

4-3-2017

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Recommended Citation

Bass, A. Erin (2017) "Identity Discovery and Verification in Artist-Entrepreneurs: An Active Learning Exercise," *Organization Management Journal*: Vol. 14: Iss. 2, Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/omj/vol14/iss2/3>

Identity Discovery and Verification in Artist-Entrepreneurs: An Active Learning Exercise

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship curricula are becoming increasingly more interdisciplinary, with higher education institutions offering a variety of “entrepreneurship and” courses that cross the boundaries into other fields. Despite this, many entrepreneurship curricula are centered on business theory, which is not suitable for nonbusiness students. For example, business students are trained to define success by financial statements and organizational viability, whereas artists enjoy success by achieving creative satisfaction. This article explores the importance of identity to the entrepreneurial process, highlighting the similarities and differences between the artist and entrepreneur identities. Pedagogical in approach, the article demonstrates the utility of an active learning exercise in identity discovery and verification for artist-entrepreneurs. It highlights the critical role of identity for artist-entrepreneurs, the need to develop curricula for nonbusiness students to maximize learning, and the utility of this exercise as a starting point for artist-entrepreneurs to enact the entrepreneurial mind set in their creative work.

KEYWORDS

Active learning; arts; entrepreneurship; identity; pedagogical exercise

Entrepreneurship curricula are becoming increasingly more interdisciplinary. There are many higher education institutions that offer interdisciplinary entrepreneurship programs, such as the medical innovation program at Northwestern University (2015), the engineering technology entrepreneurship program at Arizona State University (2015), and the arts-entrepreneurship program at Southern Methodist University (2015). In addition to the eruption of these entrepreneurship-minded programs across institutions, cross-listed courses with entrepreneurship-oriented themes are increasingly more relevant. For example, the 2015–2016 academic calendar at University of North Carolina–Greensboro cross-lists 39 entrepreneurship courses with a variety of other academic units such as art (Creative Space: The Meeting of Art and Entrepreneurship), information systems and supply chain management (Entrepreneurship and Technology in Health Care), and interior architecture (Design Thinking and/or Entrepreneurial Thinking) (University of North Carolina Greensboro, 2015).

The rise in entrepreneurship as a discipline that is applicable both within and outside business schools is a growing theme across higher education institutions. This is especially true in disciplines such as the arts in which self-employment is on the rise as salaried positions become scarcer and more uncertain. For example,

storied institutions within the arts community, such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York City Opera, and the Joffrey Ballet School, have all recently filed for bankruptcy or face its looming threat (Boniello, 2016; Boroff, 2011; Cooper, 2013). These and other arts organizations face an uncertain future, and thus, the future of these organizations’ salaried employees is equally uncertain. Artists who once sought salaried employment through an established arts organization increasingly turn to full- or part-time self-employment in order to attain or maintain a career in this field. In fact, artists are three and a half times more likely than the U.S. work force average to be self-employed (National Endowment for the Arts, 2011).

Although many art (and other nonbusiness) students will turn to self-employment to pursue a career in their respective fields, enrolling these students in entrepreneurship classes might not be the most effective way to educate potential nonbusiness entrepreneurs (Nesteruk, 2012). Entrepreneurship classes are typically part of business schools, and curricula are developed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to effectively build and grow businesses and enjoy financial success (Falck, Heblich, & Luedemann, 2012; Gartner, 1985). However, the assumption that entrepreneurs are driven by financial success may not hold

across nonbusiness entrepreneurs. For example, artists create to satisfy an artistic need, rather than a market opportunity (Bass, Milosevic, & Eesley, 2015; Caves, 2000; Delmestri, Montanari, & Usai, 2005). Thus, the underlying motive of financial success may be in direct contrast with what artists desire as an outcome of their creative work (Bass et al., 2015; Delmestri et al., 2005).

To address the uniqueness of nonbusiness entrepreneurship students, this article provides a pedagogical tool that instructors might use in the “entrepreneurship and” classroom. The exercise taps into the role of identity in shaping the student experience and career path. That is, it challenges students to reflect on how they view themselves and what they do, and how that in turn influences their careers. As a former artist turned business school professor, I am aware of the importance of identity in building success and satisfaction in one’s career. As an artist who worked closely with other artists, I was conscious of the limitless opportunities that stemmed from this identity (freelance, contract work, touring, gigging, etc.), but also the seeming boundaries this identity created (limited availability of steady work, limited business knowledge, specialized skills that failed to transfer to other professions). These boundaries have confined for artists for years, creating stark realities of “starving artist” or “under-employment” (Bain, 2005; Caves, 2000; Phillips, 2010; Stohs, 1991). To this end, educating arts students on the tenets of entrepreneurship could be a key capacity-building endeavor of higher education institutions by equipping arts students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to maximize their potential as artists and creatively contribute to society and the communities in which they live and work (Bass et al., 2015; Griff, 1960; Taylor, 2011).

Identity and work

Differences between business and arts students stem, in part, from differences in occupational identities. Occupational identity is “a composite sense of who one is and wishes to become as an occupational being” (Kielhofner, 2008, p. 106) and is often used to answer the question that most students face as they graduate from college: “so ... what do you do?” (Unruh, 2004, p. 290). Occupational identity plays a key role in a person’s identity because what we do (occupational identity) shapes who we are (person identity) (Burke, 2004; Desrochers, Andreassi, & Thompson, 2004; Kielhofner, 2008; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Unruh, 2004).

