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Joy and the mop: The role of film in doing and undoing gender in entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship remains principally constructed as a masculine activity performed by men, suggesting that women entrepreneurs continue to experience contradictory gendered expectations whereby they are both evaluated against male norms and expected to display culturally acceptable forms of femininity. While there is a growing body of critical literature on gender and entrepreneurship, limited work explores the audio-visual modalities of how gender performances reinforce and/or subvert gendered expectations in women's entrepreneurial activities. Considering this gap, we follow the feminist tradition of elaborating gender theory through film as an important medium of cultural production and transmission. By drawing on Butler's theory of gender performativity, we explore how a successful woman entrepreneur is represented in the semi-fictionalized film, *Joy*. Using a critical social semiotic approach, we analyze how the audio-visual aspects of the gender performances in *Joy* unfold across time and space to construct expectations of women's entrepreneurship. From our analysis, we make two principal contributions. First, we examine how the medium of film simultaneously reinforces and subverts the gendering of entrepreneurial activity. Second, we propose three sub-genres of gender performance—*exaggerated femininities, instrumental masculinities,* and *situational*

gender (in)congruity—that can serve to subvert stereotypical expectations about women's entrepreneurship.

KEYWORDS

entrepreneurship, film, gender, Judith Butler, performativity

1 | INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is frequently constructed in academic and public discourse as a predominantly male activity (Ahl, 2006; Bruni et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2012), and, as such, "maleness and forms of masculinity" have come to be closely associated with entrepreneurial characteristics and behaviors (Phillips & Knowles, 2012, p. 417). Gender can be a source of identity conflict for women entrepreneurs (García & Welter, 2013) who are simultaneously evaluated against male and masculine norms (Ahl, 2006), while also expected to display culturally acceptable forms of femininity (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). Considering the persistence of hegemonic masculinities in the social and economic environments within which entrepreneurship occurs (Dean & Ford, 2017), it is perhaps unsurprising that research demonstrates that gender plays a role in constructing expectations, experiences, and perceptions of entrepreneurship (Ettl & Welter, 2010; Welter & Smallbone, 2008). The "feminine entrepreneur" is even sometimes juxtaposed with the "successful entrepreneur" as if they were two entrepreneurial alternatives (Mirchandani, 1999). Research on women's entrepreneurial experiences (Cardella et al., 2020; Marlow, 2020; Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018) reveals the persistence of gendered patterns that perpetuate unequal power, opportunities, and rewards (Acker, 1998). For example, women entrepreneurs struggle to access financial resources (Fairlie & Robb, 2009; Meliou, 2020) and experience barriers to accessing social resources (connections, knowledge, and skills) because of the exclusionary dynamics of gendered structures and power regimes inherent in social and professional networks (Meliou, 2020; Özkazanç-Pan & Muntean, 2016, 2018). Gendered expectations even appear to shape how people imagine their own entrepreneurial potential (Özkazanç-Pan, 2014).

To conceptually frame our paper, we draw on Butler's (1993, 1997, 1999) theory of gender performativity to understand how gender performances do and undo gender in ways that shape entrepreneurship across time. Butler's concept of gender performativity has been foundational to a considerable body of research concerned with gender in organizations (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013; Rhodes & Pullen, 2011), as well as a more limited body of research on gender and entrepreneurship (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). We draw on gender performativity as developed in, *Bodies that Matter* (Butler, 1993), *Gender is burning: Questions of appropriation and subversion* (Butler, 1997), *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (Butler, 1999), and *Undoing Gender (2004)*. We proceed from Butler's (1999) claim that gender cannot be reduced to sex-based differences or biological facts because it is not a reflection of what one is but instead is something that one does. Gender arises from "the stylized repetition of acts through time" (Butler, 1999, p. 192). The effects of gender practices therefore point to the performative dimension of gender.

While there is a growing body of critical literature on gender and entrepreneurship (e.g., Ahl, 2006; Ettl & Welter, 2010; Özkazanç-Pan, 2014), comparatively, little research examines how gender performances shape entrepreneurial opportunities and experiences. In a critical review of gender and entrepreneurship, Marlow and Martinez Dy (2018, p. 3) argue that the field needs to move beyond consideration of "masculine bias within entrepreneurship" to recognize "gender as a human property with myriad articulations enacted throughout entrepreneurial activity." While historically research has tended to highlight masculine expectations and patriarchal inequality in relation to entrepreneurship (e.g., see Ahl, 2006), Lewis (2014, p. 1845) theorizes a more pluralist view of "entrepreneurial femininities"—each involving the performance of both masculine and feminine aspirations and behaviors—to recognize the impacts for women entrepreneurs of postfeminist gender regimes (McRobbie, 2009). Arguably, postfeminism as a discursive formation reveals a "double entanglement" between (i) the (ostensibly) accepted status of

feminism in individualistic Western systems of organizing and (ii) forces which seek to return to traditional gender relations (Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009). Yet, limited empirical work explores the modalities of how gender performances reinforce and/or subvert masculine or feminine expectations in women's entrepreneurial experiences. An important exception is the work of Phillips and Knowles (2012), which draws upon notions of performance and performativity to explore representations of women small business owners in contemporary novels. Phillips and Knowles (2012, p. 416) find that the analyzed novels portray successful women entrepreneurs who simultaneously display "culturally accepted norms of femininity" and yet whose "...partial and conflictual identification with norms of gender and entrepreneurship could lead a reader to question those norms." While Phillips and Knowles' (2012) work suggests alternative ways of doing gender in entrepreneurship, the use of novels as source material inhibits the examination of audio-visual modalities in understanding how gender performances reinforce and/or subvert gendered expectations.

Reflecting the need for methodological innovation, we follow in the feminist tradition of exploring gender theory within the popular cultural medium of film (Bell & Sinclair, 2016; Butler, 1997; Fotaki & Harding, 2018; Phillips & Knowles, 2012; Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). According to Butler (1997), film plays a key role in perpetuating gender performativity in society by reinforcing gendered expectations. In a recent *Gender, Work & Organization* editorial, Wallenberg and Jansson (2021, p. 1991) argue that film and television reach large and heterogenous audiences to shape how we understand society, others, and ourselves, thus highlighting the political importance of what and who is conveyed through those mediums. Film-based analysis also affords insights that are unavailable to other methods because the medium of film renders observable and accessible to analysis broader repertoires of gender performance and performativity. For example, film permits analysis of spatial, temporal, esthetic, and discursive elements of gender performativity in the complex configurations of visual and audible modes found in the staging of actors and objects, facial expressions, and vocal expressions. Our study is therefore centered on the use of a film, *Joy* (2015), as a medium of popular culture, to observe gender performances as they unfold across time and space in relation to women's entrepreneurship.

Joy[1] is a biographical, albeit semi-fictionalized, account of a woman's entrepreneurial journey set in 1990s North America. The film's central protagonist Joy, played by Oscar winning actor Jennifer Lawrence, invents, manufactures, pitches, and sells a self-wringing mop (the "Miracle Mop"). We focus on *Joy* because the film had a wide international release (58 countries), has been watched by a large audience (grossing $101,134,059 USD), and (to our knowledge) is the only contemporary Hollywood film to focus on a successful woman entrepreneur. Through this approach, we explore the representation of a successful woman entrepreneur in a contemporary film, in particular examining how performances in the film serve to do and undo gender (Butler, 1993, 1997, 1999) in ways that reinforce and/or subvert gendered expectations about entrepreneurship. Through our analysis of *Joy* (2015), we ask *how do gender performances in a contemporary film serve both to reinforce and subvert gender expectations about women's entrepreneurship?*

We make two principal contributions. First, we demonstrate how film can simultaneously reproduce, reinforce, and subvert gendered expectations about entrepreneurship through a detailed exploration of the gendered representations of a successful woman entrepreneur on screen. Second, we build on theoretical insights from Butler (1997) and Pullen and Rhodes (2013, p. 513) about the role of parody in "denaturalizing culturally embedded gendered practices" to propose three sub-genres of gender performance—*exaggerated femininities, instrumental masculinities, and situational gender (in)congruity*—that are deployed in *Joy* to subvert gendered expectations about entrepreneurship.

