‘In the night kitchen’: Gender, identity and artisanal work

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Abstract
Using the theoretical lens of identity work, the objective of the article is to explore how the identity of an entrepreneurial, female, artisan food producer is constructed and enacted. Emphasis is given to a gendered examination of how artisan and entrepreneur as facets of identity co-exist, compete or integrate. The article relies on a phenomenologically oriented case study that comprises numerous sources including primary data from multiple, in-depth, interviews. The data are used to examine identity work undertaken by the case subject across the following categories: dramaturgical, socio-cognitive, psycho-dynamic, discursive and symbolic. The article makes a modest contribution to furthering understanding of the female entrepreneurial identity from a novel perspective.

Keywords
artisan, entrepreneurial identity, gender, identity work

Introduction
In the field of entrepreneurship scholarship, entrepreneurial identity continues to be a burgeoning area of focus and conceptualisations are increasingly nuanced. However, relative to other foci, empirical evidence remains limited – particularly in terms of the specifics of identity construction and enactment. Therefore, there is value in contributions that seek to articulate lived experience both in terms of the entrepreneurial identity and the diversity of its embodiment. This article takes gender as a signifier of diversity and adds an additional, and novel, lens to understanding by considering the influence of an additional identity to that of entrepreneur: artisan. Artisan as identity possesses a meaning and derivation that exists beyond demography. It is both a reflection of individual context and intrinsic to the individual’s sense of self – from subjective (i.e. ideological) and objective (i.e. organisational identity) standpoints (Brown, 2015). The objective of this article is to explore how the entrepreneurial identity of a female, artisan food producer is constructed and enacted via the theoretical lens of identity work.

Theorising using identity work facilitates empirically driven interrogations at the nexus of the individual and the external environment (Caza et al., 2018). This intersection is especially pertinent...
to the identities of entrepreneur and artisan as both are heavily influenced socially, temporally and culturally, and are potentially gendered. Numerous scholars have noted that there is insufficient evidence exploring identity work processes in action, and that existing research with such an orientation tends to exclude the contextually embedded character of those processes (Watson, 2009b, 2013); that gap is addressed here. The article also echoes the call for this special issue itself, in that it focuses on the richness available in the diversity of experiences of female entrepreneurs, particularly when the subtleties and novelty of their working context is sought out. Empirical gaps in our understanding of the gendered entrepreneurial experience also catalyse deeper fine-grained theorising – for example, here, in understanding the identity work that underpins both the entrepreneurial and artisanal identity.

The entrepreneur is a heavily gendered construction that suffers from the historic and pervasive dominance of a masculine orientation to understanding (Anderson and Warren, 2011; Patterson et al., 2012). Research has traditionally been preoccupied with the quantification of participation by men and women (and comparisons of their respective capabilities and performance) and articulating why women experience particular barriers or role conflict stemming from gendered norms (Moore et al., 2011). The original story of an entrepreneur as ‘heroic man’ perpetuates stereotype and gender blindness (Ahl, 2006). There also remains a lack of conceptualisations of female entrepreneurial identity that move beyond those ascribed to gender by ties to caregiving, motherhood and the like. While these have proved influential, they can come at the expense of a more varied exploration, which enables the ongoing neglect of a focus on how other aspects of the task character or work context may influence the entrepreneurial identity itself. This article responds to this void in its attempt to understand the nature of an identity derived from three differing sets of identity work resources: gender, artisanal work and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Entrepreneur and artisan are both examples of practice-driven identities beset by masculine narratives, imagery and history. An entrepreneurial identity is one driven by self-identification and centred on ‘the embodied practices of agents committed to new venture creation and management’ (Kašperová and Kitching, 2014: 439). While we understand much about the identity of the artisan product (handmade, uncompromised, small, traditional and true) (Rice, 2016), we know little of how the identity of artisan is adopted and sustained by those who work as artisan producers. Artisanal work generally, and food production specifically, is increasingly gaining attention both theoretically and practically. Globally there is a heightened interest in how we source food. The growing presence of artisan food producers is a direct reflection of that concern and embodies a commitment not only to the history and craft of artisan practice, but also to the principles of stewardship and sustainability. A question then emerges: How is artisan, as an identity, reconciled with those of entrepreneur and woman in this world of work? Identity as a fundamental bridging construct between the individual and broader society provides an opportunity for empirical insight to this question via its emphasis on the permanent dialectic between self and context (Ybema et al., 2009). Identity work is then the performative element of those processes which are fundamentally interactive in character and serve to construct a sense of identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

As identity adoption is a socially oriented process of becoming (Kempster and Cope, 2010), we rely on the construct of identity work as its analytic lens. Identity work comprises the activities undertaken to develop, maintain and exhibit identities (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) and facilitates a gendered examination of how artisan and entrepreneur as facets of identity co-exist, compete or integrate (Kreiner et al., 2006; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009). A phenomenologically oriented case study is drawn upon that comprises numerous sources including primary data from multiple, in-depth, interviews and some media-derived secondary data. Data analysis relied on interpretative phenomenological methods, content-driven thematic association and dimensions of discourse at the level of both meta- and micro narrative. In this article, individual identity dimensions are described
Artisanal context

Neo-artisanal production is a critical part of the contemporary urban cultural economy (Wallace, 2019). Work that is artisanal in character has experienced a resurgence in the post-Fordist era, and craft has been reclaimed as a contemporary labour mechanism (Sennett, 2008). This reclaiming of practical work primarily learnt through experience is in stark contrast to new economy work which privileges immaterial labour. Artisanal work deploys skills involving action and movement, and absorption in processes that involve physically ‘doing something to something with something’ (Sennett, 2008). While some definitional slipperiness exists, an artisanal product

must have a high degree of handmade input, but not necessarily having been produced or designed using traditional materials, produced as a one-off or as part of a small batch, the design of which may or may not be culturally embedded in the country of production, and which is sold for profit. (Fillis, 2004: 61)

Practical skills are elevated to the status of artisan craft via experience, repetition and practice. Anyone can be a craftsman – the defining factor is experience.

