Evolving Entrepreneurial Identities: An Exploratory Study

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.

5. The word count of the thesis is 74,920.

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is a diverse and complex phenomenon. However, despite substantial developments in the field, dominant approaches to entrepreneurship research are criticised for failing to question taken-for-granted assumptions about both the entrepreneurial actor and the process of entrepreneurship. This has resulted in a narrow view of entrepreneurship which fails to reflect the heterogeneity of the phenomenon and the individuals who undertake it.

Through an exploration of the experiences of nascent entrepreneurs, the study builds upon the extant entrepreneurship literature by addressing the misalignment between entrepreneurship research and observations of entrepreneurship. The study aims to gain insights into the phenomenon of nascent entrepreneurship from the perspectives of the individuals who enact it. The study uses interpretative phenomenological analysis to gain an understanding of what it means to be an entrepreneur. The research draws upon data captured from 21 in-depth interviews with nascent entrepreneurs to develop three key themes which are discussed in relation to the extant entrepreneurship literature: entrepreneurial motivations and identity; entrepreneurial identity formation and perseverance; identity crafting, reconciliation and conflict.

The findings contribute to theoretical understandings within the broader entrepreneurship literature by challenging the stereotypical view of the economically motivated lone wolf entrepreneur and presenting a nuanced picture of entrepreneurship as a means of identity fulfilment. The study contributes to the entrepreneurial identity literature by providing an empirical basis for dynamic entrepreneurial identity formation through action (enactment of the entrepreneurial role), interaction (with networks and start-up communities) and reflection. This challenges conceptualisations of both static and discursively imposed entrepreneurial identities. The findings present a nuanced illustration of entrepreneurial identity formation by emphasising the interrelationships between entrepreneurial passion, self-efficacy and identity. The study contributes to the entrepreneurial motivations literature by showing the motivational influence of non-entrepreneurial identities, non-entrepreneurial passions and possible future selves. The findings contribute to the

entrepreneurial identity literature by demonstrating the importance of entrepreneurial identity formation and reconciliation with multiple personal and socially ascribed identities in order to commit to the entrepreneurial role and persevere with entrepreneurial endeavours. The study has practical and policy implications including the facilitation of opportunities for identity evolution and an emphasis on identity fulfilment and authenticity.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1   Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a diverse and complex phenomenon (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012). However, within the field, scholars have expressed concerns about the narrow conceptualisation of both the process of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur as an actor (Ogbor, 2000; Welter, Baker, Audretsch, & Gartner, 2017). Therefore, despite substantial theoretical developments, calls have been made for studies to take a broader and more inclusive view of what constitutes entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial actor (Galloway, Kapasi, & Wimalasena, 2019; Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012; Welter et al., 2017).

In the following thesis, entitled *Evolving Entrepreneurial Identities: An Exploratory Study*, I describe how I develop fine-grained insights into the experience of the nascent entrepreneurs by suspending a priori theoretical propositions in order to explore the phenomenon of nascent entrepreneurship from the perspectives of individuals who enact entrepreneurial roles. Therefore, in responding to calls for research into entrepreneurial motivations (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018; Rindova et al., 2009), entrepreneurial identity formation (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) and the interplay between identities (Warren, 2004), I argue that nascent entrepreneurship can be understood in terms of identity fulfilment, dynamic identity formation and identity reconciliation. My findings thereby offer a nuanced understanding of how both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial identities are central to entrepreneurship and how the phenomenon is experienced by entrepreneurs. By adopting an exploratory, participant-led approach I enable participants to discuss the role of non-entrepreneurial identities (characterised by creativity, passions and values) in their entrepreneurial endeavours thereby answering calls for researchers to pay attention to both personal values (Rindova et al., 2009), and the role of other identity types in entrepreneurship (Wry & York, 2017).

Nascent entrepreneurship research overcomes the under-coverage of the smallest and newer ventures (Davidsson, 2006). Therefore my study also addresses the misalignment between entrepreneurship research and its tendency to focus on a subset of high growth businesses (Galloway et al., 2019; Rindova et al., 2009; Welter et

al., 2017), and empirical observations of "everyday" entrepreneurship (Welter et al., 2017 p.313) by answering calls for researchers to be more expansive and inclusive in their approach (Rehn & Taalas, 2004; Welter et al., 2017). Through focusing on student and graduate nascent entrepreneurs, the empirical work presents insights from micro-businesses and self-employment (which account for the bulk of all venturing in most developed countries) (Galloway et al., 2019; Welter et al., 2017), thereby building on the theoretical understanding of both the phenomenon of entrepreneurship and the conceptualisation of the entrepreneurial actor (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012; Welter et al., 2017). The findings, therefore, challenge the stereotypical depiction of the entrepreneur as a financially motivated individualistic, hero character (Ahl, 2006; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; Ogbor, 2000) and offer a situated understanding of nascent entrepreneurship by engaging with its inherent ambiguities and tensions (Bruyat & Julien, 2001; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012; Welter, 2011; Zahra, Wright, & Abdelgawad, 2014).

1.1   Background to the study

Since the 1980s, UK governments have treated entrepreneurship as the key to thriving in a competitive and complex global environment (Gibb, 2012; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012). In the same time period, enterprise culture has become a dominant feature of political discourses on both sides of the political spectrum (Curran, 2015). In the UK, the Thatcher government promoted an individualistic, agentic model of enterprise that emphasised freedom, individualism and autonomy (Burrows, 2015; Fournier & Grey, 1999; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers, & Gartner, 2012). As a result, entrepreneurship, as well as being understood as a desired organisational form, began to represent individual characteristics such as a willingness to take risks and pursue goals (du Gay, 1996).

The pervasiveness of the concept of entrepreneurship as an important means of stimulating the economy by creating wealth and employment (Acs, Desai, & Hessels, 2008; Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018; Williams & Vorley, 2015) is reflected by the promotion of entrepreneurship by governments and policy makers in many countries as a means of economic development (Greene & Saridakis, 2007; Scott & Twomey, 1988). The National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (2008) indicates that

governments are seeking to develop entrepreneurial economies involving competitiveness, growth, innovation and creativity by encouraging entrepreneurial graduates and the UK government has stressed the importance of enhancing the entrepreneurial capabilities of university educators and students (Rosa, 2003).

Entrepreneurship research has grown dramatically in volume in the last thirty years (Blackburn & Kovalainen, 2009; Ferreira, Fernandes, & Kraus, 2019). In this time the field has made major advances in terms of ensuring relevance and rigour (Zahra et al., 2014). A debt is acknowledged to pioneering studies of entrepreneurship which documented and reported key success factors in entrepreneurship in terms of opportunity recognition, personality types and the ability to assemble resources (Low & MacMillan, 1988). Socio-cultural studies linked entrepreneurship to the wider culture, and network theories refined attempts to place the entrepreneur within the social context (Low & MacMillan, 1988). Moving from individual-level analysis to firm-level analysis, process theories shed light on the entrepreneurial behaviours of organisations (Randerson, 2016). In addition, nascent entrepreneurship research, a term that first emerged in the 1990s (Davidsson, 2006), has allowed for an exploration of new venture creation because of its focus on individual, processual and environmental characteristics regardless of the subsequent success or failure of the venture (Johnson, Parker, & Wijbenga, 2006) thereby overcoming criticisms of start-up and hindsight bias (Davidsson, 2006).

However, despite the boom in entrepreneurship research leading to a more nuanced view of the phenomenon (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018), there is still potential in the field for further theory development (Blackburn & Kovalainen, 2009; Galloway et al., 2019). In particular, one critique of entrepreneurship research focuses on the occurrence of myths and taken-for-granted assumptions within the field (Blackburn & Kovalainen, 2009; Gibb, 2012). Dominant approaches to entrepreneurship research are criticised for failing to question assumptions about the phenomenon and the entrepreneurial actor (Galloway, Kapasi, & Wimalasena, 2019; Ogbor, 2000; Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers, Gartner, 2012). This has resulted in a narrow view of entrepreneurship which fails to reflect the heterogeneity the phenomenon and the

actors who undertake it (Lerner, Hunt, & Dimov, 2018; Welter, Baker, Audretsch, & Gartner, 2017).

Entrepreneurship is an elusive concept (Williams & Williams, 2014) and agreement of the definition of the terms 'entrepreneur' and 'entrepreneurship' has not been attained (Bruyat & Julien, 2001; Gartner, 1990). Typically the field of nascent entrepreneurship focuses on the entrepreneur, defined as someone actively involved in the creation of a new business, including the individual or environmental characteristics which lead to subsequent success or failure (Johnson et al., 2006; Reynolds, 2009). Within the field 'nascent' can also refer to the early stages of starting a business which takes into account the processual nature of new venture creation (Lichtenstein, Carter, Dooley, & Gartner, 2007). Nascent entrepreneurship is a temporary state (Davidsson, 2006) therefore, following Lundqvist, Middleton, & Nowell, 2015,in considering the definition of nascent entrepreneurship for the purposes of this exploratory study, an inclusive definition will be adopted which includes both the early stage of the venture and individual's limited level of entrepreneurial experience. Therefore my definition conceptualises entrepreneurship as a process carried out by an individual or group of individuals undertaking activities of self-employment, new venture creation or the development of a new enterprise within an existing organisation. By adopting this definition, I aim to avoid the hierarchical dichotomies apparent in definitions that distinguish between entrepreneurship and small business ownership which result in privileging some voices over others (Ogbor, 2000; Welter et al., 2017).

Entrepreneurship research typically draws on concepts which prioritise economic measures (Galloway et al., 2019; O'Rourke, 2014) and the field of nascent entrepreneurship, with its search for explanations for differing start-up rates between countries, follows this pattern (Frederic Delmar & Davidsson, 2000). Furthermore, the pervasive use of human population surveys in the field of nascent entrepreneurship to estimate the prevalence of venture start-up (Reynolds, 2009) fails to consider the antecedents to new venture creation activities (Hopp & Sonderegger, 2015). Therefore, despite substantial developments in the field, it is still dominated by the language and approaches of economics resulting in a narrow perspective of what

entrepreneurship entails and who the entrepreneur is (Galloway et al., 2019; O'Rourke, 2014). Neoliberal policy discourses glorify entrepreneurship (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012) however in the media the phenomenon is portrayed as both positive (beneficial for the economy) or negative (risky and prone to failure) (Atherton, 2004). The heroic qualities of the entrepreneur (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007) are emphasised by media portrayals and entrepreneurs are ascribed celebrity status as a result of their entrepreneurial endeavours (Welter, Baker, Audretsch & Gartner, 2017). Clearly, therefore, considerations of entrepreneurship are often value-driven and dependent on the stance of the commentator (Atherton, 2004). For this reason, I reflexively engage with my research approach and research process in order to surface my assumptions about the phenomenon.

The mismatch between entrepreneurship research and empirical observations of entrepreneurship has been highlighted by Galloway et al. (2019) and the idea for this research project echoes this concern. It was born out of (what felt to me like) a similar misalignment between the conceptualisation of the entrepreneur as an individual who rationally assesses the profitability of opportunities before assuming the risk of starting a business (Hatt, 2018; Lerner et al., 2018) and my observations of the entrepreneurs that I came into contact with in my day to day life, in my role as a university Research Associate, where I worked with owner-managed micro-businesses and SMEs on small scale consultancy projects. I was aware of the conceptualisation of the entrepreneur in the literature as well as the stereotypical characterisation of the entrepreneur in the media and this image also felt unrepresentative of my entrepreneurial acquaintances.

1.2   Aim and objectives of the study

The overarching aim of the study was to generate insights into entrepreneurship by exploring the phenomenon from the perspective of nascent entrepreneurs, defined both in terms of their lack of prior entrepreneurial experience as well as the early stages of the venture (Lunqvist et al, 2015). I felt that entrepreneurship research was traditionally approached in ways that did not always embrace the heterogeneity of the phenomenon. Traditional approaches tend to value a minority of high growth ventures over the diverse majority and therefore, in order to achieve a broad understanding of

entrepreneurship which would resonate with entrepreneurs, I aimed to focus the research on "everyday entrepreneurship" (Welter et al., 2017, p. 313). Entrepreneurship literature has been criticised for relying on taken-for-granted assumptions (Gibb, 2012; Leitch, Hill, & Neergaard, 2010) and the enduring treatment of all entrepreneurs as members of a homogeneous group (Mitchell, Busenitz, Morse, & Smith, 2002). By adopting an interpretative phenomenological approach, I aimed to learn about what it means to be a nascent entrepreneur from the perspective of individuals who enact entrepreneurial roles. By focusing on aspects of entrepreneurship that were meaningful to entrepreneurs rather than entrepreneurship scholars, I aimed to minimise the influence of orthodox assumptions.

Therefore the aim of the study is to:

'Explore nascent entrepreneurs' understanding of their entrepreneurial experiences'

Starting with a deliberately broad research aim allowed me to explore the participants' own accounts of nascent entrepreneurship without directing them to specific aspects of their experiences. However, through my reflexive engagement with the interview process and data, I was able to elaborate research objectives to further explore entrepreneurship from the participants' perspectives. These objectives are to:

1. Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial motivations
2. Gain insights into the process of entrepreneurial identity formation
3. Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial perseverance

In the Methodology Chapter I explain how the research aims and objectives underpin the analytical process.

1.3   Approach

I have taken an interpretative phenomenological approach in order to access participants' perspectives on their experience of entrepreneurship. Within my interpretation, I engage in a double hermeneutic and recognise that any understanding gained from the research is my interpretation of the participants' interpretations. My

theoretical perspective is grounded in phenomenology which emphasises an exploration of the nature of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002) therefore I aim to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship as experienced at first hand by the participants in my study.

In line with my philosophical commitments, I have adopted the qualitative methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This methodological approach focuses on the experiential aspects of a phenomenon and allows me to explore how individual participants relate to their specific experience of entrepreneurship (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). With this in mind, I carry out in-depth interviews which are loosely structured and allow participants to discuss the topics that are relevant to them. The analysis of the data is underpinned by idiographic commitments resulting in each transcript being analysed and a participant narrative account being written for each participant once all the interviews had taken place and prior to meta-level analysis. The resulting data analysis process was designed to make sense of the data in ways that would facilitate understanding of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The narrow conceptualisation of entrepreneurship is due, at least in part, to the dominant positivist stance that favours quantitative methods in order to seek generalizable descriptions and statistical analysis (Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007). Therefore, my methodological approach aims to expand and contextualise understandings of the broader phenomenon of entrepreneurship by going beyond description at a generalizable level. Entrepreneurship is a social undertaking (Sarason, Dean, & Dillard, 2006) and gaining a situated understanding of the phenomenon in its natural setting generates meaningful insights at the level of lived experience.

The sample for the study consisted of student and recent graduate entrepreneurs, as a means to access and understand nascent entrepreneurship in terms of both the nascent entrepreneurial actor and their developing entrepreneurial experience and the early stages of venture creation (Lundqvist et al., 2015). The nature of my student and recent graduate ventures resemble Welter et al.'s (2017, p. 313) "everyday" entrepreneurship in that the sample is made up of micro and non-employing businesses. Given that entrepreneurship research tends to focus on high growth

technology businesses (Galloway et al., 2019; Welter et al., 2017), I wondered if this could be due to a lack of understanding amongst policy makers of under researched micro-businesses? (Gherhes, Williams, Vorley, & Vasconcelos, 2016). Therefore, my approach generates meaningful insights which are of theoretical relevance to the broader field of entrepreneurship research (Carter, 2007) because I explore the complexities and ambiguities inherent in nascent entrepreneurship (Carter, 2007; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers, Gartner, 2012).

The dominant theme to emerge from the analysis of the in-depth interviews is identity. Given free rein within the conversation, the analysis highlighted how participants talked about their entrepreneurial endeavours in relation to the multiple identities that made up their sense of self. Discussions of identity, therefore, were not restricted to the entrepreneurial identity but included other non-entrepreneurial identities and the role these played prior to and after start-up. This holistic approach enabled participants to link their venture to their identities in a number of ways including the motivation to embark on an entrepreneurial career and the motivation to persevere with their endeavours after start-up. They also discussed conflicting feelings about their emerging entrepreneurial identity and considered the label 'entrepreneur' in relation to their evolving sense of self.

The study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by presenting a view of the entrepreneurial actor and the entrepreneurial phenomenon which challenges stereotypical depictions in the field. The findings contribute to the entrepreneurial identity literature by challenging static and discursively produced conceptualisations of entrepreneurial identity and instead illustrating how entrepreneurial identities are dynamically formed through the enactment of the entrepreneurial role as well as interaction with entrepreneurial communities and networks. The study shows how nascent entrepreneurs craft their entrepreneurial identity in relation to the socially ascribed entrepreneurial identity as well as the many other identities that make up their sense of self. Entrepreneurial identity formation and reconciliation is shown to play a crucial part in enabling the nascent entrepreneur to commit to the entrepreneurial role and persevere with their endeavours. A further contribution is made by highlighting the interrelationships between entrepreneurial identity

formation, entrepreneurial passion and self-efficacy. By linking entrepreneurial identity formation and reconciliation to entrepreneurial perseverance the study challenges the entrepreneurial motivations literature which typically conflates the motivation to start a venture with the motivation to persevere. The study contributes to the entrepreneurial motivations literature by providing an empirical basis for the motivational potential of non-entrepreneurial identities and passions as participants seek identity fulfilment through entrepreneurship.

1.4   Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a review of the entrepreneurship literature that centres on exploring the phenomenon of entrepreneurship from a range of academic perspectives. The chapter considers the origins of the current conceptualisation of the entrepreneur by critiquing literature and concepts from economics, behavioural psychology and processual perspectives of entrepreneurship as well as exploring the entrepreneurial motivations and entrepreneurial passion literature. The chapter concludes with a critical review of the entrepreneurial identity literature, exploring the conceptualisation of entrepreneurial identity as a static entity which is prerequisite to new venture creation as well as notions of discursive and narrative entrepreneurial identity formation

Chapter 3 details the methodological approach to the study, developed in response to my critique of the dominant approach to entrepreneurship research which I argue has resulted in the narrow conceptualisation of the phenomenon. The philosophical commitments which underpin the study are explored and the resulting methodological goals are discussed. I explain my methodological choice of adopting interpretative phenomenological analysis to operationalise my philosophical commitments and discuss both data collection in the form of in-depth interviews and data analysis in detail. Research ethics are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 outlines the research findings. I use excerpts from the interview transcripts to illustrate how participants were motivated to start a venture as a result of a desire to fulfil both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial identities. I use representative vignettes to illustrate how participants craft and form entrepreneurial identities through their enactment of the entrepreneurial activities and their immersion in

entrepreneurial communities. I also use vignettes to discuss how the interplay of evolving identities can cause conflict for some participants. I show how some participants have to work to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with the other identities that make up their overall sense of self. If unsuccessful they question their commitment to the venture and start to envision alternative futures.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the extant entrepreneurship literature. My study challenges the stereotypical representation of the economically motivated lone wolf entrepreneur. Conceptualised this way the entrepreneurial identity is viewed as a static trait which drives entrepreneurial action. My study contributes to the entrepreneurial identity literature by presenting a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial identity formation based on action and interaction.

By demonstrating how entrepreneurs have agency in the crafting of their entrepreneurial identity my study challenges the notion that entrepreneurs reproduce representations from enterprise discourse. I broaden the current understanding of identity conflict by linking it to other (personal) identities that make up the sense of self as well as the social identity of the entrepreneur. Therefore I add to the currently limited discussion regarding how representations of entrepreneurship may act as a barrier to entrepreneurial careers. My study supports the view that motivations can change over time and therefore I challenge approaches that seek to understand entrepreneurial perseverance by examining start-up motivations. I challenge dichotomous representations of entrepreneurial motivations by showing how identity can influence the start-up decision. My study expands the understanding of the impact that identity can have on entrepreneurial action by demonstrating how non-entrepreneurial identities (characterised by creativity, passion and values) can influence the start-up decision.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by considering how the study has met its aim and objectives. Each research objective is considered in turn and the theoretical contributions of the thesis are discussed in detail. The practical implications of the study for nascent entrepreneurs are considered and the policy implications for start-up supports and educators are discussed in detail. Finally, I consider the limitations of the research and indicate areas for future study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial experience

What does it mean to be an entrepreneur? The following chapter will consider how this question has been addressed in the entrepreneurship literature. It starts with an examination of the Western entrepreneurship discourse embodied by the cultural stereotype of the entrepreneur. Given that the stereotype presents a ready-made entrepreneur the transition into entrepreneurship for entrepreneurs is obscured and this has implications for nascent entrepreneurs. Therefore the impact of this stereotypical depiction on aspiring entrepreneurs will be considered. This is followed by an examination of the assumptions that underpin entrepreneurship research which have led to the dominant conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship will be explored from a range of different academic and historical perspectives and an argument will be made in favour of a research approach that considers nascent entrepreneurs' motivations and the underlying identities that influence entrepreneurial behaviour prior to start-up and as the venture begins to establish itself.

The entrepreneurial identity literature will be explored in detail including the link between identity, motivations and opportunity recognition, as well as the role entrepreneurial identities play, how they are formed and how they interact with other identities to the benefit or detriment of the entrepreneurial experience. Finally, it will be argued that the field of entrepreneurship research would benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial experience by considering the whole person and the plurality of their identities (Watson, 2009) including the circumstances prior to new venture creation and the transition into entrepreneurship.

2.1 What does it mean to be an entrepreneur?

In Western and European discourse and popular culture representations of the entrepreneur tend to be caricatured and there is a lack of nuanced insights into their experiences (Atherton, 2004; Down & Warren, 2008; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007). The entrepreneur is often conceptualised as a fully formed, individualistic (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007) white male hero (Ahl, 2006; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Gill, 2017; Ogbor, 2000) leading a high

growth, high turnover venture (Treanor, Jones, & Marlow, 2020). Although this portrayal has been criticised as highly romanticised (Acs & Audretsch, 2003) it is still influential in the contemporary entrepreneurship literature (Down, 2010). Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson (2007 p. 341) suggest that the reason for this is that entrepreneurship is a complex socio-economic process and therefore the role of the myth is a convenience, providing "an expedient human identity" for researchers, educators and the media.

The focus on high-growth technology firms by the media as well as researchers has led to the entrepreneurs becoming celebrities, despite representing a minority (Welter et al., 2017). This constant praise in the media suggests that only special people can be entrepreneurs (Fletcher, 2006). This assumption is commonly reflected in the entrepreneurship literature which considers entrepreneurial individuals as having an enabling entrepreneurial identity prior to venture start-up (Down & Reveley, 2004; Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006).

The myth of the heroic entrepreneur is intrinsically tied to how entrepreneurship is defined within the research field because definitions legitimise assumptions (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004).Stereotypical depictions of the entrepreneur are apparent in academic realms including literature (Gill, 2017) and entrepreneurship education (Jones & Warhuus, 2018). Entrepreneurship research has been dominated by a tradition of male scholars researching male entrepreneurs resulting in a masculinised theory of entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2006; Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2005; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Hurley, 1999; Jones, 2014). There is an unwillingness amongst scholars to get rid of "worn out" ideas (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007 p.341) and quantitative approaches are increasingly seen as the benchmark for providing acceptable evidence about the nature of entrepreneurship (Gartner, 2004). However this limited view about what facts are deemed relevant ignore the details that could illuminate the phenomenon of entrepreneurship (Gartner, 2004). The transition into entrepreneurship is unlike the transition into roles within organisations. Whilst both lead to identity emergence and change, entrepreneurial transition lacks the institutional structure, role modelling and socialisation of the organisational context (Zhang & Chun, 2017).

The persistence of the myth of the heroic entrepreneur is not without consequences. Individuals who do not identify with a stereotype associated with an activity may choose not to participate (Smith, & Boje, 2017; Treanor, Jones, & Marlow, 2020). Stereotypes become part of the taken- for-granted assumptions that privilege and reinforce the power structures in society (Ogbor, 2000). Asymmetrical power is created within relationships whereby others are silenced resulting in economic consequences (Ogbor, 2000).

