Entrepreneurial Identity: A Review and Research Agenda

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, research on entrepreneurial identity (EI) has grown particularly rapidly, yet in seemingly disparate directions. To lend structure to this fragmented field of inquiry, our systematic integrative review maps and integrates EI research based on antecedents, content, outcomes as well as their relationships. In so doing, we reveal that the field revolves around two primary conceptualizations of EI as Property or Process. We suggest future avenues for examining the interplay between EI and temporal, socio-cognitive, and spatial contexts, and for investigating and theorizing overlooked mechanisms of reconstructing and losing EI.

Keywords

Entrepreneurial identity, systematic integrative review, identity theories.
INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, entrepreneurial identity (EI) has emerged as a pivotal concept for understanding entrepreneurship as a social and economic phenomenon (Anderson et al., 2012; Mmbaga et al., 2020; Navis & Glynn, 2011). Research suggests that the way entrepreneurs answer the question “Who am I?” plays a critical role throughout the entrepreneurial process (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Mathias & Williams, 2018; Powell & Baker, 2017). Early in the establishment of new ventures, EI is important for achieving legitimacy (Hytti, 2005; Marlow & McAdam, 2015), belonging (Stead, 2017), and positively standing out from others (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). EI continues to inform entrepreneurs’ decisions, actions, and feelings (Alsos et al., 2016; Cardon et al., 2009; Down & Reveley, 2004) as they build their organizations, including how they acquire resources (Kromidha & Robson, 2016), the extent to which they commit time to their ventures (Murnieks et al., 2020), and even their passion (Cardon et al., 2009).

In the past decade, research on EI has grown particularly rapidly, yet in seemingly disparate directions. This is partly due to the very essence of EI as an “umbrella construct”—a central and multifaceted field of study (Hirsch & Levin, 1999)—that builds on an array of theoretical perspectives, including identity theory (Stryker, 1968), role identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), narrative identity theory (Ricoeur, 2012), and identity work (Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). These perspectives are rooted in different disciplinary traditions—sociology, social psychology, philosophy, and management, respectively—that reflect epistemologies ranging from positivism to social constructivism (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Given that entrepreneurial studies build on these varying foundations, it is not surprising that they may have led to different—at times unrelated, incongruent, or even contrasting—understandings of EI (Fauchart & Gruber, 2020; Leitch & Harrison, 2016).
In addition, as others have noted (Navis & Glynn, 2011; Wagenschwanz, 2020), EI encompasses notions that span levels of analysis from founders (“founder identity”) to organizations and even entire industries or fields. On the one hand, the breadth of this umbrella construct has opened avenues for diverse and rich theorizing; on the other, it has magnified conceptual confusion. Further, research on EI is still at a stage of “emerging excitement,” with scholars primarily focused on building new theories or extending existing ones (Hirsch & Levin, 1999). Indeed, most empirical studies of EI are qualitative and increasingly deploy inductive methodologies—a telling indicator of the theory-building efforts in which many have been engaging.

The importance of EI to the understanding of entrepreneurship, its breadth in terms of both theoretical foundations and levels of analysis, and scholars’ overarching focus on the development of new theory have led to increasing fragmentation in this research area. Recently, some have acknowledged this fragmentation (Baker & Powell, 2020; Crosina, 2018; Fauchart & Gruber, 2020; Leitch & Harrison, 2016) and paved the way for further knowledge development through a combination of (1) overviews of the literature focused on specific topic areas and (2) literature reviews (Mmbaga et al., 2020; Wagenschwanz, 2020).

With respect to extant EI overviews, Baker & Powell (2020, p. 165) discussed EI as it relates to other “contemporary human identities,” stressing the importance of not oversimplifying EI. Crosina (2018) provided a focused map of extant research on EI as it relates to women entrepreneurship. Fauchart & Gruber (2020) and Leitch & Harrison (2016) also approached the EI literature with a focused lens, considering how being a founder can span role and social identities, and mechanisms of identity formation, respectively. Although these chapters and editorial do not offer comprehensive reviews of the literature (Baker & Powell, 2020), they still sensitized us toward themes and issues—such as entrepreneurs’ gender, body, and work context—to which we remained opened as we systematically coded the literature. In
this way, despite recognizing that it is atypical for systematic reviews to account for book chapters and editorials (e.g., Busenitz et al., 2003; Champenois et al., 2020; Fitz-Koch et al., 2018), in our review we honor these efforts and complement them by considering EI holistically, across contexts and dynamics of identity, and in terms of EI’s content in relation to the broader entrepreneurial process.

With respect to recent EI reviews, Wagenschwanz (2020) and Mmbaga and colleagues (2020) helped mitigate some fragmentation in the field by mapping extant EI research more holistically. In particular, Wagenschwanz (2020) made strides toward enhancing construct clarity by explaining how EI relates to founder identity. Leveraging bibliometric techniques, Mmbaga and colleagues (2020) uncovered central themes in extant EI research. They then typified the existing EI literature into one of four primary conversations—“distinctions, variations, constructions, and intersections,” and suggested ideas for future research based on topic gaps.

Our work builds on and extends these perspectives. To start, we follow Wagenschwanz's (2020) understanding of EI as related but analytically distinct from founder identity. However, rather than examining EI in relation to sister constructs, or tracing EI’s nomological net, we consider EI from “within,” mapping extant research based on how it conceptualizes EI. In addition, we surface EI’s various antecedents and corresponding outcomes at the individual, venture, and socio-cultural levels. With respect to Mmbaga and colleagues' work (2020), we too map EI literature based on central themes. However, rather than deploying bibliometric techniques to identify topic clusters, we code EI studies abductively, following other systematic integrative reviews (Cronin & George, 2020; Elsbach & Knippenberg, 2020). This analytical approach is especially appropriate to assess emerging fields of inquiry—and more specifically for moving beyond themes toward surfacing (missing) links among such themes (Torraco, 2005, 2016). Thus, given the still emergent stage of EI research (Hirsch & Levin, 1999), a
systematic integrative review appears not only timely but also necessary to gain a more analytical understanding of EI. Borrowing Weick's (1990) cartography analogy, all maps are inherently “imperfect renderings of territory” (p. 7). Together with existing others, our review makes critical strides toward a more comprehensive understanding of the EI research landscape.

In particular, our systematic integrative review maps and integrates EI research based on its antecedents, content, outcomes as well as their relationships, thus paving the way for a deeper (more analytical) understanding of “our accumulated wisdom” of EI (Walsh, 1995, p. 302; see also Shepherd et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2019). In so doing, we show that the field revolves around two primary conceptualizations of EI as either Property or Process, each grounded in distinct ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions that rarely intersect. Research fitting the EI as Property perspective is largely rooted in positivism (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) and draws primarily on identity theory (Stryker, 1968), role identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978), and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to conceptualize EI as a relatively stable and distinctive set of attributes. By contrast, research fitting the EI as Process perspective is rooted in social constructivism (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) and draws mainly on narrative identity theory (Ricoeur, 2012) and identity work theory (Snow & Anderson, 1987) to define EI as a socially negotiated, ongoing accomplishment. As we elaborate upon below, each provides critical insights into specific antecedents and outcomes of EI. Notably, EI as Process theorizes EI as primarily influenced by individual and socio-cultural antecedents. By contrast, EI as Property focuses predominantly on EI as influencing individual and venture outcomes.

Our integrative model reveals gaps in extant understandings of EI, which we address in our future research agenda. In particular, we suggest future opportunities for examining the interplay between EI and temporal, socio-cognitive, and spatial contexts, and for investigating and theorizing overlooked mechanisms of reconstructing EI and losing EI.
We begin by presenting our methodology for data collection, curation, and clustering. We then discuss insights from our review, focusing on understandings of each EI as Property and as Process. We conclude with a detailed agenda for future research.

**REVIEW METHOD**

We conducted a systematic integrative review, a methodological approach particularly suited for situating and linking knowledge anchored in different disciplines and epistemological paradigms (Cronin & George, 2020; Elsbach & Knippenberg, 2020). As the terms suggest, this approach combines aspects of systematic literature reviews—which are appropriate for identifying relationships among constructs—with integrative reviews, which are useful for helping to bridge scholarly conversations (Cronin & George, 2020). In this way, systematic integrative reviews can facilitate the identification of gaps and critical issues in existing knowledge, even when located within disparate scholarly discourses, as well as help reveal promising areas for future research (Elsbach & Knippenberg, 2020). At the broadest level, our systematic integrative review surfaces primary antecedents and influences of EI and builds a bridge between existing understandings of EI as Property and as Process, which, as we elaborate upon below, trace their roots to distinct epistemological paradigms and foundational theories of identity.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of our process for gathering and synthesizing extant EI research, as well as to grant various EI perspectives “balanced representation” (Cronin & George, 2020, p. 9), we followed three primary analytical steps (cf. Stephan, 2018). First, we collected existing EI research. We then carefully curated our search results to ensure topic fit. Finally, we abductively coded studies that matched our sampling criteria (see also Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Stephan, 2018; Tranfield et al., 2003).
**Data Collection**

To start, based on prior recommendations (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018; Patton, 1990; Shepherd et al., 2015), we used criteria sampling to identify articles concerning EI. First, we looked for relevant publications in the Web of Science database using ENTREPRENEUR* and IDENTIT* to search through titles, abstracts, and keywords. Regarding our choice of the keyword “entrepreneur,” to capture broad understandings of entrepreneurship, we collected articles from both the for-profit and social sectors. The choice of the keyword “identity” was also purposeful: to omit articles that concerned broader notions such as the entrepreneurial self.¹

In line with other reviews (Busenitz et al., 2003; Champenois et al., 2020; Fitz-Koch et al., 2018), we excluded books, book chapters, Ph.D. dissertations, and conference proceedings. To identify a robust sample, characterized by a high degree of content validity and representative of EI research (Grégoire et al., 2011), we limited our search to articles published in ABS-ranked journals.² This initial search resulted in 1,314 articles, of which 821 published in ABS-ranked journals.