Despite the egalitarianism that an artisan identity represents, conceptualisations of artisan workers are gendered and primarily masculine in the telling (Holmes, 2015; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019; Warren, 2016). Gendered readings of craft preserve its feminine heritage and position the quotidian nature of such work firmly in the domestic setting (feminist writings of the 1960s and 1970s exposed and contested this link between craft and domesticity). In contrast, a masculine reading of craft relies on imagery of men in situ using tools that women would be unwilling or unable to use (Rosner and Fox, 2016). Indeed, Sennett’s (2008) seminal book focuses on male-oriented occupations and depicts an archetypical male craftsman. Collectively, there exists a pervasive undervaluing of the contribution and experience of women who work as artisans (Holmes, 2015). Similarly, in the limited scholarship that examines gendered artisanal entrepreneurship, women are typically attached to categorisations that reduce artisan practice to hobby status (Bouette and Magee, 2015). This dovetails with historic approaches to women’s entrepreneurship that saw them predominantly, but erroneously, linked to micro-firms or sole-traderships with limited growth potential. In their detailed review of artisan entrepreneurship Pret and Cogan (2019) specifically note the lack of attention to gender and report that the few pieces of empirical work that do take it into account fail to consider the resulting implications. They argue that future research in this area must attend to any potential distinctiveness of female practice in this occupational sphere.
This turn towards the artisan (synonymous with the label ‘craft worker’) can be understood as an act of both resistance and authenticity (Hartmann and Ostberg, 2013), and as an opportunity to reframe debates about economies and markets (Carr and Gibson, 2016). As well as a symptom of the perceived ills that pervade the structures and experience of the modern labour market, it addresses the ways in which modern modes of consumption and production have the power to alienate. For some, it is also a deliberately adopted antidote to forms of work that have been divested of meaning, autonomy and practical skill (Banks, 2010) and promotes emancipation, individualisation, sub-cultural identification, and anti-commercialism (Jakob, 2012). Strong links also exist to broader societal imperatives such as environmental sustainability and locally rooted ethical production and consumption (Jakob and Thomas, 2015). There is an indisputably ideological tone to the pursuit of artisanal work, and in some contexts it is a deliberate political statement about the meaning and quality of work. Sennett (2008) described those who craft as work as being dedicated to good work for its own sake. However, both the skill and value of work are historically informed and determined, as well as socially contested, categories (Rantisi, 2014).

Artisans as business owners are characterised as practicing a type of trade that relies heavily on co-operation and community embeddedness and pursue goals that place little, if any, priority on growth (Tregear, 2005). To be validated beyond a mere hobbyist, an artisan entrepreneur must subscribe to commercial goals (Bouette and Magee, 2015). Typologies that categorise motive have described artisan owner-managers as having one of four primary orientations: lifestyle, business, artist/designer and the late-developer (signalling a possible post-career emergence) (Fillis, 2004). Other typologies have described a hobbyist (not registered as a business), an artisan (strong deterrents to growth based on an unwillingness to employ or expand production) or an entrepreneur (with limited artisan identifiers and a dominant business focus) (Bouette and Magee, 2015). Such categorisations are frequently used as a means to explore the links between particular types of artisanal production and certain geographic locations or regional economic productivity (Bennett et al., 2015); situate studies in one particular sector in order to attempt to explain its boom in activity – either by a focus on production processes, business model, or both, for example, micro-brewing (Danson et al., 2015; Drakopoulou Dodd et al., 2018; Lamertz et al., 2016; Thody, 2014; Thurnell-Read, 2014); or study sub-groups of artisans working on the production of a particular material cultural artefact, for example, surfboards in Hawaii, California and Australia (Gibson and Warren, 2014).

Despite clear multi-dimensional imperatives, artisanal work features rarely in discussions of contemporary work (Holmes, 2015). Much of the research explicitly focused on the artisan-craft sector is dominated by a practitioner emphasis and lacks evidence of theoretical rigour (Fillis, 2004). When specifically considering artisanal work in relation to entrepreneurship and small firms there is a relatively small corpus of work. Pret and Cogan (2019) describe the existing knowledge base as being dominated by seven themes: behaviour, context, motivation, development, resources, diversity and classification. The most common topic is the behaviour of artisan entrepreneurs relative to their firm such as collaboration, competition and practice. Specific attention has also been given to the implications of motivations, goals and values to subsequent business practice, particularly in the context of support and networking needs (Bouette and Magee, 2015; Kuhn and Galloway, 2015). Most research tends to focus on firm behaviour as a result of sectoral positioning rather than on the individuals at the heart of the firms. In contrast, and to fill an important gap, this article examines gender in concert with entrepreneur and artisan identities.
Theoretical framing: identity work

