

Article

Reframing Entrepreneurship via Identity, *Techné*, and Material Culture

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship is typically understood as capitalist, but new models are emerging; these new models, like Welter et al.'s "everyday-entrepreneur," can be understood in the tradition of *techné*, in which entrepreneurship is an embodied practice balancing the sociality of identity politics and the materiality of objects and infrastructures. With no English equivalent, *techné* is typically understood as either art, skill or craft, but none of the placeholders provide a suitable encapsulation of the term itself (Pender). Examining identity against the backdrop of entrepreneurship illuminates the rhetorical ways entrepreneurs cultivate and innovate the processes of making, especially in terms of the material cultures that this process springs from and operates within. Intersectional issues related to entrepreneurial identity present opportunities for diversification and growth in the existing scholarship. A reframing of entrepreneurial identity and continued development of Welter et al.'s everyday-entrepreneurship is argued for, showing how social biases render gender and objects invisible. The article uses data from an on-going study to demonstrate how reframing entrepreneurial identity uncovers the ways in which systemic biases are embedded in the relationship between identity and everyday things. The case study delves into connections between identity, technology, and innovation illustrating how entrepreneurial identity can be seen as a kind of *techné*, which helps readers better understand identity in relation to material objects and culture—including the biases at work there.

Keywords: *techné*; entrepreneurship; identity; material cultures



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1. Introduction

All too often, when the term entrepreneur is discussed, people automatically default to the media's representation of entrepreneurship—they think about the show 'Shark Tank' or business leaders like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Sam Walton, etc. The tendency to jump to examples like these says something about the larger narrative regarding entrepreneurship that is worth exploring. Identity politics is an area of concern for entrepreneurship studies; certain people are being, and have been, historically left out of conversations about who is worthy of this socio-cultural designation and scholars have begun to recognize the need to address this issue.

In 2017, Welter co-published a call urging scholars to adopt a "wider and nondiscriminatory perspective on what constitutes entrepreneurship" as a means for cultivating heterogeneity amid the field's available discourse on the topic. The defining criteria that set parameters for who is considered an entrepreneur and what it means to be entrepreneurial have continued to shift in tandem with socio-cultural changes inside and outside the academy. Welter et al. (2017) point out, a significant majority of the scholarship in this area highlights silicon-valley models of entrepreneurship; this work is representative only of such a small demographic and is largely inaccessible to the general public.

Adjacent work in the field has identified and responded to skewed representations of entrepreneurship by embracing this cultural turn. In the humanities and social sciences, for example, scholars have helped illuminate the value of placing more direct attention on the entrepreneur by inviting conversations pertaining to identity politics, underrepresented

groups, and contexts that house less visible forms of work, process, and organization (Cox 2019; Jones 2017; Jones et al. 2016; Williams et al. 2020). Broadening definitions of who and what is enveloped in the terms entrepreneur and entrepreneurial necessarily requires a close examination and an embrace of those whose stories are generally glossed over and discounted for not fitting into the established socio-cultural assumptions about this identity.

In order to develop a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship, confronting identity is crucial. Saldaña (2015) writes that “identity is a concept (or construct, process, phenomenon, etc.) that has multiple approaches to and definitions of it, depending on the discipline—if not the individual.” He goes on to expand, acknowledging: “some will say identity is a state of being; others will say it is a state of becoming [. . .] some say it is how you perform; and others say it is what you own and consume [. . . but] the point here is that identity exists by how it is defined” (pp. 71–72). Simply put, identity is the vehicle that facilitates day-to-day operation in the world, an inescapable phenomenon for everyone. Many scholars have explored what it means for someone to establish and perform an entrepreneurial identity (Bjerke 2007; Cuervo et al. 2007; Essers et al. 2017). As a result, many genres or models of entrepreneurship have emerged—for example, technopreneurship and eco-preneurship (Fowosire et al. 2017; Schaper 2002). Exploring identity in explicit detail, then, pulls the curtain back on how complicated identity construction and performance is—especially for individuals that find themselves straddled across physical and social spaces and expectations.

Taking a social justice oriented turn, some scholars have drawn awareness towards alternative and often marginalized narratives of entrepreneurship (Calás et al. 2009; Hindle and Moroz 2010; Ozkazanc-Pan 2009; Rehn and Taalas 2004). An adjacent scholarship seeks to take on the work of publishing complex reflections on the intersections of gender and entrepreneurship. In an effort to go beyond superficial conversations on the differences between male and female entrepreneurs, scholars have begun conversations that are more attuned to the nuanced socio-political influences on the impact and effect of gender differences (Bruni et al. 2004; Essers and Benschop 2007; Hughes and Jennings 2012; Lansky 2000; Marlow et al. 2009). All in all, conversations about gender and marginalized identities are only two of many parallel conversations that seek to expand the boundaries of the discipline, but there is more work to be done.

Welter et al. identify a latent potential for the field of entrepreneurship in their call for a diversification of entrepreneurial scholarship suggesting that this work contributes a “window into and tools for shaping social and economic equity construed to include not only issues of structural inequality but also empowerment and emancipation more broadly” (Welter et al. 2017). Leading by example, they offer the expression “everyday-entrepreneur,” which is meant to represent the activities of entrepreneurship by local people that occur via mundane practices. In my research, this term is developed even further by highlighting the way this model of entrepreneurship moves beyond basely capitalist agendas. Everyday-entrepreneurs are seen as those who cultivate and deploy entrepreneurial traits to aid their pursuit of a goal much larger than themselves in operations that are not necessarily profit-driven; their innovative contributions to each of their communities is observed in the way social practices are fundamentally reconfigured in ways that promote equity for the greater good.

