

# Master Thesis Innovation and Entrepreneurship

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## **Young entrepreneurs gaining legitimacy: What is the role of gender in the attainment of legitimacy as a young female- or young male entrepreneur in the technology sector?**

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Radboud University

Nijmegen school of management

**Radboud University**



# Young entrepreneurs gaining legitimacy: What is the role of gender in the attainment of legitimacy as a young female - or young male entrepreneur in the technology sector?

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## Preface

This master thesis contains a research that is conducted to finalize the Master program in Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Radboud University Nijmegen.

I started my academic journey in 2016 at Radboud University with a bachelor's degree in business administration. After writing my bachelor thesis, I decided to extend the three-year bachelor program with half a year, in order to follow elective courses abroad. I was able to attend the University of València, where I followed four elective business courses.

After completing my bachelor's degree, I commenced my Master in Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This master program taught me a lot. However, due to the COVID-19 situation I was not able to get to know my fellow students very well and it was hard to put in motivation and willpower when all education was from home. Nevertheless, I was able to complete all courses with an average of 7,2. The last part of this Master program was dedicated to writing my master thesis.

After finalizing this master program, I will be moving to Barcelona to follow another Master program in Fashion and Luxury Business Management.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Caroline Essers for guiding me through the process of writing my master thesis. The feedback provided by Caroline has been crucial and very valuable in this process.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all twelve respondents that have decided to offer their valuable time to have an interview with me.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. Especially, I would like to thank my father for his unconditional support during my entire academic career and making it possible for me to pursue these academic chances.

Charlotte Geurten

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## Abstract

Multiple studies are executed in the domain of entrepreneurship and legitimacy. However, this study dives into the under researched aspect of intersectionality of multiple social constructs. Namely, the role of age and gender in the attainment of legitimacy in the technology sector in the Netherlands. Consequently, the goal of this research is to investigate whether there are differences and similarities in the way young male- and young female entrepreneurs construct their identity to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders in this male dominated industry. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the identity work that young male - and young female entrepreneurs undertake to gain legitimacy in a masculine industry as the technology sector.

Accordingly, the following research question has been developed: *Which role does gender play in the attainment of legitimacy for young male and female entrepreneurs in the technology sector?* Therefore, literature study has been executed and four identity work strategies emerged. Six young male – and six young female entrepreneurs are interviewed. Firstly, to gain an insight in their experiences of being a young male- or young female entrepreneur in the technology sector. Subsequently, to gain insight in de differences and similarities regarding the identity work they perform in order to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders.

The results show that both young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study experience disadvantages i.e., negative situations due to the intersection of their gender- and age identity. Moreover, both do perceive several advantages i.e., positive situations due to their gender identity as well. However, the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity seems to diminish the extent to which they are perceived as legitimate entrepreneurs by external stakeholders. Hence, to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders, identity work is performed by all twelve interviewed entrepreneurs. Cognitive-, physical- and discursive identity work strategies are used, but carried out in different ways to cope with the intersection of their gender- and age identity. Additionally, a strategy is used that concerns bringing an external individual that fits the image of the stereotypical entrepreneur to cope with the intersection of their gender-and age identity.

**KEYWORDS:** Identity work, intersectionality, gender, age, legitimacy

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Problem indication

In the Netherlands, there is a noticeable increase in young starting entrepreneurs. In 2017 50% of starting entrepreneurs were younger than 35 years old. In 2007 this was only 40% (CBS, 2017). The most remarkable is the increase of young entrepreneurs under the age of 25. The number of entrepreneurs under the age of 25 has grown from 18,200 in 2007 to 27,300 in 2016 (CBS, 2017). In the process of becoming an entrepreneur and creating a venture, it is likely that the concerned entrepreneurs need financing of external stakeholders. According to Shane & Venkatamaran (2000) entrepreneurship is defined as “The examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited” (p. 218). To be an entrepreneur one does not need to, but can create a new venture (Shane & Venkatamaran, 2000).

Assuming that an entrepreneur is to create a new venture; in order to obtain the required resources to create and maintain a venture, one should be seen as a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders (Martens et al., 2007). Legitimacy is defined by Überbacher (2014) as the way in which the entrepreneur is recognized as appropriate for the beginning enterprise. According to De Clercq and Voronov (2009), legitimacy is the entrepreneur’s ability to conform to existing norms as well as the ability to convince stakeholders that they are innovative and change agents.

In this period of developing an enterprise, entrepreneurs take certain roles or want to show a certain image in order to demonstrate legitimacy incorporated in their personality and identity (Swail & Marlow, 2018). Hence, the creation of a suitable identity which fits the norms of what an entrepreneur should be and act like is crucial in the development of gaining legitimacy (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). The construction of such an identity is called identity work (Brown, 2015). There is a general discourse on who is a typical entrepreneur. Men fit the prototype of this typical entrepreneur, which is white and masculine (Essers & Benschop, 2007). Accordingly, men might experience an advantage because of their gender when convincing external stakeholders. Consequently, legitimacy might be an obstacle for female entrepreneurs, who ought to blend their ‘role’ of being a woman and the role of an entrepreneur which often are perceived contrary by society or incumbents in the field (McAdam, Harrison & Leitch, 2018). Accordingly, Marlow and McAdam (2015) conducted a study on the identity

work that female entrepreneurs conduct in order to gain legitimacy in a male dominated sector. They found that female entrepreneurs in the technology sector ‘reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur’ (Marlow & McAdam, 2015 P.791).

Therefore, it is interesting to investigate how entrepreneurs construct their identity at the intersection of social categories such as gender and age in order to gain legitimacy. The intersection of such social categories is called intersectionality. Intersectionality is defined by Essers & Benschop (2007) as the overlap of different social categories like sexuality, culture, gender and age. Moreover, intersectionality is often key in research on discrimination, identity and hierarchical relationships (Cho et al., 2013). Intersectionality emphasizes on the fact that diverse social categories are not to be separated (inseparable) and highlights power dynamics that appear when various categories of social difference merge (Collins, 2000; Weber, 2010). Accordingly, Crenshaw (2014) used the term intersectionality in her article to indicate inequality and discrimination as a result of how gender and race overlap to form the employment experience of colored women (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Hence, the intersectionality of social categories in the process of gaining legitimacy is an appealing field for research.

Several researchers have investigated the general attainment of legitimacy from key stakeholders by entrepreneurs (Arshed et al., 2019; Garud et al., 2014; Swail & Marlow, 2018). Garud et al. (2014) have examined the role that projective storytelling plays in gaining legitimacy. They found that ‘projective storytelling can be used by entrepreneurs to gain legitimacy for their ventures’ (Garud et al., 2014 P.1489). Furthermore, several researchers agree that a lack of legitimacy results in the fact that organizations are not able to gain the resources needed in order to survive (Martens et al., 2007; Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2013). Additionally, Swail and Marlow (2018) have investigated what impact gender bias has on the attainment of legitimacy of women when starting a venture. They found that during the nascent stage, women should not only legitimize their venture, but additionally, they have to perform identity work in order to overcome the prejudices and conform to the stereotypical entrepreneur (Swail & Marlow, 2018). Accordingly, entrepreneurship is a phenomenon entrenched in prejudices and biases (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Calás, Smircich, and Bourne, 2009). These prejudices and biases result in restrictions on who is to be seen as a legitimate entrepreneur and who is not (Marlow & Mcadam, 2015).

Legitimacy is a familiar concept in entrepreneurship literature. In the past, research was conducted about the combination of being female and gaining legitimacy (Garud et al., 2014; Marlow & McAdam, 2015; Murphy et al., 2020; Swail & Marlow, 2018). Entrepreneurship research lacks however a focus on the intersectionality of gender and age in combination with gaining legitimacy as an entrepreneur. Therefore, this study asks the question on how do entrepreneurs construct their identity at the intersection of gender and age in order to gain legitimacy? According to Leitch and Harrison (2016) the understanding of identity construction is needed in order to link identity to established legitimacy.

Therefore, this research dives into the further exploration about what young entrepreneurs do to gain legitimacy when starting a venture. More specifically, how young entrepreneurs construct their identity. Accordingly, two social categories will be studied. Namely: Age and Gender. This study narrows limits the social construct of age until the age of 28. This focus on young entrepreneurs is based on the under researched area of young entrepreneurs gaining legitimacy. The average age of entrepreneurs receiving funding for their venture is 40 (Wright, 2017). Therefore, it is interesting to see what happens when entrepreneurs starting a venture are substantially younger. Furthermore, this study seeks to find out whether a difference exists between male- and female entrepreneurs in this process. Thus, an additional social construct, gender, is taken into account. Hence, the difference between men and women can be based on sex. Accordingly, sex is defined as the biological differentiation between men and women (Burr, 2002). However, in this research the focal point will be on gender, which is the social constructed phenomenon on how individuals act e.g., feminine or masculine. This concept will be further elaborated in paragraph 2.1.2.1.

As research on gender at the intersection of age in relation to legitimacy is too substantial to cover in all industries, this research will focus on the technology industry. The technology industry consists out of several subsectors such as: medical technology, social technology, blockchain, artificial intelligence etcetera. The technology industry is overall a male dominated market (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). Therefore, it provides an appealing area to conduct research on differences in the strategies young male- and young female entrepreneurs use to gain legitimacy. Accordingly, in this male dominated industry various prejudices on females operating in this industry exist (Marlow & McAdam, 2015).

Concluding, this research aims to gain an insight in the identity work that young male - and female entrepreneurs perform to gain legitimacy in the technology sector, in order to contribute to the existing knowledge on this subject by expanding the under researched area of intersectionality in combination with the attainment of legitimacy in this specific sector.

## 1.2 Problem statement

In the previous paragraph it has been captured that multiple studies are executed in the domain of entrepreneurship and legitimacy. This research however, dives into the under researched aspect of intersectionality of multiple social constructs. Namely, the role of age and gender in the attainment of legitimacy in the technology sector in the Netherlands. Consequently, the goal of this research is to investigate whether there are differences and similarities in the way young male- and young female entrepreneurs construct their identity to gain legitimacy in this male dominated industry. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the identity work that young male - and young female entrepreneurs undertake to gain legitimacy in a masculine industry as the technology sector.

Accordingly, the following research question has been developed:

*Which role does gender play in the attainment of legitimacy for young male- and young female entrepreneurs in the technology sector?*

## 1.3 Conceptual framework and research questions

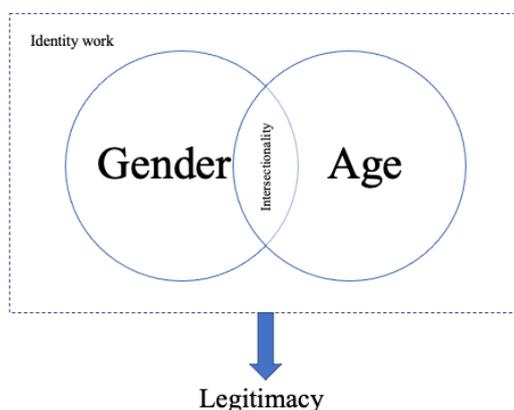


Figure 1: conceptual framework

The conceptual framework composed in figure 1 provides the base for the research sub-questions. Based on this framework and the key research question, six sub-questions are developed in order to achieve an answer to the key research question and a solution for the problem statement:

1. What is meant by identity and intersectionality?
2. What is meant by legitimacy?
3. What are the experiences of young male- and young female entrepreneurs seeking legitimacy?
4. How do young male entrepreneurs construct their identity in order to gain legitimacy?
5. How do young female entrepreneurs construct their identity in order to gain legitimacy?
6. What are the main differences regarding the strategy (identity work) of gaining legitimacy between male and female entrepreneurs in the researched cases?

#### 1.4 Thesis structure

This paragraph contains an outline of the following chapters of this research. Chapter two consists of a theoretical background and will provide an answer to the first two research questions. Chapter three contains the methodology that is used during this research. Chapter four consists of the empirical findings and provides answers to the remaining research questions. The fifth chapter contains a discussion of the acquired results. This discussion is an elaboration on the analysis of the fourth chapter combined with the theoretical background provided in chapter three. Additionally, it contains the limitation and contributions of this research. Moreover, it provides potential future research recommendations. Finally, the last chapter contains a conclusion and reflection.

## 2 Theoretical background

This chapter contains the theoretical framework and is therefore an elaboration of the core concepts that are relevant in this study. Section one elaborates on identity work, paragraph two elaborates on intersectionality, paragraph three is an elaboration on the concept legitimacy and the final paragraph contains a short wrap up of the theoretical background.

## 2.1 Key concepts

### 2.1.1 Identity work

Several perspectives on identity exist among researchers (Brown, 2015). For example, sociologists define identity as ‘a conceptual bridge between the person and commonality’ (Webb, 2006 p.10). Though, social psychologists see identity as related to the need for social confirmation (Brown, 2015). Nevertheless, there is a developing consensus that identity is about the significance that people ascribe to themselves and is constructed as a result of social interaction as they pursue to answer the following question: ‘Who am I?’ (Brown, 2015).

Accordingly, during this research it is argued that young entrepreneurs engage in identity work in order to create entrepreneurial identities (Essers & Benschop, 2009). Entrepreneurs aim to construct entrepreneurial identities that conform to the typical heroic masculine entrepreneur (Essers & Benschop, 2009) in order to gain legitimacy. Therefore, identity work can be defined as “people that are forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003 p.1165). For this research, the focus is on individual identity, rather than on collective identities (Brown, 2015). Furthermore, Watson (2009) defined identity work as follows: “Identity work implicates the mutually constitutive processes whereby people aim to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self- identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social- identities which pertain to them in the various milieu in which they live their lives” (P.257). Accordingly, Brown (2015) argues that there is an increasing awareness that identity work is not a discrete phenomenon, as Vonorov and Vince (2012) emphasize on the adaptability and fluidity of identities. Moreover, identities are composed as ongoing projects emerging from dialog between an internal self and external discourses encountered within a social context (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Lewis, 2016).