According to Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson (2007 p.350), the myth of the independent entrepreneur has formed the basis of enterprise policy in the UK since the 1980s resulting in implications for government funded venture start-up provision (Treanor, Jones, & Marlow, 2020). The economic consequences for women entrepreneurs (Orser, Elliott, & Leck, 2011) such as disadvantaging women's access to policy and programme support (Orser et al., 2011), has been well documented. In addition, female graduates are less likely to opt for an entrepreneurial career than their male counterparts (Connolly, O'Gorman, & Bogue, 2003; Jones, 2014; Martínez, Mora, & Vila, 2007).

Williams Middleton & Donnellon (2017 p. 116) highlight how in the realm of education the "persistent myth" of the heroic entrepreneur, likened to a deity by Farny, Frederiksen, Hannibal, & Jones (2016), leads educators to focus on entrepreneurial success resulting in students aspiring to unattainable goals. Within entrepreneurship education, the focus on the success of exemplars can reinforce the myth and result in students missing opportunities to approach entrepreneurship as a team effort as well as to learn from failure (Rae, 2006; Williams Middleton, 2013). Henderson & Robertson, (1999) found that it was young people's attitudes to entrepreneurs that prevented many of them considering entrepreneurship as a career choice. Despite the majority of their respondents actively engaging in entrepreneurship education, many felt that they lacked (amongst other characteristics) an innate propensity for risk-taking required to be a successful entrepreneur (Henderson & Robertson, 1999). Prevailing social discourses can therefore restrict and even prevent the transition to entrepreneurship by inhibiting an individual from developing their own entrepreneurial identity (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014; Gill, 2017).

Therefore, what it means to be entrepreneurial is an individual experience which is influenced by the dominant Western discourse of the masculinised entrepreneur (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014; Gill, 2017). The language of enterprise discourse is representative of the values and meanings ascribed to entrepreneurial activities however it is also dynamic and diverse and individuals appropriate the aspects of it that are relevant to them and their situated view of the world (Cohen & Musson, 2000).

Identity theorists accept that individuals have multiple identities that make up their overall sense of self (Burke, 2003). How then does this influence the nascent entrepreneur's ability to identify as an entrepreneur during the transition into entrepreneurship? Professional services entrepreneurs such as medics have to manage both their professional role identity and their entrepreneurial identity (Stewart, Castrogiovanni, & Hudson, 2016). Entrepreneurs within the creative and cultural industries have to find a way to relate their creative identity to their entrepreneurial identity (Werthes, Mauer, & Brettel, 2018). Personal identities can influence the information that individuals attend to (Hitlin, 2003). Identity dissonance can occur between entrepreneurial self-identity and the social (ascribed) identity of what it means to be entrepreneurial; in other words who and how one presents oneself and who and how one is identified (Anderson, Warren, & Bensemann, 2018). In order to manage potential conflicts between identities, individuals carry out identity work which combines their personal identities with the more discursive aspects of entrepreneurship in order to shape an entrepreneurial identity that is acceptable to their other identities (Watson, 2009). In crafting their entrepreneurial identity, entrepreneurs both accept and challenge norms and social expectations (Hytti & Heinonen, 2013).

2.2 Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is typically portrayed as the nexus of individuals and opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Shane, 2003). This representation is underpinned by a set of assumptions about the functionality and intentionality of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship (Lerner et al., 2018). Most research, regardless of the approach, shares the assumption that wealth creation is the ultimate function of entrepreneurial

endeavours (Lerner et al., 2018; Rindova et al., 2009). The individuals involved in entrepreneurship are, therefore, presumed to intentionally seek out and evaluate opportunities in terms of risk and potential for profit (Lerner et al., 2018). In addition, nascent entrepreneurship research has been criticised for presenting a simplistic, linear view of the venture creation process that starts with the identification of a business opportunity and ends with the first sales and first hires despite there being scant empirical evidence to support this (Liao & Welsch, 2008).

These assumptions have led researchers of entrepreneurship to a focus on high growth technology businesses which are presumed to epitomise the best version of entrepreneurship despite the fact that they represent a small minority of ventures (Galloway et al., 2019; Welter et al., 2017). Non-financial motivations and outcomes are rendered subordinate or simply ignored by entrepreneurship researchers who prioritise wealth accumulation and job creation (Galloway et al., 2019; Welter et al., 2017).

Entrepreneurship is a diverse phenomenon (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012) which can stem from a wide range of circumstances as well as result in different outcomes (Galloway et al., 2019). Some scholars have signalled a mismatch between entrepreneurship theory and anecdotal evidence and observations which suggest that entrepreneurs engage in new venture creation for non-pecuniary reasons such as social and personal factors (Galloway et al., 2019; Rindova et al., 2009). Given that the majority of entrepreneurial activity is conducted by micro-businesses (Galloway et al., 2019), the narrow focus adopted by entrepreneurship researchers excludes a large amount of "everyday" activity by undervaluing its theoretical interest to the field (Welter et al., 2017, p. 313). As a result of the research field's skewed focus on a minority subset of entrepreneurship, other types of entrepreneurial activity are marginalised (Welter et al., 2017) and consequently there is little theoretical engagement with entrepreneurial diversity (Galloway et al., 2019; Ogbor, 2000; Welter et al., 2017).

Following Welter et al. (2017), by embracing heterogeneity a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship can be achieved (Rindova et al., 2009) leading to theoretical development of the field (Welter et al., 2017). A broader approach would

allow researchers to focus on the origins of new ideas (Rindova et al., 2009) and, following Welter et al. (2017), there is a lot to be gained from being more expansive. Zahra et al. (2014) argue that it is necessary to study entrepreneurial activity in natural settings in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Entrepreneurship takes place in the broader context of the entrepreneur's life (Lerner et al., 2018). Circumstances, situations and environments can provide individuals with opportunities as well as set the boundaries for their actions (Welter, 2011). Both context and life course are often ignored in entrepreneurship research (Welter et al., 2017) therefore a contextualised view of entrepreneurship can contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon (Welter, 2011). The study of nascent entrepreneurs and their early entrepreneurial experiences goes some way to overcome the lack of research into the smallest and newest of ventures (Davidsson, 2006).

Entrepreneurship research has its origins in a number of different disciplines including economics, psychology and sociology (Acs & Audretsch, 2003) and this has influenced the development of the field (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; Steyaert, 2005). It is a multidimensional and multiparadigmatic phenomenon that cannot be captured through a single approach (Randerson, 2016). As a result, there are various conceptualisations of entrepreneurship but none tell the whole story (Hatt, 2018). The remaining chapter will discuss how entrepreneurship is conceptualised from different research perspectives. Each of these perspectives will be discussed in detail and their contribution to our understanding of entrepreneurship will be considered. A brief overview of these perspectives will follow.

Economic explanations of entrepreneurship, typically framed in terms of ultimate purpose and financial risk, emphasise agency, rationality and economic measurements of success (Lerner et al., 2018; Hatt, 2018). From a psychological perspective, entrepreneurs are studied in terms of their psychological make-up which allows them to identify and develop opportunities and tolerate the accompanying uncertainty (Hatt, 2018). Decision-making from this perspective is therefore conscious and directly related to the individual's entrepreneurial career aspirations (Lerner et al., 2018). A prevalent strand of entrepreneurship research has sought to distinguish between

those who have the relevant and necessary personality traits and those who lack them (Hatt, 2018).

By moving from individual-level analysis to an organisational-level analysis researchers are able to focus on the processes of entrepreneurship (Anderson & Ronteau, 2017). Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) looks at the firm-level entrepreneurial behaviours that cut across departments and individuals (Randerson, 2016). However, the extant literature has come to treat EO as a predictor of outcomes such as wealth creation thereby obscuring the nuances involved in entrepreneurial processes (Anderson & Ronteau, 2017; Randerson, 2016).

EO does little to counter criticisms levelled at entrepreneurship research for having too narrow a focus on wealth creation which comes at the expense of exploring other non-pecuniary entrepreneurial motivations (Rindova et al., 2009). Motivations research has tended to dichotomise the drivers behind new venture creation, implicitly labelling financial motivations as more interesting for study and theory building (Welter et al., 2017). As a result, entrepreneurship as an expression of personal values, a desire to make a difference in the world or to work autonomously is under researched (Rindova et al., 2009).

An identity perspective allows researchers to move beyond traditional economic rationality (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017) and also enables researchers to follow Ogbor's (2000) advice to avoid the taken-for-granted assumptions about entrepreneurship by exploring how discourse impacts on praxis. A better understanding of the concept of the entrepreneurial identity can provide insights into entrepreneurial behaviour because it emphasises that people act in ways that they feel is appropriate to themselves (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017). These different perspectives contribute to the "critical mess" (Gartner, 2004, p. 200) of entrepreneurship research and their contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon is discussed in more detail below.

2.3   Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship - The Economics Approach

Economists became interested in entrepreneurship as increasingly it came to be regarded as a mechanism for economic and social development (Acs & Audretsch,

2003). As a result, it has become a dominant approach to entrepreneurship research but has been criticised for perpetuating a narrow perspective and a limited focus on self-interested individuals (O'Rourke, 2014) who rationally evaluate opportunities for their profitability (Lerner et al, 2018).

The dominance of this perspective can be understood by examining its historical origins. As early as the eighteenth century, economists were interested in the impact of entrepreneurship on the economic environment and the characteristics of that environment that were favourable (or unfavourable) to entrepreneurship (Bruyat & Julien, 2001). However, the attention of early economists, whilst focused on explaining the economic system of their era, also included the entrepreneur as a significant component of their economic theory (Down, 2010). Therefore in the field of entrepreneurship, the study of the person and the phenomenon have often been intertwined (Ogbor, 2000).

Economists such as Cantillon, Schumpeter, Knight and Kirzner's inclusion of the entrepreneur within economic theory began the characterisation of the entrepreneur that still resonates today (Bruyat & Julien, 2001; Down, 2010; Jones, 2014). Cantillon's entrepreneur assumes risk and later, in the first half of the twentieth century, Schumpeter reinforced the notion of the entrepreneur's unique qualities by stressing the talent for creating opportunities through innovation (Ahl, 2006; Bruyat & Julien, 2001; Down, 2010). For Schumpeter, innovation is regarded as being essentially an intrinsic quality rather than a set of practices (Bruni et al., 2004) resulting in Schumpeter's portrayal of the entrepreneur as a special person or hero character (Down, 2010). This is reinforced by Knight's emphasis on the entrepreneur's creative ability to make judgements in the face of uncertainty (Down, 2010). Whilst more passive in the role of creator of new ventures, contemporary economist Kirzner's entrepreneur was distinct from ordinary people by his or her vision and alertness to opportunities (Blundel, Lockett, & Wang, 2018; Down, 2010). In contrast to Schumpeter, opportunities existed as objective phenomena. This meant that opportunities could only be identified and exploited by those people with extraordinary qualities and therefore were not recognisable to all people at all times (Down, 2010; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).

By combining ideas from Schumpeter, Knight and Kirzner, contemporary economist Casson (Casson, 1982) developed a modern economic theory of entrepreneurship that emphasised the processual nature of organisational emergence (Down, 2010). Casson did little to counter the characterisation of the entrepreneur as a unique individual by depicting the entrepreneur by his or her ability to access and interpret information and make appropriate judgements about opportunities (Down, 2010). Similarly, within nascent entrepreneurship the characteristics of the founding entrepreneurs, for example, their previous entrepreneurial experience (see Delmar & Shane, 2006), and the process of new venture creation in terms of the activities undertaken by the nascent entrepreneur (see Delmar & Shane, 2003) are examined in order to understand one of the central questions in entrepreneurship research; why some new ventures go on to be successful whilst others fail (Lichtenstein et al., 2007).

For Casson, whilst the recognition of opportunities was a subjective process, the opportunities themselves were objective realities which could be discovered by the entrepreneur (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). In his General Theory of Entrepreneurship (2003), Shane, extending Casson's work, put emphasis on the interaction between the individual and the opportunity and reinforced the characterisation of the entrepreneur by focusing on the cognitive process of opportunity discovery (Down, 2010). In this view, opportunity recognition takes place when the entrepreneur judges that resources are not used to their best potential thereby identifying profit-making possibilities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Shane & Venkataraman (2000) attribute the ability to make accurate judgements about an opportunity's potential for pecuniary rewards to the possession of information corridors and cognitive properties. Prior information, such as user needs, combines with new information enabling conjecture; this combined with the cognitive ability to recognise new means-end relationships enables entrepreneurs to discover commercial opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

Shane's (2003) individual-opportunity nexus contributes to the field of entrepreneurship research by linking the individual and the opportunity at the centre of the entrepreneurial domain (Sarason et al., 2006). Whereas other approaches focused on the individual (personality trait approach) or the opportunity (early

economic approach) (Sarason et al., 2006), Shane (2003) attributes agency to individuals by emphasising the entrepreneur's cognitive function in the process of opportunity discovery (Fletcher, 2006). From this perspective, entrepreneurs possess an ability to 'connect the dots', that is, use cognitive frameworks to perceive connections between otherwise unrelated phenomena (Baron, 2006, p.106). According to Baron (2006), the pattern recognition perspective allows us to see why some people and not others recognise specific opportunities. By emphasising the entrepreneur's cognitive abilities this view reinforces the notion of the entrepreneurial actor as a special individual who arrives at new venture creation as a fully formed entrepreneur thereby underplaying the nascent entrepreneur's process of becoming (Phillip & Knowles, 2012).

Whilst the individual-opportunity nexus is helpful in explaining opportunity recognition in relation to cognitive ability too much agency is attributed to the individual's special skills and knowledge (Fletcher, 2006). This view is also limited by the assumption that opportunities are objective realities and therefore they represent a singular phenomenon, constituting the same opportunity for everyone (Fletcher, 2006; Sarason et al., 2006). Entrepreneurial identity is an important factor in influencing entrepreneurial behaviour (Alsos, Clausen, Hytti, & Solvoll, 2016) and entrepreneurs' underlying identities influence the decisions they make and therefore not all entrepreneurs think in the same way (Mathias & Williams, 2017). Mathias & Williams'(2017) study revealed how the different role identities adopted by business founders could result in a different focus on how related new opportunities are to existing ventures.

Determinist explanations of entrepreneurship tend to underemphasize the broader social, economic and political contexts in which entrepreneurs develop opportunities and they fail to account for why entrepreneurs act in specific ways at specific times (Fletcher, 2006; Mathias & Williams, 2017). Contexts can act as assets and liabilities for individuals by providing them with opportunities as well as limiting their actions (Welter, 2011) therefore, research that engages with context can generate fine-grained insights into the phenomenon (Zahra et al., 2014). In addition, determinist approaches which seek to make broad assertions about causal mechanisms

overemphasise the entrepreneurial process as the effective filling of market gaps (Sarason et al., 2006; Zahra et al., 2014). In contrast, Fletcher (2006) regards opportunities as created by the individual or team of individuals through their interactions with each other and the context in which they operate. In this way, entrepreneurship is seen as a societal phenomenon (Fletcher, 2006) as well as a recursive process between the entrepreneur and the social system (Sarason et al., 2006). The entrepreneur navigates private, social and professional domains in which an individual's multiple identities continuously and simultaneously interact, influencing decision making and behaviour (Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015).

Entrepreneurial behaviour is important to our understanding of entrepreneurship (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017) however deterministic economic approaches to entrepreneurship research, by focusing on simplistic economic goals and wealth creation, miss opportunities to explore the diverse motivations of entrepreneurs and how they go about accomplishing them (Rindova et al., 2009; Welter et al., 2017). A better understanding of the potential of entrepreneurial identity to both drive and shape behaviour can help address this gap (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) by accounting for the actions not only of economically-driven entrepreneurs but also those driven by other non-pecuniary motivations (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017). The field of nascent entrepreneurship therefore, by viewing entrepreneurship as a process of emergence both for the venture and for the entrepreneur (Lundqvist et al, 2015), offers a more inclusive consideration of both the phenomenon and the entrepreneurial actor.

2.4   Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship - The behavioural psychologists' perspective

In recent years, researchers have started to take the view that there is no entrepreneurial type, anyone has the potential to become an entrepreneur (Mathias, 2017) and that there is no average in entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000). However, in the 1960s behavioural psychologists began to explore causal explanations of who would become an entrepreneur by examining shared characteristics (Carlsson et al., 2013; Hurley, 1999). McClelland (1961) was one of the first psychologists to attempt to understand the environmental conditions leading to entrepreneurship (Carlsson et al., 2013). *The Achieving Society* (McClelland, 1961) identified the need for achievement as

a key motivating factor for entrepreneurs in capitalist societies (Down, 2010) and concluded that high economic growth in certain regions was a result of a significant proportion of that society exhibiting a high need for achievement (Hurley, 1999). The work became the founding text for the psychological approach to entrepreneurship research and spawned a dominant strand of research which aimed to predict and promote entrepreneurship by identifying a shared set of personality traits exhibited by entrepreneurs and absent in non-entrepreneurs (Carlsson et al., 2013).

By aiming to identify these shared characteristics, the personality trait approach sought to uncover those which made entrepreneurs distinct from other people and those which led them to successfully exploit opportunities (Gartner, 1988; Mathias, 2017; Shane, 2003 p.97). Through this distinction, the entrepreneur, already conceptualised as an innovative risk-taker by earlier economic theory, was credited by subsequent researchers as displaying an internal locus of control or belief in their ability to influence the environment in which they operate (Rotter, 1966), a desire for independence (Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The list is not exhaustive; in fact the central aim of this approach, i.e. to identify a number of traits in order to describe the entrepreneur, has led to a "startling" number of characteristics (Gartner, 1988 p.21). Furthermore, there is little agreement amongst scholars about the weight of individual traits in the context of the set of shared characteristics which make entrepreneurs unique (Timmons & Spinnelli, 2009).

Personality trait research reinforces the stereotype of the hero entrepreneur through the "largely fruitless" endeavour (Sarasvathy, 2004 p.708) of comparing entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Nascent entrepreneurship is a temporary state (Davidsson, 2006) however, in contrast, the personality trait approach assumes that the entrepreneur arrives at new venture creation with the appropriate fixed personality type already in place and therefore, from this perspective, research can investigate entrepreneurs at different stages in the entrepreneurial process and still draw conclusions about the personality traits that led to embark on an entrepreneurial career (Gartner, 1988). This approach has also been challenged for ignoring the interdependency and influence of environmental factors on traits (Hatt, 2018) and for failing to consider the social and historical context in which entrepreneurs operate

(Chasserio, Pailot, & Poroli, 2014). Ogbor (2000) argues that comparing the average experiences of one group with the average experience of another group is futile. Furthermore, by comparing entrepreneurs with non-entrepreneurs the phenomenon of entrepreneurship itself is portrayed as static rather than dynamic and episodic whilst reinforcing the depiction of the entrepreneur as being different from other members of society (Shane et al., 2003). Gartner (1988 p.21) argues, in his influential paper that effectively brought the dominance of the trait approach to an end (Down, 2010), that if entrepreneurs possessed all these traits they would be a "generic Everyman". Individuals, therefore, can be better understood in terms of becoming rather than the fixed state of being (Svenningson & Alvesson, 2003). Entrepreneurship involves the process of becoming because it is performative (Phillips & Knowles, 2012) and identities are powerful motivators (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006). Therefore, an identity approach to entrepreneurship research enables the exploration of the dynamic processes that the nascent entrepreneur undertakes in the creation of a new venture (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010).

2.5 Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship - A process perspective

In contrast to the trait approach where the individual is the unit of analysis, entrepreneurial orientation (EO) focuses on a firm-level analysis, specifically, EO reflects the processes, methods and styles that an organisation uses to act entrepreneurially (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The study of nascent entrepreneurship, however, with its focus on the both the entrepreneurial actor and the new venture, resolves the individual versus organisation unit of analysis dilemma in entrepreneurship research by seeking to discover the individual and processual characteristics of venture formation (Johnson et al, 2006).

The EO construct is defined as a firm's strategic position towards entrepreneurship (Anderson, Kreiser, Kuratko, Hornsby, & Eshima, 2015). Miller (1983) and Covin & Slevin (1991) conceptualised the entrepreneurial organisation as a firm that pursues innovation, proactively enters new markets and accepts risks in the pursuit of new opportunities (Anderson et al., 2015). Lumpkin and Dess (1996) sought to further define the dimensions of the EO construct developed by Miller (1983) and Covin and

Slevin (1991) added two further dimensions; autonomy and competitive aggressiveness.

Although the original purpose of EO was to focus on the processes behind entrepreneurial activity, the construct has become normative, used to capture the entrepreneurial qualities of organisations in order to predict future outcomes (Anderson & Ronteau, 2017). As a result, EO research combines firm-level behaviours without exploring the processes that lead to these behaviours (Randerson, 2016).

Parallels can be made between EO research and the behaviours and attitudes attributed to entrepreneurs by both economic and psychological approaches to entrepreneurship research. Innovation, which has characterised entrepreneurship since Schumpeter (1934), from this perspective, reflects an organisational willingness to support new ideas and processes and is a means by which organisations pursue opportunities (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Likewise, the concept of risk-taking, extensively explored at an individual-level in entrepreneurship research, is considered at firm level under the construct of EO, because, as Lumpkin and Dess (1996) argue, managers and employees may take risks at firm-level which they would not take as individuals. In line with Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) discussion of opportunity recognition and exploitation, entrepreneurial firms adopt a forward-looking perspective and are proactive in their pursuit of new opportunities and their entry into new markets (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). With the proactive firm conceptualised as a leader in the market, it influences trends and even creates new demand (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Lumpkin and Dess (1996) extend the conceptualisation of the autonomous entrepreneur to the level of the firm by linking it to employee empowerment, leadership style and flat organisational structures. Therefore firm level autonomy is linked to opportunity search and exploitation (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). The final dimension of EO proposed by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) is competitive aggressiveness which they define as an organisation's propensity to challenge and outperform competitors.

The construct of EO assigns behaviours (innovativeness and proactiveness) and attitudes (risk-taking) which typically characterise the individual entrepreneur, to the established firm (Anderson et al., 2015) but, despite this, the antecedents of EO are

largely unexplored (Stewart et al., 2016) leaving questions about the early stages of venture formation largely unaddressed. Furthermore, start-up studies based on successfully established firms can miss out on the experiences of those new ventures that were unsuccessful (Johnson et al., 2006).

A dominant strand of research explores the CEO's influence on the firm and at least partially positions EO as a reflection of the CEO's personality traits and psychological characteristics (Cao, Simsek, & Jansen, 2015). Similarly the personality factors associated with the individual entrepreneur, such as the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), the desire for autonomy (Shane, 2003) and tolerance for ambiguity (Budner, 1962) are, in this approach, associated with management teams and firm founders (Anderson et al., 2015; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Despite the acknowledged dissatisfaction with the traits approach to entrepreneurship research (Gartner, 1988) and the burgeoning interest in entrepreneurial identity the relationship between entrepreneurial identity and firm level entrepreneurial actions is under researched (Stewart et al., 2016).

Drawing on role identity theory, Mathias & Williams (2017) note that the entrepreneurial experience requires entrepreneurs to take on different role identities and that these different role identities have an impact on business founders' perception of risk. The relationship between an individual's multiple identities can have an impact on the nascent phase in terms of the motivation to start a venture, as well as through subsequent stages in terms of decision making and the ability to persevere. Mills and Pawson (2006) showed how the entrepreneur's identity as a mother influenced her decision to start a venture, shaped her perception of risk and influenced how risks were then addressed or avoided. Stewart et al. (2016) contribute to our understanding of how identity is related to EO by demonstrating a link between entrepreneurial identity, competitive advantage and performance. They examined the centrality of professional and entrepreneurial identities in professional service entrepreneurs. Those who demonstrated a central professional identity founded organisations with a weak EO, whereas professional service entrepreneurs with a central entrepreneurial identity founded ventures with a strong EO (Stewart et al., 2016). Thus an understanding of nascent entrepreneurs' multiple identities can

provide insights into how the venture develops focusing on a series of decisions rather than a single decision fixed in time (Johnson et al., 2006).

