

How Should We Study Heterogeneity in Entrepreneurship? Moving the Field to an Inclusive Approach

Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice
1–43

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DOI: 10.1177/10422587251347048

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship scholarship faces challenges related to diverse populations, striving to balance inclusivity with the recognition of unique entrepreneurial identities. Applying optimal distinctiveness theory, we explore the relationship between belongingness and uniqueness in entrepreneurship research. Catalyzed by Bakker and McMullen's 2023 article on inclusivity in entrepreneurship, we utilized natural language processing to examine responses about inclusive entrepreneurship from 29 scholars dedicated to marginalized populations. Findings suggest that employing varied research methods and integrating structural and epistemological considerations can enhance our understanding of entrepreneurial heterogeneity. We advocate for entrepreneurship research that values individual experiences while promoting inclusive practices, highlighting the need for evolving scholarly paradigms to reflect entrepreneurial differences.

Keywords

optimal distinctiveness theory, inclusive entrepreneurship, marginalized entrepreneurs, heterogeneity in research, epistemological considerations

Introduction

For decades, entrepreneurship has struggled with heterogeneity among entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs, as well as within groups of entrepreneurs. Numerous efforts have underscored the importance of heterogeneity in entrepreneurship scholarship and sought to explore how differences among entrepreneurs might be analyzed (Audretsch et al., 2022; Bruyat & Julien, 2001; Gartner, 1985; Spilling, 2008). This challenge continues with the ever-increasing diversity¹ of entrepreneurial populations under study, resulting in a degree of fragmentation in the field, dispersion of research findings, and a perceived lack of knowledge accumulation (see, for instance, Audretsch, 2012; Landström & Lohrke, 2010; Landström et al., 2012; Schildt et al., 2006; Teixeira 2011). This editorial aims to categorize the various approaches to studying heterogeneity in entrepreneurship and outline a forward-looking path.

We propose a framework grounded in the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991), which assesses the importance of belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). By using this framework, we show that many strategies for addressing hetero-

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geneity in the field highlight different aspects of belongingness and uniqueness. This is particularly true for initiatives described as “inclusive.” While these inclusion efforts are admirable, we contend that they complicate the understanding of what defines an inclusive approach in entrepreneurship research.

We utilize a recent article by Bakker and McMullen (2023), titled “Inclusive entrepreneurship: A call for a shared theoretical conversation about unconventional entrepreneurs,” as a catalyst to examine how efforts to address heterogeneity can fall short of achieving an inclusive approach to entrepreneurship research. Given that Bakker and McMullen (2023) have received considerable attention for their insights into inclusion (94 citations in Google Scholar as of April 14, 2025),² it inspired us to explore what “inclusive entrepreneurship” signifies for scholars engaged in inclusive entrepreneurship research. As a result, we sought input from scholars specializing in marginalized populations to capture their responses to the four research questions Bakker and McMullen (2023) proposed in their article: (RQ1) How should unconventional entrepreneurs manage social stigma? (RQ2) How should unconventional entrepreneurs transition from familiar niche markets to mainstream markets? (RQ3) How can entrepreneurial ecosystems become more open and inclusive? and (RQ4) Should unconventional entrepreneurs assimilate or collectively claim agency? Following Al-Dajani et al. (2023), we gathered multiple voices to incorporate a variety of perspectives in addressing these research questions and the critical theoretical and practical approaches necessary for studying inclusion in entrepreneurship. We employed a qualitative strategy to summarize the insights of 29 entrepreneurship scholars who responded to our request for reactions, together with a multi-method approach that combined ChatGPT, qualitative analysis (NVivo), and human data analysis.

These analyses led us to key findings and specific suggestions for moving the entrepreneurship field forward to more inclusive research. The entrepreneurship field should (1) recognize the importance of context and social construction in understanding entrepreneurial identity (EI) and practices; (2) move beyond positivist epistemologies in entrepreneurship research; (3) acknowledge the structural inequalities and the agency of marginalized entrepreneurs; (4) reject the notion of homogeneity among entrepreneurial populations; and (5) value the unique heterogeneity within and across groups of entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, researchers must acknowledge the complexity of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the limitations of oversimplified solutions for inclusivity. The main argument of this study contends *against* the necessity of a unified theory of entrepreneurship. Instead, we posit that an inclusive approach to entrepreneurship scholarship promotes broadening research perspectives, questioning existing assumptions, embracing diversity, and employing more inclusive language and methodologies in entrepreneurship studies. In other words, an inclusive research approach signifies that diverse individuals, organizations, environments, and processes are significant topics for study, and their unique differences are essential. Our analysis also raises concerns about Western bias and gatekeeping in the academic publishing process, which impedes the dissemination of knowledge from marginalized research communities. Finally, in alignment with the call for diverse perspectives, our study emphasizes the importance of using both human analysis and AI tools in research and advocates for the exploration of such technologies.

This editorial is structured as follows: first, we utilize the ODT framework, highlighting the connections between *belonging* and *uniqueness* to analyze how entrepreneurship scholars conceptualize and address heterogeneity. This framework systematically categorizes prior research into four paradigms: exclusion, differentiation, assimilation, and inclusion. Then, we illustrate how inclusion differentiates itself from the other three categories.

Noting a conflation of “assimilation” and “inclusion” approaches, we use Bakker and McMullen (2023) to engage scholars in deeper discourse on the fundamental nature of inclusiveness. These insights are analyzed, and the results of this analysis are presented. Our article concludes by discussing our findings, their implications, and suggestions on how an inclusiveness perspective can enhance entrepreneurship scholarship.

A Framework for Inclusive Research in Entrepreneurship

The concept of inclusion in organizational literature is still emerging despite the growing focus on discussions about inclusion as it relates to the creation of in-groups and out-groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Shore et al., 2011). Consequently, there is currently no consensus on the definition of “inclusive entrepreneurship.” It has been described as the involvement of marginalized or disadvantaged groups in entrepreneurial activities, empowering them to unleash their creative potential and achieve economic self-sufficiency that benefits themselves and society (Pilková et al, 2016). Alternatively, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that “inclusive entrepreneurship policies seek to unlock entrepreneurial talent across the population, helping to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity of creating a successful and sustainable business, regardless of their gender, age, place of birth, work status, or other personal characteristics” (OECD/European Commission, 2023).

To better understand what inclusive entrepreneurship entails, we utilize a framework (Shore et al., 2011) based on ODT (Brewer, 1991) to generate insights on how to make research more inclusive. This framework contrasts two dimensions: belongingness and uniqueness (Figure 1). Belongingness evaluates whether a particular type—such as an individual, organization, environment, process, or characteristic—should be regarded as a group member worthy of inclusion in the study. Uniqueness examines whether the differences among specific types—individuals, organizations, environments, processes, or characteristics—are significant. This framework provides insights into how entrepreneurship research has addressed heterogeneity through four distinct approaches: *exclusion* (low belongingness, low value of uniqueness), *differentiation* (low belongingness, high value of uniqueness), *assimilation* (high belongingness and low value of uniqueness), and *inclusion* (high belongingness and high value of uniqueness). We present examples from previous scholarship that align with the four categories.

Our observation is that early developments in the field led to numerous studies that we categorize as belonging to the *exclusion* quadrant, primarily because there was a significant effort to differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. This endeavor was partly driven by the ambition to establish the legitimacy of entrepreneurship research as distinct from strategy, management, and other disciplines (see, e.g., Brush et al., 2003). Consequently, many articles focused on defining what constitutes an entrepreneur as opposed to a small business owner (Carland et al., 1984), distinguishing entrepreneurship research from other fields (Gartner, 1990; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), and what characterizes a study as entrepreneurial (McMullen et al., 2021). In other words, these studies reflect an exclusionary approach.

Other scholars aimed to define the differences among various types of entrepreneurs to guide educational or policy initiatives that would match specific profiles. Studies that fall under the *differentiation* category include those examining personality trait variations (Salmony et al., 2022), differences between opportunity and necessity motivations (Fairlie & Fossen, 2020), and other individual characteristics (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). In

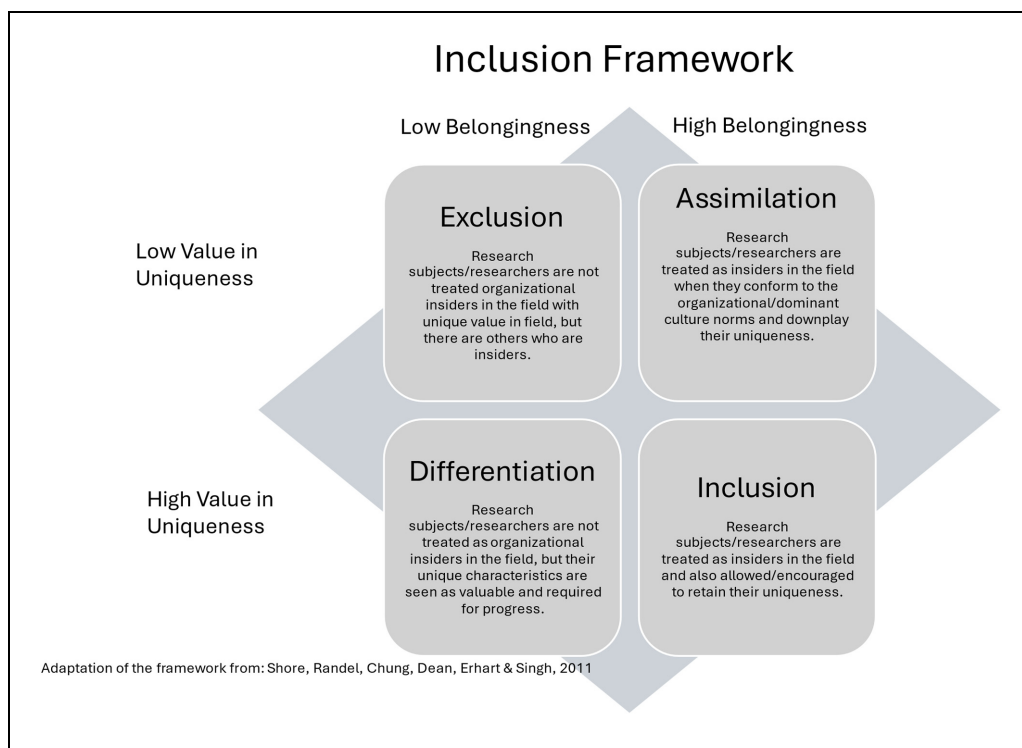


Figure 1. Inclusion framework.

addition, classifications of ventures (Gartner et al., 1989) or types of entrepreneurial ventures, such as social and commercial (Bacq et al., 2013), serve as further examples.

An *assimilation* approach to entrepreneurship suggests that distinct groups should become more similar to the “normal” population (Bakker & McMullen, 2023; Bates, 2022; Nevo, 2025). However, by aiming to incorporate distinct groups into the “normal” population, this perspective also views their uniqueness as a liability rather than an asset.