To ensure that we did not omit relevant texts, we conducted an additional keyword search using the Web of Science database. For this search, we used recurrent keywords from the abstracts of the articles we had already retrieved; namely, IDENTITY WORK, IDENTITY PROCESS, ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTIT*, LIMINAL*, FOUNDER, and NEW VENTURE. This second search rendered 258 articles, of which 218 were published in ABS-ranked journals. As a further check, we ran the same search through the EBSCO database. This rendered 657 articles, of which 380 published in ABS-ranked journals. After screening these 380 articles for duplication with the Web of Science sample, this EBSCO search contributed

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¹ The *self* concerns identity as an overarching structure, encompassing a multiplicity of identities, rather than the content of identity or its link to behavior (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Relatedly, an enterprising *self* refers to the multiple ways individuals ascribe to and define themselves on the basis of an enterprising culture (Rose, 1992).

² This decision was made to enhance the quality of the articles in our sample, all of which follow ABS-ranked journals’ rigorous peer-review process.
95 additional texts to our sample. We completed this first iterative data search in September 2019, which marked our initial cut-off date for data collection and resulted in an initial sample of 1031 articles published in ABS-ranked journals.

In September 2020, we updated our search: 721 additional articles had been published in ABS-ranked journals since the September 2019 cut-off. In total, we retrieved 2,229 articles from the Web of Science and EBSCO databases, of which 1,752 were published in ABS-ranked journals.

**Data Curation**

Following the identification of the 1,031 articles, the first two authors read the abstracts of each of these texts. This first step led them to exclude 578 studies from the Web of Science dataset whose focus was outside the scope of the review (inter-rater reliability of 95%). For example, the authors eliminated articles that focused on topics such as corporate governance, open innovation, indigenous land rights, moral economy, or administrators in higher education institutions rather than on EI itself. Discrepancies in assessment—both at this stage and in subsequent ones—were discussed during peer-debrief meetings (Gioia et al., 2010). Consensus as to inclusion or exclusion was reached based on whether the topic of EI was central to the article. Together, these steps reduced the sample to 358 articles.

The first two authors then re-read the abstracts of these 358 texts and the abstracts of the 95 articles that were retrieved from the EBSCO database. Based on their cross-ratings, 251 studies were excluded because they focused on *organizational* rather than on *entrepreneurial* identity (inter-relater reliability of 98%). This step further narrowed the sample size to 202 articles. In addition, because the abstracts of 38 studies in this sample did not mention EI, the first two authors read these articles in their entirety and ultimately decided to exclude them because EI was not the primary topic, reducing the total to 164 articles.
At this point, since the first two authors were uncertain about the possible inclusion of 11 articles, the other two authors stepped in. They also read these texts in full and provided their assessments as to inclusion or exclusion. After discussion, the research team decided to exclude seven texts, narrowing the total to 157 articles. Finally, after engaging in descriptive coding of these 157 texts, the four authors decided to exclude 29 studies because they were not grounded in theories of identity and only tangentially addressed EI (inter-rater reliability of 97%). This initial data curation process ended in April 2020 and led to 128 articles being included in our final sample.

We updated the data curation process in September 2020. As indicated above, 721 additional articles were retrieved after September 2019; the first two authors read all the abstracts. Based on their cross-ratings, 668 studies were excluded because—as in the prior data curation round—their focus was outside the scope of our review (inter-rater reliability of 96%). Then, after each of the four authors had an opportunity to review the remaining 53 articles, 28 more were eliminated because EI was only peripheral to their primary focus. This second data curation round led to the addition of 25 new articles. Table 1 presents our data collection and data curation process, which resulted in a final sample of 153 articles (133 empirical and 20 conceptual).

--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

As indicated in Appendix 1, our sample comprises articles published in a combination of entrepreneurship and other discipline-based journals. To the best of our knowledge, the first article on EI was published in 1993, which marks the starting point of our review.
Data Coding and Clustering

We analyzed the articles in our sample following three main rounds of coding: 1) thematic categorization of findings; 2) identification of higher order themes (based on relationships among descriptive themes); and 3) integration of higher order themes into a broader framework (integrative themes; cf. Cronin & George, 2020). Through these three analytical steps (Cronin & George, 2020), we abductively coded each of the 153 articles in our sample (Charmaz, 2006). Table 2 provides a comprehensive list of codes for each round.

--- Insert Table 2 about here ---

Thematic Categorization of Findings. To begin, we generated descriptive themes that helped us map and situate each article within the EI literature (cf. Grégoire et al., 2011; Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2017). For example, we coded each article based on type (conceptual or empirical), method (survey, case study, interview, content analysis, discourse analysis, visual analysis, or ethnography), data sample, focus (what the article discussed), and primary insights (main findings). We also coded each text based on whether it built on one or several foundational theories of identity (identity theory, role identity theory, social identity theory, narrative identity theory, identity work theory). Moreover, we coded each article’s epistemological paradigms, distinguishing between studies adopting positivist or social constructionist epistemologies, and differentiating among interpretive, critical, and postmodern studies within the social constructionist paradigm (cf. Alvesson & Deetz, 2006).

As we traveled back and forth between conceptual and empirical texts in our sample and foundational theories of identity, we articulated additional descriptive themes. For example, we coded each article based on entrepreneurs’ personal and socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., motivation, gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, body), as well as their passion, actions and goals—including opportunity recognition and exploitation, entrepreneurial
behavior, and entrepreneurial intention. We also distinguished studies concerning aspiring entrepreneurs—engaged in entrepreneurial learning through education, training, and mentoring, from nascent entrepreneurs—engaged in ongoing new venture creation or early venture development, and experienced entrepreneurs—running more mature ventures (cf. Rotefoss & Kolvereid, 2005). In addition, we generated themes to capture entrepreneurs’ industry, distinguishing between those involved in high-tech and low-tech industries, and their embeddedness in emerging or established economies (cf. Stam et al., 2014). We also devised themes to encompass venture-related dynamics influenced by EI like venture creation, growth, performance and resource acquisition. Additionally, we distinguished studies investigating the role of the immediate environment such as family business, network, incubator, and education in EI. Finally, we identified studies exploring the broader socio-cultural environments, including factors such as legitimacy, emancipation, media and public discourse, and regional/local development related to EI (see the first column of Table 2).

**Identification of Higher Order Themes.** At this stage of analysis, we re-examined and clustered descriptive themes into higher order categories focused on explicating the analytical role played by groups of descriptive themes (Cronin & George, 2020). For example, by re-examining the articles’ focus and primary insights, we could now note whether a given article focused on EI as a primary construct (“EI as star”), or whether it discussed EI as part of a constellation of other constructs (“EI as ensemble member”) (cf. Pratt, 2020 and the second column of Table 2). Further, based on the articles’ paradigm, foundational theory(ies) of identity, method(s), and sample(s), we noted whether EI served as an “asset” or as a “liability”, or as something “proactively” or “reactively” deployed by entrepreneurs.

We re-examined and clustered the remaining descriptive themes and corresponding articles following the same criteria (Cronin & George, 2020). These efforts resulted in
aggregating studies according to level of analysis—individual, venture, or socio-cultural—and in further distinguishing texts at each level based on whether they focused on antecedents or outcomes of EI. For instance, because the descriptive themes of motivation(s), gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, and body all referred to personal and socio-demographic characteristics of individual entrepreneurs that contributed to their EI, we regrouped them under “individual antecedents of EI.” Taken together, these codes depict who the studied entrepreneurs are and why they engage with entrepreneurship (cf. Welter, 2011). We similarly aggregated the first-order themes of family business, network, and incubator, which we understood as proximal contexts for EI (see Ashforth, 2016), under the higher order theme “venture antecedents of EI.” Taken together, these codes suggest EI in relation to where entrepreneurship occurs (cf. Welter, 2011). Lastly, we aggregated the first-order themes of education, and media and public discourse under the higher order theme “socio-cultural antecedents of EI.” We similarly aggregated texts concerning outcomes of EI by level of analysis, once again differentiating between “individual, venture, and socio-cultural outcomes.”

Finally, we re-examined descriptive themes relative to the types of entrepreneurs under study and their environment. For instance, we regrouped the first-order themes of aspiring, nascent, and experienced entrepreneurs under the higher order theme “experience.” We also regrouped the descriptive themes of high-tech and low-tech industry under simply “industry.” In addition, we clustered the first-order themes of emerging and established economies under the higher order theme “country.” Through these latter re-classifications in particular, we sought to capture an ostensibly more distal context, also important for understanding EI in relation to entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011; Welter & Gartner, 2016). All of our higher order themes are presented in the second column of Table 2.
**Integration of Higher Order Themes.** Moving beyond juxtaposition of higher order themes requires the deployment of more abstract language that explains how higher order themes fit together; in other words, the elaboration of integrative themes (Cronin & George, 2020). In this vein, we systematically examined how our higher order themes related to one another and used new language to make this relationship apparent. For example, EI as star and EI as ensemble member—which refer to the relationship between EI and other constructs in the entrepreneurial process—were integrated under the integrative theme “identity(ies) in context.”

Further, focusing on distinct understandings of EI, we noticed that when cast as an asset or as a liability in the entrepreneurial process, EI tended to be conceptualized as a property, and that when depicted as either proactive or reactive, more as a process. We thus devised two broader integrative themes: “EI as Property” to refer to a relatively stable set of individual attributes, and “EI as Process,” which is more fluid and evolving.

Next, we explored how the higher order themes of individual, venture, and socio-cultural antecedents of EI related to one another, and ultimately aggregated them under the broader integrative theme “constructing EI.” Similarly, we explored how the higher order themes of individual, venture, and socio-cultural outcomes of EI related to one another, and aggregated them under the integrative theme “enacting EI.” Lastly, we aggregated the higher order themes of experience, industry, and country under the integrative theme “layers of context.”

To ensure that our coding was rigorous and robust, two authors independently coded each article. Throughout the process of coding, we gathered several times to discuss disparities in individual coding results (Gioia et al., 2010). Over time, these conversations shaped the definition of our final codes, which we describe in detail in our codebook (Appendix 2). As an additional resource to the reader, Table 3 provides a detailed summary of the 153 articles in our sample.
As the data in Table 3 suggest, the rate of publication increased substantially over the years, from a single article to more than 21 articles per year during the 27 years we examined. Figures 1a and 1b depict the overall growth of EI research and highlight the burgeoning number of studies that draw on identity work and that cast EI as *Process*, in particular.