Drawing from a larger three-part study, I seek to show how everyday-entrepreneurship is nuanced by the tradition of *techné*, which anchors the embodied practices of participants who necessarily balance the social variables of identity politics with the materiality of objects and infrastructures. Participants in this study were selected on the basis of ethnicity, age, and shared connections with the researchers (e.g., linguistic, geographic, and organizational ties) so as to center, legitimize, and prioritize narratives of women of color. More specifically, this choice reflects a feminist methodology that embraces turning to the stories of women and people of color as a way of broadening conceptions of what it means to be entrepreneurial and whose stories are considered in the realm of entrepreneurial work and scholarship. This focus on local community members who embody an entrepreneurial

spirit not only further extends definitions of what it means to be an entrepreneur, but also demonstrates how prioritizing “Silicon Valley Models of Entrepreneurship” limits the potential growth of scholarship on the topic (Welter et al. 2017). For the purposes of this article, I have chosen to present data collected over a series of interactive interviews with a singular participant. As the case-study included herein will show, using *techné* as a framework for better understanding entrepreneurial identity uncovers systematic biases embedded in the relationship between gender and technology.

A close examination of the work of everyday-entrepreneurs reveals the way people are embedded in material cultures and organizing structures, like technology and social media. As they navigate different contexts in their daily lives, the challenges they confront expose politics and bias that influence their lived realities. Reflecting on the routine moments of daily life—interpersonal relationships, communication, and other actions—shows not just what someone values and considers important, but also the way socio-cultural norms guide human behavior at large. Thus, the dynamics of everyday life, including those that we mistakenly assume are kept ‘private’, are publicly imbued with classed and gendered power hierarchies that undergird social issues like those pertaining to identity, technology and entrepreneurship.

2. Situating Entrepreneurship Studies

There are many different approaches for situating entrepreneurship studies. In this section, I reflect on the challenges that the discipline has faced regarding a consensus on what entrepreneurship is, which reveals the way scholars have struggled with notions of identity. A brief overview of relevant scholarship exposes areas where the field holds growth potential. My research seeks to address this gap by presenting everyday-entrepreneurship, an alternative model of entrepreneurship that counters the existing grand narratives that circulate within this discourse.

Entrepreneurship is a relatively new field of study that has emerged as a byproduct of cross-disciplinary influences. As a result, scholarship on the topic is fragmentary (Cerullo 1997; Duval-Couetil and Hutcheson 2015; Essers et al. 2017; Mendelson 2011; Schwartz et al. 2011; Van Gelderen et al. 2012; Welter et al. 2017). Beginning with the very definition of entrepreneurship, scholars tend to disagree on what entrepreneurship is and how to talk about it in relation to identity. Gartner (1990) addresses these tensions, questioning: “What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurship?” It is critical for scholars to make their beliefs and understandings about entrepreneurship explicit, he argues, so that differing perspectives might be organized in ways that allow the field at large to understand how arguments about entrepreneurship contribute to one another on a broader basis. In a similar vein, Cunningham and Lischeron (1991) seek to offer the necessary background research for readers to establish their own conceptions of who an entrepreneur is and what they do for society. They explain that “the term ‘entrepreneur’ has often been applied to the founder of a new business, or a person who started a new business where there was none before.” However, there are still others that “reserve the term to apply only to the creative activity of the innovator.” Competing notions of the term suggest that the ability to identify and capitalize on opportunities is an entrepreneurial trait belonging to those who develop a niche in the market or a strategy to satisfy some need—who some also refer to as entrepreneurs (p. 45). Of course, many other definitions also circulate within the discourse in an attempt to define the term.

Conflict arises for individuals who do not fit the hegemonic socio-cultural criteria prescribed within entrepreneurship studies. Grand narratives of entrepreneurship have influenced canonical understandings of how to design entrepreneurship research, who is considered entrepreneurial, and how systemic biases have created challenges for disempowered individuals; consequently, few scholars have explored what it means to perform and embody entrepreneurship beyond profits and venture creation—especially as it pertains to those with marginalized identities. Welter et al. (2019) confirm that the context of most entrepreneurship research is “narrow, stable, and largely taken for granted” be-

cause there is such a “tight focus on a particular set of contextual factors—who (men), where (industrialized countries), how (through technological innovations), and why (to generate profits and wealth).” The most widely circulated narratives of entrepreneurship showcase the priority of these parameters in the multitude of silicon-valley representatives, to the extent that high profile entrepreneurs have become household commonplaces. Put in another way, we know all about the celebrity entrepreneurs that have put forth life changing products that we depend on daily—Steve Jobs and the evolution of iProducts; Mark Zuckerberg and the development of Facebook and social media, etc. What this shows, then, is that the everyday-entrepreneurs that are embedded in our local communities who are working towards entrepreneurial objectives outside of profit driven models are largely overlooked and left out of the scholarship entirely. We may recognize these as the city school board trustee advocating for technology grants, or the cultural center director who creates educational programs at the state university, for example. By focusing so intently on high-profile models of entrepreneurship we have effectively obscured the ability to see how smaller scale and everyday-entrepreneurs do recognizably entrepreneurial work. Widening discourse on entrepreneurship to include everyday-entrepreneurs: (1) dismantles grand narratives of entrepreneurship that are intrinsically oppressive, (2) exposes biases that render individuals invisible, (3) contributes to new models of entrepreneurial identity, and (4) diversifies entrepreneurial scholarship.