The *inclusion* quadrant encompasses research that champions and values the differences found among specific types of entrepreneurs (Bruton, et al., 2023; de Bruin & Swail, 2024; Martinez Dy & MacNeil, 2023; Mauksch & Dey 2024). This research approach posits that these differences are significant, and the unique characteristics and circumstances of these entrepreneurs must be regarded as valid and important in their own right, emphasizing both belongingness and uniqueness.

In essence, the field of entrepreneurship has engaged in decades-long discussions about “exclusion” and “differentiation.” The emphasis on differences has also led to the prioritization of certain types of entrepreneurs for study (e.g., often those in high tech and high growth) who may be perceived as more significant (e.g., to society, employment, and value creation) than others. This raises two concerns. First, differences among entrepreneurs do matter and need to be researched; however, our categorizations and classifications have led to some entrepreneurs being viewed as less qualified, less important, or less worthy of study compared to a particular standard. For example, how women entrepreneurs (Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018) and minority entrepreneurs (Bates, 2022) are often perceived in entrepreneurship research.

Second, the desire for generalizability in findings requires an assumption of similarities, leading to attempts to categorize entrepreneurs into types. However, the reality of heterogeneity shows that differences matter, necessitating their recognition and understanding (Garcia et al., 2023). Approaching the phenomenon of entrepreneurship with a deeper appreciation of heterogeneity would allow different entrepreneurial phenomena to stand on their own terms rather than seeking ways to assimilate them.

As shown in Table 1, research categorized as *assimilation* and *inclusion* is relatively recent. In defining “assimilation,” we argue that this research views individuals as insiders only when they conform to organizational or dominant cultural norms, often overlooking their individuality. *Assimilation* is contrasted with *inclusion*, and in the following section, we explore the defining characteristics of an inclusive perspective in entrepreneurship scholarship.

Methodology

Data Collection

In July 2023, we invited 42 entrepreneurship scholars from 12 countries to provide alternative perspectives on how to study diverse populations in entrepreneurship. They were also asked to respond to Bakker and McMullen’s suggestions regarding assimilation as a solution to the perceived challenges of studying varied populations. These scholars—including deans, junior researchers, and senior academics—were selected for their expertise in inclusive entrepreneurship and marginalized communities. We included a broad range of scholars knowledgeable about marginalized populations as defined by Bakker and McMullen (2023). Scholars received an invitation, detailed in the Appendix, to write short essays sharing their insights on Bakker and McMullen’s perspective on inclusiveness. We received 21 essays ranging from 832 to 1,918 words, with an average length of 1,127 words, all written in English. In total, 29 scholars contributed to these responses: 11 from the United States and the rest from Europe, Kenya, South Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, and Saudi Arabia. Complete essay responses are made available in an online repository with the Supplemental Material, and a full list of authors and their areas of expertise can be found in the Appendix, Table A1.

Thematic Analysis and Topic Modeling With ChatGPT-4

We conducted thematic analysis and topic modeling using OpenAI’s ChatGPT-4 custom portal, Data Analyst (OpenAI, 2023), identifying recurring patterns and concepts within the combined corpus of 21 responses. This process involved syntactic and semantic analysis, enhancing our ability to discern underlying themes beyond the surface-level content.³

ChatGPT-4 processes text by considering the entire context of sequences, enhancing the reliability of textual analysis in diverse datasets. Its extensive training on 13 trillion tokens (Schreiner, 2023) reduces stereotypical biases and improves epistemological neutrality, ensuring that the biases in the results reflect the collective data rather than the perspectives of individual researchers.

Large language models (LLMs) can democratize access to essential research tools and methodologies. LLMs can enhance inclusivity by fostering a sense of belonging within the research community. Their ability to bridge linguistic and technical barriers empowers researchers from diverse backgrounds to contribute meaningfully to scholarly dialogues. At the same time, the process of prompt engineering allows researchers to inject their

Table 1. Example Publications Within Optimal Distinctiveness Framework.

Article Title	Author	Journal/Year	Population	Method	Insights
Exclusion: Low belongingness/low value in uniqueness—research in this quadrant seeks to separate “entrepreneurs” from “non-entrepreneurs”					
Differences between entrepreneurs and managers in large organizations: biases and heuristics in strategic decision-making	Busenitz, L.W., & Barney, J.B.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (1997)	Entrepreneurs and managers in large organizations	Quantitative	Focuses on the susceptibility of entrepreneurs to decision-making biases and heuristics by emphasizing the differences in behavior, decision-making processes, and psychological characteristics with managers in large organizations
Differentiating entrepreneurs from small business owners: a conceptualization	Carland, J. W., Hoy, F., Boulton, W.R., & Carland, J.A.C.	<i>Acad. Manag. Rev.</i> (1984)	Entrepreneurs and small business owners	Theoretical	Differentiates entrepreneurs from small business owners. Emphasizes innovation as a distinguishing characteristic of entrepreneurs
From unemployment to self-employment: can enterprise policy intensify the risks of poverty?	Danson, M., Galloway, L., & Sherif, M.	<i>Crit. Perspect. Account.</i> (2021)	Experts on resource-limited entrepreneurship	Qualitative	Discusses the challenges faced by individuals transitioning from unemployment to self-employment. Emphasizes the lack of employment choices and the deepening likelihood of poverty for those individuals with least capacity to bear risks
What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurship?	Gartner, W.B.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (1990)	Academic researchers in entrepreneurship and business leaders	Qualitative and quantitative	Suggests that entrepreneurship must involve uniqueness, characterized by attributes such as a special way of thinking and creating a unique combination. This implies that individuals who do not exhibit these unique characteristics may be excluded from the category of “entrepreneurs”
What makes an entrepreneurship study entrepreneurial? Toward a unified theory of entrepreneurial agency	McMullen, J.S., Brownell, K.M., & Adams, J.	<i>Entrep. Theory Pract.</i> (2021)	Entrepreneurs	Theoretical	Focus on the common elements of entrepreneurial agency across different subcommunities of entrepreneurship. Seeks to establish a common conceptual core, which could lead to the exclusion of non-entrepreneurs
Risk propensity differences between entrepreneurs and managers: a meta-analytic review	Stewart, W.H., Jr., & Roth, P.L.	<i>J. Appl. Psychol.</i> (2001)	Entrepreneurs, small business owners, and managers	Quantitative	Focuses on identifying and quantifying the differences in risk-taking propensities of entrepreneurs and managers

(continued)

Table I. (continued)

Article Title	Author	Journal/Year	Population	Method	Insights
Differentiation: Low belongingness/high value in uniqueness-this quadrant looks for differences between kinds of entrepreneurs					
Exceptionality in entrepreneurship: systematically investigating outlier outcomes	Clark, D.R., Crawford, G.C., & Pidduck, R.J.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur. Insights</i> (2023)	Entrepreneurs, outliers	Quantitative	Challenges the traditional view of entrepreneurship as an egalitarian field, emphasizing the exceptional nature of outlier entrepreneurs
Varieties of entrepreneurship: exploring the institutional foundations of different entrepreneurship types through "Varieties-of-Capitalism's arguments" Darwinians, communarians, and missionaries: the role of founder identity in entrepreneurship	Dilli, S., Elert, N., & Herrmann, A.M.	<i>Small Bus. Econ.</i> (2018)	Entrepreneurial ventures and their shareholders, workforces, and R&D partners	Quantitative	Focuses on the distinct institutional foundations of entrepreneurship across different countries, emphasizing the differences in institutional constellations that facilitate the development of various types of entrepreneurship
Risk propensity differences between managers and entrepreneurs and between low- and high-growth entrepreneurs: a reply in a more conservative vein	Fauchart, E., & Gruber, M.	<i>Acad. Manag. J.</i> (2011)	Firm founders in the sports-related equipment industry	Qualitative	Focuses on the distinct social identities of firm founders. Underscores the differences and variations in social motivations and frames of reference among the different classes of founders
Personality trait differences across types of entrepreneurs: a systematic literature review	Miner, J.B., & Raju, N.S.	<i>J. Appl. Psychol.</i> (2004)	Managers, entrepreneurs, and owner-managed firms	Qualitative	Challenges the prevailing conclusion that entrepreneurs have a higher risk propensity than managers, where entrepreneurs may actually be more risk avoidant
	Salmony, F.U., & Kanbach, D.K.	<i>Rev. Manag. Sci.</i> (2022)	Entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs	Qualitative	Emphasizes the need for clear differentiation between entrepreneur subtypes in future research. Highlights the unique personality traits associated with different types of entrepreneurs

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Article Title	Author	Journal/Year	Population	Method	Insights
Macro-level determinants of formal entrepreneurship versus informal entrepreneurship	Thai, M.T.T., & Turkina, E.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (2014)	52 countries	Quantitative	Focuses on the differences between formal and informal entrepreneurship, highlighting the unique characteristics of each
The development and interpretation of entrepreneurial typologies	Woo, C.Y., Cooper, A.C., & Dunkelberg, W.C.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (1991)	New business owners	Qualitative	Classification criteria used in this study produced unique groupings not fully captured by existing typologies
Assimilation: High belongingness/low value in uniqueness-this quadrant attempts to show how different kinds of entrepreneurs should work toward merging with the ingroup					
Inclusive entrepreneurship: a call for a shared theoretical conversation about unconventional entrepreneurs	Bakker, R.M., & McMullen, J.S.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (2023)	Marginalized populations, such as refugees, women, racial, and immigrant entrepreneurs	Theoretical	Suggests assimilation, where the unconventional group eventually becomes woven into the fabric of society, with unconventional entrepreneurs becoming more conventional over time through a process of normalization or shifting power dynamics
Minority entrepreneurship	Bates, T.	<i>Found. Trends Entrep.</i> (2011)	Latino-owned businesses and immigrant ethnic groups, such as U.S.-based Cuban, Korean, and Chinese entrepreneurs	Quantitative	Highlights the barriers minority entrepreneurs face in acquiring educational credentials, skills, financial capital, and market access. Emphasizes the need for minority entrepreneurs to overcome these barriers to achieve successful firm creation and operation
Minority Entrepreneurship 2.0	Bates, T.	<i>Found. Trends Entrep.</i> (2022)	Minority entrepreneurs in the U.S.	Quantitative	Acknowledges discriminatory barriers that impede business creation and performance for minority entrepreneurs, such as acquiring appropriate human capital, accessing financing, and exploiting market opportunities. Discusses the assimilation of immigrant entrepreneurs into the American business landscape

(continued)

Table I. (continued)

