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WHO AM I? LOOKING INSIDE THE "ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY"

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ABSTRACT

This paper extends existing research surrounding entrepreneurial motivation by investigating entrepreneurial roles and entrepreneurial identities. We argue that these entities are critical elements within entrepreneurs' self-concepts that drive behavior. In two separate studies involving 225 non-entrepreneurs and 63 entrepreneurs, we examine both the entrepreneurial role and the entrepreneurial identity. We offer theoretical extensions for how the consideration of entrepreneurial roles and identities can expand our general understanding of the entrepreneurial process.

INTRODUCTION

Despite agreement among entrepreneurship scholars that motivation is an important area of study (Herron & Sapienza, 1992; Naffziger, Hornsby & Kuratko, 1994), research on entrepreneurial motives is scarce (Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003). Classical entrepreneurship theory offered the prospect of monetary gain as a motivation for entrepreneurial endeavors (Kirzner, 1979; Knight, 1921; Schumpeter, 1942), but extrinsic rewards like money are known to be inferior to intrinsic motives for influencing behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). More recent entrepreneurship research has focused on possible intrinsic motives like the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961) associated with individual traits, but work on "traits" has proved largely inconclusive (Gartner, 1988). While we know that entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated individuals (Gimeno et al., 1997), we still struggle to understand what drives their motivations. The current study attempts to redress this gap by using structural identity theory (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000) to propose that individuals are motivated to engage in entrepreneurial activities because they seek to verify important self-conceptions. In essence, we propose certain individuals hold salient entrepreneurial identities, which motivate them to act as entrepreneurs.

In this paper, we attempt to better understand sources for entrepreneurial motives by investigating the concept of the entrepreneurial identity. Drawing from the vast literature surrounding structural identity theory, we argue that entrepreneurial roles and entrepreneurial identities serve as powerful entities that propel entrepreneurial actions. In the first section of this paper, we move to establish, both theoretically and empirically, the existence of entrepreneurial roles and identities. Further, we attempt to begin a characterization of the nature of these concepts; we try to figure out what the entrepreneurial role and entrepreneurial identity look like. In the second half of this paper, we again draw on the work of structural identity theorists to offer theoretical extensions about the relationship between entrepreneurial identities and entrepreneurial outcomes. In the sections that follow, we first review structural identity theory, specifically its emphasis on roles and identities. Next, we present the results of two empirical studies aimed at investigating entrepreneurial identities and roles. Finally, we conclude with a discussion about the interaction of multiple identities with an individual's entrepreneurial identity to influence emotions experienced during the entrepreneurial process.

EXPLORING ENTREPRENEURIAL ROLES AND IDENTITIES –
THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Identity Theory: Defining Roles & Identities

Structural identity theory[1] is an extension of the symbolic interactionist work of Mead (1934), Blumer (1969) and Stryker (1968). It posits that individuals make choices to behave in manners that are consistent with valued roles (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identity theorists are very careful to distinguish between the concepts of "role" and "identity." Role refers to the expectations of behavior attached to certain societal statuses or positions (Cast, 2004), with the latter defined as any socially recognized category of actors like mother, father, or doctor (Stryker & Statham, 1985). An identity is defined as a cognitive schema (Stryker & Burke, 2000) that results from the internalization of a role into a person's self-concept[2], such that, as Cast (2004) succinctly puts it, "an identity is a set of meanings that represent the self in a social role, defining who one is in that status" (p. 57). Said otherwise, identities are reflexively applied cognitions that answer the question "Who am I?" (Stryker & Serpe, 1982); they are "meanings a person attributes to the self" (Burke, 1980, p. 18). Thus, whereas the role represents a set of socially-held behavioral expectations attached to positions external to an individual, an identity represents the internalization and incorporation of these expectations into one's own sense of a self-concept (Gecas, 1982). Cast (2004) provides an illustrative example regarding the relationship between roles and identities, "The status of mother has an attached set of role expectations, such as feed the child, clothe the child, rock the child, and these expectations are internalized in an identity so that each mother has an identity that reflects these expectations of herself in the status of mother" (p. 57).

Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of discovering and exploiting opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In this context, it seems logical that certain individuals (namely entrepreneurs) would internalize specific behavioral expectations, perhaps those of "identifying, evaluating and exploiting opportunities" (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 218), into an entrepreneurial identity. These internalized expectations would then define, for the individual, what it means for him/her to be an entrepreneur. To our knowledge, the concept and characterization of an entrepreneurial identity have not yet been explored in the literature. According to Stryker (1989), a self-concept[3] is composed of a "structure of differentiated identities organized in a hierarchy of salience" (p. 54). Thus, individual identities all combine to form an individual's self-concept. People's conceptions of who they are rest on an aggregation of multiple different identities (parent, friend, entrepreneur, etc.) which they assume depending on time and place. Entrepreneurs' self-concepts likely contain varying identities (spouse, father or mother, community leader, etc.) in addition to their entrepreneurial one.

McCall and Simmons (1978) point out that the behavioral expectations embodied within an identity exhibit both stability, stemming from their socially-agreed upon and reflexively applied nature, as well as an idiosyncratic quality, arising from their autonomous internalization by individuals and situationally-dependent nature. Thus, the core of the actions attributed to identities tend to be recognized by all members of society (as stated above, mothers are expected to clothe their children), but at the same time, each person adapts the role behaviors to his or her own personality (the color and style of the clothing that mothers choose for their children varies from person to person, from context to context). Depending on the contextual fabric of each of our own lives, we have varied numbers and kinds of identities (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Burke (1980) is careful to point out that in addition to being related to roles, identities are related to other identities and roles as well. By this, he means that identities and roles derive meaning from their relation to other identities and roles. Focusing on roles for the moment, the meanings in roles are constructed and held relative to other roles which serve as points for reference. In many cases, the meanings embedded within a role exist only in relation to some other important counter-role. For example, the role of "wife" derives a significant portion of its meaning from the role of "husband". We understand, for the most part, what it means to be a wife through her actions in relation to a husband. Similarly, the role of "doctor" requires a role of "patient" for it to be complete. Doctors interact with patients on many levels, all of which combine to create the role of doctor. Doctors without patients are unable to fulfill many of the duties we commonly ascribe to them. Thus, we conceptualize many of our roles, and therefore our identities, in relation to important counter-roles. Given the socially embedded nature of roles, it is highly likely that the entrepreneurial role has a number of counter-roles (like those of

the venture capitalist or of a manager in a firm) which are necessary for comprehension and interaction. For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to note that a role or identity cannot be meaningfully developed in isolation; it must be evaluated relative to pertinent counter-roles or counter-identities (Burke, 1980).

Why do Identities Matter?

Identities motivate behavior (Burke, 1991a; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Erez & Earley, 1993; Foote, 1951; Marcussen & Large, 2003; McCall & Simmons, 1978). McCall and Simmons (1978) go so far as to call identities perhaps the primary sources of motivation for human behavior. Identity control theory (Burke, 1991) argues that identities are powerful motivators because they fulfill the human need for self-verification (Swann, Pelham & Krull, 1989), which then contributes to a sense of efficacy (Erez & Earley 1993). Related to the need for self-consistency, self-verification represents the desire for individuals to preserve self-conceptions (Burke, 2004) because congruency in this manner promotes feelings of stability and control (Swann et al., 1989). Consistency in one's conception of self over time provides an individual with a sense of coherence and continuity, which increases an individual's perceived ability to deal effectively with his or her environment (Erez & Earley, 1993). In addition, self-verification leads to increased positive affect (Burke, 2004; Stets, 2004) and self-esteem (Burke & Stets, 1999; Erez & Earley, 1993). On the other hand, a lack of self-verification may lead to feelings of confusion, inefficacy and distress (Burke, 2004; 1991b; Stets, 2004).