--- Insert Figures 1a and 1b about here ---

**Organizing Framework**

Our coding and clustering efforts culminated in the elaboration of an overarching framework (Figure 2), which portrays the relationships among higher order and integrative themes. In addition, by indicating frequencies for each descriptive theme, and the total number of articles for each higher order theme (see Clough et al., 2019), Figure 2 not only offers a comprehensive overview of EI research but also suggests visually where our knowledge of EI is relatively thicker and thinner.

--- Insert Figure 2 about here ---

Underpinning existing EI research and thus at the center of the oval in Figure 2 are the two primary understandings of EI: as *Property* and as *Process*. This underlying divide in EI conceptualizations has been obscured by the multiplicity of theories, methods, and themes studied in relation to EI. However, as we reveal in the next two sections, scholars working within these two primary conceptualizations have tended to adopt distinct ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions. We organize our systematic integrative review around these conceptualizations, emphasizing their unique contributions and highlighting critical gaps within and across streams of research. Three main questions—*What is the content of EI?*, *What are the antecedents of EI?*, and *What are the outcomes of EI?*—orient our detailed presentation of these two research streams.
ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY AS PROPERTY

Studies of EI as Property (n=54) cast EI as a relatively stable and distinctive set of attributes that may be acquired, enhanced, or lost by entrepreneurs. These studies tend to draw on identity theory (Stryker, 1968), role identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978), and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and espouse largely positivistic understandings of EI as a “categorical essence” (Down, 2006, p. 6)—that is, something relatively homogeneous across groups of entrepreneurs.

What is the content of entrepreneurial identity as property?

Foundations and Definitions. From identity theory and role identity theory perspectives (e.g., McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker & Burke, 2000), EI has been defined as a host of “meaningful and self-defining” entrepreneur role-related characteristics (Mathias & Williams, 2018, p. 263). This definition builds on broader conceptualizations of role identity as the “internalized meanings and expectations associated with a role” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 289). Here, EI serves as a “super-ordinate identity” that encompasses role identities such as innovator, organizer, facilitator, inventor, founder, and developer (Cardon et al., 2009; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009).

Despite recognizing multiplicity as it relates to EI, existing research has hardly examined how entrepreneurs manage the multiplicity of role identities they occupy, particularly when they are building their organizations (see Ekinci et al., 2020 and Mathias & Williams 2018 for two notable exceptions). Scholars have recently lamented the paucity of research in this area (e.g., Gruber & MacMillan, 2017; Shepherd et al., 2020) and called for more work to better understand role identity dynamics as they relate to EI, particularly beyond the founding stage (e.g., Gruber & MacMillan, 2017; Shepherd et al., 2020).
Following social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979), EI has been defined as entrepreneurs’ way of “interpreting experiences and behavior options” (Alsos et al., 2016, p. 238) based on their group membership(s). As such, this perspective emphasizes the role of one’s self-categorization as a group member (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as a primary source of one’s identity (Cardador & Pratt, 2006). Fauchart and Gruber’s (2011) EI typology exemplifies this perspective and serves as the conceptual backbone for a number of subsequent studies (e.g., Alsos et al., 2016; Sieger et al., 2016) that anchor EI to the social identities entrepreneurs occupy. In particular, based on interviews with founders in the sports equipment industry in Switzerland, Germany, and France, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) suggest that founders’ social identities generally fit one of three groups: darwinians, communitarians, and missionaries, each characterized by distinctive social motivations, self-evaluations, and frames of reference.

This work sensitizes us to the critical role of context—here encapsulated by the countries and industries in which entrepreneurs operate—in informing their social identities. In this regard, our review indicates that most empirical investigations of EI as Property take place in established economies (n=39) and thus raises questions about our assumptions relative to the universality of EI, particularly the extent to which our current understanding of EI as Property may encompass EI as it manifests in emerging economies.

**Asset or Liability?** When seen as Property, EI is conceptualized as either an asset (n=48) or a liability (n=6). As an asset, EI is something that entrepreneurs strategically deploy in the process of starting and running new ventures (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011) or a psychological resource that helps entrepreneurs fulfill their foundational needs for belonging, self-enhancement, and positive distinctiveness (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Interestingly, although research suggests that there can be a dark side to identity that may trigger unproductive behaviors such as blind unquestioning or escalation of commitment (e.g., Ashforth & Sluss, 2006; Rouse, 2016), we
know very little about this dark side as it relates to EI. When portrayed as a liability (e.g., Jernberg et al., 2020), EI is regarded as limiting entrepreneurial agency (Orser et al., 2011). In such a case, individuals might reject their EI because they perceive it as a threat to their broader sense of themselves (Slade Shantz et al., 2018).

**What are the antecedents of entrepreneurial identity as property?**

Whether asset or liability, EI *as Property* is influenced by various antecedents at the individual, venture, and socio-cultural levels (see Figure 2). Below, we review articles in our sample concerning such antecedents (n=18), bringing to the fore the *whys*, *wheres*, and *hows* that weigh on EI. By doing so, we reveal contextual issues that are critical to our understanding of entrepreneurial activity as it relates to EI (Welter, 2011).

With respect to the *whys* that shape EI *as Property*, two primary sets of antecedents stand out at the individual and socio-cultural levels. At the individual level, motivation to start a business—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—is often invoked. Intrinsic motivations (n=10) are associated with individuals who deliberately choose entrepreneurship among other possible work options and include, for example, self-fulfillment (Ekinci et al., 2020) or self-achievement (Jain et al., 2009). By contrast, extrinsic motivations (n=3) are associated with those who are pushed into entrepreneurship by external factors, such as Finnish farmers under pressure from policy makers to diversify their agricultural activities (Vesala & Vesala, 2010).

At a socio-cultural level, direct interactions with mentors or peers (e.g., Falck et al., 2012; Smith & Woodworth, 2012)—often described as role models—can fuel individuals’ decisions to embrace a self-definition as an entrepreneur (e.g., Byrne et al., 2019). For instance, Ahsan et al. (2018) show that students develop their EI by engaging with other successful entrepreneurs and business professionals, along with their professors. Moreover, the media and public discourse (n=7) exert a powerful normative influence on the formation of EI (Achtenhagen &
Specifically, the media provides entrepreneurs with a host of cultural tools such as narratives, imagery, symbols, and role models that they can leverage or emulate to elaborate socially accepted self-definitions as entrepreneurs. However, entrepreneurs can also relate to such cultural tools and role models more critically. For instance, MacNabb et al. (1993) showed that women entrepreneurs reject some of the very values associated with entrepreneurial role models, such as risk taking and profit motivation. In the same vein, Achtenhagen and Welter (2011) suggest that women entrepreneurs push back against gendered representations of entrepreneurship.

With respect to the *wheres* that shape EI as *Property*, EI has largely been theorized within sites that are designed to foster its formation. Specifically, formal institutions such as higher education contexts (n=7; e.g., Newbery et al., 2018; Smith & Woodworth, 2012) have been described as bolstering individuals’ propensity to see themselves as entrepreneurs. Some (e.g., Ahsan et al., 2018) have noted that such contexts weigh not only on entrepreneurs’ EI construction but also on its enactment. Beyond educational settings, networks (n=1; Hanson & Blake, 2009) and industry (n=14), especially low-tech industries (n=12) like the consulting industry (Conger et al., 2018), have been theorized as influencing the development of EI.

With respect to the *hows* that shape EI as *Property*, the research we reviewed focuses predominantly on identity formation (e.g., Hanson & Blake, 2009; Jain et al., 2009) and assumes that, once acquired, EI is hardly ever abandoned. Indeed, role or group exit and identity loss\(^3\) are almost never discussed. Specifically, identity formation is theorized as individuals “assuming a specific role and/or a social identity” (Fauchart & Gruber, 2020, p. 19). For instance, Newbery and colleagues (2018, p. 55) show that students develop their EI by observation of role models, followed by direct experience, depicting identity formation as comprising an “awareness phase” and an “experiential phase.” As this example implies, the

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\(^3\) Exit signals a deliberate decision to quit a social role or identity, while loss may be more accidental, in response to undesired events such as bankruptcy or the unexpected death of a family member.
construction of EI is portrayed here in a rather linear way: it relates to the acquisition of specific knowledge that is instrumental to executing one’s role.

Yet, as some have begun to suggest, EI formation may be far from linear (Vesala et al., 2007) and may require individuals to manage multiple—at times conflicting—identities at the founding and beyond. Pratt and Foreman (2000) theorized that individuals adopt one of four strategies to manage multiple identities: deletion (eliminating one or several identities); compartmentalization (maintaining different identities separate from one another); aggregation (maintaining different identities but connecting them); and integration (merging different identities into a new composite identity). However, as we alluded, scant research has examined how entrepreneurs manage their multiple identities. The few studies in our sample that touch on these dynamics show that entrepreneurs primarily leverage integration and aggregation to manage their multiple identities. For instance, Jain et al. (2009) documented that scientist entrepreneurs integrate their academic and entrepreneurial identities into a new hybrid identity, while Vesala and Vesala (2010) noted that Finnish farmers see themselves as entrepreneurs and as producers and aggregate these two identities by finding ways to selectively connect them while keeping them largely separate.

What are the outcomes of entrepreneurial identity as property?

EI as Property is not only influenced by but also influences outcomes at the individual, venture, and socio-cultural levels (see Figure 2). Below, we review the articles in our sample concerning such outcomes (n=31).

At an individual level, EI as Property affects entrepreneurs’ passion or emotion (n=6), their cognitions, and their behaviors. Two of the foundational theories upon which research on EI as Property builds—identity theory and role identity theory—help explain why. Both suggest that role identities that rank higher than others in a hierarchy of salience are more self-
defining and that these identities exert the strongest influence on individuals’ affect, cognitions, and behaviors (e.g., Stryker, 2002). Applying these insights to EI, Cardon and colleagues (2009) found that the more salient an entrepreneurial role identity, the more likely entrepreneurs are to experience passion related to their entrepreneurial endeavors. Similarly, Murnieks and colleagues (2014) suggest a direct effect of EI on passion such that the more central EI is, the higher the levels of passion experienced by entrepreneurs. Building on these insights, Murnieks and colleagues (2020) showed that EI centrality drives harmonious passion.