Article Title	Author	Journal/Year	Population	Method	Insights
Liminal entrepreneurship: the creative practices of nascent necessity entrepreneurs	Garcia-Lorenzo, L., Donnelly, P., Sell-Trujillo, L., & Imas, J.M.	<i>Organ. Stud.</i> (2018)	Nascent necessity entrepreneurs (NNEs) in Spain, the United Kingdom, and Ireland	Qualitative	Discusses the transition of nascent necessity entrepreneurs (NNEs) from a state of necessity to a reaggregated stage, where they are able to "re-write themselves" as "others": as would-be-entrepreneurs. Highlights the importance of personal, social, and material outcomes in this transition
Atypical entrepreneurs in the venture idea elaboration phase	Nevo, S.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (2015)	White men and women, Black women with entrepreneurial experience	Quantitative	Discusses how atypical nascent entrepreneurs, particularly Black/White women, may face challenges in receiving feedback during the venture idea elaboration phase. Atypical entrepreneurs should work toward merging with the ingroup to receive feedback that is more aligned with the feedback received by typical entrepreneurs
Self-employment as an indicator of segmented assimilation among six ethnic minority groups	Valdez, Z.	<i>Entrep. Res. J.</i> (2012)	U.S.-born non-Hispanic Whites and U.S.-born and foreign-born individuals from ethnic minority groups	Quantitative	Examines the relationship between self-employment and segmented assimilation among six ethnic minority groups in the United States. Most ethnic minority groups demonstrate convergence to or reach parity with U.S.-born Whites' self-employment outcomes
Inclusion: High belongingness/high value in uniqueness—This quadrant attempts to show how different kinds of entrepreneurs can be valued as different					
Extending the boundaries: reframing "entrepreneurship as social change" through feminist perspectives	Calás, M.B., Smircich, L., & Bourne, K.A.	<i>Acad. Manag. Rev.</i> (2009)	Entrepreneurs	Theoretical	Reframes entrepreneurship through feminist analytical lenses, recognizing the diverse cognitive capabilities, value orientations, and attitudinal outlooks that individuals bring to entrepreneurship
Muslim businesswomen doing boundary work: the negotiation of Islam, gender, and ethnicity within entrepreneurial contexts	Essers, C., & Benschop, Y.	<i>Hum. Relat.</i> (2009)	Female Muslim entrepreneurs in the Netherlands	Qualitative	Demonstrates how these women perform creative boundary work at the intersections of their identities, showing that their diverse identities are valued and respected within the context of entrepreneurship

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Article Title	Author	Journal/Year	Population	Method	Insights
Ex-incarceree/convict status: beneficial for self-employment and entrepreneurship?	Irankunda, A., Price, G., Uzamere, N., & Williams, M.J.	<i>Am. Econ.</i> (2020)	Formerly incarcerated	Quantitative	Suggests that ex-incarcerates/convicts can contribute to entrepreneurship and self-employment, and that expanding entrepreneurship training programs and eliminating barriers to start-up capital for this group could reduce crime and recidivism
Trailing wives and constrained agency among women migrant entrepreneurs: an intersectional perspective	Lassalle, P., & Shaw, E	<i>Entrep. Theory Pract.</i> (2021)	Women migrant entrepreneurs from Poland who settled in Scotland, UK	Qualitative	Emphasizes the importance of understanding the intersection of multiple social structures that influence individual agency and entrepreneurial actions. Highlights inclusive practices in research and policymaking
Treating disability as an asset (not a limitation): a critical examination of disability inclusion through social entrepreneurship	Mauksch, S., & Dey, P.	<i>Organ.</i> (2023)	Blind individuals in Nepal	Qualitative	Uses a performative lens to examine how social enterprises "do disability." Shows how social enterprises, while challenging deficit-oriented representations of disability can paradoxically solidify disability as something profoundly "other."
Who is a "non-entrepreneur"? Taking the "others" of entrepreneurship seriously	Ramoglou, S.	<i>Int. Small Bus. J.</i> (2013)	Entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs	Theoretical	Argues allocating entrepreneurial capacities to the "others" of entrepreneurship. Allowing for a more nuanced and inclusive perspective that acknowledges the coexistence of unexploited opportunities and unexercised agencies
Race, gender, and class in entrepreneurship: intersectional counter-frames and Black business owners	Wingfield, A.H., & Taylor, T.	<i>Ethn. Racial Stud.</i> (2016)	Black business owners	Qualitative	Acknowledges the intersection of race, gender, and class in entrepreneurship, showing how black business owners use racial counter-frames to define their experiences. Shows how diversity can be valued for varied perspectives and contributions
Hype: marker and maker of entrepreneurial culture	Wadhvani, R.D., & Lubinski, C.	<i>J. Bus. Ventur.</i> (2025)	Contemporary entrepreneurs	Theoretical	Notes that entrepreneurial culture is not monolithic and that diverse cultural and historical experiences contribute to the richness of entrepreneurial practices and values. Challenges the dominance of any single narrative or ideology

unique perspectives and creativity into the model's outputs, ensuring that their individuality is preserved within the collaborative process.

This synergy between the LLM's generative capabilities and the researcher's expertise democratizes knowledge production and celebrates the uniqueness of individual scholarly contributions. LLMs' multilingual capabilities further enhance inclusivity by enabling the analysis of documents across languages, with instantaneous translation removing barriers posed by linguistic limitations. These features collectively empower a broader and more diverse cohort of scholars to actively engage in and enrich the research ecosystem.

Prompt engineering is critical in using LLMs; thus, prompts were carefully crafted and tested to guide the model's responses toward generating coherent discussions within our research context (Kutela et al., 2023). For the thematic analysis, the final prompt was, "Provide a list of themes in the uploaded academic article as they pertain to inclusivity and provide an elaborate summary of these themes." The final prompt for topic modeling was, "Use a topic modeling approach to identify five topics related to inclusivity in entrepreneurship across these 21 academic essays. Include these stop words: (for a list of stop words, see the Appendix, Table A2). Include a keyword list for each topic."

Thematic Analysis. We first conducted the thematic analysis to analyze the 21 essays separately. Thematic analysis is well-suited for detailed, nuanced analysis of smaller datasets where context is crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Topic modeling is more helpful in exploring and categorizing large text corpora, like academic papers, news archives, or extensive collections of digital text (Vayansky & Kumar, 2020), uncovering latent topics relevant to the entire corpus. Due to ChatGPT-4's factual errors and hallucinations (Wu et al., 2023), NVivo (Lumivero, 2015) was also employed in the analysis to validate the NLP output from ChatGPT-4, and we furthermore ensured ongoing oversight by us to maintain analytical rigor. Figure 2 shows the overall process of incorporating machine analysis and "human-in-the-loop" analyses (Wu et al., 2022) to examine the dataset.

ChatGPT-4's "embeddings," vector representations of words and phrases that capture contextual meanings of words and phrases, were crucial in linking different text elements and uncovering overarching themes. While ChatGPT-4 can be used to identify latent themes, it cannot match the expertise of a domain-specific human analyst, particularly in the sociocultural-influenced field of entrepreneurship. Thus, for the thematic analyses, we designed a structured approach to interact with ChatGPT-4 effectively, following the guidelines of Braun and Clark (2006) as outlined in the Appendix (Table A3). This analysis resulted in 124 unique themes across the essays (see list in Appendix Table A4). These themes were further categorized into 19 subthemes and organized by topic, as shown in Table 2.

Topic Modeling. Unlike thematic analysis, where each essay was evaluated separately, we treated the essays as a single corpus for topic modeling. We employed Latent Dirichlet Allocation without lemmatization to organize the data into words, topics, and documents. To enhance clarity and orthogonality, we iteratively adjusted the number of topics, ultimately settling on five key topics. These encompass varying analytical levels, from individual scholar contributions to broader ecosystem analyses. The details of these topics, along with the corresponding keywords are summarized in the Appendix (Table A5).

Once topic modeling was finalized, we assigned ChatGPT-4 to identify keywords for each topic and provide a more detailed examination of the dominant themes. Table 2

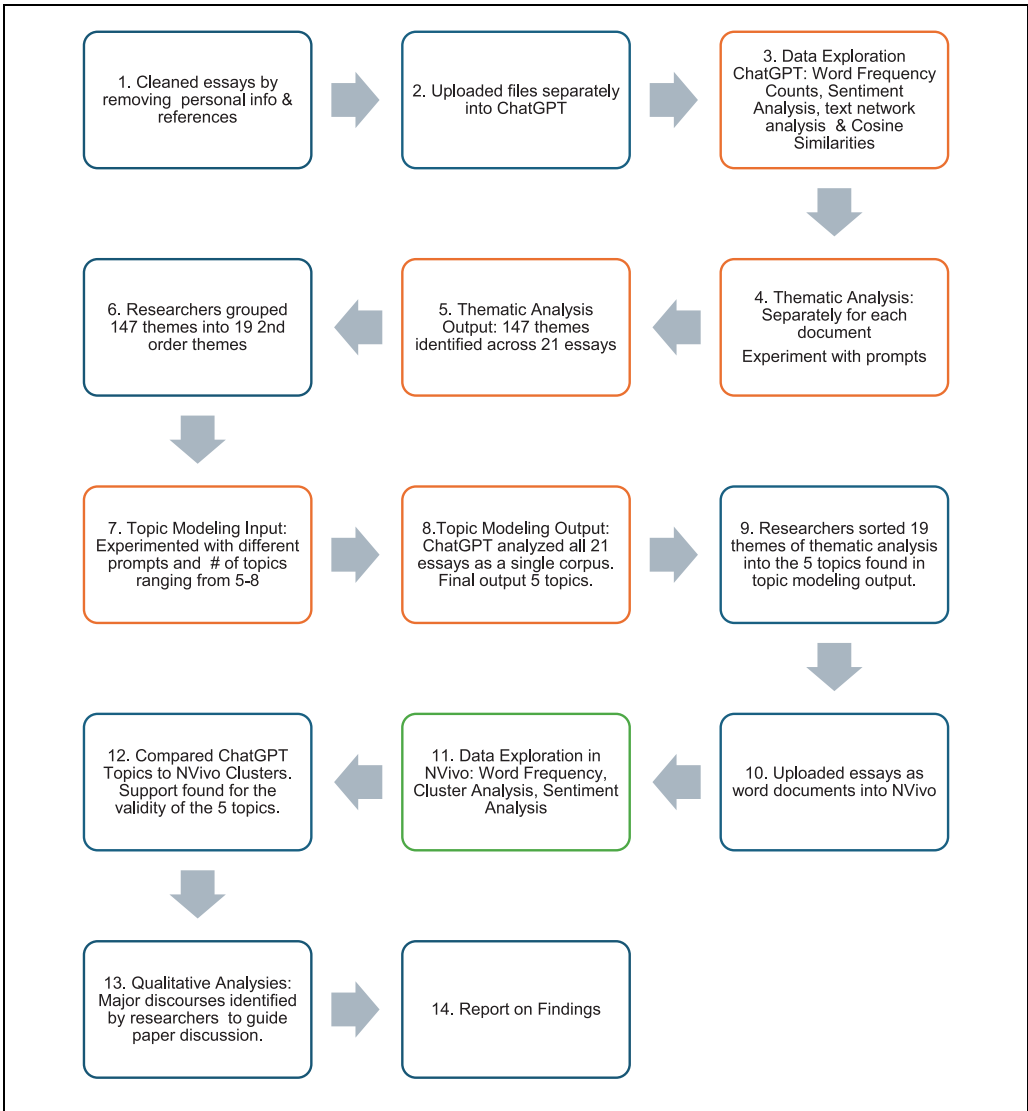


Figure 2. Natural language processing steps with ChatGPT and NVivo.