An entrepreneurial identity comprises multiple potential dimensions: ideal or experiential attributes or traits, congruence with essential defined entrepreneurial behaviours, centrality of the identity to both self-definition and enactment, and positive appraisals of the character of the identity itself (Hoang and Gimeno, 2005). This agentic preoccupation among definitions has been supplemented by an emphasis on post-structuralist interpretations which seek to recognise the importance of social constructionism and relationality (Nadin, 2007; Watson, 2008). Such conceptualisations allow for movement beyond behaviour as the dominant manifestation of identity and facilitate a focus on other ways of engaging with and enacting an entrepreneurial identity (Hytti, 2005). This includes the discursive resources that inform and underpin identities: the macro-discourses that voice cultural and social milieu and the micro-linguistic turn that narrates individual identity in private or public (Down and Reveley, 2004). The challenge therein is to reconcile, or at least relate, the singular agency approach to understanding with the broader relational embeddedness. Underpinned by constructionist priorities, understanding then attempts to take account of how an identity, as discourse, is socially constructed by the use of language and acknowledges that vocabulary is itself embedded in power relations. This balances a solely agentic or structural lens with a worldview that recognises that neither is entirely a matter of free will or imposition (Watson, 2013).

An identity is dynamic and cyclical: it evolves and does not reside in stasis within the interior life of the host individual. Interactions that are embedded in a number of spheres such as the individual, societal and cultural are critical to its construction and maintenance (Jones et al., 2008). As a project of selfhood, identity sits at the nexus of narration and action, which influences the traction the identity achieves both for the individual and among broader societal and occupational collectives. The meaning and value of such processes, be they positive or negative, therefore affects whether an identity may achieve stability, sustain the regard attached to it or achieve a level of saliency that informs both. Identity centrality correlates with the desirability an individual feels towards adopting an identity and the potential longevity of that attachment. It also influences how an identity is managed relative to other roles or inhabited domains – and whether this occurs in tension or cohesion, with demands co-existing or conflicting, and boundaries distinct or overlapping (Hoang and Gimeno, 2010).

The resilience of masculinity in the identity hierarchies pertaining to entrepreneurship is formidable and continues despite repeated calls for change and concerted efforts to achieve it (Calás et al., 2009; Hamilton, 2013). Both heroic and normative, the male entrepreneur is perpetual in presence and dominates the defining parameters of an entrepreneurial identity (Ahl, 2006; Bruni et al., 2004). The ensuing behavioural corollary is women entrepreneurs believing the path to entrepreneurial legitimacy lies in mimicking the male norm and reproducing behaviours that are recognisably entrepreneurial because they are recognisably masculine (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). Women, therefore, attempt to craft entrepreneurial identities in the context of discursive resources that are set in opposition: being a woman and being an entrepreneur (Ashe and Treanor, 2011; García and Welter, 2013; Kovalainen and Österberg-Högstedt, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Madsen et al., 2008; Orser et al., 2011; Warren, 2004). In solidifying an entrepreneurial identity, women entrepreneurs deploy a variety of strategies to overcome the disjunction between their experience and the masculine entrepreneurial norm. These include increasing proximity to the norm by enactment that reinforces the stereotype or, in contrast, utilising distancing techniques to achieve the opposite effect (Nadin, 2007). The adoption of a deliberately feminised entrepreneurial identity may also both enhance feelings of authenticity and fitting in, but via legitimate self-actualisation and standing out against the stereotype (Lewis, 2013; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009).
Identity work is relational and dialogic in character and is negotiated in contestation with others (Watson, 2009a). It occurs, either internally or externally, or dually, to substantiate an identity; can comprise talk or action or both; and allows for the confirmation, alteration, maintenance and/or evolution of the identity to which it relates (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). There can be both a reflexive and external character to identity work that relies on either self-narration, often derived from broader social discourse, or face-to-face interactions that are underpinned by dramaturgical performances of the identity being made credible (Watson, 2009b). Identity work influences, and is influenced by, the perceived salience and centrality of the identity (Murnieks et al., 2014). In turn, identity regulation relies heavily on the quality and constancy of the identity work that is undertaken (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). There exists an inherent reciprocity in identity work that extends beyond internal dialogue and resources to encompass the broader discourses in which they are immersed – or to which they are exposed (Down and Warren, 2008). Therefore, identity work can either accord with or disaggregate from internal dialogue and external discourse, both of which can be influenced by macro discursive resources that are beyond the control of the individual. This duality is further complicated by demography which may amplify resource advantage or disadvantage depending on identity context. Gender may influence identity assumption and subsequent identity work in just such a fashion.

Identity work is a complex process involving forming, sustaining, enhancing and revising a construct of selfhood that is typically a mixture of both coherence and distinction (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). The challenge lies in the ability, or inability, to find ways of enacting talk and action that leverage seemingly oppositional identity dimensions – and to do so when one identity may suffer at the expense of the other. This is especially acute when identity work is considered relative to gendered notions of entrepreneurial behaviour. Accordingly, identity work may be as dynamic as the identity it seeks to shore up. It is not a discrete act that can be achieved and then abandoned, nor is it a repetitive process that can be deployed without consideration. Identities and identity work evolve in tandem. Conscious identity work is grounded in a combination of positive and negative dimensions of regard. It can emerge from self-doubt and self-confidence, as well as existential concern, and in the voids that exist in the inconsistencies between reality and perception (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Methodology

The value of post-positivist approaches to entrepreneurship research is well understood (Drakopoulou-Dodd et al., 2014) and the particular merits of phenomenological enquiry have also been noted (Cope, 2005). Phenomenology captures phenomena as experienced by people and focuses on meaning and essence over measurement (Moustakas, 1994) and substantiation via understanding of central abstracts (Cope, 2005). This ontological and epistemological positioning resonates with the need for studies of identity to be underpinned by inductive approaches to theory development given their idiosyncratic, dynamic and nascent character (Caza et al., 2018).