We begin by situating our analysis within discussions of cultural representations of gender and women in popular culture, especially emphasizing representations of women's entrepreneurship, before situating our conceptual approach. We then outline our critical social semiotic analysis of *Joy*, describing how the multimodality of the film provides unique opportunities to analyze gender performances in relation to entrepreneurship. We present our findings in two sections: an integrated analytical overview which focuses on gender performances in *Joy* as seen through the lens of Butler's (1993, 1997, 1999, 2004) gender performativity and inductive thematic findings that show how

three key sub-genres of gender performance—*exaggerating femininities, instrumental masculinities, and situational gender (in)congruity*—are deployed with irony and humor in *Joy* to subvert gendered expectations about entrepreneurship. We close with a discussion of the theoretical insights from our analysis, highlighting limitations, and avenues for future research.

2 | GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN FILM

We focus on film not because its visuality (or other modalities) "mirrors" the real world (Rose, 2022) but because films are sites of social knowledge transmission which provide opportunities for social meanings to be intersubjectively negotiated (Höllerer et al., 2019; Jancsary et al., 2016). In this sense, films can play a role in the construction of social reality while also providing an opportunity to examine alternatives—for example, a world without gendered expectations (see Höllerer et al., 2019). Research suggests that how gender is represented in film is important because these representations can either reinforce or subvert gendered expectations (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013), thus plausibly shaping gender-based expectations about both entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship (Bruni et al., 2004). Phillips and Knowles (2012), building upon their study of fictional entrepreneurial women, suggest that narrative fiction and film can offer an opportunity to destabilize stereotypical views of gender, because in fictional worlds the reader is an active interpreter of the text and can "upend" the gendered ways in which entrepreneurship is understood. As Bell and Sinclair (2016) explain, popular culture plays a critical role in creating and sustaining gendered ways of seeing women—and their bodies—through the patriarchal gaze. For example, processes such as "aestheticization" (Van Leeuwen, 2015) draw the gaze toward women's esthetic characteristics (e.g., their clothes and physical appearance). Even when women are protagonists (leading characters) in film, they are often portrayed stereotypically as being passive and feminine (good mother, wife) and/or active and masculine (aggressive, careerist) (Bell & Sinclair, 2016).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in critical analyses of how women are represented on screen (e.g., Bell & Sinclair, 2016; Milestone & Meyer, 2020). Films, and the narratives, representations, images, and stereotypes they embody, can be both powerful and problematic tools of cultural transmission (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). Representations of gender on screen can, and arguably often do, reinforce problematic stereotypes regarding appropriate roles for men and women in society (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). For example, Brewis (1998), among the first studies in business and management studies to draw on film as a source of data, conducts an analysis of the film *Disclosure*, starring Michael Douglas and Demi Moore, a controversial film that examines workplace sexual harassment. Brewis argues that *Disclosure* is a "persuasive cultural artifact" (p. 86) because it has the power to subjectify and influence that goes beyond the agendas of its creators. Brewis's (1998) analysis of *Disclosure* problematizes the acclaim initially associated with the film, demonstrating that rather than being emancipatory, the portrayal of the female harasser reinforces stereotypes of working women as threatening and unnatural. Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore's character) is depicted as having used her sexuality to seek advancement and is only seen within the workplace, implying a necessary separation of home and work life and the absence of a private life for career success. Additionally, Brewis (1998) problematizes the way in which sexual harassment is portrayed, especially the reinforcement of the damaging stereotype that the objects of the harassment may not be entirely unreceptive to it. More recently, Bell and Sinclair (2016) draw on *Borgen*—a Danish television series with a woman protagonist—to highlight how popular culture can provide potentially radical insights into the role and importance of the politics of representation on the small screen. Similarly, Panayiotou (2015) explores the gendered nature of space in organizations through a critical analysis of five films—including *What Women Want (2000)*, and *The Devil Wears Prada (2006)*—to suggest that the women protagonists in these films blend gender conforming and non-conforming behaviors. Together, these strands of film and television research suggest the importance of how gender is performed on screen.

3 | GENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

To theorize gender performances in film, we proceed from Butler's (1993, 1999, 2004) claim that gender is not a biological fact but rather a social construction engrained within society and its members that implicitly rewards,

through social acceptance and economic advancement, the self-performance of gendered ways of behaving. Butler (1999) presents gender as a fluid entity, which develops in the dynamic context of social and cultural conventions, rather than a preconceived notion grounded in biological attributes. In Butler's (1999, p. 34) words,

> …gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence …gender proves to be performance – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed.

Butler proposes that what are appropriate feminine and masculine roles and behaviors are social constructions (Butler, 1993, 2004). Butler (1999, p. 173) theorizes gender as "performative" in that "acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means." Gender in this frame is not an individual trait or characteristic but is instead a practice or something an individual does. Performance and performativity are essential both to the social construction (and re-construction over time) of gender in each social or cultural context, but also critical to illuminating, reinforcing, and challenging prevailing assumptions regarding gender. Butler (1999, p. 190) notes that when individuals "perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions … the construction 'compels' our belief in its necessity and naturalness," thus maintaining hegemonically masculine role norms in the process. Equally, while individual performances of gender are often constrained or patterned by dominant and regulatory discourses, performances can be revelatory in the sense that they "…can occupy the norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rework the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation" (Butler, 2004, p. 217). For Butler (2004, p. 1), the performance of gender therefore entails both doing and undoing gender, involving "the experience of becoming undone in both good and bad ways." Ultimately, "through the practice of gender performativity, we not only see how the norms that govern reality are cited but grasp one of the mechanisms by which reality is reproduced *and* altered in the course of that reproduction" (Butler, 2004, p. 218).