Note. Colored figure: Blue boxes note researcher (HITL) analysis, orange boxes note ChatGPT-4 analysis, and the green box notes NVivo analysis.

outlines the five topics, their associated themes, exemplary essays related to the topic, and sample texts. The topics cover various levels of analysis: academic scholars (topic 1) and entrepreneurs (topic 2) at the micro-level; group differences (topic 3) and diverse social groups (topic 4) at the meso-level; and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem (topic 5) at the macro-level. These topics showcase a range of epistemological approaches in entrepreneurship research. Before proceeding to the final qualitative analysis phase (step 13 in Figure 2), we performed a series of validation tests (steps 10–12) to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the output, which we will describe in the next section.

Table 2. ChatGPT Themes Sorted by Topic.

Topic	Theme	Unit	Exemplary essays	Example text
Topic 1: Studying entrepreneurship	Classifications	Scholars	Al-Dajani, Jackson, Price, Radu-Lefebvre, Ram, Villesèche, Xheneti	Al-Dajani: "A shared theoretical conversation about unconventional entrepreneurs is a constructive initiative in entrepreneurship research; however, it does not sufficiently embrace inclusivity and is not mindful of the diversity amongst all entrepreneurs"
	Beyond positivism	Scholars	Amorós, Lindbergh, et al., Dey and Keim, Dodd, Galloway, Hechavarria, Lubinski and Wadhvani, Lewis, Newman and Ro, Randolph et al., Price, Ram, Radu-Lefebvre, Villesèche	Dodd: "Instead, an emergent ontology of liminal enterprise would rather be drawing attention to, for example, community as a key level of practice (and analysis), the layered complexity of relationships between people, place and planet, the circular frugality of the edges, ..." Newman and Ro: "A unifying theory based on assumptions from one cultural legacy is not helpful when exploring the diversity of entrepreneurs, ventures, and cultural contexts around the world"
	Researcher agency	Scholars	Al-Dajani, Dey and Keim, Jackson, Lewis, Price, Randolph, et al., Radu-Lefebvre	Dey and Keim: "We believe that the disinclination to appreciate power as a key explanatory factor is likely to result from the adoption of a traditional social science approach predicated on a neo-positivist notion of the impartial, detached, and value-free science (Willmott, 2015)"
Topic 2: Identity and roles of entrepreneur	Distinctions	Entrepreneur	Bonillas, Hechavarria	Bonillas: "In other words, rather than label an entrepreneur as unconventional because of their physical dimensions, cognitive abilities, culture, socio-economics, and behavior, perhaps we should look at how people seize entrepreneurial opportunities by taking something unconventional and capitalizing on it"

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Topic	Theme	Unit	Exemplary essays	Example text
Topic 3: Sociocultural construction of entrepreneurial identity	Variations	Entrepreneur	Al-Dajani, Amorós, de Bruin, Dey and Keim, Galloway, Hechavarria, Liu	Amorós: “The reflection on whether, for all unconventional, marginalized, and stigmatized groups, entrepreneurship is an end itself (business creation) or is a means to mitigate these stigmas and generate inclusive development among non-conventional groups (McMullen, 2011)”
	Intersections	Entrepreneur	Bonillas, de Bruin, Al-Dajani, Milanov, Newman and Ro, Price, Radu-Lefebvre, Sindani, Villesèche, Xheneti	Price: “An individual may have some social identities that are considered ‘conventional’ or ‘mainstream’ while simultaneously having social identities that are considered ‘unconventional’ or ‘marginalized’. These identities also may change in relation to geographic location as a powerful, dominant identity may not have the same status in a different society”
	Construction of identity	Entrepreneur	Amorós, Lindbergh, et al., Lubinski and Wadhwani, Randolph et al., Newman and Ro, Villesèche	Randolph et al.: “It seems reasonable to assert that maybe ‘unconventional’ entrepreneurs do not necessarily want to be ‘conventional’ and do not want to change their traits”
	Resources of entrepreneur	Social groups	Bonillas, Dodd, Liu, Randolph et al., Newman and Ro, Sindani, Xheneti	Xheneti: “Social positionality shifts the attention away to the inequalities in access to resources—material, economic, cultural (Martinez Dy, 2020) and most importantly, the structural conditions of such inequalities, offering an opportunity to theorize the agency—structure interaction”
	Cultural norms	Social groups	Amorós, Lindbergh, et al., Dodd, Galloway, Hechavarria, Jackson, Liu, Lubinski and Wadhwani, Newman and Ro, Randolph et al., Price, Ram, Radu-Lefebvre, Sindani, Villesèche	Ram: “First, practical adequacy’s depth ontology foregrounds the analysis of the enabling conditions and structural inequalities that shape entrepreneurial activities (Bruton et al., 2023; Martinez Dy et al., 2018; Martinez Dy, 2020). It would view ‘ethnic minority’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee’ less than as physical or cultural attribute, ... than as a social construct shaped by societal structures such as racism”

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Topic	Theme	Unit	Exemplary essays	Example text
Topic 4: Differentiation versus assimilation	Context	Social groups	Amorós, Lindbergh, et al., Bonillas, Hechavarria, Liu, Lubinski and Wadhvani, Randolph, et al. Newman and Ro, Ram, Villesèche, Xheneti, Sindani	Sindani: "Based on my research, my response would be on two components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and my reflection would be how formal institutions (enterprise policy) and informal institutions (culture) can be more inclusive for unconventional entrepreneurs (Jua Kali—informal women's entrepreneurs)." Hechavarria: "Entrepreneurship is a contextualized economic activity that is situationally constrained.... most of the unconventional entrepreneurs highlighted in the essay, like convicts, refugees, immigrants, and differently-abled people, tend to be shunned by the labor market (hard to find a job), so many turn to entrepreneurship as a means to generate income because they have no better options for work"
	Heterogeneity across diverse groups	Group differences	Al-Dajani, Liu, Lewis, Randolph et al., Newman and Ro, Radu-Lefebvre, Ram, Xheneti	Lewis: "For example, underrepresented racial minority entrepreneurs in the United States operate within a system that disadvantages them yet use that system to create new products, businesses, and processes that privilege the interests of their communities (Bruton et al., 2023)"
	Within-group heterogeneity	Group differences	Al-Dajani, Amorós, Lindbergh, et al., de Bruin, Dey and Keim, Galloway, Lubinski and Wadhvani, Price, Radu-Lefebvre, Ram	de Bruin: "Wheadon and Duval-Couetil (2017) urge reflexivity and critical reflexivity in entrepreneurship education and research so that gender exclusivity is not sustained. Additionally, reflexivity increases awareness of the diversity of entrepreneur populations and affords attention to intersectionality (Martinez Dy et al., 2014; Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018)"
				(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Topic	Theme	Unit	Exemplary essays	Example text
Topic 5: Inclusive ecosystem	Assimilation is not the Answer	Group differences	Al-Dajani, Lindbergh, et al., Bonillas, de Bruin, Dey and Keim, Galloway, Liu, Jackson, Newman and Ro, Price, Ram, Villesèche, Xheneti	Galloway: "In my work on gay entrepreneurs (Galloway, 2007, 2011), I referenced Queer Theory and the distinction between liberalist and liberationist approaches to understanding diversity to show how the unconventional attracted (non-heteronormative) market share, and was the reason some were entrepreneurs at all—they could create countercultural 'unconventional' organizations as a means of diverging from mainstream labor/enterprise"
	Complexity	Ecosystem	Amorós, Lindbergh, et al., Dey and Keim, Dodd, Milanov, Randolph et al.	Lindbergh, et al.: "We do certainly agree with the authors that 'entrepreneurship has the potential to be an inclusive space', comprising many types of entrepreneurs and practices of entrepreneurship"
	Structural inequalities	Ecosystem	Lewis, Lindbergh, et al., Jackson, Lindberg, Randolph et al., Newman, Ram, Sindani, Xheneti	Newman and Ro: "Some aspects of his identity (ethnicity, gender) are part of the dominant power structure in the U.S., yet the individual as disabled would also be considered 'unconventional' as disabled persons have less power in U.S. society"
	Entrepreneur agency	Ecosystem	Al-Dajani, Galloway, Jackson, Liu, Lewis, Randolph et al., Newman and Ro	Liu: "Representation is crucial as it would be important to let immigrant entrepreneurs share their voices and needs among other individuals, businesses, governments, nonprofits, and community stakeholders and actively involve them in the decision-making process"

Note. Essays are available in the supplementary appendix.

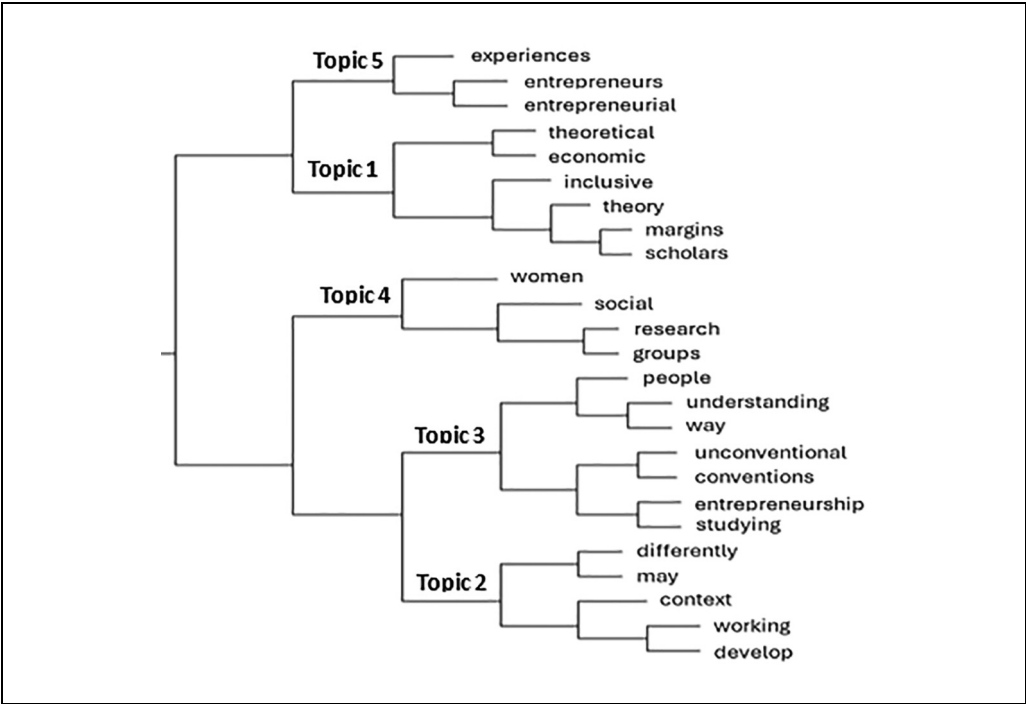


Figure 3. Cluster validation with NVivo.