Swail and Marlow (2008) conducted a study on identity work that women execute in searching legitimacy while starting a business in a prevailing masculine context. They argue that “constructing identity involves an internal, self-evaluating focus” (Swail & Marlow, 2008 P. 261). This means that it is a process based on the individual self, whereas seeking legitimacy is an outward focused process to gain confidence of external stakeholders. Therefore, composing identity is a process focusing on presenting the individual self in a way that legitimacy can be gained from external stakeholders (Swail and Marlow, 2008).

As stated earlier, women may face constraints, and men may face advantages because of their biological sex (Swail and Marlow, 2018). Female entrepreneurs may have to pursue diverse ways of identity work to conform to the male archetypical entrepreneur (Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio, 2008). Additionally, Leitch and Harisson (2016) argue in their study that identity “can be viewed as our representation of the internalization and incorporation of socially-held behavioral expectations” (P.3). Therefore, identity can have an influence on how individuals feel, behave and what they aspire to accomplish in the future (Leitch & Harisson, 2016).

Hence, this study focuses on the performance of identity work by young male and female entrepreneurs when developing a startup in the technology sector and seeks to find the similarities and differences in constructing identity work.

### 2.1.2 Intersectionality of social categories

Essers and Benschop (2009) argue that identities are intersectionality constructed. Therefore, several studies have focused on the influence of gender on gaining legitimacy. This study however, includes the intersectionality of gender and additionally age in order to gain legitimacy. This means that both concepts are taken into account simultaneously. Commonly, gender and age appear to be considered important identity categories in order to understand the identities of young entrepreneurs aiming to be considered as legitimate entrepreneurs (Essers & Benschop, 2009). Intersectionality as a concept was initially constructed by Crenshaw (1997) to emphasize on the importance of categories of coercion existing at the same time that formed dissimilarities in power. As in her article (2014) Crenshaw used intersectionality to indicate inequality and discrimination as a result of how gender and race overlap (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Accordingly, intersectionality is often key in research on discrimination, identity and hierarchical relationships (Cho et al., 2013).

It is argued that research on intersectionality consists of two approaches in organizations (Rodriguez et al., 2016). In their article, Rodriguez et al. (2016) state that the first approach focuses on subjectivity and analyzes the intersection of social categories in order to emphasize the form and results of disparity experienced by people because of their membership of certain social categories forming their social identities. Furthermore, the second approach encompasses subjectivities in systemic dynamics of power and discovers intersections in order to make them visible and accessible and detectable for further analysis (Rodriguez et al., 2016). A plurality of research on intersectionality follows the first approach described by Rodriguez et al (2016). Munro (2001) conducted a research on the intersectionality of ethnicity, class and

gender in trade unions. Swail and Marlow (2018) conducted a research on the effect of gender bias on legitimacy but suggested further research on the interaction of gender with other social categories. Furthermore, Netto et al. (2020) developed research on intersectionality theory by examining the intersectionality of patriarchy and racism with other social categories amongst low paid migrants.

Referring to Acker (2011) in this research, inequality is acknowledged that comes from social identity categories as gender or age. This is in line with the first approach Rodriguez et al. (2016) described in their article. Additionally, Essers and Benschop (2009) argue that in entrepreneurship, people are constructing identities by taking into account diverse social categories, as in this research, gender and age. The concerning social categories will be elaborated in the following two paragraphs.

#### 2.1.2.1 Social category: Gender

Generally, biological sex characterizes males and females by their physical nature and therefore, the biological differentiation between men and women is defined as biological sex (Burr, 2002). Moreover, gender is argued to be the socially constructed phenomenon on masculine or feminine behavior (Jeon et al., 2020). The socially constructed perspective on gender takes into account de masculine of feminine behavior that individuals show when constructing their identity. Therefore, this concept is a suitable social category to use in order to investigate identity work. Hence, even though female employment has grown greatly since 1960, women are still not as much employed as males (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Feminist studies and theories are based on the belief that gender is an important part in constructing society, but even more importantly, it is something that disadvantages females (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Therefore, as argued by Calás, Smircich, and Bourne (2009), an important objective of feminist knowledge is to investigate, acknowledge and stop this disadvantage that women face. Accordingly, entrepreneurship is not a phenomenon that incorporates gender neutrality. Actually, prejudices based on gender exist. Most entrepreneurs are entangled in these gendered biases (Calás, Smircich & Bourne, 2009; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Marlow & Patton, 2005). Moreover, research points out that entrepreneurship is likely to be seen as a stereotyped masculine phenomenon. Therefore, people have a typical association of entrepreneurship with manly traits like being assertive, competitive and self-concentrated (Gupta, Turban, & Bhawe, 2008; Gupta, Jennings & Brush, 2013). Therefore, it might happen that women tend to behave manly when seeking for legitimacy in order to fit into this dominant

discourse. Accordingly, this makes gender an interesting social category to investigate when male and female entrepreneurs are constructing their identity when seeking for legitimacy.

#### 2.1.2.2 Social category: Age

This research focuses on the intersectionality of two social categories. In paragraph 2.1.2.1 the social category of gender is elaborated. Hence, an additional category, age, is added in order to speak of intersectionality. The focus of this research is limited to the social category of age until 28. This focus comes from an attraction to investigate an insufficient attention of the role of age in combination with gender, identity work and legitimacy. The average entrepreneur receiving the first funding for their venture is aged 40 (Wright, 2017). Accordingly, it is interesting to do research on a social category that deviates from this average age. Therefore, a social category of age until 28 is chosen for this research. In this research, entrepreneurs under the age of 28 will be referred to as ‘young entrepreneurs’. When starting a venture, age is closely interrelated to experience (Kelan, 2014). While researchers have often focused on the intersectionality of race and gender, an important under researched category is age in combination with gender (Kelan, 2014). Accordingly, several researchers have argued that older females tend to be discriminated based on age in their work environment (Ainsworth, 2002; Krekula, 2007). Controversially, not much research has been done on discrimination regarding their experience of younger women in the work environment (Kelan, 2014). Increasingly, young women see age, and with that, lack of experience, as a cause of discrimination and prejudices (Kelan, 2014; Scharff, 2011). Therefore, young entrepreneurs with an age until 28 make a suitable social category to investigate in combination with gender in order to gain legitimacy.

#### 2.1.3 Legitimacy

The construction of an identity can be used as a method to gain legitimacy (Brown & Toyoki, 2003). This research incorporates the intersectionality of the social categories gender and age in constructing an identity by entrepreneurs when developing a venture. In this context, whereas an entrepreneur is developing a venture and translating ideas into practice, the stage in which this organization is situated, is called nascency (Swail & Malow, 2008). Marlow and McAdam (2015) state that in this early stage of developing a venture, a lack of track record forces stakeholders to judge the venture based on the owner’s identity and credibility. Therefore, it is argued that in this nascency state, the entrepreneur’s legitimacy functions as an indication for credibility and potential (Fisher, Kotha & Lahiri, 2016).

Accordingly, Swail & Marlow (2008) argue that seeking for legitimacy is an outward focused process of activities while engaging with external stakeholders. According to De Clercq and Voronov (2009), there is a factor which differentiates an entrepreneur in a nascent stage and an entrepreneur with years of experience. This differentiating factor is the disproportion between the available resources and the resources needed to achieve the goal (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). Several researchers argue that within the development of a new technological idea or venture, the challenge for an entrepreneur is gaining legitimacy in order to pursue their activities (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). Accordingly, De Clercq and Voronov (2009) argue that “gaining legitimacy is driven by meeting the field incumbents’ expectations about conformity and innovation” (P.399). This means that the product or idea should have a fit with what is socially desired and accepted as, in this research, technology (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001). Therefore, in order to gain legitimacy, it is important for an entrepreneur to match the current norms in the field (Aldrich and Baker, 2001). Hence, entrepreneurs face a challenge of constructing their unfamiliar idea in such a way that it becomes plausible/reasonable (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Simultaneously, the entrepreneur must show that the idea is supplementary, innovative and to some extent, new to the field (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Consequently, De Clercq and Voronov (2009) claim that legitimate entrepreneurial behavior is seen as: “the ability to meet such potentially contradicting demands which is, confirming with - and challenging existing field arrangements” (P.400). E.g., entrepreneurs should be able to act in line with what is seen as desirable and at the same time they must be able to add new things to the existing. For this study it is therefore interesting to research the way entrepreneurs construct their identity in order to ‘fit in while standing out’ (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009).

In this study, gender is used as a criterion for assessing the legitimacy of young entrepreneurs developing a technological venture (Swail & Marlow, 2018). Taking into account that the typical entrepreneur is male (Essers & Benschop, 2007) and one can speak of a masculine discourse in the entrepreneurial context (Hamilton, 2014), female entrepreneurs have to execute explicit forms of identity work in order to overcome the chasm between undervalued female identities and the male archetypical entrepreneur (Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio, 2008).

This research seeks to understand the biases and prejudices that young women experience when seeking for legitimacy in order to develop their technological venture. As masculinity is the dominating discourse in entrepreneurship, femininity is seen as the opposite of this norm (Ahl,

2006). This gender blindness (Hamilton, 2014) caused negative effects on women's capability to gain legitimacy as a result of them believed to be less significant than men (Ahl, 2006). However, legitimacy is needed in order to attract resources from external stakeholders (Garud et al., 2014).

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the process young male- and young female entrepreneurs go through when seeking for legitimacy in order to pursue their actions to realize their technological venture. It is aimed to connect the identity work entrepreneurs perform at the intersection of age and gender in relation with this attainment of legitimacy, in order to find out whether prejudices or biases exist within these processes.

## 2.2 Wrap up

This chapter provided a classification of the core concepts of this research. Firstly, identity work is the process of individuals presenting themselves in certain ways to answer the question of who am I (Brown, 2015)? Individuals often construct an identity to match dominant discourses (Aldrich and Baker, 2001). Furthermore, it is argued by Essers and Benschop (2009) that identities are intersectional constructed. This means that individuals are part of multiple social categories simultaneously. For this research, the concerning social categories are age and gender. Lastly, starting entrepreneurs seek to gain legitimacy for their nascent organizations in order to achieve the required resources (Garud et al., 2014). As this is their goal, this research aims to investigate the way young male- and young female entrepreneurs construct their identities by comparing their narratives.

## 3 Research methodology

The third chapter contains the methodology which elaborates on the research design and the data collection. The data collection consists of interviews and the analysis of literature. The third paragraph contains the operationalization of the key concept identity work. Subsequently, the fourth paragraph consists of a description of the quality criteria. Finally, this chapter finishes with a paragraph about research ethics.

### 3.1 Research design

This study accommodates a qualitative framework, i.e., a method that benefits various data sources such as literature, written documents, persons by conducting interviews and observations (Bleijenbergh, 2016). Accordingly, this research is conducted by making use of various data sources such as literature and interviews. The relevant sources will be elaborated in the following paragraph.

Furthermore, this research is partly conducted in a deductive way and partly conducted in an inductive way in order to gain knowledge on the relationship between the identity work that young male- and young female entrepreneurs execute in order to gain legitimacy. Deductive research means that research is executed on a subject that has already been researched by other researchers. Therefore, existing theories can be adopted and applied to new research questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Accordingly, existing theoretical frameworks facilitate this research on the relationship between the identity work that young male – and young female entrepreneurs execute in order to gain legitimacy (Bleijenbergh, 2016). Finally, this framework will be used as a guide to construct semi-structured interviews.

Additionally, this research is conducted by applying an inductive method. This means that the conducted semi structured interviews are allowed to be interpreted by the researcher (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Furthermore, it means that this study is built upon the interpretivist philosophy; therefore, the respondents' interpretation of the situation will be accounted as the foundation for constructing additional knowledge about this subject (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

### 3.2 Data collection

This research is conducted by means of a multiple case study, as twelve cases will be compared with respondents strategically chosen (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Accordingly, the goal is to describe the identity work that the respondents conduct in order to gain legitimacy.

For this research, the population will be young male - and young female entrepreneurs having experienced the process of identity construction when gaining legitimacy in the nascent stage of starting a venture in the technology sector. This population is the group of which a conclusion is wished to be gained (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Therefore, a multiple case study will be executed in order to compare these different stories. In order to conduct this multiple case study, a sample of the population is taken. This sample consists of twelve respondents willing to cooperate in this research. The twelve respondents will be six young male entrepreneurs and six young female entrepreneurs, so that a conclusion can be drawn regarding

the differences between these two groups. Young male - and young female entrepreneurs that created a venture in the technology sector in the Netherlands is a relative homogeneous group for which Guest et al. (2006) advice to select a sample of twelve respondents. Several ways to select a sample can be applied. In this research a sample will be selected firstly by self-selection sampling (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Therefore, an announcement for needed participants in this research is made on a social media platform called LinkedIn. Potential participants were able to react on this publication. Self-selecting sampling by publicizing a need for respondents will attract the first few participants who will acknowledge the importance of this subject and are therefore prepared to commit their time to participating in this research (Symon & Cassell, 2012 P.43).