Not surprisingly, arts students and business students hold very different occupational identities. Business

students are trained in finance, accounting, management, marketing, and economics in order to secure positions as accountants, analysts, managers, or the like after graduation. However, the path is not as linear for arts students. Art students are trained in art history, art criticism, and design, and although they can secure salaried employment as artists or designers, many of them pursue their passion through self-employment.

Not unlike artists, entrepreneurship students often use college coursework as preparation for the nonlinear career path of self-employment. Artists and entrepreneurs are also similar in that both seek to create something unique in order to define and maintain their distinctive identity as an artist or entrepreneur (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). In the same vein, artists and entrepreneurs hold strong occupational identities because what they do in terms of their occupation defines, at least in part, who they are. Additionally, a parallel exists in that both the arts and entrepreneurship center on creation, autonomy, and satisfaction through work (Caves, 2000; Phillips, 2010). For centuries, artists have made their living not through “employment” but through “creation” (Gallos, 2009; Phillips, 2010).

Despite these seeming similarities, many times artists do not see themselves as entrepreneurs—“the vast majority of artists have not mastered the world of capitalism and remain poor, scuffling at meagre second jobs” (Bradshaw, McDonagh, & Marshall, 2006, p. 112). Even artists who make careers out of freelancing do not necessarily see their freelance work as an entrepreneurial venture. Thus, a paradox exists in that many artists are entrepreneurs but do not identify as such. This is problematic because by not verifying this side of their identity, artists could potentially limit both their entrepreneurial and their creative potential. And, as suggested by Bain (2005, p. 29), “In the 21st century artists are required to be experimental and innovative and to push the frontiers of art while capitalizing upon the development of a distinctive and marketable individuality.” Thus, by not embracing and verifying their individuality, artist-entrepreneurs could be restricting the potential of their identity. This restricted identity could result in failure to realize the synergies that could be gained by integrating both the artist and entrepreneur sides of the identity.

Given this threat, the following exercise seeks to aid instructors in helping students verify their occupational identity as artist-entrepreneurs. Although this exercise is designed for arts-entrepreneurship students, guidance is provided for modifying the exercise to be used in other interdisciplinary entrepreneurship courses. The following sections demonstrate the utility

of an active learning exercise in identity discovery and verification. In doing so, it highlights (a) the critical role of identity for artist-entrepreneurs, (b) the need to develop curricula rather than rely on business-oriented entrepreneurship curricula for nonbusiness students to maximize learning, and (c) the utility of this exercise as a starting point of self-discovery for artist-entrepreneurs to enact the entrepreneurial mindset in their creative work.

The active learning exercise

Implementation guidance

The exercise described in the following is created to afford arts-entrepreneurship students the opportunity to explore their own identities so as to understand how their identities shape the entrepreneurial process. The active learning exercise is targeted at undergraduate or graduate arts-entrepreneurship students who are either interested in developing arts-minded businesses or further interested in exploring how identity shapes the entrepreneurial process.

Course integration

Several factors related to course integration contribute to the effectiveness of the exercise in an interdisciplinary classroom: content, timing, and approach to entrepreneurship. Each of the course-related factors are described in detail next.

Content

This is best introduced by instructors after the basic tenets of entrepreneurship have been reviewed and some discussion has occurred regarding entrepreneurship as being influenced both by factors that shape the individual and by factors that shape the context. That is, both academic and applied research has examined how the individual's characteristics such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, entrepreneurial intentions, passion, and tenacity influence both the likelihood of starting a business and entrepreneurial performance (Baum & Locke, 2004; Rauch & Frese, 2007; Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007; Zhao, Seibert, & Lumpkin, 2010). Thus, it is important that students understand that individual characteristics are important influencers on the entrepreneurship process. In addition, students should be aware of research on the effect of context on the entrepreneurial process and be familiar with how institutional support, national or regional culture, socioeconomic status, and prior exposure to

entrepreneurship influence the likelihood of starting a business and being successful (Chakrabarty & Bass, 2013; Hayton, George, & Zahra, 2002; Krueger, 1993). Taken together, students should be aware that both individual and contextual factors shape how entrepreneurship is approached by individuals, and their experiences in achieving success as entrepreneurs. As related to this exercise, these concepts demonstrate that the individual's identity captures not only who the person is (individual factors) but also that person's experiences (shaped by contextual factors)—both of which shape the entrepreneurial process (Bass et al., 2015; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009).

Timing

Although this exercise can be employed at any point of time during the course, students benefit most when it is employed at the early stage of the course for several reasons. First, the knowledge gained from the self-discovery process that is integrated in this exercise can be carried through the course and applied to the topics and course activities that follow. After completing this exercise, students are more self-aware and draw from that awareness when learning other entrepreneurship-related topics such as opportunity discovery or creation, designing a business model, or feasibility assessment. Second, this exercise requires students to think critically and integrate seemingly disparate information. This skill proves to be useful for the students as they move through the course and apply critical thinking to other topics. Third, this exercise stimulates both small- and large-group discussion. Because the exercise is individualized, each student completes the same components but creates a unique end product. Due to the heterogeneity in the students' self-reflection (Phase 1 in the following) and in the information they gain from their interviewee (Phase 2 in the following), many different perspectives are collected and can be shared. Thus, this exercise can serve as a content-oriented ice-breaker that allows students the opportunity to share their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives with the class and in small groups.