Additional scholarship that capitalizes on the heterogeneity of entrepreneurial identity uncovers a growth area that contributes to diversity within the field (Welter et al. 2017). Davidsson (2004) suggests that the term entrepreneur designates a role individuals inhabit as a function of their identity, which influences how different activities are carried out across various social contexts. Different contexts encourage and facilitate varying performances of entrepreneurial identity and very few—if any—scholars take up the ways everyday-entrepreneurs negotiate a sense of belonging to, with, and across communities. For this reason, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) advise that “in order to understand (entrepreneurial) identity in depth, we need to listen carefully to the stories of those we claim to understand and to study their interactions, the discourses and roles they are constituted by or resist—and do so with sensitivity for context” (p. 1190).

Scholarship needs to address entrepreneurs in terms of the complexity of their lived realities, and this also necessitates attention to identity. New and emerging models of entrepreneurial identity extend beyond profit-driven business models and there is much to be learned by those everyday-entrepreneurs who have been forced to innovate along the periphery of institutionalized systems that render their work invisible. As the case-study included herein will show, the experiences an individual accrues over time significantly impact the way they produce and contribute to communities across contexts. A broadening of entrepreneurship to include and accept this work therefore exposes what is lost when scholars insist on placing all of the value of entrepreneurship in capital oriented agendas and the tangible products of material culture. Instead, everyday-entrepreneurs show how the process of producing and/or contributing reveals valuable opportunities to understand better the rhetorical tools that facilitate innovation for and within communities—despite being mundane and far removed from silicon-valley celebrity status.

3. *Techné* after Postmodernism

In this section, Pender’s (2011) work on *techné* is presented as a framework that anchors the fundamental assertion of this article; *techné* affords a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial identity in that it articulates the way everyday-entrepreneurs engage in rhetorical processes of innovation in their contributions to the various communities they belong to. Though linking rhetoric and *techné* is productive, certain challenges are confronted in this work because the terms (i.e., rhetoric and *techné*) are defined and understood in many different ways. With no English equivalent, *techné*—the Latin version of the Greek word “τέχνη”—is typically understood as either art, skill, or craft, but none

of those placeholders provide a suitable encapsulation for the term itself. Indeed, many interpret *techné* as a more precise distillation of rhetorical work itself.

The origins and definitions of rhetoric and *techné* are entangled and long steeped in classical debates that contest the technical differences between art and skill. As the differences proposed by Plato and Aristotle show, *techné* retreats from definition(s) because its essence is manifested in highly contextual ways. In the *Gorgias*, for example, Plato uses Socrates to argue that rhetoric is not an art (*techné*—a learned kind of expertise); instead, he suggests rhetoric is a routine or knack learned from experience and habit. In the *Phaedrus*, however, this argument is reversed under rule-based prescriptions. Socrates argues that art produced without an understanding of its own mechanisms is no art at all—but it is a *techné* if it can withstand rigorous analysis while being itemized and organized by the rhetor with a capacity to understand differences in discourse and deploy specific strategies/tools for persuasion. Aristotle likewise follows suit taking up the art or knack issue in the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, arguing that it is the instrumentality of *techné* that distinguishes it from theoretical and practical knowledge. In his work, the tensions between art and skills are reasoned as follows: “knowledge and understanding belong to art rather than to experience because artists (*technitai*) know the cause, and men of experience do not” (Aristotle 2009, 981a24-981b2). The differences in proposed definitions for *techné* in the *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, and in Aristotle’s writings confirm that rule-based measures fall short of accounting for a *techné*. In essence, both theoretical principles and lived experience(s) are needed to extract the value of *techné* in any given situation; this ‘yes + and’ gray space is, therefore, the basis for opportunities to reclaim the value of *techné* and its applicability to entrepreneurship. That being so, the debates about *techné* that began as far back as the Greeks continue presently among scholars in search of a definitional consensus.

Pender (2011) demonstrates how *techné* finds its origins in a complex linguistic structure that points towards an articulation of process(es) of making and/or producing accounting for the essence that links art, skill, and craft together; any attempt to “re-establish the value of *techné*,” she argues, hinges on the issue of definition(s), which vary “depend[ing] entirely on whom you ask and when you ask them”—similar to the challenges presented by the terms entrepreneurship and identity (p. 13). This ambiguity and lack of unanimity has ruptured scholarly opportunities that are reflected by academics, Pender explains. Scott and Pinkert (2020), for example, offer a pertinent contribution in their proposal for integrative *techné* as a transdisciplinary conceptual framework aimed at supporting students’ development and deployment of expertise; they entreat that “integrative *techné* is a capacity for intentionally enacting, connecting with, and articulating learning as a principle-driven, adaptable, and cross-contextual knowledge-making experience” (p. 493). As such, scholars are working to recover *techné* as a pedagogical tool because it is, as Atwill asserts, “stable enough to be taught and transferred but flexible enough to be adapted to particular situations and purposes” (Atwill and Lauer 1995, p. 48). To this end, Pender summarizes *techné*’s key defining features—dependence on time, circumstance, experience, the contingencies of human interaction, and the situational potential of rhetorical ecologies (2011, p. 123). These key features are intrinsically embedded within the social situations that encapsulate entrepreneurship and identity; thus, using *techné* as a schema for the better understanding of new models of entrepreneurship offers an interdisciplinary contribution towards the diversification of discourse in the fields of rhetoric, entrepreneurship, etc.