Secondly, snowball sampling is executed. Snowball sampling i.e., a method in which participating respondents recommend other potential respondents in the field (Symon & Cassell, 2012 P.43). Hence, the respondents recommended additional participants and consequently, the sample snowballs (Saunders et al., 2009).

### 3.2.1 Young male and female entrepreneurs: interviews

In this research, interviews are conducted as a means to gather relevant data to provide an answer to the research question. Therefore, the structure of the interview is in line with the research question (Saunders et al., 2009). Firstly, the respondents are selected based on non-probability sampling. According to Saunders et al. (2009) respondents do not have a fixed probability to be chosen when a non-probability sampling technique is used (Saunders et al., 2009). Hence, a non-probability sampling technique is not suited for research questions that seek statistical answers about the population (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the sampling strategies discussed in paragraph 3.2 are used to attain suitable respondents.

Subsequently, the interviews are conducted using a semi-structured technique. Semi structured interviews are generally recognized as ‘qualitative research interviews’ (King, 2004). Conducting an interview using a semi-structured technique means that the interviewer will have a list of topics and or questions based on the theoretical framework (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2009) the order of these questions is not fixed. Instead, the order can be adapted to the progress of the interview. Furthermore, new questions can be asked as they arise from the conversation (Saunders et al., 2009). The goal of the conducted interviews is to achieve profound narratives from young female- and young male entrepreneurs.

Accordingly, the conducted interviews are transcribed and analyzed. The following steps are executed in order to conduct an analysis of the interviews. The transcripts are coded, partly based on the operationalization of the core concepts. Subsequently, the codes are further aggregated into overarching themes, patterns and categories. This is in line with categorical content analysis, which is an analysis based on the content of conducted interviews (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Hence, citations and quotes are provided in the results. These citations and quotes are interpreted and analyzed discursively. Accordingly, it is important for this research to take note on what is said, in what way and why by respondents. In this way, by illustrating these quotes and citations, an elaboration will be provided about the sense making of the respondents about the concerning topics. Additionally, this approach is in line with social constructivism, which focuses on the fact that language should be interpreted based on individuals and their identity (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

### 3.3 Operationalization

This paragraph focuses on the elaboration of core concepts into further dimension and indicators. Based on these elaborated indicators and subjects, questions will be constructed for the interviews.

The key concept in this research question is identity work. This approach is focused on particular acts of identity work executed by young male- and young entrepreneurs seeking legitimacy in order to create a venture in the technology sector. As defined by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003): “identity work refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (P.1165). As the technology sector is a male dominated industry (Marlow & McAdam, 2015), it is interesting to take into account gender and age regarding identity work. As stated in paragraph 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2, prejudices exist regarding the social categories of age and gender (Ainsworth, 2002; Calás, Smircich & Bourne, 2009; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Krekula, 2007). Therefore, this research aims to dive into the differences between young male- and young female entrepreneurs when constructing their identity in the process of gaining legitimacy. By executing interviews, this research aims to focus on “language and discursive construction of identities” (Essers and Benschop, 2009 P.409). The goal is to explore how these young male- and female entrepreneurs construct their identity in order to gain legitimacy while being part of multiple social identity categories simultaneously e.g., intersectionality. Furthermore, this study takes into account that identity work is a process by

individuals, continuously changing and adapting to different situations (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Therefore, identity work is asked to the respondents as a phenomenon divided in the self-identity, referring to the unconscious part of an identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Sveningsson and Alvesson, (2003) state that the self refers to ‘something deeper, more personal and non-accessible’ than identity” (P. 1168). This is questioned to respondents regarding facts such as, age, biological sex, function etc. Additionally, respondents are asked about the constructed identity e.g., identity work executed (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In this research, identity is referred to as “the conscious struggle to respond to the question who am I?” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003 p. 1168). Therefore, respondents are questioned about how they present themselves in the process of gaining legitimacy. Questions are asked about aspects such as age, behavior, femininity, masculinity, feelings etc. Additionally, for the operationalization of identity work a framework by Caza et al. (2018) is used. In this framework, identity work is grouped into four dimensions namely; cognitive-, discursive-, physical- and behavioral identity work (Caza et al., 2018). Cognitive identity work refers to “the mental efforts execute in order to construct interpret, understand and evaluate identity” (Caza et al., 2018 P.891), discursive refers to what individuals say and how they say it, physical refers symbols in the way individuals present themselves physically such as clothing and behavioral refers to the way individuals act in order to construct identity (Caza et al., 2018). These dimensions are further elaborated in several indicators. The indicators are used as topics during the interview. Furthermore, based on the concerned indicators, interview questions are constructed.

The dimension cognitive identity work is elaborated in four indicators: cognitive tactics, projected identification, selective cognitive processing and cognitively repositioning organizational practices. Cognitive identity work is about self-reflection, including self-questioning, reflexive sense making and self-change (Beech, MacIntosh, & McInnes, 2008; Fletcher & Watson, 2007). For instance, MacIntosh and Beech (2011) argue that individuals repeatedly “construct their identity through an internal dialogue with their fantasies” (Caza et a., 2019 P. 891). Additionally, Ashford and Kreiner (1999) argue that individuals can use cognitive tactics in order to construct their identity such as reframing the meaning of their work or shifting attention to certain parts of their jobs. Projected identification is a concept elaborated by Petriglieri and Stein (2012) which indicates the process during identity construction in which individuals project certain unwanted characteristics onto other individuals, so that it seems that the individual himself does not possess these unwanted characteristics (Caza et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop (2013) found in their research that individuals are able to switch between constructed identities. Therefore, the indicator selective cognitive processing elaborates on individuals “filtering and attending to the suggestions given to them by others based on whether those suggestions were favorable to their goal of maintaining autonomy or not” (Caza et al., 2018 P. 892). The last indicator is cognitively repositioning organizational practices. This concept is argued by Berger et al. (2017) and is about the fact that individuals can resolve conflicts between social identity and professional identity by “cognitively repositioning some of their organization's practices” (Caza et al., 2018 P. 892).

The indicators of discursive identity work are insider jargon, tone of voice/ word choice, language skills and expressions. Therefore, discursive identity work refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891). Gagnon (2008) describes insider jargon as discursive tactics to shape identity i.e., speaking like an insider or using irony and humor to construct identity (Caza et al., 2016). Additionally, tone of voice and choice of words (Allen, 2005) are referred to as aspects of which individuals can construct a desired identity (Caza et al., 2016). Alvesson (2001) argues that language skills play an important role for individuals in constructing identity. Accordingly, Kuhn (2006) in his study argues that the use of expressions (Kuhn, 2006) can be deployed in order to construct a desired identity (Caza et al., 2016).

Physical identity work is elaborated into three indicators: physical appearance, physical appearance of environment, physical appearance of materials. Humphreys and Brown (2002) argue that physical appearance is an important factor in constructing identity e.g., how individuals dress. Additionally, Elsbach (2009) found that physical environment can be used as a means to create identity to associate stakeholders’ impressions with the aimed identity. Finally, Anteby (2008) found that individuals can use materials in order to construct their identities such as prototypes or presentations.

Lastly, the dimension of behavioral identity work can be further elaborated in to four indicators; Behavioral tactics, behaviors that adhere to the norms of organizational justice, courageous acts and signaling. Ashford et al. (2007) argue that behavioral tactics such as blaming, condemning and distancing from roles can be used to construct identity. According to Scott et al. (2000) individuals can construct their behavioral identity by enacting in attitudes that are in line with or are not in line with the norms of the organization or industry. Koerner (2014) states

that individuals can execute courageous acts in order to construct their identity. Lastly, Berger et al. (2017) argue that individuals can signal their identity by executing behavior in order to show that they work hard.

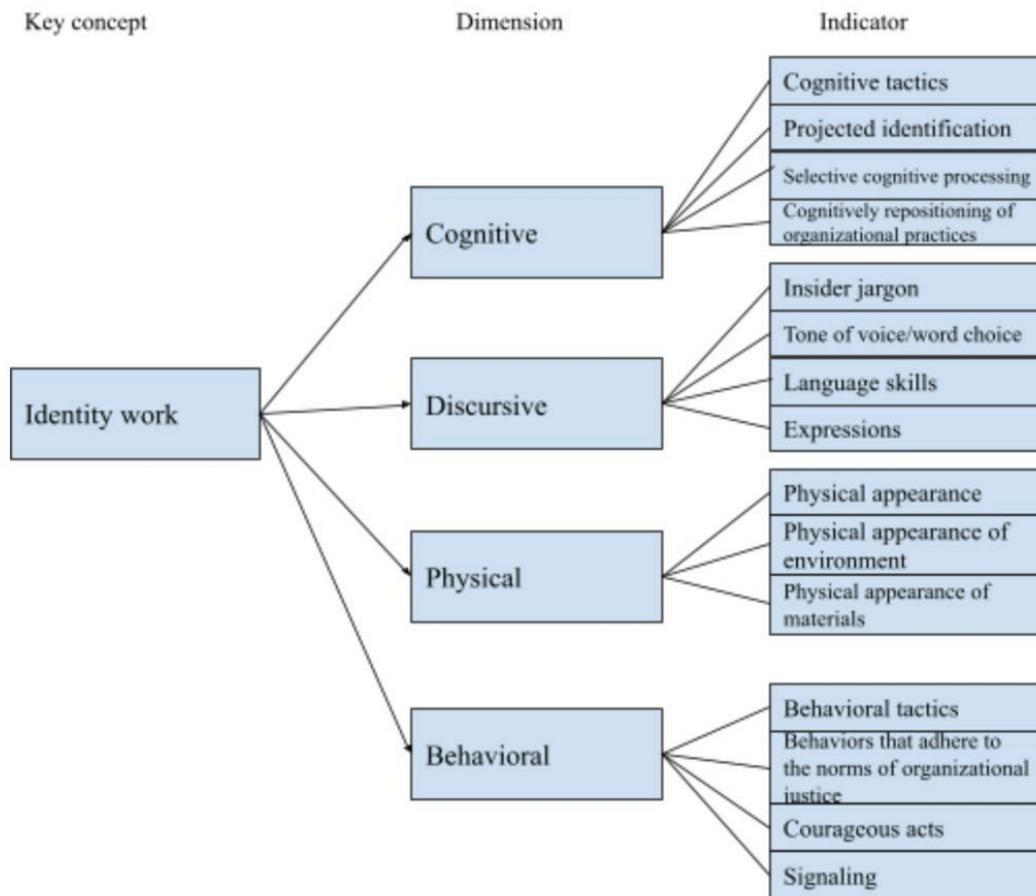


Figure 2: Operationalization of identity work

According to the above-mentioned indicators, interviews are constructed to gain information about the way every young male- or young female entrepreneur constructs their identity to gain legitimacy. A combination is made by asking general questions and questions based on the detailed operationalization of identity work in order to sketch detailed narratives. However, primary questions are asked about their general experiences in the process of constructing their identity, taking into account their intersectionality. Subsequently, to achieve detailed narratives, more profound questions are asked. Concluding, the aim of the interviews is to investigate which differences exist between young male- and young female entrepreneurs in the process of performing identity work, to gain legitimacy in the technology sector. This will be accomplished by analyzing the detailed narratives.

### 3.4 Quality criteria

This research contains a qualitative research. Therefore, the quality of this research cannot be evaluated by means of the same criteria as quantitative research (Seale, 1999; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Criteria's like validity and reliability are commonly used in quantitative research and are seen as aspects that need to be verified in order for the research to be considered as worthy of application (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Thus, in quantitative research, objectivity is the goal for a convincing study (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Controversially, Symon and Cassell (2012) argue that subjectivity, being transparent and interpretation are the goal in qualitative research. Hence, as the assessment criteria used in quantitative research cannot be used in this study, other assessment criteria have to be adopted. Tracy (2010) argued that there are several reasons to develop distinguishing criteria for qualitative research namely: pedagogical, developmental and political. Pedagogical, by setting ground rules, as this helps researchers to learn. Developmental, as constructing such ground rules helps researchers to discuss with each other and learn from each other. Finally, political, as possessing ground rules empowers researchers to assure others that the conducted research is valuable (Tracy, 2010). However, this research applies the list of criteria created by Guba and Lincoln (1989) that employs the naturalistic terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Accordingly, the four criteria defined by Guba and Lincoln (1989) are considered to be crucial for a trustworthy research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). These criteria's will be elaborated and applied in the following paragraphs.

#### 3.4.1 Credibility

Credibility means that the researcher attempts to present an adequate fit between “constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989 p.237). According to Symon and Cassell (2012) this can be achieved by several methods such as prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity and member checking (p. 207). Peer debriefing is performed by the researcher by means of discussing the subject with a colleague (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Member checking will be performed by discussing the interpretations of the researcher with the participants. Therefore, it is secured that the data is not misinterpreted by the researcher throughout the process (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

### 3.4.2 Transferability

In order to secure transferability, it is important for the researcher to present sufficient detail about the research case (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This can be accomplished by providing broad descriptions. Therefore, in this research, transferability is achieved by representing the research process as comprehensive as possible. Accordingly, readers can therefore conclude if this study is applicable to other contexts and specifically, their own context (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

### 3.4.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is an additional criterion defined by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The goal of confirmability is to clarify where the obtained data comes from (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

Confirmability of research is met by providing a comprehensive explanation of the collected data and the analysis process of the used data (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Accordingly, Symon and Cassell (2012) argue that in this way, the reader is able to judge whether the collected data is obtained separately from the researcher and his thoughts. Correspondingly, the data in this research comes from literature and interviews. The data is analyzed by the coding the transcripts.

