



Exploring the symbolic normalization of entrepreneurship overpromotion

Carlos Poblete 

Received: 9 February 2026 / Accepted: 1 August 2026

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2026

Abstract Entrepreneurship is widely promoted as an inherently desirable and socially valuable career path, yet this promotion often obscures structural constraints, uneven outcomes, and high failure rates. While prior research has documented the risks of excessive entrepreneurial encouragement, less attention has been paid to the discursive processes through which entrepreneurship becomes normalized as a moral and identity-based imperative. This study develops a process-based, discursive account of normative entrepreneurial identity formation. Drawing on narrative identity theory, master narrative research, and the concept of symbolic capital, the study analyzes the televised discourses of high-prestige entrepreneurs featured in a Chilean motivational TV show using Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings reveal a three-stage process through which personal success stories acquire normative force: discursive authorization, narrative standardization, and normative identity closure. Through this process, entrepreneurial narratives function as cultural templates that define legitimate entrepreneurial identity while backgrounding structural conditions. The study contributes by theorizing overpromotion as a symbolic normalization process, highlighting

how entrepreneurial discourse regulates identity rather than merely inspiring action.

Plain English Summary Inspiring entrepreneurial success stories do more than motivate people. They can foster the belief that anyone can succeed through hard work alone, creating cultural scripts that frame failure as a personal shortcoming rather than a normal feature of entrepreneurial activity. As these narratives spread, entrepreneurship increasingly comes to be viewed as both a moral obligation and a universally attainable path, while structural barriers and high failure rates fade from view. This study reveals how the success stories of high-profile entrepreneurs become influential cultural templates that shape how individuals interpret success, failure, and their own entrepreneurial journeys. In doing so, these cultural templates foster unrealistic expectations about entrepreneurship while obscuring the role of context and structural conditions in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. The principal implication is that researchers, educators, and policymakers should promote entrepreneurial narratives that inspire action without obscuring risk, inequality, and the contextual conditions shaping entrepreneurial outcomes.

Keywords Entrepreneurial narratives · Master narratives · Critical discourse analysis · Social identity construction · Entrepreneurship promotion

JEL Classification L26 · M13 · Z13 · D83

C. Poblete (✉)
Universidad del Desarrollo, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: cpoblete@udd.cl

We know they are lying.
 They know they are lying,
 They know that we know they are lying,
 We know that they know that we know they are
 lying.
 And still, they continue to lie.
 -Alexander Solzhenitsyn

1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship is often celebrated as an all-powerful force (Canales et al., 2025; Keim et al., 2024; Mazzoni et al., 2025) and is celebrated through the proliferation of entrepreneurial ecosystems, startup contests, and pitch competitions (Kwong et al., 2012; Passaro et al., 2017). However, despite the fascination surrounding entrepreneurial activity, high business failure rates persist (Artinger & Powell, 2016; Eklund et al., 2018; Jenkins & McKelvie, 2016). While governments and institutions often promote entrepreneurship as a pathway to economic growth and social development (Shane, 2009), particularly in emerging and developing economies, the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems often follows a one-size-fits-all approach, prescribing universal recipes without true contextualization where emerging economies tend to unsuccessfully replicate what has been done in developed economies (Mahn & Poblete, 2023). In such contexts, characterized by institutional voids and the absence of robust formal support systems, master narratives often fill the gap, functioning as informal institutions that guide and constrain entrepreneurial behavior through moral rather than economic logic. This overenthusiasm with entrepreneurship, while potentially contributing to macroeconomic growth, often leaves individuals and families in precarious socio-economic conditions when ventures fail, exacerbating vulnerabilities rather than alleviating them (Shane, 2008, 2009). Thus, under these circumstances, the exacerbated promotion of entrepreneurship as an unquestioned good itself is problematic (Garud et al., 2025), as it prioritizes macro-level growth over micro-level well-being.

While existing literature focuses on individual-level predictors of entrepreneurial action, such as overconfidence (Hayward et al., 2006; Koellinger et al., 2007), as well as the overly reliance on

heuristics (Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Saleh & Hunt, 2020), among other cognitive biases, less attention has been paid to the discourses that encourage entrepreneurialism—the ideology of entrepreneurship that defines who counts as a legitimate agent of change, privileges particular practices, and curates historical narratives of change (Lubinski et al., 2025)—in the first place (Eberhart et al., 2022; Lubinski & Tucker, 2025). These narratives are relevant as they mold the dominant cultural script that portrays entrepreneurship as an accessible and universally desirable path (Keim et al., 2024; Lubinski & Tucker, 2025). Yet, the role of these narratives in perpetuating exacerbated entrepreneurship promotion remains under-explored. Thus, the research question guiding this study is: how are entrepreneurial narratives constructed through elite entrepreneurs' discourse, and how do these narratives acquire normative force in the public sphere?

To answer this question, this study draws from narrative identity theory and more concretely on the master narrative approach. This theory states that narratives are not merely reflections of reality but actively shape how individuals interpret their roles and make sense of their actions within broader social and cultural frameworks (McAdams & McLean, 2013; McLean & Syed, 2016). While individuals construct their identities through stories, integrating past experiences, present realities, and future aspirations into a coherent self-narrative (McAdams, 1995), they shape what is considered a legitimate entrepreneurial journey, reinforcing particular values, behaviors, and expectations (Castelló et al., 2023; Down & Warren, 2008; Warren, 2004). Master narratives are dominant cultural scripts that provide overarching templates for individual storytelling (Hammack & Toolis, 2016; McLean & Syed, 2016), and can function as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, dictating who is recognized as a legitimate successful entrepreneur and what is deemed acceptable or desirable. In order to do so, master narratives simplify complex realities, offering archetypes and moral lessons, which makes them particularly influential in shaping societal expectations and behaviors (McLean & Syed, 2016). Master narratives themselves can be the manifestation of these discourses insofar as they reflect and reproduce hegemonic ideals about entrepreneurship, often aligning with broader economic and political agendas. When mobilized by high-prestige entrepreneurs,

these narratives may shift from interpretive resources to normative reference points that implicitly define what entrepreneurship identity ought to be (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). As such, this theoretical lens is suitable not only because it allows for an in-depth exploration of how entrepreneurs author and project dominant entrepreneurial narratives in their discourse and navigate tensions between individual agency and structural constraints through storytelling, but also provides a top-down framework to explore the imposition of identity templates.

Empirically, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2012) to examine the discourses of highly prestige entrepreneurs in the context of a Chilean TV show promoting entrepreneurship. CDA provides a framework for analyzing how language is used to construct meaning, legitimize certain perspectives, and influence social practices (Mason, 2012; Perren & Jennings, 2005). We conceptualize this televised format as a “critical discursive arena”: a high-stakes public space where elite actors exert symbolic power to negotiate the meaning of success, thereby bridging the gap between private experience and public expectation. By focusing on these narratives, this study aims to identify the key themes, rhetorical strategies, and features that characterize their discourses. These narratives do more than reflect personal identity construction; they also carry significant societal weight due to the entrepreneurs’ success, potentially shaping master narratives that define what it means to be a successful entrepreneur and what behaviors are valued in this role. Such master narratives often promote entrepreneurship as a universal solution, which risks fostering unrealistic expectations and exacerbating vulnerabilities for those who fall short. Consequently, this analysis sheds light on how these discourses may widen the gap between macro-level entrepreneurial aspirations and micro-level realities.

Findings reveal that the analyzed discourses often involve significant simplifications of the entrepreneurial process, including glorifying risk-taking, downplaying the role of structural barriers, and presenting failure as a necessary step toward success. Abductively, these simplifications, when repeated and amplified, can coalesce into a master narrative that portrays entrepreneurship as an accessible and universally desirable path. Importantly, this master narrative serves as the discursive bridge between narrative and

social identity, where the master narrative provides the “prototype” that regulates individual identity construction by offering a shared understanding of what it means to be an entrepreneur and what behaviors are expected or valued in this role. From a theoretical perspective, this connection between narrative identity and normative social identity highlights the power of master narratives to shape not only individual aspirations but also collective norms and expectations.

The study contributions are threefold. First, it advances theorizing on the overpromotion of entrepreneurship by developing a discursive and process-based explanation of how entrepreneurship becomes culturally normalized as an unquestioned good. Moving beyond accounts that locate overpromotion in individual cognitive biases or policy failures (Douglas, 2009; Perren & Jennings, 2005; Shane, 2008), the study conceptualizes overpromotion as a symbolic normalization process through which elite entrepreneurial discourse transforms contingent success stories into normative identity templates (Dey & Mason, 2018; Keim et al., 2024). Second, the study contributes to narrative entrepreneurship research by specifying the conditions under which individual entrepreneurial narratives become master narratives (Rifo & Poblete, 2026). Concretely, it theorizes discursive authorization and narrative standardization as sequential mechanisms that translate personal success stories into socially binding reference points (Castelló et al., 2023; Down & Warren, 2008; Hammack & Toolis, 2016), thereby shifting the focus from identity expression to identity regulation. Third, the study extends research on symbolic capital in entrepreneurship by demonstrating its discursive function in reality-definition. Rather than treating symbolic capital merely as a facilitator of entrepreneurial action (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; de Clercq & Honig, 2011), the study shows how it enables high-status entrepreneurs to convert personal experience into normative authority, shaping moral expectations, legitimacy, and belonging. In other words, symbolic capital not only confers resources upon high-prestige entrepreneurs, but discourse authority to define reality for everyone else (Lubinski & Tucker, 2025). Taken together, these contributions position entrepreneurial discourse as a central mechanism through which meanings, identities, and moral obligations are stabilized, offering a theoretically grounded explanation for why optimistic entrepreneurial narratives remain culturally dominant

despite persistent evidence of precarious outcomes (Artinger & Powell, 2016; Eklund et al., 2018; Hal-lonsten, 2024).

2 Conceptual foundations

2.1 The overpromotion of entrepreneurship as an unquestioned good

Entrepreneurship is often portrayed as an unequivocal force for economic and social progress (Keim et al., 2024). However, this idealized view overlooks the inherent risks, complexities, and high failure rates associated with entrepreneurial ventures (Shane, 2008). The uncritical glorification of entrepreneurship as a universally beneficial pursuit raises concerns about its long-term consequences, with tangible economic and psychological consequences (Dey & Mason, 2018).