Despite the fact that the origins of *techné* are rooted in classical rhetoric, important links can be drawn to present day contexts that expose the way everyday-entrepreneurs are able to harness available means for innovative purposes that operate outside the bounds of capitalist agendas. Critical analysis of the material culture(s) that encapsulate entrepreneurial identity (in each of its genres, models, and forms) exposes factors that pose harmful threats to individuals that do not match the preconceived conditions to qualify as an entrepreneur in the U.S. and elsewhere. Those that inhabit intersectional identities are, therefore, forced to work within the margins of a society that has “engineered inequity explicitly working to amplify social hierarchies based on race, class, and gender” as a “pre-

condition for the fabrication of technologies” necessary for entrepreneurial work (Benjamin 2019, pp. 23–24). For these reasons, the ways everyday-entrepreneurs engage *techné* as a “non-instrumental mode of bringing-forth” and a means of “inventing new social possibilities,” per Pender’s (2011) categorization, are highlighted. As the case study included in the next section will show, *techné* provides a holistic framework for better understanding everyday-entrepreneurial identity because it is flexible enough to account for the dynamic ways that skills transfer across domains in shifting contexts; not to mention that *techné* also pinpoints the ways entrepreneurial behaviors and actions impact communities in response to social disharmonies posed by variables such as technology, for example.

4. Everyday-Entrepreneurial *Techné*

Tracing the trajectory of an everyday-entrepreneur’s work is a monumental task that is complicated by the complex interpersonal networks that support the structure of an identity that is unique to each individual. Despite the fact that some identity markers are more explicit than others, each of them contribute to the way a person is drawn to perform who they are; thus, the strategies deployed to do so, inevitably, change in and across different situations. Examining different aspects of identity against the backdrop of entrepreneurship illuminates *techné* at work in the rhetorical ways entrepreneurs cultivate and innovate processes of making, especially in terms of the material cultures from which they are sprung and operate within.

For this case study, Rachel Wolman’s everyday-entrepreneurial narrative is presented. Rachel is a white, lesbian, Jewish woman whose identity is primarily constructed around being a religious song-leader, traveling musician, and the founder of the @Orangetheorememes Instagram page. Among her networks, she is best known for building community through music and fitness. A large part of Rachel’s identity is rooted in technology and in her work she presents notable intersections between gender, technology and social justice. More specifically, the way bias, algorithmic oppression, and inequitable experiences in social media affect lived realities is brought to attention; by broadening definitions of entrepreneurship to include local individuals like Rachel and other underrepresented everyday-entrepreneurs, the field gains alternative models that showcase rhetorical ways of being and processes of making that contribute to social change.

Pender (2011) defines *techné* as a “non-instrumental mode of bringing forth” and a “process of production.” Within the realm of entrepreneurial identity, then, *techné* is observed as a set of behaviors that contribute to and reconfigure the practices of society by bringing about social change (Spinosa et al. 1997). In the work of an everyday-entrepreneur, what this means is that *techné* is the process that occurs when people like Rachel recognize and respond to problems and/or social disharmonies; the plan they devise for how to respond is demonstrated in an innovative process that expresses the potential for new social possibilities. In this sense, *techné* operates on two levels: one, the principal expertise through which this work is done; and two, the technologies that are used to accomplish this.

4.1. Sketching Mundane Material Cultures & Their Importance

In this section and those that follow, specific examples are presented of *techné* at work in Rachel’s everyday-entrepreneurial interactions on Instagram. These moments show how Rachel develops and transfers skills across the distinct domains of her life; here, we see how she leverages gender in response to racism and sexism online, uses the available means at her disposal to confront algorithmic oppression, and establishes an assemblage of resources for her fitness community. Ultimately, *techné* facilitates Rachel’s uncovering of new social opportunities and her identity as an everyday-entrepreneur is analyzed in this case study.

Spinosa et al. (1997) argue that an entrepreneur is a selfless individual who recognizes how important it is to be motivated by a commitment to others before one’s own needs in an effort to foster life in a world that everyone shares (p. 44). Over the course of her life, Rachel has carefully constructed her identity around a driving passion to help and

connect people. She uses a variety of tools at her disposal in order to guide her mission, and technology offers a crucial contribution to this work. During our interviews, Rachel recounted how she has been heavily invested in all things technological for the greater majority of her life. She had access to computers at a very early age because her father is a ‘computer tech’ who holds an engineering master’s degree in information systems; for this reason, Rachel developed an advanced technological literacy that has since carried over and played a significant role in her adult life. In her thirty years, two cherished milestones are of significant importance to her entrepreneurial work—the moment she was first introduced to song-leading as a career path and the day she joined Orangetheory Fitness.

Music plays a significant role in Rachel’s life insofar as it primarily offers her the means to educate and connect people within the Jewish faith. “My main job,” she explained, “is to bring people together through song. That’s a hard thing to explain to people who are not in my world, which is why I just tell people I’m a traveling musician because that’s also true.” In her home synagogue, she is responsible for composing the music for various services, leading worship and praise sessions, and guiding others who wish to learn to do the same. Additionally, the various components that encompass Rachel’s obligations as a song-leader also transfer into the religious tutoring and education services she offers. Being able to read and sing in Hebrew, for example, enables Rachel to teach young children how to learn and access scripture. Rachel is also well known beyond her hometown community because she has worked hard to build robust professional networks; prior to the COVID pandemic, many religious organizations would often fly her all over the country to conduct weekend services with young Jewish teens. Indeed, the rhetorical skills Rachel has nurtured as a professional song-leader carry forward into other roles in her identity.