Butler's concept of gender performativity provides a valuable way to explore and critically examine the gendered nature of entrepreneurship (see Lewis, 2014; Phillips & Knowles, 2012) in film. Adjacent research drawing on postfeminism, with its origin in cultural and media studies (Lewis et al., 2017), has illuminated some of the repertoires of gendered performances of entrepreneurship. For example, Lewis (2014) critically examines gender and entrepreneurship literature through the lens of postfeminism, identifying four "entrepreneurial femininities" that each embody stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes. Lewis et al. (2017, p. 214) argue that postfeminism, when understood as a discursive formation (i.e., involving predictable cultural uniformities), entails "…a complicated co-existence of feminist values such as choice, equality of opportunity and agentic self-determination alongside the re-articulation of traditional expectations and traditional gender stereotypes around motherhood, beauty and female sexuality." For Lewis (2014, p. 1848), postfeminism is therefore a cultural phenomenon that enables "identifying (liberal) feminist and feminine discourses, which play out in contemporary organizations [that] contribute to a resignification of femininity, making available to organizational actors a range of emerging femininities." While postfeminist discourses arguably foreground women's agency in ways that risk "taming" or "moderating" structural feminist discourses (Dean, 2010), critically applying postfeminism as a "versatile discursive phenomenon which is a reworking and co-optation of feminism" (Lewis, 2014, p. 1851), provides a way to examine the cultural realities of gendered power regimes (McRobbie, 2009) in relation to entrepreneurship. Drawing on this critical lens on postfeminism, Lewis (2014, p. 1852) reviews research on gender and entrepreneurship to highlight how "…as entrepreneurs women now inhabit both masculine and feminine realms, juggling the 'doing' of both masculinity and femininity" (Lewis, 2014). Lewis (2014) identifies four distinct "entrepreneurial femininities" from gender and entrepreneurship research: first, a gender-neutral depiction of individualized femininity (the "entrepreneur") as involving

a rational, agentic actor who can overcome barriers to success regardless of gender. Second, a depiction of maternal femininity (the "mumpreneur") who reconciles tensions between business and maternal responsibilities through a (constrained) form of entrepreneurship that leverages domesticity. Third, a relational femininity (the "female entrepreneur") who accepts gender-based limitations and deploys feminine practices of management and leadership that are distinguished from traditional masculine approaches to business. Fourth, an excessive entrepreneurial femininity (the "nonpreneur") typified by people who are deemed to display the wrong amount or type of femininity (e.g., acting in excessively feminine ways without the counterweight of masculinity). Importantly, in common with wider postfeminist research in organization studies (e.g., Villeseche et al., 2022), each of Lewis's (2014) entrepreneurial feminisms entails a repertoire of behaviors and structural expectations that exhibit elements of stereotypically masculine and feminine aspirations and actions, suggesting the situational, dynamic, and fluid nature of gendered entrepreneurial performance.

Reflecting this, representations of women entrepreneurs in film similarly suggest some of the cultural and symbolic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs (Gupta et al., 2016). When women entrepreneurs do appear as central characters in film, they are mostly located in the home or a similar domestic setting, associated with items or products gendered as feminine and associated with motherhood and the family, and, very often, their enterprises are failures. For example, in *You've Got Mail* (1998), the woman owner's business failure (closure of a small children's bookstore) is juxtaposed with a male owner's success (thriving of a large bookstore). In *Waitress* (2007), the central woman character is a talented and innovative cook of dessert pies. Toward the close of the film, the elderly male owner of the pie shop dies and, in his will, leaves his pie shop to her. In this way, the would-be entrepreneur finally has her own enterprise, but it has all been facilitated by a male character. In *Bridesmaids* (2011), the cakeshop belonging to a central female character has been declared bankrupt at the opening of the film. Each of these depictions of a woman entrepreneur in film perhaps presents a missed opportunity to subvert the gender stereotypes and expectations that exist in society that entrepreneurship is a predominantly male activity and that successful entrepreneurs are men (Mirchandani, 1999), thus reinforcing representations that depict entrepreneurship as undesirable and infeasible for women (Marlow & McAdam, 2013).

The expectation that a woman's entrepreneurship is bounded by gender is arguably reinforced by the links drawn between women, entrepreneurship, motherhood, and family. Women are often depicted as less agentic in their decision to become entrepreneurs. For example, women are seen to be pushed into entrepreneurship by the restrictions of the labor market (McAdam, 2012), or pulled toward entrepreneurship by the happenstance opportunity to extend forms of home-based care and unpaid labor (Muntean & Özkazanç-Pan, 2015). Research therefore suggests that family and household is a decisive influence on women's entrepreneurial opportunity (Brush et al., 2009; Ettl & Welter, 2010) because (i) women's economic activities are expected to operate in tandem with their caring and household responsibilities (Bourne & Calás, 2013) and (ii) women continue to lack access to external resources (e.g., finances) and supports (e.g., knowledge, networks) (Meliou, 2020; Özkazanç-Pan & Muntean, 2016, 2018). It is also sometimes expected that women entrepreneurs will establish themselves in industries and sectors traditionally associated with women and domesticity (Bennett & Dann, 2000), and women's enterprises are subsequently viewed as being concentrated in the low-value-added sectors of the service industry (Marlow et al., 2009) rather than higher-growth sectors, such as, technology. Some women therefore find that their identity as an entrepreneur is rejected, for example, with others reconstructing their inventions as accidental and their expertize as non-authoritative (Bruni et al., 2004).

Paradoxically, the widespread symbolic association between motherhood and women's entrepreneurship appears simultaneously to enable women to pursue entrepreneurship (see Lewis, 2014) and to restrict the opportunities that are available. In an empirical paper about Swedish family businesses, women narrate their entrepreneurial identities through either a proactive *Pippi Longstocking* plot involving "conscious choice, drive, and motivation," or a reactive *Alice in Wonderland* plot emphasizing happenstance and family loyalty (Bjursell & Melin, 2011, p. 218). While these plots, metaphors, and narratives perhaps capture some central tendencies in women's entrepreneurial experiences, they are also somewhat limiting. This focus on the world of children's literature and child heroines of

fantasy novels—in the context of women's economic activity—is arguably belittling and infantilizing. Both *Pippi* and *Alice* operate in a fantasy world and frequently state that they do not wish to grow up. Notably, entrepreneurs of all genders tend to draw upon advice from friends, family, and personal networks (Herbane, 2019). Just as there are stories that represent entrepreneurs in popular culture, entrepreneurs can deploy culture in support of their ventures. Gehman and Soublière (2017) argue that entrepreneurs draw upon cultural stories (which could include archetypical gendered stories) to justify their company's existence and to convince investors to contribute resources.

In summary, Butler's (1993, 1997, 1999, 2004) theory of gender performativity enables us to understand how mediums of popular culture (Butler, 1997; Pullen & Rhodes, 2013) can serve to both reproduce and subvert gendered stereotypes and expectations in ways that potentially affect women's economic activity. Drawing on Lewis's (2014) attention to entrepreneurial femininities and Lewis et al.'s (2017) understanding of postfeminism as a discursive formation, we argue that film-based analysis enables us to explore the "double entanglement" (Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009) experienced by women entrepreneurs because it renders the dance of masculinities and femininities in a portrayal of a successful women's entrepreneurs experience observable across time and space.

4 | METHODOLOGY

We employ critical social semiotic analysis (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016) to explore audio-visual representations of gender and entrepreneurship in the film *Joy*. This approach is drawn from applied linguistics and can be understood as a type of combined textual and visual discourse analysis which focuses on the reconstruction of meanings in pre-existing multimodal artifacts (Höllerer et al., 2019). Consistent with the archeological approach to social semiotics, we are principally concerned with the reconstruction of socially shared meaning (a form of cultural memory) from a pre-existing multimodal artifact (a film). We take this approach because the multimodal nature of film immediately draws viewers' attention to how gender is performed across time and space, highlighting issues of how women and their bodies are represented (Bell & Sinclair, 2016). To fit within the 90–120 min common to a cinematic release, the central protagonist's life story, or key sections of it, is usually told through a series of related—and often narrated—motivating events. In this sense, analyzing a single film enables the researcher to encounter how the protagonist is represented close-up and to investigate how subjective realities are constructed through linguistic and visual signifiers (Bell & Davison, 2013). Analysis of film therefore enables researchers to consider subjective experiences of entrepreneurship which are contextually specific and which might otherwise remain hidden (Bell & Davison, 2013). In this way, film can help researchers to overcome failures of imagination.