Validation Tests

Conducting word frequency analysis in ChatGPT-4 and NVivo confirmed the reliability of our tokenization process. We found it essential to ask ChatGPT-4 to perform the word frequency analysis before the topic modeling, highlighting the significance of establishing correct corpus analysis parameters when using LLMs for corpus analysis. We next assessed the sentiment of the documents using NLP sentiment analysis, discovering a neutral to subjective tone throughout the responses. Document sentiment varied from neutral to mildly subjective (polarity: .032–.20; subjectivity: .39–.46; results available upon request), suggesting that the authors’ personalities and beliefs subtly influenced their writings without undermining academic objectivity.

A document similarity analysis using the Latent Semantic Analysis approach (Deerwester et al., 1990) revealed that the most similar essays shared thematic elements such as “marginalization” and “intersectionality,” supporting the model’s effectiveness in identifying related content (results available upon request). The two essays identified as the most similar were Lewis #21 (Table A1)⁴ and Randolph et al. #17 (Table A1), which scored .363 on similarity.⁵ Both essays addressed “marginalization” and “intersectionality.” Lewis #21 (Table A1) also discussed “agency” and “power,” while Randolph et al. #21 (Table A1) focused on “access” and “inclusion.” This alignment in scores and content led us to accept the model.

Finally, a word cluster analysis performed in NVivo confirmed that the topics identified by ChatGPT-4 were aligned with the word clusters, providing additional validation for our topic modeling approach (see Figure 3). After completing the NLP analysis and

validation check, the first lead author organized the themes and topics in an Excel spreadsheet, categorizing each essay by author, theme, and topic for easy reference by the research team.⁶ This streamlined method ensured that our findings remained robust and captured the nuanced themes within the entrepreneurship research community.

Qualitative Analysis

In step 13, leveraging preliminary NLP analysis from ChatGPT-4, we conducted a traditional qualitative analysis of all essays through a structured approach. First, each lead author independently read the essays to comprehend their meanings, arguments, and perspectives. After compiling notes and identifying emerging themes per Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, the lead authors drafted summaries that were exchanged and discussed in writing and during online Zoom sessions.

Upon completing the machine analysis from step 12, each of the six lead authors reviewed this spreadsheet and reflected on the insights generated by the NLP. Each lead author was assigned one of the five main topics identified from the NLP output (as listed in Table 2) to deepen our analysis. They examined a corresponding subset of essays related to their topic, analyzing and synthesizing emerging subtopics into a 3- to 4-page draft. These drafts were collectively reviewed during further discussions, which focused on structural differences, thematic coherence, and any discrepancies. Through these discussions, we refined our understanding and reached a consensus on 3- to 4-key meta-themes per topic. These meta-themes framed our narrative around the key discussions in Bakker and McMullen (2023), highlighting areas of agreement or divergence. The analyses outlined here form the basis for the following discussion.

Discussion

Topic 1: Studying Entrepreneurship

Scholars have warned about the consequences of furthering hegemonic theories of entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000) and (un)conscious perpetuation of privileged epistemic positions (Chowdhury, 2023). (Randolph, et al. #17, Table A1)

Three broad themes related to the approaches of studying entrepreneurship emerged from the essays: (1) whether a classification of "conventional" or "unconventional" entrepreneurs is theoretically valid; (2) the significance of adopting different epistemological and ontological approaches to the study of entrepreneurship; and (3) questioning the agency of researchers themselves who investigate marginalized populations.

Classifications. Bakker and McMullen (2023) identify unconventional entrepreneurial subgroups based on physicality (gender, age, and disabilities), cognitive dimensions (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, intelligence quotient, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), cultural dimensions (e.g., religion, ethnicity, and immigrant), economic impoverishment, and behavioral dimensions (e.g., the formerly incarcerated).⁷ The conventional group consists of "those entrepreneurs who possess the traits considered to be in accordance with (local) customs and beliefs, conferring on them the greatest access to the resources required for entrepreneurship" (Bakker & McMullen, 2023, p. 2). Unconventional entrepreneurs are categorized at the individual micro-level, whereas the

definition of the conventional entrepreneur is at a socioeconomic macro-level unit of analysis, an epistemological inconsistency (Lubinski and Wadhwani, #12, Villeseche, #19, Table A1). Nevo (2025) uses “atypical” and “typical,” which also are socially constructed labels, thus, also a socioeconomic-level construct and epistemologically consistent.

Classifying entrepreneurs has always been problematic (Gartner, 1985, 1988; Ramoglou et al., 2020). In any classification scheme, the question is, “What (or who) do these categorizations serve?” Dey and Keim, #5 (Table A1) suggest that this categorization is a way of demonstrating power over others (Foucault, 1980), while Lubinski and Wadhwani, #12 (Table A1) surmise that the “unconventional” takes on the specter of “madness” (Foucault, 1965) or “stigma” (Goffman, 1963). A categorization, by definition, includes some and excludes others. There is a sense of irony in Bakker and McMullen (2023) that, albeit intending to be more inclusive, they generate more exclusion (Al-Dajani, #2, Table A1).

Rather than “conventional,” the essay writers utilize categories such as the privileged or dominant class (Dey and Keim, #5; Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17, Table A1). Instead of “unconventional” they refer to the oppressed or marginalized (Al-Dajan, #2; Amorós, #1; Dey & Keim, #5; Galloway, #7; Jackson, #9; Lewis, #21; Lubinski and Wadhwani, #12; Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17; Newman and Ro, #13; Price, #14; Table A1). Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17 (Table A1) explain, “[i]dentifying entrepreneurs as conventional or unconventional reinforces and reifies a white male hero entrepreneur archetype (Ogbor, 2000) and is unnecessary as scholars have already reached a consensus on the appropriate phrase to describe such entrepreneurs: marginalized.” Thus, in the remainder of this editorial, we will use the term marginalized instead of “unconventional.” None of the essay writers supported the classification of entrepreneurs into “unconventional” and “conventional”; in fact, they found it either atheoretical, insulting, or both. The attempt to categorize entrepreneurs as “unconventional” versus “conventional” (Bakker & McMullen, 2023), “atypical” and “typical” (Nevo, 2025), or other in/outgroup categorizations is fraught with inaccuracies, epistemologically unsound, fosters exclusivity rather than inclusivity (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), and introduces a framework with which the essay writers decisively disagree.

Beyond Positivism. The second theme related to theory questioned the positivist epistemological and ontological approach (Dey and Keim, #5; Dodd, #6; Lubinski and Wadhwani, #12; Ram, #16; Radu-Lefebvre, #15; Table A1). The positivist approach and search for generalization of theory overlook the value of alternative epistemologies and methodologies in the field of entrepreneurship. Radu-Lefebvre, #15 (Table A1) asks whether a positivist epistemological position is “the most (only?) valuable and necessary in the field of entrepreneurship. Each of these sets of methodologies [qualitative and quantitative] might thus contribute to theory development in their own legitimate ways, and one cannot accuse entrepreneurship studies developed on specific groups of entrepreneurs of a lack of generalization (Bakker & McMullen, 2023, p. 2) as the objective of qualitative research is NOT generalization but the contextualization of unique aspects of human experience (Dilthey, 1974).” This goal of generalization minimizes the idiosyncratic characteristics of diverse populations, whose identification is a frequent goal of the social constructionist and critical theory researcher.

The essay writers drew on a variety of existing theoretical lenses that recognize marginalized groups, including intersectionality (de Bruin, #4; Dodd, #6; Lewis, #21; Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17; Newman and Ro, #13; Xheneti, #20; Table A1), stratification

economics (Price, #14; Table A1), structural disadvantage (Lewis, #21; Table A1), mixed embeddedness (Liu, #11, Ram, #16; Table A1), and context (Amorós, #1; Table A1). Many were nimble enough to account for different contexts while illuminating the point that context is essential for understanding entrepreneurial behavior. For example, Hechavarria, #8 (Table A1) describes necessity entrepreneurship commonly attributed to immigrant entrepreneurs who “turn to entrepreneurship as a means to generate income because they have no better options for work.”

By contrast, Liu, #11 (Table A1) highlights marginalized entrepreneurs who fall into the opportunity category when discussing a “new generation of immigrant entrepreneurs” who are overrepresented in the high-tech and high-growth sectors, such as Elon Musk and Sergey Brin. However, this new generation of immigrant entrepreneurs is more diverse in their skill level, entrepreneurial motivations, industries, and business strategies, as evidenced by their over-representation in the high-tech and high-growth sectors (Liu et al., 2014; Saxenian, 2007) and their extensive transnational activities (Wang & Liu, 2015). Thus, although immigration status puts many entrepreneurs in marginalized positions, the context of their intersecting identities is vital to understanding the relationship between their status and their ability to access the social, cultural, or economic resources necessary to start their ventures.

Agency of the Academic Researcher. A third theme in studying entrepreneurship focused on the researchers themselves. Members of advantaged classes establish the norms by which entrepreneurs are studied and who gets to study entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship scholars who hold marginalized identities and / or study marginalized entrepreneurs face questions of legitimacy (like those faced by marginalized entrepreneurs) and thus encounter barriers to social, cultural, and economic resources within the academic community. Lewis, #21 (Table A1) explains the difficulty that scholarship on marginalized entrepreneurs faces, stating, “Scholars may encounter reviewers asking, ‘Why should an entrepreneurship journal care about race/class/ability?’” Indeed, Galloway, #7 (Table A1) challenged the claim that “unconventional entrepreneurs... have been passively disregarded” in research (Bakker & McMullen, 2023, p.1), stating: “This is simply not true. There may well be passive disregard in Journal of Business Venturing, but great work has been coming through (for years) in International Small Business Journal, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research, Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, and many more, including our own International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation.” Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17 (Table A1) clarify how existing power structures inhibit the dissemination of work on marginalized entrepreneurs through journal rankings, noting that these rankings “perpetuate an elitism that prevents scholarship published in ‘unconventional’ journals from being cited.” Hence, academic gatekeepers of a particular social class utilize their power to narrowly define the field of entrepreneurship and place constraints on which entrepreneurship scholarship can be published. They do so in ways that perpetuate the exclusion of marginalized entrepreneurs and scholars (Garcia & Baack, 2023; Morris, 2017).

Topic 2: Identity and Roles

..., rather than label an entrepreneur as unconventional because of their physical dimensions, cognitive abilities, culture, socio-economics, and behavior, perhaps we should look at how

people seize entrepreneurial opportunities by taking something unconventional and capitalizing on it. (Bonillas, #3; Table A1)

The essay writers raised an important question in the study of entrepreneurship: “How important is the entrepreneur’s identity in the study of entrepreneurship?” The role of EI in setting an entrepreneurial strategy has been studied extensively (Mmbaga et al., 2020; Navis & Glynn, 2011; Radu-Lefebvre et al., 2021). In a systematic review, Mmbaga et al. (2020) revealed four distinct conversations around EI: *distinctions*—how entrepreneurs and their corresponding identities differ from other groups; *variations*—varieties of identity types among entrepreneurs; *intersections*—the intersection of multiple identities⁸ and *constructions*—the construction, creation, and evolution of entrepreneurial identities. These four conversations nicely sum up the approaches that our essay writers utilized when discussing the identity of entrepreneurs.