Another large component of Rachel’s life is dedicated to the community of Orangetheory Fitness (OTF)—a woman-owned, boutique fitness franchise gym that was founded in 2010. For reference, the community is wide-reaching, extending far beyond the rowers, weight floor, and treadmills that members use in studios for each workout. There are over 1200 studios in all 50 U.S. states and over 23 countries with plans for many more locations on the way, according to the latest reports ([“Orangetheory Fitness Franchise Information” 2020](#)). The membership based company offers coached group workouts centered on the science of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) and all studios follow the same workout template, which changes on a daily basis with a rotating focus on strength, endurance, power, or a combination of all three. One of the draws for this membership is the eligibility to sign up for a workout at any Orangetheory studio whether at home or away and all attendees, no matter the location, share the same template. As a result, members significantly contribute to building community through camaraderie and commiseration in and outside the studio. To the best of my knowledge, two of the most common digital spaces where members interact include Reddit and Instagram. Keeping the scope of this article in mind, I have opted not to discuss the Reddit environment here; this is not to suggest, however, that the issues of algorithmic oppression, benefits of community engagement, and other similar issues do not apply to Reddit’s digital space. If anything, the topics at hand are arguably more explicit in that domain—but I have chosen not to address that here because Rachel’s work is focused primarily on Instagram. As the @Orangetheorymemes Instagram page founder, Rachel is responsible for creating a formative space for members to carry forward shared community ties.

Rachel started the @Orangetheorymemes Instagram page in April 2018, shortly after becoming a member of OTF because she felt that Orangetheory “was and is the most meme-able workout” she had ever done. A quick Instagram search after her first class rendered a singular meme, but nothing necessarily dedicated to the cause. There were other member-based accounts that followed fitness journeys and vlogged entries of what it was like to be a part of this community and to workout with OTF, but that was not what she was looking for. Admittedly, Rachel did not anticipate that the page would be the first of its kind within the Instagram scene. Her account has reached, at its highest peak, a

maximum of 111K followers. On average, the page analytics show a follower breakdown of 87% women and 13% men with a target age range for both groups between 25–34 years old (49%), 35–44 years old (25%), 18–24 years old (12%), and 45–54 years old (10%). Since the inception of her page, she has posted more than 1200 times, hosted 42+ recorded interviews, and her content has been shared, viewed, and reposted enough times to be considered viral. Page analytics are current through 23 November 2020—the date when this article was written. Due to recent changes on the Instagram interface, live-streams are now automatically recorded and saved to IGTV; prior to this update live-streams were not recorded for viewing post-facto. In any case, it is also worth noting that OTF did not hire Rachel to do this work, nor do they compensate her monetarily. Regardless, she is passionate about spreading joy, raising awareness about inclusivity, and connecting with the wider OTF community. Other OTF meme accounts have also cropped up since that time that take inspiration from the work Rachel did to break ground in this new space, but none have an established fan-base as large as hers, nor do they offer the array of materials that are housed on @Orangetheorymemes. Ultimately, Rachel leverages humor in her efforts to build connections and strengthen the bonds between the Orangetheory community at large.

4.2. Material Cultures & the Complications of Gender

Rachel's mission in life—both on and off-line—is to bring people together, help them when she can, and spread joy along the way. Everything she does in life, she explained, has this objective at its crux and she is intentional about her actions, making sure to share her passion with others, make everyone feel important, help people find peace, and ensure that they feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable in that process. This objective reflexively calls on the many different facets of Rachel's identity and is felt by the various communities that she belongs to. However, effective execution of this work is constrained by a myriad of challenges. As it pertains to her work on Instagram and other digital environments, the ability to connect with people interpersonally is muddled by the complications presented by gender and the biased nature of algorithms. Rachel has had to invoke *techné* in cultivating her entrepreneurial ability to identify social disharmonies, crafting equitable solutions to technological challenges, and responding to social obstacles that hinder her ability to carry out her personal mission of connecting people within and across her religious and fitness communities. To reiterate, Rachel's everyday-entrepreneurial work is validated by the long-term contributions she has offered to other content creators on social media platforms; as we will see, her memes page demonstrates how effective content strategies are not simply limited to mutual points of identification—instead, they hinge on the innovative process of creating new social possibilities and space for something more.

The pervasiveness of technology and social media shows how “the political and the mundane are inevitably interwoven” (Caldeira et al. 2020). Rachel began participating in social media sites and digital communities as early as 2002 when she was just twelve years old; these experiences were formative as they exposed her to the cultural norms that various communities share online, as well as to some of the gendered challenges that are unique to women in these spaces. Because of the way social media platforms are set up via algorithms and the emphasis on users posting about the aesthetics of their life, women tend to be locked into polarizing categories as they represent themselves—empowering or boring and mundane, skinny or fat, etc. These categorizations are harmful for users. Consequently, gender is, among other variables, an added complication that individuals are obliged to confront in relation to entrepreneurship and technology. Thus, navigating digital spaces while inhabiting the identity of a Jewish, lesbian woman, is tricky at times.

Many scholars have brought light to the challenges women face online, including specific focus on the lived realities for individuals of color and those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ communities (Herring et al. 2002; Sparby 2017; Warzel 2016). When asked to articulate some of the daily challenges and struggles Rachel encounters in her life she listed (in no particular order): being a woman, being gay, her age, and the Instagram

algorithm, among others. During our interviews, she reflected on instances where online communities have treated her poorly and, in other cases, been harassed by small-minded trolls. For instance, when applying to be a member of LiveJournal communities Rachel recounted how she was always rejected and called a “fat pig” because she was overweight. She also shared some of the struggles she has encountered on her Instagram page: “I have gotten my ass handed to me on that memes page, multiple times. I’m pretty good at [dealing with it] now, but I have [had to] experience a lot, a lot of challenges. It destroys me sometimes.” Gelms (2018) argues that “keeping our finger on the pulse of (these occurrences) is imperative to understand who is excluded from digital publics and how these exclusions perpetuate racism and sexism,” which preserves the internet as a space free of politics and challenges to white masculine heterosexual hegemony. Although these experiences are unique to Rachel, many women who are excluded from digital publics on a regular basis share similar struggles.

