



The development of entrepreneurial identity and intention

DR SARAH PREEDY, PLYMOUTH MARJON UNIVERSITY

DR KELLY SMITH, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

DR ANDREAS WALMSLEY, COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

DR PETER MCLUSKIE, COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

What is the research study?

- ▶ A longitudinal study over the course of academic year 2020/21, with first year HE students studying enterprise modules across two UK universities.
- ▶ Pre and post survey, reflective diaries and focus groups.
- ▶ Aims were to explore how entrepreneurial identity and intention may change over time, whether there was a relationship between the two constructs and how enterprise education and other variables may moderate the development of these two constructs.
- ▶ Although this study did not set out to measure EE impact, but instead to understand how intention and identity may form or fluctuate over the course of an academic year, the results can offer implications for educators in their design and delivery of EE activities.

Measuring entrepreneurial identity

- ▶ Entrepreneurial identity is how an individual defines themselves and is informed by their attitudes and beliefs including their thoughts and feelings about oneself in a future entrepreneurial role.
- ▶ A better understanding of entrepreneurial identity formation and its facilitators can shed light on why some, and not others, become entrepreneurs. This is particularly pertinent with the increasing focus upon measuring the impact of enterprise education.
- ▶ Measures used; Cardon et al.,'s 2009 founder/inventor/developer types, Murnieks et al., 2012 centrality scale, Morris et al.,'s 2018 centrality statements.
- ▶ Tools included; the above measures at pre and post survey points, 1-10 scale, 3 words exercise, drawing exercise and open reflection in diaries.

Measuring entrepreneurial intention

- ▶ “a self-acknowledged conviction by a person that they intend to set up a new business venture and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future. That point in the future might be imminent or indeterminate, and may never be reached” (Thompson, 2009, p. 676).
- ▶ Thompson describes EI as a continuum, it is not simply ‘yes’ or no’ to the question of whether an individual has EI. Thompsons measurement tool – ‘The Individual Entrepreneurial Intent Scale’ was used in the pre and post surveys (very true to very untrue likert scale) and in each of the fortnightly reflective diaries with space to provide detail.

The ten points listed below examine entrepreneurial intent, please provide a reflection next to each one detailing how you feel you have, or have not, acted in this manner over the past two weeks.

Intention to set up a Business in the future	I haven't taken any physical steps towards building a business, but I have spent at least an hour this week conceptualising ideas.
Planning your future carefully	Last week I was feeling particularly active when it came to planning my future and learning more about myself, as I signed up for different programs that I will detail below.
Reading business newspapers/articles	This week I have read 2 or 3 articles on larger scaled companies such as tesla and apple. However, this was just by chance I haven't felt like searching for articles.
Not searching for business start-up opportunities	I have not been searching for business start-up opportunities yet as I am still thinking about what kind of business I would like to start.
Reading financial planning books/articles	I have not read any books on financial planning however I intend too.
Saving money to start a business	I have been saving money but without an end yet as I am in the earlier stages of planning a business venture.

Initial Findings

- ▶ **The mean entrepreneurial identity score fluctuated across the year** for the majority of participants, reflective of the fact that entrepreneurial identity is a subjective and dynamic socio-cognitive factor which is not stable over time (Leitch and Harrison, 2016).
- ▶ **Intention scores were consistently higher** than 'identity' scores displaying an upward trend over the course of the year.
- ▶ Statistically significant **differences by gender on entrepreneurial identity** - men having consistently higher scores when self identifying as entrepreneurial.
- ▶ The **impact of the pandemic and lockdowns** was apparent with participants citing isolation, negative news stories regarding business and lack of social opportunities as negatively impacting on their identity and intention scores.
- ▶ Identity and intention **scores could be easily impacted** by seemingly minor events (assessment hand ins, Christmas break)
- ▶ The **research tools themselves appeared to be influencing some participants entrepreneurial intentions**. Completing the 10 item scale fortnightly was starting to become a reminder to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

What then has been the impact of EE?

► **Positives**

- An upward trend in intention scores across majority of survey and diary participants.
- Learning the building blocks of being an entrepreneur (marketing, finance etc.) gives participants confidence to act on their entrepreneurial intentions.