Whilst role identity is associated with the enactment of a role (Goodrick & Reay, 2010), it is reinforced by the relationships and expectations entrenched within the interactions of specific groups (Stewart et al., 2016). Cao, Simsek and Jansen (2015) argue that CEO influence on EO can be better understood in terms of the CEO's social capital. Dubini & Aldrich (1991) argue that entrepreneurship is inherently a networking activity and social capital both binds to create networks as well as facilitates network interaction (Anderson & Jack, 2002). Research into personal networks reveals the people with whom the entrepreneur has direct relationships both within and external to the organisation such as partners, suppliers, customers and family members (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991). The prevalent network success hypothesis assumes that there is a positive relationship between networking and success (Witt, 2004). This hypothesis postulates that entrepreneurs can use their personal network to access resources and information that they would be not able to obtain or would only be able to obtain at an increased cost (Witt, 2004). In the early stages of their business, nascent entrepreneurs have to extend their personal networks in order to seek out specific support, for example, professional services, however as the business grows these professional contacts play an increasingly crucial role in assisting the entrepreneur (Hill, Mcgowan, & Drummond, 1999). Therefore achieving a balance of strong ties, characterised by trust but also redundancy (Granovetter, 1983; Witt, 2004) and weak ties, characterised by minimal emotional investment but extended access to information and opportunities (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991; Granovetter, 1983) is crucial for entrepreneurial success (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991; Witt, 2004).

However, empirical investigations of the network success hypothesis have been inconclusive (Witt, 2004). Whilst an entrepreneur's network contacts are recognised as diverse, the entrepreneur at the centre of the network is treated as a homogenous individual (Witt, 2004). Likewise, although EO focuses on a firm-level analysis to determine an organisation's orientation and predict their performance potential, this approach necessarily focuses on the behaviours and attitudes of individuals within the organisation thereby reinforcing the need to gain an understanding of the individuals

who are central to the organisation. Entrepreneurial activity depends on the decisions that people make (Shane et al., 2003) and is "infused with meaning as a result of the expression of an individual's identity" (Leitch & Harrison, 2016 p.177) and nascent entrepreneurship research offers a richness that includes the individual, processual and environmental characteristics that are lacking in entrepreneurship research (Johnson et al., 2006). Therefore the following sections will consider how the entrepreneurial motivations and the entrepreneurial identity approaches contribute to our understanding of nascent entrepreneurship.

2.6   Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship - A motivations perspective

The entrepreneurial experience can be divided into two stages; the decision to start a venture or opportunity discovery and the actions or behaviours taken to realise the venture or exploit the opportunity (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). An understanding of entrepreneurial motivations can provide insights into business start-up as well as subsequent performance and growth during the exploitation stage according to Birley & Westhead, (1994). The personality trait approach and contemporary economic theories of entrepreneurship placed human agency at the centre of entrepreneurship by highlighting the role of individual characteristics and cognitive abilities. As a result, much of the literature has focused on the characteristics of the entrepreneur (Nabi, Walmsley, & Holden, 2015). From this perspective entrepreneurs make different decisions when faced with similar opportunities (Shane et al., 2003). According to Shane & Venkataraman (2000), the motivation to exploit an opportunity is based on the entrepreneur's belief that the potential profit is large enough to compensate for the opportunity cost of other alternatives (taking into account the investment of time and money, and the bearing of uncertainty). This aligns with the popular assumption that positions financial motivations including wealth creation as the main reason behind the decision to start a new venture (Renko & Freeman, 2017). However, Carter, Gartner, Shaver, & Gatewood's (2003) study of nascent entrepreneurs found whilst financial motives were important so were independence and self-realization.

However, the entrepreneurial motivations literature suggests a diverse range of start-up reasons which provides challenges for researchers (Birley & Westhead, 1994). In

addition to the desire for financial success, are independence, recognition, self - realisation, innovation, roles and egoistic passion (Carter et al., 2003; Cassar, 2007; Shane et al., 2003). Egoist passion is defined as love of 'the process of building an organisation and making it profitable' (Shane et al., 2003 p.269). Entrepreneurial passion can be seen as a "dynamic motivational construct" (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016 p.226) which has a role in opportunity recognition (Bao, Zhou, & Chen, 2017), drives entrepreneurial behaviour, provides meaning for entrepreneurial action (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016) and binds entrepreneurs to their goals (Tasnim, Yahya, & Zainuddin, 2014). Supporting this Cardon, Wincent, Singh & Drnovsek (2009) conceptualise entrepreneurial passion as the feelings experienced by the entrepreneur when engaging in entrepreneurial activities which suggests that it has an impact on the entrepreneur's motivation to persevere during the exploitation phase. It seems that passion, therefore, can impact on the nascent entrepreneur's motivation during the new venture creation process (Huyghe, Knockaert, & Obschonka, 2016) and influence his or her motivation to persist in the face of difficulties (Cardon, Zietsma, Saparito, Matherne, & Davis, 2005; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016).

Passion, however, rather than being viewed purely as a motivation, can be explained more effectively in terms of its links with the concept of identity (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009; Huyghe et al., 2016; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). Passion is aroused by being engaged in something that relates to a meaningful identity (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009). Murnieks, Mosakowski, & Cardon (2014) argue that those individuals whose entrepreneurial identity is central to their sense of self experience greater levels of passion and in this way, entrepreneurial passion is significantly related to entrepreneurial behaviour. Conceptualising entrepreneurial passion as a source of positivity which diminishes risks, difficulties and the impact of failure suggests that it can also offer insights into the motivation to persevere (Cardon et al., 2005; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016).

Whilst extant literature tends to focus on a single entrepreneurial passion, both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial passions should be taken into consideration in terms of their influence on nascent entrepreneurship; namely opportunity

recognition and the start-up process (Huyghe et al., 2016). Consideration of the interplay between different types of passions and multiple identities can lead to more of a holistic understanding of the new venture creation process than focusing on entrepreneurial passion in isolation (Huyghe et al., 2016 p. 359).

In recent years, entrepreneurs have been categorised in terms of their motivations as necessity entrepreneurs, pushed into entrepreneurship because all other options are either absent or unsatisfactory or opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, pulled into entrepreneurship by a perceived business opportunity (Bridge, O'Neill & Cromie, 2003; Williams & Williams, 2014). Examples of push factors are job dissatisfaction and the changing world of work whilst examples of pull factors include financial reward and identifying an opportunity (Kirkwood, 2009). The distinction has gained popularity as a result of its adoption by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), a survey of entrepreneurial activity across 35 countries (Williams & Williams, 2014). Resulting studies adopting this taxonomy have studied gender differences in entrepreneurial motivations (see Kirkwood, 2009), as well as entrepreneurship in deprived urban neighbourhoods and disadvantaged populations (see Williams & Williams, 2014).

However GEM's justification for classifying countries on the basis of the prevalence of one type of entrepreneurship (i.e. necessity or opportunity) over another has been questioned (Bridge, O'Neill, & Cromie, 2003). Rosa, Kodithuwakku, Balunywa, & Rosa's (2006) empirical study demonstrated that research respondents did not understand or relate to these classifications and that different interpretations of work and unemployment were used in developing countries. Kirkwood (2009) also found that push and pull factors could be observed acting in combination revealing that entrepreneurial motivations were both complex and intertwined. An example of this complexity was the way that apparent push factors, such as the changing world of work, could also be viewed in a positive light and acted as a trigger point when combined with other factors (Kirkwood, 2009). In their longitudinal study focusing on the transition from higher education to entrepreneurship, Nabi et al. (2015) examined the motivations of university graduates with stated intentions of starting a business. Their findings revealed that a complex mixture of both push and pull factors influenced their respondents. In other words, individuals could experience a range of push and

pull factors simultaneously. Consequently, a complex mix of push and pull factors can influence the nascent entrepreneur's decision making and behaviour and therefore the push-pull dualism is too simplistic (Jayawarna, Rouse, & Kitching, 2011; Vorley & Rodgers, 2014; Williams & Williams, 2014).

The need to study motivations in relation to the context of the rest of the entrepreneur's life experiences has been highlighted by Jayawarna et al. (2011) and Vorley & Rodgers (2014). Jayawarna et al.'s (2011) findings support their conceptual proposition that entrepreneurial motivations are dynamically interrelated with social circumstances, conceptualised here as career, household and business life courses. Through a study of work and personal life incidents, Vorley & Rodgers (2014) are able to link motivations to the everyday lived experiences of their home-based entrepreneurs. Their findings emphasise how the context of the nascent entrepreneur's wider life experiences are inextricably linked to, and impact upon, the dynamic and developing motivations that lead to starting a business.

In line with Jayawarna et al. (2011) and Vorley & Rodgers (2014), Nabi et al.'s (2015) study also highlighted the importance of context in the study of entrepreneurial motivations. The transition period from university to self-employment was influenced by the labour market context (push factor) and the support of family and significant others (pull factor). Therefore a range of environmental support and features of the context were relevant in pushing and / or pulling graduates into entrepreneurship.

Moving beyond environmental support and context, Nabi et al. (2015) consider the role of the business opportunity as a motivating factor. Similar to Shane's (2003) conceptualisation of opportunity, the nature of the business idea influences the willingness of people to exploit it and the financial capital required can determine whether the decision is made to go ahead (Nabi et al., 2015; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). However, rather than the prediction of potential profit being the deciding factor for acting on an opportunity as proposed by Shane & Venkataraman (2000), Nabi et al.'s (2015) respondents were more likely to be motivated to exploit the opportunity if it was logistically simple, realistic and required little expert input from other parties.

Nabi et al.'s (2015) study reinforces the role of human agency in the exploitation of opportunities. The personal characteristics that influence the study's nascent entrepreneurs echo familiar motivations such as the need for independence (Shane, 2003) however Nabi et al. (2015) also include the nascent entrepreneur's desire to embody an entrepreneurial identity as a strong pull factor. The conceptualisation of the entrepreneurial identity as a simple desire to achieve the financial success and prestige reflects the influence of entrepreneurial stereotype prevalent in Western society. A more nuanced discussion of the role that entrepreneurial identity plays in new venture creation is discussed later in this chapter.

The link between motivations and business growth has been extensively explored in the literature (see for example, Birley & Westhead, 1994; Burke, FitzRoy, & Nolan, 2002; Cassar, 2007; Hessels, Van Gelderen, & Thurik, 2008; Renko & Freeman, 2017). The argument being that the nascent entrepreneur's set of motivations will influence the goals of the subsequent venture (Hessels et al., 2008). Kirkwood (2009) found that although 'push factors' (for example, job dissatisfaction) tended to be more prevalent amongst her participants, entrepreneurs influenced by these motivations tended to have less financial success than those influenced by 'pull factors'. Looking at 'pull' factors and business growth, Cassar (2007) found that despite his respondents rating independence as the most important motivation for starting a business, being motivated by financial success was more likely to be positively linked to business growth intentions. By distinguishing between the pull factors, Cassar's (2007) research suggests that although the desire for independence is a strong motive for entrepreneurs, it has a negative association with the entrepreneurs' growth intentions. This can be explained by Hessels et al. (2008) who suggest that entrepreneurs motivated by the desire for independence do not tend to have high ambitions for their business whereas financially motivated entrepreneurs tend to be job, growth and export oriented. This contrasts with findings from Burke et al.'s (2002) study of non-pecuniary motivations and the subsequent success of the venture. They refute the view that non-pecuniary motivations, such as independence, will reduce the likelihood of financial success and argue that it is the extent to which an individual is motivated that influences performance.

Renko & Freeman (2017) give a possible explanation for the different findings on financial motivations and business growth by pointing out that many studies of entrepreneurial motivations compare entrepreneurs with non-entrepreneurs (see Carter et al., 2003; Cassar, 2007) rather than examining the entrepreneur in the context of the entrepreneurial opportunity. A financially motivated nascent entrepreneur may favour a high revenue potential opportunity and therefore, may be less likely to pursue an opportunity if the potential for high financial rewards is low (Renko & Freeman, 2017). Therefore Renko & Freeman (2017) argue that there must be an alignment between individual motivations and the revenue expectations for the opportunity for nascent entrepreneurs to persist in new venture creation.

Research that focuses on identifying a link between start-up motivations and business performance and growth is problematic as it relies on the assumption that the nascent entrepreneur's motivations at start-up continue to influence behaviour once the business is established. However, Birley & Westhead (1994) conclude that once ventures are established, the original motivations of the entrepreneurs have minimal impact on the resulting performance. In particular, the opportunity - necessity dichotomy assumes that the originating motivations remain constant over time whereas Williams & Williams' (2014 p.36) empirical study discovered that respondents' motivations were temporally fluid. Additionally, Collewaert, Anseel, Crommelinck, De Beuckelaer, & Vermeire, (2016) found that the positive feelings of entrepreneurial passion associated with founding a venture could decrease over time.

Entrepreneurial persistence has also been linked to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), the entrepreneur's values (Holland & Shepherd, 2013; Tasnim, Yahya, & Zainuddin, 2014) and the need for achievement (Sibin, Matthews, & Dagher, 2007). However, Benz & Frey's (2008) claim that the self-employed gain higher levels of job satisfaction than those in paid employment suggests that entrepreneur not only values outcomes but also the processes that lead to the outcomes.)

Renko & Freeman's (2017) observation that there must be an alignment between motivations and revenue expectations raises the concept of how alignment between the individual and the opportunity is crucial to the entrepreneurial process. An individual's goals are closely related to their motivations and values, both of which,

Fayolle, Liñán, & Moriano, (2014) suggest, may enable the nascent entrepreneur to move from entrepreneurial intentions to entrepreneurial action. Whereas Renko & Freeman (2017) follow Shane & Venkataraman (2000) by attributing economic rationality to the financially motivated entrepreneur's decision making, the concept of alignment suggests that opportunities are idiosyncratic to the individual (Sarason et al., 2006). A conflict in values and needs can slow or prevent intended action, therefore, more research is required to explore alignment (or lack of it) between the individual's "inner voices" and the opportunity in order to enhance our understanding of new venture creation and growth (Bird, 1988 p.449). Therefore the role of values and motivations in venture start-up requires further attention (Fayolle et al., 2014).

The answer to avoiding the assumptions evident in entrepreneurship research and gaining more meaningful insights into the phenomenon of nascent entrepreneurship could lie in seeking out a different approach to research (Sarasvathy, 2004). Traditionally empirical entrepreneurship research adopts quantitative measures to understand a phenomenon that is often both qualitative in nature (Witt, 2004) and closely linked to other aspects of the entrepreneur's life (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991). Scholars have suggested that new research approaches could move beyond economic rationality and develop an understanding of entrepreneurship as a socially situated phenomenon (Anderson et al., 2018) by focusing on what entrepreneurs do (Gartner, 1988), exploring categories of entrepreneurs (Sarasvathy, 2004) and deviations within the entrepreneurial sample (Ogbor, 2000) in order to avoid the assumptions that more traditional approaches foster. Although the understanding of factors supporting or impeding nascent entrepreneurship has developed over recent years, little research explores nascent entrepreneurial characteristics as antecedents to their new venture creation activities (Hopp & Sonderegger, 2015).

2.7   Conceptualisations of entrepreneurship - An identity perspective

The study of entrepreneurial identity provides opportunities for research in the field of entrepreneurship (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006) because it has the potential to call into question the depiction of the entrepreneur as an autonomous lone operator (Mendoza, Coule, & Johnston, 2021) by developing alternative understandings of who the entrepreneur is as well as the entrepreneurial process (Ireland & Webb, 2007;

Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). Identities can influence motivations, actions and commitment and are central to meaning-making (Svenningson & Alvesson, 2003) therefore an understanding of entrepreneurial identities can provide insights into the founding process (Zhang & Chun, 2017) as well as the entrepreneurial experience as a whole.   Although there is a growing recognition amongst entrepreneurship scholars that an identity approach can offer understandings of an individual's entrepreneurial motivations as well as their decision to continue to engage in entrepreneurial activities, there is little empirical examination of this phenomenon (Farmer, Yao, & Kung-Mcintyre, 2011).

An individual's identity can include a personal identity as well as identities related to the membership of a social group or a role (Karhunen, Olimpieva, & Hytti, 2017). In the extant literature, entrepreneurial identity is explored through different lenses including social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), role identity theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000) and social constructionism (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014). The social identity theory perspective views the entrepreneur as a member of a social category (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). This allows an exploration of the impact of identity on behaviour (see Fauchart & Gruber, 2011) as well as the interplay between the entrepreneurial identity and other social identities such as gender or ethinicity (see Essers & Benschop, 2007). Role identity theory explores the development of the entrepreneurial role in relation to other professional roles as well as the interplay between these identities (see Karhunen, Olimpieva, & Hytti, 2017) and can shed light in the transition into the entrepreneurial role (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Through the social constructionist lens, the discursive practices and linguistic resources employed by the entrepreneur in their construction of an entrepreneurial identity are explored (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014). What these theoretical perspectives have in common is the implication that a desired identity can be a precursor to engagement, action and commitment (Farmer et al., 2011), the assumption being that the desired identity is an entrepreneurial one.

Whilst previously identity was viewed as an entity with stable qualities, the current field now views it as a dynamic process which has an impact on and is impacted by other identities and behaviours as well as the context and environment in which it is

situated (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014). Similarly, where once identity was viewed as monolithic now identities are viewed as multiple (Svenningson & Alvesson, 2003) with a clear distinction between personal identities and external identities (Watson, 2008). Despite this, the impact of personal identities on the entrepreneurial experience is not well understood (Wry & York, 2017).

In the remainder of the chapter, three themes in the identity literature will be discussed. Firstly, the links between identity, entrepreneurial motivations and opportunities during the nascent phase will be explored. Entrepreneurial identities are formed in different ways and identity formation is discussed here in detail. Finally, the interplay between different identities can lead to identity conflict and identity reconciliation and integration. Insights into the transition to entrepreneurship can be gained by giving consideration to identity interplay and management during the opportunity exploitation phase.

2.7.1 Identity, motivation and opportunity recognition

A better understanding of the role of entrepreneurial motivation can help to explain the entrepreneurial phenomenon (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018). The entrepreneurial identity has been linked to the motivation to start a new venture (Obschonka, Silbereisen, Cantner, & Goethner, 2015) because it is viewed as a catalyst for individuals to take the first steps towards new venture creation and, therefore, propels entrepreneurial action (Down & Reveley, 2004; Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006). Seen in this light, the entrepreneurial identity precedes the creation of the venture itself (Down & Reveley, 2004).

Individuals experience a transition period when they start a new venture (Down & Reveley, 2004). Down & Reveley (2004) found that their research participants' entrepreneurial identity enabled them to make the transition from salaried employees to risk-taking entrepreneurs (Down & Reveley, 2004). Hoang and Gimeno (2010) argue the concept of founder role identity can provide insights into why individuals complete or abandon entrepreneurship during the transition period. By viewing the new venture creation process as involving a role transition, Hoang and Gimeno (2010) highlight the challenges new entrepreneurs face and link entrepreneurial identity to the longer term outcomes of the venture including successful founding. Gaining an understanding of

the identity of entrepreneurs can provide insights into this period (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010) as well as the entrepreneurial experience as a whole (Cohen & Musson, 2000). For example, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) explored entrepreneurial decision making by linking different motivating influences to the different founder identities displayed by their participants. Their study posits that founder role identity influenced their decision-making in terms of which market segment is served, how customer needs are dealt with and which resources and capabilities are utilized (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011).

However Leitch and Harrison (2016) caution against the portrayal of identity as a pre-determined trait or characteristic of the personality. Nominalistic studies such as Hoang and Gimeno (2010) and Fauchart and Gruber (2011) which view identity as a static entity typically assume that the entrepreneurial identity instigates venture start-up, remains unchanged and continues to influence behaviour in the same way. When identity is no longer regarded as a static 'monolithic' construct (Murnieks, Mosakowski, & Cardon, 2014 p.1585) the extent to which it is possible to predict founder behaviour by founder role identity is called into question.

The extant entrepreneurship literature suggests that a possible future entrepreneurial identity can also guide behaviour as the entrepreneur attempts to convert a desired identity into an actual one (Farmer et al., 2011; Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Dissatisfaction with an identity self-assessment may even motivate non-entrepreneurial individuals to assume the entrepreneurial identity that is lauded by the media (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018). Therefore, envisioning a possible entrepreneurial self can lead to entrepreneurial behaviours (Farmer et al., 2011; Nabi et al., 2015) before an individual has even taken on the entrepreneurial role (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010).

However the entrepreneurial identity is not always viewed in a positive light across all cultures, industries or social groups (Donnellon, Ollila, & Williams Middleton, 2014; Jones, Ratten, Klapper, & Fayolle, 2019; Zhang & Chun, 2017). For example, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Zhang & Chun's, (2017) study viewed becoming an entrepreneur as a drastic lowering in social status thus highlighting how studying entrepreneurs with similar backgrounds can lead to nuanced understandings of the entrepreneurial phenomenon (Ozasir Kacar & Essers, 2019). Empirical studies of

female entrepreneurship (see Duberley & Carrigan, 2013; Mills & Pawson, 2006) reveal that a dual identity of mother and professional can provide the impulse behind new venture creation. Mills and Pawson's (2006) study links the subject's identity as an active family woman who needs to be engaged in business activity with her motivation to start her own business. In Duberley & Carrigan's (2013) study, business start-up allowed the participants to maintain a professional identity which maternity leave and motherhood threatened to take away whilst simultaneously being able to live out their 'good mother' identity. On the other hand, in Hytti's (2005) case study, becoming a self-employed journalist allowed the subject to safeguard her journalist identity when faced with a lack of job security. Whilst the entrepreneurial identity literature assumes that becoming an entrepreneur is prioritised by individuals who start a venture, for the musicians in Albinsson's (2018) study, creating their own opportunities in order to work as professional musicians was the end goal. This suggests that individuals may also choose an entrepreneurial career in order to defend who they currently are (Powell & Baker, 2014) rather than to achieve a desired future identity.

Within the field of social psychology, personal identities are viewed as influencing the information that individuals attend to (Hitlin, 2003). Therefore because social relationships and feedback are also provided through personal identities, entrepreneurship researchers should give more consideration to the influence of personal identities on the process of entrepreneurship (Wry & York, 2017). However, the motivations and entrepreneurial identity formation of nascent entrepreneurs who do not aspire to an entrepreneurial identity is largely unexplored (Mendoza et a,l 2021). With the extant literature focusing on entrepreneurial identities (see for example, Down & Reveley, 2004; Hoang & Gimeno, 2010), the impact of non-entrepreneurial identities on entrepreneurs' motivations and opportunity recognition is under researched thereby limiting our knowledge of the entrepreneurial process (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018).

In their study of social entrepreneurship, Wry & York (2017) argue that both role and personal identities affect the types of opportunities that a social entrepreneur recognises as well as influencing how they choose to develop these opportunities and the criteria they apply to measure their success. Fresh insights can be gained by

considering both salient non-entrepreneurial role and personal identities (Wry & York, 2017). Awareness of opportunities comes from knowledge, competencies and social relationships, all of which may be provided by role identities. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the entrepreneurial motivations of individuals who do identify (or aspire to identify) with the entrepreneurial role but who, nevertheless, create a new venture and embark on an entrepreneurial career.

2.7.2 Identity formation

If entrepreneurial identities are crucial to the motivation to start and the ability to persevere in new venture creation then when and how are they formed? Calls for more attention to be paid to entrepreneurial identity formation suggest that the area is under researched (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Unlike role transitions within an organisational context, little is known about the transition to an entrepreneurial identity which, unlike professional roles, differs from previous, related roles, lacks relatable role models and demands new practices (Zhang & Chun, 2017). Within entrepreneurship research, the approach taken depends on how identity is defined. Functionalist, variable driven approaches regard identity as an objective and measurable category to which an individual belongs whilst discursive approaches view identity as a resource used by an individual in shaping their sense of self (Gill, 2017 p.37). The entrepreneurial identity can start to emerge prior to the creation of the new venture (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). Previous job and personal experiences, observing entrepreneurial behaviour (Newbery, Lean, Moizer, & Haddoud, 2018) and other significant life events, can influence entrepreneurial identity formation (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). From this perspective, identity formation is an individual experience that intersects with and is influenced by the social discourses of gender, ethnicity, class or religion (Gill, 2017). The extent to which an individual can challenge and resist these prevailing cultural narratives is widely debated in the literature (Garcia-Lorenzo, Donnelly, Sell-Trujillo, & Imas, 2018). Therefore, the discursive approach can be broadly divided by researchers' views on the extent to which individuals can actively engage in identity crafting and the extent to which they are bound by prevailing social discourses (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014).