Approach to entrepreneurship

This exercise is especially suited for instructors who view entrepreneurship from a process perspective (Baron & Shane, 2007; Steyaert, 2007), rather than focusing on the outcomes of entrepreneurship. The process perspective of entrepreneurship focuses on "the creation of newness" (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009, p. 478) and centers on the actions, activities, and

projects that create newness. Baron and Shane's (2007) text adopts this process perspective to entrepreneurship, and thus instructors who use this text might find its core concepts map well with this exercise. Another useful resource is Table 1 from Steyaert's (2007) review of the process perspective of entrepreneurship. This table compares and contrasts various process perspectives of entrepreneurship—from evolutionary to social constructionist—in terms of how the core concept is defined, key assumptions, and illustrative research. Instructors—especially those of graduate-level courses—might find this table useful if various theoretical lenses are used or contrasted throughout the course.

Learning objectives

The exercise has three learning objectives. After completing the active learning exercise, students should be able to:

- (1) Understand how identities are enacted by artists, entrepreneurs, and artist-entrepreneurs.

Individuals hold multiple identities based on who they are as an individual (person) and what they do in terms of work (occupational identity) (Burke, 2004; Desrochers et al., 2004; Stryker & Burke, 2000), both of which impact individual actions, such as how they approach the entrepreneurial process. Burke (2004, p. 5) defines identity as “the sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define what it means to be who they are as persons, as role occupants, and as group members.” Individuals learn

what these meanings are and the categories with which they are associated through social interactions and their work (Burke, 2004; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011).

- (2) Engage in identity discovery as a self-reflective process and be comfortable engaging in ongoing identity discovery as an artist-entrepreneur.

This exercise requires students to engage in data collection, reflection, and information integration for self-discovery. Identity discovery and verification are important to developing the artist-entrepreneur identity because they allow the individuals to “match” who they believe they are, or their internal identity standard, with their behaviors in a situation and how they approach their work (Burke & Stets, 1999; Unruh, 2004). This matching process produces valuable cognitive and emotional responses, including “the development of committed relationships, positive emotional attachments, and a group orientation” (Burke & Stets, 1999, p. 347). Because some students may require more time to engage in self-discovery—especially if they have not been tasked with this before—errring on the side of more time for assignment completion allows for each student to learn and reflect on their own pace. In doing so, each student can focus on his or her own individualized experiences and incorporate those experiences into the assignment.

- (3) Discover how identity is verified and shapes the enactment of the entrepreneurial process.

Table 1. Recommended readings to set the stage for the student experience.

Purpose of the reading	Example articles
To understand the concept of artist-entrepreneurs	Bacharach, S. (2015, August 7). Why art is good for entrepreneurs. <i>Inc. Magazine</i> . Retrieved from http://www.inc.com/samuel-bacharach/art-and-entrepreneurship.html Bram, T. (2011, March 2). 10 Artists explain how they became art entrepreneurs. <i>OpenForum</i> . Retrieved from https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/10-artists-explain-how-they-became-art-entrepreneurs-1/ Deresiewicz, W. (2015, January/February). The death of the artists—and the birth of the creative entrepreneur. <i>The Atlantic</i> . Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of-the-artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/ Tickle, L. (2015, July 9). Creating wealth: How artists can become inventive entrepreneurs. <i>The Guardian</i> . Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2015/jul/09/creating-wealth-how-artists-can-become-entrepreneurs
The understand state of arts-entrepreneurship	National Endowment for the Arts. (2011). <i>Artists and arts workers in the United States</i> . NEA research note 105. Retrieved from www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/105.pdf National Endowment for the Arts. (2015). <i>ACPSA issue brief 6: The impact of new demand for arts and culture</i> . Office of Research & Analysis. Retrieved from https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ADP6-6_Impact_New_Demand_Arts.pdf
To understand the role of identity in shaping individuals' actions	Bass, A. E., Milosevic, I., & Eesley, D. T. (2015). Examining and reconciling identity issues among artist-entrepreneurs. In O. Kuhlke, A. Schramme, & R. Kooyman (Eds.), <i>Creating cultural capital</i> (pp. 99–109). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Burke, P. J. (2004). Identities and social structure: The 2003 Cooley–Mead Award address. <i>Social Psychology Quarterly</i> , 67(1), 5–15. Cast, A. D. (2003). Identities and behavior. In P. J. Burke, T. J. Owens, R. T. Serpe, & P. A. Thoits (Eds.), <i>Advances in identity theory and research</i> (pp. 41–53). Boston, MA: Springer US.

Instructors can utilize this active learning exercise to demonstrate how the integration of occupational identity and person identity shapes the entrepreneurial process (Falck et al., 2012; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). Identity is a central part of the entrepreneurial process because “entrepreneurial activities are infused with meaning because they are an expression of an individual’s identity, or concept of self” (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011, p. 935). The active learning exercise described in the following is processual in nature, with multiple, cumulative phases that allow students to discover and reflect on the importance of identity to the entrepreneurial process. This active learning exercise should be deployed so that it provides students enough time to complete the assignment while keeping them engaged. That is, it is important that students devote sufficient time to complete the assignment without significant interruptions. This exercise has been most successfully deployed over the course of 2 to 4 weeks. This will allow students to better grasp the importance of identity to the entrepreneurial process.

Preparation

In total, this exercise will require the instructor to prepare for 2 hours outside of class (to identify readings for the reading assignment and prepare the introductory activity).

If done entirely in class, the activity requires a portion of four in-class sessions (session one: introductory activity—15 minutes; session two: Phase 1—15 minutes; session three: Phase 3—30 minutes; session four: debriefing—20–25 minutes).

If the activity is assigned outside the class, it requires a portion of two in-class sessions (session one: introductory activity—15 minutes; session two: debriefing—20–25 minutes), with at least 2 weeks in between these two in-class activities for the students to complete Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3.