4.1 | Joy as a revelatory case example

We draw upon a single case study with revelatory properties (Yin, 2014). The revelatory case approach is particularly useful in generating new insights and ideas in relation to hard to access phenomena (Yin, 2014), in this case, how gender performances unfold across time and space in relation to entrepreneurship. Given the relatively limited nature of empirical studies of gender performance and entrepreneurship that incorporate both audio and visual elements, we therefore draw upon the revelatory example of the film *Joy*.

Joy is a biographical, albeit semi-fictionalized, account of Joy Mangano's successful entrepreneurial journey in 1990s America. Joy, the film's central protagonist—played by Oscar winning actor, Jennifer Lawrence—invents, manufactures, pitches, and sells a self-wringing mop (the Miracle Mop). The film depicts the full entrepreneurial journey (from opportunity recognition, through invention, commercialization, company formation, and growth) and provides a richly contextualized account of gendered entrepreneurship that deals explicitly with boundaries between work and home/family life, traditional employment and entrepreneurial activity, and the gendered capitalist economy and the entrepreneur. In *Joy*, we see the role of gender play out in the unfolding of Joy's entrepreneurial journey.

Representations of gender and entrepreneurship are therefore rendered observable, as we view representations of childhood socialization, opportunity recognition, invention, investment, commercialization, company formation, and growth in the context of work and home/family life, traditional employment and entrepreneurial activity, and the gendered economy and the entrepreneur. *Joy* is therefore a revelatory example because, to our knowledge, it is the only contemporary English language mainstream popular film where the protagonist is an economically successful woman entrepreneur and where the film has reached a large and heterogenous audience. *Joy* has also become an important cultural object as Jennifer Lawrence received a best actress Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Joy. The film *Joy* was therefore selected for analysis because it portrays a woman entrepreneur who is still running a successful enterprise at the close of the film.

4.2 | Critical social semiotic analysis

We draw upon the approach to critical social semiotics described by Machin and Van Leeuwen (2016), which involves first focusing on the *signifier* (the audio-visual data), second on the *signified* meaning (subjective interpretation), and finally on the wider *significance* of the text in relation to a social theory. Here, we draw upon Butler's (1993, 1997, 1999, 2004) theory of gender performativity. We selected Machin and Van Leeuwen's (2016) approach in relation to multimodal political discourses because we believe that representations of gender in film are political (Bell & Sinclair, 2016; Butler, 1997; Pullen & Rhodes, 2013; Wallenberg & Jansson, 2021) and because we seek to understand the importance of the audio-visual modalities of gender performances in *Joy*.

In the first step of our analysis, we began by watching and rewatching the film (*Joy*) without any preconceived conceptual concern outside of it being a story about a woman entrepreneur. To aid this inductive process, each author, while watching and rewatching the film, noted down striking visual or audible aspects of the film. We inductively identified multiple sources of visual and audible data as *signifiers* of gender performance in *Joy*. Visual data included the spatial composition of objects and actors, facial expressions, gestures, aesthetics, lighting, repetitions, transitions, and framing. Audible data included monologue, dialog, noises (e.g., sigh), music, objects, composition, aesthetics, and lighting.

In the second stage of analysis, we sought to explore *signified* meaning by discussing what visual and audible data we had identified in our templates across a series of meetings. As a team of women, we come from different academic and experiential backgrounds. Two of us—like Joy—have children. One of us has direct experience of being a woman entrepreneur, another has a background in the television and film industry. Two of us come from the UK, although all of us have lived and worked in Australia. We note these differences and similarities within our team because as Machin and Van Leeuwen (2016) argue, the *signified* meaning of audio-visual data is interpreted through first-hand experience and cultural knowledge. As such, we discussed how our diverse frames of reference as a research team helped us to understand the multiple interpretations (multivocality) of both our visual and audible data. As per the norm in film studies, we refer to contiguous configurations of visual and audible data as scenes. For example, in a series of gender performances (Butler, 1999), Joy demonstrates her invention (the mop) across a range of different settings to both (predominantly male) investors and (predominantly) women customers. The mop in the film is an interesting example of how something with a relatively established meaning (a mop) can take on complex connotations because of the way in which the prop is depicted in relation to gender. For example, as a team we discussed whether the signified meaning of the repeated mop demonstration was about the feminized aesthetics of women's entrepreneurship (female product categories) or the lack of cultural knowledge held by (predominantly male) investors about the materiality of mops. Through this process, we explored how the meaning potentials of signs and sign systems that create the social reality about women's entrepreneurship can be intersubjectively negotiated (Höllerer et al., 2019) in more radical and agentic ways.

In the final step, we sought to illuminate how the visualization of entrepreneurship in *Joy* contributes to broader social understanding of gender and entrepreneurship. In this stage of our analysis, we drew upon Butler's theory of gender performativity (1993, 1997, 1999, 2004) to reflect on the wider significance of *Joy* in relation to a social theory (gender performativity), especially seeking to uncover *Joy*'s underlying cultural and ideological implications and intentions and examining its capacity to reproduce, reinforce, and subvert stereotypical gendered expectations about

entrepreneurship. To accomplish this, we applied a version of Pritchard's (2020) four-step approach to interpreting visual data. We found the four steps in Pritchard's (2020) approach—readiness, recognition, refinement, and reflection—helpful in illuminating the inherently ideological nature of gendered entrepreneurship, as seen through its construction in language, other forms of representation, and in manifestations of social practices and institutions. The first stage of this analysis—readiness—involves preparing for an analytic move to question what lies beneath the surface of the film (Pritchard, 2020; Van Leeuwen, 2005) through discussion of the film alongside our research questions and theoretical framework. We followed Van Leeuwen's (2005) instruction to focus on the visible and to consider how the scenes we felt particularly exemplified gendered entrepreneurship might be interpreted, as well as considering the wider significance of these interpretations. During recognition, we reflected on each scene that we had identified and discussed earlier in our analysis and considered thematic connections and linkages between them. We discussed commonalities and unique elements of scenes in relation to broader literature on gender performances and entrepreneurship (e.g., Lewis, 2014) and developed analytic notes that captured understandings and further themes and questions as they arose. Refinement entailed storyboarding the elements of our analysis developed in prior stages and uniting themes we had identified into an initial overall interpretation. For example, from this stage of analysis, we proposed three key sub-genres of gender performance that we argue were used in *Joy* to subvert stereotypical expectations about women's entrepreneurship. Finally, we reflected on the outcomes of this analytic process in relation to our research question, especially noting issues and themes that suggested inductive theoretical insights from our data. For example, we came to realize that the film *Joy* appeared to simultaneously do and undo gender in culturally significant ways.

5 | FINDINGS

We present our findings in two sections. In section one, we draw on Butler's (1993, 1997, 1999) theory of gender performativity to provide a brief chronological overview of *Joy* and to critically explore how gender performances in the film serve to paradoxically reinforce and subvert gendered expectations about entrepreneurship. The gender performances in *Joy* reflect the cultural context within which the film embeds itself, whereby postfeminist values, such as, agency, self-determination, and economic choice (see Lewis, 2014) become entangled with the neo-conservative belief in the intrinsic link between women, domesticity, and domestic labor. In section two, we present our thematic findings to propose three sub-genres of gender performance that serve to naturalize Joy's entrepreneurial success by playfully parodying and subverting stereotypical expectations about gender and entrepreneurship. These findings echo Butler (1997, 2004) and Pullen and Rhodes' (2013) theorization of how gender performances entailing humor, especially parody, are powerful in their capacity to do and undo gender, thus serving to crystalize and destabilize those norms. We also compare these findings with Lewis's (2014) understanding of entrepreneurial femininities to explore the ways in which postfeminist discursive formations are apparent in *Joy*. First, we show how familial and fairytale-like scenes are used in *Joy* to depict *exaggerated femininities* that simultaneously reinforce and ridicule the notion that women's entrepreneurial intentions and inventions are peculiarly domestic. Second, we share how the character Joy deploys *instrumental masculinities* in her speech, behaviors, and dress at key junctures in the film where her gender is presented as a barrier to entrepreneurship. Third, we demonstrate how *situational gender (in)congruity*—involving the comedic reversal of expectations through gender-based comparison—is used in *Joy* to explain the ways in which femininity shapes Joy's entrepreneurial success.