With respect to how EI shapes cognitions, research suggests that, when salient, EI can influence entrepreneurial intention (n= 4; Obschonka et al., 2012; Pfeifer et al., 2016) and opportunity recognition and exploitation (n=2). Indeed, salient identities function as cognitive filters, focusing entrepreneurs’ attention on issues and information consistent with their identities. These dynamics tend to lead to the identification of different opportunities (Wry & York, 2017). In addition, EI shapes opportunity exploitation, although that differs based on specific EI content. Indeed, as Cardon and colleagues (2009) found, entrepreneurs tap into their particular knowledge and skills when exploiting new opportunities, which are associated with the self-defining roles they occupy.

As our review thus far suggests, EI also affects entrepreneurial behavior (n=6), including entrepreneurs’ propensity to pursue their own economic self-interests or those of others, as is the case for darwinians and communitarians (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011), and their persistence in the face of obstacles and setbacks (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Morris and colleagues (2018) make this last point evident by showing that survival or lifestyle entrepreneurs, whose entrepreneurial role identities are less salient and thus less self-defining, tend to be less committed to their entrepreneurial endeavors. Existing research concerning how EI as Property influences individual-level outcomes has focused predominantly on the positive effects of EI on entrepreneurs’ affect, cognitions, and behaviors. We still know little about how EI relates to
failure, how it might lead to psychological disengagement, or how it connects to the intention of starting a new venture after exit (see Rouse, 2016 for a notable exception).

At the venture level, EI primarily affects business creation (n=10), shaping the types of organizations that entrepreneurs launch and the markets they serve (Alsos et al., 2016; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Pan et al., 2019; Sieger et al., 2016). In addition, EI shapes founders’ organizing efforts (Powell & Baker, 2017), including their hiring practices (Stewart & Hoell, 2016) and their ventures’ strategic responses to adversity (Powell & Baker, 2014), which in turn affect their venture overall performance (n=10), including their capacity to successfully engage in resource acquisition (n=8). For example, Morris and colleagues (2018) recognize entrepreneurs’ ventures as germane sites for the enactment of their EI. They further suggest that distinct EIs are associated with different types of organizations—such as survival, lifestyle, or high-growth—each of which engages differently in resource acquisition. Moreover, based on a longitudinal study of nine new resource-constrained ventures in the textile and apparel industry, Powell and Baker (2014, 2017) showed the critical role of EI in shaping how these organizations were able to withstand hardship. Beyond these foundational studies, we still lack knowledge of the multi-level mechanisms that link EI to the growth (n=5) of new businesses. Put differently, despite recognizing the centrality of identity in the entrepreneurial process, existing research says little about how EI influences the ways in which entrepreneurs structure, organize, and grow their ventures (e.g., Gruber & MacMillan, 2017; Shepherd et al., 2020).

At a socio-cultural level, EI affects how entrepreneurs pursue legitimacy (n=1). Notably, in his study of founders in the underground cannabis market, Klein (2017) showed that entrepreneurs rejected the prohibition of medical cannabis and latched onto other founders who shared similar views as the primary basis for positive self-definition. This helped them feel not only more positive about themselves but also more efficacious in pushing back against institutional mandates, ultimately gaining legitimacy as entrepreneurs. To our knowledge,
Klein’s study is the only one to detail the effects of EI as Property at a broad socio-cultural level.

Taken together, we still lack understandings of how EI shapes others—employees, ventures, markets, communities, and so on—beyond the entrepreneurs themselves. Future research would benefit from examining the positive and negative effects of EI on such others and from better accounting for how entrepreneurs manage their multiple role identities, including EI.

**EI as Property: Summary**

This stream of research conceptualizes EI as a set of relatively stable and distinctive attributes and focuses largely on individual-level and venture-level outcomes of EI, as opposed to socio-cultural-level outcomes. Inherent in this EI conceptualization are assumptions of stasis, over-positivity, and universalism. For example, this stream has tended to adopt fairly narrow views of context, limiting it to a specific country or industry, and to assume that this context is interpreted and shapes entrepreneurs’ understandings of who they are in similar ways. In addition, by conceptualizing EI as a set of relatively stable attributes, and examining it cross-sectionally, much of this research underplays the potentially transformative role of time in EI. Lastly, although scholars have acknowledged a dark side of identity (e.g., Ashforth, 2016; Rouse, 2016), studies of EI as Property have focused mostly on the positive effects of enacting EI. Studies of EI as Process provide a complementary perspective, which mitigates some of these challenges.
ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY AS PROCESS

As noted above, studies of EI as Process (n=99) cast EI as an ongoing accomplishment. This research tends to draw on narrative identity theory (Bruner, 1987, 1991; Ricoeur, 2012) and on identity work theory (Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), and espouses largely social constructivist understandings of EI as something “fluid and emergent” (Hytti, 2005, p. 594). Here EI is “achieved” (Brown, 2004, p. 692) in relation to others in various ways (Johansson, 2004; Nielsen & Gartner, 2017).

What is the content of entrepreneurial identity as process?

Foundations and Definitions. From the narrative identity theory and an identity work perspectives, EI has been defined as “the product of, and realized in, narrative accounts of individuals’ past, present and future” (Hytti, 2005, p. 598) and more specifically as something that is “produced through dialogues with clients, suppliers, employees, and family in a processual fashion” (Essers & Benschop, 2007, p. 52). In this way, EI may be thought of as inseparable from (inter)actions and context. This fluid view of EI (Down & Warren, 2008; Warren, 2004; Watson, 2009) is anchored in a similarly dynamic understanding of reality that follows a processual, ever-evolving ontology of becoming (Chia, 1995).

More specifically, from a narrative identity perspective, the content of EI is tightly bound to narratives that in turn configure and reconfigure EI over time (Hamilton, 2014, pp. 707, 709). Similarly, from an identity work perspective, it is through self-related accounts that entrepreneurs express and negotiate “who they are” (Navis & Glynn, 2011, p. 479). However, as Crosina (2018, p. 105) notes, EI comprises both “self-referential claims” as entrepreneurs and “actions” related to launching and running new ventures. Similarly, Clarke and Holt (2017)
found that, in addition to words, entrepreneurs draw upon physical settings, visual symbols, artifacts, and their bodies to define who they are as they go about creating their organizations.

Therefore, understanding EI as a dynamic process requires attention to entrepreneurs’ words and deeds (Fletcher, 2006; Gherardi, 2015). However, existing research focuses predominantly on the former, including the language entrepreneurs use to define themselves (Jones et al., 2008). As a result, we know little about how EI comes to be in practice, including through entrepreneurs’ behaviors. Not surprisingly, some researchers have deplored the notion of a disembodied entrepreneur that narrative identity and identity work research can suggest (e.g., Kašperová & Kitching, 2014; Poldner et al., 2019).

**Proactive or Reactive?** When seen as Process, EI tends to be conceptualized as something proactive (n=59), triggered by entrepreneurs’ desire—that is, as a quest (Phillips, 2013) to recognize (Lewis et al., 2016), learn from (Rae, 2004, 2006), and grow (Gill & Larson, 2014) entrepreneurial opportunities. For example, extrapolating from the narratives of two ecopreneurs, Phillips (2013) describes EI as a journey toward achieving a fulfilling life in harmony with the environment.

However, some research has begun to recognize that entrepreneurs might develop and draw upon their EI more defensively to shield themselves from trauma (Shepherd et al., 2019), as a means to confront setbacks, or to deal with broader challenges in their lives, such as poverty (Refai et al., 2018). Here EI may be thought of as a reactive process (n=40), a type of coping triggered by events outside of entrepreneurs’ focal control that require management. Under these circumstances, EI is driven by lack rather than desire, whether a lack of alternatives (e.g., due to poverty) or equal opportunities (such as for women or migrant entrepreneurs). In a similar vein, Marlow and McAdam (2015, p. 805) describe EI as a process of “reflective accommodation,” which may take “regressive form(s)” (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). Several
studies concerning entrepreneurs’ identity work (e.g., Essers & Benschop, 2007; Fenwick, 2002; Watson, 2009) highlight the tensions, conflicts, and struggles inherent in EI as a reactive process, including the strategies used by some, such as migrant and women entrepreneurs, to cope.

**What are the antecedents of entrepreneurial identity as process?**

Whether cast as proactive or reactive, EI as Process is influenced by various antecedents at the individual, venture, and socio-cultural levels (see Figure 2). Below, we review articles in our sample concerning such antecedents (n=55), again focusing on the *whys*, *wheres*, and *hows* that inform EI (see Welter, 2011).

With respect to the *whys* that shape EI as Process, two primary sets of antecedents stand out at the individual and socio-cultural levels. At an individual level, motivation to become an entrepreneur serves as a primary trigger of EI. Intrinsic motivations (n=20) like the desire “to raise awareness of societal problems” characterizing purpose-driven EI (Horst et al., 2020, p. 99) and the desire to implement new ideas (Lundqvist et al., 2015) have been found to induce some individuals to proactively embrace entrepreneurship and EI. By contrast, others engage in entrepreneurship and adopt EI more reactively, driven by extrinsic motivations (n=8) and largely as a means to alleviate personal difficulties (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2018). Studies of barefoot entrepreneurs seeking to defy poverty (Imas et al., 2012) or of women entrepreneurs fighting prejudice (e.g., Essers & Benschop, 2007, 2009; Masika, 2017) are illustrative of these dynamics.

At a socio-cultural level, interactions—including dialogue, confrontation, and negotiation with others—can shape an individual’s decision to become an entrepreneur. In this way, EI may be seen as an “expression of relationships” (Fletcher & Watson, 2007, p. 13), with
others in one’s social or personal circle exerting a strong influence beyond serving as possible role models. For example, Essers and colleagues (2013) found that family members’ expectations and opinions influence how EI manifests itself (see also García & Welter, 2013). Such expectations and opinions span a number of domains, including entrepreneurs’ gender (n=27; e.g., Tlaiss & Kauser, 2019), age (n=4; e.g., Mallett & Wapshott, 2015), and even ethnicity (n=9; e.g., Essers & Benschop, 2007). For instance, older necessity entrepreneurs routinely confront social skepticism and disdain and must find ways to cope as they define who they are as entrepreneurs (e.g., Mallett & Wapshott, 2015). Similar EI dynamics apply to women entrepreneurs, who are often discouraged in their pursuit of entrepreneurial endeavors (Fernandes & Mota-Ribeiro, 2017), which can affect their ability to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors, as documented by Welch and colleagues (2008).