The activity is effective in helping students through the identity discovery and verification process regardless of whether it is completed entirely in-class or a combination of both in-class and outside class components. However, the exercise is most effective when completed with some in-class components (introductory activity and debrief session) in combination with outside class components (Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3). The identity discovery and verification process is captured in Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 of the activity. Assigning these components outside class affords students more time to reflect on their identity, values, and perspectives (see Learning Objective 2 in the preceding). Students have commented that, as for most outside class

assignments, they just wanted to get it done, but the more time they spent on the assignment, the more they reflected on how their experiences shape who they are and what they do. As two students commented after completing the assignment:

“I think identity can push or pull you toward a career and motivate how passionate you are about that career ... Take a look at high ranking military officials, doctors, or even actors. Their jobs take up the majority of their time. Personal time can easily shift into business time at a moment’s notice. Not only is the job part of their own identity, but it is also largely how the public identifies these types of jobs, which only supports that person primarily identifying themselves with their jobs.”

“I learned how much I truly do base a lot of things off of my personality and my identity ... I never understood the differences between individuals until you saw the different ways that we approached the [same] questions. My personality and identity drive me a lot more than I thought it did.”

Setting the stage for the student experience

Prior to the class in which the exercise is assigned, instructors should provide students with popular press articles in entrepreneurship or business outlets that discuss the rise of artist-entrepreneurs. *Inc. Magazine*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, and *Forbes Magazine* have recently published articles in this area. The purpose of this reading assignment is to inform students of arts-entrepreneurship and some of its unique qualities. It should take the instructor less than 1 hour to prepare the reading assignment, and a sufficient number of readings should be assigned (approximately 1 to 2 hours of reading material for students) so that students understand the concept of artist-entrepreneurs. In addition to popular press articles, students might also benefit from reading research reports on the state of arts-entrepreneurship. The National Endowment for the Arts (<https://www.arts.gov>) provides many such reports. These reports are useful in communicating the role of artist-entrepreneurs in society. Finally, especially for graduate-level courses, students might benefit from academic research on the identity discovery and verification process, and the uniqueness of the artist-entrepreneur identity. These academic articles are useful for students to read prior to engaging in the active learning exercise so that they have a greater understanding of the role of identity in shaping individuals’ actions. Table 1 provides some recommended articles that instructors could use to create a reading assignment that helps set the stage for the student experience in the active learning exercise

Introducing the active learning exercise to students

At the beginning of the class when the active learning exercise is assigned, the instructor can “kick off” the assignment with an activity. Preparation for this portion of the active learning exercise should take the instructor approximately 1 hour to find the artist-entrepreneurs and create a slideshow. The introductory activity should take approximately 15 minutes of in-class time.

The activity requires the instructor to present pictures of well-known artist-entrepreneurs and ask students, either individually or in small groups, to provide three words to describe each artist-entrepreneur. The artist-entrepreneurs should be prominent enough so that students recognize them and know enough about the individual and/or their organization to describe them. Some good examples include musical artists who have started recording companies, such as Sean Combs or Sean Carter (Jay-Z), fashion designers who have launched successful brands, such as Giorgio Armani or Calvin Klein, and filmmaker George Lucas of Lucasfilm. They can also be local artist-entrepreneurs. The only requirement is that the students can readily recognize the artist-entrepreneur. I have found artist-entrepreneurs in the music industry to be the most recognizable by students, and thus tend to use more of these individuals for this portion of the activity. See Table 2 for a suggested listing of artist-entrepreneurs in the music industry that can be used for this part of the exercise.

Either a slideshow of these artist-entrepreneurs can be created or their pictures can be pulled up from online sources. For each picture, the instructor should ask the students to (a) identify the person and (b) identify what the person does. A list of these descriptors of what each artist-entrepreneur does should be recorded on the board for the class to see. The instructor should request students to provide at least three descriptors for each artist-entrepreneur. Once the students have provided descriptors for the collection of artist-entrepreneurs (5 to 10 artist-entrepreneurs), the instructor can ask the students to reflect on the completed list of descriptors. What do students notice about similarities in identities of these individuals by the

words written on the board? Differences among the individuals? If students had to pick one descriptor for each individual, could they? And would the word they selected adequately describe the individual?

Following the activity, the instructor should provide a brief description of person identity and occupational identity. From identity theory, person identity describes who a person is, whereas occupational identity describes what a person does for work (Burke, 2004; Desrochers et al., 2004; Unruh, 2004). The instructor should ask students to look at the list of words on the board to identify the words that describe the perceived person identity versus the words that describe the perceived occupational identity for these artist-entrepreneurs. Is there a relationship between the two? Students should come to the conclusion that person identity shapes what people do (“I am an artist, so I am earning a degree in fine art”) and also that occupational identity shapes who people are (“I sell my work at a local gallery, so I am a working artist”).

This activity primes the students for the complexity of the artist-entrepreneur identity, but also that the artist and entrepreneur parts of the identity are interdependent. That is, students should come to the realization that the individual would be very different if they were only an “artist” or only an “entrepreneur.”