On and off her Instagram page, Rachel strives to be authentic in representing her true self—including her beliefs and what she stands for; as such, her work as an everyday-entrepreneur is hinged on the issue of visibility in digital spaces. Discussing the different considerations that she takes when posting to her memes page, she mentioned a code of ethics by which the page runs that allows her to dismantle (or at least confront) social issues like racism and sexism using the available means at her disposal. The first step in this process, she noted, is acknowledging how privileged she is to have a voice people listen to. Rachel passes as a straight white woman; since people read her as feminine, her identification with the LGBTQ community is subdued and the fact that her Jewish identity is not marked affords her certain levels of ethos that people generally do not question. These are things she thinks about constantly:

I want to be as inclusive as possible, and so I try to make sure to include (people of) every background. I’m constantly looking at my grid and thinking ‘are there too many white people?’—that’s my first thought every time. I never think ‘are there too many people of color?’ because there’s no such thing in my mind.

Following up on that, Rachel also shared how she continuously boosts other content creators within the OTF community online. Many of these pages belong to Black people and people of color; an overwhelming majority belong to women and a good chunk of these accounts are hosted by men. “I try really hard to have a diverse group of people that I showcase,” Rachel explained, “because I think it’s important to learn from other people who are different from us.” Additionally, Rachel also shared that the other content creators and pages have values that align with the focus of the @Orangetheorymemes community. *Techné* helps articulate the issue of visibility and highlights the value of her work as we take stock of how Rachel curates a rhetorical ecology that offers an equitable space for the OTF community.

4.3. Algorithmic Oppression & Material Culture

Rachel works tirelessly to connect with her @Orangetheorymemes following by creating opportunities for new social possibilities among the members in the OTF community. Rachel is more than an influencer because her entrepreneurial model is not profit-driven. Influencers are “everyday, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating ‘advertorials’ into their blog or social media posts” (Abidin 2014). What sets her work apart is the way she has transferred the intersectional approaches, feminist values, and other skills that guide her career as a song-leader towards building community online, not to mention that her work contributes to a reconfiguring of practices that discloses social change for her following. “The life of skillful disclosing,” Spinosa et al. (1997) explain, “is a life of intense engagement” (p. 24). They go on to assert that the best way for an everyday-entrepreneur to confront and explore problems and/or social disharmonies is through dedicated experimentation—testing many different approaches and responses to

determine what is best for the community. For online content creation, we commonly see this translated as engagement analytics; however, this data is reliant on the way algorithms respond to content in conjunction with people's reactions and active participation with her page, which directly affect the circulation of her material on Instagram.

Noble (2018) studies the way biases are embedded in algorithms and search engines; "algorithmic oppression is not just a glitch in the system" she explains "but, rather, is fundamental to the operating system of the web." More in-depth research should take insight from Noble's work, focusing on the way algorithm(s) works, how they feed on engagement, likes, comments, shares, follower count and the like—but here we focus on the affective problem that algorithms pose for everyday-entrepreneurs. Algorithmic oppression exposes the embedded biases that Noble discusses and content creators' rhetorical response(s) to the challenge posed by Instagram which prevents them from using the tool to its full potential.

Highly politicized events such as the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, the 2020 presidential election, and the COVID-19 pandemic—to name a few—significantly affect the social media algorithm, exposing the way power hierarchies are disproportionately structured in organizing information online. In light of these events, Rachel Wolman and other content creators, were no longer able to leverage hashtags and geotags to their advantage. Instead, they had to deploy rhetorical strategies to navigate the multiple layers of technology, working around the issue in the process. "They took away the ability for hashtags to show anything," Rachel explained, "[because] too much misinformation was being spread," which is a real problem. Consequently, Rachel had a much harder time connecting with new followers on her page. Hashtags are vital for discovery, working with the algorithm to circulate content, making it visible for new potential followers. Altering the expected conventions of how hashtags work disrupted the circulation of Rachel's content. The issue of hashtags hiding the most recent posts has been resolved since this article was written; however, this event showcased Rachel's everyday-entrepreneurship because she was tasked with finding ways around this obstacle, revealing two important points: (1) her ability to leverage other features on Instagram to stay true to her primary objective, and (2) that moments like these rupture opportunities for social critique. During the election season, when users clicked on a hashtag they were shown content with that tag in a random order (i.e., this display does not follow the traditional reverse-chronological posting order that is typical for this platform) because Instagram had "hidden" the most recent posts (see Figure 1).

