questions they ask and determining which theories provide the best ways to answer these questions. These encouragements hold for work both within and across conversations in research about identity in entrepreneurship. In this respect, we hope our review spurs additional scholarship that encompasses identity in all of its unique, broad, integrative, and evolving features that are central to entrepreneurship.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Nick Mmbaga: Original draft preparation, formal analysis, writing, reviewing, and editing.

Blake Mathias: Original draft preparation, formal analysis, writing, reviewing and editing.

David Williams: Original draft preparation, formal analysis, writing, reviewing and editing.

Melissa Cardon: Original draft preparation, formal analysis, writing, reviewing and editing.

Acknowledgements

We thank the help of field editor, Jeff York, the three anonymous reviewers, Russell Crook, Trey Lewis, Jaewoo Jung, Ashley Roccapiore, Ace Beorchia, Tracie Martin, and participants at the 2018 Academy of Management Conference.

Appendix A. Articles on identity in entrepreneurship in the review

Year	Authors ^a	Distinctions (D) Variations (V) Constructions (C) Intersections (I)	Method	Cited in paper
1999	Gartner et al.	D, V, I	Qualitative (discriminant analysis)	x
1999	Dyck and Starke	C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2001	Lounsbury and Glynn	D, C, I	Conceptual	x
2004	Bruni et al.	D, C, I	Qualitative (ethnography)	x
2004	Down and Reveley	C	Qualitative (ethnography)	x
2004	Lewis	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2004	Warren	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2005	Baker and Nelson	D, V, C	Qualitative (grounded theory)	
2005	Dobrev and Barnett	D, V, C	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	
2007	Martens et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative and quantitative	x
2007	Nadin	V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2007	Steyaert	V, C, I	Qualitative (narrative analysis)	x
2007	Vesala et al.	D, C, I	Quantitative (stepwise regression analysis)	x
2008	Down and Warren	V, C	Qualitative (ethnography)	x
2008	Huy	D, C	Qualitative (ethnography)	
2008	Jones et al.	C	Qualitative (case study)	x
2008	Sundaramurthy and Kreiner	D, I	Conceptual	x
2009	Cardon et al.	V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2009	Drori et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (ethnography)	x
2009	Essers and Benschop	V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2009	Goethner et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2009	Jain et al.	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2009	Reay	D, C, I	Conceptual	x
2009	Shepherd and Haynie (a)	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2009	Shepherd and Haynie (b)	D, C, I	Conceptual	x
2009	Webb et al.	D, V, I	Conceptual	x
2010	Boje and Smith	C, I	Qualitative (visual & semiotic analysis)	
2010	Hoang and Gimeno	D, V, C	Conceptual	x
2010	Navis and Glynn	D, C, I	Qualitative and quantitative	x
2010	Smith	V, C	Qualitative (biographical analysis)	x
2010	Spartz	V, C	Conceptual	
2010	Vesala and Vesala	V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2011	Anderson and Warren	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (discourse analysis)	x
2011	Bingham et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (negative binomial regressions)	x
2011	Bjursell and Melin	V, C	Qualitative (interviews)	
2011	Clarke	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2011	Diaz García and Welter	C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2011	Farmer et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (ordinary least square)	x
2011	Fauchart and Gruber	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2011	Harmeling	V, C	Conceptual	
2011	Miller and LeBreton-Miller	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (panel regression analysis)	x
2011	Miller et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (panel regression analysis)	x
2011	Moss et al.	C, I	Quantitative (content analysis)	x
2011	Navis and Glynn	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2011	Orser et al.	C	Qualitative (content analysis)	
2011	Wry et al.	V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2011	Zachary et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (content analysis)	x
2012	Cucculelli and Marchionne	D, I	Quantitative (survival analysis)	x
2012	Dodd and Hynes	D, V, C, I	Quantitative and qualitative	x
2012	Falck et al.	V, C	Quantitative (ordinary least square)	x
2012	Hallack et al.	D, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	
2012	Li and Gustafsson	D, V, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2012	Libaers and Wang	V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x
2012	Nielsen and Lassen	C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	
2012	Obschonka et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x

