THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE IDENTITY WORK IN SERIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic
To date research in identity work and entrepreneurship has been generally understudied. Recently, the attention of management scholars toward the ways in which individuals fashion and negotiate their identities at work has been increasing (e.g. Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008) and has started to garner the attention of entrepreneurship and institutional scholars too (e.g Navis & Glynn, 2011). Entrepreneurs need to be perceived as distinctive and unique to garner attention and to attract resources. At the same time they need to project their ventures within the larger environment, by negotiating their identities to elicit legitimacy. To complicate the matter, serial entrepreneurs usually wear different hats across the ventures they are a part of and often interact with audiences that differ from one venture to another.

Method
We conduct a longitudinal mixed-method case study to address this topic. We tracked the entrepreneurial identity dynamics of a famous and successful serial entrepreneur: Damon Albarn, a British music producer and musician, who is credited with the creation of multiple bands, projects and artistic ventures within the music scene and beyond across the world. A dataset comprised of all paper and online publications from January 1995 until May 2014 that covered Mr. Albarn or the projects he was involved with was collected through secondary sources (newspapers, specialty magazines, e-zines, blogs) and catalogued by the authors and their research assistants. Further expansion of the dataset included all video material retrievable through online access and converted into textual data for further analysis. The dataset has been analyzed via Gioia’s grounded method (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013) and corroborated via semantic network analysis (Oswick et al., 2010).

Results and Implications
Our exploratory results highlight how entrepreneurs engage in identity work by differentiating their discourses. They strategically elicit intertextual linkages to associate with (disassociate from) cultural settings that may enhance (endanger) their chances of success and activate interpretive frameworks to support their claims. The use of both qualitative and semantic network analysis represents an important contribution. We believe that the use of more objective metrics embedded in the semantic network approach opens up the possibility for a more systematic comparability of empirical results.

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