Rachel Scott, founder of Rachel Scott Bread, was purposively selected to illuminate and extend the chosen constructs of interest (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The choice of a single case study relies on Yin’s (2003) critical and revelatory rationales and, following Perren and Ram (2004), is an entrepreneurial personal story from a subjective perspective. Given the phenomenological positioning, data were collected via two in-depth, semi-structured interviews carried out by phone across a period of weeks (the intention had been to visit Scott on site but scheduling and logistics prevented this). These data were supplemented by additional contact between interviewee and researcher via e-mail across some years (and as recently as 2020 which gives the case a longitudinal flavour).
The interviews followed Larty and Hamilton’s (2011) recommendation to establish structural parameters by ascertaining objective proxies of experience such as roles, functions and milestones before moving to contextualisation via the situating and embedding of the interviewee among that experience. For this case study, this meant a dual primary focus on artisanality and entrepreneurial behaviour. Two overarching focal questions were used: ‘tell me the story of your business?’ and ‘tell me about being an artisan?’ with interviewer prompts to cover characteristics such as history, origin, firm size, market, strategy motivations and growth for the former, and definition, ideology, meaning, values, practice, food trends, modernity, production and process for the latter. The bridging question between the two key areas of emphasis was ‘tell me about a typical day or week in your working life?’. This questioning formula facilitated the type of interviewee-led narratives that have proven particularly useful in establishing how identities are constructed in the domain of entrepreneurial behaviour (Johansson, 2004). Each interview was between 60 and 90 minutes long and both were recorded and transcribed to facilitate data analysis. This data set was supplemented by analysis of a radio interview of approximately an hour in length given by Scott that was publicly available via podcast on the broadcasting radio station’s website (the Spectrum programme from Radio New Zealand). Media coverage of Scott and her business provided further background to the case.

Relying on methods of interpretative phenomenological analysis, data processing was strongly inductive and idiographic in character (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). The first high-level, macro reading of the data set resulted in ‘emergent ideas’ and coding was deliberately open: focusing on identifying separate ‘artisan’ and ‘entrepreneur’ components of the narratives. Narrowing to more selective coding followed in the second reading of the data which allowed for the dual integration of larger tranches of data with a more reductive approach to the codes in scope (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). This also facilitated subsequent coding that pertained to the different forms of identity work. The relatability of codes, individually or in sets, was then assessed for robustness, and the relativities of each relationship or categorisation stress-tested in relation to extant bodies of literature. ‘Reducing’ and ‘complicating’ during analysis allowed for both the coalescing of well-understood ideas and the emergence of novel interpretations that acted as stimuli for new questions and conclusions (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

The thematic thinking units (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) that emerged from the coding processes were a means of capturing the structures of experience reported by Scott (Van Manen, 1990). By turn, these expanding and diminishing analytical cycles drew out theme from narrative; situated textual fragment within broader context while allowing for signals of the unspoken, or voids of opportunity in terms of interpretation; and where appropriate facilitated a micro-focus on vocabulary and its deployment to reflect essential experience. The cumulative effect of this incrementality was the ability to identify identity work mechanisms as they emerged from the data collection and analysis cycles. The findings and discussion are presented as one amalgamated section, rather than sequentially. Dubois and Gadde (2014) argue that this best reveals the strengths of single case research and exemplifies ‘systematic combining’ of which a foundation tool is matching (i.e. going back and forth between theoretical framework, data and analysis) (Dubois and Gadde, 2002).

**Findings and discussion**

Leading identity scholar Andrew Brown (2017) comprehensively detailed the five primary analytical approaches to interrogating identity work: discursive, dramaturgical, symbolic, socio-cognitive and psycho-dynamic. Given that different identity work strategies can be co-dependent as processes and occur simultaneously (Down and Reveley, 2009), it was important to examine the data for all five types. Therefore, this framework was adopted to analyse Scott’s identity work and, following a synopsis of the case study, it orients the subsequent sections of the paper.
The case

Eponymous Rachel Scott Bread was founded as a limited liability company in 1995 when Scott was in her mid-20s, having returned from a stint working abroad. She is a sole-working artisan bread maker – though she sometimes relies on part-time labour to assist with deliveries. Located in Amberley (a small town about 50 km outside Christchurch in the North Canterbury region of New Zealand) the bakery co-exists with Scott’s domestic space in a converted industrial building. At the time of the interview Scott was co-habiting with a partner and had no dependents. Her bakery specialises in a range of handcrafted classic breads, often with a distinctive twist, that are created with locally sourced, pure-origin, high-quality ingredients. There is no dedicated retail operation; instead, Scott supplies stores, restaurants and cafes and so on directly across the length and breadth of the country from Dunedin in the South to Auckland in the North. She also frequents her local farmer’s market with some degree of regularity and enjoys interacting with consumers and hearing their feedback. The bakery does not rely on any form of marketing other than a website: www.rachelscottbread.co.nz, instead letting her reputation and that of her product speak for themselves. The reach of both often results in assumptions about the scale of her operation that far exceed its actual size. Scott is self-taught, describing herself as a ‘sponge’ who listened hard and read voraciously but who has also received considerable practical and moral support from her family and partner across the life cycle of the bakery. She learnt from a number of chefs with whom she worked, mostly in pastry, when she arrived in London aged 19, and from numerous trips to France to pursue her passion for bread and expand her knowledge. This echoes the perspective that making is knowing in the context of artisanal work (Lehmann, 2012). Her intention was not to form a career around food as she is inherently artistic and initially began studying to become an architect: ‘I’m probably more creative than entrepreneurial’. While her bread is distinctly traditional, its innovation lies in its self-expression: of Scott’s talent, palette and touch.