Nascent entrepreneurs have to constantly confront the "pervasive cultural narratives" about who an entrepreneur is supposed to be (Garcia-Lorenzo, Donnelly, Sell-Trujillo, & Imas, 2018 p.382). The entrepreneurial identity, therefore, reflects the enterprise discourse that exists in the public domain (Anderson & Warren, 2011). The language of enterprise discourse is representative of the values and meanings ascribed to entrepreneurial activities however it is also dynamic and diverse and individuals appropriate the aspects of it that are relevant to them and their situated view of the world (Cohen & Musson, 2000). An individual's sense of self is made up of multiple identities (Burke, 2003) including a self-identity that the individual feels themselves to be and the social identities that other people take the individual to be (Watson, 2009). Watson (2009) conceptualises identity as being a made up of both personal and social aspects of identity. Individuals develop and evolve an entrepreneurial identity through the stories they tell (Rae, 2004). Narrative and dramatic processes, such as storylines, emplotment and narrative structuring (Downing, 2005) as well as different forms of language use, such as clichés (Down & Warren, 2008), can also be seen as performances for other audiences (Anderson et al., 2018) and further our understanding of identity-making amongst entrepreneurs.

The transition stage offers nascent entrepreneurs an opportunity to experiment with different versions of themselves as well as new relationships and activities (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2018; Ibarra, 1999). This suggests that an individual does not passively accept the prevailing social discourses or accept the social identity ascribed to them by others but strives to shape their identities and the way they are perceived by others (Watson, 2009). By carrying out identity work, defined as the processes by which people shape a coherent and distinct notion of their personal identity in relation to the social identities attributed to them (Watson, 2009), individuals create an entrepreneurial identity that is acceptable to the multiple identities that make up their sense of self (Watson, 2009). For scholars writing from a discursive perspective, entrepreneurial identities are formed continuously through simultaneous interactions with other social identities such as gender or family roles (Chasserio et al., 2014). Essers & Benschop (2007) explore how the participants navigate the restricting and enabling discourse of gender and ethnicity to enable them to craft their entrepreneurial identity (Gill, 2017). Glinka & Brzozowska's (2015) findings highlight

the context dependent nature of identity by illustrating the entrepreneurial identity construction of her participants through an interplay of being an immigrant, being an entrepreneur and a sense of nationality. This interplay of identities takes place within a cultural context in a number of overlapping dimensions including private, social and professional and calls into question the representation of entrepreneurial identity as stable and constant (Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015).

Entrepreneurial identity is formed through a sense of belonging that is socially and culturally created through such interactions with socially situated others (Anderson et al., 2018). Through these interactions nascent entrepreneurs develop repertoires and self-narratives which enable them to manage the transition to an entrepreneurial identity (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018). Mills & Pawson (2012) describe their participants' narrative accounts as an attempt to make sense of their start-up experiences by integrating role expectations and going beyond discourse (Svenningson & Alvesson, 2003).Individuals are socialised through both cognitive and symbolic mechanisms (King, 2017) such as workshops and the success stories of other entrepreneurs. Socialisation into entrepreneurial communities, including working with a mentor (Rigg & O'Dwyer, 2012), and the resulting immersion into the discourse of enterprise (Cohen & Musson, 2000) can act as an induction for new entrepreneurs, enabling them to learn how to be (Obschonka, Goethner, Silbereisen, & Cantner, 2012; Rigg & O'Dwyer, 2012). In this way, social identification promotes a feeling of oneness with a social group and the sense of shared experiences (Anderson et al., 2018).

However, the concept of entrepreneurial identity in the extant literature is subject to problematic assumptions regarding identity formation (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014). This is due to the predominant attention on how entrepreneurs narratively construct their entrepreneurial identity (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014). In addition to narrative identity construction and group membership, entrepreneurial identities can develop through role enactment (Anderson, Warren, & Bensemann, 2018), suggesting a need for researchers to also pay attention to embodied, non-discursive practices (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014).

According to Rae (2004), the social interactions as well as the activities required to carry out the entrepreneurial role can lead to the emergence of an entrepreneurial

identity. By viewing entrepreneurial identity formation as a fluid and continual process we can investigate how it is shaped by entrepreneurial actions (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Role enactment requires the entrepreneur to engage with both people and with place (Anderson et al., 2018) thus enabling the nascent entrepreneur to receive and internalise the sensegiving of others (Hoyte, Noke, Mosey, & Marlow, 2019). Being an entrepreneur involves a series of decisions and commitments whereby the individual or team of individuals adopt responsibilities, undertake tasks and undergo experiences that distinguish them from others (Atherton, 2004). Commonplace start-up practices such as applying for funding or investment produce reality by encouraging individuals to imagine themselves running the venture and this can have a profound effect on self-perception (King, 2017). Entrepreneurial identity, from this perspective, is therefore performatively produced and can be described as performances of the self (Anderson et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs enact what it means to be entrepreneurial through their networking activities (Jack, Moult, Anderson, & Dodd, 2010). Viewing networking through an identity perspective enables researchers to consider benefits other than resource and information acquisition such as emotional support, confidence building, social learning and identification with a collective (Jack et al., 2010; Pearson, Carr, & Shaw, 2008).

The meaning of individual stories is created within wider cultural stories (LaPointe, 2010). Therefore entrepreneurs are active in shaping and reshaping their entrepreneurial identities using materials from the context in which they operate such as other identities, experiences and perspectives (Down & Reveley, 2004; Hytti, 2005). Time and place are also important both to the development of the individual's narrative account of their experience as well as to how the account is interpreted (Hytti, 2005). Identity work can only be understood in the context of the entrepreneur's life (Watson, 2009). Entrepreneurship is, therefore, performative in that it is a matter of becoming and this process of becoming is enmeshed in culturally and historically embedded discourses which can be challenged, experimented with or accepted in the course of identity construction (Hytti & Heinonen, 2013; Phillips & Knowles, 2012). According to Markowska, Härtel, Brundin, Roan, & Hatel (2015) increased contextual embeddedness leads ultimately to increased identification with the entrepreneurial role resulting in individuals putting more effort into adopting

behaviours expected of the role. In this way, entrepreneurship can be seen as an enacted situated practice (Bruni et al., 2004).

However there remains a need to understand entrepreneurial identity construction over time and in diverse contexts; from prior to start-up to founding and beyond and across different SME and entrepreneurial context in such a way that transcends the essentialist identity categories that characterise the field (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Therefore a multiple identity approach can illuminate identity formation, conflict and reconciliation (Leitch & Harrison, 2016).

2.7.3 Identity conflict, reconciliation and persistence

How then does the interplay of multiple identities within one individual influence the entrepreneurial experience? Successful transition into the founder role depends on the extent of the conflict between the new role and other identities held by the individual (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Therefore, the interplay between multiple identities influences entrepreneurial identity construction (Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015).

The multiple identities that make up the sense of self can be complementary or contradictory (Karhunen et al., 2017) and some nascent entrepreneurs may feel under pressure to behave in ways which conform to the entrepreneurial stereotype but feel inauthentic to their sense of self (Treanor, Jones, & Marlow, 2020). Transitions to an entrepreneurial role can be affected by the founder's strength of attachment to the role (centrality) as well as the extent to which the new role affects existing commitments to other roles (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Frederiksen & Berglund (2020) conceptualise authenticity as the ideal starting point for entrepreneurial identity formation. As individuals strive for a sense of authenticity, they both defend the identities that they value against threats and behave in ways that confirm valued identities (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018; Powell & Baker, 2014). A feeling of authenticity comes from the close connection between an individual's sense of self and their external social identity (Lewis, 2013). As nascent entrepreneurs reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with the socially ascribed entrepreneurial identity and their other identities they carry out 'authenticity-driven identity work' (Lewis, 2013, p. 252) in order to frame their experience and create a cohesive story of the self

(Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018; Zhang & Chun, 2017). This can result in nascent entrepreneurs describing themselves as an entrepreneur differently to the cultural understanding of the entrepreneurial actor (Bell et al., 2019).

As nascent entrepreneurs begin to form an entrepreneurial identity they experience a 'rewriting of the self' whereby they make adjustments to their sense of self in order to integrate the emerging identity (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2018 p.38). They carry out identity work (Watson, 2008) by tuning their personal identities to accommodate the new entrepreneurial identity whilst modifying the prevailing cultural understanding of the entrepreneurial identity in order to preserve valued aspects of the social groups and roles that they identify with (Hytti & Heinonen, 2013; Karhunen et al., 2017). However, there remains a need to understand how nascent entrepreneurs resist, use or discard the socially ascribed entrepreneurial identity available to them (Lewis & Llewellyn, 2004).

Nascent entrepreneurs can experience self-doubt during the transition period (Zhang & Chun, 2017). Identity dissonance can occur between entrepreneurial (self) identity and the social (ascribed) identity of what it means to be entrepreneurial; in other words who and how one presents oneself and who and how one is identified (Anderson et al., 2018). The meaning of 'entrepreneur' in terms of its heroic portrayal in Western society has implications for Warren's (2004) participants who preferred to be recognised as professionals whereas for Glinka & Brzozowska's (2015) immigrant entrepreneurs entrepreneurship constituted an appealing way of constructing a professional identity.

In order to establish an entrepreneurial identity, an entrepreneur must construct their entrepreneurial self and establish their self-efficacy or belief that they are able to mobilise resources to exploit a venture idea (Zhang & Chun, 2017). Donnellon et al., (2014) argue that entrepreneurial identity construction is a critical part of developing entrepreneurial competency. Therefore in addition to entrepreneurial identity construction, self-efficacy drives entrepreneurial persistence (Cardon & Kirk, 2015). However, identifying with the concept of being an entrepreneur does not automatically lead to perceptions of self-efficacy and feelings of self-efficacy are mediated by entrepreneurial motivations (Brändle, Berger, Golla, & Kuckertz, 2018).

For example, Brändle et al., (2018) suggest that nascent entrepreneurs on a mission to make a positive difference in the world are more likely to experience lower levels of self-efficacy than financially motivated entrepreneurs.

Different strategies of identity management can be employed by entrepreneurs in order to reconcile conflicting identities. Shepherd & Haynie (2009b) found that entrepreneurs in a family business developed a 'meta-identity' in order to address the competing demands of family and business identities. Similarly, Lewis & LLewelyn's (2004) subject experienced a constant movement between her old corporate identity and her new entrepreneurial identity resulting in the emergence of a hybrid identity. In their endeavour to balance the psychological needs of distinctiveness and belonging, the subjects of   Shepherd & Haynie's (2009a) study employ two identity management strategies: compartmentalisation and integration. In the former strategy, entrepreneurs switch back and forth between their entrepreneurial identity and the identity that gives them a sense of belonging and in the latter, entrepreneurs occupy multiple identities at the same time in an attempt to overcome competing demands (Shepherd & Haynie, 2009a). However Powell & Baker(2014) found that entrepreneurs with incongruent identities had to suppress one or more chronically salient identity in order to run their entrepreneurial venture.

Research suggests that entrepreneurs must manage their roles within the venture in order for it to grow (Mathias & Williams, 2018). Hoang & Gimeno (2010) highlight a link between identity integration and persistence arguing that insights can be obtained into how the entrepreneurial role affects organisational founding and development (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010 p.50). How entrepreneurs react to difficulties can depend on the structure of their salient identities thus going some way to explain why entrepreneurs react differently to the same adversity (Powell & Baker, 2014). The management of multiple identities is linked to the regulation of the entrepreneur's emotions (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006). Entrepreneurs who experience problems in their venture which prevent them from enacting a salient entrepreneurial identity may suffer from negative emotions such as low self-esteem (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006) whereas positive emotions have a motivational influence (Ahsan, Zheng,

DeNoble, & Musteen, 2018). Therefore entrepreneurial passion enhances entrepreneurial persistence (Cardon & Kirk, 2015).

Entrepreneurial identity construction requires further exploration and discussion (Donnellon et al., 2014). An emphasis on multiple identities is important to entrepreneurship (Nielsen & Gartner, 2017). Warren (2004) argues that a greater understanding of the interplay between multiple identities could offer insights into entrepreneurial transition. The entrepreneurship literature links entrepreneurial passion with entrepreneurial motivations and outcomes (Murnieks et al., 2014) however limited studies link non-entrepreneurial passion to new venture creation (Huyghe et al., 2016). Future research could explore whether personal non-entrepreneurial identities and passions have an impact on the motivation to start a business, their role in the individual's ability to persevere in the face of difficulties and the impact of identity conflict between personal non-entrepreneurial identities, and other multiple identities. To understand this more contextually embedded research is needed that acknowledges identity as a dynamic and emergent process of "becoming" which would allow for more understanding of identity creation and entrepreneurial outcomes (Leitch & Harrison, 2016 p.185). Therefore research is needed in unexplored and novel contexts in order to gain an understanding of how entrepreneurial identity is both formed and sustained (Lewis, 2016).

2.8 Chapter Summary

What does it mean to be an entrepreneur? The field of entrepreneurship research has been criticised for its narrow conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Explanations of entrepreneurship are based on assumptions of rationality and intentionality and the entrepreneurial actor is represented in stereotypical terms. As a result, our understanding of who the entrepreneur is and what the entrepreneur does is incomplete. On a practical level, the ubiquitous characterisation of the entrepreneur can discourage and even exclude individuals from participation in entrepreneurial activities.

The portrayal of the heroic entrepreneur endowed with unique, innate talents can be traced from the early days of entrepreneurship research across time and academic disciplines. Early economists' observations of the entrepreneur's role in the

development of the economy still resonate today. Schumpeter's (1934) portrayal of the entrepreneur as a heroic innovator remains influential within the field of entrepreneurship research. Despite personality trait research in entrepreneurship being replaced by other foci, the traits attributed to entrepreneurs are still commonly referred to as a given both by researchers as well as in the popular conception of the entrepreneur. Although contemporary economists framed entrepreneurship as the nexus between opportunity and the individual (Shane, 2003) they also attributed too much agency (Fletcher, 2006) to the individual entrepreneur who was distinguished by his or her superior cognitive abilities and rational decision making in the process of opportunity recognition.

More recently, the attempt to move the focus from the individual to the firm as the unit of analysis did little to question the assumptions rife in the field. The measurement tools used in entrepreneurial orientation (EO) research impede the development of a nuanced understanding of the processes being researched and as a result, the approach has become a standard to be used for comparison (Randerson, 2016). Furthermore, EO, whilst ostensibly an analysis of firm-level behaviour, attributes the traits and characteristics associated with the entrepreneur to the culture of the organisation, the senior management team and the CEO.

Recognising the influence on the venture that the founder is capable of, motivations research sets out to understand the decisions entrepreneurs make (Shane et al., 2003). However, motivations research typically relies on hierarchical dichotomies to explain the different reasons why entrepreneurs act (Welter et al., 2017). These dichotomous distinctions privilege some types of entrepreneurial motivations (for example, wealth creation) over others (for example, lack of employment opportunities) thereby reinforcing the view that financial gain is the fundamental goal of entrepreneurial activities (Rindova et al., 2009). Motivations research, which attributes economic rationality to the entrepreneur's decision making process, obscures the episodic and socially situated nature of entrepreneurship. In the search for links between motivation and subsequent performance, human emotions are portrayed as static and consistent; the motivation to persist once the venture is established in the same way

decisions and behaviour were influenced at start up (Birley & Westhead, 1994; Williams & Williams, 2014).

Entrepreneurial identity research allows researchers to move beyond economic rationality (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017) and offers a different approach to gathering insights into the phenomenon of entrepreneurship (Sarasvathy, 2004). Entrepreneurial identity is understood to be linked to entrepreneurial motivations and the formation of an entrepreneurial identity is seen as necessary in order for the entrepreneur to persevere with his or her endeavour (Down & Reveley, 2004). However, despite the emergent shift in the field from the essentialist conceptualisation of static, singular identities towards a multiple identity perspective, the influence of non-entrepreneurial and personal identities on the motivation to start and persevere with a venture remains unclear. The successful formation and reconciliation of an entrepreneurial identity is necessary in order to make the transition into entrepreneurship therefore research in this area could illuminate the processes of identity formation and the challenges that result from the interplay of multiple identities. Additionally, how entrepreneurs use entrepreneurship to defend a central non-entrepreneurial identity is not well understood. If entrepreneurial identities are formed through enactment and socialisation then what role do other identities play in this process? This research takes a step toward this goal. The next chapter explains my motivation for undertaking the study and my rationale for the approach taken. Before discussing my methodological approach, I outline a methodological critique of the dominant entrepreneurship literature which, I argue, has resulted in a narrow conceptualisation of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship.

Chapter 3   Methodology

In the following chapter, I detail my motivation and rationale for undertaking the study within the adopted methodological approach. In order to explain my motivations, I also critique the dominant methodological approach to entrepreneurship research. I discuss the philosophical commitments that underpin the methodology and explain my methodology, methods and data analysis in detail. The chapter ends with a discussion of the research project's ethical considerations.

3.1   Rationale for the approach

The idea for the study was born out of a sense of unease about the way entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are studied and consequently represented in academic research. High growth, high tech ventures or "unicorns" which represent the less common instances of entrepreneurship receive a disproportionate amount of academic and press attention (Welter et al., 2017 p.312). Indeed, in 2018 there were 4.3 million non-employing businesses compared to 1.4 million employing businesses (Federation of Small Businesses, 2019). Therefore I want to explore entrepreneurship beyond the "tiny group of outliers" that are unrepresentative of the diverse majority of entrepreneurial activity (Welter et al., 2017, p. 313) and entrepreneurs beyond the homogeneous image of the entrepreneur (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers, Gartner, 2012).

In my former role as a university Research Associate, I regularly encountered start-up founders; some of whom were students and recent graduates. However, in my encounters with them, I was unable to make a connection between the people and the ventures within my networks and the subjects of much academic research. I could not recognise the autonomous, independent and financially driven entrepreneur that I read about in academic studies in the entrepreneurs in my networks and I wondered why this may be. I was also concerned that these prototypical characteristics were so readily portrayed in the field that there was a risk that research was being carried out based on erroneous assumptions about who the entrepreneur is. I wondered how the entrepreneurial stereotype might affect those who did want to start a venture but could not relate to this image. Would they find it off putting or discouraging? I

wondered how students and recent graduates, as a sizeable sub-set of nascent entrepreneurs, experienced entrepreneurship but could not find many answers in the literature. Whilst the graduate entrepreneurship literature examines the phenomenon through a range of demographic variables, student entrepreneurship focuses on entrepreneurial intentions. I felt that this may be due to the focus that traditional entrepreneurship research had on measurement and prediction where the context was lost and wondered if an approach based on exploration would offer different results and understandings. Therefore the rationale for the study came from a desire to connect with, explore and understand entrepreneurship from the perspectives of the nascent entrepreneurs that I encountered in day to day life. As a result, the empirical focus of my study is student and recent graduate entrepreneurs however the theoretical contribution is relevant to the broader field of entrepreneurship research because the sample comprises of participants in the early stages of their entrepreneurial career. Therefore, the research outcomes expand the understanding of the phenomenon of nascent entrepreneurship in general. The following section includes a critique of the dominant methodological approach in entrepreneurship research providing further justification for my chosen approach.

3.1.1 Critique of dominant methodological approach to entrepreneurship research

Entrepreneurship is considered to be a complex and dynamic phenomenon that spans a variety of contexts (*GEM Global Report*, 2007; Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007). However, as an academic field, it is dominated by positivistic approaches using quantitative methodologies (Bygrave, 2007). The limited view of entrepreneurship researchers in terms of what is relevant results, according to Gartner (2004), in a lack of evidence and this restricts our understanding of the phenomenon. Descriptive and empirical based research based on structured surveys obscures the fact that entrepreneurial activity is episodic, staged and short-lived and instead presents findings as static and permanent (Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007; Shane, 2003; Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003). By focusing on specific causal relationships, encounters and events, positivistic approaches produce abstracted concepts and descriptions that allow for generalisation across a range of contexts and risk superficiality by seeking breadth over depth (Bosley, Arnold, & Cohen, 2009; Conger, 1998; Kempster & Cope, 2010). The analysis of relationships between variables lifts entrepreneurs out of the context in which they receive and

make meaning, creating a deterministic view that is independent of their lives (Berglund, 2007; Bryman, 2012). Context can offer opportunities and set boundaries for entrepreneurial actions, therefore, a consideration of context in entrepreneurship research can add to our understanding of the phenomenon (Welter, 2011). Research areas are typically defined by the researcher rather than the participants and the tendency to use convenient, readily available data sets further distances the researcher from the researched (Bosley et al., 2009; Bygrave, 2007). The dominant approach for researching entrepreneurial activity excludes diversity and reinforces reductionist stereotypes (such as the hero character) whilst leaving assumptions, particularly around entrepreneurial personality traits, unquestioned (Bruni et al., 2004; Orser et al., 2011).

This is not to criticise positivistic approaches reliant on quantitative methods per se, rather my intention is to raise concerns over its dominance which results in a failure to reflect the complexity and dynamism of the field. There is little evidence to describe what entrepreneurs actually do (Gartner, Carter & Hills, 2003; Gartner, 2004) because quantitative studies limit the type of questions that can be asked (Gartner & Birley, 2002). Bygrave (2007) argues that an emerging field, such as entrepreneurship, is better suited to exploratory, empirical research, more observation and more description whilst Gartner & Birley (2002) believe that qualitative studies are better suited to asking the questions that are 'missed' by quantitative studies.

However qualitative studies of entrepreneurship also have some criticisms to answer as concerns have been raised about the lack of sophistication in qualitative methods (Fletcher, 2006; Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007). When qualitative research is published it is often based on case studies developed from archival data or structured and semi-structured interviews (Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007) and an over-reliance on anecdotes has been noted (Fletcher, 2006). The lack of transparency both in the selection of participants as well as the process of data analysis have also been raised as criticisms of qualitative research (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Bryman, 2012). Fletcher (2006) argues that to improve the quality and rigour of qualitative research closer consideration should be paid to its philosophical underpinnings (Busenitz et al., 2003;

Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Therefore I was keen to explore my philosophical assumptions as discussed in the section below.

3.1.2 Philosophical considerations

Entrepreneurship involves social interaction and its enactment is embedded in the social context (Anderson et al., 2018; Sarason et al., 2006). I believe that people construct meanings through their engagement with the world that they are interpreting, therefore, my epistemological position, my theoretical understanding of how we know what we know, is constructionism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) (see Table 1). From this position, I can gain insights into the phenomenon of entrepreneurship by paying attention to how participants make sense of their entrepreneurial experiences within the context of enacted practices and interactions with the environmental context (Crotty, 1998).

Table 1 Relationship between philosophical considerations and methodology

[edited]

(Adapted from Crotty, 1998)

Entrepreneurship research from a constructionist perspective is usually aligned with the European tradition which emphasises discursive practices and linguistic resources in the construction of meaning (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014). However, whilst I share a commitment to constructionism, my focus is the embodied experience of the entrepreneur of which language is an important part (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Therefore it is not my intention to discover objective truths about entrepreneurship. Rather, I aim to gain insights into how the entrepreneurs in my study understand their own experience of entrepreneurship. I recognise that, as a researcher, my account of the social world is a construction rather than definitive knowledge (Bryman, 2012). It is not my intention to confirm or disconfirm prior theories but rather any theoretical insights and contribution generated stems from the lived experiences of the participants (Cope, 2005; Leitch et al., 2010). This stance allows me to pay attention to the particular rather than the general and therefore facilitates an exploration of the multiplicity and diversity of entrepreneurship (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014).

Constructionism, with its invitation to reinterpretation and its openness to new or richer meaning, informs my interpretivist perspective (Bryman, 2012). Interpretation is a means of seeking meaning (Crotty, 1998; Moran, 2000; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and this is achieved via the circular process of exploring our pre-understandings in order to "render explicit and thematic what is at first implicit and unthematised" (Crotty, 1998, p. 97). Following Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics, I question the possibility of any knowledge outside of an interpretative stance (Crotty, 1998; Smith et al, 2009). My theoretical perspective enables me to surface assumptions about entrepreneurship and explore the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants whilst acknowledging the double hermeneutic; any understanding gained results from my interpretation of the participants' interpretations. A commitment to phenomenology allows me to explore the essence of the lived experience of entrepreneurship (Patton, 2002). The close analysis of the lived experience of my participants generates thick descriptions and allows a nuanced understanding to emerge. My commitment to this perspective enables me to avoid generalisations over a range of contexts and instead highlights both convergence and divergence in the experiences of participants.