## 3.5 Research ethics

This paragraph elaborates on the research ethics. Firstly, the research goals are ought to be fully transparent to participants (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Therefore, all participants are informed about the research goal. Where unclarity exists, participants are free to ask questions. Furthermore, the data that is possessed about all participants will be treated fully confidential, and all participants remain anonymous. To assure this confidentiality and anonymity agreements are made verbally. However, as participants seek for more confirmation, written agreements are formed. Additionally, the interviews will be recorded, only when the respondent has agreed with this decision. Moreover, all twelve respondents are free to withdrawn from participation in this research at all times. Furthermore, participants are all fully notified about the result when this research is finished. As they wish, they will be notified by email with a copy of this research. However, results of this research will not be shared with third parties without anonymization. Accordingly, the findings are allowed to be applied by young male- and young female entrepreneurs through accessing additional knowledge about this subject.

## 4 Analyses

This fourth chapter will provide the findings extracted from the empirical data. Furthermore, it will provide answers to the last four sub-questions.

As stated before, interviews are performed with six young male entrepreneurs and six young female entrepreneurs. Each of these individuals are entrepreneurs that have established a venture in the technology sector. Therefore, they all have gone through, or are going through the process of constructing their identity to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. During the interviews, detailed narratives were established. Based on the codes elaborated in chapter three, the following sub-questions will be answered by providing an analysis of the interviews. Hence, this chapter will elaborate on the entrepreneurs' experiences and performed identity work.

### 4.1 Experiences

As found in the literature, entrepreneurs must convince external stakeholders of their potential to gain legitimacy (Fisher, Kotha & Lahiri, 2016). Thus, the first part of the interviews focused on extracting detailed narratives about the experiences of the young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this process. Therefore, this paragraph provides an elaboration on the findings of these narratives regarding the intersectionality of age, gender and entrepreneurship.

#### 4.1.1 Experiences young male entrepreneurs

In this paragraph six young male entrepreneurs are cited to provide a clarification on their experiences as young male entrepreneurs.

Marco (24) is an entrepreneur that has developed a robot to enhance people's sleeping pattern. His mother suffers from sleeping problems and was prescribed a lot of medication. Thus, he wanted to solve this and developed a robot to improve his mother's sleeping problems. To set up his venture, he is interacting with several stakeholders to gain the needed resources.

Thijs (31) is an entrepreneur that started a company in medical technology during his study Industrial Engineering at the TU Eindhoven. He started his company when he was 25. The company is active in medical technology and develops smart ultrasound solutions.

Hans (26) is an entrepreneur that started a company in app development seven years ago. During his study ICT, the company evolved from an idea to practice. Hans and his team develop apps for customers that experience technical problems. With his company, he strives to become the biggest app developer in the Netherlands.

Cas (23) is an entrepreneur and set up a company in 2017. With his venture, he constructs e-commerce solutions for companies in the manufacturing industry. For example, they construct websites where customers can compose products in 3D.

Steven (25) is an entrepreneur active in artificial intelligence. He strives to make the world a better place by applying artificial intelligence to solve sustainable development goals. Steven is an entrepreneur that obtained a degree in Mechanical Engineering, Neuroscience and Data Science.

Max (24) is an entrepreneur who developed a pressure sensitive keyboard. This product is developed during his study and the initial target market was the game industry. However, he discovered that pressure sensitive keyboards can tell a lot about a person's behavior. Therefore, they now use this pressure sensitive keyboard to detect, for example, fraud in exams.

An overarching theme that returned during the interviews is that the young male entrepreneurs in this study feel that they have an advantage in gaining legitimacy due to their gender identity. The young male entrepreneurs in this study are under the impression that external stakeholders are willing to invest in them because they recognize themselves in the young male entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to perceive their gender identity as a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy too. Additionally, the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to feel that the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity diminishes the advantage, and enforces the disadvantage perceived due to their gender identity in the attainment of legitimacy.

Marco seems to have positive experiences in the process of gaining legitimacy as a male entrepreneur regarding his gender identity. He recognizes that he looks like the stereotypical entrepreneur, which is white and masculine according to Essers and Benschop (2007):

*“I think the stereotypical entrepreneur in this sector is the way I am. External stakeholders see themselves in you, I think because of that it feels safe for them. [...] Being a young entrepreneur does not work in your advantage, as a young entrepreneur you are perceived as less legitimate. External stakeholders have told us several times that we are too young and that we are not able to deal with money properly.”*

Marco is still in the process of gaining resources from investors. He has participated in several pitch contests and noticed that the people he needed to convince, were mostly male entrepreneurs. This might suggest that being male feels beneficial to him in the attainment of legitimacy. Marco explains that the external stakeholders recognize themselves in him, and

therefore, he assumes it feels safe for the external stakeholders to invest in him. Potentially, it feels safe because it provides a feeling of trust, as the external stakeholders can empathize in Marco's situation. Thus, Marco is under the impression that he experiences advantages based on his gender identity because he fits the stereotypical entrepreneur. Furthermore, Marco had to gain the needed resources from external stakeholders to build a prototype. In the situation described above, he was collecting money from external stakeholders. At that time, he was not perceived to be a legitimate entrepreneur due to the intersection of his gender identity with his age identity. The investors mentioned that Marco was too young to use money wisely. Additionally, the investors assumed he has never had more than three zeros on his bank account and that he still had a student loan. For the investors, those were reasons not to invest in Marco. Therefore, Marco seems to feel that the intersection of his age identity, in addition to his gender identity with entrepreneurship diminishes the extent to which external stakeholders perceive him to be a legitimate entrepreneur.

Correspondingly, Max makes a comparable assumption:

*“Regarding age, that is a disadvantage. You have no experience and no track record. You must prove yourself more to be a reliable party than parties with track record. [...] What does play a role is that as a male, you look like them. There are more older men in important positions than older females, so maybe because of that, you can level with them because they recognize themselves in you”.*

Max, who has developed a pressure sensitive keyboard, explains that in his situation, he must convince male stakeholders more often than female stakeholders. Accordingly, he mentions that the stereotypical entrepreneur in his sector is male and around 40. Max feels that external stakeholders prefer to invest in male entrepreneurs because they see a younger version of themselves in front of them. He seems to perceive this as beneficial in gaining legitimacy. Nevertheless, Max mentions that he perceives his age identity to be a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy. He explains that his age has been used against him by external stakeholders. In this case, he attempted to collect money at investors. As Max is still a student, the investors mentioned that due to his age, they do not trust whether he will keep the company alive when he graduates. Respectively, Max seems to feel that his gender identity causes an advantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Yet, the intersection with age seems to reduce this advantage. The aforementioned narratives suggest that Marco and Max both perceive an advantage related to their gender identity in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders, as they fit the image of the stereotypical entrepreneur. However, they seem to perceive that the

intersection with their age identity causes a disadvantage and makes external stakeholders perceive them as less legitimate entrepreneurs.

The male entrepreneurs in this study seem to feel that the intersection of gender with age causes a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hans provides an explanation why he perceives to be seen as a less legitimate entrepreneur due to his age identity:

*“I notice that external stakeholders are quite reserved because of my age. Once I walked into a meeting and the individuals I was having a meeting with told me that the room had to be cleaned later.”*

In this case, Hans was having a meeting with a potential client. As he walked into the meeting room, the other persons mistook him for a cleaning boy. Apparently, his appearance was perceived to be young and the external stakeholders did not recognize him as an entrepreneur. Hans noticed that they were very reserved. Accordingly, based on the comment made by the external stakeholders, he assumed that this is due to his age identity. Furthermore, Hans suggested that he does not feel that his gender identity has a negative influence on the attainment of legitimacy from external stakeholders in this situation. Yet, the statement made by Hans seems to imply that the intersection of his age identity with his gender identity has an unfavorable influence on the attainment of legitimacy from external stakeholders. During the interview, Hans elaborated on this by explaining that during the first conversation, he feels that he must prove himself more than older entrepreneurs.

Having experienced disadvantages due to age identity himself, Thijs explains:

*“When we are having group conversations, I notice that when a female makes a statement, it is not taken seriously. [...] With age, when you speak to someone that is 20 years older, this person has twenty years more experience. However, that does not mean that this person knows better, and that is the struggle, and the mistake people make. As a young entrepreneur you need to tell a lot more to convince external stakeholders of your abilities than older entrepreneurs.”*

The statements made by Thijs illustrate that he has experienced situations in which female entrepreneurs got ignored by male stakeholders. Thijs seems to be under the impression that in conversations with stakeholders, female entrepreneurs are not taken seriously. He mentions that in his experience, female entrepreneurs are in a disadvantage. Yet, Thijs explains that he is under the impression that his gender identity provides neither an advantage nor a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Nevertheless, Thijs seems to

think that external stakeholders link age to experience and knowledge. Apparently, he feels that this is a common made mistake. Thijs does not believe that age is exclusively linked to experience and knowledge. However, he perceives that to be as the common idea. Therefore, due to the intersection of his gender identity with his age identity, he seems perceive a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy. Thus, due to the intersection of his gender identity with his age identity, he seems to feel that he must provide more information to external stakeholders to gain legitimacy than male entrepreneurs of age.

Contrarily, male respondents in this study seem to feel that nowadays, it is important for external stakeholders to seek for gender diversity. They have experienced several situations which for them, implied that external stakeholders are ought to incorporate more female entrepreneurs in teams, functions or investments. Thus, the young male entrepreneurs in this study are under the impression that positive sexism in favor of female entrepreneurs exists. Marco explains why he feels this way:

*“At this moment in time, you are in an advantage when you are a young female entrepreneur. I participated in a lot of pitch contests, and I noticed that often of young female entrepreneurs win. Hence, it is possible that it helps being a female entrepreneur, because it is crucial to incorporate female entrepreneurs nowadays.”*

Marco mentioned that he has participated in many pitch contests. He expresses that he is under the impression that female entrepreneurs won because of their gender, over their qualities. Marco believes that in this situation, less qualified female entrepreneurs got preference because gender diversity is of increasing importance to external stakeholders. Therefore, he seems to imply that his gender identity causes disadvantages in gaining legitimacy. As Marco mentioned to perceive a disadvantage due to his age identity, the intersection of gender and age seem to enforce each other in some situations.

Correspondingly, Steven makes a comparable assumption:

*“When a choice must be made, it is often the case that less qualified female entrepreneurs get chosen over male entrepreneurs. Purely because females should be incorporated nowadays.”*

Steven, who is an entrepreneur in artificial intelligence, seems to feel that less qualified female entrepreneurs are given preference too. He suggested that due to lack of female entrepreneurs in the technology sector, external stakeholders aim to incorporate more females. This seems to imply that he perceives his gender identity to be a disadvantage too. However, he mentioned

that as an entrepreneur, he does the same thing. He aims to construct a team that consists of both males and females. Therefore, Steven acknowledges that sometimes, he employs females to enhance the diversity in his team. This might imply, due to his own assumption that more females must be incorporated, he strives to incorporate more females as well. Hence, he seems to feel that other stakeholders do this too. Consequently, he seems to imply that his gender identity can cause a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders.

The above mentioned stories suggest that the young male entrepreneurs in this study experience disadvantages due to their gender as well. As the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to experience disadvantages due to their age identity too, the intersection of gender identity with age identity seems to enforce each other in diminishing the extent to which they are perceived to be legitimate entrepreneurs by external stakeholders.

Concluding, the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to perceive an advantage due to their gender identity. Because they look like the typical entrepreneur. Contradictory, the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to perceive their gender identity as a disadvantage too. However, they all seem to perceive that the intersectionality with their age identity causes a disadvantage and makes external stakeholders perceive them as less legitimate.

#### 4.1.2 Experiences young female entrepreneurs

In this paragraph six young female entrepreneurs are cited to provide a clarification on their experiences as young female entrepreneurs in the technology sector.

Judith (31) is a female entrepreneur that started her current company three years ago. She started this company together with a male colleague she met at her previous job. Together they created an online learning and collaboration platform in virtual reality. It concerns an online platform where consumers can learn and walk around in a 3D environment and provide feedback to each other.

Merel (29) started a company in 2015 together with her brother. Their venture is specialized in the development of 3D printing for the food industry. They invent, design and develop innovative 3D technology which their customers can utilize to personalize dishes with decorations.

Chloe (23) is a female entrepreneur active in social media technology. Chloe is currently graduating and started a business next to her degree. Her company provides online strategies to enhance customer loyalty by optimizing social media channels for companies.

Arenda (29) is a female entrepreneur that owns a company specialized in blockchain technology. Before she started her venture, Arenda worked at a fish company. There, she had to work with excel to register the packaging. Arenda saw that many mistakes were made, which caused inaccuracies in their stock. Therefore, she aimed to create a system which registers packaging automatically. Hence, she created a system based on blockchain to solve this problem.

Karin (21) is a female entrepreneur active in space innovation. During her bachelor's degree in Science of Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences she started her company. She has always had interest in everything related to outer space. One day, her lecturer asked why no one at the University of Technology had started a company in space innovation, and that is how the idea was born. She built an online community where people can talk about space related innovations. Additionally, her team is working on a CubeSat, which is a nano satellite, to send to lunar orbit.

Petra (31) is a female entrepreneur that started her company when she was 26. Without any degrees, she has created a digital platform where ventures can measure their sustainability. Petra started this company during her job at a call center for a sustainability venture. She felt that the contemporary sustainability was not good enough and wanted to create something that enhances sustainability over the world. Petra is intrinsically motivated and started this company from scratch.