Discursive

Discursive identity work is achieved via language, written or spoken, and is used in narrative and/or dialogical processes of self-authorship (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016). Internal identity talk can be both expressive of and constitutive of identity (Brown, 2017). External narratives can relate to conversation with others and/or participation in, or adherence to, broader societal discourse (Beech, 2008). The importance of Scott’s discursive resources is their ability to give voice to her internal world: the compass and attitudinal framework by which she arranges her life and work. This worldview is dominated by her artisan identity and makes little, if any, use of a business-oriented lexicon – nor is it, at face value, gendered.

The language she uses to describe being an artisan is positive, consistent and informed by practice rather than any sense of collectivity or patterning that reflects broader public discourse or catchphrase. To her, artisanality means ‘handmade; engaging all the senses; really being connected with the process’. The nomenclature Scott uses to describe her process is also revealing as it speaks of ‘engagement’, of having a ‘meditative’ quality, and relying on ‘responsiveness’. The engagement trope has been central to discussions of artisanal work over time with its ability to fulfil a dialectical purpose that is mutually transformative and connecting head, hand and material (Yarrow and Jones, 2014). Scott feels that those unfamiliar with artisan practice construe it as unchanging and repetitive. She disagrees and uses the word ‘alchemy’ to describe the beauty she finds in the process of making bread and describes herself as a ‘sensualist’, taking ‘traditional inspiration’ but putting her ‘own mark on it’. However, she also describes the technicalities involved in achieving a consistent result: continually adjusting her process to respond to changing conditions such as
‘humidity, temperature, season, changing flours etc’. This parallels the wide variety of affective investments artisans are said to make in their products and speaks to the embodied and affective nature of artisanal production as a form of work (Thurnell-Read, 2014).

Scott distinguishes this from ‘businesses where often people are just touching buttons, they’re not even touching dough. It’s just all automated, relying on pre-mix with ingredients I can’t even understand’. Scott also threads a vocabulary of sustainability through her story: ‘No preservatives’. ‘Gentle footprint’. ‘No waste’. ‘Baking only to order to fulfil that purpose’. ‘Get back to source and stay there’. ‘Starting with the best ingredients . . . letting those ingredients shine by not doing very much to them . . . adding enough technique but not getting too many textures or flavours going on. . . . minimal intervention’. Scott makes an acute distinction in her descriptions of baking and business, and her involvement in both:

At heart I’m creative . . . I wanted to have my hands on the dough. Often, I’d find on my travels that the baker was no longer touching the dough, they were just involved in the day to day workings of the business and the stresses that went with that. I thought that’s not what I want for myself. I want to reduce stress to the point where I can continue for a long time.

Scott is dedicated to the quality of her product, which she describes as a form of perfectionism:

Putting my name on it, that’s also a commitment to the fact that I’m probably not going to be selling the business. To put your name on each loaf you’re really committed. I want to sleep well at night knowing that I’ve done the best I can. I don’t know if it’s to be recommended to run the business the way I have. But, I feel great camaraderie with others who approach life the same way. . . . their own work, whether they be artists or writers or whatever they do.

Scott narrates the labour she engages in as a ‘passion project’ and describes her business as a vehicle that allows her to bake the way she wishes to bake: ‘I think I’m luckier than most bakers because I have crafted my own business’. It is this surety of purpose, and the interiority of its discursive resource base, that reflects how impervious to external influence her discursive identity work is. It is also, arguably, gender neutral beyond the historic gendered connotative associations of baking and domesticity – which are now outmoded given the prevalence of masculinity in the world of professional cooking and baking. However, she makes no reference to either.

**Dramaturgical**

Dramaturgical identity work occurs through action – or performances of the self – and can be very gendered in its enactment. It is typically for an audience so as to achieve external validation via the performance of actions that reflect the identity in play (Down and Reveley, 2009). The actions can be observed across a spectrum of scale from the micro-gesture through to the adoption of particular physical postures and styles of movement. Dramaturgical identity work can also facilitate strong organisational and/or career identification, with organisational rituals and routines also acting as key catalysts for this type of identity work.

Scott describes how much of what she does is instinctive, honed after many years of practice, and that her body and mind take over in a ‘knowing without thinking’ way: ‘I’ve learnt the science, the technical details, but then it goes to the back of the mind and I respond with hands and taste’. This embodied form of knowledge and practice in manual work is well established (O’Loughlin, 2013). Sennett (2008) described this type of engagement as the insoluble connection of thinking and doing via practical action, and how it represents a counterpoint to the inherent disconnection in modern forms of work. Scott bakes from 5.00 pm through until 9.00 am two days a week:
I have built the bakes around having a good rhythm. For people who have a retail situation there is a need to bake every day. But, I have two enormous bakes across 16 hours, twice a week. So, it’s quite mammoth—total exhaustion to the point of collapse which feels quite worthy.