3.1.3   Methodological Goals

As a result of the philosophical considerations that underpin my approach and in response to my critique of entrepreneurship research I have developed a number of methodological goals which are discussed below.

In line with phenomenological inquiry's location in the "context of discovery" rather than the "context of justification" (Cope, 2005, p. 171), my first goal is to avoid the assumptions and stereotypes prevalent in entrepreneurship research (Bruni et al., 2004; Orser et al., 2011). By suspending a priori theoretical propositions I aim to describe entrepreneurship from the perspective of the participants who experience it (Cope, 2005; Hycner, 1985). I adopt a participant-led rather than a researcher-led approach to the phenomenon under investigation, using loosely structured in-depth interviews as a means of encouraging participants to discuss areas of importance to them (Smith et al, 2009). Through my reflexive engagement with the participants' understanding of their experience, I develop my own interpretation of what

entrepreneurship means to them. I acknowledge, therefore, that the resulting findings and discussion are produced by engaging in a double hermeneutic and do not represent an attempt to present an object truth (Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2009; Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Smith, 2011).

I address my second aim, to describe what entrepreneurs actually do (Gartner, 2004) by providing "rich details and thick descriptions" (Cope, 2011, p. 608) of entrepreneurship. By deeply exploring entrepreneurship from the perspective of the participants' meaningful lived experiences I develop descriptions that contribute to raising awareness and understanding of how entrepreneurs are "motivated to act" (Berglund, 2007, p. 89). This contrasts with the dominant positivistic approach to entrepreneurship research which aims to produce broad descriptions across a range of contexts (Kempster & Cope, 2010). Entrepreneurship research approached from this perspective aims for statistical generalisation and causal predictions which lift both entrepreneurs and the conceptualised attributes of entrepreneurship out of the contexts in which they receive their meaning (Berglund, 2007). In phenomenological terms, any attempt to provide predictive knowledge through the construction of generalizable laws applicable across time and space is untenable (Cope, 2005, p. 169). Whilst my aim is to develop deep understandings of the meanings that the experience of entrepreneurship holds for the participants, theoretical (rather than empirical) generalizability is possible (Cope, 2011; Gill, 2015). Therefore my analysis of the findings will be explored in relation to the extant entrepreneurship literature in the discussion chapter (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). By creating a dialogue between the analysed data and the extant literature I aim to demonstrate my sensitivity to the research context. (Smith et al, 2009).

Leitch, Hill, & Neergaard (2010) suggest that knowledge of entrepreneurship is bounded by its "contextual nature" (p. 70). Therefore my third aim is to locate the research in its specific context and time, thereby producing a "photographic slice" of nascent entrepreneurs' lives (Cope, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985 p. 155). By limiting the sample to a small group with similar contextual characteristics, the dynamic nature of the entrepreneurial experience can be explored in terms of the balance of convergence and divergence within the sample (Berglund, 2007; Smith, et al, 2009). In

this way, shared themes can be identified along with the particular way in which these themes play out for individuals (Cope, 2011) giving the study an idiographic approach.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Methodology

In order to explore the entrepreneurial experience from the perspective of the participants, I adopt interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology developed principally by Jonathon Smith (Cope, 2011). IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring participants' experience in its own terms and therefore my rationale for choosing IPA is a manifestation of sensitivity to context, a quality criterion for assessing the research (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). It is also an interpretative endeavour viewing participants' accounts as attempts to make sense of what is happening to them (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). It is informed by hermeneutics and recognises that the IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic as they try to make sense of the participant who is, in turn, trying to make sense of their own experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA is an idiographic approach which aims to explore in detail the experience of individual participants as they make sense of what is happening to them (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and therefore avoids the generalising effects of traditional, positivistic approaches.

Studies adopting an IPA approach, therefore, tend to involve small, purposively selected samples who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Gill, 2015). Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are the most common methods of data collection in an IPA study and transcripts are analysed individually (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The final output of an IPA study is the researcher's interpretation supported by extracts from participants that should resonate with their experiences (Berglund, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

IPA shares several concerns and interests to other forms of interpretative qualitative analysis. Grounded theory is often seen as the main alternative approach to IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In grounded theory the researcher begins with an area of study rather than a perceived theory and theory can then be constructed from empirical data (Dey, 2007; Gehrels, 2013). Similarly IPA has an inductive approach to

inquiry and both methodologies use bottom-up coding whereby the codes are developed from the data rather than the literature (Urquhart, 2013). However, the 2 methodologies differ in a number of ways and it is these fundamental differences that result in IPA being the most suitable choice of methodological approach for this study. An IPA approach allows the methodological goals of the study (see 3.1.3) to be met because IPA's explicit aim is to explore experience and gain a better understanding of what it is like to live a particular situation (Willig, 2008) whereas the aim of grounded theory is to discover or generate theory (Urquhart, 2013) (see Table 2).

Therefore IPA is determinedly experiential in its focus (Smith, 2011) allowing me to meet the research aim by developing a deep understanding of the meaning that the experience of entrepreneurship holds for the participants whereas grounded theory is not necessarily experiential (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), By focusing on experience, IPA researchers can gain an understanding about the participants' understanding of their embodied and emotional experience of the phenomenon (Smith et al, 2009). With an IPA approach there is an emphasis on how participants make sense of what is happening to them through self-reflection (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2011). Therefore IPA is concerned with the micro-analysis of individual experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This contrasts with grounded theory which aims to produce mid-level accounts of psychosocial phenomenon preventing the researcher from gaining insights into how shared themes play out for individuals.

IPA also offers advantages over grounded theory on a processual level because its idiographic approach allows the researcher to engage in a detailed analysis with the individual transcripts before carrying out a collective analysis at a later stage of the research process (Willig, 2008). In contrast a key feature of grounded theory is that data analysis begins as soon as data has been collected (Urquhart, 2013). The grounded theory researcher follows a process of data collection and open coding, followed by initial memo writing and grouping codes into initial categories (Gehrels, 2013) whereas the first stage of analysis in IPA can include a broad and flexible range of comments, descriptive labels and questions (Willig, 2008).

In an IPA approach, sample participants are selected on the basis that they can offer a particular perspective on the phenomenon being studied (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin,

2009), therefore sampling is purposive, designed before data collection and prescribed from the start (Goulding, 2005; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). By selecting a relatively homogenous sample, the IPA researcher can explore how and where the participants' experiences converge and diverge leading to a detailed and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon (Smith, Flowers &Larkin, 2009). In addition, in order to uphold IPA's idiographic commitments, data collected from each participant's account is treated in its own terms. This allows new themes to emerge and minimises the influence of what has already been found during the analysis of previous accounts as well as the influence of the extant literature (Smith, Flowers& Larkin, 2009). Unlike IPA, in grounded theory further sampling is based on emerging concepts (Urquhart, 2013). Therefore, coding is usually centred on theoretical sampling where the researcher seeks specific new data (Gehrels, 2013) (see Table 2). This means that participants with different experiences of a phenomenon may be recruited in order to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes under study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007) As a result, the coding of empirical data in grounded theory involves a constant comparison between the literature, the data and the emerging theory (Dey, 2007; Gehrels, 2013)

Therefore an IPA approach, both in terms of its aims and its processes, allows me to avoid the assumptions and stereotypes prevalent in the entrepreneurship literature thus enabling me to focus on my own interpretations of the participants' understanding of their entrepreneurial experiences that result from my direct engagement with the transcripts. Table 2 below gives an overview of the key similarities and differences between IPA and grounded theory.

In addition, an IPA approach enables me to meet the methodological goals of the study by allowing me to explore shared themes as well as gain an understanding of how these different themes play out for individual participants. This way, similarities and differences of experience within the sample are highlighted and explored prior to developing a dialogue with the entrepreneurship literature thereby allowing me to develop a deep understanding of the meaning of entrepreneurial experience for the participants.

Table 2 Comparison between IPA and Grounded Theory (adapted from Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

[edited]

The following sections discuss in detail how I applied the principles of IPA to the design and execution of the current study in order to explore how the participants understood their own entrepreneurial experiences.

In order ensure transparency and rigour, which are quality criteria in IPA research (Smith et al, 2009), I will use the remaining chapter to give a detailed description of the research process including how the sample criteria were developed, how the participants were sourced, the interview process and the steps taken to analyse the data.

3.2.2 Sampling

In line with the principles of IPA, I used purposive sampling to select the research participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling whereby participants are chosen for their relevance to the study rather than their representation to the general population (Bryman, 2012; Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007). Patton (2002, p. 46) states "the logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research". Potential participants were contacted via referrals from my own network of contacts and I used snowballing techniques to gain referrals from other participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011). My sampling rationale was born out of my concern that the assumptions around who engages in entrepreneurship are left unchallenged in the research field thereby perpetuating stereotypical portrayals of the entrepreneur. In keeping with the principles of IPA, I selected participants who shared superficial characteristics in terms of their experience of the phenomenon of nascent entrepreneurship (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). By choosing to limit the sample to student and recent graduate entrepreneurs I would be able to explore the experience of non-stereotypical nascent entrepreneurs who shared a similar starting point at the beginning of their entrepreneurial careers. This meant that the participants not only shared a similar starting point both with each other but also with nascent entrepreneurs in general in that they were just starting out on their entrepreneurial careers and, therefore, they

were experiencing the transition to entrepreneurship. The sample criteria would allow patterns of convergence and divergence to emerge within the context of the phenomenon (Smith, et al, 2009) and therefore highlight any heterogeneity found in the sample. Heterogeneity in such a sample would point to a much greater heterogeneity amongst the wider population of entrepreneurs and therefore challenge reductionist entrepreneurial stereotypes. My aim was to locate the research in a specific context and time therefore I needed to be clear about the selection criteria (Bryman, 2012) and I identified the shared characteristics of graduation date from higher education, number of years of professional work experience and length of time in business. By choosing participants with a shared context I would be able to explore the relevance of context to the participants' transition to and experience of entrepreneurship. Initially, my criteria were participants who:

- left university between 2007 and time of study (2014/15)
- had no more than 3 years graduate level work experience as an employee*
- started a venture or become self-employed within 3 years of graduating

*Defined as employment that they could not have obtained without having achieved their university degree

By studying a purposefully chosen sample of participants with superficially similar characteristics and shared context I aimed to highlight the balance of convergence and divergence of experiences across the group. My thoughts were that if the participants were similar in terms of their date of graduation, amount of professional experience and length of time in business then they would share a similar starting point and would have experienced comparable graduate labour market conditions in relation to the wider economy. By limiting the participants' contextual background, I would be able to study contemporaries which would facilitate the comparing and contrasting of experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. I was aware that often in entrepreneurship research, in particular in studies of socio-demographic characteristics, the entrepreneurs under scrutiny are at different stages in their lives and in business. I wanted to avoid this as I felt that these studies were more about socio-economic factors rather than the specific experience of entrepreneurship as shared by nascent entrepreneurs. I decided against using age, degree discipline,

business sector, university or financial indicators of business activity such as turnover because I felt that they would not contribute to answering the research question. By choosing the above criteria and locating the research in the specific context and time shared by the participants, I aimed to explore the participants' understanding of their entrepreneurial experience holistically, thereby gaining an understanding of the "complex emergent whole" (Down & Reveley, 2004, p. 235). This approach contrasts with previous entrepreneurship research which approaches the topic in individual or psychological terms with limited attention to context or alternatively, when contextual factors are considered, such as educational background, work experience and family background, they are treated as discrete static variables (Down & Reveley, 2004).

The criteria for the sample were chosen intuitively based on the aims stated above however by reflecting on conversations with prospective participants I realised that I had based the criteria on the assumption that people's careers took a linear path. After talking to a number of entrepreneurs I realised that people's lives were more diverse in their circumstances, less uniform in their timeline and consequently I risked excluding examples which would offer insights into the research aim.. I found that instead of the traditional route from education to employment and entrepreneurship, prospective participants often carried out study, work and entrepreneurial commitments simultaneously. As a result, I amended the criteria in order to reflect the staged and episodic nature of nascent entrepreneurship (Neergaard & Ulhoi, 2007; Shane, 2003; Shane et al., 2003). The sample criteria were amended to include participants who:

- were current students (at time of interview) or had graduated no earlier than 2007
- had no more than 4 years graduate level work experience as an employee
- started a venture or became self-employed prior to graduating or within 5 years of graduating

The resulting sample included 21 participants who were current students or recent graduates from 3 universities in the north of England.

The advantages are that the amended criteria reflect the complexity of people's lives. They allow for the inclusion of participants who started their venture as a result of an earlier experience but did not act on the resulting idea until several years later. They allow for the inclusion of participants whose venture has developed as a result of a complex mix of life experiences.

The sample included 21 participants. There is no rule about how many participants to include in IPA (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) and I chose a sample size that would allow me to explore the balance of convergence and divergence as well as commonality and individuality across the participants (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Therefore I focused on getting a manageable and relevant group of participants (Berglund, 2007). The size of the sample allowed me to gain multiple perspectives ensuring that the complex interplay of nuanced experiences could be brought to the fore.

3.2.2.1 Introducing the participants

Jon is an Events Management graduate based in a city in the North of England. He knew at the interview for his first graduate role that he would ultimately start his own venture. After less than 3 years' work experience he resigned from his job and started an exhibition agency.

Robert joined his father's small business during the placement year of his Business and Enterprise Management degree and returned to the business after graduating. He also used the business' infrastructure and capabilities to launch other venture ideas turning the business into an e-commerce venture with international customers.

Chloe planned to leave her first graduate job in order to go travelling when her colleague, Claudia, suggested that they started a business together. She has a degree in Events Management so they decided to set up an Events company.

Kate was studying to be a teacher when a friend showed her a software programme that he had been developing. They decided to apply for a place in an incubator programme in a neighbouring city. Their application was successful leading to Kate juggling her final year at university in the North West whilst living and working on her tech start-up in another city.

Paige had always wanted to work with animals and during her placement year working for the enterprise support team during her university she developed the confidence to pursue her dog walking idea. By the time she was finishing her Business and Enterprise Management degree she already had paying customers.

Business and Enterprise Management graduate, **Ben**, had always been interested in working for himself but wasn't sure what to do. He had plenty of work experience in restaurants and pubs and came up with the idea of a mobile catering van which he would use to travel around festivals and events.

Luke regretted his decision to study Business Management wishing instead that he had followed his interests in graphic design. However after an inspiring trip overseas with his church he decided to start a venture to help a workers' co-operative that he had met during his stay. He was unable to take the idea forward for legal reasons and found a graduate job but, rather than being discouraged, Luke saw this as an opportunity to develop a clothing label that reflected his own interests in design, adventure travel and ethical enterprise.

During Philosophy and Politics student **Dan's** summer vacation, he took up an opportunity to teach English in a developing country. On his return, struck by the injustice of inequality he witnessed there, he joined the student society that had organised the trip. Wanting to make a positive difference, he worked with two other students to develop a social enterprise that would import and sell coffee from co-operatives in the host country.

Tourism graduate**, Claudia** was being bullied at work which led her to consider alternative career options. She came across a flyer about enterprise support at her university and persuaded her colleague Chloe to start an events company with her.

Stephanie's design project during her master's degree received such positive feedback that her university offered her a contract to develop the accessibility products further. As the contract came to an end, she felt reluctant to give it up and was anxious about how she was going to continue her design career leading her to become a self-employed accessibility product designer.

Christa had grown up with her family's retail business and decided to study Retail Management. To gain more work experience, she deferred her final year and took a full time role in retail. After confiding in her mother about how she disagreed with the way the company approached retail management, her mum encouraged her to turn a candle-making hobby into a business.

Nicole started her confectionary business during the summer after her first year of studying Business. She had worked at county fairs previously and, having seen how much money people spent, wanted to make her own money instead of working for someone else.

Simon had always liked the idea of working for himself and found working in the public sector, first as a radiologist and then as a teacher, frustrating. He loved travel and spotted the opportunity for a price comparison website when he witnessed a friend's mum trying to book a holiday online.

As an elite athlete with food allergies, **Georgie** had a strong interest in nutrition. Her big frustration was the lack of allergen free cakes. In the first year of her food and nutrition degree and with the help of her business coach father, she started an affiliate marketing blog and contracted the manufacture of cakes based on her own recipes.

Music student **Darcie** was frustrated by the apparent lack of opportunities for music graduates and, after taking a business planning module in the final year of her undergraduate degree, decided to start her own music publishing venture whilst also undertaking a masters in music and composition. She also successfully applied for a music publishing scholarship which provided her with training opportunities and networking events in the music publishing industry.

Towards the end of his product design degree **Andrew** hoped that his designs would lead to an offer of employment however when this didn't happen he and two of his fellow design students decided to start their own product design company.

Will was in his final year of a Business Management degree when long-time friend and fellow student, Dan, invited him to join them in setting up a coffee importing social enterprise. Will didn't know what he wanted to do after university but the graduate

schemes he kept hearing about did not appeal to him. He liked the idea of making a difference to people's lives and the more involved he got the more he enjoyed the experience of learning about business in a practical way.

Lauren had a troubled family life when she was growing up and she empathised with young people who were failing at school. During her event management degree, she started working as a school sports co-ordinator. She found that she was passionate about helping young people and went on to start a social enterprise - a college for young people who had been excluded from mainstream education.

English literature student **Joanna** was thinking about a career in teaching and took up an opportunity to teach English overseas as part of an exchange programme organised by a student society at her university. Shocked by the social inequalities she witnessed she became president of the society on her return to university and began, along with fellow students Will and Dan, to work on a social enterprise project importing and selling coffee from worker co-operatives.

Soon after starting a masters in neuroscience, **Caroline** realised that this was not the career for her. She persevered with the course and applied for a range of unrelated graduate jobs but was unsuccessful. By chance she saw an advert for a start-up boot camp hosted by her university and she decided she had nothing to lose by going along. She had worked in several part-time cleaning jobs since school and when challenged to think up a business idea, she came up with a cleaning business..

Gemma's degree in fashion design gave her the opportunity to gain work experience in the industry as well as take on live commercial projects. Aware of the lack of job opportunities and reluctant to move for work, she decided to start her own wedding dress design business.

Table 3 below shows the participants by selection criteria and contextual information.

Table 3 Participants by Selection Criteria with Contextual Information

Pseudonym	Business	Highest level of study	Year of graduation	Year of start up	No. of years graduate work experience at start up	Male / Female	Degree discipline	Private / Social enterprise	Alone or partner (s)
Jon	Exhibition agency	UG	2010	2013	2y10m	M	Events	P	alone
Robert	E-commerce	UG	2012	2012	0	M	Business & Enterprise	P	partner
Chloe	Events organiser	UG	2012	2014	2	F	Events	P	partner
Kate	Tech start-up	UG	2014	2013	0	F	Teaching	P	partner
Paige	Dog walker	UG	2013	2013	0	F	Business & Enterprise	SE	alone
Ben	Mobile catering	UG	2010	2011	0	M	Business & Enterprise	P	alone
Luke	Clothing label	UG	2010	2014	4	M	Business management	SE	alone
Dan	Coffee importer	UG	2014	2014	0	M	Philosophy & Politics	SE	partner
Claudia	Events organiser	UG	2010	2014	3y6m	F	Tourism	P	partner

Name	Business	Level		Year	Year	Num	Gender	Subject	Status	Alone/Partner
Stephanie	Accessibility products	PG		2007	2012	4	F	Product Design	P	alone
Christa	Candle maker	Current UG		2015	2014	0	F	Retail Management	P	alone
Nicole	Confectionary	UG		2014	2012	0	F	Business Studies	P	alone
Simon	Travel website	PG		2014	2014	2	M	Teaching	P	alone
Georgie	Allergen free cakes	Current UG		2016	2013	0	F	Food & Nutrition	P	partner
Darcie	Music publishing	Current PG		2015	2013	0	F	Music	P	alone
Andrew	Product design	UG		2010	2011	0	M	Product design	P	partner
Will	Coffee importer	UG		2014	2014	0	M	Business management	SE	partner
Lauren	College	UG		2009	2009	0	F	Events	SE	alone
Joanna	Coffee importer	UG		2014	2014	0	F	English Literature	SE	partner
Caroline	Cleaner	PG		2014	2014	0	F	Neuroscience	P	alone
Gemma	Wedding dress designer	PG		2013	2013	3m	F	Fashion Design	P	alone

3.2.3 Sourcing the participants

I started sourcing the participants by using my own professional networks. As a Research Associate involved in employability initiatives within higher education, I had already come into contact with a number of nascent entrepreneurs either as a result of their willingness to visit the university as guest speakers or because they were taking up a funded internship offer to recruit a student. I had existing relationships with two university enterprise support services that publicised my call for participants via a group email and blog post (See Appendix 1). I developed a list of intermediary contacts such as business advisers and incubator managers and I also used my Facebook and LinkedIn pages to publicise my search for participants (See Appendix 2). See Table 4 for a breakdown of sources per participant number.

Table 4 Sources by Participant Number

Source	Total 21 participants
Web pages of university enterprise services	10
Own professional network	5
Email sent by university enterprise service on my behalf	3
Snowball	2
Market organised by enterprise service	1
Blog post	0
Other intermediary contacts	0
Own social media pages	0

Aside from my own professional networks, the most successful way of sourcing potential participants was by scanning the university web pages including their news updates, case studies and enterprise competition entrants and contacting the entrepreneurs directly via email (when their email address was published), through their business website and social media.

In my initial contact with potential participants, I gave a broad outline of the nature of the study but avoided stating the research aim because I saw my role as researcher was to listen to participants' stories and interpret them in relation to the research aims s (Musson, 1998). Instead, the email expressed an interest in the general area. I also avoided using the terms 'entrepreneur' and 'entrepreneurship' because other researchers have noted that not everyone who runs their own business identifies with these terms. Orser et al (2011) note that the entrepreneur is personified as masculine in entrepreneurship discourse, therefore, I was concerned that potential female participants would feel that they did not fit the criteria. In addition, I felt that the term could be off-putting for potential participants who did not consider their venture to be successful or who ran a micro, not for profit or part-time ventures (Cope, 2005).

As a result, I developed a list of potential participants and once contact had been made with them I was able to use snowball sampling techniques (Bryman & Bell, 2011) to reach other potential participants such as business partners, co-working space tenants and university peers. I contacted 46 potential participants out of a list of 56. Out of the 46 contacts, 21 eligible participants were willing to be interviewed for the research. The breakdown of the outcome of the 46 contacts is shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5 Outcome of Contact Made With 46 Potential Participants

Outcome	Out of a total of 46 participants
Eligible and interviewed	21
No response	13
No longer in business	6
Do not meet the eligibility criteria	3
Not available	2
Decline	1

In order to assess the potential participants for eligibility against the criteria, explain the research project in more detail and build rapport, I arranged to have a telephone conversation with those people who had responded to my initial contact. I created a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 3) in order to capture the details and

made notes during the informal conversations. In most cases it was clear whether or not the potential participants were eligible as a result of the conversation and, if they were, the interview was arranged either at the end of the call or via subsequent emails. I also explained that the interview would take up to 2 hours, would be audio recorded and transcribed and that the participants would have the opportunity to read and amend the transcripts. I also gave reassurances about anonymity (participant names have been changed and business names have been omitted), informed consent and the right to withdraw at any time. I explained that the interview transcripts and Participant Information Sheets would be password protected and that the audio recordings would only be accessible to authorised individuals such as supervisors and examiners.

I arranged the interviews at a convenient time and location for the participants (see Table 6). The majority chose to meet me on campus where I had access to quiet meeting rooms whilst others invited me to interview them at their business premises. One interview was carried out via Skype in order to avoid delaying the interview until either the participant or I could travel. Skype maintains the visual and interpersonal aspects of the interview as well as the synchronous interaction, therefore, it is a feasible alternative to face to face interviews (Hanna, 2012). The interviews lasted approximately 2 hours each with the Skype interview notably shorter than average (approximately 1 hour).

Table 6 Breakdown of Interview Locations by Participant Numbers

Location	Out of a total of 21 participants
Meeting room on campus	17
Business premises	3
Skype	1

Once the arrangements had been made for the interview I reconfirmed the details via email (see Appendix 4).