Self-verification is achieved when an individual successfully aligns self-relevant feedback concerning his or her actions with the standards of conduct embodied within an identity (Burke, 2004; 1991b). In this sense, Burke (2004; 1991a) likens identity processes to control systems. He argues that individuals continually regulate their behavior by monitoring feedback from others generated as a result of that behavior. A cyclical process occurs where an individual takes some action, views the results of that action, evaluates the results in comparison with the standards embodied within an identity, and then incorporates this new information to modify his or her behavior to improve the expected results. Behavior is continually altered until feedback matches the identity standard (Burke, 1991a). This match results in self-verification, and may manifest any number of other emotions ranging from elation to satisfaction to relief, depending on the identity involved[4]. When feedback does not match the identity standard, self-verification is not achieved and varying levels of distress are experienced (Burke, 1991b). To the extent that individuals desire the positive outcomes associated with self-verification and wish to avoid the distress associated with a lack of self-verification, identities motivate behavioral modification until feedback matches identity standards (Burke, 1991b). Foote (1951) aptly points out that in this cyclical process, memories of behaviors that resulted in verified identities can then serve as powerful motivators for subsequent similar behavior. We argue that understanding the nature of the entrepreneurial identity may contribute to a better comprehension of entrepreneurial motivations and emotions.

Entrepreneurial Role and Identity: Semantic Content and Behaviors

Social psychologists and sociologists have researched numerous different identities across numerous different contexts, including gender identities in young children, (Burke & Tully, 1977), religious identities (Stryker & Serpe, 1982), blood donor identities (Callero, 1985), and parenthood identities (Riley & Burke, 1995; Cast, 2004). In this note, we extend this line of inquiry into the realm of entrepreneurship which, as a field to date, has yet to incorporate identity theory. We take a first step toward redressing this gap by investigating the meaning of the entrepreneurial role and the entrepreneurial identity, as held by both non-entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurs.

The theoretical possibility exists that there is no shared conception of an entrepreneurial role (and therefore an entrepreneurial identity), since roles and identities are conceived of cognitively by individuals who rely on somewhat idiosyncratic schemas to develop these concepts (Blumer, 1969). While this possibility exists, it is not likely in a society dominated by the level of human interaction we

see in our world today. Roles originate and reside in the mental schemas of individuals (Stryker & Burke, 2000), but their conceptualization tends to be shared across members of a society (Stryker, 1980). We all learn about different roles by interacting with other members of society. In these interactions, we share notions of the composition of certain roles. As such, role conceptions are passed on from one person to another. Thus, there tends to be a central, stable component of roles which exists commonly among all of us, and which allows us to speak meaningfully (and understand what we mean to each other) when we talk about these roles (Burke & Tully, 1977).

To the extent that some entity called the "entrepreneur" exists in our contemporary business culture (as evidenced by a review of business literature), there should be an accompanying role and identity. Discussion of a class of individuals called "entrepreneurs" has been ongoing since the writings of Cantillon (1755) and been featured prominently by scholars such as Knight (1921), Schumpeter (1942) and Kirzner (1979). It appears that in our society, we all hold some conception of an "entrepreneur" as an individual who is distinct from other roles and identities in at least some meaningful way. Thus, we hypothesize that both the entrepreneurial role and the entrepreneurial identity exist:

> *H1: A commonality of meaning exists regarding the conception of the entrepreneurial role, relative to other counter-roles.*

> *H2: A commonality of meaning exists regarding the conception of the entrepreneurial identity, relative to other counter-identities.*

METHODS

We employ the methodology of Burke and Tully (1977) for measuring the *meaning* content of the entrepreneurial role and the entrepreneurial identity.

Meanings and Behaviors

In this section, we examine why the concept of "meanings" is pertinent to a discussion of roles and identities. If identities are defined as internalized expectations of *behavior*, then why is a discussion of "meanings" merited? More to the point, couldn't we simply measure identities through behaviors, and ignore "meanings?" The answer to this last question is "not exactly." While behaviors are often inherent in meanings (Stryker & Statham, 1985), they must be embedded contextually to be understood fully. Measuring identities only through behavior, absent context, ignores the theoretical foundations of identity theory, a point on which we expound below.