Active learning through the exercise: Phases in identity discovery and verification of artist-entrepreneurs

Phase 1: Identity discovery (15 minutes, in-class or take-home assignment)

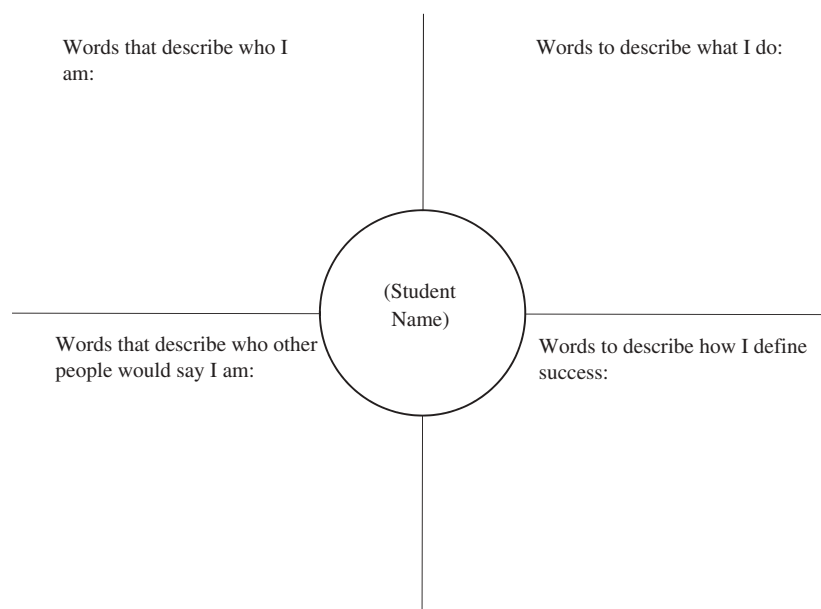
In the first phase of the active learning exercise, students are required to complete an identity chart. An example identity chart is provided in Figure 1. The chart requires students to describe who they are (“Words that describe who I am”) and what they do (“Words to describe what I do”). It also requires that they reflect on how others might perceive their identity (“Words that describe who other people would say I am”) and how they define success (“Words to describe how I define success”). The identity chart allows

Table 2. Listing of artist-entrepreneurs.

Artist-entrepreneur	Entrepreneurial endeavors
Benji and Joel Madden (Good Charlotte)	MADE/DCMA (clothing)
Bono (U2)	Edun (clothing); ONE (aid, relief)
Curtis Jackson (50 Cent)	G-Unit (clothing); SK Energy Shots (beverage)
Dave Mustaine (Megadeth)	Mustaine's Vineyards (winery)
Gwen Stefani	L.A.M.B. (clothing)
Kanye West	GOOD Music (music production); Yeezy (clothing)
Neil Young	PonoPlayer (electronics)
Sammy Hagar	Cabo Wabo, Sammy's Beach Bar Rum (beverage); Cabo Wabo Cantina (restaurant)
Sean Combs (P. Diddy)	Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group (music production); Bad Boy Films (film production); Justin's (restaurant)
Shawn Carter (Jay-Z)	Roc-A Fella Records (music production); 40/40 (restaurant); Roc Nation Sports (sports management)

Students complete this identity chart to explore their own person identity and role identity.

1. Fill in the following identity chart about yourself:



2. Circle the category that best defines you at present:

Artist

Businessperson/Entrepreneur

Figure 1. Phase 1: Student identity chart.

students to discover their person identity by providing words to describe who they are and how others see them, and their occupational identity by describing what they do and how they define success. Students should be encouraged to include any words that describe themselves, ranging from relationships (husband, sister, son), to traits (introspective, compassionate, witty), to professions (accountant, analyst, playwright). For example, one arts student provided the following words to describe him- or herself: “artistic; confident; punctual.” Based on these descriptions, students should be able to identify more strongly as either an artist or a businessperson/entrepreneur.

Once this phase of the assignment is complete, the instructor can facilitate a group discussion about person and occupational identities, and how each student identified him- or herself (as an artist or a businessperson/entrepreneur). Students often reference and discuss the importance of time and upbringing to person identity (that person identity develops and changes over time and is influenced by family, values, and relationships), and the importance of experiences to occupational identity (that educational and specific or memorable professional experiences influence occupational identity).

Phase 2: Understanding alternative identity claims and how they may exist in tension with identity (take-home assignment after phase 1 is complete; can take up to 2 weeks to complete)

In the second phase of the active learning exercise, students are required to interview a person (outside of the class) who is perceived to identify with the category opposite the one that they selected (e.g., if the student identifies more with the business person/entrepreneur category, the student must select an artist to interview). To select someone from the artist category, students might contact the art program on campus, local theaters, galleries, or artist co-ops to find an individual to interview. To select someone from the businessperson category, students might contact faculty in the business school, the local chamber of commerce, an entrepreneurship accelerator or incubator programs, or local professional business organizations to find an individual to interview. The instructor should suggest that students ask the potential interviewees whether they perceive themselves to be a businessperson or an artist prior to scheduling the interview. This will avoid the students potentially interviewing someone from the same category with which they identify.

The interview provides insight required to complete an identity chart for the interviewee, and to learn about opposing identity claims. A sample format for the interview is provided in Figure 2. The student conducts an interview with this person to discover his or her person identity (e.g., “How would you describe who you are?”; “How would others describe who you are?”) and occupational identity (e.g., “How do you describe what you do?”; “How do you define success?”). As in Phase 1, the interviewees should be encouraged to provide any words that they believe are appropriate (e.g., parent, professional, sculptor, responsible, collaborator).