Distinctions. Essay writers emphasized that the identity and actions of any entrepreneur do not follow conventionality compared to the non-entrepreneur (Al-Dajani, #2; Dodd, #6; Galloway, #7; Villesèche, #19, Table A1). Al-Dajani argues, “Conventionality is not determined by the entrepreneur’s conformity to a set of predetermined entrepreneur characteristics, but rather by the individual’s unwillingness to be an agent of change.” That is to say that the conventional will not pursue entrepreneurship, only the unconventional will. More pointedly, Dodd, #6 (Table A1) calls conventional entrepreneurship an oxymoron as entrepreneurship “is surely the diametric opposite of such convention.”

Several essay writers (Jackson, #9; Lewis, #21; Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17; Xheneti, #20, Table A1) call out the “othering” distinction inherent in Bakker and McMullen (2023). Xheneti suggests that “there is much more to be learned by these ‘encounters with difference’ (Imas et al., 2012) or narratives outside of the mainstream (Kibler & Laine, 2024) that will help us unpack further the phenomenon of entrepreneurship.” Lewis sets this othering within the theory of structural disadvantage (Giddens, 1979), thus calling for more studies, not on the individual but on the socioeconomic system where othering occurs.

Variations. The role identity of entrepreneurs can vary depending on their unique passions, motivations, and intentions in pursuing entrepreneurship (Mmbaga et al., 2020). Although passion and intent were not a significant theme in the essays, some noted motivational variation due to role identity (Al-Dajani, #2; de Bruin, #4; Dey and Keim, #5, Table A1). Necessity-driven versus opportunity-driven entrepreneurship is a common theme in studies on the marginalized entrepreneur (Amorós, #1; Hechavarria, #8; Liu, #11, Table A1). In addition, de Bruin states the motivational differences between social and environmental entrepreneurs compared to the profit-driven entrepreneur. This is notable because marginalized populations are more likely to pursue social entrepreneurship (Garcia et al., 2023).

Galloway, #7 (Table A1) discusses work on disabled or ill entrepreneurs, explaining that their disability status did not necessarily push workers into entrepreneurship in an economic sense as predicted by theories of necessity entrepreneurship. Instead, some entrepreneurs chase non-economic values, viewing their ventures as life-enhancing choices. Galloway also describes the experience of queer individuals noting “how the unconventional attracted (non-heteronormative) market share... was the reason some were entrepreneurs at all—they could create countercultural ‘unconventional’ organizations as a means

of diverging from mainstream labor/enterprise.” Here, entrepreneurial motivation is not the opportunity entrepreneurship as commonly theorized but rather an act of social liberation in the face of marginalization.

Intersections. The role of intersectionality and how dual identity shapes entrepreneur experiences was a common theme in the essays (Al-Dajani, #2; Dey and Keim, #5; Dodd, #6; Lewis, #21; Liu, #11; Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17; Newman and Ro, #13; Xheneti, #13, Table A1). Numerous studies in entrepreneurship have taken an intersectional lens to understand how the interconnectedness between various social identities impacts individual behavior and societal perception in entrepreneurship (Acker, 2006; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Martinez Dy et al., 2017; Xheneti et al., 2019). This highlights the uniqueness of individuals who identify with more than one underrepresented population. Newman and Ro, #13 (Table A1) use an intersectionality perspective when pointing out inconsistencies in Bakker and McMullen’s (2023) approach to categorizations: “For example, consider a white male in the United States who suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a largely ‘invisible’ disability... Would this person be considered an unconventional entrepreneur because of his disability? Or would he be considered conventional due to his ethnicity and gender?”

Constructions. The social construction of EI often arises in the study of entrepreneurship, particularly in gender studies (Brush et al., 2009). Entrepreneurial narratives influence entrepreneurial identities as specific challenges and opportunities are constructed from historical, institutional, cultural, and social factors (Dey and Keim, #5; Dodd, #6; Radu-Lefebvre, #15; Ram, #16; Sindani, #18; Xheneti, #20, Table A1). Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17 (Table A1) highlight the social construction of gender by arguing that “[f]emale entrepreneurs are described [by Bakker and McMullen] as unconventional because of their gender. It seems reasonable to assert that maybe ‘unconventional’ entrepreneurs do not necessarily want to be ‘conventional’ and do not want to change their traits. Rather, they want to be treated fairly.” Furthermore, Dodd, #6 (Table A1) warns us not to ask, “Why can’t a woman be more like a man?”

Given this summary of EI, asking “Who is an entrepreneur?” continues not to be the right question. The question of “Who is an ‘unconventional’ entrepreneur?” is atheoretical given the definition of conventionality. Asking, “How can new offerings [from marginalized populations] transcend from niche markets to Main markets?” Bakker and McMullen (2023, p. 6) overlook the distinctions, variations, intersectionalities, and constructions of EI, which drive entrepreneurial activity. The essay writers argued that marginalized entrepreneurs do not need to transcend their niche markets to serve mainstream markets to “maneuver into positions that provide the highest probability of success” (Bakker & McMullen, 2023, p. 7), as success can be found in whichever market they choose to serve.

Topic 3: Social Construction of EI

[E]ntrepreneurship is not a natural phenomenon. It is a series of socio-economic phenomena enacted by people with infinitely varying lives, hopes, responsibilities, limitations and enablements. (Galloway, #7, Table A1)

Another topic the essay writers highlight and interrogate is the salience of social, cultural, and economic factors in explaining across-group differences in entrepreneurial strategizing. They utilize these structural factors to emphasize at least three activities of privilege/marginalization that contribute to differences in entrepreneurship across groups: (1) allocating various forms of capital resources, (2) establishing cultural norms, and (3) divorcing entrepreneurship from its contexts. This framework, which integrates theories of privilege and marginalization into behavioral approaches to the study of entrepreneurship, offers a way forward for creating more inclusive entrepreneurship scholarship and practice.

Resource Allocation

Resource allocation emerged from those essays describing how privilege and marginality produce group differences in whether or how individuals can access resources necessary for entrepreneurship (Dey and Keim, #5; Bonillas, #3; Randolph, Nair, and O'Toole, #17; Xheneti, #20; Villesèche, #19; Table A1). Essay writers described how social and economic marginalization impedes entrepreneurship by limiting access to social, cultural, political, and financial capital resources among the marginalized. Amorós, #1 (Table A1) explained, "Throughout human history, dominant classes have enjoyed greater access to resources, be it physical, financial, social, or cultural," and that entrepreneurs must acquire access to resources they do not control to start new ventures. However, as Newman and Ro, #13 (Table A1) explain, this requires an entrepreneurial venture's structures, practices, and behaviors to be considered legitimate, and therefore, it must "align with the prevailing institutions in the environment in which it operates" (Fisher et al., 2016, p. 383; Tolbert et al., 2011). The essay writers rhetorically ask, "What if stakeholders will never perceive the entrepreneur as 'legitimate' due to their social identity?" Lewis, #21 (Table A1) offers an answer suggesting that marginalized entrepreneurs are "products of structural disadvantage, a quality of social systems in which prevailing social structures afford greater agency to dominant groups than to marginalized groups" (Giddens, 1979).

Given their characteristics, entrepreneurs from the dominant social group, the 'conventionals' (Bakker & McMullen, 2023), are passive recipients of disproportionately large resource shares. However, we argue that both the construct of convention and the phenomenon of entrepreneurship are about active practices, not passive attributes. Traits do not simply confer resources on entrepreneurs from dominant social groups, but these entrepreneurs act in ways that utilize their privileged positions of relative power to acquire resources necessary for entrepreneurship (Pratto et al., 2006). Their actions can both reflect and reinforce their positions in the social hierarchy (Dodd, #6, Table A1). By reinforcing their dominant positions, these entrepreneurs (intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to marginalizing entrepreneurs from non-dominant groups (Amorós, #1, Table A1; Colbourne et al., 2024). Thus, the actions of stakeholders create group differences in entrepreneurship based on relative privilege and marginalization. Galloway, #7 (Table A1), presents a vision that focuses on not addressing perceived deficits among the marginalized but on the exclusionary behavior of actors from dominant groups. She states, "If research and policy want to increase conventional/greater-yield outputs/performance, they could stop marginalizing everything that is not nominally conventional."

Cultural Norms. Another subtheme in Topic 3 investigates how individuals from privileged social classes establish cultural norms that strengthen their position of power while marginalizing those outside the norms they establish. Their ability to do so is driven by the same

resource advantages that grant them superior entrepreneurial outcomes. Dodd, #6 (Table A1) explains:

[I]t is always those with the greatest access to resources who enact, reproduce, and sustain the local customs and beliefs of their own strata. It is precisely because they hold this access to diverse forms of capital that the dominant center is able to determine and deploy their habitus, presented and justified as “convention.” Their actions and norms are wrapped up in a narrative of conventionality to underwrite the continuation and exacerbation of extant resource structures and flows.

This norm-setting further reinforces the flow of resources to the privileged class by perpetuating the belief that the conventional entrepreneurs are the ones that society should invest in since they tend to garner greater financial returns (Lindbergh et al., #10, Table A1). The impact of social returns as opposed to economic returns is ignored (Garcia et al., 2023).

Entrepreneurship in Context. The final subtheme under Topic 3 emphasized the vital role of context in understanding group differences in entrepreneurship and ultimately moving the field of entrepreneurship research forward (Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2024; Welter, 2011). Despite acknowledging the importance of contextualization, Bakker and McMullen (2023) obscure the roles of privilege and marginalization in explaining group-based differences in entrepreneurship, thus—again—divorcing entrepreneurship from its context. Ignoring context places undue expectations on the marginalized that they can and must utilize their agency to overcome challenging contexts through greater effort, better practices, and the like. Likewise, it perpetuates a narrative that entrepreneurship could overcome its marginalization (Dodd, #6; Galloway, #7, Table A1).

Rather than separating entrepreneurship from its context, the essay writers suggest that examining how and why increased contextualization is essential for developing more inclusive entrepreneurship theories would be more effective. They argue that entrepreneurship is not separate from the context in which it occurs or the environment in which the entrepreneur resides. Creating comprehensive theories and frameworks of entrepreneurship necessitates understanding the diverse and complex contexts in which marginalized entrepreneurs exist. As mainstream entrepreneurship theory stems from the experiences of the dominant class, inclusive entrepreneurship requires theoretical perspectives broad enough to include the various contexts in which both marginalized and privileged entrepreneurs function. In conclusion, we do not need new unified theories of the marginalized, but enhanced theories of entrepreneurship across its many contexts (Villesèche, #19, Table A1). Openness and inclusivity start with the researcher.

Topic 4: Diversity and Heterogeneity in Business and Entrepreneurial Practices

In reality, entrepreneurs, whether “conventional” or “unconventional,” are not homogeneous groups, and their entrepreneurship is multifaceted with a wide spectrum of approaches, strategies, and motivations. (Al-Dajani, #2, Table A1)

Essay writers emphasized the diversity and heterogeneity of entrepreneurs within and across different groups. They critiqued homogeneity within conventional or marginalized groupings based on theory, practice, and implications. Three key themes emerged from this

analysis: heterogeneity across diverse groups, multifaceted heterogeneity within groups, and assimilation as an incorrectly recommended solution.