To understand the significance of "meaning" in identities, it is important to understand the origins of identity theory. As conceptualized by Stryker (1968), McCall and Simmons (1978), and Burke (1980), identity theory is an extension of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism contends that interactions between individuals are the fabric of society (Stryker & Statham, 1985), and that in the course of these interactions, individuals make a point of interpreting one another's actions and assigning meaning to them. Blumer (1969) states, "human beings interpret or "define" each other's actions. Their "response" is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the *meaning* that they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the *meaning* of one another's actions." (p. 79, italics added). Meanings of symbols drive behaviors. These meanings encompass many elements, including the attributed motivation, the underlying intent, and the environmental, historical and temporal context of the symbol. Thus, we see that these meanings embed behaviors in rich contextual networks which drive interpretation and subsequent reaction.

Based on this reasoning, we argue that it is important to measure the meanings attached to identities, and not just the behaviors. While all meanings are characterized by resultant behaviors, not every

behavior is attached to the same meaning. For example, the behavior of a man pushing a woman could be assigned many meanings. Perhaps the man is in the process of mugging her (hurting), or perhaps he is pushing her out of the way of an oncoming truck (helping). One behavior could be assigned two very different meanings: hurting versus helping. Conversely, if we assign the meaning of "savior" to the man, we conclude that the behavior which must follow our interpretation is some act of helping the woman avoid harm, hence the shove. Behaviors are critical to understanding identities and roles, but must be gauged in relative contexts of meaning to be accurate. Thus, identities and roles cannot be measured through behaviors alone; meanings are critical.

Semantic Differential Methodology

The methodology of Burke and Tully (1977) employs self-administered semantic differentials consisting of different adjective pairs placed on opposite ends of a seven-point scale to gauge the meaning inherent in roles and identities. Subjects rate each adjective pair relative to two different roles. Since roles (and identities) are defined in relation to relevant counter-roles (Burke, 1980), it was necessary to include at least one other role besides the entrepreneurial one. For this, we drew on the work of Burke and Reitzes (1981) who outline general categories of counter-roles which may be used when obvious ones do not exist[5]. They employed roles which represent 1) prior or subsequent identities, 2) roles of others who are primary interactants, and 3) roles which represent who one might have become under different circumstances or choices. In line with this general typology, we used one primary counter-role to represent these three categories: a middle-manager in a company. We contend a manager in a firm simultaneously encapsulates 1) who an entrepreneur might have been prior to the current role or who s/he might become subsequently if entrepreneurship is not a good fit, 2) who s/he might have become under different circumstances, were the elements necessary for the move to becoming an entrepreneur not present, and 3) a primary interactant for any entrepreneur managing a firm with more than 2 or 3 people (since the entrepreneur is likely to have managers working for him or her). We asked the respondents to rate a series of adjective pairs for each of these two roles, and then employed discriminant analyses to determine which "adjective items maximally distinguish between the role meanings" (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, p. 86). Using discriminant analyses in accordance with the method specified by Burke and Tully (1977) attempts to discern what those common elements of roles are: those elements shared by all individuals. If there is no commonality in role conception, the discriminant analysis will find no significant results.

Creation of the Semantic Differential Instrument

Since we were not able to find any literature which addresses the entrepreneurial role directly, it was necessary to develop a new instrument for assessing this role. We surveyed the existing literature to determine which traits and characteristics are commonly ascribed to entrepreneurs and the activities of entrepreneurship. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) define entrepreneurship as the field concerned with the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities. While this is a succinct definition, it is too broad to usefully or practically conceptualize the entrepreneurial role. Thus, we turned to the wealth of literature which analyzes traits and behaviors characteristic of entrepreneurship.

A vast amount of research has been conducted on the different traits hypothesized to be linked to entrepreneurship (Brockhaus, 1982; Hornaday & Aboud, 1971). Despite the fact that some authors claim the study of traits in entrepreneurship has been fruitless (Gartner, 1988), we thought it would be important to incorporate this body of work into the design of the role instrument. The focus of this research is aimed at what meanings and behaviors individuals assign to the entrepreneurial role, not necessarily those characteristics which have been statistically proven to distinguish entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. To the extent that individuals *perceive* or *believe* entrepreneurs to possess certain traits, we considered it germane to include them in a study of the entrepreneurial role. Perception is a critical element in the determination of roles and identities (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). Whether these entrepreneurs possess

these traits in statistically significant quantities that separate them from non-entrepreneurs, or in quantities that predict other outcomes like venture performance, is a different issue we leave for another paper.