While hindrances with hashtags are anomalous, another more regular problem content creators face is shadow banning. Cooper (2020) and many others have focused on the ways content creators can play to the algorithm's strengths, but significantly fewer scholars have targeted the way Instagram (and other social media platforms, for that matter) facilitate censorship via shadow-banning and other mechanisms. When creators are shadow banned, a certain percentage of their content is blocked and concealed from a large majority of members who use that platform and follow those specific accounts. Generally speaking, shadow banning is presented as an altruistic measure that social media platforms can take to protect users; the idea is that an absence of engagement with such content will resolve problematic, or otherwise unfavorable, content on the site and eliminate spammer and troll accounts (Cole 2018). However, there are a number of cases that show users being banned for sharing content that is deemed permissible by social media sites (Middlebrook 2020); survey data produced by Salty—an inclusive online community designed for women, trans, and non-binary people—unmasks the illusion of altruism, providing data that shows how plus-sized profiles, queer people, and women of color experience shadow banning at disproportionate rates (Salty 2019). Unsurprisingly, Rachel echoed these sentiments explaining that being shadow banned is something she deals with often. In response, she leans on her existing community to continue to circulate her content via their engagement with her page by actively alerting them to this issue and alerting them of new content through announcements on Instagram stories. Instagram stories are a feature that enables

users to share photo and video content that is separate from the content found in the tiled gallery of a user's profile. These snippets are visible to a user's followers and they remain visible for 24 h. Figure 2 shows Rachel's post to the @Orangetheorymemes community, addressing how shadow banning affected her ability to spotlight the work of Black staff members and coaches.

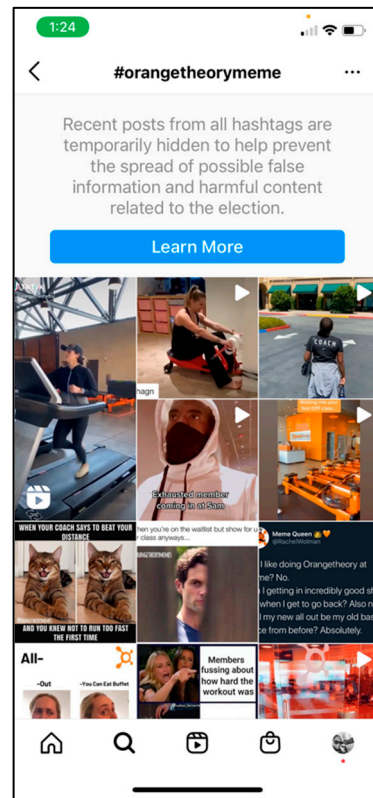


Figure 1. This figure shows a screen-capture of the message provided by Instagram regarding hash tagged content. The message reads, “Recent posts from all hashtags are temporarily hidden to help prevent the spread of possible false and harmful information.”

The entrepreneurial ability to read situations and understand how specific skills, knowledge, and prior experiences aid the pursuit of a goal—whether predetermined or otherwise—requires an attunement to *kairos*, the critical moment that an individual must seize. During such a highly politicized time, one example of the way Rachel has made use of her resources is shown in a collaborative post with the members of a West coast Orangetheory studio that addresses the Black community. In this post, Rachel took careful measures to make sure the @Orangetheorymemes followers were shown that she (and others in the OTF community) stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM). Attention to social movements like BLM, which are so incredibly important to the history and progress in the United States, provide additional windows to engage with the work of everyday-entrepreneurship more critically; in highly politicized moments like these, we are shown that there are new spaces opening up for socially aware identity and entrepreneurship discourse. A more in-depth analysis of the intersections of BLM and everyday-entrepreneurship, however, extends beyond the scope of this particular article. As Figure 3 shows, Rachel is committed to human rights and her personal beliefs and religious creed anchored and guided the way she chose to caption this post. For her, standing up for her beliefs was (and continues to be) more important than the expense of losing followers.

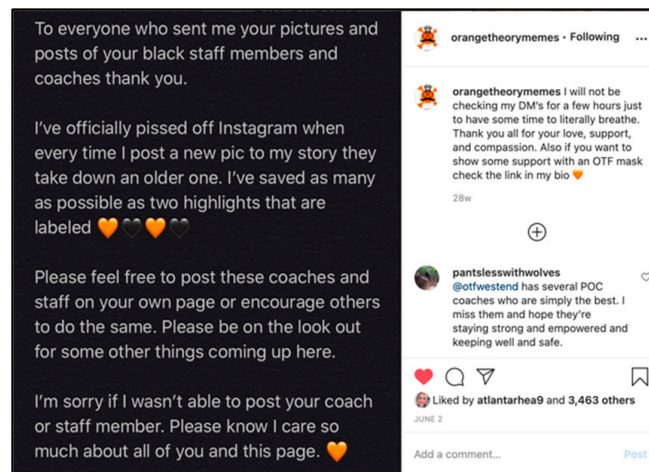


Figure 2. This figure shows a screen-capture of the message Rachel sent out to the @Orangetheorymemes community alerting them to the ways the algorithm was discriminating against her Instagram story posts spotlighting Black members and coaches. The post reads “To everyone who sent me your pictures and posts of your black staff members and coaches thank you. I’ve officially pissed off Instagram when every time I post a new pic to my story they take down an older one. I’ve saved as many as possible as two highlights that are labeled 🧡🖤🧡🖤. Please feel free to post these coaches and staff on your own page or encourage others to do the same. Please be on the look out for some other things coming up here. I’m sorry if I wasn’t able to post your coach or staff member. Please know I care so much about all of you and this page. 🧡”.