The oversimplified and romanticized narrative around entrepreneurship creates unrealistic expectations, particularly among inexperienced individuals (Poblete et al., 2019), incentivizing entry into entrepreneurship without a full understanding of the odds behind this economic activity. The consequences of framing entrepreneurship just as a matter of mindset can lead to a mismatch between expectations and reality, where novice entrepreneurs overestimate their likelihood of success and underestimate the resources, resilience, and networks required (Douglas, 2009; Welter et al., 2017). The result is not only high failure rates but also disillusionment, financial losses, wasted resources, and opportunity costs, particularly for individuals who lack the social and financial capital to absorb these setbacks (Anokhin & Wincet, 2012; Shane, 2009).

Moreover, the relentless push to promote entrepreneurial ecosystems from a one-size-fits-all approach leads to misguided policy interventions that fail to address the deeper structural conditions necessary for sustainable business creation. Context matters: factors such as institutional voids, regulatory environments, and cultural attitudes toward risk-taking shape the outcomes of entrepreneurial activity (Eklund et al., 2018; Forlani & Mullins, 2000). However, beyond these institutional constraints, entrepreneurial outcomes also depend on the shared interpretive frameworks through which individuals collectively imagine

economic and social possibilities (Dey & Mason, 2018). In this scenario, role models in entrepreneurship and their discourse can be imperative to the way entrepreneurial activity is conceived.

2.2 Narrative identity and master narratives

Narrative identity theory provides a useful framework for understanding how entrepreneurial narratives shape meaning, identity, and self-interpretation over time (Hammack & Toolis, 2016; McAdams & McLean, 2013), particularly when articulated by high-prestige entrepreneurs. This theory suggests that individuals interpret their life experiences and identity shifts as an integrative and purposeful act of self-authorship, revealing the interplay of personal and social influences (McAdams, 1995; McLean & Syed, 2016).

For successful entrepreneurs, due to their social and symbolic capital, derived from their perceived expertise and visibility, these narratives are more likely to be amplified and legitimized within the public sphere (Bourdieu, 1991; De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; de Clercq & Honig, 2011). This combination of compelling storytelling and social authority creates a fertile ground for the emergence of master narratives, which are dominant cultural scripts that provide a framework for understanding what is considered “normal” or “desirable” in a given context (Hammack & Toolis, 2016).

Specific discursive characteristics, such as rhetorical simplifications and moral archetypes, render these narratives particularly prone to becoming master narratives. By identifying these characteristics, we can better understand how the narratives of high-prestige entrepreneurs might contribute to the broader discourse on entrepreneurship (Down & Warren, 2008). Master narratives often simplify complex realities, offering clear archetypes and moral lessons, which makes them particularly influential in shaping societal perceptions and behaviors. Thus, the discourses of successful entrepreneurs, by virtue of their narrative structure and the symbolic capital of their authors, have the potential to transcend individual accounts and contribute to the formation of master narratives that define entrepreneurship at a societal level. Importantly, narratives and discourse are analytically related but conceptually distinct. Narrative identity theory conceptualizes narratives as structured

meaning-making stories through which individuals construct coherence and interpret experience over time (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Discourse, in contrast, refers to broader socially shared systems of meaning that regulate what can be legitimately said, valued, and normalized within a particular context (Fairclough, 2012; Van Dijk, 2015). In this sense, narratives constitute the story-based content through which entrepreneurial identities are articulated, whereas discourse provides the ideological and institutional infrastructure through which certain narratives gain legitimacy, visibility, and normative force. Thus, entrepreneurial master narratives emerge not merely through the existence of repeated stories, but through discursive processes that authorize, amplify, and standardize specific narrative forms while marginalizing alternative interpretations (Rifo & Poblete, 2026).

Furthermore, the institutionalization of these narratives is often facilitated by mass media platforms, which function as discursive magnifiers (Perren & Jennings, 2005). Televised formats, in particular, provide a unique arena where personal narratives are curated and broadcasted to a wide audience, transforming individual self-authorship into a collective cultural product. In this process, the media does not merely record the entrepreneur's story, but it actively participates in meaning regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), providing the visual and rhetorical cues that signal which identities are worthy of emulation. By providing a platform for high-prestige actors, media outlets validate these narratives as authoritative templates, bridging the gap between private success and public normative expectations.

2.3 Symbolic capital

Entrepreneurs, particularly those recognized as successful, accumulate symbolic capital (prestige, authority, and credibility) by virtue of their perceived achievements (Clark & Harrison, 2019; Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991). This capital is not merely a byproduct of financial success but a form of social recognition that grants entrepreneurs the ability to shape discourse and influence others. Through their accumulated reputation, they serve as key figures in disseminating entrepreneurial knowledge, acting as transmission mechanisms that encourage entrepreneurial activity (De Carolis et al., 2009).

Symbolic capital, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1991), encompasses elements such as standing, good name, and honor all of which contribute to an individual's ability to exert influence. This form of capital is relational rather than intrinsic, since it is constructed and sustained through others' perceptions and social recognition (Gergs, 2003). It functions as a form of mediating power, often derived from and intertwined with economic, social, or cultural capital (Karataş-Özkan, 2011). Fuller and Tian (2006) highlight that symbolic capital is deeply connected to trust and the value attributed to individuals by society, reinforcing their ability to influence norms and behaviors over time.

In the entrepreneurial field, symbolic capital is not only a marker of prestige but also a tool for legitimization and agenda-setting. Those who possess it can shape narratives about what constitutes entrepreneurial success, reinforcing particular visions of entrepreneurship and structuring the hierarchies of influence within the field (de Clercq & Honig, 2011; Meisenhelder, 1997). Bourdieu (1991) further argues that symbolic capital allows individuals to shape perceptions and dictate norms, subtly controlling others' behaviors, beliefs, and decisions. This aligns with De Clercq and Voronov's (2009) assertion that entrepreneurs with symbolic capital wield their influence through language and discourse, positioning themselves as authoritative figures whose messages are not merely informative but persuasive.

Crucially, this influence operates through the creation of doxa, which is a set of fundamental beliefs that are taken for granted as common sense within a field (Bourdieu, 1991). When elite entrepreneurs mobilize their symbolic capital, they do not just offer advice; they define the boundaries of the entrepreneurial imaginary. This represents a form of symbolic power where the elite's specific worldview becomes misrecognized as a universal truth. Consequently, those who fail to meet the narrative's high-risk expectations are not seen as victims of structural barriers, but as individuals who lacked the correct mindset. This doxification of entrepreneurial ideals explains why overpromotion remains unchallenged: the narrative has been rendered an unquestioned social fact.

This study argues that the overpromotion of entrepreneurship is sustained not merely by policy failure, but by a discursive cycle. Entrepreneurs with high symbolic capital use their authority to project

personal stories as master narratives. These narratives function as “informal institutions” that regulate the narrative identities of the public, effectively normalizing high-risk behavior by framing it as a moral imperative of “agency.” This synthesis allows for the examination of the TV show not just as entertainment, but as a site of identity regulation. Therefore, this study examines how entrepreneurs with symbolic capital construct and disseminate narratives about entrepreneurship, exploring the ways in which their status as authoritative figures enables them to influence others’ attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors. By doing so, it sheds light on the interplay between symbolic capital and entrepreneurial discourse, particularly in shaping the broader entrepreneurial imaginary.

3 Method

Due to the social constructionist paradigms in which this study is settled, a qualitative and abductive approach is adopted (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Qualitative research is particularly useful for extending pre-existing conceptual ideas and preliminary models (Pratt, 2008; Pratt et al., 2006; Lee et al., 1999).

3.1 Research setting

This study is situated in Chile, a country with one of the highest levels of early-stage entrepreneurial activity among OECD nations. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), around 25% of Chile’s population engages in early-stage entrepreneurship. In contrast, less than 10% of all entrepreneurial initiatives successfully transition into established businesses, surviving beyond 42 months. This striking disparity reflects a broader tension between entrepreneurial enthusiasm and long-term viability.

Chile serves as a representative case of an emerging economy, where entrepreneurial promotion is deeply embedded in national development strategies (Harima et al., 2024; Poblete et al., 2026). Over the past two decades, public and private initiatives have played a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurship as a driver of economic growth, innovation, and upward mobility (Mahn & Poblete, 2023). Government programs such as Start-Up Chile and various incubation and acceleration schemes have positioned

entrepreneurship as a solution to structural economic challenges, including informality, unemployment, and dependence on natural resource exports (Barton et al., 2025).

3.2 Case selection and data collection

The study analyzed participants of a Chilean TV show called “Inspiradores: Querer es poder,” which was transmitted simultaneously on two channels: CHV and CNNChile.¹ The TV show, which was inspired by TED talks, asked 18 individuals to share their experiences and provide a motivational message focused on persuading others to become entrepreneurs. The director of the show (Diego Lopez) stated that these individuals were selected because they were “the most representative people in the areas we wanted to deal with.” The TV show provides the discursive infrastructure necessary for elite private experiences to be converted into public social norms.

Table 1 illustrates the main topic each expositor dealt with on the show and their presentation title. It is important to mention that some expositors presented twice and each speech was analyzed individually.

The study deliberately focuses on a TV show where entrepreneurs serve as authoritative figures. In the selected cases, entrepreneurs not only are positioned as trustworthy, expert figures, but also their discourses are persuasive narratives in the same structured way. By focusing on this particular format, the study is able to reveal underlying persuasive mechanisms that might be less evident in other formats.

3.3 Critical discourse analysis

CDA is particularly suitable for this study because it allows examination not only of what entrepreneurial narratives communicate, but also of how discursive structures legitimize, circulate, and normalize those narratives as culturally authoritative identity templates. CDA examines how discourse represents, reproduces, legitimizes, and challenges ideologies in texts and speech (Fairclough, 2012). Rooted in a

¹ https://www.cnnchile.com/pais/inspiradores-querer-es-poder_20171030/; <https://www.chilevision.cl/tag/inspiradores-chv>.