Throughout the findings, text depicted in quotation marks are indicative quotations transcribed from the film (audio data), and text in squared brackets captures scene description and directions (visual data).

5.1 | Gender performance and performativity in *Joy*

Joy is a film about entrepreneurship that simultaneously subverts, perpetuates, and even exaggerates the existing binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine, even if it does so in highly ironic and stylized ways. The focus of the film is primarily on Joy's first successful entrepreneurial invention, the self-wringing Miracle Mop, which

metonymically stands for all of women's unpaid labor in the domestic sphere (Muntean & Özkazanç-Pan, 2015): cleaning and child-care, caring responsibilities, house repairs, and house-related administration, such as paying bills. *Joy* covers a selection of major episodes across Joy's entrepreneurial journey from ideation through to commercialization.

In scenes from Joy's childhood, she is represented as inventive. In one scene, Joy reminisces that she invented a self-release dog collar in high school but could not access the support needed to get a patent [repeated as a refrain in later scenes]. In another, Joy is also represented as rejecting the rags-to-riches Cinderella story whereby women succeed through marriage, saying, "I don't need a prince. This is a special power. I don't need a prince." In a later scene, we find a slightly older Joy (although still depicted as youthful) as the sole earner in a household which is home to four generations of her family. Joy's work life is depicted as demanding and unsatisfying, as shown by Joy's facial expressions as she works at an airline check-in desk:

> [Joy is wearing a feminine uniform and has dark circles beneath her eyes depicting tiredness]
> [Looking at Joy's name badge] an unnamed customer remarks "you don't look very joyous to me today"
> [Joy grimaces]
> Joy's manager: "There's going to be some cutbacks."

One reading of this scene is that Joy is pushed from the traditional labor market and is driven to pursue entrepreneurship through necessity (McAdam, 2012). This contrasts with the postfeminist narrative of the agentic choice to retreat to the home whereby the bringing together of motherhood and entrepreneurialism can reconcile the tensions of family and economic life (Lewis, 2014; Lewis et al., 2017).

As the film progresses, we see how Joy comes to create The Miracle Mop. A mop which at the time was unique because of its self-wringing design and washable mophead. Cleaning is, typically, a signifier of women's unpaid work (Ozkazanc-Pan & Pullen, 2021) and, in the film, the invention of the Miracle Mop is depicted as stemming from an episode of "gender socialization" (Phillips & Knowles, 2012) whereby Joy makes her discovery after cleaning up broken glasses and red wine.

> [Joy and her family are on a sailing boat]
> Father's girlfriend: "Sailing in the winter is the best comparison to life in business."
> [A bottle of red wine gets broken. Joy cleans up the mess with a mop. As she does so, she cuts her hands]
> Joy: "I don't want to work anything out. I just want a nice dumb sleep."

Joy's initial gender performances (caring, cleaning) suggest the womanliness of her invention (the mop) and her potential entrepreneurial positioning as "the mumpreneurs" (Lewis, 2014, p. 1855).

Next, with Joy seeking investment to produce her product, we start to see blurring between the femininity of Joy's invention (Bennett & Dann, 2000) and the stereotypically masculine expectations of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006). Joy stands in her father's office at the auto garage facing her father and his new girlfriend, her half-sister, her friend, her former husband, and her daughter. One reading of this scene is that the film's narrative emphasizes happenstance and family loyalty (Bjursell & Melin, 2011), which are often seen as key resources for women entrepreneurs. After the pitch, her audience is unconvinced, with her father's partner stating that "the only thing we see is crayon drawings. We can't make heads or tails of." In a further scene, Joy shows her family the prototype mop and again asks for investment leading to the following dialog:

> Father's girlfriend: "You are in a room and there is a gun on the table. And the only other person in the room is an adversary in commerce. Only one of you can prevail. You have to protect the business and Maurice's money. Do you pick-up the gun?"
> Joy: "That's a very strange question."
> Father's girlfriend: "there is nothing strange about me."
> Joy: [pause] "I pick up the gun."

The "gun" is a repeated gendered trope used ironically throughout *Joy* as a metaphor for demonstrating the masculinity required to be a successful entrepreneur (Ettl & Welter, 2010; Welter & Smallbone, 2008). We see Joy performing behaviors (*welding the mop*) and using language (*I pick up the gun*) associated with masculinity to become more entrepreneur-like. In this sense, Joy begins to resist the gendered expectation to enact a feminized version of entrepreneurship despite the femininity of her invention (Lewis, 2014) and instead (in some contexts) perform behaviors more stereotypically associated with male entrepreneurs (Ahl, 2006). One interpretation is that the role norms associated with entrepreneurship are portrayed as trumping the culturally acceptable forms of "maternal" entrepreneurial femininity (Lewis, 2014; Phillips & Knowles, 2012), suggesting that Joy's performances as an entrepreneur are, at times, depicted as more culturally salient than Joy's gender identity.

In further scenes, we continue to see Joy struggling to negotiate (and resist) attempts to trivialize her invention and to render her as a woman performing entrepreneurship in feminized ways (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). The following series of scenes begin to suggest that Joy can proactively deploy (Lewis, 2014) a repertoire of gender performances that can blend masculine and feminine entrepreneurial presentations (Butler, 1993) and behaviors to challenge prevailing assumptions. In the first scene, Joy's ex-husband gets her an opportunity to pitch the Miracle Mop to a television shopping channel (QVC). By the time that Joy begins to perform the Miracle Mop pitch in a boardroom in front of a group of predominately male executives, viewers have already seen her perform the Miracle Mop routine four times, on each occasion, successively refining the performance but also struggling to attract buyers. The Miracle Mop routine involves demonstrating how easy the mop is to use because of its design. For example, you can remove the mop head without touching it.

> [Boardroom at QVC with seated predominantly male executives in formal business attire. Visibly nervous and still wearing her coat, Joy spills water on a shoe belonging to one of the sales team]
> Executives: "Laughter"
> [Joy is on her hands and knees wiping the executive's shoe]
> Joy: "I'm sorry."
> Senior QVC Executive: [to a member of the sales team] "Try out the mop"
> [Male sales team member is unable to work the mop]
> Executives: "Dip it, then pull and twist" comment the executives as they make other suggestive remarks.
> Executives "Pull and twist just like when you're on the road."
> [Joy looks awkward and uncomfortable but remains silent. Joy leaves the boardroom without demonstrating the mop].