2013	Achtenhagen and Johannisson	D, C, I	Conceptual	x
2013	Brannon et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (survival analysis)	x
2013	Cardon et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (factor analysis)	x
2013	Glynn and Navis	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2013	Hytti and Heinonen	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (diaries)	x
2013	Kovalainen and Österberg-Högestedt	C	Conceptual	x
2013	Lewis	D, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2013	Nwankwo	V, C	Qualitative (historical analysis)	
2013	Phillips et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2013	Seuneke et al.	D, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	
2013	Stinchfield et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2013	Vanevenhoven and Liguori	V, C	Quantitative (factor analysis)	
2013	Zellweger et al.	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2014	Battilana and Lee	V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2014	Chasserio et al.	C	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2014	Donnellon et al.	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2014	Gill and Larson	C	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2014	Hamilton, 2014 (JSBM)	C	Conceptual	x
2014	Kašperová and Kitching	V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2014	Murnieks et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x
2014	Pijpers and Maas	V, C	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2014	Powell and Baker	D, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2014	Stenholm and Hytti	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2015	Cannella et al.	D, V, C	Quantitative (GLS panel data regressions)	x
2015	Cardon and Kirk	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2015	Elfving	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2015	Lundqvist et al.	V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2015	Marlow and McAdam	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2015	O'Kane et al.	C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2015	Obschonka et al.	C	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	
2015	Smith and Woods	C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2016	Berglund et al.	V, C, I	Qualitative (ethnography)	
2016	Bredvold and Skalen	V, C	Qualitative (interviews)	
2016	Collewaert et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (logistic regression analysis)	x
2016	Fisher et al.	C, I	Conceptual	x
2016	Hall-Phillips et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x
2016	Huyghe et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2016	Leitch and Harrison	V, C	Conceptual	x
2016	Lewis	V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2016	Lindstrom	V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	
2016	Meek and Wood	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2016	Mollick	D, V, C	Quantitative (quasi experiment)	x
2016	O'Neil and Ucbasaran	C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2016	Parsian and Mobaraki	V, C	Quantitative (ordinary least square)	
2016	Pfeifer et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (logistic regression analysis)	x
2016	Qureshi et al.	C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	
2016	Rouse	D, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2016	Sieger et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (factor analysis)	x
2016	Stewart and Hoell	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2016	Watson et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (polynomial regression analysis)	x
2016	Yitshaki and Kropp	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (narrative analysis)	
2016	York et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2016	Zampetikas et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (ordinary least square)	
2017	Barrett and Vershinina	V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2017	Cardon et al.	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2017	Clarke and Holt	D, C, I	Qualitative (visual ethnography)	x
2017	Demetry	V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2017	Driver	C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	
2017	Fedorenko et al.	V, C, I	Conceptual	
2017	Fernandes and Mota-Ribeiro	D, C, I	Qualitative (discourse analysis)	x
2017	Fisher et al.	C, I	Conceptual	x
2017	Giazitzoglu and Down	C, I	Qualitative (ethnography)	x
2017	Greenberg and Mollick	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (logistic regression analysis)	x
2017	Gruber and MacMillan	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2017	Hytti et al.	D, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2017	Kacperczyk and Younkin	V, C, I	Quantitative (survival analysis)	
2017	Karhunen et al.	V, C	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2017	Kauppinen	V, C, I	Qualitative (content analysis)	
2017	Lee et al.	C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2017	Masik	C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2017	Mathias and Williams	D, V, I	Qualitative (verbal protocol)	x
2017	Pontikes and Barnett	C, I	Quantitative (survival analysis)	x
2017	Powell and Baker	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2017	Stead	C, I	Conceptual	x

2017	Wry and York	D, V, C	Conceptual	x
2018	Ahsan et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x
2018	Balven et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	
2018	Brändle et al.	D, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2018	Celuch et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x
2018	Conger et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2018	Dentoni et al.	D, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2018	de La Cruz et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x
2018	Grimes et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (probit regression analysis)	x
2018	Grimes	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2018	Harlow and Chadha	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2018	Irwin et al.	D, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2018	Liñán et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	
2018	Mathias and Williams	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2018	McMullen	C, I	Conceptual	x
2018	Morris et al. (a)	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (cluster analysis)	
2018	Morris et al. (b)	V, I	Qualitative and quantitative	
2018	Newbery et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (quasi experiment)	x
2018	Partanen et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (structural equation modeling)	x
2018	Shantz et al.	D, V, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2018	Shepherd and Williams	V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2018	Steffens et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (logistic regression analysis)	x
2018	Stigliani and Elsbach	D, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2018	Stroe et al.	D, V, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2018	Warnick et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (conjoint analysis)	x
2018	Werthes et al.	D, V, C	Qualitative (case study)	x
2019	Anderson et al.	C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2019	Baker and Powell	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	x
2019	Bell et al.	V, C	Qualitative (interviews)	
2019	Ceresia and Mendola	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	
2019	Dinger et al.	V, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2019	Guo et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	
2019	Hahn	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	
2019	Hampel et al.	I	Qualitative (interviews)	x
2019	Horst and Hitters	V, C, I	Conceptual	
2019	Hsu et al.	D, C, I	Qualitative (grounded theory)	x
2019	Humphreys et al.	C	Qualitative (historical analysis)	
2019	Jones et al.	V, C, I	Conceptual	
2019	Korhonen et al.	D, V, C, I	Qualitative (interviews)	
2019	Ladge et al.	D, V, C, I	Conceptual	
2019	Lahti et al.	V, C, I	Quantitative (experiment)	x
2019	Murnieks et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (ordinary least square)	x
2019	Murnieks et al.	V, C	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	x
2019	Oo et al.	D, V, C, I	Quantitative (ordinary least square)	x
2019	Pan et al.	V	Conceptual	x
2019	Pearse and Peterlin	D, V, I	Qualitative (case study)	
2019	Saha	C, I	Quantitative (Pearson correlation)	
2019	Santos and Cardon	V, I	Quantitative (logistic regression analysis)	x
2019	Strauss et al.	D, V	Quantitative (hierarchical regression analysis)	
2019	Wry and York	N/A	Conceptual	x
2020	Zuzul and Tripsas	D, C, I	Qualitative (case study)	x

* We provide full citations for each article in the references section.

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