The following section provides an elaboration on the statements made by the young female entrepreneurs. The interviewed young female entrepreneurs seem to feel that they are taken less seriously than males, hence they feel that they must prove themselves more to gain the same legitimacy as male entrepreneurs. Judith explains:

*“Male entrepreneurs in this sector assume in advance that I work in Human Resources, or that I am the intern. Accordingly, during meetings, male entrepreneurs have the tendency to solely turn to the other male entrepreneur. [...] I feel like I have to prove myself more as a young female entrepreneur than the average male entrepreneur in this sector.”*

Judith emphasizes that when she goes to client meetings with her male companion, male clients tend to direct themselves towards her male companion. In the situation described above, she seems to feel that the external stakeholders have prejudices based on her gender identity. Apparently, the external stakeholder assumed that Judith works in Human Resources due to her gender. Accordingly, she seems to feel that she gets left out. This makes Judith feel

unimportant and not perceived as a legitimate entrepreneur. Furthermore, Judith noticed during a meeting with a male external stakeholder, that the statements made by her male companion were assumed to be true by the external stakeholder without argumentation. Whereas Judith must provide more arguments to substantiate her statements for it to be assumed as true by the external stakeholder. This implies that Judith experiences a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy due to her gender.

Accordingly, Merel explains why she feels she is taken less seriously as a young female entrepreneur:

*“Being a female entrepreneur brought challenges. But I have experienced that mainly with stakeholders active in the technology sector. They are not used to work with females. Once I visited a factory and they literally told me to send my brother, my male companion, because he presumably has more experience. [...] Of course, that is why we brought an older male. But that is mostly with bigger parties that are not used to work with young entrepreneurs.”*

Merel is a young entrepreneur that has set up a venture together with her brother in 3D technology. She has experienced several situations in which stakeholders assumed that she did not understand the business. The statement made by Merel refers to a situation in which she went to visit a factory. Since mostly male employees work in this factory, she seems to assume that they are not used to work with females. Therefore, the external stakeholders mention that they prefer to interact with her male companion. This made her feel taken less seriously as an entrepreneur and prejudiced based on her gender identity. Accordingly, Merel mentions in her statement that she brings an older male to meetings. She seems to feel that due to the intersection of her gender identity with her age identity, she is perceived to be as less legitimate. Thus, Merel intentionally brings an older male when she meets external stakeholders. This is an old Philips man that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur, which is white and masculine according to Essers and Benschop (2007). This indicates that Merel experiences disadvantages due to the intersection of age and gender with entrepreneurship. The strategy she uses resembles the strategy used by the Somma sisters in the article of Bruni et al (2004), which will be elaborated in paragraph 4.2.2.

Correspondingly, Karin illustrates a comparable experience:

*“Generally speaking in life, it is a given that as a female you have to do more to achieve the same than men. Even now at a modern time, and I think that still holds, especially in the tech sector because it is very male dominated. You need to do more than a male to get the same respect from someone. [...] But it has also been the case that I know that if I walk into a room with partners or whatever that as a young female, I already have a disadvantage. I did not do anything, but I would already be a bit behind just because they expect a different face. [...] Age is a big one. When you walk into a room filled with old men, sometimes old women, they instantly disregard you because of how young you are. Because they think like okay this guy or girl is probably going to pitch his or her project and I’m probably not going to really like it. So, it is already dismissive before you even say a word. I have experienced that.”*

Karin is a 21-year-old female entrepreneur and runs a business in space innovations. Her quotes demonstrate that she has experienced several situations in which external stakeholders did not see her as a legitimate entrepreneur due to the intersection of her age identity with her gender identity. Karin explains that prejudices regarding her age- and gender identity exist. Hence, she seems to feel that because she is active in a male dominated sector, external stakeholders expect a male entrepreneur and are surprised when Karin shows up. Thus, she seems to experience a disadvantage as a female entrepreneur. Accordingly, Karin seems to feel that as a female entrepreneur, she must prove herself more than male entrepreneurs to assure external stakeholders that she possesses the required knowledge. Correspondingly, she explains that her age generates prejudices too. She feels that external stakeholders do not perceive her as a legitimate entrepreneur, but as a student who is going to pitch a project which is not relevant for them anyway. Therefore, Karin is under the impression that as a young female entrepreneur, she is already two steps behind without saying a word. For Karin, the intersection of her age identity with her gender identity seems to enforce each other in diminishing the attainment of legitimacy from entrepreneurs.

Petra, a young female entrepreneur that has set up a digital platform in global sustainability, seems to illustrate comparable experiences:

*“There are males that do not take you seriously, I have experienced it before that I was having a conversation with someone, and I did not say what he wanted to hear. Subsequently, he reached out to my male colleague and told him he did not want to talk to me anymore. [...]. Absolutely, because you are a young female entrepreneur. Try to*

*explain to a room full of men that you are going to measure what they have failed to measure the past twenty years. That was definitely a disadvantage.”*

These quotes demonstrate that Petra experiences disadvantages due to the intersection of age, gender and entrepreneurship. Petra is a young female entrepreneur that has created a global sustainability measurement system. In the above statements, she explains a situation during a meeting. Petra mentions that she said things which the external stakeholder did not want to hear, and as this meeting took place involving two males, the external stakeholder turned to her male colleague and mentioned that he did not want to talk to Petra anymore. Petra explained that this is one of the few times she got very angry. However, she walked away and decided not to cooperate with his male. Accordingly, since her gender identity intersects with her age identity, she perceives a disadvantage. As mentioned before, she has developed a global sustainability measurement system at 26. She seems to feel that due to the intersection of her age identity and gender identity, external stakeholders, which are usually male, do not perceive her to be a legitimate entrepreneur. Petra seems to have a hard time explaining to her male stakeholders that she has developed a system that they were not able to create in the past years. Hence, she is under the impression that she must prove herself to gain legitimacy.

On the other hand, several of the interviewed young female entrepreneurs perceive their gender identity to be an advantage in gaining legitimacy. Arenda mentions:

*“It is always males talking at pitches, at least nine out of ten are male. It helps when a female entrepreneur is on stage because you are different, you stand out and they will remember you. [...]. Certainly, a female entrepreneur with blonde hair and blue eyes in the technology sector. This time has an advantage. Nowadays it is more and more desired for female entrepreneurs to reach the top. More and more investors must invest in female entrepreneurs. [...] Sometimes external stakeholders disregard you because of your age, and you have to prove yourself to be a legitimate entrepreneur.”*

These statements illustrate that Arenda perceives her gender identity to be an advantage. She feels that as a young female entrepreneur in a male dominated sector, you stand out. Arenda explains that when doing pitches or presentations she is always the one talking. She thinks it is beneficial to do this because she will be remembered as a female entrepreneur between all the male entrepreneurs. This relates to an article of De Clercq and Voronov (2009), who argue that “to enact entrepreneurial legitimacy, they must be perceived as fitting in and standing out” (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009 P.403). Accordingly, Arenda seems to feel that being female in this sector is beneficial in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. However, she perceives

that the intersection with her age identity causes external stakeholders to see her as less legitimate. Arenda mentions that external stakeholders perceive her as a young girl peeking around the corner. She explains that it has been mentioned to her that, due to her age, she lacks experience. Therefore, Arenda seems to be under the impression that her gender identity causes advantages in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders, but the intersection with her age identity diminishes this advantage.

Accordingly, Chloe confirms:

*“I experience being a female entrepreneur as positive. I think, as a female entrepreneur you stand out, because not many females start a business. Therefore, it makes you unique. [...] I notice that external stakeholders don’t listen to the questions I ask. For example, when I ask a question and they answer: Yeah, but we have a lot of experience and we know what we are talking about.”*

This quote demonstrates that Chloe seems to perceive being a female entrepreneur as beneficial in gaining legitimacy, because it makes her unique in a male dominated sector. This is in line with De Clercq and Voronov (2009) who argue that legitimate entrepreneurial behavior is seen as: “the ability to meet such potentially contradicting demands which is, confirming with - and challenging existing field arrangements” (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009 P.400). Nevertheless, Chloe seems to feel that external stakeholders do not take her seriously due to her age identity. The external stakeholders in this situation, assume that Chloe does not have enough experience due to her age. Hence, she seems to experience that external stakeholders ignore her questions. Respectively, Chloe illustrates that she experiences her gender identity to be beneficial in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Nevertheless, the intersection with her age identity makes her feel that external stakeholders perceive her as less legitimate.

Concluding, part of the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to feel that the intersection of gender, age and entrepreneurship causes a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. This holds for Judith, Karin, Merel and Petra. Contrarily, Arenda and Chloe seem to perceive their gender identity as beneficial, considering they stand out in this male dominated sector. Additionally, Chloe and Arenda seem to perceive that the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity causes a disadvantage and makes external stakeholders perceive them as less legitimate entrepreneurs.

## 4.2 Identity work

As found in the literature, entrepreneurs construct identity work to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders (Swail & Marlow, 2018). Therefore, the second part of the interviews focused on extracting detailed explanations about the strategies that the young male- young and female entrepreneurs use to construct their identity in this process. Accordingly, the following two paragraphs provide an elaboration on the findings regarding identity work. The last paragraph contains a comparison regarding the identity work strategies that the young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study use.

### 4.2.1 Identity work performed by young male entrepreneurs

The interviewed young male entrepreneurs in this study mention that they are consciously constructing their identity as an entrepreneur. Marco states:

*“Currently I am discovering the more feminine part of myself and I try to use more of that in our pitches. [...] Our founding team is quite young, and some look like they are 16 instead of 25. Hence, I invested in good photography so we appear older, at least in the pictures I show during pitches.”*

As Marco is a starting entrepreneur, he participated in a many pitch contests. He noticed that female entrepreneurs pitch more emotionally and therefore, are able to convince external stakeholders. As stated in paragraph 4.1.1, Marco seemed to experience disadvantages due to his gender identity. Accordingly, he seems to feel that acting more feminine has a positive influence on gaining legitimacy. Therefore, he adjusts his identity towards a more feminine way of telling stories by pitching more emotionally. Furthermore, this statement illustrates that Marco wants his team to appear older. Apparently, he is of the opinion that he and his team members appear too young and that this has a negative influence on gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hence, he undertakes actions like this to appear older and to cope with the intersection of his age- and gender identity. This is in line with the article of Humphreys and brown (2002), who argue that physical appearance is an important factor in constructing identity.

Additionally, Steven states:

*“For a very long time I have had to hold back because people got intimidated by me. In this way I started to act more feminine. I started to speak on a higher tone and use more mitigating speech.”*

Steven is an entrepreneur with a low, hard voice and a clear opinion. He seems to feel that people get intimidated by this. Thus, he started adjusting his voice to a more feminine tone. He seems to believe that adjusting his voice to a higher tone has a positive influence on gaining legitimacy, as he comes across less rude. Steven might use this coping strategy to compensate the disadvantage he experiences due to the intersection of his gender- with his age identity. According to the literature, Steven uses a discursive identity work strategy, which refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891). More specifically, his coping strategy is in line with the strategy described by Allen (2005) who argues that tone of voice and choice of words are referred to as aspects of which individuals can construct a desired identity.

Cas, a male entrepreneur that started his company when he was 19, has experienced several disadvantages as an entrepreneur due to the intersection of his gender identity with his age identity. Cas explains:

*“I incorporated a separate person to do the sales. A male of around 40 or 50 years old. Actually, he did not know anything about the system, but he made sure that we got in at big companies. [...] But I would have never been invited for a first meeting if I did not incorporate that older male to do the sales process.”*

These quotes illustrate that, to cope with the intersection of being a young male entrepreneur, Cas used a strategy that incorporates an external person that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur according to Essers & Benschop (2007). He seems to feel that external stakeholders do not give him a fair opportunity based on prejudices. Regarding the disadvantage that Cas perceives in gaining legitimacy due to the intersection of his age with his gender, he uses this identity work strategy. Cas feels that he was forced to incorporate a male that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur. He explained that he used this male to make the first contact. Although this male did not know anything about the business, external stakeholders tended to accept information from this person over the information provided by Cas. Cas mentioned that he was the one giving the useful information to the person that did the first contact. This strategy resembles the strategy used by the Somma sisters, explained in the article of Bruni et al (2004). In this article, the Somma sisters used a male engineer to do contact with external stakeholders, who were all men (Bruni et al., 2004). Accordingly, it seems that Cas is under the impression that he must perform this identity work to obtain a first meeting with external stakeholders. Subsequently, he is able to perform the concerning job and prove himself to be a legitimate

entrepreneur. However, he feels that this would not have been possible if he executed the initial sale process himself.

In line with the literature, it has been found that the young male entrepreneurs in this study use discursive identity work strategies to compensate the intersection of their age- and gender identity in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hans states:

*“I used to talk very technical, but nowadays I am trying to use less insider jargon so the other to understand you. I try to simplify and explain things instead of being straight to the point. [...] However, I need to be careful that I do not explain things too simple, which makes the external stakeholder feel that I assume he does not know anything”*

And Cas narrates:

*“Particularly in the technology sector, the more technical insider jargon you use, the more people are under the impression that you use these words to talk them down. [...] A great developer is able to translate complex things into simple explanations so external stakeholders will understand.”*

Both Hans and Cas seem to perceive that the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity diminishes the extent to which they are seen as legitimate entrepreneurs by external stakeholders. The above made statements suggest that both Hans and Cas seem to use discursive identity work strategies to compensate the intersection with their age identity. Discursive identity work refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891). Accordingly, Gagnon (2008) describes in his article that insider jargon can be used as discursive tactics to shape identity i.e., speaking like an insider (Caza et al., 2016). Hans and Cas seem to construct their identity in such a way that they translate technical language into language that is understandable for external stakeholders. This implies that they might think that using insider jargon is something that has a negative influence on gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders.