The physicality of the work is described as taking its toll and the recovery time increases as time passes: ‘It’s very physical—heavy bins of dough, heavy oven doors and heavy trays of bread. Full on’. The temporal dimension of her performance of bread-making has no audience given its nocturnal character; therefore, its performance is for her.

Baking through the night means I have no interruptions. You can get into the rhythm of baking. It’s quite a meditative process. I like engaging with the dough and it requires you to engage all the senses . . . People have said it must be difficult for your relationship . . . but you just need the right people in your life. He is very supportive of me . . . and has worked outside the norm himself having done contracting work and truck driving.

This form of identity work has a reinforcing purpose in that it solidifies both her love of her baking practice, and the centrality of her identity and its related choices. This is a contrast to many of the ways dramaturgical identity work is reported as conferring meaning. Typically, the identity work benefit is secured by the external validation of others after an identity performance to an audience, rather than a sequestered performance serving a confirmatory purpose in its own right (as in Scott’s case).

**Symbolic**

Symbolic identity work is achieved via the adoption, display and manipulation of object symbols (Brown, 2017). The tangible character of the objects and their associated visibility makes this form of identity work more open to objective assessment than other forms. It may also involve the deployment of artefacts such as uniforms and hairstyle. Similar to dramaturgical identity work, this form can also be acutely gendered and used to perform or camouflage gendered identities (Brown, 2017).

Beyond her artisanal production methods, Scott’s choice of tools acts as a form of symbolic identity work. The importance of equipment, or tools, in the context of artisanal work is predicated on their ability to be fit for purpose, and the artisan knowing exactly what is achievable with each (Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019). Tools are subsequently described as an extension of the intelligent hand (Holmes, 2015). Scott describes her practice as ‘purist and simple’, involving very little machinery and ‘engaging all the senses’. Centred around a table she describes baking as ‘being all about hands and time: the luxury of time’. Her ovens were made locally, and her mixer is a refurbished 1960s model from London. She describes it as having ‘not missed a beat’, being of large capacity (40–50 kg), and with a ‘very slow mixing speed’—which is what she wanted (in deliberate contrast to modern mixers that operate at a very high speed). She also uses a wooden peel to drop in the loaves and wooden cooling racks. This deliberate slowing of pace is therefore embodied in both her equipment and her practice.

Scott’s minimalist approach to equipment allows her a proximity to her bread-making that informs her identity and is, in and of itself, a form of identity work. Typically, proximity in the world of artisanal work speaks to the spatial distance between producer and consumer, and the sociality and meaning possible through those interactions (Carr and Gibson, 2016). However, Scott speaks of the proximity to the production process itself: she identifies with the bread that she makes, and wants to engage with every loaf, noting that she is unaware of ‘any other baker who has baked every loaf of bread themselves over their entire career’.
**Socio-cognitive**

Socio-cognitive processes as identity work provide opportunities for sense to be made of identities. They relate to both individual and group belonging and typically involve deriving meaning from both social stimuli and affiliation – and often as a means of bolstering self-esteem (Brown, 2017). Socio-cognitive identity work can occur at the level of the sub-conscious, and therefore identification may occur without the subject being able to articulate how the process works. How individuals are categorised, compared socially, and the subsequent related choices are all part of this process.

There was a limited amount of socio-cognitive identity work at play in Scott’s case. This absence may reflect the type of identity work itself and also be compounded by the solitary nature of her work. She did not describe any attention being devoted to resolving identity related tensions or boundaries. She deliberately chose to situate her bakery and domestic spaces in the same building – she converted an old mechanic’s garage with ‘high ceilings and good bones’ with about a quarter of the space being taken up by the bakery. This gives her access to her starters and to take flour deliveries, and she experiences no discord in the arrangement: ‘I don’t need a clear division in my life. It is such a part of my life, the bread . . . I know it is psychologically difficult for some people, but I can shut off’. Any stress Scott does report is related to the operational aspects of the business side of baking: ‘couriering is the biggest stress in my life’. Though she acknowledges that her night baking routines are ‘rough in terms of lifestyle’.

While her vision means she has never wanted her bread ‘to be a fashionable item that is also vulnerable to being unfashionable down the track’, she is open to diversifying her presence in the market if it fits with her existing ideology. She evaluates her business choices in terms of their congruence with her primary artisan identity. For example, she describes how her baking ‘has become more and more about place’. Beyond her choice of local origin products, this has seen her engage with the local farmers’ market and supply craft breweries and vineyard restaurants in the immediate vicinity of the bakery. There are many well-evidenced links between place, materiality and artisan production (Gibson, 2016). Beyond a business priority, it appears to help Scott situationally embed her artisanal identity in her local community – but, in a way that is moderate and does not compromise her broader philosophy.

There is a willingness to return to source now days . . . being proud of sourcing well as well as producing well. Where restaurants use my bread, they will name it as mine on the menu so they’re proud to acknowledge that people specialise, and that they source that quality product.

Scott also regularly experiments with other types of bread and creating new products, for example, chocolates, to potentially add to her product offering. In New Zealand, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, her role as baker conferred a ‘key worker’ status that allowed her to keep baking bread, which she described as being ‘good for mental health and financial well-being’. During lockdown, at level 3, customers were able to collect pre-ordered bread from a table in her garden. This dynamic mimics the global trend towards micro-bakeries that operate permanently via such a model. Scott intends to maintain this sales channel and use it instead of continuing with the local farmers’ market where she has experienced some pressures, such as the need to sell all perishable bread, and other stresses, including the ‘grim weather’. Her strategy will be to retain her baking for her retail customers around the country, but she is ‘all for a gentler more stress-free life in the future’.