Table 1 Data overview

Expositor name	Gender	Topic	Title	ID
Marcelo Guital	Male	All My Ideas Started with a “Cannot”	Fall in Love with a Venture to Fight Adversity	MG1
			The Importance of Entrepreneurship in Happiness	MG2
Duilio de Lapeyra	Male	Change or Die	How to Develop Resilience	DL1
Claudio Lucero	Male	Setting Goals and Challenges	First Chilean and Latin to Reach the Summit of Everest	CL1
			Teamwork	CL2
Julián Ugarte	Male	Economy of Love	Economy of Love	JU1
Alejandra Mustakis	Female	Entrepreneurship and Talent in Chile	Why Starting Up in Chile?	AM1
			Changing the World with Unique Ideas	AM2
Daniel Daccarett	Male	To Be an Entrepreneur	Perseverance as a Key for Entrepreneurship	DD1
			The Reasons to Foster to Become an Entrepreneur	DD2
Mónica López	Female	How to Reignite in Love	The Secrets to Prevent Infidelity	ML1
			The 7 Rules to Be Happy	ML2
Pedro Grez	Male	Greze Method	Greze Method	PG1
Nicolás Alarcón	Male	Leadership, Motivation, and Positive Attitude	How to Fulfill Our Dreams	NA1
James Hamilton	Male	Prevention and Overcoming Abuse	Facing Abuse	JH1
Nerea de Ugarte	Female	Women’s Empowerment in Chile	Female Empowerment	NU1
Claudia Zila	Female	Kilos of Happiness	The Importance of Maintaining Good Self-Esteem	CZ1
			Validate Women’s Sexual Desires	CR1
Carolina Del Real	Female	How to Live with HIV	The Struggle Before and After Being Diagnosed with HIV	CR2
Sebastián Errázuriz	Male	The Most Powerful Weapon Called Education	Education as a Weapon to Change the World	SE1
Sylvia Langford	Female	How to Educate Self-Sufficient Children	Raising Responsibility and Self-Sufficiency	SL1
Thomás Kimber	Male	Sustainable Entrepreneurship	The Exciting Story of Sustainable Entrepreneurship	TK1
León Murillo	Male	Conquest of Dreams	The Difficult Way to Get to the Viña del Mar Festival	LM1
Roberto Musso	Male	How to Overcome the Death Valley of Entrepreneurship	How to Overcome the Death Valley of Entrepreneurship	RM1

socio-cognitive framework, it integrates language, cognition, and society, linking individual mental representations to broader social structures. Ideologies, understood as collective belief systems, shape identity, social relations, and interpretations of reality (Fairclough, 2012; Van Dijk, 2015).

CDA moves beyond surface-level language analysis to explore deeper cognitive and social dimensions, bridging individual cognition with structural forces. Discourse, inherently ideological, encodes values and norms that perpetuate societal structures (Van Dijk, 2017, 2020). More than a descriptive tool, CDA adopts an interpretive and explanatory stance, revealing how ideologies shape social practices and identity

formations (Van Dijk, 2015). By analyzing lexical choices, propositions, and thematic structures, CDA uncovers how discourse reinforces or disrupts dominant narratives, ultimately shaping societal understanding and action.

3.4 Data analysis

Given the research context, the data analysis was conducted through three primary levels. The first level addresses textual analysis (focusing on modality and transitivity); the second addresses discursive practice (intertextuality); and the third addresses social practice (hegemony and ideology). Data analysis followed

an iterative, abductive process. In the first cycle, open coding was performed to identify recurring metaphors and rhetorical tropes. In the second cycle, these were grouped into axial categories. Finally, a thematic synthesis was conducted to map these categories onto Fairclough's (2012) three levels of analysis, ensuring that micro-linguistic choices were linked to macro-societal ideologies.

At the semantic level, the analysis focused on key linguistic and textual elements such as word choices, metaphorical expressions, and grammatical structures that shaped the portrayal of entrepreneurship. This included identifying recurring terms like "success," "resilience," or "self-made," which reflected societal ideals of individual achievement and personal growth. Metaphors, such as "entrepreneurship is a roller coaster," were examined for their role in framing the entrepreneurial journey as one of risk and excitement, reinforcing the notion of entrepreneurial struggle as a noble pursuit. The use of active voice in imperative statements like "you must carry on" emphasized authority and motivation, while modal expressions like "you can succeed" introduced an element of possibility, suggesting that entrepreneurship was attainable. The analysis also looked for underlying assumptions or fallacies embedded in the language, such as the presupposition that anyone could become an entrepreneur if they were resilient enough, which perpetuated the "rags to riches" myth. Finally, the overall tone (whether motivational, authoritative, or empathetic) was scrutinized, as well as how repeated phrases or ideas contributed to constructing the entrepreneur's identity as a heroic or visionary figure. This analysis uncovered the deeper ideological messages conveyed through the discourse and its influence on both individual self-perception and societal understanding of entrepreneurship.

At the discourse level, the analysis focused on the strategies used to communicate entrepreneurial success and identity, particularly through the structure and framing of the narrative. This involved identifying the overarching narrative and how entrepreneurship was positioned in relation to social issues, such as economic inequality. Rhetorical devices like framing, repetition, and amplification were examined to highlight how certain messages were reinforced. Additionally, the analysis explored the use of polarizing strategies, where entrepreneurship was framed as a path for economic mobility, contrasting with

the idea that it was an exclusive privilege for certain social classes. For instance, the analysis evidenced that the construction of the narrative followed a typical motivational sequence: identifying a common problem, presenting entrepreneurship as a solution, and calling the audience to take action by emulating the successful entrepreneur. The positioning of actors was also examined, along with how the speaker was positioned in the discourse. This included identifying whether the speaker presented themselves and how their message was constructed. Through these strategies, the analysis uncovered how certain discourses dominated, marginalizing alternative perspectives, such as the lack of recognition for systemic barriers many entrepreneurs faced.

At the social level, the analysis examined how entrepreneurial discourses and semantic choices reflected and reinforced social power structures, highlighting the role of language in maintaining or challenging societal hierarchies. This involved identifying how social categories were represented or excluded in the portrayal of entrepreneurship. For instance, discourses that presented entrepreneurship as solely the result of individual effort often obscured broader socio-economic and political contexts that influenced entrepreneurial opportunities, thus promoting a meritocratic narrative. Additionally, the focus was on the ideologies underlying these discourses, such as the belief that success depended solely on personal effort, which were often framed as "natural" or "inevitable" rather than socially constructed. By connecting these discourses to broader social issues, the analysis explored how media portrayals of entrepreneurship could influence public perceptions, reinforcing stereotypical ideas about who could be an entrepreneur and what qualities were necessary for success.

While the analytical process was guided by Fairclough's (2012) three levels (semantic, discourse, and social), the analysis moved beyond linguistic description to theoretical abstraction. Linguistic markers (e.g., metaphors, modality) were treated as first-order evidence which, through iterative cycles of constant comparison, were clustered into second-order themes. These themes ultimately informed the three aggregate dimensions of the process model: Discursive Authorization, Narrative Standardization, and Symbolic Normalization. This approach bridged the gap between "what was said" (text) and "what it does" (social regulation).

3.5 Theory development and reflexive iteration

The development of the data structure (Table 2) and the subsequent process model (Fig. 1) was the result of multiple distinct iterations of the coding structure. In the early stages, the analysis was arguably too descriptive, focusing heavily on the linguistic “surface” of the speeches. However, the proposed model emerged when a tension was evidenced: the linguistic choices (the what) were inseparable from the social power of the speakers (the who) and the medium of the TV show (the where).

The primary challenge lay in moving beyond a simple categorization of “inspirational tropes” to uncovering the underlying mechanisms of symbolic regulation. For example, one of the prior versions focused on the over-reliance of core elements of entrepreneurship that seemed to be irretractable relevant, namely sense of misfit, optimism, collaborative mindset, passion, and hard work, while other on the effective application of Monroe’s motivational sequence. There were moments where the model felt “stuck” in a descriptive loop, particularly when trying to reconcile Fairclough’s critical

framework with McAdams’ narrative identity theory. It required multiple rounds of “thematic dismantling,” literally breaking apart the axial codes and starting over, to realize that the narratives were doing more than just informing; they were authorizing a specific reality.

This iterative struggle was essential for ensuring that the aggregate dimensions presented in this study (Discursive Authorization, Narrative Standardization, and Symbolic Normalization) were not merely forced onto the data, but emerged from a “collision” between the empirical evidence and theoretical scrutiny. The resulting model is thus a representation of this long-term pursuit, capturing the movement from individual speech to the stabilization of a societal doxa.

4 Findings

4.1 Textual analysis

Entrepreneurial discourse is deeply embedded in ideals like “willpower,” “autonomy,” and “growth.”

Table 2 Data structure

Raw data	Theoretical abstractions	Aggregate dimensions
Use of metaphors to frame instability (e.g., “roller coaster” and “surfing waves”)	The moralization of individual agency and the framing of risk as a character virtue rather than a financial calculation	Discursive Authorization
High modality/imperative verbs (e.g., “You must” and “Do it now”)		
Explicit dismissal of intelligence over “attitude” and “passion.”		
Heroic labeling (Entrepreneurs as “superheroes,” “abnormal,” or “geniuses”)		
“Us vs. Them” polarization (Entrepreneurs vs. “soap opera” watchers)	The creation of a “one-size-fits-all” heroic script that erases contextual differences and standardizes the “correct” entrepreneurial identity	Narrative Standardization
Motivational sequencing: Problem Entrepreneurial Solution Call to Action		
Standardization of work ethic (e.g., “14 h a day,” “no days off”)		
Intertextual referencing of universal “freedom” and “dreams”		
Meritocratic assumptions (e.g., “Profit is the result of effort”)	The conversion of elite narratives into <i>Doxa</i> (unquestioned common sense), rendering over-promotion as a natural social fact	Symbolic Normalization
Erasure of structural barriers/privilege (Starting from “zero” is framed as a “gift”)		
Framing entrepreneurship as the only path to “true freedom,” happiness, and self-realization (Doxification)		
Shifting responsibility from the State/Institutions to the individual		

The narratives examined consistently emphasize individual effort, perseverance, and optimism as the core drivers of success, portraying the entrepreneur as someone who pushes forward despite obstacles: “Be entrepreneur is someone who sees the glass half full” [DD1]. Quotes such as “Changing the world is a choice; one decides” [DD2] and “If I don’t train, I won’t cross the finish line, it’s logical” [DL1] construct entrepreneurship as a self-made decision—one that relies on personal commitment and effort rather than a combination of personal agency and external circumstances. The discourse reinforces the belief that success is achievable through determination and discipline: “You can achieve whatever you want in life” [SL1]; “We keep going, stubborn and obsessive—why? Because deep down we know it depends on us” [AM1]. Furthermore, the frequent use of quantifiers (“We are many, we are more, and we can change the world” [JH1]) amplifies the collective momentum of entrepreneurship, framing it as both a social norm and an aspirational pursuit fueled by passion and relentless effort. Entrepreneurs are also portrayed as transformed individuals: “I went from being the fool, the restless, the unbearable... to being the best” [SE1], suggesting that entrepreneurship redeems prior social labels.