Interestingly, with few exceptions (n=3), existing research disregards class as an antecedent to EI as Process. This is problematic because hierarchical status systems unlock differential resources (e.g., Ozasir Kacar & Essers, 2019). Moreover, although some studies have acknowledged the importance of others in co-constructing EI (Watson, 2009), there remains only limited knowledge regarding how this co-construction happens.

Methodologically, the prevalence of (single) interview studies (n=43) over ethnographic fieldwork combining observation, archival data, and interviews (n=7) contributes to a paradoxical empirical invisibility of others in EI as Process studies. Indeed, in much of this research, interviews generally focus on how entrepreneurs manage their identities, with others theorized as either socio-cultural background or the audience to entrepreneurs’ identity work, as opposed to as active participants in it. As a result, we lack dyadic and group-level studies of how EI may be co-constructed though social interactions; for a notable exception, see Warren (2004) on EI and communities of practice. More efforts are necessary to understand how interactions with others shape EI and are shaped by entrepreneurs’ agency.
With respect to the *wheres* that shape EI *as Process*, EI has been primarily investigated in traditionally low-tech industries (n=12), such as creative industries (e.g., Rae, 2004), and less often in high-tech industries (n=5), such as the mobile phone sector (e.g., Masika, 2017). In addition, entrepreneurs who proactively develop their EI are generally located within established economies (n=80) and embedded in environments that support and facilitate their identity construction. Such environments include higher education institutions (n=9), incubators (n=6), and networks (n=5). Here, too, entrepreneurs’ very organizations—their ventures—are only seldom explored as sites for their identity work (e.g., Bruni et al., 2004).

By contrast, entrepreneurs who reactively develop their EI are generally situated within emerging economies (n=10), such as in deprived areas of Chile, Argentina, Zimbabwe, Ghana (Imas et al., 2012), and Uganda (Masika, 2017). In these contexts, entrepreneurs operate outside or at the margins of formal institutions and tend to develop their identities through practice (e.g., Werthes et al., 2018). Here, family firms are regarded as essential to the formation of EI, particularly among migrant families (Essers et al., 2013; Essers & Benschop, 2007). Exploring the relation between EI and family business, Aygören & Nordqvist (2015) expose EI as shaped by family and business institutions and shaping organizing practices in the family firm.

Beyond the aforementioned efforts to shed light on EI dynamics in emerging economies, EI *as Process* studies (e.g., Gill & Larson, 2014) tend to examine EI within established economies. In addition, although the investigation of varying “social and spatial processes, [and] not just economic processes” has been acknowledged as critical to deeper understandings of EI (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 1559; see also Katila et al., 2019), we still have limited knowledge of these processes and related contextual influences, whether cultural, socio-material, or geographic.

With respect to the *hows* that shape EI *as Process*, existing research focuses predominantly on identity construction (e.g., Watson, 2009) through identity work (e.g.,
Bjursell & Melin, 2011). EI is seen here as the result of an ongoing process of “personal and social emergence” (Rae, 2004, p. 494), tightly bound to learning and to defining oneself, and acting as an entrepreneur. Emergence—and more precisely emerging—involves dealing and engaging with institutions, others, and an array of media and public discourses (n=32). For example, building upon “Western male archetype[s].” Ozasir Kacar and Essers (2019, p. 716) noted that mainstream entrepreneurship discourse tends to place women at a disadvantage (e.g., Hamilton, 2014; Hytti & Heinonen, 2013). In response, women entrepreneurs dynamically construct their EI together with their gender by resisting or finding ways to acquiesce to male archetypes (Bruni et al., 2004). In this way, identity work helps women entrepreneurs manage possible discrepancies between their feminine identity and the expectations inherent in playing an entrepreneurial role and ultimately to achieve positive distinctiveness despite being disadvantaged (Gherardi, 2015).

Beyond the purposeful use of discursive resources (Watson, 2009), identity work concerns “the arrangement of personal appearance” and “physical settings and props” (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p. 1348). Clarke's (2011) study of entrepreneurs seeking resources through the strategic deployment of visuals is one of the few that illustrates these dynamics. Indeed, existing research provides limited insights into how objects or symbols play into entrepreneurs’ identity work strategies and more specifically into the construction, maintenance, and annihilation of their EI.

**What are the outcomes of entrepreneurial identity as process?**

EI as Process is not only influenced by but also influences critical outcomes at the individual, venture, and socio-cultural levels. We review the next articles in our sample concerning such outcomes (n=18).
At the individual level, EI relates closely to activities at the very heart of entrepreneurship: opportunity recognition and exploitation (n=3) (Lewis et al., 2016), feedback seeking, interpreting, and implementing (Grimes, 2018), and to entrepreneurs’ creative processes (Imas et al., 2012). In addition, EI has been linked to entrepreneurial behaviors (n=15) in which entrepreneurs routinely engage such as bricolage and brokerage (Stinchfield et al., 2013) or the strategic use of cultural clichés involving language of risk, bravery, ambition, and autonomy to fit (Down & Warren, 2008). However, as Shepherd and colleagues (2019) noted, the relationship between EI and entrepreneurial behavior may be more dialectical than causal—with EI shaping behavior and behavior shaping EI. As such, EI may be conceptualized as more of a mechanism than as something that unidirectionally influences individuals’ thoughts and actions (Shepherd et al., 2019). Finally, although the effects of EI on individuals have been depicted as overwhelmingly positive, some emerging evidence indicates that EI can also lead to negative behavioral outcomes such as constrained innovation (Slade Shantz et al., 2018).

At the level of the venture, EI as Process can favor resource acquisition (n=7; Navis & Glynn, 2011) and, to a lesser extent, performance (n=1) and growth (n=2). Indeed, embracing EI can serve as a strategic means to access financial resources. Albinsson's (2018) study of Swedish musicians illustrates these dynamics. EI can also enable entrepreneurs to build their business networks, as exemplified by Stoyanov’s research on migrant entrepreneurs (Stoyanov, 2018; Stoyanov et al., 2018). In particular, by gaining acceptance and embeddedness in their host countries for who they were, these founders shaped their ventures’ creation (n=4). Zuzul and Tripsas (2020) suggest a close link between EI and venture creation focusing on firm-level inertia and flexibility. They discovered that founders who espoused a “revolutionary” EI were trapped in a constant quest for novelty and thus inadvertently encouraged firm inertia. By contrast, those who saw themselves as “discoverers” fostered firm flexibility through the implementation of adaptive changes (Zuzul & Tripsas, 2020).
At a socio-cultural level, entrepreneurs tap into who they are as a primary means to achieve legitimacy from their stakeholders (n=15). As such, besides being claimed and displayed, EI must be granted. As we have noted above, entrepreneurship is largely located within a masculine domain. Thus, gaining legitimacy often encompasses performing masculinity (Swail & Marlow, 2018). To illustrate this point, Lewis (2015) highlights how women entrepreneurs perform belonging at the intersection of gender and entrepreneurship through various practices, such as accessing networks through male partners, concealing their femininity, or reproducing dominant masculine norms. Performing masculinity in attempts to be recognized as legitimate is not just a prerogative of women entrepreneurs. Indeed, men entrepreneurs also must perform masculinity to gain acceptance from others. Gaining legitimacy for one’s EI sakes requires skillful impression management, which may include displaying visual symbols, “setting, props, dress, and expressiveness” (Anderson et al., 2019; Clarke, 2011, p. 1365). However, there may be limits to individuals’ ability to engage in such impression management, which often puts women and migrant entrepreneurs seeking legitimacy for their EIs and behaviors at a disadvantage (Abd Hamid et al., 2019).

Besides legitimacy, emancipation (n=3) is another socio-cultural outcome of EI, although it has received comparatively less attention. Notably, the few studies that concern EI as it relates to emancipation focus on how women’s micro-emancipatory acts of “strategic disobedience,” including defying broader social discourses and expectations, help them assert their identities as entrepreneurs despite patriarchic constraints (Barragan et al., 2018). Finally, few studies consider EI as it connects to broader regional and local development issues (n=5). Notably, Berglund and colleagues (2016) examined EI in relation to the turnaround of a depleted community. Warren and colleagues (2017) suggest that indigenous Maori entrepreneurs’ EI is shaped by their socio-cultural environment. Similarly, Gill and Larson (2014, p. 538) suggest that EI “contributes to place-making,” with entrepreneurs shaping both
where they work and live. However, the ways in which EI’s influence in these contexts is realized remains largely unclear.

**EI as Process: Summary**

Overall, this stream of research conceptualizes EI as a dynamic and fluid process of emergence. It brings to the fore individual and socio-cultural antecedents of EI, exploring largely discrete characteristics of entrepreneurs—such as their gender, ethnicity, or age—rather than considering them in concert or at their intersection. Narratives, as socio-cultural tools that entrepreneurs leverage to construct or otherwise work on their identities, take the lion’s share of attention. By contrast, other symbolic and material tools (e.g., entrepreneurs’ bodies) have been overlooked in how entrepreneurs construct and enact their EI (see Clarke, 2011; Katila et al., 2019; Poldner et al., 2019 for notable exceptions). These, in turn, stem from unique socio-cognitive contexts such as entrepreneurs’ families, peer groups, and communities, which have also been only marginally considered. Indeed, EI as Process research tends to privilege distal spatial contexts—such as entrepreneurs’ countries or industries—and only rarely explores EI in relation to more proximal contexts, such as their families or communities. Yet, emerging evidence suggests the importance of capturing more fully the complexity and fluidity of EI in relation to these very contexts (Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2019). Further, existing research in this stream focuses on how EI construction leads to largely positive consequences, omitting possible negative repercussions and struggles. As a result, we know little about how entrepreneurs may go about seeking to lose or reconstruct their EI.
TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF EI

Together, these analyses culminated in the elaboration of Figure 3: an integrative model of EI. Building on Figure 2, this model not only encapsulates the field, but also brings to the fore various theoretical mechanisms and relationships that warrant further exploration (to which we have alluded hereto). As the legend at the bottom of Figure 3 suggests, shapes filled in black denote overlooked areas in the literature—the interplay of temporal, socio-cognitive, and spatial contexts and the mechanisms of losing EI and reconstructing EI, respectively—while dashed lines and arrows signal relationships that would benefit from further attention.