Scott does not appear to invest in socio-cognitive identity work around her role as business owner. In fact, she is almost reticent in talking about that aspect of her identity, describing only how its adoption elicits reactions in the public sphere that are gendered and not always positive.
'Couldn’t give you any idea of turnover – I pour everything into paying off the building . . . For me, I’m a baker who, in order to bake the way I wish to bake, has created their own business’. For Scott, this is not resigning herself to lifestyle or hobby business status, nor is it a proxy for a lack of business capability or potential. It is a strategic choice with a rationale that extends beyond capped growth (Parry, 2010): it echoes her commitment to artisanal production. For her, to privilege business above craft would be to sacrifice the only way in which she wishes to make bread.

I’m astute enough to be making this work. I’m not silly with money. I could have approached it in a totally different way. But it wouldn’t have had my name on it and I probably would have sold it off . . . I mean I’m sure I could produce bread a lot more cheaply . . . but that’s not of interest to me.

Scott mentioned gendered reactions to her business despite its success:

Even in the early years I had approaches from people, from men, who thought we can take this little gem of a business and get it lifted to a size where it can be a listed company and that just terrified me . . . one merchant banker referred to me as a ‘wee cottage industry’ in a very patronising way but I can take that on the chin. It’s a choice to be the scale I am. I didn’t want to see it diluted quality wise – the product, the bread . . . I want that pursuit of excellence and to bake the best product I can. I put thought and heart into it.

These gendered reactions in relation to Scott’s entrepreneur identity point to the potential imposition of male frameworks of success to ascribe a lack of meaning to her operation due to its scale – but these were experienced externally as opposed to being internally valorised.

Making bread is a form of socio-cognitive identity work for Scott and the associated decisions that result creating no tensions due to their congruence. The authenticity of her approach merely amplifies the identity symmetry of her self-conception and its enactment (Meister et al., 2014) ‘I’m very honest about ingredients and process. There’s no spiel that isn’t true about me or my bread’.

**Psycho-dynamic**

Rooted in ego-defences, and often occurring unconsciously, psycho-dynamic identity work is constituted in automatic functions and reactions that are often habitual (Brown, 2017). As a result, there can be a fusing of the personal ideal with idealised understandings of the collective to which the individual wishes to belong. Scott is comfortable and certain about her identity as artisan – with the other dimensions of her identity occupying peripheral spaces. This results in little need for rupturing approaches to psycho-dynamic identity work in that there is seldom a disjunction between her ability to work as her ideal self. She does not describe needing to belong to any collective to reinforce her artisan identity. This is notable given so much of the literature on the artisan as worker speaks to the sense of belonging and community that such craft practices afford.

Aspects of Scott’s story reflect that her ‘belonging’ may exist at an existential level rather than via an external manifestation of action, and that this subjective psychological congregation serves an even greater purpose for her in identity work terms. Scott describes her way of working as providing her with ‘serenity’ and that she ‘needs a calm environment to work in as I work best in that state’. This echoes the original reason she founded her business: ‘It’s not about fame and fortune. It’s about the pursuit of excellence and that means I sleep well at night’. She translated her way of working into a manifest and meaningful identity she describes as magical: bread-making is one of ‘those things in life that I do find magic in . . . puts a glint in your eye’.
There is a solid values-driven approach underpinning all Scott’s work practices:

I feel that I am approaching my life and my work in an honourable way. It’s an honest well-crafted non-commercial product . . . It is possibly the harder road to take but it is about integrity and feeling good about yourself and your place in the world. Those qualities will always continue to be important with humans.

This speaks to the kind of virtue ethics that frequently underpin conceptualisations of artisanal work – being ethical by doing not saying (Helms and Dobson, 2016). It also reflects the historic origins of work as a craft: both Hegel (1977) and Marx (1964) depict work as a means of expressing and realising self – articulating that work produces the self as much as it does an object. Scott is unalienated in her labours and liberates herself further by the forms of identity work she does and does not engage in.

**Conclusion**

Scott’s identity is clearly chosen not ascribed; she exerts great agency rather than suffering structurally driven constraints. The motivations for her identity assumption and the character of the identity work are positive, task-driven and substantively performative. The authentic framing of the identity and the associated identity work ensure the bonding of identity to routines, practices and vocabulary that reinforce its imperative: the advantages and values of an artisanal work life and a small firm as a vehicle for that. While the gendered thread is implied, it is an uncommon case in respect of that: no caregiving responsibilities were reported, and partner and family were described as accepting, and both practically and philosophically supportive of the atypical aspects of her working life. This nullified some of the sources of conflict reported in other gendered accounts of entrepreneurial identity that typically narrate the tensions inherent in balancing partnerships that are spousal in character with work and motherhood-related demands.

Existing research has sought to establish whether identities and related identity work co-exist, compete or are integrated. Co-existence implies a degree of neutrality in the arrangement in that the identities are reliant on one another or hold equal power, and dovetail neatly. This contrasts with identity facets that are in competition – that is, are oppositional and may undermine or contradict one another, creating a negative tone. Identities that are integrated are said to engender positivity via a blending that is beneficial in character. Competing identities imply identity tensions that need to be resolved; co-existence implies a scenario where tensions need to be actively attended to; and integration implies the relative absence of tension. Rather than adding an additional categorisation of identity relationality, there may be some utility in instead moving towards describing the ‘form’ identities take in relation to one another as a means of adding additional nuance to understanding of identity work.