3.3   Interviews

The phenomenological interview is a powerful means of attaining an in-depth understanding of an experience that an individual has lived directly (Cope, 2005; Kvale, 1983; Patton, 2002; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). This type of interview allows the researcher to capture and describe "how people experience some phenomenon - how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Cope, 2011; Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Therefore the main aim of the study is to:

'Explore nascent entrepreneurs' understanding of their entrepreneurial experiences'

I used loosely structured, informal interviews to collect the participants' stories told in their own words and enable the participants to organise their descriptions in terms of what was important to them (Kvale, 1983). As rapport between the interviewer and the participant is important in any interview situation and essential for the conversational flow of a relatively unstructured interview (Cassell, 2009; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), I spent the first 10-15 minutes in ice-breaking conversation. I also used this time to reiterate the points already made in writing about anonymity, audio recording and transcription, and general purpose of the research (without directly referring to the research aim. The Participant Informed Consent Form (see Appendix 5) was read and signed by both parties. I explained the two audio recording devices to the participants; a standard digital audio recorder and a digital smart pen with which I also made notes. After the interviews the audio recording from the standard digital recorder was transferred to 2 memory sticks (one as a backup) and deleted from the recorder. The audio on the smart pen was not deleted because it was linked to the handwritten notes. The 2 memory sticks and the smart pen were stored safely, and I was the only person who had access to the data and all digital data was password protected.

I took the time to explain that the interview would not follow a traditional question and answer format but would take a lead from the interviewee (Cope, 2005). The aim was to reassure the participants that there were no right or wrong answers and

therefore any topics that they chose to focus on were valid (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Approaching an interview without a schedule could be a daunting task and not always recommended for early career researchers (Cope, 2005; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). With this in mind I created a loose schedule which would still allow me to relinquish control in order for the participants to set the agenda for the conversation (Cope, 2005; Smith et al 2009; Thompson et al., 1989) and create opportunities for unexpected phenomena to be discussed (Kvale, 1983). My area of interest is broad so unlike studies which focus on a specific aspect such as work-life balance (see Rehman & Roomi, 2012), there was less risk of the subject area not being covered in the loosely structured interview.

My aim was to use the interviews to elicit the stories, thoughts and feelings of the participants about the phenomenon of entrepreneurship (Smith et al, 2009). In order to encourage participants to reflect and develop their ideas at length, I paid particular attention to how I phrased the questions. Therefore, in preparation for the interviews, I compiled a list of potential questions and examined them for their style (see Appendix 6). Rather than constructing a rigid interview schedule, my aim was to develop a conscious interviewing style that would enable me to spontaneously formulate specific types of questions and avoid using over-emphatic, manipulative, leading or closed questions (Smith et al, 2009). I took the questions into the participant interviews to act as a prompt in case the conversation ran dry although it was rarely needed.

In order to minimise the influence of a priori issues or research-led assumptions (Smith et al, 2009), I had decided to start the interview with the single core question *'can you tell me about your experience of starting and running a business?'* I had anticipated that the participant's response to this question would be an overview or summary of the areas that are important to them and by noting the summarised topic areas I could return to each topic in order to explore them further (Smith et al, 2009). Interviewing is an interpersonal experience (Kvale, 1983) and I was very aware that as a business school Research Associate, participants may feel anxious about being judged or that I had superior expertise in the area of entrepreneurship (I observed that some were

nervous and one participant brought notes) therefore I was consciously sensitive to this during the interviews. In particular, I avoided using any theoretical or academic terms and I positioned my research as stemming from the naïve curiosity of an onlooker rather than as a reflection of any supposed expertise.

3.3.1 Recording and Transcription

Initially, I had intended to transcribe all of the interviews myself because I thought this would facilitate a close reading of the information and result in me being more familiar with each participant's interview responses. However, after transcribing the first one I realised that I risked delaying the analysis stage so I engaged a transcribing service resulting in me only transcribing 9 of the 21 interviews. At the data analysis stage, I realised that an additional close reading of the transcript, whilst simultaneously listening to the recording, compensated for not having personally transcribed the interview and as a result I did not feel distanced from the interviews transcribed by the service.

Smith et al, (2009) advise that the verbatim transcription format is used for IPA studies, therefore, I transcribed the first interview in this style to include every 'erm', pause and repetition and used a Word table to structure the text. The second interview, which was transcribed by the service, was also in the verbatim format but line numbers were used instead of a table. After reviewing the verbatim transcriptions, I decided that the intelligent verbatim format (which excluded the 'erms') provided sufficient detail for the requirements of the project as well as being easier to read.

3.4 Data Analysis

My responsibility as an entrepreneurship researcher is to provide sufficient information on the design and conduct of my research so that the reader can judge the integrity and rigour of the research process (Leitch et al., 2010, p. 73). Comprehensive articulation of data analysis is a critical issue in improving the robustness of qualitative entrepreneurship research (Kempster & Cope, 2010). Qualitative, interpretive research has been criticised for its failure to describe the research process in sufficient detail and to elaborate on the method of data analysis (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Gephart, 2004; Kempster & Cope, 2010; Leitch et al., 2009). This may be due in part to the reluctance of qualitative researchers to be overly prescriptive in their explanation of

the data analysis because qualitative methods should arise in response to the phenomenon rather than adhering to a "cookbook" set of instructions (Hycner, 1985, p. 280).

IPA offers a flexible yet structured analytic process which provided me with a guiding framework within which to conduct the analysis thereby enabling transparency, reflective engagement and theory building (Smith et al, 2009). This approach allowed a detailed examination of each participant's response and how their personal experience addressed the research aim. Consistent with IPA specifically (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) and interpretivist approaches in general (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) I prioritised making sense of the data over following prescriptive procedures in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in its context. In the following section, I will describe the procedures I undertook in order to analyse each interview individually and the 21 interviews collectively.

3.4.1   Analysis of Individual Interviews

Consistent with IPA's idiographic commitments I interviewed all participants and all audio recordings were transcribed before starting the formal analysis. However, by keeping a research journal and noting thoughts and feelings after each interview it could be said that I started making sense of the data prior to embarking on formal analysis (Patton, 2002). I analysed each interview individually and carried out the meta-level analysis only once all interviews had been analysed. In the following section, I will discuss the analytic process starting with the individual -level analysis and moving on to discuss the meta-level analysis.

Steps taken to analyse individual interviews

1. Listen to the interview recording several times
2. Create 'Source' on NVivo per participant name and upload transcript
3. Create linked memo by typing up research journal entry
4. Close reading whilst listening to audio recording
5. Create second memo to record thoughts
6. Close examination of text and 3 categories of annotations
    a. descriptive comments (dc)
    b. linguistic comments (lc)

      c.   conceptual comments (cc)

7. Creation of themes

8. Clustering of themes and sub-themes

9. Narrative account of each participant's experience based on the themes and subthemes that most represented the idiographic experience

I carried out a full analysis of each interview before moving on to the next one by following the steps above. I started by listening to the interview recording several times through headphones in order to immerse myself in the data. Listening to the interview allowed me to recall not just the words of the interviewee but my feelings and impressions at the time as well as the setting and the atmosphere (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). It also allowed me to experience the interview as an organised whole (Hycner, 1985). On a practical level, this enabled me to be mobile and consequently listen more times than would be possible if I were at my desk.

After creating a 'Source' in NVivo I uploaded the interview transcript and named the folder according to the interviewees' initials and the date of the interview. I then created a memo and typed up my research journal entry which I had written straight after each interview (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Example of Research Journal Entry (added to NVivo at the start of the analysis process)
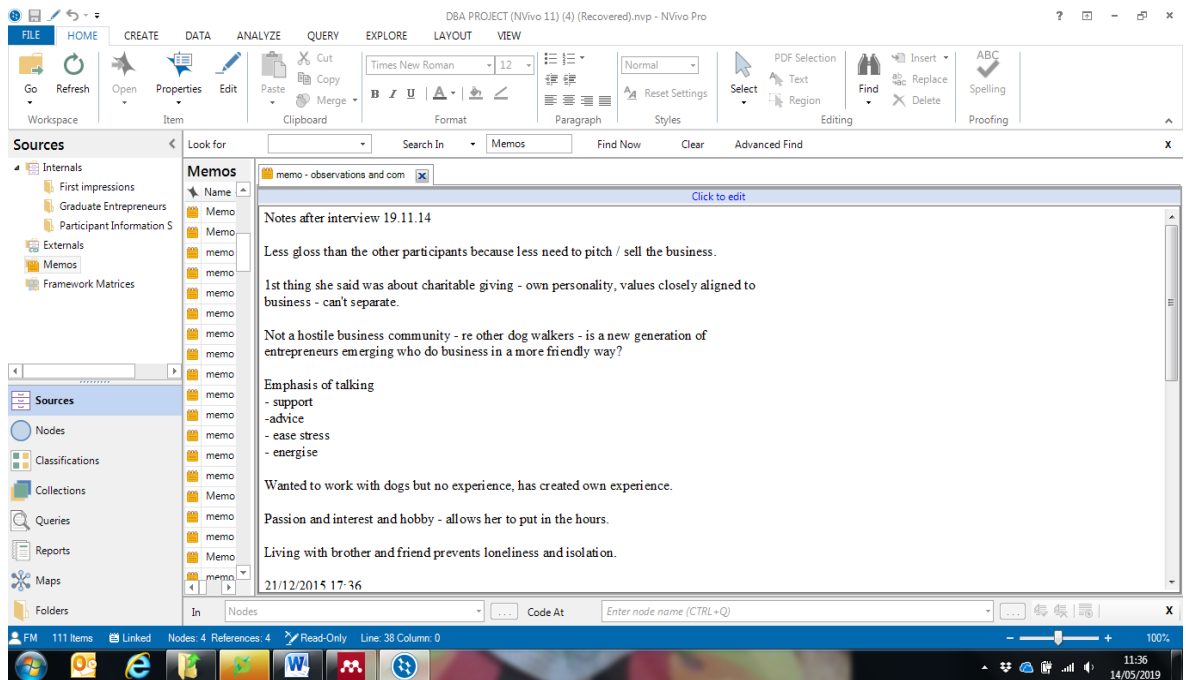
I then carried out a close reading whilst listening to the audio recording. I listened and read all the way through and then recorded my thoughts in another memo entry. I used the memo facility to add my thoughts about the interview at any stage of the analysis (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Example of Memo Made after Individual Analysis
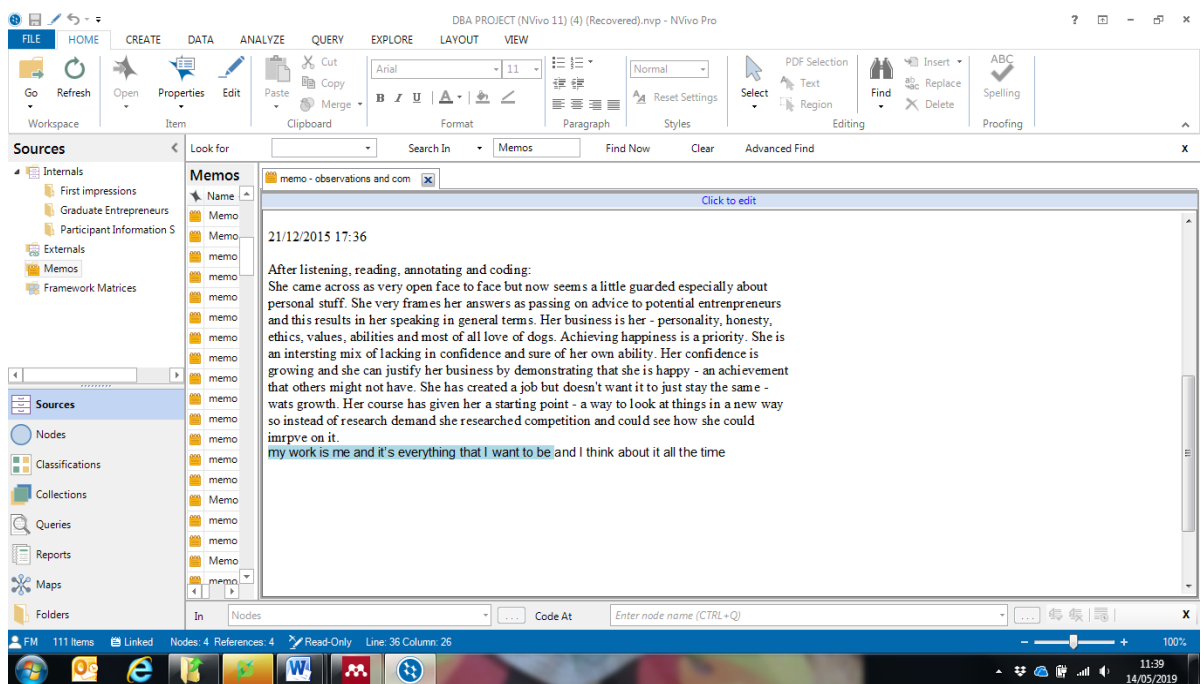
I then made a close examination of the text to make the three categories of comments recommended by Smith et al (2009); descriptive comments (dc), linguistic comments (lc) and conceptual comments (cc). Descriptive comments are exploratory and allow the researcher to take things at face value (Smith et al, 2009). Linguistic comments describe the functional aspects of language, the degree of fluency, pauses, pronoun use, use of metaphor and repetition (Smith et al, 2009). Conceptual comments are more interpretative and often represent a move away from the text towards a focus on the participant's understanding of the matters being discussed (Smith et al, 2009, p. 88) (see Figure 3). I found the unrestricted nature of the descriptive comments freeing whilst the linguistic comments allowed me to develop insights into the thoughts and feelings of the participant in response to my questions. Conceptual comments encouraged me to reflect and question as well as make links outside of the confines of the transcript. All were conducive for immersing myself in the participant's experience and creating a dialogue with the participant's experiences as recounted during the interview.

Figure 3 Example of transcript annotated with descriptive and conceptual comments
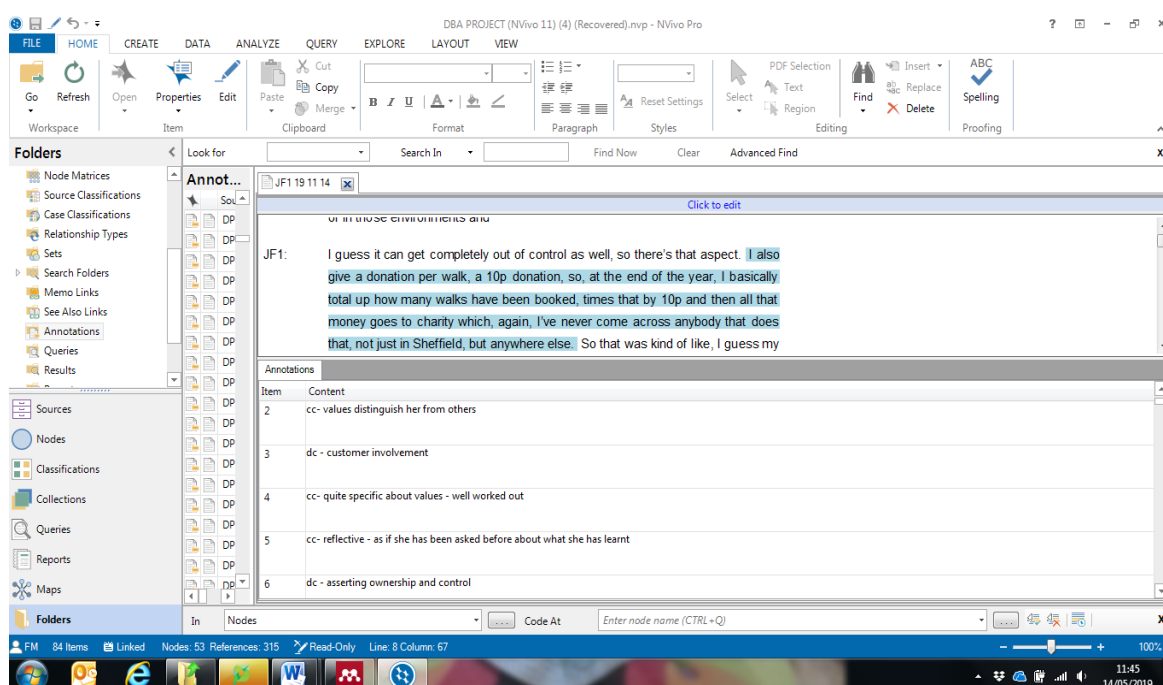
My aim for the analysis of the interview data was to allow for the exploration and discovery (Cope, 2005) of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. "Purpose guides analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 434) therefore I allowed the themes to emerge from the

participants' own words. With the exploratory comments in view on screen, I went through the interview text coding it where appropriate into themes which represented aspects of the participant's understanding of their experience of entrepreneurship. As new codes emerged I ordered and re-ordered them into hierarchies and re-ordered them again at the end once I had coded the entire transcript.

After the analysis of the first interview transcript, I felt that I needed to elaborate on the themes so I wrote explanatory memos for each one (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Example of Theme Memo
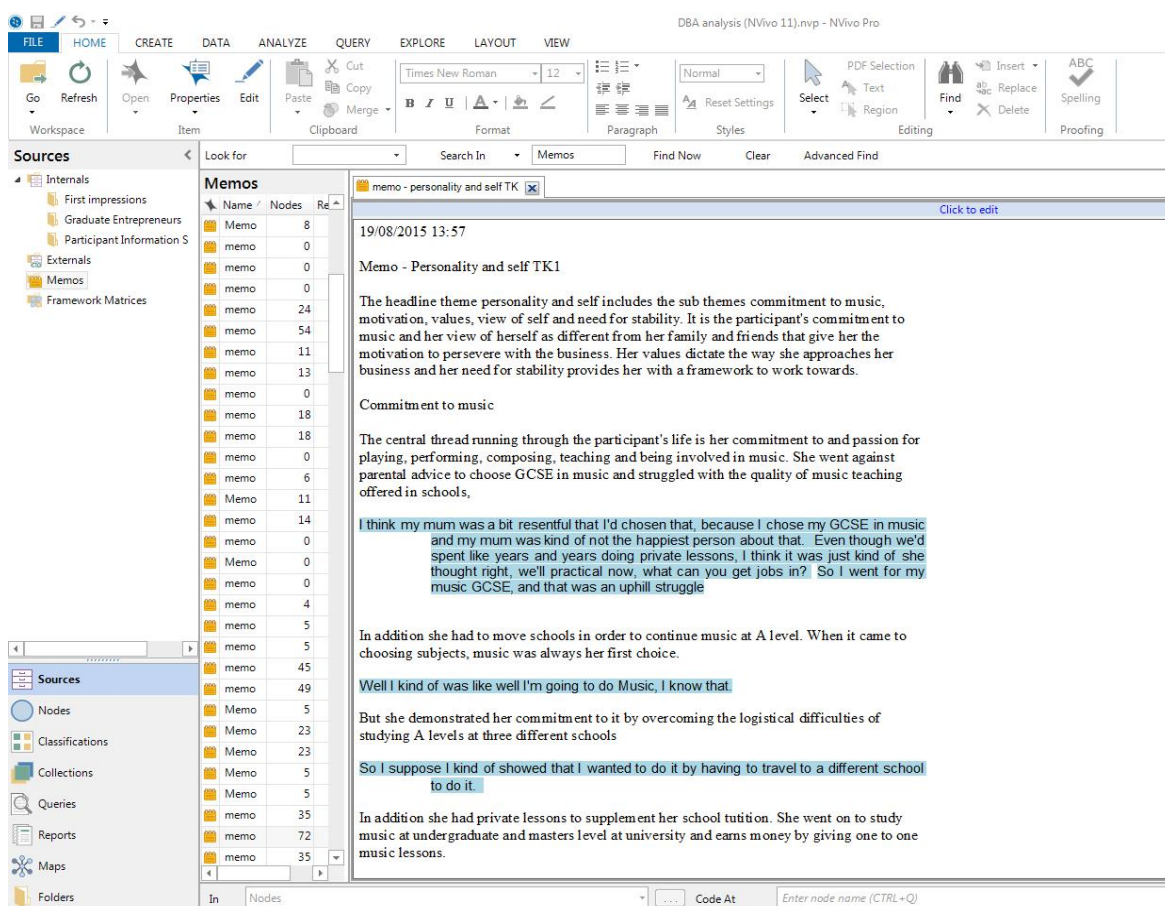
This enabled me to make further connections between the themes and resulted in merging many themes. After this, I started to link excerpts of the interview transcript to the themes. Initially, I used the participants own words as the labels for each sub-theme resulting in the first four participants having different labels for similar conceptual themes. After analysing the first four interview transcripts I decided to check that this method of coding would work when it came to the meta-level analysis of 21 interviews. In the pilot attempt to integrate the four analysed interviews I

realised that I needed to apply my own labels to the themes and use a consistent hierarchical structure for themes in order to manage the data from the entire sample; an approach supported by Willig, (2008). Whereas for the first four interview transcripts, I had coded and ordered themes directly from the participants' dialogue, I now developed a coding structure for subsequent transcripts. This enabled the meta-level analysis once all the individual interviews had been analysed (Willig, 2008). I also began to see connections between the themes and clustered them into groups which were given a descriptive label (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) (see Table 7). Some of the themes that emerged from clusters of shared meanings whilst other themes were characterised by hierarchical relationships with one another (Willig, 2008). Therefore Table 7 includes themes with subthemes (hierarchical relationships) and themes without subthemes (shared meanings). The resulting themes and sub-themes below were then used to categorise the remaining transcripts whilst maintaining flexibility to allow for any new themes, unique to the individual, to arise.

By giving myself a more central role in organising and interpreting the information I found that I extended my own interpretation of the participants' accounts. Therefore the resulting analysis was an interpretation that was closely aligned to the lived experiences of the participant (Smith et al, 2009). The theme guide was used to code the rest of the interviews and I added additional themes and sub-themes as they arose.

Table 7 Sub-themes and Themes

Sub-themes	Themes (hierarchical relationships)
view of self values learning about self	Personality and Self
concerns problems and solutions peaks and troughs	Challenges
competitors customers products sales activities suppliers typical activities	Current Position
work life balance switching off stress or pressure	Impact on life
work experience employability self-employment vs employment income and financial rewards attitude to employment influence on career choice career prospects	Careers and employment
initial idea first activities timing investment	Starting up
benefits of working with partners difficulties of working with partners communication between partners roles of partners	Partnership

learning skills hindsight expectations	Learning and skills
informal support formal support family and friends networking	Support
	Themes (shared meanings)
	Credibility
	Critical Incidents
	Risk
	Luck
	University and course
	Endorsement
	Future Plans
	Reflecting
	Success and achievement

I used NVivo when carrying out the analysis of individual interview transcripts and found it helpful for its storage and retrieval capabilities (MacMillan & Koenig, 2004) as well as its coding functionality in terms of making connections between interrelated experiences and ideas.

Qualitative data analysis software programmes have been criticised for their fragmentation of the data which risks decontextualising the data (Bryman, 2012; Buston, 1997) and losing its narrative flow (Bryman, 2012). However by listening to the audio recording several times and carrying out a close reading prior to developing themes I was able to maintain a sense of the whole interview (Hycner, 1985).

It has also been criticised for the ease with which coded text can be quantified, leading the researcher to adopt the measures of reliability and validity relevant to quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). However, by being aware of this criticism prior to starting the

analysis and through my reflexive engagement with the research I had sufficient confidence in my commitment to my approach not to be tempted into quantifying my data.

3.4.2 Participant Narrative Accounts

For the next step of analysis, I wrote narrative accounts for each participant (see Appendix 7 for an example). The purpose of the narrative account is to condense the lengthy and unstructured interview data into a manageable yet holistic account of the participant's story (Cope, 2005; Hycner, 1985). Guided by the principles of IPA, I wrote the participant narrative accounts without reference to the entrepreneurship literature so that the reader would be able to appreciate the lived experience of the participant as an idiosyncratic manifestation of entrepreneurship (Cope, 2005; Patton, 2002).

For each participant, I identified the dominant themes that expressed the essence of their entrepreneurial experience. As a result, the narrative account illustrated the essential and idiographic elements of the participant's lived experience as an entrepreneur according to the themes and subthemes from the interview analysis. This process also assisted the later stage meta-level analysis because it highlighted the dominant role that the theme 'Personality and Self' (see Table 9) had across all participants and illustrated which themes were central or marginal to the phenomenon of entrepreneurial experience (Willig, 2008).