--- Insert Figure 3 about here ---

We use this figure to orient our discussion of relevant areas for future research.

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

At the broadest level, our systematic integrative review reveals that existing EI research revolves around two primary analytical conceptualizations of EI: as Property and as Process. Due to their grounding in distinct ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions, such understandings rarely intersect. This creates opportunities for extending and building theory. We see such opportunities as fitting one of two primary overarching themes: (1) the interplay of EI and temporal, socio-cognitive, and spatial contexts; and (2) mechanisms for reconstructing and losing EI.

**Interplay of EI and Temporal, Socio-Cognitive, and Spatial contexts**

Although EI research acknowledges the centrality of context for both constructing and enacting EI, the empirical texts in our sample tend to study entrepreneurs in relation to a particular temporal and spatial context, generally limiting “context” to entrepreneurs’ relative experience
and/or country. Indeed, fewer than a third of the empirical papers in our sample account for how other contextual influences shape “who entrepreneurs are” or who they might want to be. We see opportunities for theoretical extension by opening the black box of temporal, socio-cognitive, and spatial contexts, and by theorizing their possible interplay and joint influence on EI.

Temporal context. Existing EI research has tended to investigate the construction and enactment of EI through a largely static temporal lens. Entrepreneurs are generally described as fitting one of three groups—aspiring, nascent, or experienced (Rotefoss & Kolvereid, 2005)—which reflects their in-the-moment temporal inscription in the entrepreneurial process (see Figure 2). By comparison, limited effort has been dedicated to investigating their transitions from aspiring to nascent, and onward to experienced entrepreneurs. In addition, conceptualizations of time as it relates to EI tend to assume linearity: entrepreneurs are portrayed as developing their identities following comparable stages that unfold in largely sequential order (e.g., Newbery et al., 2018). This warrants reconsideration, especially given emerging recognitions that EI is closely associated with the subjective perception and enactment of time (Wilson et al., 2009) and that entrepreneurs likely draw upon their identities in different ways, in different situations, and at different points in their careers (Byrne et al., 2021).

Thus, to more fully capture the complexity of time as it relates to the development and evolution of EI, future research would benefit from embracing longitudinal and socio-constructivist approaches (e.g., Crosina, 2018; O’Neil et al., 2020) that are appropriate for capturing “how things evolve... and why” and theorizing “complex” phenomena (Langley, 1999, p. 691). Longitudinal research involving data such as interviews and ethnographic observations could also help trace critical the relational and organizational implications
associated with changes in EI over time, beyond the founding stage. When conducting such studies, scholars should remain attentive not only to what entrepreneurs themselves do as they construct and enact their identities over time but also to the actions in which they engage together with, or in relation to, others, thus remaining open to EI as an evolving, relational construct (Fletcher & Watson, 2007).

Longitudinal and socio-constructivist approaches aimed at more fully situating EI temporally might also involve examining a host of historical and archival data (Jones & Wadhwani, 2006). Different historical periods value and account for time in distinct ways and are characterized by varying levels of technical and technological development, among other differences (Vaesen & Houkes, 2017). This way, opportunities and constraints of a given historic period likely impact the formation (including the very content) and enactment of EI. For this reason, we believe that examining EI as influenced by, or as influencing specific historical circumstances could lead to the discovery of novel antecedents and outcomes of EI, and to potential novel mechanisms and strategies associated with EI construction and maintenance.

**Socio-cognitive context.** Despite recognizing the importance of entrepreneurs’ proximal social contexts—generally comprised of their families, peer groups, and/or communities (Berglund et al., 2016; Essers et al., 2013; Falck et al., 2012)—existing research has tended to examine the influence of such contexts on EI unilaterally, overlooking how EI itself can weigh on the very definition of family, peers, and community (see Figure 2). Yet, we know that entrepreneurs are not only shaped by context; they can also exert powerful influence over it. Entrepreneurs’ understanding of, and relationships within, a given context are critical in shaping what this context means to them (Welter et al., 2016) (hence our label “socio-cognitive”). In this vein, future research may fruitfully explore context not as something that “already exists out there,”
separate from entrepreneurs, but instead as something actively constructed through ongoing interpreting and relating.

Yet, we should also not overemphasize entrepreneurs’ capacity to influence their EI or socio-cognitive contexts. To illustrate, entrepreneurs’ bodies endow them with a set of features such as sex and ethnicity that can be difficult to modify (e.g., Kašperová & Kitching, 2014). Further, operating under conditions of poverty may limit entrepreneurs’ agency and, by doing so, constrain the development of their EI (Baker & Welter, 2020). By contrast, major crises or the experience of setback may set EI in motion, if as nothing other than a coping mechanism (e.g., Powell & Baker, 2014). Because our knowledge of these situations and of entrepreneurs’ primary socio-cognitive contexts of reference remains limited, future research would benefit from examining how entrepreneurs’ understandings of, and relationships within their most proximal environments might affect and be affected by their EI, particularly in moments of crisis and lingering uncertainty.

**Spatial context.** With respect to spatial context, studies of EI within established economies have received the lion’s share of attention. We know less about emerging economies and the diversity among them as possible spaces of becoming (see Figure 2). Exploring the EI-context nexus in such contexts offers opportunities for theoretical integration and extension (see Baker & Welter, 2020; Jones et al., 2019). In particular, by acknowledging that EI is constructed through particular resources that are available to entrepreneurs in a specific place at a given time (Brown, 2015), future scholarship may better account for the multiplicity and heterogeneity of EI (Welter et al., 2017). For example, focusing on issues of EI in emerging economies might broaden our understanding of intercultural and inter-group variation in how EI is constructed and enacted, thus expanding our knowledge of socio-cultural antecedents of EI and possibly capturing less-studied outcomes of EI, such as EI’s impact on regional/local development.
Moreover, prior studies rarely investigate EI in relation to ostensibly more proximal spatial contexts. Thus, future research would benefit from examining EI by accounting more fully for entrepreneurs’ industries, ventures, and workspaces as possible sites for the construction and enactment of their identities. This might involve a move from viewing EI as a star to instead approaching it as an ensemble member (Pratt, 2020); that is, assessing how EI relates to other organizational dynamics like venture location, financing, and growth (e.g., Ekinci et al., 2020).

Prior EI research is especially sparse with respect to the socio-material context as a possible influence on EI. However, some scholars, especially those working from an entrepreneurship as practice perspective, suggest an interplay between the socio-materiality of entrepreneurial situations and the construction and enactment of EI (e.g., Cohen & Musson, 2000; Imas et al., 2012). These insights invite a further (empirical) emphasis on uncovering how the socio-material world, such as start-up events (Katila et al., 2019) surrounding entrepreneurs, shapes and is shaped by their EI.

To summarize, prior research acknowledges the influence of various types of contexts on EI but overlooks their interplay, fluidity, and possibly multiplicity (Welter, 2011). A more dynamic understanding of different contexts and their interplay is necessary (Baker & Welter, 2020; Welter, 2011). As Laclau notes (1992, pp. 84–85), EI is not “a medium through which universality operates,” but a space where particularities coexist. Because contexts are “intersectional” (cf. Welter et al., 2016, p. 1)—meaning that entrepreneurs can be simultaneously embedded in various temporal, socio-cognitive, and spatial contexts—future EI research would benefit from accounting for how such contexts shape, separately or together, the construction and enactment of EI. Greater attention toward these dynamics may also help reveal the contextual conditions under which EI may be more fixed or fluid rather than just fixed or fluid as the EI as Property and as Process perspectives suggest. In this way, a deeper
focus on contexts, including how entrepreneurs interpret and relate to their respective environments, may help build important conceptual bridges between the EI as Property and EI as Process perspectives.

**Mechanisms for Reconstructing and Losing EI**

Prior research that theorizes EI as an ongoing accomplishment (Hytti, 2005; Johansson, 2004; Nielsen & Gartner, 2017) suggests more or less overtly the construction and enactment of EI, tying distinct EI antecedents with outcomes (see “constructing” and “enacting” EI in Figures 2 and 3). Specifically, our review indicates that entrepreneurs deploy a range of individual, venture, and socio-cultural resources to define who they are and strive to behave in ways that are consistent with these self-definitions. Yet, as some have suggested (Shepherd et al., 2020), neither the resources entrepreneurs deploy to define their EI, nor the array of outcomes associated with their EI, are fixed or otherwise stable. Rather, entrepreneurs may accidentally lose their EI, in conjunction with venture failure, for example. When this happens, they may either accept the loss or mobilize to reconstruct their EI. We still know little about these dynamics. Given the increasing precariousness of modern firms—which have become more and more vulnerable to disruptive events such as bankruptcies, scandals, and even natural disasters (Crosina & Pratt, 2019; Shepherd & Williams, 2020; Williams & Shepherd, 2018)—this focus appears both timely and important. This entails honoring EI as something which, in figurative language, is not only born and grows but also may age or experience decay and, under extreme circumstances, even “die.” In Figure 3 we denote these overlooked mechanisms under the labels “reconstructing” and “losing” EI.

**Reconstructing EI.** Research in management and other fields has long suggested that work identity may be dynamically constructed and re-constructed (Snow & Anderson, 1987;
Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), particularly as workers change and advance in their roles (Ibarra, 1999), encounter events or circumstances that threaten who they are (Petriglieri, 2011), or as they interact with and work alongside influential others (Bruni et al., 2004). Identities can also vary in their relative centrality, complementarity, and degree of separation and may coexist in unison or tension (Abd Hamid et al., 2019; Barragan et al., 2018; Essers et al., 2013; Fernandes & Mota-Ribeiro, 2017; Shepherd et al., 2019). In addition, such configurations of identities may change over time, and individuals may adopt distinct strategies in efforts to manage them. Indeed, as we noted above (see p. 19), Pratt and Foreman (2000) identified almost twenty years ago four main strategies that individuals use to deal with multiple identities: deletion, compartmentalization, aggregation, and integration. However, entrepreneurs’ possible use of these strategies, beyond rare examples of aggregation (e.g., farmer-entrepreneur or musician-entrepreneur studies), compartmentalization (e.g., women entrepreneurs), or integration (e.g., hybrid identity studies) remains largely unclear (e.g., Jain et al., 2009; Vesala & Vesala, 2010). Taken together, future studies may thus more systematically explore how entrepreneurs reconstruct EI in relation to the host of other identities they hold and how this might affect their motivations, emotions, and cognitions (see Pratt, 2020 for calls for research).