Heterogeneity Across Diverse Groups. Essay writers argue that the groups identified as “unconventional” are not in and of themselves exclusive and that wide variations exist across these groups. One vivid example is the distinction that sex is not gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987), contrary to Bakker and McMullen (2023), who ascribe women as marginalized because of their biological sex. However, the reality is that both men and women entrepreneurs differ in “terms of their prototypicality regarding their capacity and willingness to embrace hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2018)... which Bakker and McMullen (2023) refer to in their article without, however, distinguishing the social representation from its social incarnation” (Radu-Lefebvre, #15, Table A1). Gender theory, which differentiates between biological sex (male/female) and gender (masculine/feminine), suggests that in Western societies, men are expected to display masculine behaviors associated with assertiveness and dominance. In contrast, women are expected to exhibit feminine behaviors associated with warmth and emotional expressiveness (Bem, 1974; Eagly, 1987). However, men and women are not precluded from behaving in either a masculine or feminine manner when starting a business, building a management team, creating a mission, or growing their venture. The variations between men and women entrepreneurs are not sex differences, but rather, they are based on gender, which is a social construction that guides behavior.

Another example of heterogeneity across groups has to do with marginalized entrepreneurs labeled as “ethnic minority” or “racialized minority.” At the outset, these terms do not recognize the implicit stereotypes of the “model minority” (e.g., an Asian who starts a high-tech company in Silicon Valley) and homogenize marginalized populations (Garcia et al., 2023). In the United States, for instance, Black entrepreneurs possess distinct social identities compared to Latino entrepreneurs, yet both groups are often grouped as a single “minority” group. Beyond being identified as racialized minorities, the critical differences between these two groups are often ignored (Ram, #16, Table A1). First, social identity is based on the knowledge that one belongs to a social group or category and is anchored in intergroup social comparisons (Stets & Burke, 2000). In other words, there is considerable variation among all groups identified as ethnic or racialized minorities based on their group affiliations (Garcia et al., 2023).

Further, within the classification of marginalized entrepreneurs, there are significant differences across groups stemming from socioeconomic factors (Ram, #16, Table A1), environments where they live and work (Lindbergh et al., #10, Table A1), and the multifaceted contexts within which entrepreneurship is embedded: institutional, political, social, spatial, cultural, economic, or transnational (Lewis, #21; Liu, #11; Xheneti, #20, Table A1). For example, variations in motivations, strategies, and approaches occur primarily because entrepreneurs do not have the same starting point regarding resources (Bonillas, #3, Table A1), which is directly influenced by their family embeddedness (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). For instance, a high-income single mother, a Hispanic immigrant to the United States with an electrical engineering degree, or a less-educated white male veteran will come to entrepreneurship from a variety of family embeddedness contexts, which means they have different bundles of “starting” resources in terms of human, social, and financial capital (Brush et al., 2001). These variations in their starting points lead to varying approaches in entrepreneurial processes (opportunity recognition, launch decision, and resource mobilization) and business models (Al-Dajani, #2, Table A1).

Within-Group Heterogeneity. Besides the variation in entrepreneurial behavior *across* marginalized groups, there is also variation *within* these groups. In the case of migrant entrepreneurs, skills, resources, and social and economic conditions in their home and host countries influence how they approach entrepreneurship (Ram, #16, Table A1). More specifically, migrant entrepreneurs to Europe or North America often enter low-tech sectors with low entry barriers and develop services or products valuable to the migrant community (e.g., food, retail trade, and services, c.f. Kerr & Kerr, 2020). Paradoxically, the next generation of immigrant entrepreneurs often have diverse skill levels, motivations, and business strategies, and they are overrepresented in high-tech and high-growth sectors, as well as extensive transnational activities (Liu, #11, Table A1). For example, Hispanic business owners classified in the United States as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) are overrepresented among immigrant businesses earning \$1 million or more annually (Orozco et al., 2018). By acquiring strong English language skills during childhood and fostering community connections within their ethnic groups and in mainstream markets, this cohort is less likely to experience negative marginalization than non-DACA immigrants. These distinct identities blur the lines between conventional and marginalized entrepreneurs as immigrant entrepreneurs may share migration and ethnicity traits with certain groups and industry or business-related traits with others (Liu, #11, Table A1; Kerr & Kerr, 2020).

Xheneti, #20 (Table A1) draws from Martinez Dy (2020), who points out that the likelihood of discovering and acting on entrepreneurial opportunities is driven by intention or motivation and social positionality. Social positionality moves away from categories of groups, gender, ethnicity, and class to consider social locations, processes, and contexts (Martinez Dy, 2020) that directly influence the kinds of opportunities, enabling conditions, resources, and social networks in the entrepreneurial process. For example, Cuban immigrant entrepreneurs arrive in Florida with different resources, networks, and opportunities than Mexican immigrants arriving in Texas, although both are classified as Hispanic entrepreneurs. Hence, variations within groups of marginalized entrepreneurs are apparent for reasons other than their classification in that group.

Similarly, other essay writers highlight contextual factors that shape and are shaped by various forms of entrepreneurship (Baker & Welter, 2020). For example, the household context may influence women entrepreneurs, whereby some with larger, low-economic households may start different kinds of businesses than those women with smaller, more affluent households. As such, the differences within groups of women, racial groups, older entrepreneurs, immigrants, etc., are not the result of who they are (their unconventionality) but instead of their social positionality within their economic and social contexts.

Likewise, some contexts or ecosystems may be more inclusive of certain kinds of entrepreneurship (e.g., business types) than others (Liu, #11; Sindani, #18, Table A1). Because within-group positionality includes networks of actors and elements and is geographically bounded (Spigel, 2017), contextual influences on how entrepreneurs acquire information and access markets, resources, and support systems vary widely. Some ecosystems are more inclusive and provide some businesses with more support, while others do not. Hence, the variation within groups of entrepreneurs is less due to who the entrepreneur is and more a consequence of the contextual setting.

Assimilation is Not the Answer. One way for marginalized entrepreneurs to overcome their social stigma and deficits is to assimilate, “where the unconventional group eventually becomes woven into the fabric of society, largely as a function of acceptance by the

conventional group” (Bakker & McMullen, 2023, p. 7) and where conventional entrepreneurs are held up as “an ideal of good conduct” or “proper being” (Dey and Keim, #5, Table A1). But how do the marginalized become conventional? Can a woman be more like a man? How can the margins become like the center? What does this mean for racial minorities, those with cognitive or physical challenges, the aged, or immigrants? How do they become conventional? Four main dimensions of conventionality (physical, cognitive, economic, and social) are not logically “changeable” for those described as unconventional. Bakker and McMullen’s definitional roots for conventional do not recognize the underlying causes of marginality and possible conditions for change (Dey and Keim, #5, Table A1).

Alternatively, if we view entrepreneurship as a practice, a social process, and a set of activities, then how does the practice of entrepreneurship become conventional (Hechavarria, #8, Table A1)? In the first place, conventions do not reside in people, but they are understood as socially routinized behaviors taken for granted (Lubinski and Wadhwani, #12; Hechavarria, #8, Table A1). Given the different starting points, contextual factors, and social positions noted above, is it *possible to be conventional, given that these factors are causes of the variations across and within groups*? Following an assimilation approach would be the equivalent of “attempting to apply a bland grey theory, approach, and/or policy that ignores the rich diversity of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship and would be akin to providing the same medical treatment to every patient in the hospital regardless of their individual condition.” (Al-Dajani, #2, Table A1). Instead, we should increase our opportunity to understand the lived experiences of diverse people and broaden the tent to hold all perspectives (Jackson, #9, Table A1). It is unclear who benefits from assimilation.

Topic 5: Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

How, then, shall we realize this inclusive vision of entrepreneurship? Isaiah 54:2 encourages us to “Enlarge the site of your tent and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.” (Jackson, #9, Table A1)

Many researchers have advocated for more open and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. Essay writers, however, including Al-Dajani, #2; Lindbergh et al., #10; Liu, #11; and Xheneti, #20 (Table A1), criticize this objective as an overly simplistic view of the inherently complex nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems. Their perspective on ecosystems coalesces into three subthemes: (1) the inherent complexity of entrepreneurial ecosystems, (2) the necessity of acknowledging and embracing structural inequalities, and (3) the crucial role of individual agency in navigating the complexities of markets and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Complexity of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. Entrepreneurial ecosystems are numerous interdependent elements that enable entrepreneurship through formal and informal institutions (Stam, 2015). By asking how entrepreneurial ecosystems can be made more open and inclusive, Bakker and McMullen (2023) suggest *formal institutions* (e.g., laws) as a possible answer, referencing the 1964 Civil Rights Act as an example of legislation driving social change. However, essay writers argue that centralized control oversimplifies the decentralized nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems (Bonillas, #3; Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1).

Ecosystems, including entrepreneurship ecosystems, often operate through partisan mutual adjustments among stakeholders, lacking a singular coordinating entity (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). Jackson, #9 (Table A1) suggests that “as more women, minoritized individuals, differently abled individuals, people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and LGBTQIA individuals become entrepreneurs, their experiences will reshape the consciousness of institutional inhabitants and will fundamentally transform dominant structures and practices” without formal institutional fulcrums.

Alternatively, Bakker and McMullen (2023) propose fixing *informal institutions* (i.e., entrepreneurial culture and networks) because “the culture and network advantages of unconventional entrepreneurs are too often offset by the disadvantages of subsisting in an enclave economy” (p. 6). However, recent studies have debunked the ethnic enclave theory in modern society (Garcia et al., 2023; Liu, # 11, Table A1). Due to advancements in digital technologies, entrepreneurial ecosystems are increasingly transcending industry boundaries and geographic constraints, including previously traditional enclaves (Elia et al., 2020). Consequently, these ecosystems manifest across diverse sectors and regions, underscoring the interconnected and dynamic nature of the contemporary business landscape (Jacobides et al., 2018). Recent research has also shown that informal institutions that embrace the diverse voices of various stakeholders and copresence of subcultural amenities spur productive entrepreneurship within a regional economic ecosystem, whereas the “mainstream” or dominant culture had no significant impact on local start-up rates (Audretsch et al., 2021).

Overall, essay writers noted that, because Bakker and McMullen (2023) suggest a too broad description of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, its framework lacks “practical adequacy” (Ram, #16, Table A1), and its vagueness risks misleading readers about what constitutes an entrepreneurial ecosystem, much like their atheoretical classification of a “conventional” versus “unconventional entrepreneurial archetype (Ram, #16, Table A1). These oversights hinder efforts to understand and address the nuanced dynamics in complex entrepreneurship ecosystems.