Like the women in the novels analyzed by Phillips and Knowles (2012, p. 423), Joy is portrayed as "somehow accidentally straying into masculine territory." The latent misogyny in the room is signaled through phallic humor about how the Miracle Mop is used. In a second scene, Joy gets another opportunity to perform her Miracle Mop routine directly to the male senior executive who comes to understand the potential of the product because of its demonstrability on television. In a third scene, a male presenter is asked to sell the Miracle Mop on the teleshopping channel QVC and becomes the second man in the film not to be able to use the mop. Eventually, a nervous Joy steps in to sell the Miracle Mop on television, and a combination of feminine cultural capital (Gehman & Soublière, 2017) and comfort with domestic tasks (Phillips & Knowles, 2012) sets the scene for Joy's entrepreneurial success.

5.2 | Exaggerated femininities, instrumental masculinities, and gender (in)congruity

In this section, we unpack key themes from our inductive data analysis to propose three sub-genres of gender performance which draw upon aspects of parody (Butler, 1997, 2004; Pullen & Rhodes, 2013) to subvert stereotypical

expectations of women entrepreneurs. These findings are important because they extend Butler's (1997, 2004) observation that gender performances are only effective in unsettling gender norms if they are perceived as parodies rather than failed performances (see Pullen & Rhodes, 2013).

5.2.1 | Exaggerated femininities

Familial and fairytale-like scenes are used in *Joy* to depict exaggerated femininities that simultaneously reinforce and subvert the idea that Joy's entrepreneurship is constrained by her gender. Exaggeration features prominently as a performative device in *Joy* to paradoxically signify both a reinforcement and critique of gendered expectations about Joy's entrepreneurship. Exaggeration—by playing with heightened femininity in the context of entrepreneurship—therefore presents an opportunity for the film to denaturalize gendered stereotypes and expectations (Butler, 1999; Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). For example, in the early stages of Joy's entrepreneurial ideation, she is found sketching her idea in her child's bedroom.

> [Joy is shown sitting at a child's table in a child's bedroom with her bandaged right hand, her left hand makes big simple loops on a piece of blank white paper with a purple crayon]
>
> [Camera changes angle to focus on Joy's face. Joy's tongue briefly sticks out of her mouth in a childlike gesture of concentration]
>
> [Wider shot]
>
> [Joy is kneeling at the desk, not sitting. Joy pulls and pushes at the loops in the doll's hair as if she is playing]

Sewing, like cleaning, is frequently regarded as a female activity (Rippin, 2007). In this scene, Joy's position is doubly subordinated as she is aligned with the young female child. This scene employs exaggeration by depicting Joy, and Joy's nascent entrepreneurial activity, as childlike. In a later scene, following Joy's initial failure to communicate the concept of the mop to her family members, Joy returns to her child's bedroom to further develop her product concept. In this very short scene in her young daughter's bedroom, the women (including Joy, her grandmother, and 5-year-old daughter) drink from cups belonging to a doll's tea set. This scene deploys exaggeration by situating Joy's inventive process within a childlike situational, linguistic and spatial context, yet it also implicitly ridicules gendered assumptions regarding women's entrepreneurial process. These scenes are reminiscent of Bjursell and Melin's (2011) focus on the world of children's literature and child heroines of fantasy novels in the context of women's economic activity. While these scenes could be interpreted as trivializing of Joy's process of invention, they are such an exaggerated version of "maternal femininity" (Lewis, 2014, p. 1855) that they begin to challenge the prevailing assumptions about gendered norms in entrepreneurship. First, exaggerated femininity resists the idea that entrepreneurial ideation is associated with hegemonically masculine role norms (Butler, 1999). Second, the degree of absurdity in the exaggeration challenges the audience to consider the stereotypical views that they hold about women entrepreneurs. Third, Joy models successful entrepreneurship to her young daughter, showing that feminine entrepreneurial processes (creativity, frugality) can be mobilized toward traditionally masculine entrepreneurial outcomes (sales, economic success).

5.2.2 | Instrumental masculinities

At key moments in the film when Joy's gender—specifically her femininity—is presented as a barrier to her entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006), she instrumentally deploys masculine norms (Butler, 1999) in her speech, behaviors, and dress. Unlike Lewis's (2014, p. 1852) category of "individualized entrepreneurial femininity"—founded on gender-neutrality and equal opportunity—Joy is frequently confronted by the idea that successful entrepreneurship (her father, the QVC executives) is male (Mirchandani, 1999). Throughout the film, Joy performs a range of behaviors more frequently associated with male entrepreneurs, for instance, she takes a financial risk when she accepts an order to produce 50,000 mops. She demonstrates physical courage in her confrontation with a factory owner in California, and she displays a willingness to take personal risks when confronting a lawyer in Dallas. Throughout this process, Joy becomes more traditionally entrepreneur-like, mimicking, albeit somewhat ironically, more masculine codes of dress and behavior (Butler, 1999, 2004). Still later in the film, Joy begins to blend progressively more complex elements associated with male and female gender performances. Aesthetic choice (Lewis, 2014) is one of the principal forms of Joy resisting feminization and adopting behaviors, language, and gestures more typically associated with male entrepreneurs. The strategy is used at key moments in *Joy* to signify when the central character does (or does not change) her appearance to make progress on her entrepreneurial journey. For example, in the following key scene, Joy resists being "made over" to appear more feminine for her first television appearance selling the Miracle Mop.

> [Wardrobe dresses Joy in a short, tight black top and a skirt to show her legs]
> Joy: "Let me make one change."
> [Joy changes back into the black pants and white blouse she arrived in]
> Senior QVC Executive: "What? You undid the whole thing."
> Joy: "This is me [Pause] I wear a blouse and I wear pants. That's who I am."

This scene is a turning point for Joy, whereby she literally undoes "aestheticization" (Van Leeuwen, 2015) by resisting a stereotypical feminine portrayal (Bell & Sinclair, 2016) and remaining true to her own esthetic. Joy's ability to choose her style of self-presentation could be associated with the fluidities afforded by postfeminism (Lewis et al., 2017). Gender in this sense becomes undone through changes to Joy's esthetic presentation. For example, in one scene, Joy dresses in a black leather jacket, a black top, black trousers, and wears heavier make-up and her hair tied back in a ponytail. She drives from the airport to an unfamiliar industrial park to the factory, where her mop parts are manufactured. With the soundtrack now in the rock genre, she presents herself in a more stereotypically masculine way and puts herself at physical risk to meet the factory owner and, in the process, discovers the factory is using her designs as their own. This scene suggests that Joy is now thinking more individualistically about her entrepreneurship and is less concerned with pleasing those around her (see, Lewis, 2014, p. 1853). In another scene, Joy looks into a mirror while cutting her stereotypically feminine long blonde hair shorter with scissors, signifying that Joy means (less feminine) business. In a third scene, (again dressed in black and wearing mirrored sunglasses), Joy sits behind a table in the window of a hotel room and confronts a male fraudster with the illegality of his contract and his position. In these scenes, gender norms are arguably simultaneously cohered to (Butler, 1993) and subverted, as Joy, without reflection, performs more masculine esthetic codes and behaviors in her pursuit of entrepreneurship.