To create the semantic differential instrument, we drew from research that looked at defining the important traits of entrepreneurs. A primary contributor to trait theories in entrepreneurship, McClelland (1961) argues that "need for achievement" is a key characteristic of entrepreneurs. He also contends that risk-taking, decisiveness, energy, innovation, anticipation of the future, overconfidence and personal responsibility are all important factors to study among entrepreneurs. A decade later, Hornaday and Aboud (1971) tested a series of nine personality factors between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. They found that achievement orientation, support from others, and tendencies toward independence and leadership were significantly different among entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Continuing the theme of studying personality factors among entrepreneurs, Ciavarella et al., (2004) investigated the correlations between the Big 5 personality factors, as present in the founding entrepreneurs, and new venture survival. Interestingly, they found that only conscientiousness predicted increased survival rates. To these general studies of the personality traits relevant to entrepreneurs, we added items representing entrepreneurial orientation (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) and entrepreneurial mindset (McGrath and MacMillan, 2000). While entrepreneurial orientation has traditionally been conceptualized as a firm-level (vs. an individual-level) construct, its component elements (autonomy, innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness) could easily be assessed of individuals. Since entrepreneurial orientation has received a significant amount of attention in the literature (for a review, please see Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005), we included it in this portion of the study. McGrath and MacMillan (2000) argue that possession of an entrepreneurial mindset is a primary way individuals can successfully move forward in an entrepreneurial process. Thus, we included elements from this construct in this study as well.

Study #1

Data

The data for study #1 were gathered from questionnaire responses of 225 undergraduate students enrolled at a large western University. Questionnaires were distributed after a brief introduction describing the general intent of the survey was read by the experimenter. The data analyzed here were drawn from 45 adjective pairs assessed by the students in semantic differential format on seven-point Likert scales. Subjects were asked to evaluate the adjective pairs in relation to the following prompts: 1) "In general, an Entrepreneur is…", 2) "In general, a person who is not an entrepreneur but is a Manager in a company is…" To mitigate order effects, the sequence of the presented roles as well as the presentation of specific semantic differential scales within the roles were randomized between subjects. In order to avoid confusion though, the order of presentation of the semantic differential scales across the three roles was held constant within subjects. 5 questionnaires were eliminated due to incomplete data, leaving us with a final sample of 220.

Discriminant Analyses

Discriminant analyses were conducted on the responses to determine which adjective pairs maximally differentiate the role of entrepreneur from that of manager. The objective of the discriminant analysis in this study is to determine which adjectives best differentiate the entrepreneurial role from the manager role (Callero, 1985). The overall discriminant function, for the comparison of 45 adjective pairs across the two roles, was significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.174, chi-square = 342, signif = 0.00). Table 1 lists the 18 pairs of adjectives which best discriminate between the roles of entrepreneur and manager, as well as their associated discriminant weights (standardized discriminant function coefficients per Burke & Reitzes, 1981) and loadings (structure correlations between each adjective pair and the discriminant function per Hair et al., 1998). These 18 were selected because their loadings (structure correlations) all exceeded +/- 0.3, which is the minimum value recommended by Hair et al., (1998) to be considered substantive. The remaining 27 adjective pairs all possessed loadings below +/- 0.3.

Based on this analysis, it appears the non-entrepreneurs in this sample tend to differentiate entrepreneurial and managerial roles along the lines of risk-taking, innovation, and unpredictability. They appear to conceive of the entrepreneurial role (as distinguished from a more traditional managerial one) as one characterized by an unpredictable, innovative individual who charges forward undaunted by risk and uncertainty. As we might expect, such a conception is aligned with the traditional view of an entrepreneur as portrayed in the literature (Bygrave, 1997; Knight, 1921; McClelland, 1961).