Moreover, future research would benefit from examining how reconstructing EI could change the relationship that ties EI to entrepreneurs’ other identities. Figuratively, does EI reconstruction lead to EI fitting a larger puzzle of identities that intersect harmoniously? Does it lead to EI becoming a square peg which does not but still strives to fit a square hole round peg and thus becoming a source of conflict or tension? For instance, prior research points at tensions between gender, ethnic identities, and EI (e.g., Essers & Benschop, 2009). It could be fruitful to explore how these tensions may be magnified or mitigated following the reconstruction of EI. In this vein, given that entrepreneurship has traditionally been characterized as a masculine domain (Marlow & McAdam, 2015), future studies could
generatively explore how masculinities and femininities shape the reconstruction of EI for both men and women. Further, because existing research only tangentially addresses issues of emancipation in relation to EI outcomes, such as women’s micro-emancipatory acts in patriarchic cultures (Barragan et al., 2018), we see possibilities for examining emancipation in relation to EI reconstruction (e.g., Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1982).

**Losing EI.** As our review makes evident, although scholars have spent considerable efforts articulating how and why people might make the transition into entrepreneurship and the accompanying construction of EI (e.g., Dobrev & Barnett, 2005), it is less clear what losing EI might entail. Rich opportunities for theory elaboration lie in revealing what may appear to be the mundane work that allows entrepreneurs to either sustain or let go of their EI. In this vein, what are the organizational or personal events that may accidentally trigger EI loss? A better understanding of these circumstances is likely to yield insights into how individuals might manage EI loss, including the host of resources to which they may or not dispose in their efforts.

In addition, much existing theorizing portrays EI as something desirable that individuals strive to attain as a primary means to gain resources, legitimacy, or to positively stand out. However, emerging evidence indicates that EI may also be the source of negative emotions (Muhr et al., 2019), blind obedience, and escalation of commitment (Orser et al., 2011; Rouse, 2016). Under what conditions, then, might entrepreneurs seek to purposely lose their EI and to what ends? Some have noted that competing demands between multiple identities—such as mother and entrepreneur—may cause burnout and eventually lead some women to giving up their entrepreneurial careers to avoid stress or interpersonal conflicts (Foley et al., 2018). What implications might this type of choice hold for the EI of these women and others in comparable circumstances?
People may also voluntarily decide to give up their EI because either they or others in their social circles perceive it as negative, associated with sheer ambition, power, or a lack of morality (Petriglieri, 2011). Appreciating the host of factors that may exacerbate or attenuate such perceptions would help advance our understanding of why people may decide to lose their EI. Taken together, we need more scholarly efforts to uncover when, how, and why EI loss occurs and how it might affect entrepreneurs’ own health and well-being (Shepherd, 2015; Wiklund et al., 2019).

Given the centrality of EI in the entrepreneurial process, we hope that these ideas stimulate new research in this critical and still germane area of inquiry. We end where we began: opportunities lie ahead to more fully capture the complexity of the field of EI as it relates to the dynamic phenomenon of entrepreneurship. After all, as cartographers, we can only sketch “imperfect renderings of territory”; however, we hope that our map will “animate” others, academics and practitioners alike (Weick, 1990, pp. 7–8).

CONCLUSION

EI research increased exponentially over the last three decades in fragmented and disparate directions. Prior to our review, we lacked a framework to lend structure to, and integrate, this critical area of inquiry. Here, we systematically parsed antecedents, outcomes, and content of EI as well as their relationships, offering both a fine-grained view of EI’s analytical roles in extant theorizing and conceptualizations of EI. By doing so, we revealed critical gaps in our understanding and suggested novel avenues for future scholarship.
REFERENCES

*for papers included in the SLR


**TABLES AND FIGURES**

**Table 1. Data Collection and Curation Process**

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**DATA COLLECTION**

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**FINAL SAMPLE**
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The elaboration of a typology of founders' social identities

The role of individual-level resources in the formation of entrepreneurial identity and small business success

This article highlights “entrepreneurial identity” as influenced by individual-level antecedents. Specifically, it shows how entrepreneurial identity is shaped by firm performance, resources, and the founder's attitudes towards the opportunity. The study provides insights into the dynamics of entrepreneurial identity formation and the role of individual-level resources in shaping the identity of nascent entrepreneurs.

The role of cultural integration in the formation of entrepreneurial identity and small business success

This article highlights “entrepreneurial identity” as influencing individual-level outcomes. Specifically, it shows that entrepreneurial identity shapes the founders' approach to business and their decisions, influencing a range of individual-level outcomes such as performance and growth.

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The identity work of old entrepreneurs and nascent entrepreneurs:

**Methodology**

*Network Analysis*

The study employs a network analysis approach to examine the role of networking in shaping the entrepreneurial identity of both old and nascent entrepreneurs. This method allows for a detailed exploration of the intricate relationships and interactions that are central to understanding the identity work of these entrepreneurs. The network analysis approach helps in identifying key players, their roles, and the patterns of connections that underpin the entrepreneurial identity formation process.

**Findings**

The findings reveal that networking plays a critical role in the entrepreneurial identity work of both old and nascent entrepreneurs. Specifically, old entrepreneurs leverage their established networks to affirm their identity and gain legitimacy within the entrepreneurial community. In contrast, nascent entrepreneurs begin to construct their identity by forming new connections and acquiring recognition in their nascent entrepreneurial endeavors.

**Implications**

The study's implications highlight the importance of recognizing the unique ways in which old and nascent entrepreneurs engage in identity work, particularly through networking. This knowledge can inform strategies for supporting nascent entrepreneurs in developing their identities and gaining acceptance within the entrepreneurial community, thereby enhancing their entrepreneurial potential and success.
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Note: The table above is a simplified representation of the document content. Each row represents a study or concept introduced in the text, with columns indicating the type of study, nature of identity, role of identity, identity in context, focused on, research design, method, experience, and findings highlights. The table is not exhaustive and represents a selection of studies and concepts discussed in the text.
The role of identity development in a socio-cultural context: the development of an entrepreneurial identity by the entrepreneur in a socio-cultural context.

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Figure 1a. Evolution of EI Research over Time (Theories of Identity)

Figure 1b. Evolution of EI Research over Time (EI as Property and EI as Process)
Figure 2. Entrepreneurial Identity Research: Streams and Themes

**Note:** Number of studies and frequency of themes are indicated in brackets. The thickness of the boxes and arrows in the model reflects the relative volume of extant research concerning themes and relationships, respectively.

*Denotes the total number of articles per category, after accounting for deduplication.
Figure 3. Entrepreneurial Identity Research: An Integrative Model

**Note. Note.** Shapes filled in black (i.e., "Temporal, Socio-Cognitive, and Spatial Contexts" as well as "Losing EI" and "Reconstructing EI") denote missing theoretical understandings, and dashed lines those relationships that warrant further exploration, as suggested by our review and elaborated in our future research section.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Reviewed Articles per Journal per Year

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APPENDIX 2. CODEBOOK

1. CODE: Constructing
This code denotes articles investigating how entrepreneurs build their identity, drawing upon various resources in their respective environments.

2. CODE: Country of study
This code classifies articles into one of two categories: Established economies and Emerging economies (Stam et al., 2014), which suggest the contextual backdrop of papers.

3. CODE: Enacting
This code classifies articles based on how entrepreneurs draw upon their identity while starting and/or running their ventures.

4. CODE: Experience
This code further classifies the entrepreneurs under study based on their respective stage in the entrepreneurial process. In particular, drawing on Rotefoss and Kolvereid (2005), we used: Aspiring entrepreneurs, Nascent entrepreneurs, or Experienced entrepreneurs. The code aspiring entrepreneurs denotes individuals engaged in education, training, and mentoring programs (pre-venture phase); nascent entrepreneurs describes individuals engaged in ongoing new venture creation or early venture development; and experienced entrepreneurs are those who have been engaged in running their ventures.

5. CODE: Focus
This code offers a brief summary of the primary topic/s addressed in a given article.

6. CODE: Foundational Identity Theories
This code classifies articles into one of five categories, according to the primary theory of identity upon which a given article draws, namely: Identity theory, Role-identity theory, Social Identity theory, Narrative identity theory and Identity work theory. When texts draw upon
multiple theories of identities, we denote them by enumerating the theories they draw upon (See Table 2).

7. CODE: **Identity in context(s)**

This code classifies articles based on whether they investigate EI as a primary construct (“Star”, cf., Pratt, 2020) or as part of a constellation of other constructs (“Ensemble Member”, cf., Pratt, 2020).

8. CODE: **Individual characteristics**

This code classifies articles based on understandings of entrepreneurial identity as it relates to specific characteristics of the entrepreneurs under study—such as their Body, Gender, Ethnicity, Age, Occupation, Class, Emancipation, Entrepreneurial behavior, Entrepreneurial intention, Legitimacy, Passion/Emotion, and Opportunity recognition and exploitation.

9. CODE: **Method**

This code indicates the primary research methodologies/techniques used in empirical articles to gather (and in some cases to analyze) data, namely: Survey, Case study, Interviews, Content analysis, Discourse analysis, Ethnography. When pertinent, we also note the number of times each technique was applied (e.g., number of interviews), and earmark longitudinal investigations.

10. CODE: **Nature of Identity**

This code classifies articles based on the “essence” of EI—namely whether they conceptualize EI as Property or Process. *EI as Property* captures identity as a relatively stable set of attributes. Specifically, articles taking an *EI as Property* perspective cast EI as either an *Asset* or as a *Liability*. *EI as Process* encompasses understandings of identity as dynamic and fluid. Articles taking an *EI as Process* perspective further describe EI as either a *Proactive* or *Reactive* process.
11. CODE: **Paradigm**

This code classifies articles based on their epistemological stand, namely: *Positivism* or *Social constructivism* (whether *Interpretive, Critical, or Postmodern*). The term epistemology refers to a given theory of knowledge. *Positivism* envisions reality as independent of our knowledge of it. As such, it assumes that it is possible to investigate phenomena in their “true” form, and to establish causal relationships among such phenomena. By contrast, *Social constructivism* envisions reality as constructed through social and discursive interaction. Within this epistemology, *Interpretive* research focuses on people’s interpretations of social phenomena. *Critical* studies reveal power and domination structures that govern social settings, while *Postmodern* studies deconstruct meaning, inviting reflexivity over these very structures.