Metaphor plays a crucial role in shaping the perception of entrepreneurship. Battle metaphors, such as “Selling is the mother of all battles” [MG2] and “Pick your battles” [MG1], frame the entrepreneurial journey as a strategic and often combative endeavor, reinforcing the idea that overcoming adversity is an essential and noble aspect of success. This combative framing is made explicit: “Fighting is part of the process” [SE1], normalizing struggle as an inherent feature of the entrepreneurial identity. Similarly, extreme sports metaphors highlight the unpredictable yet exhilarating nature of entrepreneurship: “Entrepreneurship is like surfing a big wave... you must wait for the right wave and ride it skillfully” [DD1]. The struggle is also depicted as a test of endurance and resilience: “Entrepreneurship is like rowing against the current; if you stop rowing, the waves carry you away” [DD1]. At the same time, entrepreneurship is described as a mindset and personal strength, with statements like “Entrepreneurship is a muscle: if you exercise it, it strengthens” [DD1], reinforcing the belief that persistence and adaptability are key to success.

The grammatical structure of these narratives reinforces authority and personal agency. Imperative statements such as “I am giving you the tools and keys for you so you can open the door” [CZ1] and “Avoid complaining and be an example of the willingness to change the economic logic” [TK1] establish an authoritative tone, urging individuals to take action. The active voice dominates, emphasizing personal responsibility over structural support. The discourse frames entrepreneurship as a matter of decisiveness and boldness: “A man, a woman, who does not set challenges for themselves in life—what are they living for?” [CL1]. Statements like “The only secret is hard work” [DD1] reinforce the necessity of effort, while “We are called crazies, hippies, and misfits... we are the ones who make changes... any one of us could be the genius of the twenty-first century” [AM1] presents entrepreneurship as an open opportunity for radical innovation.

The emotional tone of these discourses is overwhelmingly motivational and urgent. Rhetorical questions such as “What do you want to be when it is just too late?” [NA1] and direct appeals like “The only animal on Earth that is inspired is man... inspiration is pure magic.” [MG1] foster a sense of collective purpose while reinforcing personal responsibility. This collective enthusiasm, however, quickly gives way to urgency when discussing time constraints and the necessity of perseverance, as in “We have infinite opportunities but finite time” [AM1], framing entrepreneurship as a race against time. Struggles are positioned as an inevitable part of the journey: “When you learned to walk, did you have any experience? Don’t fear mistakes—fear not moving forward” [CL1], normalizing economic instability and labor precarity as challenges to embrace rather than problems to solve. This reframing of fear is further specified: “Be the ones who lose their shame and fear of getting it wrong” [ML1], transforming hesitation from a rational response to risk into a moral failing.

These discourses advance a meritocratic presupposition by presenting success as the direct outcome of individual agency. Phrases such as “If you work hard, you will move forward, for sure” [AM1] and “Entrepreneurship is a tool for social mobility... people who start businesses can challenge the status quo” [DD1] utilize direct and unqualified assertions about the future to encode achievement with personal

determination. Consequently, the texts employ an obligation modality that constructs entrepreneurship simultaneously as an economic imperative and as a broader philosophy in which adaptability and problem-solving appear as developable individual attributes rather than structurally conditioned resources: “One is prepared for this, and as you have been trained, you are ready to overcome problems” [DD1]. Table 3 provides additional supporting evidence of the micro-linguistic level.

4.2 Discursive analysis

The dominant entrepreneurial discourse is structured through a compelling generic sequence designed to captivate, inspire, and mobilize. It begins by defining entrepreneurs as exceptional individuals—“Entrepreneurship is for the crazy people, for the misfits, for those who do not fit”

[AM1]—framing them as outsiders who challenge norms. “Everyone will be against you... so you have to believe in your story until the end” [DD1] reinforces that opposition is guaranteed, making belief in one’s narrative a survival mechanism. This identification of difference creates an immediate sense of belonging for those who feel out of place. The next step ignites personal desire: “The first thing on the list is that I am passionate about it” [RM1], reinforcing the idea that entrepreneurship is not just a career but a calling. With passion established, entrepreneurship is positioned as the ultimate solution to an unfulfilled life—“Everything depends on you. Your decisions are going to generate your life” [DL1]. This suggests that taking control through entrepreneurship leads to a purposeful existence. Finally, the narrative culminates in an urgent call to action: “Go out and start a business now, be entrepreneurs” [AM1], urging individuals to embrace the risk, step into

Table 3 Micro-linguistic

Analytical category	Illustrative quotes
Key Terminology and Ideological Markers	“Commit yourselves, do excellent work, be responsible, be supportive.” [CL1] “Anyone can change a whole industry.” [AM1] “No need to be very intelligent, just have the right attitude.” [DD1] “Our history is part of our learning; it’s part of the society we live in, part of the culture we are embedded in.” [NU2] “Talent is something we have in abundance.” [RM1]
Metaphorical Framing	“Problems are like waves: either you learn to surf them or they drown you.” [DD2] “The tie is a defeat; no one plays to tie; we must always play to win.” [CL1] “No matter if we are like lions or gazelles, what matters is waking up running... if we don’t run, we starve.” [DD2] “Entrepreneurs are guys from another planet... we see opportunities where others don’t.” [DD1] “They wait for entrepreneurs to die before calling them superheroes.” [DD1]
Agency and Authority in Grammatical Structures	“Why don’t you do it now?” [ML2] “There are no grays.” [DL1] “They succeeded; they are proving the good management of the company.” [CL1] “Wouldn’t you like to be the next genius of the century, the one who reinvented everything?” [AM1]
Emotional and Motivational Tone	“Guys ... I want to change the world” [NA1] “Take responsibility and commit to your team.” [SE1] “Look at what we have achieved with so little. Imagine what we could do with more.” [AM1] “Be free.” [MG1] “You have to work 14 h a day.” [MG2]
Underlying Assumptions and Ideological Effects	“We can change the logic of how the economy works.” [TK1] “The beauty of entrepreneurs is that we surround ourselves with people smarter than us because, in general, we are not the smartest.” [DD2] “We are surrounded by worries that exist only in our minds.” [TK1]

the unknown, and claim their place in the world of innovators. “Be part of this rebellion” [NU1] further frames entrepreneurship not merely as career choice but as an act of collective dissent.

This generic sequencing draws upon and recontextualizes multiple established genres within the prevailing entrepreneurial narratives. The testimonial genre is evident in autobiographical accounts of hardship and redemption, such as MG1’s reflection:

I had lost my house; I lost all my stuff; even my wife left me. I had to move to a flat that was smaller than my former kitchen, but I never stopped dreaming and did not think even a minute about not carrying on... Suddenly, two friends contacted me and invited me to lunch because they wanted to talk about something. They told me they wanted to help me pay all my debts, and they also offered the salary I wanted for a year.

The confessional mode, characteristic of evangelical testimony and self-help literature, positions economic failure as a spiritual trial preceding redemption and a merely circumstantial state. The endurance of hardship is central to this genre: “I am by far the one who has collected the most failures in the body, but second chances always emerge” [MG2] – here, failures are literally embodied, making resilience a physical and moral badge of honor. Likewise, “things always change, things always pass—no matter how hard, cruel, or bitter they are” [LM1] provides a temporal reassurance that all suffering is transient, encouraging persistence through any adversity. These formulations transform economic precarity into a spiritual journey where the accumulation of failure becomes proof of authenticity. Similarly, CL1’s account—“A journalist asked me how I succeeded with so many difficulties, and I said we were seven. I always had six individuals who backed me up”—draws upon the heroic quest narrative, wherein the protagonist’s journey is legitimated through the enumeration of trials overcome. These genre conventions constitute recognizable formats through which entrepreneurial identity becomes sayable and intelligible within this dominant discourse.

The texts also draw upon and blend well-established cultural narratives and storytelling traditions. Entrepreneurship is framed as an intrinsic human trait rather than a learned skill or economic choice,

reinforcing the idea that it is universal, natural, and inevitable. As RM1 asserts, “Entrepreneurship... is inherent to human beings,” positioning it as a fundamental attribute rather than a structured activity. This perspective erases the distinction between necessity-driven self-employment and opportunity-based entrepreneurship, implying that anyone, regardless of resources, can succeed. This logic extends to resource constraints themselves: “When you have no money, it forces you to be more efficient” [MG1]—scarcity is redefined as a disciplinary mechanism that hones entrepreneurial skill. Through these formulations, the narratives echo familiar cultural tropes that downplay contextual and economic factors, presenting entrepreneurship instead as an innate human quality, almost a biological instinct, rather than a professional or economic behavior shaped by external conditions.

The production and consumption of these texts presuppose specific shared knowledges and subject positions. The audience is positioned as already-aspiring entrepreneurs or those who recognize themselves in the figure of the “misfit.” AM1’s claim, “Traditional industry associations don’t represent us,” and the call to action: “We are going to build a guild for those who want to go against the world, for those who want to change the world,” presupposes a shared antagonism toward established institutions and a collective identification with outsider status. This demand for leadership is further specified: “I want leaders, those who make decisions and bring solutions” [CL2], reinforcing the binary between autonomous decision-makers and passive followers. The use of inclusive pronouns—“we,” “together,” “all together”—establishes an imagined community of entrepreneurs: “All together can transform Chile into a country of entrepreneurs” [AM1]. Entrepreneurs are also called to “discover that which gives meaning to their lives... that which sets their hearts on fire” [JH1], linking collective action to deep personal purpose. “Everything is possible even when it apparently lacks sense” [LM1] further removes any rational constraint on ambition. This “we”-ness requires consumers of the discourse to inhabit a subject position that recognizes itself as part of this collective rebellion, even as the discourse remains silent on the contextual and systemic conditions that enable such identification.

The discursive practice also involves the strategic erasure of alternative perspectives through the “naturalization” of specific narrative forms. AM1’s

assertion that “this is no longer about having money or being the smartest—anyone who thinks differently can change an industry or create a new one” presents meritocracy as a self-evident truth, presupposing that the playing field is level. The rigid binary of leadership, as MG2 puts it—“You are either a leader or a follower”—further narrows the space for alternative identities, reducing entrepreneurship to a singular, dominant ideal. Those who question or deviate from this path are dismissed as lacking ambition or intelligence, as DD1 provocatively asks, “Do you want to be an executive who says, ‘Yes, boss, whatever you say,’ or do you want to be a little smarter and change the world?” Through these interdiscursive moves, the prevailing entrepreneurial narrative regulates what can be legitimately said, rendering structural critique unsayable while positioning hesitation and doubt as moral failures. Table 4 provides additional supporting evidence of these meso-discursive strategies.