The student also asks the interviewee a series of questions about the knowledge he or she has gained in the profession (“What do you attribute your success to?”; “What obstacles have you overcome?”; “Tell me about a time or event that you believe had an impact on your career”). Students suggest this portion of the interview to

be very enlightening, and learn a lot about their interviewee by asking about past experiences. When combined with a discussion of success, students come to the realization that our individuality is not the only factor that shapes our identities—experiences and contextual factors also largely shape who we are and what we do. In reflecting on this, one student commented:

“This assignment and interview allowed me empathize and see the challenges that others must overcome to reach their goals. In my interview, I learned that the challenges people face can be very different. For example, [my interviewee] mentioned several hurdles in their life growing up including: poverty, alcoholism, and death. Because of these early experiences, they developed a strong support system and relied on pure grit and determination to reach their goals.”

Another student commented on the importance of experiences in shaping the identity discovery and

The interviewee should identify with the opposite category of the student (e.g., if the student identifies with the Businessperson/Entrepreneur category in Phase 1, they should interview a person that identifies with the Artist category for Phase 2).

Sample interview questions:

- a. What words would you use to describe yourself?
- b. What words would you use to describe what you do?
- c. What words would others use to describe who you are?
- d. What words would you use to describe how you define success?
- e. What do you attribute your success to?
- f. What obstacles have you overcome?
- g. Tell me about a time or event that you believe had an impact on your career.

Students then complete this identity chart of the interviewee.

Please circle the category that best defines the person you interviewed:

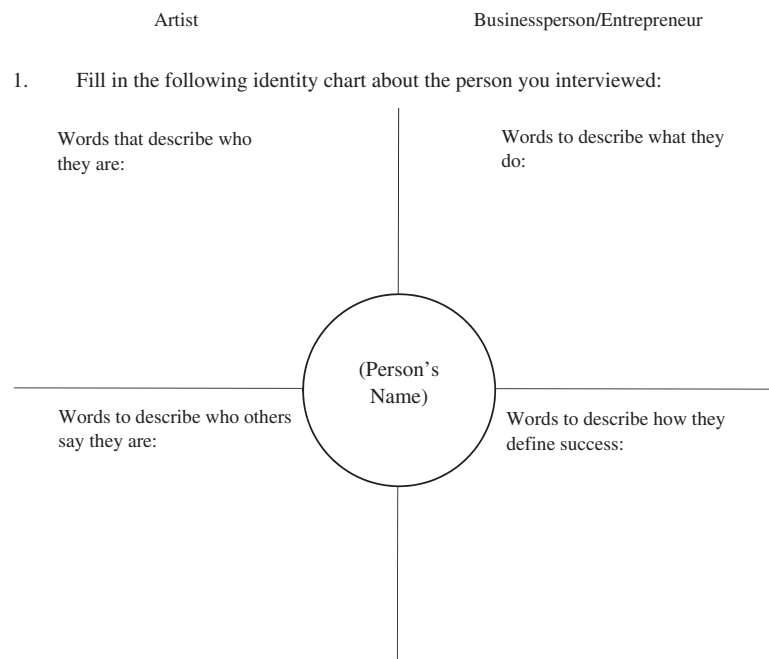


Figure 2. Phase 2: Interviewee identity chart.

verification process: “I think for any profession it is very important to have good qualities (honesty, loyalty, motivation, etc.), but your experiences are what shape you into being the person who you will become.”

Students might also come to the realization that identity guides the occupations we pursue. For example, after interviewing the dissimilar other, one student commented on the power of identity in defining careers:

“I believe that identity greatly influences a career path. While there is an exception to every rule, people are most likely going to search for work in job that they enjoy. Their identity dictates what they will enjoy ... However, I also think the opposite is true too. That your career can shape your identity as well. In summary, I strongly believe that your identity and what you choose to do for a living are heavily correlated.”

After the interview, the student completes an identity chart, similar to what is provided in [Figure 2](#), for the interviewee based on the student’s perceptions gained through the interview. It is important that the format for the identity chart is the same in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the exercise. The same format helps students compare and

contrast the information they have collected. Students report their observations for this part of the exercise in a group discussion that occurs at the end of Phase 3.

Phase 3: Reflection on the tension and integration of the two identities (30 minutes, in class or as a take-home assignment)

In the third phase of the active learning exercise, students are required to integrate the information they collected about themselves and the interviewee, and to reflect on the complete experience. The students compare and contrast their identity chart with their interviewee’s, noting similarities and differences. [Figure 3](#) provides an example chart that might be used for this phase in the exercise. Students often find the comparison of success between themselves and the interviewee to be revealing. For example, one student commented:

“From the interview, the terms for success were more relaxed than the words I used to describe in the corporate environment. Our differences in experience allow us to have different viewpoints on success. [My interviewee] provided me with insight that there is

Students complete the following table that identifies similarities and differences between them and the person they interviewed. The follow-up questions guide students through the learning process of the active learning exercise.

1. Fill in the following table using the information from the identity charts about yourself and the person you interviewed:

	Similarities	Differences
Words to describe me/Words to describe them:		
Words to describe what I do/Words to describe what they do:		
Words to describe what I want to be/Words others use to describe them:		
Words to describe how I define success/Words to describe how they define success		

2. What are the main insights you gained from the person you interviewed in terms of success, obstacles or challenges, and how events and experiences shape who we become?

- a. **Understanding the importance of the exercise**
 - i. Now that the assignment is completed, why do you think this is important to you?
 - ii. How can it be important to your community?
- b. **Understanding the discovery process**
 - i. What were the most valuable guiding questions?
 - ii. What kinds of surprises did you encounter while completing the assignment?
- c. **Review the work**
 - i. Could you have completed the assignment differently?
 - ii. What would you do differently if you were to take on this challenge again?
- d. **Future actions**
 - i. How will you put your insight into action (identify the specific steps)?
 - ii. What obstacles might you face during this process?
- e. **Connections**
 - i. What did you learn during this process that you didn’t know before?
 - ii. How can you apply what you learned to other similar challenges in your career?
 - iii. What skills did you learn that apply to other areas of your learning?