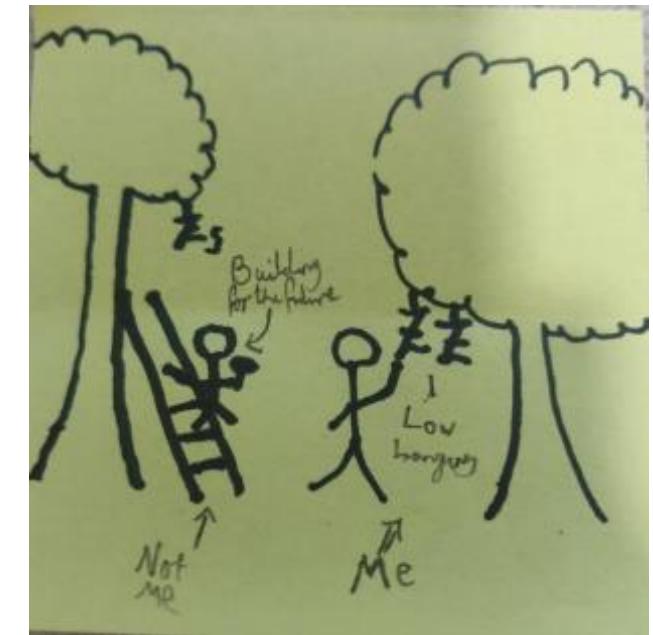
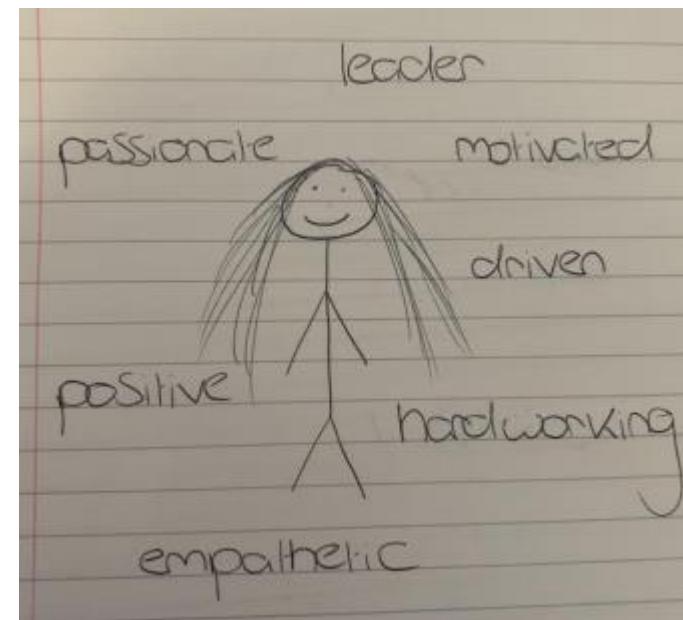
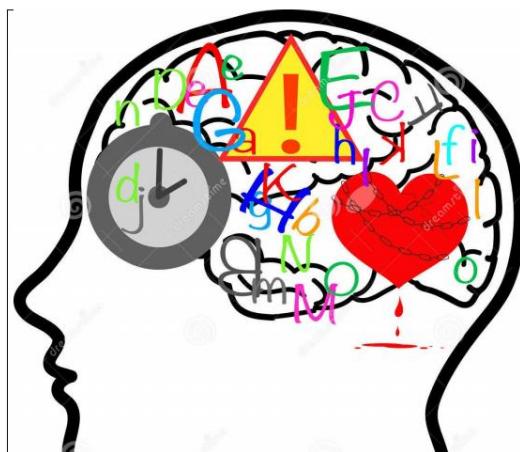
"I feel more empowered to set up my own business venture with the knowledge I have gained through my degree. After having watched a few start-up videos as recommended by my department, I really identified with those who were setting up their own business. I saw myself as someone who could be sitting on that chair making a video about a new product or service I had designed one day."

"I feel in the last two weeks through uni studies the most motivated I have ever felt in a long time. I feel like I always said I wanted a business but never really did much about it like researching or planning but now I feel really confident and I feel the most powerful I have in a while. I want to spend the time investing in myself by educating myself on everything I want to."

- ## ► **Negatives** - assessment deadlines and perceptions of high workloads led to a decrease in feeling entrepreneurial and setting entrepreneurial intentions.

Our reflection on reflection!

- ▶ Hesitancy in some cases to engage in deep reflection.
- ▶ Some reluctance regarding drawing their identity.
- ▶ This may be because identity, what it represents, how it is articulated, how it may be enacted, is heavily contextualised and a complex process.



Any Questions