Concluding, in line with the literature mentioned in chapter three, the young male entrepreneurs in this study use cognitive-, discursive- and physical identity work strategies to cope with their gender and age identity and attain legitimacy from external stakeholders. Cognitive identity work refers to “the mental efforts executed to construct interpret, understand and evaluate identity” (Caza et al., 2018 P.891). The young male entrepreneurs in this study tend to construct their identity by trying to find the more feminine part in them. It seems that they do this to

compensate the disadvantage they perceive in gaining legitimacy due to the intersection of their age and gender as an entrepreneur. Furthermore, as mentioned in paragraph 3.3, discursive identity work refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891). Hence, the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to use discursive identity work strategies to compensate the disadvantage they perceive due to the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity. As they seem to feel that their age causes external stakeholders to perceive them as less legitimate, they try to compensate this by using discursive identity work strategies. This implies that they try to simplify technical language so external stakeholders feel that they possess the required knowledge. Additionally, in line with the literature, young male entrepreneurs perform physical identity work. Physical identity work involves symbols in the way individuals present themselves physically, such as clothing (Caza et al., 2018). The young male entrepreneurs in this study tend to construct their physical identity using clothing mainly to appear older. As they feel that their age diminishes the extent to which they are seen as less legitimate, they cope with this by using physical identity work strategies to appear more mature. This implies that the young male entrepreneurs in this study feel that appearing older has a positive influence on gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders.

Lastly, young male entrepreneurs in this study use an identity work strategy to cope with the intersection of their gender- with their age identity. As the young male entrepreneurs in this study feel that their age diminishes the extent to which they are seen as a legitimate entrepreneur, they seem to feel forced to incorporate external old males, that are perceived as legitimate entrepreneurs by external stakeholders. They seem to do this to compensate their age identity. This resembles the strategy used by the Somma sisters, in the article *Doing gender, Doing entrepreneurship* by Bruni et al. (2004). In this article, the sisters use a male engineer to pretend to be the entrepreneur because they are interacting with external stakeholders that are all men (Bruni et al., 2004).

#### 4.2.2 Identity work performed by young female entrepreneurs

As elaborated in paragraph 4.1.1, the young female entrepreneurs in this research perceive gender to be a disadvantage as well as an advantage in gaining legitimacy. However, they seem to experience that the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity diminishes the extent to which they are seen as a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders. Karin explains how she copes with this:

*“Definitely. I think there are a lot of things that I do to shift towards the entrepreneurs that I think are doing well. One of those things is being more assertive. Which is usually a male quality. [...] Two years ago, if I wrote an email there would be a lot of: please, if you may and it would be very kindly. Right now, I have grown to realize that I should ask things more directly. [...] You keep taking on a different, louder, more assertive persona to get the point across and have them listen to you for once. [...] I mean it is always dressing older. Making sure that you are not wearing anything trendy.”*

Karin is a 21 year old female entrepreneur in space innovation. She seems to feel that due to the disadvantage caused by the intersection of her age identity with her gender identity, she must compensate. Hence, Karin seems to construct her identity to appear more mature and to fit the stereotypical entrepreneur, which is masculine according to her. Accordingly, this strategy resembles what Swail and Marlow (2018) have investigated in their article. Namely: what impact gender bias has on the attainment of legitimacy of women when starting a venture. They found that women should not only legitimize their venture, but additionally, they must perform identity work to overcome the prejudices and conform to the stereotypical entrepreneur (Swail & Marlow, 2018). As the stereotypical entrepreneur is white and masculine according to Essers and Benschop (2007), the young female entrepreneurs in this study cope with the disadvantage they perceive due to the intersection of gender and age by performing an identity work strategy that makes them conform to the stereotypical entrepreneur. Hence, the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to adapt their identity by taking on masculine behavior. This is in line with the article by McAdam, Harrison and Leitch (2018). They argue that legitimacy might be an obstacle for female entrepreneurs, who ought to blend their ‘role’ of being a woman and the role of an entrepreneur which often are perceived contrary by society or incumbents in the field (McAdam, Harrison & Leitch, 2018). Additionally, the statement made by Karin implies that she dresses a certain way to come across more mature. She seems to feel that this is a useful strategy to cope with the disadvantage she perceives due to her age identity. Thus, female entrepreneurs in this study seem to construct physical identity work to come across older by adjusting their physical appearance. Hence, they compensate the disadvantage perceived due to the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity. This is in line with the strategy described by Humphreys and Brown (2002), who argue that individuals can construct a desired identity by adjusting their physical appearance. Lastly, it seems that Karin attempts to compensate the disadvantage she perceives due to the intersection of her age- and gender identity by communicating in a more masculine way. This implies that she thinks performing discursive identity work, is a way to cope with the disadvantage caused

by the intersection of her age- and gender identity. Hence, discursive identity work refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891).

Judith elaborates on her way of coping with the intersection of her gender identity and age identity as an entrepreneur:

*“Sometimes, I have the feeling that, as a young female entrepreneur, I have to prove myself more to be a legitimate entrepreneur than male entrepreneurs. [...] I had to learn to debate, argue and specific communication techniques. [...] Male entrepreneurs have specific goals; they act more on the content. I am under the impression that you get results faster that way. I noticed I try to be more accurate and to the point, and not to feel guilty whenever I say something or give my opinion. [...] I try to mirror their masculine behavior as a person.”*

During the interview, Judith mentions that she feels it is needed for her to prove herself more than male entrepreneurs due to the intersection of her gender- and age identity. She indicates that male entrepreneurs work more efficiently. Hence, she seems to suggest that she adjusts her identity towards a more masculine identity because she often works with males. This is in line with Marlow and McAdam (2015), who conducted a study on the identity work female entrepreneurs perform in order to gain legitimacy in a male dominated sector. They found that female entrepreneurs in the technology sector “reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur” (Marlow & McAdam, 2015 P.791). As Judith mentions, she copes with being perceived as less legitimate by learning to debate, argue and by learning communication techniques i.e., language skills. This is in line with Alvesson (2001), who argues that language skills play an important role for individuals constructing their identity. Concluding, to compensate her age- and gender identity, Judith seems to perform discursive identity work strategies, which refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891).

Accordingly, Arenda confirms:

*“Absolutely, at some point you just start to show copying behavior. You are evolving to talk on the same tone as all those males just to match them. [...] Eventually I decided to wear glasses, and I adjusted my way of speaking [...]. At one point I started to dress like an old lady, because I thought that would be more appreciated.”*

These quotes illustrate that Arenda feels that she must cope with the disadvantage she perceives as a young female entrepreneur. Arenda implies that she adapts her identity to the stereotypical entrepreneur by adjusting her way of speaking and tone of voice. This is in line with Marlow and McAdam (2015), who conducted a study on the identity work female entrepreneurs conduct to gain legitimacy in a male dominated sector. They found that female entrepreneurs in the technology sector “reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur” (Marlow & McAdam, 2015 P.791). Additionally, Arenda uses discursive identity work strategies by adjusting her way of speaking to match the males in the sector. This is in line with the strategy described by Allen (2005), who argues that tone of voice and choice of words are referred to as aspects of which individuals can construct a desired identity (Caza et al., 2016). Lastly, the statement made by Arenda implies that she constructs physical identity work to compensate her age identity as an entrepreneur. She seems to feel that dressing like an old lady would have a positive influence in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hence, she adjusts her physical appearance, which is in line with the article of Humphreys and Brown (2002). They argue that individuals can construct a desired identity by adjusting their physical appearance.

Merel is a young female entrepreneur who possesses a business in 3D printing. She recognizes that the intersection of her gender identity with her age identity diminishes the extent to which she is perceived to be a legitimate entrepreneur. To cope with this intersection, she uses a specific strategy. Merel explains:

*“What we did very often in the beginning, and now occasionally, is bring our team coach when we have big negotiations. That is a retired, blank old Philips man. He is just present at the meeting. Every now and then the people on the other side of the table look at him, to check whether it is true what I say. And then he nods or repeats what I say. I notice that provides trust to the external stakeholders. [...] We used it very strategically, to bring people that fit the image of the stereotypical entrepreneur. I find it terrible to say that. But I think, as an entrepreneur it is important to do such things. I can try to do it alone but if that means that my company is going down, I did not do a great job.”*

Earlier in the interview, Merel mentioned that according to her, the stereotypical entrepreneur comes from a corporate firm, is white, masculine and over 40. This implies that her team coach is someone who fits her perception of the stereotypical entrepreneur. It seems that she intentionally brings him to convince external stakeholders and compensate the intersection of her gender- and age identity. This resembles the strategy used by the Somma sisters in the

article by Bruni et al (2004). In this study, the sisters use their male engineer to pretend to be the entrepreneur because they are interacting with external stakeholders that are all men (Bruni et al., 2014). This seems to provide an advantage; hence the sisters are persuaded to pretend not to be entrepreneurs. Merel seems to cope with the intersection of age- and gender identity by using a comparable strategy.

Concluding, to cope with the disadvantages perceived due to the intersection of age and gender, the young female entrepreneurs in this study perform identity work strategies. They seem to use cognitive-, discursive- and physical identity work strategies to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. Cognitive identity work refers to “the mental efforts executed to construct interpret, understand and evaluate identity” (Caza et al., 2018 P.891). To cope with their gender identity, the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem adjust their identity by acting more masculine. This in line with the article of Marlow and Brown (2015). They argue that female entrepreneurs in the technology sector “reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur” (Marlow & McAdam, 2015 P.791).

Furthermore, as mentioned in paragraph 3.3, discursive identity work refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891). Hence, the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to use discursive identity work strategies to compensate the disadvantage they perceive due to the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity. They seem to do this by communicating more masculine, less pleasing, more assertive and by talking in the same tone as males. Furthermore, in line with the literature, the interviewed young female entrepreneurs perform physical identity work. Physical identity work involves symbols in the way individuals present themselves physically, such as clothing (Caza et al., 2018). The young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to feel that their age identity diminishes the extent to which they are perceived as a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders. Therefore, they tend to construct their physical identity by adapting their clothing and accessories to appear older. This might imply that the young female entrepreneurs in this study feel that appearing older has a positive influence on gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders.

Lastly, the young female entrepreneurs in this study use the identity work strategy that resembles a strategy used by the Somma sisters (Bruni et al., 2004). In this strategy two female entrepreneurs use a male engineer to pretend to be the entrepreneur of their company. Hence this seems to imply that, to cope with their age and gender identity, young female entrepreneurs in this study bring a team coach that fits the image of the stereotypical entrepreneur.

### 4.3 Differences and similarities

Young female entrepreneurs in this study appear to perceive advantages in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders due to their gender identity. However, the intersection of their gender identity with age seems to diminish the advantage that the young female entrepreneurs in this study perceive in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders.

Contrarily, four of the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to perceive disadvantages due to their gender identity in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Additionally, the intersection of gender with age seems to enforce each other, as four of the interviewed female respondents appear to experience their gender and age identity to both have a negative influence on gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders.

The young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to experience their gender identity as an advantage in gaining legitimacy, as they appear to look like the stereotypical entrepreneur. However, here too, they seem to feel that the intersection of their gender identity with age diminishes the extent to which they are perceived to be a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders.

However, three of the young male entrepreneurs in this study, seem to experience disadvantages due to their gender identity in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Accordingly, the intersection of their gender identity with age causes that they are seen as even less legitimate entrepreneurs by external stakeholders.

To cope with the intersectionality of their age- and gender identity, both young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study perform identity work. The differences and similarities in the utilized strategies are visualized in the following table.

*Identity work*

	Literature	Findings
Young male entrepreneurs	Cognitive identity work (Caza et al., 2018 P.891)	Consciously discovering feminine behavior and accordingly, acting more feminine
	Physical identity work Humphreys and brown (2002)	Adapting physical appearance (clothing) to come across older
	Discursive identity work Snow & Anderson, (1987); Allen (2005); Gagnon (2008)	Translating insider jargon into accessible terms and knowledge, adapting tone of voice to a more feminine way of speaking
	Bruni et al. (2004)	Incorporating a male that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur
Young female entrepreneurs	Cognitive identity work (Caza et al., 2018 P.891); Marlow & McAdam (2015)	Consciously discovering masculine behavior and accordingly, acting more masculine, acting more assertive
	Physical identity work Humphreys and brown (2002); De Clercq & Voronov (2009)	Adapting physical appearance to appear older, dressing masculine to fit in (fitting in while standing out)
	Discursive identity work Snow & Anderson (1987); Marlow & McAdam (2015); Alvesson (2001)	Communicating more masculine; more assertive; talk in the same tone as males; learning language skills; less pleasing
	Bruni et al. (2004)	Incorporating a team coach that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur

*Figure 3: Identity work performed by young male- and young female entrepreneurs*

## 5 Discussion

This chapter contains a discussion on the findings of chapter four linked to the literature elaborated in chapter three. Subsequently, theoretical and practical implications will be clarified in the following two paragraphs. Thereafter, paragraph four provides a description of the limitations. Lastly, the recommendations for future research will be elaborated.

### 5.1 Discussion on the findings

This study has explored experiences of young male- and young female entrepreneurs in the technology sector. Accordingly, six young male – and six young female entrepreneurs were interviewed to gain insight in the identity work strategies they use to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hence, this study sheds light on the relation between the intersectionality of two social categories, namely; gender and age with the identity work young male- and young female entrepreneurs perform to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders.