4.3 Social analysis

At the level of social practice, these entrepreneurial narratives shift responsibility for economic outcomes

from structural conditions to individual subjects. The discourse constitutes entrepreneurship not merely as an economic activity but as a morally obligatory mode of self-conduct. As AM1 declares, “Entrepreneurship is not a choice; it is a must,” framing market participation as an imperative rather than an option. This aligns with the generalization of competition as a behavioral norm and of the enterprise as a model for how individuals shape their own identities and conduct, wherein individuals are required to engage in conduct that adheres to self-improvement and competitive principles. The entrepreneur is thus constituted as the ideal of self-governing, self-optimizing, and self-responsible.

The meritocratic framing that pervades these narratives serves an ideological function by legitimating unequal outcomes as reflections purely of individual character. NA1 asserts, “Your success is built on passion and hard work,” while DD1 claims, “I’ve never met a truly disciplined, systematic person who failed.” These statements contribute to the normalization of meritocratic interpretations of entrepreneurial success, wherein responsibility for outcomes becomes

Table 4 Meso-discursive strategies

The Overarching Narrative Structure	“The only true thing about entrepreneurs is that they are abnormal people.” [DD1] “When we started, nobody believed in us, but today we are thousands.” [AM1] “Our children fear failure because we’re educating them not to experience failure, but to be perfect.” [NU1] “You have to work 14 h a day.” [MG1]
The Framing of Entrepreneurship	“Entrepreneurship is being in love with what you do.” [AM1] “Entrepreneurship is a way of facing life.” [DD1] “We are the ones who make things happen, who make the world spin faster—we don’t sit around waiting.” [AM1]
The Use of Polarizing Strategies	“Everything we have accomplished so far, we have done with almost no money... that makes us more than mere champions.” [AM1] “Because nobody believes in you, use their words to your advantage until your actions give you strength.” [NA1] “I said, either I beat it, or it beats me... and I won.” [NA1] “A person can make an entire company fail.” [CL1] “I find it terrible, as a man, to live in a society where everyone expects you to be ready to perform at any moment.” [UN2]
The Construction of Entrepreneurial Identity	“What the state doesn’t do, I do.” [CR1] “Entrepreneurs are abnormal people... we all go to the neurologist.” [DD2] “We must first believe in our own story before we can believe in others.” [AM2] “Values don’t change, and that is the mission of us, the elderly, to remind young people that value exists.” [CL1]
The Marginalization of Alternative Perspectives	“When I overcame that barrier, I realized that a wonderful world exists.” [NA1] “There are no half-measures: either you’re pregnant, or you’re not.” [DL1] “Entrepreneurs make the world spin faster—they make things happen instead of waiting for them to happen.” [DD1]

individualized and any external constraints are rendered less visible. SE1's statement, "Failure is part of the process. If you fail, you stand up and carry on," further reinforces this logic by treating setbacks as temporary and overcome through persistence alone, thereby obscuring how access to capital, education, and networks fundamentally shapes entrepreneurial opportunities. This framing does not merely describe reality; it actively produces a social world in which inequality is understood as natural and deserved.

The discourse also operates hegemonically by securing consent for precarious labor conditions through the redefinition of freedom. RM1 states, "all these answers have a common factor: the love for freedom. Entrepreneurs embark because they want to be free," while MG1 declares, "I don't ask for opportunity... security doesn't exist, you are responsible for yourselves." These formulations recontextualize the absence of wage protections and labor stability as positive attributes—freedom from institutional constraint rather than exposure to market vulnerability. The narrative encourages the pursuit of freedom above all else, suggesting that entrepreneurship is not just an option, but an imperative driven by the evolving job market. Statements like "At some point in life, whether by choice or necessity, we will all have to become entrepreneurs" [AM2] frame self-employment as the only future, normalizing the pressures of precarity and self-sufficiency while discouraging critical discussions about systemic support, such as wage protections and policies for workforce development. This redefinition of freedom also extends to education: "Today, information is free" [SL1], "I didn't go to university because traditional study never motivated me" [MG1], and "Value hands-on experience" [SL1], dismissing formal institutions as unnecessary. This represents the "ideological work" of discourse: the transformation of structural conditions into matters of personal choice and moral character.

The social effects of this discourse extend beyond persuasion to the material reproduction of inequality. By framing entrepreneurship as universally accessible—"Everyone has sold something at some point, so everyone is an entrepreneur" [AM1]—the discourse obscures how social class, gender, and background shape access to entrepreneurial resources.

The narrative's systematic erasure of structural barriers not merely an omission but an active production of absence. When MG1 states, "So much is said about the gap between those who have and those who don't, but many who don't have simply don't want to because they are lazy," the lived experiences of those excluded from entrepreneurial success are invalidated through the naturalization of a framework in which such experiences are unthinkable. This constitutes the imposition of meaning that legitimizes existing power relations by concealing the arbitrary nature of their foundations.

Furthermore, the discourse contributes to the reorganization of social relations by reframing collective obligations as individual responsibilities. DL1's reflection, "Either I complain and see myself as a subject of charity, or I generate change... I understood that the purpose transcended beyond the person," captures the entrepreneurial mindset of embracing challenges and striving for a higher purpose, while simultaneously evacuating the possibility of collective political action in favor of individualized "change-making." NU1's reminder that "One has two lives, the first begins when we are conceived, and the second begins when we realize that we only have one" emphasizes the urgency of following one's own path, regardless of the challenges—but this "own path" is always already circumscribed by the entrepreneurial imperative. Collectively, these narratives frame entrepreneurship as a morally meaningful life project tied to authenticity, self-realization, and personal worth, thereby securing ideological consent for a social order in which economic risk is privatized and success is moralized.

Finally, the discourse's emphasis on adaptability—RM1's injunction to "Be adaptable, be adaptable, be adaptable... then you will succeed"—reflects the demands of a flexibilized labor market that requires subjects to continuously reinvent themselves in response to economic volatility. This is not merely advice; it is a structural requirement of contemporary western society that is internalized as personal virtue. The entrepreneurial ideal thus functions as a mechanism of social control that produces subjects who experience structural precarity as personal opportunity, thereby obviating the need for explicit coercion. In Table 5, additional supporting evidence of these macro-sociocognitive effects can be found.

Table 5 Macro-sociocognitive critique

Entrepreneurship and Meritocracy: The Erasure of Structural Inequalities	“Happiness implies patience, and without it, success is not achieved.” [CZ1] “Dreams come true, they just require a bit of work.” [LM1] “We are afraid of failing, but... mistakes are part of the learning process.” [SE1] “Profit is the result of effort.” [MG1] “All of this is about dreams, about feeling it, about doing what you love, but with hard work and not giving up.” [AM2]
Entrepreneurial and the collective duty of supporting one another	“Women who are truly entrepreneurial, who are innovating and worrying about social causes.” [NU1] “The beauty of entrepreneurs is that we surround ourselves with smarter people than us because, generally, we are not the smartest.” [DD1] “You don’t have to be very smart, you have to have attitude.” [DD1] “The only true thing about entrepreneurs is that they are abnormal people.” [DD2] “When you start from zero, it’s wonderful because you value things in a different way.” [MG1]
Entrepreneurship as a Mechanism of Social Control	“This is going to be beginning of a change in this country... and the conception of beauty started to change in our nation” [CZ1] “Don’t expect anyone to give you anything and fight to achieve what you want.” [CL2] “I was happy for the first time, I had begun to feel the taste of happiness that freedom gives you, having the pass in your power, being the owner of your own future in a rather poor way, but I was the owner, the frying pan was mine.” [LM1] “Who thinks they’re repressed?! I’m free” [MG1] “Entrepreneurship means assembling a personal project” [TK1]
The Entrepreneur as a Moral and Political Subject	“There are people who watch soap operas, and I stand in front of the reviewer slowly resolving, telling her how is it possible to be so foolish, sitting like an idiot watching what others live, what others travel, what others love... be the actors in your life, not just spectators.” [CL1] “One has two lives, the first begins when we are conceived, and the second begins when we realize that we only have one.” [NU1] “For the first time, I had started to feel the taste and happiness of having the pass in my hand, to be the owner of my own future... the frying pan was mine.” [LM1] “I don’t want a boss, I don’t want money, the common factor in all these answers is the love for freedom. Entrepreneurs embark because they want to be free, it’s something inherent to being human.” [RM1]
Entrepreneurial Ideals	“Our values: freedom, equal opportunities, disruption, courage and collaboration. Do you know how we do it?” [AM1] “Everything is possible if systematic work is combined with the maximization of effort and discipline.” [SL1] “When I discover my passion, I work for it, and I work and I work.” [NA1] “Ideas belong to no one; execution is what claims them.” [MG1] “If I step in, I become an agent of change within the system—I make progress happen.” [NU1]

5 A process model of normative entrepreneurial identity formation

Building on the conceptual foundations and empirical findings, this study proposes a process model of normative entrepreneurial identity formation (see Fig. 1). The model exposes the discourses articulated by high-prestige entrepreneurs move from individual storytelling to collectively binding identity expectations that normalize entrepreneurial entry while obscuring structural constraints. Rather than conceptualizing entrepreneurial narratives as neutral sources of inspiration, the model theorizes them as mechanisms of symbolic power that shape how entrepreneurship is imagined, evaluated, and morally justified.

The model unfolds through three analytically distinct but sequentially connected stages: (1) discursive authorization, (2) narrative standardization, and (3) normative identity closure. Together, these stages explain how contingent entrepreneurial success is transformed into a culturally obligatory identity script.

5.1 Discursive authorization through symbolic capital

Aligned with prior research portraying entrepreneurship as a domain shaped by heroic individuals (Dey & Mason, 2018; Johnsen & Sørensen, 2017), the process begins with discursive authorization. High-prestige entrepreneurs leverage symbolic capital—derived from public recognition, media visibility, and perceived success—to position their personal experiences as legitimate and instructive accounts of entrepreneurship. Symbolic capital confers discursive authority, enabling these actors to speak not merely about entrepreneurship but for entrepreneurship (Edewor et al., 2014; Egan-Wyer et al., 2018; Lubinski & Tucker, 2025).