I also gave each participant a pseudonym which summed up my interpretation of how they saw themselves in relation to their entrepreneurial experience, for example, Paige the animal lover, Robert the ideas man. I was keen to learn if the narrative accounts would feel authentic to the participants so I sent them out and asked for comments and feedback. Seeking participant feedback for preliminary interpretations is advocated by proponents of IPA because it allows the researchers to check their understanding with the participant (Cope, 2005) and ensures credibility in the researcher's final account (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The process of writing narrative accounts aided the analysis of the data and the accounts themselves served to communicate and check the credibility of my

interpretations. In addition the narrative accounts formed the basis of the vignettes which were used to illuminate the aggregate dimensions (Ely, , Anzul, , Vinz, & Downing, 1997). The use of vignettes to present research findings is discussed in more detail below in section 3.6.

3.4.3 Meta-level Analysis

After completing the analysis and narrative accounts of the 21 individual interviews I then started to look for patterns across the transcripts. All interviews shared a similar theme guide so my aim was to develop first and second order concepts and aggregate dimensions (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013) that would contain the essence of the sample's collective experience of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. At first, I aimed to continue to use NVivo but I soon realised that its coding functionality was restricting my ability to interpret the data across interviews at a conceptual level.

I carried out a number of exploratory exercises in order to elaborate on the patterns and connections between interviews (Smith et al, 2009). These included:

1. Numeration (Smith et al, 2009) in order to explore the extent to which participants shared themes

2. Mind mapping - looking holistically at the experience, refining of research objectives and developing first order concepts (Gioia et al 2013)

3. Cross referencing between the concepts that arose as a result of the meta-level analysis and individual analysis

4. Re-reading the Participant Narrative Accounts in order to identify shared and divergent experiences and develop 2nd order concepts and aggregate dimensions Compiling transcript extracts to see if they supported the 2nd order concepts and aggregate dimensions (Smith et al, 2009) and further exploration of convergence and divergence within the sample

Firstly I explored the extent to which participants shared the themes that I identified in the individual interview analysis. This was not an attempt to quantify recurring themes. Instead, I was interested in gaining insights into the shared experiences of the participants as well as the nuanced differences within their experiences (Smith,

Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Table 10 below shows the summary of the recurring themes whilst Appendix 8 shows recurring themes per participant.

Table 8 Most Commonly Recurring Themes from the Analysis of Interviews

Theme from Analysis of Individual Interviews	Occurrence out of 21 Participants
Personality & self	21
Impact on life	21
Challenges	21
Careers and employment	21
Learning and skills	21
Support	21
Success and achievement	21
Starting up	21
Current position	21
University and course	18
Risk	20
Future Plans	18
Credibility	18
Partnership	15
Reflecting	14
Endorsement	9
Critical incident	8
Luck	7

This exercise was revealing because whilst it demonstrated the extent to which the themes were shared amongst participants, it also encouraged me to reflect on how the participants experienced these themes differently. Furthermore, whilst some themes occurred in few interviews (for example, critical incident), it was clear that where they did occur they had a significant impact on the participant. This process also highlighted the interrelationship between themes. In particular it was evident that the theme of 'Personality and self' was strongly interrelated with all of the other themes and that those themes could be better understood when viewed in terms of their relationship with the participants' sense of self. The theme 'Personality and self' captured aspects

of the participants' identity such as passions, values and creativity as well as the need for autonomy and creative expression however these same aspects of identity underpinned and were pivotal to the participants' understanding of their entrepreneurial experience which are captured in the rest of the themes. Therefore, the participants entrepreneurial experience shaped and was shaped by aspects of identity captured in the theme 'Personality and self'. The theme 'Personality and self' therefore became a dominant collective theme in the meta-analysis. In order to enable creative thinking uninhibited by the process or structure imposed by using NVivo, I decided to use mind maps (using flip chart paper and pens) to explore the entrepreneurial experiences of the participants holistically. This proved useful because it allowed me to step back from the detail of individual interviews, further explore the relationships between the theme of 'Personality and self' and the rest of the themes thus examining the points of convergence and divergence amongst the participants. Through this process it became apparent that all themes fell into 2 temporal categories that were intrinsically linked to the aspects of identity highlighted in the dominant 'Personality and self' theme; experiences that led to entrepreneurship and experiences during entrepreneurship.

I created mind maps on flip chart paper and interrogated the collective data by exploring the participants' motivations, what factors enabled them to start a venture, how they worked out what to do and how they persevered in the face of adversity. To do this I used my in-depth understanding of the individual responses derived from the analysis of the individual interviews and the composition of the participants' narrative accounts (see Appendices 9 & 10). At this stage I realised that it was necessary to re-label and reconfigure the dominant theme 'Personality and self' to reflect both the 2 temporal categories (experiences that led to entrepreneurship and experiences during entrepreneurship) as well as the diversity of experience amongst participants. As a result, the 'Personality and self' was broken down in order to capture the full range of experience amongst participants and therefore these component parts became the following first order concepts (Gioia et al 2013) (See Figure 5 below):

Experiences that led to entrepreneurship

- desire to be immersed in a passion

- desire to fulfil a creative identity

- desire to work autonomously / express ideas

- change in priorities / perspective

Experiences during entrepreneurship

- developing self-confidence in entrepreneurial abilities

- learning by experience and overcoming problems

- positive feedback and endorsements

- involvement in networks and communities / sense of belonging

- successes and sense of progress

- accepting and rejecting characteristics of the entrepreneurial stereotype

- vision of the future

- commitment to the venture

I then returned to my research aim of nascent exploring entrepreneurs' understanding of their entrepreneurial experience and, as a result of my engagement with the data, I developed three research objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial motivations

2. Gain insights into the process of entrepreneurial identity formation

3. Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial perseverance

Using the mind maps and the participant narrative accounts I addressed the research objectives and developed the following second order concepts (see Figure 5).

- Fulfilment of pre-existing entrepreneurial identity
- Fulfilment of pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity
- Entrepreneurial role enactment & identity formation
- Entrepreneurial role enactment & the reinforcement of existing entrepreneurial identities

Next, in order to explore the unique experience of each participant and the collective experience of the sample in relation to the research objectives I re-read and annotated the participant narrative accounts and grouped the second order concepts into three aggregate dimensions (see Figure 5):

- Entrepreneurial motivations and identity
- Becoming and identifying as an entrepreneur
- Perseverance and the link to entrepreneurial identity

Using the first and second order concepts and the aggregate dimensions I built a data structure which illustrates how I progressed through the analysis of the data and provides a useful visual aid (see Figure 5) (Gioia et al 2013).

In the Findings Chapter, I use excerpts from the interview and vignettes based on the participant narrative accounts to explore how the aggregate dimensions play out in similar and different ways for the participants. I elaborate on how both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial identities can motivate individuals to start a venture and I discuss how entrepreneurial identities evolve after new venture creation has taken place. Finally, I consider how the interplay of dynamic identities has a significant impact on the participants' entrepreneurial experience in terms of their motivation to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Figure 5 Data Structure - First Order Concepts, Second Order Concepts and Aggregate Dimensions

[edited]

3.5　　Reflexive Engagement

Reflexivity allows researchers to question what they regard as knowledge as well as how that knowledge is produced. Therefore reflexive engagement with the research process allows the researcher to examine their pre-understandings and research conduct in terms of how they influence their new understandings (Haynes, 2012) thereby contributing to the credibility and authenticity of the study (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the study, I was keen to adopt a curiosity about my own assumptions in terms of my participants' experiences of entrepreneurship as well as my assumptions about the research process. In order to develop this reflexive awareness, I utilised a number of strategies including:

- keeping a research journal which I added entries to after each interview and other key stages
- memos linked to each participant's interview transcript which included first impressions, observations and emotions
- listening to interview recordings to consider how my interaction with the participants had an impact on the process
- noting my assumptions about the participants and their experiences
- reflecting verbally with my supervisors
- engaging in the online (jiscmail) IPA forum

By using these strategies I developed a dialogue with myself that questioned the research that I was conducting as well as the way I was conducting it (Haynes, 2012). Immediately after each interview I wrote a diary entry and reflected on how I felt the interview had gone. I would critique my interviewing skills and consider any changes for the next interview. I would also seek feedback from the participants about their experience of being interviewed. Something I had not anticipated prior to interviewing participants was the benefits that they might gain from the experience (Kvale, 1983). However, several participants described it as a rare opportunity to stand back from their business and consider the experience as a whole. Others likened it to a counselling session or conversation with a business adviser in the sense that it allowed them to make sense of things by talking them through. My reflexive engagement with the interview process challenged my assumptions about how participants might

understand their experience of entrepreneurship. I assumed that this would be bounded by the venture that they had created but as a result of reflecting on the interviews, I realised that the scope of the participants' understanding was not limited to the boundaries of a formal organisation but that entrepreneurial experience could be understood in terms of their wider life and career.

As a result of keeping a journal, I made changes to the way I started the interviews in order to enable participants to present their venture in a way that they had practised and therefore felt comfortable with. As well as enhancing my rapport with the participants by setting them at ease, it provided me with a useful overview of their venture which gave context to their subsequent answers. I also verbally reflected with my supervisors during the data collection period in order to make sense of the apparent contradictions and ambivalence that came to the fore in participants' accounts. Inconsistencies and ambiguities troubled me initially and I was concerned that this would have an impact on the quality of the data. However, through these conversations, I was able to see that this offered insights into the tensions experienced by participants. Therefore, I stopped viewing it as problematic and instead recognised that a benefit of the research approach was to allow ambiguities and inconsistencies to surface.

One of IPA's strengths is that it facilitates the exploration of unanticipated and unexpected findings and the loosely structured interview maximises on this strength (Berglund, 2007; Smith et al, 2009). At the first interview, I noticed that the participant had brought a presentation pack for their venture, the type that he would normally take to client meetings. I proceeded to ask my planned opening question and the interview progressed well, providing me with over an hour and a half of rich information. Thinking over the interview later, I felt that I had been fortunate to have such a reflective, articulate and self-aware interviewee for my first participant. He had been happy to raise issues of mental health, family tragedy and naivety. I was aware that I could not expect to receive this level of transparency from all my participants.

I went into the second interview with concerns about the eligibility of the participant against the criteria. His father was a sole trader and the participant had joined him in order to implement a specific project which would transform the business into a

limited company with international scope. He had also started his own, now defunct, venture, had successfully launched another one and was in the process of launching a third. The two latter ventures, funded by and structurally part of the original business, were a significant diversification. Because of my concerns, I started the interviews by asking the participant to tell me about his experience of starting his own short-lived venture. However, as we were talking I soon realised that he regarded the venture as part of a much wider entrepreneurial experience that included the new ventures that he had developed within the family business. These two first interviews made me realise that a more suitable opening question would be to ask the participant to give me an overview of their venture. This would not only provide a familiar topic for the participant and serve as an effective ice-breaker but would also give me insights into the participant's understanding of their own entrepreneurial career.

The new opening question worked well in my third interview but overall I was disappointed with the interview because I felt I had only been able to extract superficial information rather than gaining in-depth insights into the participant's experience. I had transcribed the first interview so I reconsidered it in the light of the third interview and formed a number of questions which would enable me to probe beyond the participant's superficial experience. After the first two interviews, I also introduced a question to close the conversation by asking if there was anything that the participant would have liked to have covered. This both signalled that I had no further questions and also ensured that control of the topics of conversation was with the interviewee rather than the interviewer. I recognise, however, that my choice to follow up or ignore certain points made by the participant influenced the flow of the conversation.

I felt that the subsequent interviews went well but there was one that stood out for specific reasons which I will discuss below. This was an interview with a participant who had experienced domestic violence, mental health problems, drug issues and homelessness. She was very open about her experiences and well versed in talking about them in public forums however I felt out of my depth and afraid that I would say the wrong thing. I decided to be upfront about this with the participant and she reassured me that there were no off-limits questions and that she would not take

offence easily. However, I found that, as a strategy to hide my discomfort, I took far more notes than usual or than was necessary given that it was audio recorded. I also mainly limited my input to clarifying questions. Perhaps interviewing on the participant's business premises added to my discomfort because I was very aware of how busy she was particularly as we were interrupted several times by members of staff who needed to consult with her. I felt the interview was an imposition on her time as well as on her privacy however when I contacted her to thank her for her time after the interview (which I did with all participants) I received a warm response thanking me for taking an interest in her.

3.6   Writing up the research

As Table 2 above suggests, phenomenological research findings can be written up as rich descriptions that offer insights into the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under investigation whilst also invoking the researcher's interpretation of the data (Smith, Flowers &Larkin, 2009; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Therefore in the following chapter I explore the three aggregate dimensions through the use of extracts, vignettes and interpretative commentary thereby making the evidentiary base transparent (Smith, Flowers& Larkin, 2009). By adopting this approach I can represent the different ways in which each aggregate dimension manifests itself for different participants. This approach is both reader friendly and allows the reader to vicariously live the experience of the participants thereby meeting the main aim of the study.

As is typical of IPA research, the findings chapter is written without reference to the extant literature, rather it is an interpretative account of the participants experience of the phenomenon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In the subsequent discussion chapter (Chapter 5) I create a dialogue with the existing literature in order to place my findings with current research in the field and I explore how my findings illuminate or problematize what is already known.

In order to fully explore the differing nature of the three aggregate dimensions I have chosen to write about them in different ways. The first aggregate dimension explores the link between entrepreneurial motivation and identity. This dimension has emerged

from the participants' experience of deciding to start a venture and therefore covers the focused 'event' of the start-up decision. Therefore, this dimension is explored using excerpts from the participant interviews interspersed with my interpretative commentary. The participants' experiences are discussed according to how this dimension applies to them - those motivated to start a business in order to fulfil a dominant pre-existing entrepreneurial identity and those motivated to start a business in order to fulfil a dominant pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity. This adheres to IPA's commitment to allowing for an exploration of convergence and divergence within the sample.

The second and third aggregate dimensions - becoming and identifying as an entrepreneur and perseverance and the link to entrepreneurial identity encompass a longer timeframe than the first aggregate dimension and therefore, participant excerpts fall short of conveying their experience over time. Therefore, in order to illustrate the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial identity formation over time as well as the link between entrepreneurial perseverance and entrepreneurial identity emergence, I used vignettes featuring representative participants' stories.

Vignettes are narratives with a story like structure which can be used to convey a key phenomenon and the researcher's interpretation over an extended period of time (Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 1991). They are constructed on the basis of the analysis and interpretation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A "moving vignette" can convey evolving experience over time and are, therefore, an effective means of illustrating the participants' identity crafting and formation as they engage in entrepreneurial activities and become immersed in start-up communities (Ely, Anzul, Vinz & Downing, 1997, p. 74). This has the advantage of presenting identity formation as an ongoing and dynamic process and avoids presenting the participant as the finished product (Ely, Anzul, Vinz & Downing, 1997).

The vignettes in this study provide a contextualised picture which allow the reader to experience the phenomenon vicariously (Ely, Anzul, Vinz & Downing, 1997; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). In the following chapter, I explore the second aggregate dimension 'Becoming and identifying as an entrepreneur' through 6 vignettes. The vignettes build on the discussion of the link between identity and entrepreneurial motivations to

illustrate how participants with different starting points (in terms of their motivating identities) go on to form entrepreneurial identities as a result of their engagement in start-up activities and their involvement in entrepreneurial communities.

In order to explore the third aggregate dimension 'Perseverance the and the link to entrepreneurial identity' I use two vignettes that illustrate how participants actively craft an entrepreneurial identity that is compatible within their overall sense of self and how, if successful, this reconciliation enables them to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours. The final vignette reveals what happens when a participant is unable to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with the other dominant identities that make up their sense of self.

3.7   Assessing the Quality of the Research

In presenting the methodology for this study, I aim to demonstrate that I have taken a systematic and thorough approach which Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2015) state is a criterion for quality research. How qualitative research should be evaluated is much debated in the literature (Creswell, 2013) therefore I have adopted the four broad principles recommended by Smith et al (2009) for IPA research in order to demonstrate the quality of my study. These include sensitivity to context, rigour, transparency and coherence and impact and importance (Smith et al, 2009). I detail how my study meets these quality criteria in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Assessing the Quality of the Study

[edited]

3.8   Ethical Considerations

At the start of the study, I was aware that serious consideration should be given to how the research process and outcomes could both positively and negatively affect participants and others involved (Holt, 2012). The study went through the Sheffield Hallam University ethics process and was approved by the ethics committee.

I thought that the experience of being interviewed by someone unknown and unfamiliar with their venture would offer the participants an opportunity to reflect however I was also aware that the conversation could take in a range of topics including personal and emotional issues, hopes and dreams, family, friends and relationships. With this in mind, it reinforced my methodological decision to give over control of the topic areas to the interviewees. The nature of IPA means that interviews can cover existential issues (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) so with each participant I made a judgement during the interview in terms of what was appropriate to ask and which topics might be off limits. To do this I observed non-verbal communication or made a mental note of when a participant seemed to avoid a topic. Sometimes the participant made it clear which topics were off limits. For example, one participant stated that she did not want to discuss her children whilst other participants might just precede a topic (for example, work-life balance) by saying it was personal and therefore I would know to treat it with caution.

Prior to commencing each interview, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix 5) which provided them with information about the study and reiterated what the data would be used for, how it would be recorded and stored and who would have access to it. Interview transcripts would be password protected and I would manage access to the audio recordings. Participants were reassured of anonymity and that they could withdraw at any time without having to give an explanation. I also offered them access to their interview transcript and confirmed that I would send them the narrative account to review. Participants were given a copy of

the informed consent form to keep which had the contact details for the Director of Studies should they need to contact her.

3.9   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the rationale for my research approach. Specifically, I discuss my concerns over how entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are represented in the extant literature and I attribute this narrow conceptualisation, at least in part, to the dominance of positivist approaches in entrepreneurship research. I explain the meta-theoretical considerations that underpin my research design and the resulting methodological goals that I developed in response to my concerns. I elaborate on my reflexive engagement with the research process.

The methodological approach for the study is IPA which allows me to address my research goals. Firstly, through its commitment to the double hermeneutic, IPA enables me to avoid the assumptions prevalent in entrepreneurship research. Secondly, by exploring the lived experiences of my participants I am able to produce thick descriptions of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. Thirdly, I am able to locate the understandings gained in the dynamic context in which they receive their meaning.

I detail the procedures used to select and source participants as well as gather and analyse data. In total, I carried out in-depth interviews with 21 participants which were recorded and subsequently transcribed. According to IPA's idiographic commitments, I analysed each interview transcript individually once all the interviews had taken place and identified a number of shared themes. At the end of the individual interview analysis, I wrote a narrative account designed to highlight the relevant themes for each participant. The narrative accounts were sent to the participants in order to get feedback on my preliminary interpretations. After carrying out a cross participant analysis I identified first and second order concepts which I cross referenced with each other as well as with the individual interviews resulting in three aggregate dimensions. These are fully explored in the following chapter with excerpts from the participant interviews. Finally, I conclude the chapter by outlining the ethical considerations for the study and applying quality criteria to the research process.

Chapter 4   Findings

4.1   Introduction

In this chapter, the three aggregate dimensions that emerged from the data analysis will be discussed in detail. The analysis of interview data revealed that identity factors were closely linked to the participants' entrepreneurial experiences and as a result three research objectives were formulated. These were 1) to develop an understanding of the role that identity plays in entrepreneurial motivations, 2) to gain insights into the process of entrepreneurial identity formation and 3) to develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial perseverance. Indeed, the influence of identity issues was evident prior to the start of the entrepreneurial venture and continued to have an impact on the participants' entrepreneurial endeavours throughout their experience. The study recognises that identities are fluid, dynamic and multiple (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) and it became apparent that the participants' overall sense of self consisted of a range of contrasting and complementary identities that both shaped and were shaped by their experience of entrepreneurship.

In keeping with an IPA approach with its emphasis on highlighting convergence and divergence within a sample, the chapter explores how identity factors were experienced in different ways by the participants. Whilst the analysis of the data revealed a link between entrepreneurial motivations and identity, some participants were initially motivated by non-entrepreneurial identities whilst others were motivated to fulfil an entrepreneurial identity. By grouping the participants by the dominant identity that prompted them to start a venture, the study can trace dynamic entrepreneurial identity formation, crafting, conflict and reconciliation post start-up. In this way, a nuanced understanding of the impact identity factors have on entrepreneurial motivation and perseverance can be gained. Therefore, for the purpose of illustrating the impact identity issues have on the participants' entrepreneurial experience, the remaining findings will also be discussed in relation to three participant groups; participants motivated to start a venture by a dominant entrepreneurial identity, participants motivated to start a venture by a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity (personal or creative) and participants not initially influenced

by identity factors. However, this is not intended as a typology of entrepreneurial motivations, identity or character and the multiplicity and dynamism of the identities that make up the participants' overall sense of self is not to be underestimated. In other words, the categorisation of participants into those motivated by a pre-existing entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial identity is intended to highlight the influence of an identity that is dominant at a particular point in time rather than to suggest that this identity remains dominant throughout the participants' entrepreneurial journey.

The first aggregate dimension centres around the impact of identity on the participants' motivation to start a venture. For many of the participants, a dominant pre-existing identity provided the impetus for new venture creation. Participants acted to protect or fulfil an identity that was central to their overall sense of self prior to them embarking on an entrepreneurial career. For some, a non-entrepreneurial identity prompted them to seek an opportunity to start a business (see Table 9). This was either linked to a creative identity which they had established as a student, for example, designer or musician, or to a personal identity characterised by passion or guiding values. Another group sought to fulfil the needs of a pre-existing dominant entrepreneurial identity and this prompted them to seek out an opportunity that fit the parameters of their skills, knowledge and start-up capital (see Table 10). A third group was not motivated by dominant identity issues; a set of contextual circumstances and chance encounters led to them taking up an entrepreneurial opportunity (see Table 11).

The second dimension illustrates the fluid nature of identity by demonstrating how, all participants, to varying degrees, form an entrepreneurial identity (characterised by passion for and commitment to the venture as well as a growing confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities). Despite different starting points in terms of their motivation to start a business, the participants' entrepreneurial identity evolves as a result of their socialisation into entrepreneurial communities and their enactment of entrepreneurial activities. Participants with a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity reinforce and re-shape their identity through this experience (see Table 10). Participants initially motivated by a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity begin to form an entrepreneurial identity and those participants not initially motivated by identity

factors also form an entrepreneurial identity. Identity formation and evolution is shown through the use of two representative vignettes for each cohort. These vignettes tell the story of the dynamic process which shapes the participants' identity.