Identities that are seemingly oppositional can be imagined as parallel lines that each move in an opposite direction and, to an extent, are independent of one another. They compete for priority and resources and may be partly, or entirely, contradictory – therefore requiring active identity work to reconcile. Identities that co-exist can be depicted by two parallel lines in closer proximity and moving in the same direction with influence between the two identities more likely. Co-existing implies a more evenly distributed allocation of time and identity work. Identities that have historically been described as integrated could be described as two, or more, entwined lines akin to the helical form of DNA. This would account for identity dimensions that do not co-exist as theorised, but nor are they integrated in the way that that construct is currently understood. This helix structure overlaps the identities in a mutually reinforcing fashion: resulting in a coherent identity that relies on each
component even if not visibly. These identities, and related identity work, are also less open to external influence due to this structure and the nature of its contextual embeddedness compared to co-existing or competing identities where broader external influences have more valence than the micro-context within in which they are enacted.

Scott’s primary identity is clearly that of artisan. There is a limited gendered dimension to the identity and it is informed by her identification as an entrepreneur. Scott’s identities of artisan and entrepreneur are not in competition in terms of identity work and at first glance appear to suit the descriptor of co-existence best – particularly as a claim towards traditional integration is undermined by the relative dominance of one identity (artisan) over the other (entrepreneur). Moving beyond existing theory to the notion of forms or shapes of identity relationality presented here, the close parallel lines and mutual influence represented by co-existence fall short in accurately capturing Scott’s identity enactment in that one identity is dominant (artisan) and the other (entrepreneur) serves a more functional purpose. That is, she is technically an entrepreneur in that she has started and continues to lead a viable business, but that identity influences her behaviour in a far more limited fashion than that of her primary identity, and attracts less identity work as a consequence – existing almost as a dormant identity.

The novel identity helix structure does represent the shape and character of Scott’s identity enactment. Her identities, while ideologically and theoretically in opposition, are not enacted in that fashion. Neither co-existence nor integration as understood to date captures her experience. However, a helical entwinement of artisan and entrepreneur does have potential, particularly in that relative identity power or dominance is far less important in such a conceptualisation than the form of the entwinement and its embeddedness in the immediate context. To extend the metaphor, the notion of dominant or ‘recessive’ identities may also have currency – in Scott’s case, entrepreneur is recessive to the dominance of the artisan identity. An identity helix has implications not just for the construction and shape of identities but for the subsequent identity work it takes to maintain the identity form. The helix enhances the sustainability of an identity due to the entwined nature of the identities within the form, its deep embeddedness and the relative imperviousness to external influence of the identity ‘DNA’.

The question then arises what role for gender? If as research suggests, gender mediates identity assumption and identity work, the potential roles it has are as an influence on the relationship between identities, as well as the identities themselves; a glue that binds the separate identities into one form; or as a part of the identity itself either as social construct or biological sex. For competing, co-existing or integrating identities gender can be both the cause of and the solution to identity enactment-related tensions. In terms of the identity helix, and in the case of Scott where gender played an almost silent role in terms of her identity enactment and identity work, gender instead exists as an important strand of the helical structure of identity enactment. This suggests that in an identity helix the individual strands of the structure may vary in their tensile strength and consequent impact. However, like DNA, while not always visible, different identity strands play an important role in terms of who an individual is and how they do what they do when they are invisibly inter-twined with other facets of identity rather than considered either in isolation, as mediator, or as primary influence.

Scott’s identity is derived from and sustained by the practice of artisan work itself. This is an alternative form of context to those traditionally considered relative to entrepreneurial identity. When considered in concert with the dominance of Scott’s internal identity work and the relatively inward-facing orientation of her identity resource base, this implies more identity work stability than the dynamism often assumed in inter-dependent models of identity work. It also reinforces the notion that identities can be assumed but not require active identity work – that is, an identity exists in name only. In Scott’s case, her artisan identity is practised in her day-to-day work by default
while her entrepreneur identity attracts less deliberate identity work. These are identity work processes in action anew and the artisan context is the critical and novel empirical source of these ideas. The creation of the identity is in the creation of the product – and vice versa. Rather than her business, the label of entrepreneur, or her gender, her bread is her primary identity resource – as is the artisanal practice of her labour. The micro-contextually embedded character of the identity work is in the practice of the work itself. Task or practice identity work in relation to occupation may merit a separate category of identity work in its own right rather than existing as a sub-set of that which is dramaturgical. It certainly has explanatory power relative to artisan workers – and particularly when its inextricable link to work context is also considered.

Future work that builds on the ideas in this article will not only broaden the domain of investigation, but redress the limitations of this particular study by examining, for example, larger samples situated in different geographic locations and the experiences of artisans in different sectors to food production. The novel material presented around identity form and the structure of the identity helix (and related identity work) will be well-served by the collection of a greater breadth of data that facilitates comparison, and the fleshing out of some of the nascent theorising in order to expand its potential contribution. It will be important to capture experiences of gender more diverse than those of this case to better understand its role and how it may inform the artisan identity, for example, motherhood and other caregiving responsibilities. In expanding the empirical base, the potential intersectional impact of other demographic characteristics could also feature such as age and ethnicity, as well as varying contexts for the artisan work itself – that is, specifically including considerations of space and place beyond the simple aggregation of artisanal trends at a regional or national level.

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