Empirically, this stage is characterized by a discursive bypass. By foregrounding personal traits (e.g., resilience, passion, and obsessive stubbornness) as the primary drivers of success, authorized speakers selectively background structural conditions such as market timing, institutional voids, or class-based safety nets. Through this move, entrepreneurial outcomes are reframed as expressions of personal authenticity rather than context-dependent results (Edewor et al., 2014; Muhr et al., 2019).

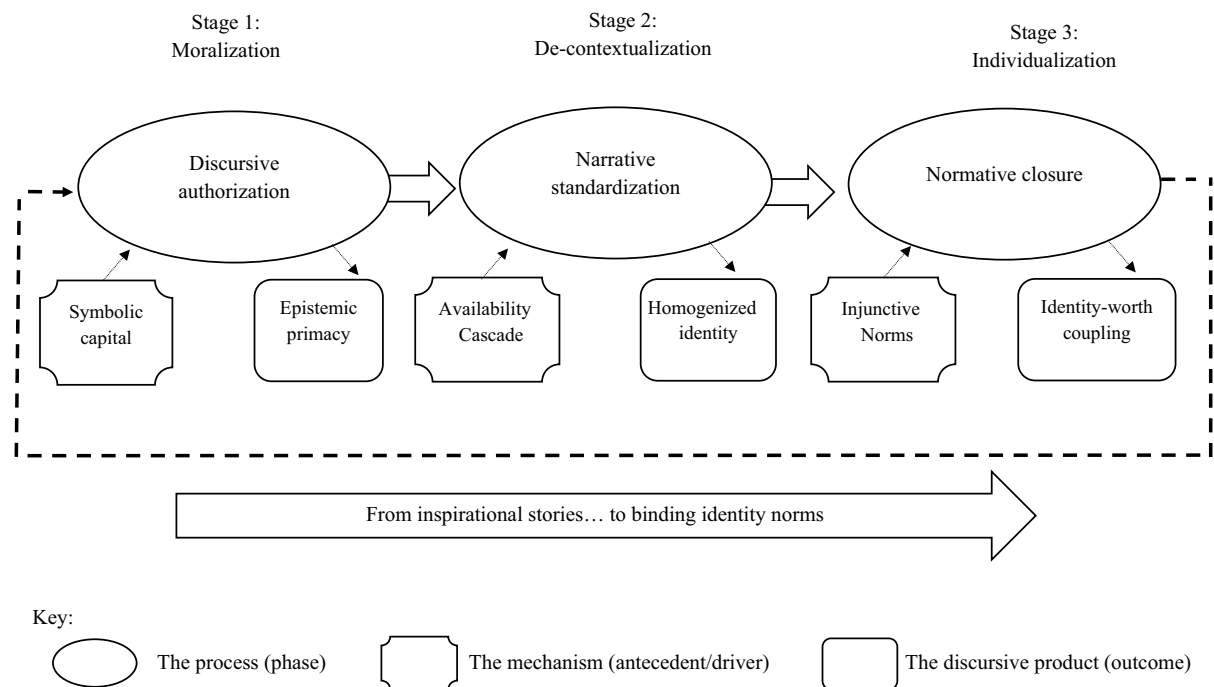


Fig. 1 A process model of normative entrepreneurial identity

This stage is theoretically important because it explains why certain narratives gain epistemic legitimacy in the first place. Discursive authorization does not depend on narrative representativeness or accuracy, but on the symbolic position of the narrator. As a result, success stories acquire prescriptive authority, setting the conditions under which individual experience becomes a reference point for collective evaluation. This mechanism extends work on symbolic capital in entrepreneurship by showing how it operates not only as a resource for action, but as a precondition for defining entrepreneurial meaning. Because the speaker is a “winner,” their use of logical fallacies (most notably survivorship bias) is granted the status of empirical wisdom. Thus, this stage sets the foundation for the master narrative by establishing who has the right to define the “correct” way to inhabit the entrepreneurial identity.

5.2 Narrative standardization through discursive tropes

In the second stage, authorized narratives undergo narrative standardization, whereby complex and heterogeneous entrepreneurial experiences are reduced to a limited set of recurring tropes and plot structures. Through repetition, media amplification, and institutional circulation, these narratives coalesce into a master narrative that defines entrepreneurship as a universally accessible and desirable life path (Down & Warren, 2008; Hammack & Toolis, 2016).

This transition is driven by an availability cascade (Kuran & Sunstein, 1999), a self-reinforcing process of collective belief formation where the increasing frequency of a narrative in the public sphere enhances its perceived plausibility, regardless of its statistical representativeness. This standardization operates through recognizable discursive devices identified in the findings, such as metaphors of struggle and liberation, moralized accounts of failure, and the portrayal of risk as character-building rather than economically consequential. By stripping away the specific socio-economic conditions that allowed a venture to thrive, the narrative transforms a unique event into a universal recipe, which in the model is represented as the de-contextualization of success (Stage 2 in Fig. 1). These devices function as cognitive shortcuts, making entrepreneurship intelligible and attractive while minimizing ambiguity and uncertainty. In doing so,

they reproduce well-documented logical fallacies in entrepreneurial discourse, including survivorship bias, false analogies, hasty generalizations, and moralistic reasoning.

This extends Keim et al. (2024) critique by showing how one of the mechanisms they identify works in practice, specifically within the domain of public narrative and discourse. Keim et al. identify the fallacy of extrapolation as the assumption that micro-level entrepreneurial successes automatically aggregate into macro-level structural transformation, critiquing it as theoretically unwarranted because structural problems exhibit complex adaptive properties that resist linear scaling. The present model specifies that this fallacy does not operate through explicit argumentative claims, but through the standardization of narrative tropes that perform extrapolation implicitly. When the master narrative reduces all entrepreneurial experience to the same plot structure (struggle, breakthrough, redemption) it creates narrative equivalence: the experience of a Silicon Valley venture capitalist and a micro-entrepreneur become formally identical despite their structural incomparability. This equivalence is the discursive precondition for the fallacy of extrapolation. By making heterogeneous experiences narratively homogenous, standardization enables policy makers, educators, and ecosystem builders to treat all entrepreneurship as functionally equivalent, thereby justifying one-size-fits-all interventions that extrapolate from munificent contexts to structurally dissimilar ones. Hence, while Keim et al.’s critique identifies the logical error, the present model identifies the narrative machinery that makes this error culturally operable and institutionally reproducible.

Importantly, at this stage, narratives cease to function as personal stories and instead become cultural templates. They offer ready-made scripts for how entrepreneurship should be understood, pursued, and evaluated. This theoretical move builds on established narrative and discourse research showing how repeated storylines stabilize expectations and normalize particular identity positions (Down & Warren, 2008; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009; Perren & Jennings, 2005). Through standardization, entrepreneurship is increasingly framed as an identity-driven journey suited for misfits, idealists, and purpose-driven individuals, while alternative forms of economic participation are implicitly devalued. By reducing heterogeneous experiences to a singular, recognizable

script, the discourse creates a one-size-fits-all policy instrument (Harima et al., 2024; Poblete et al., 2026). This renders entrepreneurship intelligible and attractive to the masses while systematically devaluing alternative forms of economic participation or stable employment, which are framed as “spectatorship” or “lazy” compliance.

This stage explains how entrepreneurial discourse travels beyond individual audiences to shape collective expectations, policy rhetoric, and ecosystem practices, reinforcing one-size-fits-all representations that often fail under conditions of labor-market segmentation, informality, or institutional weakness (Mahn & Poblete, 2023).

5.3 Normative closure and the formation of identity templates

The final stage of the model involves normative identity closure, where the master narrative becomes internalized as a set of injunctive norms that define legitimate entrepreneurial identity (i.e., the master narrative is doxified). Entrepreneurship is no longer framed as one economic option among many but as a morally valued and socially endorsed response to uncertainty, dissatisfaction, or opportunity scarcity. Similarly, the narrative is no longer merely advice; it becomes a mechanism of identity regulation.

At this stage, individuals evaluate themselves and others against the standardized identity script. This results in the individualization of systemic challenges (Stage 3 in Fig. 1), where failure is reinterpreted as a temporary moral shortcoming (insufficient perseverance, optimism, or commitment) rather than as a possible outcome, reinforcing self-blame and persistence even under adverse conditions. The entrepreneurial identity becomes resistant to counter-evidence, as questioning the narrative entails questioning one’s own worth, agency, or legitimacy. This process individualizes systemic challenges and reinforces self-attribution, persistence, and symbolic compliance with entrepreneurial norms, even under adverse conditions (Eberhart et al., 2022; Weiss et al., 2023).

During this stage, entrepreneurial identity emerges not only as a personal project of self-authorship, but as a socially regulated category governed by group-based norms and boundaries (Brown, 2006; Dentoni et al., 2018). By framing entrepreneurship as morally

legitimate and socially desirable, discourse produces injunctive norms that signal who belongs and who does not. This aligns with research on moral legitimacy in entrepreneurship, which shows that normative approval increases entrepreneurial engagement independent of economic conditions (Kibler & Kautonen, 2016). This process contributes to the moralization of entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurial persistence and self-reliance become framed not only as economic behaviors, but as indicators of personal worth and legitimacy.

Normative closure thus completes the process of overpromotion by transforming encouragement into obligation. Entrepreneurship becomes normalized not because it is economically optimal but because it is symbolically framed as the appropriate and morally endorsed response to contemporary socio-economic conditions. Over time, this may lead to cognitive commitment and identity rigidity, where questioning entrepreneurial ideals entails questioning one’s own worth or legitimacy, reinforcing exclusionary boundaries within the entrepreneurial field.

The process concludes in a self-reinforcing feedback loop. As normative closure stabilizes these identity templates within the public imaginary, the perceived “truth” of these narratives further amplifies the symbolic capital of the high-prestige entrepreneurs who articulate them. This strengthens their discursive authorization, ensuring that the cycle of overpromotion remains resistant to counter-evidence and continues to shape the institutional and cultural landscape of entrepreneurship.

6 Discussion

The process model presented in this study explains how repeated exposure to standardized tropes contributes to the stabilization of entrepreneurial identity. Through narrative repetition, familiar representations acquire taken-for-granted status, shaping collective understandings of what entrepreneurship “is” and who entrepreneurs “are.” Importantly, this process does not require novelty or explicit persuasion; rather, it relies on simplification and recognizability, which facilitate broad circulation and acceptance.