Based on the empirical data retrieved from the respondents, discrepancies arise in experiences. As expected, the young male entrepreneurs in this study experience advantages due to their gender identity. However, the interviewed young male entrepreneurs perceive several disadvantages based on their gender identity too, which was unexpected. Additionally, all interviewed young male entrepreneurs experience that the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity diminishes the extent to which they are perceived to be a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders.

Accordingly, as expected, young female entrepreneurs perceive disadvantages due to the intersection of their gender- and age identity. However, young female entrepreneurs recognize, in addition, advantages due to their gender identity. Which was an unexpected outcome.

Prior to execution of this research, an expectation of young male entrepreneurs perceiving an advantage, and young female entrepreneurs perceiving a disadvantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders existed. This expectation is based on the literature about gaining legitimacy as a female entrepreneur in male dominated sectors (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). However, results in chapter four demonstrate that this is not solely the case.

The young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to perceive an advantage due to their gender identity. Because they look like the typical entrepreneur, which is white and masculine (Essers & Benschop, 2007). Contradictory, they seem to perceive their gender identity as a disadvantage too. However, the young male entrepreneurs in this study all seem to perceive that the intersectionality with their age identity causes a disadvantage and makes external stakeholders perceive them as less legitimate.

Part of the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to feel that the intersection of gender, age and entrepreneurship has a negative influence on gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Contrarily, two young female entrepreneurs seem to perceive their gender identity as an advantage considering they stand out in this male dominated sector. Additionally, they seem to perceive that the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity causes a disadvantage and makes external stakeholders perceive them as less legitimate.

Hence, the interviews provide an insight in the way young male – and female entrepreneurs in this study construct their identity to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. In line with the aforementioned literature, four strategies of identity work arise from the interviews.

Both young male – and young female entrepreneurs in this study mention that they use cognitive -, physical - and discursive identity work strategies (Caza et al., 2018). Additionally, they seem to cope with the intersection of their age identity with their gender identity by including an external male that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur. This approach resembles the strategy used by the Somma sisters, described in the article of Bruni et al. (2004).

However, differences arise in how the entrepreneurs execute these strategies to construct their identity. Firstly, in line with the literature, both young male – and young female entrepreneurs in this study perform cognitive identity work. Cognitive identity work refers to “the mental efforts executed in order to construct interpret, understand and evaluate identity” (Caza et al., 2018 P.891). The interviewed young male entrepreneurs tend to construct their identity by trying to find the more feminine part in them. Contrarily, the young female entrepreneurs in this study tend to construct their identity by discovering the more masculine part of them to fit the stereotypical entrepreneur.

Secondly, in line with the literature, young male – and young female entrepreneurs perform discursive identity work in a different manner. Discursive identity work refers to “what is verbalized and how it is verbalized” (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Caza et al., 2016, p. 891). The young male entrepreneurs in this study agree that using sector specific jargon does not provide an advantage in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Adversely, the entrepreneurs feel that it is a useful strategy to translate sector specific language into accessible knowledge to show external stakeholders they possess the required knowledge. Therefore, the young male entrepreneurs in this study seem to suggest that, to compensate the intersection of their gender- and age identity, they tend to use discursive identity work strategies. Likewise, the young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to compensate the intersection of their age- and gender identity by executing discursive identity work. However, they tend to communicate more masculine, adapt their tone of voice to a more masculine tone and talk more assertive. This resembles a statement made by Marlow and McAdam (2015), who argue that female entrepreneurs in the technology sector “reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur” (P.791).

Subsequently, in line with the literature, both young male – and young female entrepreneurs in this study perform physical identity work. Physical identity work involves symbols in the way individuals present themselves physically such as clothing (Caza et al., 2018). Hence, the young male entrepreneurs in this study tend to perform physical identity work to appear older. Accordingly, young female entrepreneurs in this study adapt their physical appearance to compensate their age identity too, as they dress to appear more mature.

Lastly, the young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study use an identity work strategy that resembles the strategy used by the Somma sisters, in the article *Doing gender, Doing entrepreneurship* by Bruni et al. (2004). In the concerning study, the sisters use a male engineer to pretend to be the entrepreneur, as they must interact with external stakeholders that are all men (Bruni et al., 2004). The young male entrepreneur in this study uses the same strategy. Cas brings an entrepreneur that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur according to Essers and Benschop (2007). Accordingly, the young female entrepreneur in this study executes the same strategy. Merel brings a team coach that according to her, fits the stereotypical entrepreneur. Hence, both seem to execute this strategy to cope with the intersection of their gender – and age identity.

## 5.2 Theoretical contributions

This study has explored how six young male- and six young female entrepreneurs in the technology sector perceive the intersection of their age- and gender identity to influence the attainment of legitimacy from external stakeholders. Accordingly, it has shed light on how they construct their identity to cope with the intersection of their age – and gender identity to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. The contribution of this study to the literature is threefold. Firstly, this study furthers the research by Bruni et al. (2004) who found that female entrepreneurs use a specific strategy to cope with their gender identity. In this study, it has appeared that both the interviewed young female- and young male entrepreneurs seem to use a comparable strategy. However, the entrepreneurs in this study seem to perform this identity work strategy to cope with the intersection of their age- and gender identity. Hence, they use an external white male that fits the image of the stereotypical entrepreneur (Essers & Benschop, 2007) to compensate the disadvantage they perceive in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders due to the intersection of their age identity and gender identity.

Secondly, this study elaborates on research on legitimacy in combination with gender. Multiple studies are executed in the domain of being a female entrepreneur and gaining legitimacy (Garud et al., 2014; Marlow & McAdam, 2015; Murphy et al., 2020; Swail & Marlow, 2018). However, this research elaborates on the under researched aspect of intersectionality of multiple social constructs. Namely, the role of age and gender identity in the attainment of legitimacy in the technology industry in the Netherlands. As multiple researchers have found that gender identity plays an important role in gaining legitimacy (Garud et al., 2014; Marlow & McAdam, 2015; Murphy et al., 2020; Swail & Marlow, 2018), this study contributes to this by illustrating that the intersection of gender identity with age identity diminishes the extent to which the entrepreneurs in this study are perceived to be legitimate entrepreneurs by external stakeholders. As the average age of entrepreneurs receiving funding for their venture is 40 (Wright, 2017), it was interesting to see what happens when entrepreneurs are younger. Hence, this research has elaborated on this by providing narratives in which young male- and young female entrepreneurs experience the intersection of their age- with gender identity as a negative influence on gaining legitimacy.

Lastly, this study furthers the understanding on female entrepreneurs gaining legitimacy in male dominated sectors. Marlow & McAdam (2015) have performed a study on female entrepreneurs gaining legitimacy in a male dominated sector. Accordingly, they found that in a male dominated sector, various prejudices on females operating in this industry exist (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). This research adds to this by illustrating the prejudices the interviewed young male- and young female entrepreneurs experience, due to the intersection of their age identity with their gender identity. Additionally, it adds to this by comparing the strategies used by the young female entrepreneurs with the strategies used by the young male entrepreneurs to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders in a male dominated sector. As there is a general discourse on the typical entrepreneur, which is white and masculine (Essers & Benschop, 2007), men fit the prototype of this typical entrepreneur. Accordingly, men might experience an advantage due to their gender when convincing external stakeholders. Consequently, legitimacy might be an obstacle for female entrepreneurs, who ought to blend their 'role' of being a woman and the role of an entrepreneur which often are perceived contrary by society or incumbents in the field (McAdam, Harrison & Leitch, 2018). Additionally, it is argued that female entrepreneurs in the technology sector "reproduce masculinized representations of the normative technology entrepreneur" (Marlow & McAdam, 2015 P.791). This study adds on this theory by illustrating how female entrepreneurs in this study perform identity work to fit the stereotypical entrepreneur by performing masculine behavior and communication. Moreover, this study furthers this research by elaborating on the identity work that young male entrepreneurs perform to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. It appears that the male entrepreneurs in this study seem to perceive a disadvantage due to the intersection of their age identity with their gender identity. Hence, they reproduce feminine representations too.

### 5.3 Practical contributions

The results acquired in this study might be used to gain insight in how young male- and young female entrepreneurs experience being an entrepreneur in the technology sector. Accordingly, it provides an insight in which identity work strategies are used by young male- and young female entrepreneurs to cope with the intersection of their gender identity and their age identity in order to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hence, the results of this study can be used by young entrepreneurs starting a venture that must convince external stakeholders to believe in them or their startup. As this research provides an insight in which strategies are used by young entrepreneurs to cope with the intersection of their age- and gender identity, the results can be used as guidelines for other young entrepreneurs seeking for legitimacy. Hence,

the results can be utilized to gain insight in how they can construct their identity. It has become clear that the entrepreneurs in this study seem to perform physical identity work to compensate their age identity by appearing older. Thus, young starting entrepreneurs can use this strategy as it might enhance the extent to which external stakeholders perceive them as a legitimate entrepreneur.

Additionally, the female entrepreneurs in this study perform discursive- and cognitive identity work strategies to adapt to the image of the stereotypical male entrepreneur (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). As the young female entrepreneurs in this study perceive these strategies to be beneficial in the attainment of legitimacy, the findings can serve as a guideline for other female entrepreneurs experiencing the same situations in male dominated sectors.

Moreover, the findings can be utilized by other parties. For example: investors, clients or venture capitalists. The findings of this research can be used to gain insight in how the entrepreneurs consciously construct their identity and which strategies they use to enhance their legitimacy. This might be helpful for external stakeholders such as investors, clients or venture capitalists to recognize behavior that is shown by entrepreneurs to gain legitimacy.

Finally, as the young male - and young female entrepreneurs in this study perceive to be prejudiced based on the intersection of their age- and gender identity, external stakeholders such as investors, clients or venture capitalists can utilize these findings to prevent themselves from being biased by gender and age prejudices.

#### 5.4 Limitations

Several aspects that limit the strength of this research must be acknowledged. Firstly, the empirical data is retrieved from detailed narratives explained by twelve respondents. However, respondents are therefore forced to go back in their memory and explain their experiences. Hence, important things can be forgotten. Therefore, it might be useful to conduct further research involving entrepreneurs experiencing comparable situations in the present.

Furthermore, the statements that are made by respondents are based on their perception of situations. Respondents acknowledge that sometimes, they draw conclusions and decisions based on their own perception of the situation. Therefore, the strength of this research may be limited, as respondents might perceive situations wrongly.

Lastly, the technology sector is a very broad sector. Within the technology sector, several sub-sectors exist such as medical technology, social technology, deep tech, blockchain etcetera. Hence, differences may occur between these sectors. This research does not take into account the effect of which subsector the entrepreneur is active in. This may limit the strength of this research. Therefore, future research should consider which subsector is relevant.

### 5.5 Recommendations for future research

Based upon the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research can be made. Related to the intersection of gender identity with age identity, a suggestion for future research can be recommended. As this study is executed in a male dominated sector, it might be interesting to execute a comparable research on the intersection of age identity and gender identity in a female dominated sector. Hence, it can be investigated whether there is a difference regarding the identity work strategies used by young entrepreneurs in male dominated sectors or female dominated sectors.

Additionally, it is suggested to do more research into positive sexism regarding young female entrepreneurs in the technology sector. Both young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to feel that young female entrepreneurs get preference, because society strives towards more gender diversity. Hence, it is suggested to research the relationship between positive sexism and the identity work young entrepreneurs perform.

Finally, it is suggested to translate this research from qualitative to quantitative research. This study has made clear that the interviewed young male- and young female entrepreneurs perform identity work to cope with their gender- and age identity to gain legitimacy. Hence, quantitative research can be employed to find out how strong the influence of performing identity work on gaining legitimacy as an entrepreneur is. Accordingly, this study has not focused on the measurement of attained legitimacy. This study focused on the actions that are undertaken by the entrepreneurs, which they perceive to be advantageous in the process of gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Therefore, further research should be conducted to provide evidence that performing identity work has an influence on gaining legitimacy and what that influence means.

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Conclusion

To investigate the relationship between gender and gaining legitimacy as a young entrepreneur, research has been done to explore the differences and similarities in the strategy that young male- and young female entrepreneurs use to construct their identity in order to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. Hence, the following research question was formulated: *“Which role does gender play in the attainment of legitimacy for young male- and young female entrepreneurs in the technology sector?”*

Both young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to experience both disadvantages as well as advantages due to their gender identity in gaining legitimacy from external stakeholders. Additionally, the intersection of their gender identity with their age identity seems to diminish the extent to which they are perceived as a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders. Hence, both young male- and young female entrepreneurs feel that they must perform identity work to compensate the intersection of their gender- and age identity, for them to be perceived as a legitimate entrepreneur by external stakeholders.

Concluding, to gain legitimacy and compensate the prejudices that exist based on the intersection of gender identity with age identity, the young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study perform identity work by using several strategies. To achieve this, both young- male and young female entrepreneurs utilize the same strategies: cognitive-, discursive- and physical identity work. However, they perform the strategies in different manners. The young male entrepreneurs seem to explore the more feminine part of them by performing cognitive- and discursive identity work strategies, whereas the young female entrepreneurs in this study tend to adapt their identity to more masculine behavior using discursive- and cognitive identity work. Nevertheless, an overarching strategy that both young male- and young female entrepreneurs agree on is bringing an external person that fits the stereotypical entrepreneur. The young male- and young female entrepreneurs in this study seem to use this strategy to cope with the intersection of their gender- and age identity. Accordingly, to compensate the intersection with their age identity, both young male- and young female entrepreneurs perform physical identity work to appear more mature. Therefore, this research shows that in line with the literature, four identity work strategies are used by both young male- and female entrepreneurs to cope with the intersection of their age identity and gender identity in order to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders.