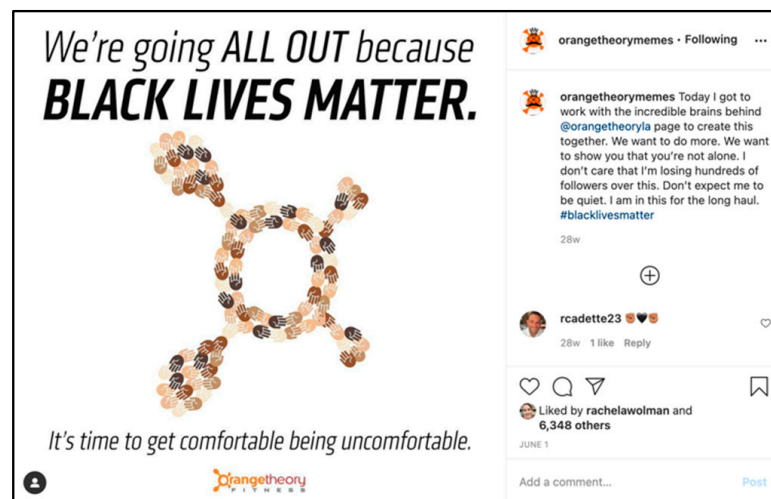


Figure 3. This figure shows a screen-capture of Rachel’s collaborative post with @orangetheoryla in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The caption reads: “We want to do more. We want to show you that you’re not alone. I don’t care that I’m losing hundreds of followers over this. Don’t expect me to be quiet. I am in this for the long haul. #blacklivesmatter”.

Atwill and Lauer (1995) argue that *techné* creates opportunities for cultural critique by making tacit social practices explicit, which—as Pender (2011) demonstrates—aims in the possibility of developing an awareness of new social possibilities. In the collaborative BLM post, for example, *techné* is at work as a means of inventing new social possibilities due to two variables: an exchange of power, and cultural critique. Banding together with the West coast studio to respond to social unrest while also leveraging the exposure of two popular Instagram accounts was Rachel’s way of subverting systematic power differences between users and the Instagram algorithm. However, this would not have been possible had

Rachel not first acknowledged her embedded social positioning, surveyed the available means, and deployed them in the right moments in pursuit of her ultimate goal.

Rachel's response to the gendered and algorithmic challenges online highlight the affordances of *techné* in that her problem solving approach brought forth, out of concealment, solutions that were otherwise hidden. In our conversations, I observed the ways Rachel talked about how strategies she has learned and developed in her religious life transfer online. These networked relationships facilitate friction and overlap between boundaries, which everyday-entrepreneurs like Rachel become aware of as they are situated in a number of contexts; it is in these spaces where innovation typically erupts. As everyday-entrepreneurs accrue a variety of experiences, they become located "within complex ambient situations [that] reveal 'constellations' and thus allow them to invent or to 'see something else'" (Hawk 2009). In both her Jewish and OTF communities, Rachel highlights the importance of communicating effectively and making each individual feel seen, heard, and appreciated. In all things, Rachel is aware of how her actions impact other people's experience—whether that experience is worship service, direct messages on Instagram, an educational conference, Instagram-live, etc.; her priority is making sure those choices stay rooted in her primary objective.

5. Discussion & Conclusions

Rachel Wolman and other everyday-entrepreneurs are, as [Spinosa et al. \(1997\)](#) point out, "worth thinking about [because] they are sensitive to how the problems they sense have roots in our pervasive way of living, our lifestyle [. . .] the changes they bring about are changes of historical magnitude because they change the way we see and understand things" (p. 41). Rachel demonstrates everyday-entrepreneurial contributions in and through what it means to host and create content for a memes page on Instagram; she shows up every day, goes all out, and brings out of concealment the biases produced by the institutional structure of social media algorithms which opens up room for scholars to address growth opportunities moving forward.

Rachel shows how everyday-entrepreneurs emerge as a product of the dynamic, social, and interpersonal interactions between people and their environments, which necessarily includes technology and the internet ([Bay and Ruiz 2020](#)). In her work, she creates spaces and opportunities for meaningful dialogue on important issues while leveraging the point of identification that she shares with the community through Orangetheory. Negotiating a sense of community and belonging in digital spaces like Instagram is tough territory to navigate, but it is absolutely necessary to bring this forth as a social reality. In support [Willcox and Hickey-Moody \(2020\)](#) argue, "community can be produced by more-than-human assemblages and argue that a more nuanced account of digital community making which accounts for live Instagram intra-action is needed." We see this reflected in Rachel's work in that she curates the page as an assemblage of resources for the OTF community at large. Despite the algorithmic and hashtag challenges, Rachel has created a space where @Orangetheorymemes page users can laugh and commiserate about the workout templates each day; find informative interviews with coaches about specific topics; support social movements like BLM and LGBTQ Pride; utilize holiday gift guides that spotlight OTF member-owned businesses; discover other promoted OTF-adjacent Instagram accounts/media; raise donation funds for various causes; and interact with Rachel personally via live sessions, static polls, and direct messages. Therefore, as we see demonstrated in this case-study, extending the definition of entrepreneurship shifts the focus of this identity away from the end result and profit driven models; instead, everyday-entrepreneurs demonstrate the merit offered by the process of responding to the opportune moment and harnessing the available means to respond to larger socio-cultural systemic issues.

Through the lens of *techné*, scholars are better positioned to understand identity and inquire into the rhetorical embodiment of everyday-entrepreneurship. As an embodied practice, *techné* articulates the rhetorical tact of everyday-entrepreneurs insofar as we are

able to tease out and isolate moments where this work brings forth biases that otherwise conceal issues (in this case, those pertaining specifically to gender and technology) and creates a space for new social possibilities. Reclaiming *techné* in this way sheds light on the value of broadening the definition of entrepreneurship to include the mundane practices of everyday interpersonal interactions. Thus, a renegotiation of entrepreneurship to include broader, “everyday” perspectives uncovers the way social justice-oriented awareness shapes everyday-entrepreneurs’ personal objectives, rhetorical skills, and identity at large; the work of everyday-entrepreneurship, especially within and among digital contexts, thus illuminates the way biases ingrained within institutional barriers render objects and gender invisible.

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