In this sense, entrepreneurial discourse functions less as information and more as a symbolic ordering device, organizing entrepreneurial identity around a

narrow set of culturally valorized dispositions. This contributes to a normative framework that privileges certain entrepreneurial selves while marginalizing alternative interpretations (Welter et al., 2017).

6.1 Theoretical and practical implications

While prior research has extensively documented the risks associated with excessive entrepreneurial encouragement, these accounts largely treat overpromotion as a consequence of individual misjudgment or institutional failure. The present study shifts the analytical focus to the symbolic and discursive conditions that make such overpromotion socially plausible, culturally legitimate, and resistant to critique.

Research on the overpromotion of entrepreneurship has shown that portraying entrepreneurship as a mindset-driven and universally beneficial career path obscures structural constraints and amplifies failure risks (Dey & Mason, 2018; Keim et al., 2024). However, existing explanations tend to locate the problem either at the level of policy design (Perren & Jennings, 2005; Shane, 2009) or individual cognition (Cossette, 2014; Saleh & Hunt, 2020). What remains under-theorized is how these optimistic framings achieve and sustain normative dominance despite persistent empirical evidence of high failure rates (Artinger & Powell, 2016; Eklund et al., 2018).

The process model developed in this study addresses this gap by conceptualizing overpromotion as a symbolic normalization process. The findings show that overpromotion does not emerge simply because entrepreneurship is encouraged too much, but because elite entrepreneurial discourse transforms contingent success stories into normative identity templates. Through discursive authorization, individual success is converted into epistemic authority; through narrative standardization, complexity is reduced to culturally legible tropes; and through normative identity closure, entrepreneurship is reframed as a moral and psychological obligation rather than an economically contingent choice. This process-based account explains how entrepreneurial discourse acquires normative force and why individuals may comply with entrepreneurial expectations even when outcomes are uncertain or precarious (Shane, 2008). In doing so, the study reframes overpromotion as a symbolic and discursive outcome, clarifying how entrepreneurial optimism can remain culturally

dominant even when contradicted by empirical realities.

A second theoretical contribution lies in specifying the conditions under which entrepreneurial narratives become master narratives. Narrative identity theory has been widely used to explain how individuals construct meaning, motivation, and coherence through entrepreneurial storytelling (Castelló et al., 2023; Essers et al., 2023; Rifo & Poblete, 2026). Similarly, entrepreneurship scholars have shown that dominant stories can crystallize into master narratives that shape collective understandings of entrepreneurial success and failure (Down & Warren, 2008; Hammack & Toolis, 2016). However, much of this work treats master narratives as emergent cultural phenomena, offering limited insight into how specific actors and discursive practices contribute to their formation and stabilization. The findings demonstrate that narrative dominance is not primarily a function of story quality or emotional resonance, but of who tells the story, how it is structured, and how it circulates. By theorizing discursive authorization and narrative standardization as sequential mechanisms, the study specifies a micro–macro translation process through which individual narratives move from personal sensemaking devices to socially binding reference points that shape collective expectations and evaluations. In doing so, the study shows how narratives not only help individuals imagine entrepreneurial futures but also delimit which entrepreneurial identities are culturally recognizable, legitimate, and morally valued (Suddaby et al., 2023).

A third theoretical contribution concerns the role of symbolic capital in shaping entrepreneurial meaning. Symbolic capital has traditionally been employed in entrepreneurship research to explain legitimacy, credibility, and access to resources (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; de Clercq & Honig, 2011). While these contributions acknowledge the influence of high-status entrepreneurs, they largely conceptualize symbolic capital as a facilitator of entrepreneurial action rather than as a structuring force of entrepreneurial meaning (Clark & Harrison, 2019; Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991). This study extends this stream of research by demonstrating the discursive function of symbolic capital. The findings show that symbolic capital enables elite entrepreneurs to convert personal experience into normative authority, allowing their narratives to define what

entrepreneurship is instead of merely what entrepreneurship can be. In this sense, symbolic capital operates as a mechanism of meaning regulation, shaping legitimacy, belonging, and moral obligation, and thereby influencing which entrepreneurial realities are rendered visible or invisible. By conceptualizing symbolic capital as a meaning-structuring resource, the study integrates Bourdieu's insights on symbolic power into entrepreneurship research more fully. It shows how language and discourse serve as vehicles through which symbolic capital is exercised, reinforcing particular entrepreneurial imaginaries while marginalizing others.

From a practical perspective, entrepreneurship is often portrayed as a universally positive and accessible path to success, ignoring its high risks, systemic barriers, and contextual challenges. This uncritical promotion creates unrealistic expectations, leading aspiring entrepreneurs to underestimate the difficulties involved, often resulting in preventable failures, financial distress, and wasted resources. These narratives, amplified by the availability cascade effect, reinforce misleading assumptions about business success (Suddaby et al., 2023). Entrepreneurs, especially novices, may adopt an overly optimistic, resilience-driven approach, which downplays the systemic challenges they face. While promoting entrepreneurial spirit can be inspiring, a more balanced, evidence-based approach to entrepreneurial advocacy could mitigate these harms by fostering prepared, resilient, and context-aware ventures.

6.2 Limitations and future research

As with every study, there are several limitations that not only should be recognized, but confer fertile territory for further research. For instance, this study focuses just on media press as a key mechanism in shaping entrepreneurial narratives, but it is only one of many channels through which the overpromotion of entrepreneurship is perpetuated. Future research should explore additional mechanisms which may also contribute to the romanticized and unquestioned perception of entrepreneurship (Perren & Jennings, 2005; Salmivaara & Kibler, 2020). Further, it would be interesting to explore how these mechanisms could interact in complex ways, reinforcing and amplifying entrepreneurial ideals across different audiences (Waldron et al., 2015).

This study focused on expositors and their discourses, but future research could explore audience reactions, for instance, by incorporating cognitive dissonance theory to examine how individuals reconcile the gap between media-driven entrepreneurial hype and the often-harsh reality of entrepreneurial failure. By understanding how aspiring entrepreneurs and the general public process conflicting information, such as the glorification of success versus statistical failure rates, scholars could gain deeper insights into the psychological mechanisms that sustain the overpromotion of entrepreneurship.

Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural and institutional contexts could offer valuable perspectives on whether the overpromotion of entrepreneurship is a global phenomenon or primarily a Western-centric issue. Such research could explore how narratives differ in regions with strong social safety nets versus those with limited state support, shedding light on the structural factors that influence entrepreneurial discourse.

7 Final remarks

This study does not question the societal value of entrepreneurship nor the intentions of high-profile entrepreneurs who promote it. Instead, it highlights a structural tension inherent to the entrepreneurial discourse. While entrepreneurial narratives can foster initiative, confidence, and innovation, their normative force may also contribute to excessive entry and widespread failure. The same discourse that legitimizes entrepreneurship as a driver of economic dynamism can simultaneously impose moral expectations that render non-entry, exit, or alternative career paths less visible or less legitimate. In this sense, entrepreneurial discourse operates as a double-edged symbolic mechanism that mobilizes action while constraining how entrepreneurial success, failure, and worth are understood.

The broader challenge, therefore, lies not in entrepreneurship itself but in its overpromotion as a universally desirable, attitude-driven solution detached from labor market conditions and structural inequalities. Entrepreneurship does not operate in isolation; its appeal and consequences are shaped by wage employment alternatives, job security, access to resources, and social mobility. Treating entrepreneurship as a

standalone remedy risks reinforcing a simplified and idealized vision that overlooks its inherent risks and contradictions. Particularly in contexts marked by economic volatility and institutional fragility, such simplification may exacerbate vulnerability rather than opportunity.

By foregrounding the discursive processes through which entrepreneurial meanings and identities are normalized, this study invites a more critical and reflexive engagement with entrepreneurial promotion. Rather than rejecting entrepreneurship, it calls for greater attentiveness to how entrepreneurial narratives are produced, authorized, and circulated, as well as to the social expectations they create. A more balanced and context-sensitive understanding of entrepreneurship may better align aspirations with realities, preserving its transformative potential while reducing the individual and societal costs associated with its uncritical glorification.

Author contributions Carlos Poblete: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Writing – original draft; Validation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.

Data availability The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (2002). Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(5), 619–644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00305>;WGROU:STRING:PUBLICATION
- Anokhin, S., & Wincent, J. (2012). Start-up rates and innovation: A cross-country examination. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 43(1), 41–60. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2011.47>
- Artinger, S., & Powell, T. C. (2016). Entrepreneurial failure: Statistical and psychological explanations. *Strategic Management Journal*, 37(6), 1047–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1002/SMJ.2378>
- Barton, M., Kimmitt, J., Poblete, C., and Muñoz, P. (2025). Ideological evolution of social entrepreneurship: Insights from Chile 1960–2020. *Business History*, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2025.2519487>
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Brown, A. D. (2006). A narrative approach to collective identities. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(4), 731–753. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-6486.2006.00609.X>
- Busenitz, L. W., & Barney, J. B. (1997). Differences between entrepreneurs and managers in large organizations: Biases and heuristics in strategic decision-making. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 12(1), 9–30. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(96\)00003-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(96)00003-1)
- Canales, R., Regele, M. D., Groberg, M. G., & Eftekhari, N. (2025). Falling off the unicorn: The maintenance of unrealistic startup labor narratives. *Academy of Management Journal*, 68(4), 760–786. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2023.0013>
- Castelló, I., Barberá-Tomás, D., & Vaara, E. (2023). Moving on: Narrative identity reconstruction after entrepreneurial failure. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 38(4), Article 106302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JBUSVENT.2023.106302>
- Clark, C. M., & Harrison, C. (2019). Entrepreneurship: An assimilated multi-perspective review. *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, 31(1), 43–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2018.1446665>
- Cossette, P. (2014). Heuristics and cognitive biases in entrepreneurs: A review of the research. *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, 27(5), 471–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2015.1105732>
- Cunningham, J. B., & Lischeron, J. (1991). Defining entrepreneurship. *Journal of small business management*, 29(1), 45–61. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270820230>
- De Carolis, D. M., Litzky, B. E., & Eddleston, K. A. (2009). Why networks enhance the progress of new venture creation: The influence of social capital and cognition. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 33(2), 527–545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00302.x>
- de Clercq, D., & Honig, B. (2011). Entrepreneurship as an integrating mechanism for disadvantaged persons. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 23(5–6), 353–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2011.580164>
- De Clercq, D., & Voronov, M. (2009). The role of cultural and symbolic capital in entrepreneurs' ability to meet expectations about conformity and innovation. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 47(3), 398–420. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2009.00276.x>
- Dentoni, D., Pascucci, S., Poldner, K., & Gartner, W. B. (2018). Learning “who we are” by doing: Processes of co-constructing prosocial identities in community-based enterprises. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 33(5), 603–622. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JBUSVENT.2017.12.010>
- Dey, P., & Mason, C. (2018). Overcoming constraints of collective imagination: An inquiry into activist entrepreneurship, disruptive truth-telling and the creation of ‘possible worlds.’ *Journal of Business Venturing*, 33(1), 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JBUSVENT.2017.11.002>
- Douglas, E. (2009). Perceptions - looking at the world through entrepreneurial lenses. In A. Carsrud, & M. Brannback (Eds.), *Understanding the entrepreneurial mind* (pp. 3–22). Springer.
- Down, S., & Warren, L. (2008). Constructing narratives of enterprise: Clichés and entrepreneurial self-identity. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13552550810852802>