## 6.2 Reflection

In this last paragraph, a methodological reflection on this research and a personal reflection on me as a researcher will be elaborated.

### 6.2.1 Methodological reflection

In order to secure credibility and transferability, several actions are undertaken during this research. To enhance credibility, peer debriefing has been executed. During this research, several meetings have been established with a colleague researcher that was doing research on a comparable subject. Therefore, we organized meetings to discuss our data. Accordingly, we have read each other's work and provided feedback to each other. Additionally, member checking was executed to enhance credibility. It has been checked with respondents whether the researcher interpreted their statements correctly. Additionally, during the interviews, questions were asked to check whether statements were interpreted correctly.

Subsequently, transferability is enhanced by representing the research process as comprehensive as possible. Respectively, the reader is able to conclude whether this research is applicable to other contexts and specifically, their own context (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

### 6.2.2 Reflexivity

In this paragraph, reflexivity will be discussed. Reflexivity involves the manner in which researchers affect their analysis and accordingly, the outcomes of the study (Symon & Cassell, 2012). As a researcher, I conducted this study based on the interpretivist philosophy. Hence, the respondents' interpretation of the situation will be accounted as the foundation for constructing additional insights regarding this subject (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

Starting this research, I assumed that young female entrepreneurs would perceive a great disadvantage in the attainment of legitimacy due to their gender identity. Accordingly, I expected that young male entrepreneurs would not perceive noteworthy disadvantages. Therefore, I feel like I started this study with several prejudices. However, the results of this research surprised me. I found it very interesting to investigate how young male entrepreneurs construct their identity based on their experiences, and how young female entrepreneurs construct their identity based on their experiences. I did not expect that all interviewed entrepreneurs would be this active in constructing their identity to gain legitimacy. However, I expected it to be mostly dependent on their gender. But for the respondents, legitimacy appeared to be highly in connection with age identity. Therefore, it might have been the case

that I did not started this study completely objective. However, I got more objective during the data collection. As respondents did not mention what I expected them to say, I realized that I was somewhat biased by prejudices. Accordingly, I started to perceive a more open perspective on the subject along the way.

Moreover, as a researcher I was dedicated to execute the process as adequate as possible. I strived to keep up and that worked out very well. Additionally, I am critical on my own work and therefore I experienced the process of conducting this research as pleasant and valuable. My supervisor was always prepared to help me, therefore I have perceived this as a very pleasant experience too. However, I might have done some things differently. I noticed that during the interviews, when I asked follow-up questions, I tended to ask them in a closed way. This is something I should learn from. Additionally, I find it hard to construct my report in a structured and clear manner. However, I have learned to do this along the way.

Conducting this study has had an influence on me as a researcher as well. I have learned that I was biased by personal assumptions in advance. However, I was not aware of it at that time. During the data collection I shifted towards a more objective view, which I think is a positive outcome.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Dutch interview guide

Om te beginnen wil ik je bedanken voor je deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik ben dus student aan de Radboud Universiteit en dit interview is voor mijn masterthesis. Voor mijn onderzoek interview ik jonge, mannelijke en vrouwelijke ondernemers die een eigen bedrijf hebben opgezet in de technologische sector. Ik onderzoek de identiteiten die ze hebben ontwikkeld in het proces van legitimiteit verkrijgen van externe stakeholders. Het gaat vooral om de manier waarop jouw leeftijd, het vrouw zijn en de combinatie daarvan in deze sector samenhangt met jouw identiteit als ondernemer en het verkrijgen van legitimiteit. In de tech sector zijn natuurlijk veelal mannen actief, dus ik ben benieuwd of hierbij vooroordelen bestaan en of je hier ervaring mee hebt. Daarnaast zou Leeftijd bijvoorbeeld ook een effect kunnen hebben. Dus, ik wil graag gedetailleerde verhalen horen over jouw ervaringen als jonge vrouw/man in deze sector. Dus schroom niet om veel te vertellen, want dat is juist het doel. Het is het meest belangrijk dat jij zo gedetailleerd mogelijk vertelt over je ervaringen, acties en gevoelens tijdens het opzetten van jouw bedrijf en het overtuigen van externen.

Alle informatie die jij mij vandaag verteld wordt niet verstrekt aan derden en in het onderzoek anoniem verwerkt in.

Als je bepaalde vragen niet begrijpt, laat het me dan weten. Je mag stoppen met het interview wanneer je dat wil, en vertel het me ook zeker als je je niet comfortabel voelt bij het beantwoorden van bepaalde vragen.

Tot slot, het is voor de analyse nodig om dit interview op te nemen, ga je daar mee akkoord?

Algemeen	Persoonlijk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zou je jezelf kort willen voorstellen? Je naam leeftijd opleiding?</li></ul>
	Over de organisatie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wanneer ben je je bedrijf gestart?</li><li>• Wil je kort vertellen wat jouw bedrijf doet? Ik weet het natuurlijk wel al een beetje, maar voor het interview is dat fijn om het er kort in te hebben staan. (Wanneer is het opgezet, missie/visie)</li><li>• Welke functie vervul jij momenteel binnen het bedrijf?</li></ul>
Identity	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hoe zou jij jouw identiteit beschrijven? (denk hierbij aan normen/waarden etc.?)</li><li>• Hoe zou jij jouw identiteit beschrijven als ondernemer? (normen/waarden)</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoe denk je dat anderen jou zouden beschrijven als ondernemer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ En in hoeverre zit er een verschil in tussen je persoonlijke en professionele omgeving?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Sector/legitimiteit verkrijgen/identity work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoe ben je in deze sector terecht gekomen?</li> <li>• Hoe is jouw bedrijf van idee tot uitvoering gekomen?</li> <li>• Wie heb je hiervoor moeten overtuigen?</li> <li>• Hoe heb je dit gedaan?</li> <li>• Hoe zou je het stereotype ondernemer in de technologische sector beschrijven? (Denk vooral aan gender en leeftijd). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In hoeverre lijkt je daarop?</li> <li>○ In hoeverre wijk je daarvan af?</li> <li>○ In hoeverre wil je daar aan spiegelen?(image/identity construction)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Zelf ook mannelijker gedraagt?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wat zijn de normen en waarden waartoe je je moet verhouden in deze sector? (identiteitsregulaties). Standaarden?! Denk ook aan gender en leeftijd.</li> <li>• In hoeverre denk je dat er in de technologische sector bepaalde vooroordelen bestaan ten aanzien van <b>gender en leeftijd</b>? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Heb jij hier ervaringen mee gehad tijdens jouw proces?</li> <li>○ Hoe ging je hier mee om?</li> <li>○ Waardoor komt dit denk je?</li> <li>○ Wat heeft jouw geslacht voor invloed gehad op dit proces?</li> <li>○ Hoe heeft jouw leeftijd invloed op dit proces gehad?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In welke mate heb je het idee dat je jouw ondernemersidentiteit wel eens hebt aangepast op deze vooroordelen?</li> </ul> <p>Vrouwelijk gedragen? Hoe merkte je dat ze bevooroordeeld</p> <p>Afhankelijk van hoe je gaat zitten → houding</p>
x	Intersectionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wat is jouw ervaring om als jonge mannelijke/vrouwelijke ondernemer een bedrijf te starten in de technologische sector? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In welke mate speelt man/vrouw zijn een rol?</li> <li>○ In welke mate speelt jong zijn een rol?</li> <li>○ In welke mate speelt een de combinatie van jong en man/vrouw zijn een rol?</li> <li>○ In welke mate ervaar je dat het zijn van een jonge vrouw van invloed is op jouw ondernemers identiteit?</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Op de kruising van jong, mannelijk/vrouwelijk en ondernemer zijn, wat voor een positieve gevolgen ervaar je, en wat voor een negatieve?</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hoe ga je hier mee om?</li> <li>○ Wat voor invloed heeft dit op jouw proces van je bedrijf opzetten gehad?</li> <li>○ Hoe wordt hierop gereageerd?</li> <li>○ Hoe pas je je je identiteit daar dan op aan? (identity work).</li> </ul>
	cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In welke mate ben je wel eens bewust bezig met jouw identiteit vormgeven als ondernemer? (Is er dan een verschil met 'jou' sociaal?)</li> <li>- Waar komt dit denk je door?</li> <li>- Wil je op een bepaalde manier overkomen? (of niet)</li> <li>- Wat voor invloed heeft jouw omgeving hierop? (De sector waarin je werkt?)</li> </ul>
	discursive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hoe weerspiegelt jouw taalgebruik jouw identiteit als ondernemer in deze sector?</li> </ul> <p>Wil je dan iets uitstralen?  Vrouwelijk? Verschil tussen vrouw en man?  Heeft dat iets te maken met de sector? Meer technisch gaan praten?</p>
	Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In welke mate ben je bewust bezig met jouw fysieke voorkoming om mensen te overtuigen? Gebruik je dus je uiterlijk om een identiteit uit te drukken?</li> <li>- In hoeverre pas je je outfit aan aan de cultuur binnen jouw sector? LEEFTIJD/GENDER/LEGITIMITEIT doorvragen naar gender en leeftijd en hoe zich dat verhoudt tot ondernemers identiteit. Daarna doorvragen naar omgeving/spullen etc.</li> </ul>
	Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wat voor houding nam je aan in het proces van legitimiteit verkrijgen? Ben je daar bewust mee bezig? Hoe kun je dit linken aan jouw identiteit?</li> <li>- <i>Courageous acts</i>. In welke mate doe je wel eens dingen die je normaal niet zou doen om mensen te overtuigen? Dingen die dus niet bij jouw persoonlijke normen en waarden passen maar wel binnen de industrie. Waar heeft dat mee te maken?</li> </ul> <p>Samenvatten: kruising jong en geslacht strje voor</p> <p>Samenvattend, welke rol heeft de combinatie van jouw geslacht en je leeftijd gespeeld als ondernemer?  Meer vrouwen actief?  Waarom streepje voor?  Doe jij dat ook? Vrouwelijker gedragen?  Behoeftte gehad om je daarop aan te passen?</p>

Vanuit welke normen en waarden acteer je?  
Normen: ongeschreven regels waaraan je je moet houden  
Waarden: achterliggende idealen die je belangrijk vindt.

Identiteit:  
Wie ben ik ?  
Hoe gedraag ik me?

## Appendix 2 English interview guide

Well firstly, I would like to thank you for participating in this research. I am doing this for my master thesis in Innovation and entrepreneurship. Therefore, I am researching how young male and young female entrepreneurs construct their identity in order to gain legitimacy from external stakeholders. So, in the process of setting up the venture but also in the rest of the process of being an entrepreneur. I am curious if there are certain prejudices or biases regarding age and gender, which you must deal with and how you do that. Do you adapt your identity to this? So in short how do you present yourself or construct your identity so that others will see you as a legitimate entrepreneur.

Okay, then I would like to ask you if it is ok for you if I record this interview? This is necessary so I can transcribe it.

- Would you like to introduce yourself? What is your name, age and which education did you follow?

### Company

- When did you start the company?
- Would you like to tell me in short what your company does?
- What is your function in the company?

### Identity

- How would you describe your identity as an entrepreneur?
- How would you describe your identity personally?
- Is there a difference? What is the difference..

## Sector

- How did you get in to this sector/end up in
- How is the company evolved from idea to practice?
- Did you have to convince certain people to achieve this?
- How did you do this?
- How would you describe the stereotypical entrepreneur in you sector? (Gender/age)
  - To what extent do you look like this stereotypical entrepreneur
  - To what extent do you differ from this
  - To what extent do you want to look like this or act like this stereotype?
- What are the norms and values that you have to relate to in this sector? (Standards? Age/gender)
- To what extent do you think certain prejudices exist related to gender and age in the tech sector? Societal norms?
  - Do you have any experiences with prejudices like that as an entrepreneur?
  - How did you deal with this?
  - Why do you think this happens?
  - To what extent did being female have an influence on this process?
  - To what extent did your age have an influence on this process?

## Identity work

- To what extent did you adjust your entrepreneurial identity to prejudices like this?
- What is your experience to start a venture in the tech sector as a young female entrepreneur?
  - To what extent plays being female a role?
  - To what extent plays being young a role?
  - To what extent does this combination play a role? DO you hve the idea that the
  - To what extent do you think that being a young female entrepreneur have an effect on your entrepreneurial identity?

## Intersectionality

- At the intersectionality of being young and female, what positive experiences have you had as an entrepreneur? And negative experiences?
  - How do you deal with this?
  - What influences has this had on creating your venture and convincing external stakeholders?
  - To what extent do you adjust your entrepreneurial identity to this?

#### Identity work

- To what extent are you consciously constructing your identity as an entrepreneur? Is there a difference with your social identity?
- Why?
- Do you want to present yourself a certain way or do you want to come across a certain way?
- What influence does your work environment have on this?
- How does your use of language reflect your entrepreneurial identity? Do you adapt this consciously? Adapt to sector?
- To what extent are you consciously using your physical appearance to convince external stakeholders that you are a legitimate entrepreneur?
- To what extent do you adapt your outfit to the culture in your sector?
- And work environment? Presentations?
- To what extent do you do things to convince people that do not align with you as a person? To convince people? Courageous acts?

Concluding: Which role did the combination of being young and female as an entrepreneur in this sector play for you?