Figure 3. Phase 3: Integration and reflection.

enough success to spread and as long as you are demonstrating the characteristics, it will come. Where in business, my thought is everyone cannot be successful. [My interviewee] allowed me to realize success does not necessarily mean a big title, but it is happiness and achievement for the individual.”

These differing views of success integrated with a discussion of identity and professions often spark the most reflection and discussion for students. Here are several student comments related to what they learned about success and identity as a result of the exercise:

“Success is a subjective idea, so it can mean something a little different to everyone. People in our culture are part of a great big Venn diagram, and a lot of us will intersect on the ideas of careers, material goods, and relationships making up part of our success. Those ideas may intersect on a broader spectrum for some than others, but this only gives us a perception of what most people think success should be. Ultimately it is going to be determined by the individual, and that individual’s idea of success is going to play an important part in determining her or his career path.”

“I think your identity does help how you define success. Certain personality traits are needed for different professions. Over time, I think you as a person learn what your key personality traits are. This will help you find a profession that will be a good fit for you.”

“I learned that success can be found in an individual task or completing a project and it does not have to be associated with a promotion or job title. It is not necessarily, winning a competition or being better than others. It is an individual achievement.”

As an active learning exercise, the students also reflect on what they learned from the interviewee, and how they might utilize that information to further their own career, despite the fact that each student and the interviewee differ in the categories with which they identify (i.e., artist or business person/entrepreneur). Students often incorporate some self-reflection when asked what they learned through this exercise. Some examples of student responses to this question are included here:

“I think the take-away there is that you should not underestimate your own actions. You never know how people view anything you say or do. What may seem like a simple and small gesture to you, could be huge for someone else. It is important to take time to reflect in life. It is at this time that one can take a step back see things from a different perspective. Today, I learned that although our career paths are completely different, we both want very similar things out of life. [My interviewee] does what makes them happy, and I am working towards that very same thing.”

“This process gave me time to reflect on where my career started and reinforce my life’s ultimate mission—that is—helping others. While my career trajectory initially appears disjointed and by happenstance, at closer look it’s really based on my upbringing and personal identity.”

“I need to find other ways to discover and challenge myself to feel fulfilled instead of worrying about where my career fits into the hierarchy of social status.”

Phase 4: Debrief and discussion (20–25 minutes)

An active learning exercise, such as the assignment just described, helps students to discover more about themselves but also to explore something new or novel—here, the identity of a seemingly different other. Through this exercise, students become aware of how identity plays into career choices and how success is defined. Further, this allows students, through comparing and contrasting with a dissimilar other, to learn from the insights of a person with an ostensibly different identity as perceived by the student. As a point of departure, students are equipped to understand that an individual’s career can be positively influenced by the integration, rather than conflict, of seemingly different identities. Understanding the identity verification process enables students to uncover how multiple identities can be verified through “matching” an individual’s person and occupational identities, which can lead to positive emotional and cognitive outcomes (Burke & Stets, 1999).

To facilitate discussion and discovery, instructors are encouraged to have students begin the discussion of their findings from Phase 3 of the exercise in small groups. Instructors should ask students, within their small groups, to take turns providing the following information: (a) their identity (artist or business person/entrepreneur), (b) their interviewee’s identity (the category not selected in (a)), and (c) similarities or differences the student found between one’s own identity and the perceived identity of the interviewee.

Once the small-group discussion is complete and all students within each small group have had a chance to share their findings, the instructor should facilitate a plenary discussion with the entire class. The following are offered as potential questions the instructor could ask:

- (1) Were there any themes you noticed in similarities or differences discussed in your small groups?

The purpose of this question is twofold. First, it allows students to identify how these two seemingly different identities can and cannot be integrated.

Primed with the small-group discussion, students are able to aggregate the information across students' experiences and identify themes that might apply more generally to the discussion. For example, one student offered that a word that popped up in the "similarities" column was "creative." The instructor can probe this theme and ask, "Why do you think the theme 'creative' is useful for both artists and entrepreneurs?"; "How does 'creative' allow both the artist and entrepreneur identities to thrive?" The instructor can tie these themes to basic tenets of entrepreneurship, such as innovativeness, opportunity recognition, and risk-taking (Baumol, 1968; Falck et al., 2012), so that students see how these themes fit into the larger discipline of entrepreneurship. This is especially important for the nonbusiness students—in this example, arts students—as this synthesis provides those students the opportunity to connect their understanding of art with foundational tenets of entrepreneurship.

- (2) What did you find surprising by doing this exercise? Do the identities have to be in conflict? What are the differences between being an artist "or" an entrepreneur and an artist "and" an entrepreneur?

This question engages students in active learning by allowing them to reflect on the experience created by the exercise. The exercise starts with the premise that the entrepreneur and artist identities are at odds with one another. The exercise identifies these differences (see Phases 1 and 2 of the exercise), but also illuminates some similarities (see Phase 3 of the exercise). For example, one student commented that they were similar to their interviewee because "We both define success in terms of the impact we make."