5.2.3 | Situational gender (in)congruity

Gender comparison is frequently used to create a comedic reversal of expectations in *Joy* and to indicate the ways in which feminine and masculine gender performances (Lewis, 2014) shape Joy's entrepreneurial success. One prominent example entails a contrast between Joy's skillful use of the Miracle Mop and an experienced television sales-

man's comedic inability to successfully use the mop. In the first scene, the camera cuts to the mophead cleaning up a spill on the white floor in a demonstration bathroom:

> Joy: "I like that it's plastic because it's so light. In my hands, it's like nothing."
>
> [Camera moves up to QVC executive's face]
>
> Joy: "It's also ten times more absorbent than any other mop on the market."
>
> [Camera continues to focus on QVC executive's face]
>
> Joy: "Why? Because of 300 feet of continuous cotton loop" [pause] "That I looped myself. That is an enormous amount of absorbent cotton" [pause] "On a very small mophead. Now, I'm done with the bathroom [pause] I take this mophead, I put it in the washing machine, it comes out clean like new. You can't do that with any other mop."
>
> Senior QVC Executive: "Stop! Can you make 50,000 of these mops by next week?"

In a later scene, the audience see the first QVC television sales event featuring the Miracle Mop:

> [Dressed in a suit, tie, and white shirt, a male salesman looks out of place in the television kitchen]
>
> Salesman: "Who has a floor or a bathroom?" [Unenthusiastic]. "It's the most exciting new home product in years." [Pause, struggling to use the mop]. "This is a little trickier than it looks." [Pause]. "Well, it's getting my arm wet here". [Salesman struggles to use the mop or detach the mophead]. "Let's see. We've got no sales here" [Pause]. "Is there a call? So, there are no calls."

The salesman's Inability to use the mop on television—presumably due to his lack of domestic experience—leads to no sales. Suggesting a reversal of assumed outcomes, whereby the successful salesman is undone by his inability to perform the Miracle Mop. In contrast to the male salesman's failure, when Joy is asked to sell the Miracle Mop on television despite her nerves, she gives a virtuoso performance of the Mop Routine. This sequence of gender comparisons culminates with Joy repeatedly and effectively demonstrating her Miracle Mop on television, emphasizing once again the gendered nature of Joy's product while also foregrounding male incompetence in the domestic realm. In one sense, stereotypical views of Joy's femininity as involving familial domestic tasks becomes a form of entrepreneurial cultural capital (Gehman & Soublière, 2017; Phillips & Knowles, 2012) and therefore the foundation for Joy's economic success. In effect, a situated form of gender (in)congruity is used to explain and naturalize (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013) Joy's success as a women entrepreneur in 1990s America. By deploying a gender comparison, Joy's success (and the salesman's failure) is depicted as simultaneously congruent with her knowledge of the Miracle Mop and domestic experience and incongruous with her gender.

6 | DISCUSSION

In this paper, we have explored how a woman entrepreneur is represented in film, adding to the growing body of research that illuminates and problematizes aspects of work and organization through the critical analysis of popular cultural artifacts such as films and TV series (Bell & Sinclair, 2016). Like Phillips and Knowles (2012), we find that cultural artifacts provide significant opportunities for doing and undoing gender (Butler, 1993, 1997, 1999). Reflecting the recent multimodal turn in management and organization studies (Höllerer et al., 2019), we find that the audio-visual nature of film renders broader repertoires of gender performance and performativity observable and accessible to analysis. For example, film permits the analysis of spatial, temporal, esthetic, and discursive elements of gender performativity in the complex configurations of visual and audible modes found in the staging of actors and objects, costumes, facial expressions, and vocal expressions. We therefore argue how a successful women entrepreneur is portrayed in a widely viewed film is important, not only because of the potential social effects of under-representation (i.e., reaffirming the maleness of entrepreneurship) but because we believe the shape of the representations available to the audience can influence how women (and others) construe their own entrepreneurial potential.

From our analysis, we make two principal contributions. First, we theorize how the medium of film can simultaneously reinforce and subvert the gendering of entrepreneurial activity. Second, we propose three sub-genres of gender performance—*exaggerated femininities*, *instrumental masculinities*, and *situational gender (in)congruity*—that can serve to subvert gendered expectations of about women's entrepreneurship. We unpack these contributions and their implications in the following sections.

First, drawing on Butler's (1993, 1997, 1999, 2004) theories of gender performativity we critically examined how repeated gender performances reinforced and subverted stereotypical gender expectations about entrepreneurship in the film *Joy*. Butler's (1993, 1999, 2004) concept of gender performativity has been foundational to a considerable body of research concerned with gender in organizations (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013; Rhodes & Pullen, 2011), as well as a more limited body of research on gender and entrepreneurship (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). While recognizing the persistent reality of masculine bias within entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006), we also sought to view entrepreneurship as involving myriad masculine and feminine gender articulations (Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018). We therefore build on Lewis's (2014) critical understanding of postfeminism to theorize a more pluralist view of women's entrepreneurial activity to explain the role of film, and other forms of popular culture, in subverting expectations about culturally acceptable forms of entrepreneurial femininity (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). For example, in *Joy*, we see a woman who can deploy both masculine and feminine codes and behaviors toward their entrepreneurial goals. At the same time, we see that some scenes in *Joy* appear to both (i) simultaneously reinforce and subvert stereotypical gender and (ii) reflect both progressive (feminist) and regressive (neo-conservative) gender regimes (McRobbie, 2009). Arguably, *Joy*, as a contemporary film depicting an earlier time therefore reflects a continued tension in society between the seemingly taken-for-granted status of feminism and the call for a return to more traditional gender roles and regimes (Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009). To some extent, *Joy* is rooted in a liberal individualist tradition (Lewis et al., 2017) which sees overcoming gendered adversity as an individual challenge and by extension entrepreneurial success as an individual achievement as opposed to a feminist endeavor rooted in solidarity (Hemmings, 2012; Vachani and Pullen, 2019). Individualizing, de-contextualizing, and de-politicizing accounts of entrepreneurial success in film are distinctly double-edged. While films like *Joy* provide female role models and recognize the gendered struggle inherent in women's entrepreneurship, they also downplay the impacts of everyday experiences of sexism (Vachani & Pullen, 2019) on entrepreneurial opportunity. At the same time, *Joy* is a revelatory example of a film because it allows the audience to observe the possibility of change in relation to gendered expectations of entrepreneurship, however "informal or imperfect" that change may be (Pullen et al., 2019, p. 6). We, therefore, demonstrate how film can simultaneously do and undo gendered expectations about entrepreneurship through a detailed exploration of the gendered representations of a successful woman entrepreneur on screen.

Second, through our analysis we extend Butler's (1993, 1997) observation toward entrepreneurship to show how gender performances in *Joy* serve to destabilize and subvert gender norms in several unexpected ways. Butler's (1997, 2004) writing suggests that comedic elements in gender performances, including parody, imitation, or mimicry are typically used with the intent to ridicule and challenge by calling into question the naturalness of assumptions regarding gendered expectations and thus can serve to subvert restrictive gender norms (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013; Rhodes & Pullen, 2011; see also Tyler & Cohen, 2008). From our findings, we show how stereotypically gendered expectations are "undone" in *Joy* through a combination of *exaggerated femininities*, *instrumental masculinities*, and *situational gender (in) congruence*. These findings are important because they extend Butler's (1997) observation that gender performances are only effective in unsettling gender norms if they are perceived as parodies rather than failed performances (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). We find that elements of parody—most notably exaggeration, mimicry, and situational reversal—are used to "naturalize" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013) Joy's entrepreneurial success. For example, hyperbolic depictions of femininity in Joy's initial development of the Miracle Mop (dolls, tiny teacups, and crayons) simultaneously speak to gender socialization (Phillips & Knowles, 2012) and to comedically lampoon the idea women's entrepreneurship is so "excessively feminine" (Lewis, 2014, p. 1857). Like Butler (1997), we therefore argue that gender performances entailing humor, especially parody, are powerful in their capacity to subvert taken-for-granted assumptions regarding gender norms, serving to both crystalize and destabilize those gender norms.