Study #2

Data

The data for study #2 were gathered from the questionnaire responses of 63 entrepreneurs operating businesses in the Boulder County, Colorado region. Questionnaires were distributed by mail and the internet following telephone calls to solicit participation. The data analyzed here were drawn from 11 adjective pairs assessed by the entrepreneurs in semantic differential format akin to the manner used for the students in study #1. We paired down the original 45 adjective pairs used in the first study in an effort to make the questionnaire more palatable for this particular sample. The 11 adjective pairs assessed in study #2 were selected based on their structure correlations in study #1. In an attempt to maximize our ability to find the characteristics of the entrepreneurial role, we used those adjective pairs that demonstrated the greatest discriminant ability (those with the highest loadings in study #1)[6]. These items are marked with an asterisk "*" in table 1, and are shown in table 2. 4 questionnaires were eliminated in study #2 due to incomplete data, leaving us with a final sample of 59.

Discriminant Analyses

Discriminant analyses were conducted on the responses in a manner similar to study #1. The overall discriminant function was significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.238, chi-square = 72.6, signif = 0.00). Table 2 lists the 11 adjective pairs along with their discriminant weights and loadings.

This analysis serves to confirm the results of study #1, namely that the entrepreneurial role (relative to the managerial one) is indeed a distinct entity. In an attempt to determine that entrepreneurs themselves did indeed possess an identity linked to this entrepreneurial role, we asked the entrepreneurs in our sample to indicate whether or not they each maintained an entrepreneurial identity, in addition to a number of other identities. All 59 entrepreneurs indicated that they did indeed possess an entrepreneurial identity which was a distinct entity separate from their other identities. In our sample, the mean number of different identities possessed by entrepreneurs was 8.4. More interestingly, the entrepreneurial identity was ranked as one of the three most important identities by 80% (47 out of 59) of our sample. Evaluated as a group, the results of studies 1 and 2 lead us to conclude that both the entrepreneurial role and the entrepreneurial identity exist as unique elements within the self-concept. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported.

IMPLICATIONS OF FOCUSING ON ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITIES

We contend that the study of entrepreneurial roles and identities offers tremendous potential for research in our field. Proceeding under the notion that they exist, we can draw on a voluminous amount of research in psychology and sociology which provides insights into how identities within the self-concept can affect motivations and emotions. In this paper, we draw on this body of work to expound on one possible ramification relevant to entrepreneurs: the regulation of emotion related to the maintenance of multiple identities.

The Functionality of Multiple Identities

Drawing from the work of sociologists, we offer the idea that the maintenance of multiple identities (Stryker, 2004; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Thoits, 1983, 1986) may allow entrepreneurs to regulate their emotions more effectively. Stryker (2004) reinforces the possible problems with maintaining only a few identities, stating "The denial of opportunities to play out roles expressive of identities is, in effect, a denial of them, calling their validity into question." (pg. 14). Thus, individuals who have only one salient identity will feel strongly compelled to act it out. If s/he cannot (which could occur if a venture fails), a sudden loss of positive affect occurs. Individuals who maintain only one identity, like the entrepreneurial one, in a salient position in their personal hierarchy are likely to experience negative affect if they are not allowed to indulge that identity[7]. If setbacks or failures occur with the venture that prevents the engagement of the entrepreneurial identity, the individual's self-verification and self-esteem are at risk.

Sieber (1974) and Thoits (1983, 1986) point out that accumulating multiple identities can result in positive outcomes. This occurs because more identities provide enrichment and ego gratification, and provide more status security in case one particular identity incurs negative affect due to some unsuccessful event. Sieber (1974) argues that having different identities to turn to for positive affect and personal growth, as opposed to relying on a single one for need fulfillment, is likely to be beneficial. The negative affect that normally results from the abstention from acting on one salient identity (Vallerand et al., 2003) is balanced by positive affect which occurs from engagement of other identities (Sieber, 1974). While negative affect associated with failures in the salient identity still occurs, it is not as devastating to the individual. Such an individual can resort to other identities for self-esteem reinforcement. Imagine an entrepreneur who maintains the identities of both mother and entrepreneur in high positions of salience. She may take solace in being a good mother on days when she experiences adversity as an entrepreneur. In this sense, an entrepreneurial identity does not wield the degree of control over an individual with multiple identities as it would over one who has only a few, or one, salient role identity. As long as the accumulation of roles does not result in role overload (due to time constraints) or role conflict (due to conflicting role expectations), individuals benefit by possessing more roles. Sieber (1974) dutifully points out that elevated time constraints are not always linked to role accumulation. Moreover, role conflicts can be managed by the individual who consciously avoids accepting adversarial identities. The benefits of multiple identities have been confirmed empirically by Cummings and ElSalmi (1970), Thoits (1983, 1986), and Linville (1987)[8].