The art students in particular comment that they are surprised that artists and entrepreneurs share so many similarities (e.g., creator, risk-taker, autonomy-driven). The instructor should probe these types of comments in a way that helps students work through this insight. Questions such as "Why did this surprise you?", "How would you describe artists or entrepreneurs before completing this exercise?", and "How has this insight about their similarities changed what you think about artists or entrepreneurs?" are useful for helping students gain understanding of how the perceived identities of individuals are not always correct or accurate. This discussion should bring to the fore the learning aspect of the exercise and help students to overcome barriers or generalizations that prevent them from understanding (a) the importance of identity to the entrepreneurial process, (b) how perceived differences

in identities can be integrated and leveraged for the entrepreneurial process, and (c) how their own biases and viewpoints shape their worldview and how they approach the entrepreneurial process.

- (3) How does this experience shape how you move forward in your career?

It was noted in the preceding that this exercise is particularly useful for instructors who adopt a process perspective of entrepreneurship (Baron & Shane, 2007). This question ties into the entrepreneurial process by requiring students to reflect on how this experience shapes their process for moving forward in their careers, whether as artists, entrepreneurs, or artist-entrepreneurs. The instructor can use this question to wrap up the active learning exercise in two ways. First, the instructor can use this question to revisit the in-class activity that required students to describe artist-entrepreneurs (see "Introducing the Active Learning Exercise to Students" section). The instructor can integrate student responses to this question with the descriptions of artist-entrepreneurs to discuss the importance of identity discovery and verification to the entrepreneurial process. Interestingly enough, this question often provokes the business students to think about how their own passions, hobbies, or interests outside of business might be helpful for them as entrepreneurs. For example, a business student commented that he avidly collected comic books, and thought he could use this knowledge to create a traveling business that targeted Comic-Con events and appealed to event attendees. Thus, after completing this active learning exercise, students should understand that both person and occupational identities shape who we are and what we do and realize that, as mentioned in a student comment earlier, identity is a critical influencer on students' future careers.

Second, the instructor can use this question to demonstrate how experiences shape the entrepreneurial process. Through this exercise, students realize the importance of experience to the entrepreneurial process. One student commented, "I found that we had a lot of similarities on how we describe ourselves. We do completely different jobs and have different back stories . . . Obstacles and challenges were a part of each of our lives." This discussion can be used as a springboard to help students identify how our personal and professional experiences shape our person and occupational identities, which further shapes the entrepreneurial process. Through this active learning exercise, students can reflect on the importance of experience as a critical learning tool, especially for entrepreneurship.

Variations on the exercise

Although the content of this active learning exercise is specific to arts-entrepreneurship, it can be adapted for a variety of interdisciplinary entrepreneurship courses (e.g., medical entrepreneurship, where the students might identify as “scientists” or “doctors”; engineering entrepreneurship, where the students might identify as “engineers” or “programmers”; or design entrepreneurship, where the students might identify as “designers” or “architects”). To use this exercise in fields other than the arts, the instructor can deploy the same exercise components, but substitute all of the arts-based content (e.g., providing pictures of artists in the introductory exercise; interviewing an artist) with the appropriate, course-specific content (e.g., if this is deployed in a design entrepreneurship course, the instructor might show pictures of architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright or Frank Gehry during the introductory exercise, provide both academic and popular press articles specific to design entrepreneurship, and require students to interview a designer or architect for Phase 2 of the exercises). Thus, the exercise can be easily modified for a variety of interdisciplinary entrepreneurship courses.

Concluding remarks

Interdisciplinary coursework requires instructors to create and deliver exercises and experiences for students that allow them to cross the boundaries of multiple disciplines and integrate the knowledge gained in doing so. The rise in interdisciplinary coursework in entrepreneurship curricula warrants an approach to learning that allows students to utilize the knowledge gained in non-business courses and apply that knowledge within the realm of entrepreneurship. As indicated earlier, nonbusiness entrepreneurship students, such as arts-entrepreneurship students, benefit most when they can utilize their arts-specific knowledge to entrepreneurship in an effort to create something new, novel, and unique.

The active learning exercise described in the preceding is unique and departs from many typical entrepreneurship exercises because it is created with an interdisciplinary angle. That is, rather than asking students to incorporate their knowledge from another discipline as an afterthought or an add-on to an active learning exercise, this exercise puts the interdisciplinary knowledge front-and-center, and requires students to reflect on how their knowledge and insights from another discipline might shape their experience as an entrepreneur. As illustrated earlier by the comments, students are often most surprised at the subjectivity of the term “success.” Through the experience gained by this exercise, students realize that

success, identity, and occupation are all interrelated. As summarized by one student, “Our differences in experience allow us to have different viewpoints on success.”

This easily implemented active learning exercise allows students the opportunity to discover and verify the artist-entrepreneur identity. The experience that students acquire by participating in this exercise enables for them the opportunity for self-reflection and comparison with other similar (and dissimilar) individuals. This exercise is useful for any arts-entrepreneurship class or program as a self-awareness tool to help students discover how identity shapes who we are and what we do. In fact, as indicated earlier, when asked what they learned that they did not know prior to completing the exercise, students often cite revelations in self-discovery in terms of their own identity, how they define success, and their career aspirations; for example:

“I haven’t necessarily looked at the development and success of those around me as being a motivating factor, like my interviewee does. That fact does make me want to reassess what success means to me and maybe find success in a less selfish manner.”

Although designed for arts-entrepreneurship students, this exercise can easily be adapted for a variety of other interdisciplinary entrepreneurship courses and programs (e.g., medicine, engineering, design, etc.). With the rise of “entrepreneurship and” courses and programs, this active learning exercise provides a tailored experience to non-entrepreneurship students that allows them to understand how they can leverage their own identity to engage the entrepreneurial mind set in their work.

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