Embrace Structural Inequalities. Entrepreneurship is a socially embedded process where barriers and challenges result from structural disadvantage, in which prevailing social structures afford greater agency to dominant groups than marginalized groups (Lewis, #21, Table A1). Knowing that the odds are against them, marginalized populations still pursue entrepreneurship in a system that disadvantages them, and often, they learn how to use that system to create new products, businesses, and processes that privilege the interests of their communities (Bruton et al., 2023; Lewis, #21; Ram, #16, Table A1). Furthermore, transitional entrepreneurship scholars posit that research within entrepreneurship literature is based on “samples that reflect survival bias...and exclude marginalized entrepreneurs who face more obstacles and are not afforded the same privileges as their white male peers. This has led to insights that favor those who benefit from existing hegemonic political, economic, and social hierarchies” (Randolph, Nair, and O’Toole, #17, Table A1). Ignoring the nuances of the liminal enterprise is to limit our own epistemological goals as academics (Dodd, #6, Table A1).

Lewis, #21 (Table A1) asserts that because entrepreneurship is a socially embedded process, barriers that marginalized groups experience reflect such context (i.e., regional ecosystems) and do not operate in isolation. It is evident to essay writers that a deeper understanding of contextual nuances is essential in shaping a more inclusive approach toward entrepreneurship research and practice. Attributing the barriers faced by marginalized entrepreneurs solely to structurally embedded frameworks oversimplifies the complex

challenges encountered by marginalized entrepreneurs. There is no one-size-fits-all approach or simplified binary classification system as assimilation approaches propose (Lewis, #21, Table A1).

Entrepreneur Agency Within Ecosystems. Focusing on informal and formal institution classifications within entrepreneurial ecosystems also ignores the agency of individual entrepreneurs in influencing and changing these institutions (Al-Dajani, #2; Hechavarria, #8, Table A1). After all, entrepreneurship is intrinsically agentic, while marginalization is involuntary (Randolph et al., #17, Table A1). Despite the dominant power structures of formalized institutions and individuals within them, scholars must not overlook how the individual agency of entrepreneurs affects their decision-making as they navigate within these institutions. Resource deficits (i.e., financial, human, or social capital) and circumstantial deficits (i.e., caring for children) that marginalized entrepreneurs face can prompt entrepreneurship. In contrast, the effects of such deficits can affect the type of enterprises they create (Galloway, #7, Table A1).

Making sense of one's experience is inseparable from the contexts within which an individual acts (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking theory is a way to explain how marginalized entrepreneurs embrace their agency, navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship, and strategize a way forward (Bonillas, #3, Table A1). The sensemaking of the Hispanic immigrant will significantly differ from that of the white male veteran who served in the U.S. military. Yet, Bakker and McMullen (2023) suggest that they should be grouped together to identify commonalities with the goal of their assimilation into the mainstream.

While formal institutions exert undeniable influence, the oversimplification of barriers faced by marginalized entrepreneurs fails to capture the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial ecosystems. This underscores the importance of amplifying marginalized voices and broadening the scope of research to encompass diverse contexts and experiences. Moreover, fostering a more inclusive dialogue and engaging in collaborative efforts across disciplines (Bonillas, #3; Hechavarria, #8; Jackson, #9; Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1) will be instrumental in addressing the systemic challenges and promoting equity within entrepreneurial ecosystems (Al-Dajani, #2; Lewis, #21; Liu, #11; Randolph et al., #17; Sindani, #18; Table A1).

Moving the Field Forward—Opportunities to Integrate and Celebrate Heterogeneity

We end this editorial with a few overall reflections on how to move forward.

Unified Theory or Not?

A main question arising from Bakker and McMullen (2023) concerns the need for a unified theory of unconventional entrepreneurs. The responses of our coauthors showcase the variety of entrepreneurship and entrepreneuring, suggesting that entrepreneurship is unconventional and cannot be captured by distinguishing two specific populations. Hechavarria, #8 (Table A1) points out that “they [Bakker and McMullen] are focusing on who an ‘unconventional’ entrepreneur is instead of what an entrepreneur does that is unconventional (e.g., Gartner, 1988). Such logic is a slippery slope and can result in further biasing on social categories within research and practice.” Instead, we suggest putting the marginalized aspect of entrepreneurs at the center of entrepreneurship research. This

means broadening and expanding existing theory to acknowledge differences, diversity, and inclusivity and value the unique differences (Shore et al., 2011) as our research's primary drivers and foundations (Jackson, #9, Table A1). By embracing a kaleidoscopic lens, we can uncover the stories of resilience and empowerment within marginalized communities (Ram, #16, Table A1). Rather than prescribing broad solutions, scholars must engage with diverse perspectives and lived experiences. This is an emphatic “no” to a unified theory of entrepreneurship.

Broadening Research Questions

Bakker and McMullen (2023) put forward the central argument that there are essential questions not asked or answered about entrepreneurship, thereby establishing four research questions outlined in our introduction. From an inclusivity perspective, these are the wrong questions to ask. Instead, researchers should focus on questions that problematize underlying assumptions about what constitutes the norm in entrepreneurship scholarship (Lindbergh et al., #10; Lewis, #21; Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1). Broadening existing theories also requires critically questioning underlying assumptions. How can we stop “othering” entrepreneurship phenomena and people? Why does our field continue using norms that only apply to some but exclude the majority, considering them “outliers”? Instead of trying to uplift the “disadvantaged” marginalized entrepreneur, when will researchers start celebrating liminal enterprises? We must begin looking at the marginalized to inform new research areas and understand their (un-)conventional approaches. Marginalized populations do belong and are valued in inclusive entrepreneurship.

Language and Imagery Discourse

We need to pay more attention to inclusive language and imagery. What words, concepts, metaphors, and images do we use to discuss entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs? Are we aware of how and in what ways established entrepreneurship concepts may devalue entrepreneurial individuals and their actions? Moving forward, it is imperative to reframe discussions surrounding entrepreneurial ecosystems and how marginalized entrepreneurs navigate barriers to growth, perhaps using unconventional methods. Scholars suggest that we should avoid broadly labeling marginalized entrepreneurs as victims of systemic discrimination through distorted lenses of positionality; rather, it is essential to invite and highlight the voices and experiences of those often overlooked in top academic literature while recognizing their diverse experiences.

New Epistemological Approaches

In this article, we utilized human insights and the AI LLM, ChatGPT-4, to conduct a preliminary analysis of the 21 essays responding to our call regarding inclusivity in entrepreneurship. Some scholars argue that neglecting the role of LLMs in research poses a significant disadvantage, as those who adopt them can explore new frontiers (Wu et al., 2023). We consider the adoption of new research methods to be a fitting analogy: Sticking to conventional methodologies overlooks the chance to broaden our epistemological and ontological foundations, just as focusing solely on studies of the “conventional” (Bakker & McMullen, 2023) or “typical” entrepreneur (Nevo, 2025) constrains our knowledge base.

Western Bias

The academy, in general, has emerged as an important institution in the discourse surrounding the reinforcement of privileged classes in entrepreneurship via the publication process. The Western bias in entrepreneurship research, however, elevates models observed in places such as Silicon Valley, noted for their significant financial returns and contributions to regional or national economic output (Galloway, #7, Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1). This reflects a bias in Western contexts since the firms that survive are often the ones that scholars focus on (Randolph et al., #17, Table A1). Given the connection between resources and survival, this normative bias only reinforces the emphasis on and elevation of entrepreneurs from privileged classes.

This “Western bias” (Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1) leads much of academia to overlook diverse contexts where entrepreneurship exists and the everydayness of entrepreneurship beyond the Silicon Valley type (Welter et al., 2017). For example, “not all entrepreneurs are ‘opportunity’ entrepreneurs; entrepreneurs found ventures for a variety of prosocial and or nonfinancial reasons and are not always pursuing financial profit as the ultimate goal, and furthermore, many, many entrepreneurs do not engage economic activity in a Western context guided by Western values, culture, and institutions” (Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1). The disproportionate amount of research conducted on Western populations and white male entrepreneurs based in Silicon Valley does not “confer them the status of ‘conventional’” (Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1) nor can serve as benchmark for other forms of entrepreneurship (Martinez Dy et al., 2018). We do need to overcome such white hegemonic mono-lenses to entrepreneurship (Garcia & Baack, 2023).

Toward Inclusive Knowledge Accumulation and Diffusion

As evident from the essays, many researchers and research communities within the field of entrepreneurship adopt more inclusive and critical perspectives than are typically recognized by mainstream scholarship. Over time, as the scholarship in entrepreneurship has expanded, we seem to have developed a tendency to narrow our discourse instead of celebrating the richness that heterogeneity offers. This is understandable as a field grows and knowledge becomes more dispersed. However, we believe that the invisibility of certain research communities also results from gatekeeping practices that may hinder knowledge diffusion from seemingly outlier research groups. Editorial boards of leading journals often exhibit insularity. The discursive power of dominant formal institutions—including top entrepreneurial journals—and their prevailing power structures should not dictate the narrative of what counts in entrepreneurship studies (Newman and Ro, #13, Table A1). “To truly achieve Bakker and McMullen’s stated goals, we need entrepreneurial, risk-taking editors on the editorial boards of leading journals and a willingness among scholars to be more inclusive in citing publications from non-elite journals authored by ‘unconventional’ scholars” (Randolph et al., #17, Table A1). Moreover, Lindbergh et al. (#10, Table A1) point out that marginalized entrepreneurial groups are “often silenced in research.” Such discursive moves alienate and stigmatize future collaborators and researchers (Jackson, #9, Table A1) regarding the topic of unconventional entrepreneurs.

There are many opportunities to reshape the field of entrepreneurship research. Moving beyond Bakker and McMullen (2023), as well as other authors (e.g., Bates, 2022; Nevo, 2025) who suggest assimilation, we invite all entrepreneurship scholars to engage in a more critical and broader conversation about what inclusive entrepreneurship truly entails. It is

essential to recognize that diverse individuals, organizations, environments, and processes in entrepreneurship belong in our field of study, and their unique differences are significant.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

While preparing this work, the authors used ChatGPT-4 Data Analyst to conduct the two natural language processing techniques: thematic analysis and topic modeling. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed, taking full responsibility for the publication's content. Details of the methodological approach utilizing ChatGPT-4 are in the body of the paper and are further elaborated upon in the Appendix.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Drawing on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's classifications, we define diversity as encompassing differences in gender, race and ethnicity, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, veteran status, and include formerly incarcerated individuals, consistent with Bakker and McMullen's (2023) recognition of unconventional entrepreneurs. We define heterogeneity more broadly to include variation in attitudes, perspectives, and personal backgrounds, building on the work of Robinson and Dechant (1997).
2. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=2420391097524675792&hl=en&as_sdt=40000005&sciodt=0,22n
3. This section received input from ChatGPT-4; all facts have been verified by the authors; all references are provided by the lead authors of this article.
4. Link to these online papers can be found with the Supplemental Material.
5. Author essays cited in this article are referenced as "this editorial" immediately following the author's name.
6. This worksheet is available upon request.
7. Bakker and McMullen (2023) use "convict" in their article, citing a 2014 paper. "Formerly incarcerated" is the preferred term within the justice reform community.
8. Mmbaga et al. (2020) distinguish their definition of "intersections" from those of critical race theorists, who consider intersections as "a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power" (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1994). Our definition considers the meta-identity of an individual and the resulting agency, more closely aligning with Crenshaw's initial use of the term.

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