Integrating the work on identity theory with that of affect and self-concepts gives us insights into the avenues to help entrepreneurs understand and regulate their emotions. If, as we suggest, entrepreneurs associate affect with their enactment of the entrepreneurial role, this engagement must be controlled. Maintaining multiple identities in addition to the entrepreneurial one is likely to allow entrepreneurs to regulate the attributed affect that results from self-verification more effectively (Sieber, 1974; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Effective regulation, in turn, will lead to more positive outcomes with respect to entrepreneurial activities (Cardon et al., 2005). In making these arguments, we are cognizant of the links between role enactment and competence. Borrowing the logic of the deliberate practice literature (Charness, Tuffiash, Krampe, Reingold, Vasyukova, 2005), individuals who devote more time to mastering the entrepreneurial role and their own entrepreneurial identities are likely to develop greater entrepreneurial competence. While maintaining multiple identities may mitigate competence development, we assert there is likely to be some point where diminishing returns are reaped with respect to time invested in the entrepreneurial identity. Namely, more time spent engaging the identity results in smaller increases in competence because of the proportionately larger increases in negative affect caused by maintenance of fewer identities. In essence, we advocate a balance in identities. Those who attempt to hold only one identity, or too many, will experience significantly more negative affect than those who maintain a salient few.

Proposition: Entrepreneurs who maintain balance in their self-concept through multiple identities will exhibit less negative affect in enactment of the entrepreneurial identity than those who maintain only a few identities.

CONCLUSION

Identity theory can offer us tremendous insights into the behaviors and experiences of entrepreneurs. Identity theorists have investigated the extent to which identities drive behaviors of individuals (Stryker, 1968; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Callero, 1985). Identities play important roles in the ways we perceive our own senses of self (Gecas, 1982) as well as how we interact with others (Goffman, 1959). The fact that there has been virtually no application of identity theory to the realm of entrepreneurship is surprising and begs to be addressed. We hope that this paper offers a useful first step at bringing the thoughts of identity theorists into this arena.

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NOTES

1. Structural identity theory should not be confused with social identity theory; the two are not identical (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). Structural identity theory emphasizes role behavior which typically involves (or even requires) direct interaction with counterroles, whereas social identity theory emphasizes differences and separation between in-group and out-group classification. Social identity theory puts little emphasis on interchange with out-group members, where structural identity theory maintains that these out-groups (counter-roles) are critical to the manifestation of identities within the self-concept.

2. To be precise, even though we use the terms interchangeably, we actually focus on self-concepts rather than selves. Gecas (1982) distinguishes selves from self-concepts by defining the former as the reflexive process by which a self-concept is formed. A self-concept, on the other hand, is the product of a reflexive process of self, and is the picture that an individual holds of him/herself as a person. When psychologists discuss selves, they usually refer to the entity that a person holds of him/herself, and not necessarily the process by which this entity is formed. All of the literature referenced in this paper refers to self-concepts, and not selves.

3. Identities and self-concepts should not be viewed as equivalent constructs. Gecas (1982) points out that self-concepts are composed of both identities and attributes. So, attributes like honesty or optimism may be a part of a self-concept even though they are not explicitly part of any one constituent identity. This paper is primarily focused on identities as components of self-concepts, so we leave the discussion of attributes for another paper. Identity theorists argue that even though identities do not represent the totality of a self-concept, they are still primary motivators behind behavior and are important to study.

4. Work by Higgins (1987) indicates that different emotions may result depending on whether the identity standard represents an "ideal" or an "ought" identity.