Joy, as a widely viewed story, foregrounds at least one version of how a woman entrepreneur's experience is significantly more complex than that of a male entrepreneur, mirroring Lewis's (2014) observation that women's entrepreneur-

ship entails a complex dance of stereotypically masculine and feminine gender performances. The central character is initially portrayed as creative and capable but also as torn between caring responsibilities and work and lacking in traditional entrepreneurial supports. As such, Joy's entrepreneurship is situated as particularly "female." The first part of the film places Joy in home and family settings, and the audience see Joy performing "womanly" tasks (washing, organizing, and cleaning). This set-up in part reflects the lived experience of many women and in part serves to signal how Joy's first-hand experiences and domesticated forms of knowledge led to the invention of the Miracle Mop. The materiality of the mop in Joy is important because of its symbolic association with women's—frequently unpaid—labor and the inability of male characters to perform its function. The film's narrative conveys that only a woman could have invented this mop because only women would be aware of the problems (touching the grimy mop head and sanitizing the mop head) that were addressed by the product (Gehman & Soublière, 2017). While there are hints that the Miracle Mop was just one of many, quite technically sophisticated things, that Joy could invent; the focus on Joy and her Miracle Mop perhaps reinforces the notion that successful women entrepreneurs are women who design products for women and the home (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). This focus perhaps downplays other capabilities and motivations such as ambition, calculation, and goal orientation (Muntean & Özkazanç-Pan, 2015) that Joy may possess. Most products associated with women entrepreneurs in film are also themselves loaded with gendered meaning. Gendered socialization could therefore impact not only women's entrepreneurial ideation (i.e., the products they design) but also on how women's ideas are received by others.

Notably, our analysis suggests that women entrepreneurs need to expend time and energy on navigating others' perceptions of their gender. Analyzing film makes the masculine, and sometimes misogynist, gaze on women's experiences of entrepreneurship visible. For example, the film begins with a scene from a television soap, a screen within a screen, where an ostentatiously dressed woman says "when someone sees a weakness in me. I turn that weakness into a strength." The women's statement is said with conviction but the juxtaposition with her stage clothes, make-up, and styled hair presents as almost comedic. The opening of the film is suggestive of the barriers that women encounter when others perceive their visual representations, hopes, words, and deeds to be incongruent, or to use terms from Bell and Sinclair (2016), when women blur boundaries between passive femininity and aggressive masculinity. How Joy presents herself is a key theme in the film, and she is mainly seen wearing pants and a blouse with light make-up and simple hair. Although notably, she is played by the Hollywood actress Jennifer Lawrence who carries her own esthetic connotations to the role. Joy is also seen rejecting (more feminine) clothing before her first QVC appearance and to wear darker clothes and flat shoes when she is in confrontation with male business adversaries, reflecting a form of the stereotype that when women entrepreneurs "get tough" they do so by presenting a masculine esthetic (Lewis, 2014). Additionally, the close association between the home and the boundaries of women's entrepreneurship in Joy remains both complex and troubling. Women entrepreneurs are caught in the assumption that they are always working a "second shift" Hochschild and Machung (2012) whether they in fact have caring responsibilities or not. As Williams (2001) argues, the "ideal worker" is available full-time and continuously because they have no home or caring responsibilities, and, as such, women entrepreneurs either by fact or association with the home are non-ideal.

Our study has several limitations that could provide the basis for impactful future research. First, our analysis, partly reflecting the necessity borne of there being so few films focusing on women entrepreneurs, is of a single film. Therefore, while our approach is far from unusual in feminist research where close analysis of single films, TV series, and even episodes of TV series, is not uncommon (e.g., Brewis, 1998; Rhodes & Pullen, 2011), our analysis is restricted in relation to some desirable comparative elements. Second, relatedly and regarding our theoretical intent to illuminate the gendered doing of entrepreneurship, our focus on one woman entrepreneur is necessarily restricted in its capacity to explore the doing of gender and entrepreneurship among non-white, non-binary, or non-heterosexual entrepreneurs. Third, Joy examines gendered entrepreneurship within a specific product category—that of products highly proximate to the gendered expectations of women entrepreneurs. This necessarily constrains the spectrum of gender performativity encompassed in our analysis, something that future research could address.

Building on these observations, we see several important opportunities for future research. Extending analysis of performances of gendered entrepreneurship to encompass a wider range of contexts would likely highlight additional ways in which gender is continuously done and undone through performance. Including contexts such as those in the

global south, those found in economic and social contexts other than 21st century capitalism (collectivist, communist, post-communist) would be especially exciting. As important, analyses of gendered entrepreneurship in the contemporary digital economy would be especially valuable in showcasing how shifting technological and industrial paradigms shape opportunities for gender performance in entrepreneurship. We critiqued prior literature for its reductive tendency to equate gender with sex and to simply document sex-based differences in entrepreneurial appetite, experience, and behavior. Understanding the full variety of gender performance in entrepreneurship requires source materials and research that includes non-binary and queer protagonists and analysis of the forms of gendered performance that emerge in such circumstances. Research should also seek to encompass gendered performances of entrepreneurship in non-stereotypical contexts—for example, analyses of women entrepreneurs in stereotypically masculine products and sectors (e.g., finance, IT, construction), of men entrepreneurs in stereotypically feminine products and sectors (e.g., fashion, household products), and non-binary entrepreneurs in both settings.

7 | CONCLUSION

This study is centered on the feminist analysis of film, as an important medium of popular culture, to observe gender performances (Butler, 1993, 1997, 1999) as they unfold across time and space in relation to entrepreneurship. Widely shared stories—such as *Joy*—are powerful sites of cultural transmission that can help us to recognize, critique, and subvert assumptions regarding the gendering of many aspects of social, economic, and political life (Rhodes & Pullen, 2011). How entrepreneurship is depicted in film therefore matters greatly for policy and practice because artifacts of popular culture have the capacity to not only reinforce expectations about how gender shapes entrepreneurial opportunity and experience but also to reveal how stereotypical masculine and feminine expectations can be subverted (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). From a societal standpoint, there is the potential for popular culture to play a socio-political role by reflecting a more complex and rich narrative of women's entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006). Yet, as our analysis foregrounds, undoing gendered expectations can be profoundly effortful and challenging at the level of the individual entrepreneur. Like Lewis (2014), we suggest that women entrepreneurs are expected to simultaneously juggle the doing of both masculinity and femininity while avoiding being either overly feminine or overly masculine in their entrepreneurial performances. Women entrepreneurs, like Joy, therefore, perhaps not only face the "double entanglement" between the (ostensibly) accepted status of feminism and forces seeking to return them to traditional gender relations (Lewis, 2014; McRobbie, 2009) but also a third layer of entanglement involving the significant amount of additional physical and emotional labor required to subvert and challenge gendered expectations. Whereas much of the emphasis in supporting entrepreneurs lies with providing skills support, access to finance, and other practical assistance, our analysis suggests that additional support to help women and non-binary entrepreneurs to see alternatively gendered entrepreneurial performances might be especially impactful. Who appears on screen is a profoundly political activity (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013), and one that would be advanced by film and television productions showcasing more diverse entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial experiences.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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ENDNOTE
[1] In this paper, we distinguish the film *Joy* from its main protagonist Joy by the use of italics. Notably, Joy is only referred to by her first name in the film, and as such, we refer to the "real" person as Joy Mangano.

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