- Eberhart, R. N., Barley, S., & Nelson, A. (2022). Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose: Entrepreneurialism and the changing nature of employment relations. In R. N. Eberhart, M. Lounsbury, & H. E. Aldrich (Eds.), *Entrepreneurialism and society: New theoretical perspectives* (Vol. 81, pp. 13–41). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Edewor, P. A., Abimbola, O. H., & Ajayi, M. P. (2014). An exploration of some sociological approaches to entrepreneurship. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(5), 18–24.
- Egan-Wyer, C., Muhr, S. L., & Rehn, A. (2018). On startups and doublethink—Resistance and conformity in negotiating the meaning of entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 30(1–2), 58–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1384959>
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160888>
- Eklund, J., Levratto, N., & Ramello, G. B. (2018). Entrepreneurship and failure: Two sides of the same coin? *Small Business Economics*, 54(2), 373–382. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S1187-018-0039-Z>
- Essers, C., van der Heijden, B., Fletcher, L., & Pijpers, R. (2023). It's all about identity: The identity constructions of LGBT entrepreneurs from an intersectionality perspective. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 41(7), 774–795. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02662426221128464>
- Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 9–20). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809068>
- Forlani, D., & Mullins, J. W. (2000). Perceived risks and choices in entrepreneurs' new venture decisions. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 15(4), 305–322. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00017-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00017-2)
- Fuller, T., & Tian, Y. (2006). Social and symbolic capital and responsible entrepreneurship: An empirical investigation of SME narratives. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 67, 287–304. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9185-3>
- Garud, R., Snihur, Y., Thomas, L. D. W., & Phillips, N. (2025). The dark side of entrepreneurial framing: A process model of deception and legitimacy loss. *Academy of Management Review*, 50(2), 299–317. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2022.0213>
- Gergs, H.-J. (2003). Economic, social, and symbolic capital: New aspects for the development of a sociological theory of the market. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 33(2), 22–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2003.11043680>
- Hallonsten, O. (2024). *Empty innovation*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31479-7>
- Hammack, P. L., & Toolis, E. E. (2016). Putting the social into personal identity: The master narrative as root metaphor for psychological and developmental science. *Human Development*, 58(6), 350–364. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000446054>
- Harima, A., Harima, J., & Freiling, J. (2024). Ecosystem orchestration: Unpacking the leadership capabilities of anchor organizations in nascent entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587241241824>
- Hayward, M. L. A., Shepherd, D. A., & Griffin, D. (2006). A hubris theory of entrepreneurship. *Management Science*, 52(2), 160–172. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1050.0483>
- Jenkins, A., & McKelvie, A. (2016). What is entrepreneurial failure? Implications for future research. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 34(2), 176–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242615574011>
- Johnsen, C. G., & Sørensen, B. M. (2017). Traversing the fantasy of the heroic entrepreneur. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 23(2), 228–244. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-01-2016-0032>
- Karataş-Özkan, M. (2011). Understanding relational qualities of entrepreneurial learning: Towards a multi-layered approach. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 23(9–10), 877–906. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2011.577817>
- Keim, J., Müller, S., & Dey, P. (2024). Whatever the problem, entrepreneurship is the solution! Confronting the panacea myth of entrepreneurship with structural injustice. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 21, Article e00440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JBVI.2023.E00440>
- Kibler, E., & Kautonen, T. (2016). The moral legitimacy of entrepreneurs: An analysis of early-stage entrepreneurship across 26 countries. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 34(1), 34–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614541844>
- Koellinger, P., Minniti, M., & Schade, C. (2007). “I think I can, I think I can”: Overconfidence and entrepreneurial behavior. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 28(4), 502–527. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2006.11.002>
- Kuran, T., & Sunstein, C. R. (1999). Availability cascades and risk regulation. *Stanford Law Review*, 51(4), 683. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229439>
- Kwong, C. C. Y., Thompson, P., & Cheung, C. W. M. (2012). The effectiveness of social business plan competitions in developing social and civic awareness and participation. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 11(3), 324–348. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2011.0007A>
- Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., & Sablinski, C. J. (1999). Qualitative research in organizational and vocational psychology, 1979–1999. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 55(2), 161–187. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1999.1707>
- Lindgren, M., & Packendorff, J. (2009). Social constructionism and entrepreneurship: Basic assumptions and consequences for theory and research. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13552550910934440>
- Lubinski, C., Prouchet, L., Ferri, C., Jepsen, N. C., & Lei, W. (2025). Rethinking the histories and ideologies of entrepreneurship. *Management & Organizational History*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2025.2595974>
- Lubinski, C., & Tucker, H. K. (2025). Entrepreneurialism: Conceptual exploration of an ideology. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2025.2547038>
- Mahn, D., & Poblete, C. (2023). Contextualizing the knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship: The Chilean paradox. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 35(1–2), 209–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2117418>
- Mason, C. (2012). Up for grabs: A critical discourse analysis of social entrepreneurship discourse in the United Kingdom.

- Social Enterprise Journal*, 8(2), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17508611211252846>
- Mazzoni, L., Naudé, W., & Innocenti, N. (2025). The myth of entrepreneurship as a tool: Reorienting business venturing as a goal in itself in a post-growth society. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 23, Article e00512. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.JBVI.2024.E00512>
- McAdams, D. P. (1995). What do we know when we know a person? *Journal of Personality*, 63(3), 365–396.
- McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3), 233–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413475622>
- McLean, K. C., & Syed, M. (2016). Personal, master, and alternative narratives: An integrative framework for understanding identity development in context. *Human Development*, 58(6), 318–349. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000445817>
- Meisenhelder, T. (1997). Pierre Bourdieu and the call for a reflexive sociology. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 17, 159–186.
- Muhr, S. L., De Cock, C., Twardowska, M., & Volkmann, C. (2019). Constructing an entrepreneurial life: Liminality and emotional reflexivity in identity work. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 31(7–8), 567–582. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2019.1596348>
- Passaro, R., Quinto, I., & Thomas, A. (2017). Start-up competitions as learning environment to foster the entrepreneurial process. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 23(3), 426–445. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-01-2016-0007/FULL/XML>
- Perren, L., & Jennings, P. L. (2005, December 4). Government discourses on entrepreneurship: Issues of legitimization, subjugation, and power. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications/Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00075.x>
- Poblete, C., Mahn, D., Acuña, C., & Rifo, F. (2026). Three faces of rural entrepreneurship: Policy, lifestyle, and sustainability in a patagonian entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Small Business Economics*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-026-01198-4>
- Poblete, C., Sena, V., & Fernandez de Arroyabe, J. C. (2019). How do motivational factors influence entrepreneurs' perception of business opportunities in different stages of entrepreneurship? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 28(2), 179–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2018.1564280>
- Pratt, M. G. (2008). Fitting oval pegs into round holes: Tensions in evaluating and publishing qualitative research in top-tier North American journals. *Organizational Research Methods*, 11(3), 481–509. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428107303349>
- Pratt, M. G., Rockmann, K. W., & Kaufmann, J. B. (2006). Constructing professional identity: The role of work and identity learning cycles in the customization of identity among medical residents. *Academy of Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2006.20786060>
- Rifo, F., and Poblete, C. (2026). Constructing the identity of the religious entrepreneur: a master narrative approach. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2026.2624621>
- Saleh, S. H., & Hunt, R. A. (2020). The role of heuristics and biases in entrepreneurial decision-making when creativity is a necessity. *Entrepreneurial Behaviour: Unveiling the Cognitive and Emotional Aspects of Entrepreneurship*, 191–212. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78973-507-920201013/FULL/XML>
- Salmivaara, V., & Kibler, E. (2020). “Rhetoric mix” of arguments: How policy rhetoric conveys meaning of entrepreneurship for sustainable development. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 44(4), 700–732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258719845345>
- Shane, S. A. (2008). *The illusions of entrepreneurship*. Yale University Press.
- Shane, S. (2009). Why encouraging more people to become entrepreneurs is bad public policy. *Small Business Economics*, 33(2), 141–149. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-009-9215-5>
- Suddaby, R., Israelsen, T., Mitchell, J. R., & Lim, D. S. K. (2023). Entrepreneurial visions as rhetorical history: A diegetic narrative model of stakeholder enrollment. *The Academy of Management Review*, 48(2), 220–243. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2020.0010>
- Turner, J. C., & Reynolds, K. J. (2001). The social identity perspective in intergroup relations: Theories, themes, and controversies. *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes*, 4, 133–152.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch22>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2017). *Discourse and power*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2020). Structures and strategies of discourse and prejudice. *Ethnic Minorities*, 115–138, 115. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003077381-9>
- Waldron, T. L., Fisher, G., & Navis, C. (2015). Institutional entrepreneurs' social mobility in organizational fields. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(1), 131–149. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.06.006>
- Warren, L. (2004). Negotiating entrepreneurial identity: Communities of practice and changing discourses. *Negotiating Entrepreneurial Identity: Communities of Practice and Changing Discourses*, 5(1), 25–35. <https://doi.org/10.5367/000000004772913764>
- Weiss, T., Eberhart, R., Lounsbury, M., Nelson, A., Rindova, V., Meyer, J., et al. (2023). The social effects of entrepreneurship on society and some potential remedies: Four provocations. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 32(4), 251–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10564926231181555>
- Welter, F., Baker, T., Audretsch, D. B., & Gartner, W. B. (2017). Everyday entrepreneurship—A call for entrepreneurship research to embrace entrepreneurial diversity. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 41(3), 311–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ETAP.12258>

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.