5. Burke and Reitzes (1981) conducted a study analyzing student roles/identities. They point out that the seminal article on semantic analysis of roles/identities (Burke & Tully, 1977) employed gender, which presents a relatively simple role/counter-role relationship (boy vs girl). Since students do not have obvious counter-roles, categories of counter-roles needed to be developed.

6. Based on interviews with 3 entrepreneurs in a pilot test subsequent to study #1 but prior to study #2, we omitted the adjective pairs of "not creative/creative" and "destroyer/creator" from consideration because they were considered identical to one another.

7. In the tradition of James (1890) and Stryker (1968), we assume that most individuals, being embedded in active social environments and cultures, possess self-concepts composed of more than one identity. In this section our particular concern is with entrepreneurs who may obsessively focus solely on the entrepreneurial identity.

8. Marks & MacDermid (1996) demonstrate empirical evidence for the assertion that greater role balance leads to less experienced stress as well. Role balance indicates the degree to which an individual fully engages across a multiple number of roles. Linville (1987) demonstrated empirically that individuals with more complex self-concepts (where they incorporate a greater number of self-aspects or

roles) experience fewer negative effects from stressful events. She hypothesizes this occurs because the stressful impact from a negative event is confined to one role, which is a smaller proportion of the overall self-concept in a complex individual.

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Table 1: Entrepreneurial Role Discriminant Analysis – Study #1

Adjective Pair	Std. Discrim. Coefficient	Structure Correlation[1]
* Risk Aversive / Risk-Taking	0.429	0.670
* Repetitive in thoughts or actions / Novel in thoughts or actions	0.235	0.539
* Predictable / Unpredictable	0.218	0.482
* Uncomfortable with uncertainty / Comfortable with uncertainty	0.090	0.468
* Someone who makes incremental changes / Someone who makes radical changes	0.127	0.425
* Not Innovative / Innovative	0.014	0.422
* A Visionary / Lacking in Vision	- 0.292	- 0.416
* Not Independent / Independent	0.251	0.416
Not Creative / Creative	0.033	0.412
* Obeys Rules / Breaks Rules	0.183	0.397
* Analytical / Intuitive (goes by gut feel)	0.024	0.392
A Destroyer / A Creator	0.056	0.382
* Someone who likes including others / Someone who likes going it alone	0.107	0.376
Constrained in actions / Unlimited in actions	0.046	0.365
Unenthusiastic / Passionate	- 0.020	0.334
A Responder / An Initiator	- 0.093	0.323
Reactive / Proactive	0.006	0.319
Someone who prefers analysis / Someone who prefers action	0.006	0.313

1. Positive signs on structure correlations indicate the first adjective tends to be more strongly associated with the managerial role, and the second adjective tends to be more strongly associated with the entrepreneurial role. This is reversed for negative signs.
2. Items indicated with an "*" were selected for the entrepreneurial role/identity instrument.

Table 2: Entrepreneurial Role Discriminant Analysis – Study #2

Adjective Pair	Std. Discrim. Coefficient	Structure Correlation[1]
Repetitive in thoughts or actions / Novel in thoughts or actions	-0.019	0.763
Risk Aversive / Risk-Taking	0.233	0.705
Not Independent / Independent	0.397	0.693
Obeys Rules / Breaks Rules	0.091	0.660
Not Innovative / Innovative	0.179	0.595
Someone who makes incremental changes / Someone who makes radical changes	0.354	0.594
Predictable / Unpredictable	0.195	0.561
Analytical / Intuitive (goes by gut feel)	0.096	0.550
Uncomfortable with uncertainty / Comfortable with uncertainty	-0.145	0.392
Someone who likes including others / Someone who likes going it alone	0.185	0.383
Lacking in Vision / A Visionary[2]	-0.182	0.311

1. Positive signs on structure correlations indicate the first adjective tends to be more strongly associated with the managerial role, and the second adjective tends to be more strongly associated with the entrepreneurial role. This is reversed for negative signs.
2. The order of this adjective pair was reversed from that used in study #1, based on feedback from the pilot study that it was confusing.