12. CODE: **Primary insights**

This code offers a brief summary of the primary findings of a given article.

13. CODE: **Role of Identity**

This code classifies articles into one of three categories: *EI as Influenced, EI as Influencing, EI as Influenced and Influencing*. As *Influencing*, EI is conceptualized as shaping individual, venture and socio-cultural outcomes. As *Influenced*, EI is conceptualized as shaped by individual, venture and socio-cultural antecedents. As *Influenced and Influencing*, EI is conceptualized as both shaped by individual, venture and socio-cultural antecedents and as shaping individual, venture and socio-cultural outcomes.

14. CODE: **Sample**

This code describes the entrepreneurs under study based on a host of characteristic, such as their gender (e.g., *Women entrepreneurs* ) or origins (e.g., *Migrant entrepreneurs*) other than their respective stage in the entrepreneurial process.
15. **CODE: Type of paper**

This code classifies articles as either *Conceptual* or *Empirical*. A *Conceptual* article presents, discusses, and/or generates theory from existing theory, whereas an *Empirical* article elaborates or generates theory from new data.

16. **CODE: Venture and Socio-cultural characteristics**

This code classifies articles based on the construction of entrepreneurial identity within a host of contexts, namely: *Family Business, Network, Incubator, Education, Media and public discourse*, as well as *Industry* (whether *High-tech* or *Low-tech* – cf., Stam et al., 2014). Moreover, it classifies articles based on the enactment of entrepreneurial identity in relation to an array of venture and other outcomes, namely: *Venture Creation, Venture Growth, and Venture Performance, Regional/Local development*, as well as *Resource Acquisition*. 


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*number of articles after deduplication checks.*

Appendix 3a. Descriptive Overview of the Reviewed Articles (Type of studies)
Appendix 3b. Descriptive Overview of the Reviewed Articles

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|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |
|                   | Nascent (n=60)     | High Tech (n=7) | Emerging economies (n=12) | Established Economies (n=124) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) | Incubation (n=7) |

Note: As the data in Appendices 3a and 3b suggests, from an epistemological standpoint, 35 articles draw on positivism, and 118 adopt social constructivist approaches (103 articles leverage interpretive, 10 critical, and 5 postmodern epistemologies, respectively). Further, from a theoretical anchoring standpoint, 137 articles draw on a single foundational theory of identity, while 16 combine multiple theories of identity. Methodologically, among the 133 empirical studies, 110 are qualitative, 20 quantitative, and 3 mixed-methods. From a more analytical perspective, 59 articles examined EI as a star construct, whereas 94 as an ensemble member.

Regarding the construction of EI (n=73), research largely focuses on antecedents of EI at the individual level (n=83), and more specifically on EI as triggered by intrinsic (n=30), and to a lesser extent by extrinsic motivation(s) (n=11). Socio-demographic characteristics such as ethnicity (n=10), age (n=4), occupation (n=7), and class (n=4) are rarely investigated, whereas gender (n=34) is more frequently examined. Only five studies focus on entrepreneurs’ body. Venture-level antecedents (n=28) are investigated less frequently than individual-level antecedents, with extant research in this area focusing on family business (n=16), network(s) (n=6), and incubator(s) (n=7). Among socio-cultural antecedents (n=53), media and public discourse take the lion share of attention (n=39), whereas education (n=16) is less of a focus.

Regarding the enactment of EI (n=49), the most studied outcomes relate to individual entrepreneurs themselves (n=36), to their ventures (n=35), and to a lesser extent to others in the socio-cultural environment (n=23). Among the outcomes of EI at the individual level, entrepreneurial behavior (n=21) is the most studied, followed by passion/emotion (n=9), opportunity recognition and exploitation (n=5), and entrepreneurial intention (n=4), respectively. Among outcomes of EI on entrepreneurs’ ventures, resource acquisition (n=15) and venture creation (n=14) take center stage. Fewer studies investigate EI in relation to venture performance (n=11) or growth (n=7). Finally, among outcomes of EI on the socio-cultural environment, legitimacy (n=16) is the most often invoked, and to a lesser extent, emancipation (n=3) and regional/local development (n=5).

In terms of experience, nascent entrepreneurs (n=60) and experienced entrepreneurs (n=68) have drawn the most attention in the 133 empirical studies, with only 10 papers investigating aspiring entrepreneurs. With respect to country context, EI is examined in established economies (n=124) and less frequently in emerging economies.

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Numbers in Appendices 3a and 3b, as well as numbers cited in the main body of the paper are after deduplication checks. Each text was coded as potentially addressing several antecedents and/or outcomes of EI at various levels of analysis (i.e., individual, venture, and socio-cultural). For a more detailed overview, see Appendix 4.

Total numbers per type of experience, before accounting for deduplication; five studies investigating more than one type of experience (see Table 3).
Further, among the empirical papers providing information relative to industry, EI is mostly investigated in low-tech industries (n=24), compared to high-tech industries (n=7).

Regarding the content of EI, when conceptualized as Property (n=54), EI tends to be largely cast as an asset (n=48) as opposed to as a liability (n=6). When conceptualized as Process (n=99), it tends to be proactive (n=59) as opposed to reactive (n=40) (see Appendices 3a and 3b, and Appendix 4).
Appendix 4. Reviewed Articles Categorized According to the Organizing Framework

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<th>Content</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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EI as Influenced (n=73)

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<th>Outcomes</th>
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EI as Influencing (n=36)

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EI as Influencing and Influencing (n=10)

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Achtenhagen & Welter (2011) * * * * *
Albinsson (2018) * * * * *
Anderson & Warren (2011) * * * * *
Barrett & Vershinina (2017) * * * * * *
Bell et al. (2019) * * * *
Bjursell & Melin (2011) * * * * * * *
Byrne, Fattoum, & Diaz Garcia (2019) * * * * * * *
Chasserio, Pailot, & Poroli (2014) * * * * * * *
Clarke & Holt (2017) * * * *
Cohen & Musson (2000) * * * * *
Conger, McMullen, Bergman, & York (2018) * * * * * *
Dobrev & Barnett (2005) * * * * * * *
Dodd (2002) * * * *
Down & Reveley (2004) * * * * *
Essers & Benschop (2007) * * * * * *
Essers & Benschop (2009) * * * * *
Essers, Doorewaard, & Benschop (2013) * * * * * * *
Falck, Heblich, & Luedemann (2012) * * * * *
Fenwick (2002) * * * * *
Fernandes & Mota-Ribeiro (2017) * * * *
Fletcher & Watson (2007) * * * *
Frederiksen & Berglund (2020) * * * * * *
García & Welter (2013) * * * * * * *
Garcia-Lorenzo, Donnelly, Sell-Trujillo, & Imas (2018) * * * * * *
Gherardi (2015) * * * * * *
Hanson & Blake (2009) * * *
Harmeling (2011) * * *
Horst et al. (2020) * * * * * * *
Hytti & Heinonen (2013) * * * * *
Hytti (2005) * * * *
Jain, George, & Maltarich (2009) * * * * * *
Jernberg et al. (2020) * * * * * *
Johansson (2004) * *
Jones & Clifton (2018) * * * * * *
Jones, Latham, & Betta (2008) * * * *
Karhunen, Olimpieva, & Hytti (2017) * * * *
Kašperová & Kitching (2014) * *
Kašperová et al. (2018) * * * * * *
Katila, Laine, & Parkkari (2019) * * * * * *
Larson & Pearson (2012) * * * * * * *
Lewis (2013) * * * * *
Lundqvist, Middleton, & Nowell (2015) * * * * * *
MacNabb, McCoy, Weinreich, & Northover (1993) * * * * * *
Mallett & Wapshott (2015) * * * * *
Marlow & McAdam (2015) * * * * * *
Masika (2017) * * * * * *
Muhr, De Cock, Twardowska, & Volkmann (2019) * * * *
Newbery, Lean, Moizer, & Haddoud (2018) * * * * * *
Nielsen & Gartner (2017) * * *
Nielsen & Lassen (2012) * * * * * *
Nielsen, Norlyk, & Christensen (2018) * * * * *
Orser et al. (2011) * * * *
Ozasir Kacar & Essers (2019) * * * * * *
Ozkazanc-Pan (2014) * * * * * *
Phillips (2013) * * * * *
Smith (2010) * * * *
Smith et al. (2019) * * * * * *
Soto-Simeone & Kautonen (2020) * * * * * *
Stenholm & Hytti (2014) * * * * *
Stirzaker & Sitko (2019) * * * * *
Vesala & Vesala (2010) * * * * * *
Wallis et al. (2020) * * * * *
Watson (2009) * * * *
Werthes, Mauer, & Brettel (2018) * * * * * *
Williams Middleton (2013) * * * * * *
Yitshaki & Kropp (2016) * * * * *
Zhang & Chun (2018) * * * * *

EI as Influenced (n=73)
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Aspiring (n=10)
Nascent (n=60)
Experienced (n=68)
Low-Tech (n=24)
High-Tech (n=7)
Emerging economies (n=12)
Established Economies (n=124)
Intrinsic motivation  (n=30)
Extrinsic motivation (n=11)
Gender (n=34)
Ethnicity (n=10)
Age (n=4)
Occupation (n=7)
Class (n=4)
Body (n=5)
Family Business (n=16)
Network (n=6)
Incubator (n=7)
Media & Public discourse (n=39)
Education (n=16)
Asset (n=48)
Liability (n=6)
Proactive (n=59)
Reactive (n=40)
Passion & Emotion (n=9)
Opportunity recognition & exploitation (n=5)
Entrepreneurial intention (n=4)
Entrepreneurial behaviour (n=21)
Resource acquisition (n=15)
Creation (n=14)
Performance (n=11)
Growth (n=7)
Legitimacy (n=16)
Emancipation (n=3)
Regional / Local development (n=5)

EI as Influenced
EI as Influenced and Influencing
EI as Influencing
Total
EI as Influencing (n=49)