The third aggregate dimension considers identity conflict and the extent to which participants manage to reconcile their emerging and evolving entrepreneurial identities with the other identities that make up their overall sense of self. The successful reconciliation of identities enables entrepreneurial perseverance post start-up however participants have to work to craft their emerging entrepreneurial identity in order to reconcile it with their previously dominant non-entrepreneurial identities. The effect of reconciliation or lack of reconciliation between identities is discussed and representative vignettes are used to illustrate how reconciliation takes place and the impact it has on participants' ability to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Table 9 Group 1 Dominant pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity motivates venture creation

Pseudonym	Business	Highest level of study	Year of graduation	Year of start up	No. of years graduate work experience at start up	Male / Female	Degree discipline	Private / Social enterprise	Alone or partner (s)	Dominant motivating identity prior to start-up
Andrew	Product design	UG	2010	2011	0	M	Product design	P	partner	Designer
Christa	Candle maker	Current UG	2015	2014	0	F	Retail Management	P	alone	Shaped by values
Darcie	Music publishing	Current PG	2015	2013	0	F	Music	P	alone	Musician
Dan	Coffee importer	UG	2014	2014	0	M	Philosophy & Politics	SE	partner	Shaped by values
Gemma	Wedding dress designer	PG	2013	2013	3m	F	Fashion Design	P	alone	Designer
Joanna	Coffee importer	UG	2014	2014	0	F	English Literature	SE	partner	Passion for social justice
Lauren	College	UG	2009	2009	0	F	Events	SE	alone	Passion for social justice

Pseudonym	Business	Highest level of study	Year of graduation	Year of start up	No. of years graduate work experience at start up	Male / Female	Degree discipline	Private / Social enterprise	Alone or partner (s)	Dominant motivating identity prior to start-up
Luke	Clothing label	UG	2010	2014	4	M	Business management	SE	alone	Shaped by values
Paige	Dog walker	UG	2013	2013	0	F	Business & Enterprise	SE	alone	Passions for animals
Stephanie	Accessibility products	PG	2007	2012	4	F	Product Design	P	alone	Designer
Will	Coffee importer	UG	2014	2014	0	M	Business management	SE	partner	Shaped by values

Table 10 Group 2 Dominant pre-existing entrepreneurial identity motivates venture creation

Pseudonym	Business	Highest level of study	Year of graduation	Year of start up	No. of years graduate work experience at start up	Male / Female	Degree discipline	Private / Social enterprise	Alone or partner (s)	Dominant motivating identity prior to start-up
Ben	Mobile catering	UG	2010	2011	0	M	Business & Enterprise	P	alone	Entrepreneur
Georgie	Allergen free cakes	Current UG	2016	2013	0	F	Food & Nutrition	P	partner	Entrepreneur
Jon	Exhibition agency	UG	2010	2013	2y10m	M	Events	P	alone	Entrepreneur
Nicole	Confectionary	UG	2014	2012	0	F	Business Studies	P	alone	Entrepreneur
Robert	E-commerce	UG	2012	2012	0	M	Business & Enterprise	P	partner	Entrepreneur
Simon	Travel website	PG	2014	2014	2	M	Teaching	P	alone	Entrepreneur

Table 11 Group 3 Pre-existing identity not a motivating factor in the creation of venture

Pseudonym	Business	Highest level of study	Year of graduation	Year of start up	No. of years graduate work experience at start up	Male / Female	Degree discipline	Private / Social enterprise	Alone or partner (s)	Dominant motivating identity prior to start-up
Caroline	Cleaner	PG	2014	2014	0	F	Neuroscience	P	alone	Identity not a motivating factor
Claudia	Events organiser	UG	2010	2014	3y6m	F	Tourism	P	partner	Identity not a motivating factor
Chloe	Events organiser	UG	2012	2014	2	F	Events	P	partner	Identity not a motivating factor
Kate	Tech start-up	UG	2014	2013	0	F	Teaching	P	partner	Identity not a motivating factor

4.2 Entrepreneurial motivation and identity

For many participants, the motivation to start a venture came from an identity central to their sense of self and the need to feel authentic. When discussing their reasons for starting a venture, participants spoke about their sense of self and the multiple, dynamic identities that contribute to their overall sense of self. By starting a venture they were able to immerse themselves in activities, communities and environments that fulfilled and reinforced the identity that was most dominant, central and authentic to their sense of self.

Contemplating life after university, participants often reflected on their sense of self and their developing awareness of what career paths they may find fulfilling and rewarding. Within their accounts of this transitional process, many participants discussed the importance of protecting or fulfilling dominant pre-existing identities. These identities, including both entrepreneurial as well as non-entrepreneurial identities (for example, a creative identity developed as a student, a personal passion or value that defined them, an aspiration to become an entrepreneur) provided the motivation for subsequent entrepreneurial ventures. In order to discuss the role that pre-existing non-entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial identities play we will now turn to groups one and two (see Tables 4 and 5).

4.2.1 Fulfilment of pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identities

For the participants who undertook university courses associated with a particular profession, for example, product design or music performance and composition, the end of their course signalled a potential threat to the identity they had developed and pursued as 'a designer' or 'a musician' through their studies (see Table 13 or for full participant profiles see Appendix 11). Gemma (wedding dress designer), for example, fundamentally sees herself as a designer. She studied fashion design at university and by the time her degree had come to an end she had undertaken a number of design-based work placements, a commission for bespoke wear and had received an award for her designs in a national bridal wear competition. Having developed an identity as a designer whilst at university, she contemplated the career options that would allow her to continue to live out her designer identity. She wanted to work as a designer but was reluctant to move to London where such employment opportunities were typically based:

Gemma: *'The problem with the fashion industry is there are not any jobs in this area... I didn't really want to move to London, it wasn't really for me. I just kind of thought I'm going to do it'* [i.e. start her own wedding dress design business].

By starting a bridal wear design venture, Gemma was able to immerse herself in the activities and behaviours which felt authentic to the identity most dominant to her sense of self, that of a designer. Similarly, Andrew (product designer) who undertook a furniture design degree developed a designer identity which was central to his sense of self. By the end of his course, he too was keen to continue to immerse himself in the world of design. Seeing himself as 'a creative or a designer' he was hopeful that his participation in exhibitions would lead to his work being spotted by potential employers:

Andrew: *'…everyone kind of thought that was the place where they would be selected to go and have an internship somewhere… I would have loved it to happen to me…'*

His disillusionment with the lack of opportunities within the design industry, however, led him to consider starting his own business. As such, he discussed the idea of starting a product design business with friends on his course whilst they were in their final year:

Andrew: *'It was always something when I was at university and certainly progressing into the final year there was a few of us actually who would...our initial idea was that we were going to come up with what would be more of a collective of individuals working under one banner...'*

Again, for Andrew the motivation for starting the venture was not about fulfilling an entrepreneurial identity, it was about creating the opportunity to fulfil the needs of the designer identity that he had developed through his university course. Stephanie, the final design student, had produced a design project that had been so well received at university that at the end of her master's degree the research centre successfully applied for funding and employed her to continue developing her product for visually impaired people. For eighteen months following the end of her course, she worked as a design researcher developing and trialling her product. When the funding came to an

end Stephanie was keen to continue her design career, but having put down roots in her university town she realised that she would have to move if she were to obtain a job as a product designer:

> Stephanie: *'It was a bit frustrating to have to find another job and that maybe leave [university city] ... I'd been looking for a job as I said but I couldn't find any product design job [here] so it was all London, Manchester.'*

She also regretted abandoning a project in which she had invested considerable time and effort and particularly when the product seemed to have commercial potential, yet, with no experience of business she was hesitant about starting her own venture:

> Stephanie: *'I was still in contact with the [research participants and wider network] so it was a shame... it [starting my own venture] was a big decision because I had so much to learn. Laughs Not being a business man / woman, it's not something I've learnt from one day to another.'*

Equally, Darcie, the musician, had studied music for most of her life. Her commitment to music was such that, unable to take post 16 qualifications in music at her own school, she had taken the unprecedented step of arranging to complete her qualifications at three different colleges in order to accommodate music. After completing her undergraduate degree in music she went on to study it at master's level and also worked as a private music teacher in her spare time. Darcie's studies, work life and hobbies all centred on music but knowing that she did not want a career as a classroom music teacher she was concerned to learn that there were few jobs for music graduates, and with her identity as a musician under threat she decided to take things into her own hands by starting a music publishing business:

> Darcie: *'... a lot of the careers advice that we had in our degree was kind of... everybody was kind of insinuating that you didn't have to do a music job once you'd finished. It said like 60% of music graduates go and do a job that's nothing to do with music and that kind of worried me a bit, like I've done this degree and now I'm not going to be able to like use it or anything... So I was just like if I can't find a job in music, 'cause they are very scarce outside London, I might as well make my own job...'*

Parallels can be drawn between the motivations of designers Gemma, Andrew, Stephanie and musician Darcie. Relevant employment opportunities that would allow them to fulfil the identity fostered by their arts degree were scarce and highly competitive especially in the regional city where they lived. This dilemma presented a threat to the loss of the identity that these participants had developed at university and, as a result, was a key motivation for their subsequent ventures.   For others, it was a personal passion that motivated the start-up of an entrepreneurial venture. Starting a venture was seen by participants as a way of immersing themselves in their passion. Through my conversations with participants, it became apparent that personal passion was so fundamental to their sense of self that it provided the impetus to take the steps to create a venture (see Table 13 or for full participant profiles see Appendix 12).

Paige (dog walker) had a long held ambition to work with dogs. However, despite some voluntary work she had little relevant experience and doubted her chances of being offered a job. Studying a Business and Enterprise Management degree and carrying out her placement year with the University's Enterprise Support Service, Paige had come across many students who had started their own business. She took confidence from her growing business knowledge and from the support she knew would be available to her so in the final months of her degree she decided to start a small scale venture that allowed her to immerse herself in her passion for dogs.

> Paige: *'I couldn't get a job working with animals because I didn't have any experience. People wouldn't take me because I didn't have, apart from volunteer work, because I didn't have any experience. So essentially, I said, well, I'm going to create that work experience for myself… So I always loved dogs, always wanted to work with dogs, decided to go to uni to study business so I could set up a business working with dogs, so it's kind of all going to plan so far.'*

Similarly, Events Management graduate Lauren's passion for helping young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, which had developed as a result of her own experiences of abusive relationships and homelessness, was only intensified by her voluntary experience in schools.   Whilst working as a sports coordinator Lauren

realised that she could do more to help. She started by running a number of projects for pupils who had been excluded from the school system and realised that she wanted a place for the students to go.

> Lauren: *'And I just found that I was passionate about getting in front of groups of young people or people of all ages really and coaching them and teaching them about the importance of fitness and health and engaging them in sessions that I thought were quite creative and innovative. I just felt that I needed a longer, kind of more intensive programme. And I had this idea that I wanted to run my own college, but I had no idea how I can go about it.'*

Lauren was already self-employed but she needed help to develop her college idea so on a recommendation she went back to her old university where she received help from an adviser who would become instrumental to Lauren's entrepreneurial ambitions. By creating her own social enterprise - a college for young people excluded from mainstream education - Lauren was able to immerse herself in her passion in a way that was authentic to her sense of self.

Like Lauren, English literature student Joanna's experience of volunteering developed her passion for social justice. A summer spent teaching English in a developing country as part of a university exchange programme made a strong impression on her.

> Joanna: *'I think I didn't realise how ignorant I was until I went out there actually. I think my understanding of sort of developing countries has been sort of shaped by Oxfam adverts and like immigration narratives...'*

On her return, she got involved in the student society that had organised the cultural exchange. Determined to support the relationship between her university city and the city that had made such an impact on her, she came up with the idea of selling coffee from the exchange region's cooperative farms and donating the profits to social causes.

> Joanna: *'And when I came back I decided that I wanted to be part of the society so I became vice and then president of the society. When I became president of the society I needed to find a way of raising awareness of the fact that [home*

city] was twinned with [exchange city] but wanted to do it in kind of like the fastest way possible.'

With two other students, Joanna developed the idea and it was given credibility when they won a university social enterprise competition. Given that she was about to graduate, Joanna now had the option of turning the idea into a trading enterprise. Despite her passion for the project, a move into venture creation signalled a significant shift from her original career ambitions and caused her some soul searching.

> Joanna: *'Yeah and for me business is very leftfield. It wasn't on my to-do list. For me ...there were other things I wanted to...like maybe teaching, writing, doing something creative that way [...]...so for me the whole summer was kind of spent going should I do it, shouldn't I do it, should I do it, shouldn't I do it. It wasn't like an easy decision.'*

Joanna's sense of self as a creative person, a writer and potentially a teacher was at odds with an entrepreneurial identity. By giving up the idea to take these interests forward as a career she jeopardised her creative identity. In the end however, encouraged by the outcome of the competition, her passion for the project and sense of self as someone who wanted to make a worthwhile social impact prompted her to take the idea forward.

For all three participants, it was their personal passions which were so central to their sense of self that motivated them to start an entrepreneurial venture. Mirroring the arts graduates' limited access to relevant employment opportunities, Paige decided to create her own venture that would enable her to immerse herself in her passion for dogs. The individual passions of Paige (dog walker), Lauren (college) and Joanna (coffee importer) were reinforced when they undertook voluntary work experience and, for Lauren and Joanna, it raised their awareness of social justice issues and the potential for enterprise to make a positive contribution.

Other participants expressed values central to their sense of self as key motivators leading to their subsequent entrepreneurial ventures (see Table 13 or for full participant profiles see Appendix 11). Joanna's business partners Will and Dan were also finishing their degrees (in Business Management and Philosophy and Politics

respectively) and were considering their career options when they started work on the coffee importing project. Dan's visit to the exchange city, his participation in the student society, and his involvement with other charity work had opened his eyes to the impact that he could make.

> Dan: *'I had a very concrete sense of it being possible to do something valuable, not just kind of feeling like oh, that's not great but what can I do about it? I felt like… there were obvious ways that you could try and help.'*

Dan felt Will's academic background in business would help them develop the coffee importing pitch for the social enterprise competition. Having been friends since school, Dan and Will shared in common their values around having a meaningful career doing something which would have a positive social impact. Will, who had not been involved in the student society or cultural exchange, had been unsure about what he wanted to do after university but could not see himself in a corporate role which did not align with his own sense of self.

> Will: *'I think from a young age I always would have wanted to do a job that was helping people in some way. It doesn't necessarily have to be my own business; it doesn't necessarily have to be a charity. I don't think I'd work for a bank.'*

By joining Dan and Joanna to turn the coffee project into a social enterprise, Will was able to align his career to the altruistic values that were so central to his sense of self.

Similarly, to Dan, a trip abroad whilst at university prompted Business Management student Luke (clothing label) to consider his values in terms of his future career. Whilst volunteering overseas with his church, Luke witnessed the work of a local social enterprise and began to understand the potential to make a positive difference through enterprise. With a part-time job in retail, Luke was able to compare business practices.

> Luke: *'I was just blown away by the actual impact and just saw this could be so much better than just traditional retail, which is get it as cheaply as possible, flog it for as much as possible, live off the profits.'*

Initially wanting to help the social enterprise expand into the UK, he entered a university business plan competition and won. Although legal issues meant that he had to rethink his idea, he also saw this as an opportunity to align the venture more closely to his sense of self.

> Luke: *'So design, adventure, change is really kind of the key ethos [...] ... I guess the three aspects reflect everything that I am about...'*

Not all participants motivated by values focused on social impact. Retail Management student Christa's values, shaped by her experience of retail in the family business as well as in other roles, influenced her view of how business - especially retail - should be conducted.

> Christa: *'I've worked in retail since I was 14 and I've had 3 jobs in retail since then and I've loved all the others. Like there's quite specific things that I look for now, it's just like how they deal with customers and things like that 'cause I find that a lot of, I find that a lot of companies say they ... want to provide the best service for their customers but actually that's a side issue whereas actually I like focusing on that...'*

However, the full-time job that she had taken for twelve months before returning to university for her final year went against those values and caused her to feel unhappy at work.

> Christa: *'I'm quite a relaxed person and I like to give good service if I can whereas I think the environment there was very sales driven and I'm not really big into that. I prefer to do my job well rather than just to make money.'*

On hearing Christa's criticisms of her employer, her mother suggested that she take her candle-making hobby further and turn it into a commercial enterprise.

> Christa: *'I really enjoyed it and obviously because I wasn't enjoying my work Mum was like well why don't you do something with this 'cause you love it and see where it can go kind of thing.'*

A negative experience in the workplace provided the impetus for Christa to start her own scented candle manufacturing business. Starting her own business allowed

Christa to apply the values that were central to her sense of self to her own venture and avoid compromising her values with work practices imposed by employers.

For these four participants, Dan and Will (coffee importers), Luke (clothing label) and Christa (candle manufacturer), the values that were central to their sense of self-guided their career aspirations. Dan, Will and Luke were motivated by the positive impact their social enterprises could make and Luke along with Christa valued alternative business practices that they felt they had to compromise on in other roles.

The participants discussed in this section revealed how they were motivated to start their ventures in order to fulfil the needs of a pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity which they expressed in terms of a desire to maintain or protect an identity developed at university, a personal passion or a set of values. These participants responded to either positive or negative experiences in order to fulfil, extend or protect a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity by creating their own venture. However, identities are dynamic and in section 4.3 below I will argue that despite being motivated to start a venture by a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity, these participants, through the enactment of their entrepreneurial role and their socialisation into entrepreneurial communities began to form an entrepreneurial identity which was characterised by a growing confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities and a passion for the venture itself. In contrast, other participants demonstrated through the accounts of their entrepreneurial experience a dominant pre-existing entrepreneurial identity that acted as a key motivating factor for their subsequent enterprises. It is to those that we will now turn.

4.2.2 Fulfilment of pre-existing entrepreneurial identities

The second group of participants discussed below had a dominant entrepreneurial identity that preceded the creation of their venture (see Table 14 or for full participant profiles see Appendix 11). This pre-existing entrepreneurial identity is central amongst the various identities that make up the overall sense of self of this group of participants and acts as a key motivating factor in their decision to start a venture. For these participants the nature of the resulting venture held less importance because the motivation did not come from a non-entrepreneurial identity; what was important

to these participants was fulfilling the needs of their entrepreneurial identity by running their own venture regardless of the specific business type or activities.

During his interview, Jon (exhibition agency) talked about always having a feeling that he would one day work for himself. At university and during his first graduate role, Events Management graduate, Jon considered a number of ideas with a view of starting a venture.

> Jon: '... just a couple of different small ideas that you kind of explore, that you see if [they] are viable and then until something sticks really... I knew I was going to do something it was just a case of narrowing down...'

He left university with the intention of starting a business sooner rather than later and in the meantime, he secured a graduate role.

> Jon: 'I knew in the interview for the job that the next thing I was going to do was going to be set up a business or I had a strong inkling.'

With his entrepreneurial intentions at the forefront of his mind, Jon began to prepare for an entrepreneurial career by attending business start-up events, talks from established entrepreneurs, workshops as well as drafting business plans. The insights he gained in his graduate role enabled him to develop a viable business idea.

> Jon: 'And it was only seeing what I saw at [graduate employer] that I thought that this is the kind of route that I've got enough experience in and that I could see the scope really and see the amount of money that's being thrown around in that sector...'

Although the graduate role allowed him to gain industry experience, he found it frustrating and came into conflict with his manager over the way things should be done. He now sees this negative experience as an inevitable consequence of his entrepreneurial identity which he explains in terms of his desire to work autonomously.

> Jon: '... there were some character clashes if I'm honest with the employer but I think that's ... probably a bit of a normal... everyone I speak to that's started their own business has that. You're always looking at ways that you think you

115

can do that better. I found that frustrating 'cause I wasn't really allowed to do things my own way...'

Teaching graduate Simon (travel website) echoed a similar dissatisfaction with the experience of being employed expressed by Jon. Prior to starting his price comparison website, he had worked in the travel industry, medicine and education. However, this had only resulted in disillusionment and served to reinforce his entrepreneurial identity.

Simon: *'And I know just from my own frustration, and I know that everyone hates their job at times, but just the idea that you can do things better than the people kind of running the place.'*

One day when seeing a friend struggle to use a travel comparison website he had an idea to improve and streamline the search process. He had had a longstanding interest in business so when the idea took shape he felt it was the right thing to do.

Simon: *'I had like a million jobs and I haven't really enjoyed many of them if any, so I think it was just that fact of wanting to work for yourself you know. It wasn't just about the travel I think. The business side was something I'd always been interested in.'*

Business Studies student Nicole (confectionary) also considered her options when trying to formulate an idea that fit what she felt were her skills and limited funds. Her part-time job working on stalls at county fairs had enabled her to witness what visitors spent their money on and she compared that to the wages she earned whilst working for someone else.

Nicole: *'I'd do really well for him in one day and he'd give me x amount of pay and I'd feel like "oh my god I've made all that money for him and that's all I get"'.*

She needed a business idea that was realistic and achievable so she discussed her options with an aunt.

Nicole: *'...basically I thought "right I'm going to do macaroons". I love macaroons and I love baking. I'm mad on baking and then my auntie said "no*

116

that's silly …macaroons haven't got a good shelf life on them, 5 days turnaround". She said "what about fudge?"

Nicole started her fudge business in her first summer vacation from university and explains it as an inevitable expression of her personality.

> Nicole: *'Like I would say that from an early age I was always different. In terms of … I would wash cars at 7 for money. I had a cupcake business. I'd go out at like 15 and sell cupcakes on a car boot like I would do silly things to make money because I was just so driven by the…the catch, like I'm like a lion. I just love the kill, like its ridiculous. And that's my personality all over.'*

Growing up Business and Enterprise Management student Robert (e-commerce) had seen first his uncle and then his father become self-employed. After leaving school, he began a high pressure sales role however after two years he knew that employment was not for him and that he would be happier working autonomously.

> Robert: *'When I made the decision ... I don't want to be in a sales role, I looked at my manager, saw he was even stressed more out than I was, looked at his manager and he was even more stressed out, and I thought, is this the best I've got to look forward to? If I do really well in this role, I get to be the sales manager. [...] and I was looking at my dad and at the time the business was growing. He was running it from the garage and I thought you know what; I could do at least a good as a job as my dad could do at it, and I'd be a lot happier because I'd be my own boss. It was a sort of rebellion against bosses.'*

However not feeling ready to go straight into business he decided to study enterprise at university, something that he now feels was the best decision in his life.

> Robert: *'...the best thing for me to do is to go to university and invest in myself, invest in my education, which I did. [...] and basically, I went to Uni with this mindset of, grab everything you can. ... anything that was remotely entrepreneurial or… or out of my comfort zone, I did it because I felt this is all experience. The more I can do, the more I can grab, the better I'm going to be*

in a position when I go and start my business. I won't be frightened of the unknown.'

University offered Robert the chance to take up a placement year and he considered his options. Whilst on an exchange trip abroad, he had an idea that would dramatically expand his father's small business from being a sole trader venture to a limited company with international reach.

> Robert: *'I can join [father's business] … we can turn it into a limited company, you know, I'll become a director of that company and my sole sort of role in that year, I only had a year window, was to take the business from a UK business to a European business, and obviously to me that's really exciting because it wasn't necessarily starting my own business, but it was enterprise in every single sense of the word.'*

Ben (mobile catering) was also looking for a viable business idea. He had a long held interest in starting his own venture that had been fuelled by his enjoyment of studying a Business and Enterprise Management degree.

> Ben: *'When I was at college … and school, I'd always liked business and liked, you know, analysing it and seeing how things worked. And I didn't really know what I wanted but I knew I wanted to do business but I didn't know what. So I starting doing business and marketing, then I started realising more and more that I wanted to do enterprise.'*

With no start-up capital to invest, he was still unsure of what he could do when he graduated from university. It was at an interview for a job as a cafe manager that he began to develop an idea.

> Ben: *'I actually had a job interview to be a manager there and they told me everything about their business, they told me a lot about it, and, yeah, I thought well that's a good idea, I might as well get on that myself and so, yeah, bit of a stolen idea really, but I suppose most are … not too original.'*

The combination of the modest start-up capital requirements, his skills as a chef gained from part-time work in pubs whilst at university and his interest in new venture creation enabled him to develop a business idea that he could make work.

> Ben: *'Yeah, I knew I wanted to start a business, I just didn't know what, and that just seemed to fit the parameters.'*

The participants discussed in the section above were motivated to start a venture in order to fulfil a dominant pre-existing entrepreneurial identity. This entrepreneurial identity was central to their sense of self over the period of time leading up to the decision to start a venture and, as a result, the nature of the business was shaped by the parameters of their skills and resources including access to start-up capital rather than their personal passions and values. Most participants expressed dissatisfaction with employment as well as an interest or enjoyment in entrepreneurial activities. Their accounts revealed an entrepreneurial identity that preceded the specific business idea and manifested itself in a desire for autonomy, dissatisfaction with employment and an interest in business. Both groups of participants linked their key motivations for starting their venture with an identity central to their sense of self. For some this dominant identity was non-entrepreneurial and stemmed from a desire to protect an identity they had developed as a student. This was a common theme in arts graduates who experienced scarce employment opportunities in their chosen industry and geographical area. Other pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identities were characterised by personal passions and values. These participants defined themselves in terms of the personal passions, such as working with animals, which motivated them to start their subsequent venture. Participants motivated by values, including the desire to make a positive social impact and practice business in a more personally acceptable way, were attracted to opportunities that enabled them to live according to these values.

For both groups of participants, it is clear that an identity central to their sense of self provides a key motivating factor in subsequent entrepreneurial activities. This is not to suggest that it was the only identity that made up their sense of self nor was the dominant identity static. Instead the discussion above shows a snap shot in time; the period leading up to the decision to start a venture as well as the role that a dominant

identity can play a key motivating role at the start of an entrepreneurial journey. The participants' multiple identities evolved and became more or less salient as a result of the activities and people they engaged with. In the next section, the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial identity formation is explored in more detail.

Fulfilment of pre-existing non-entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial identities was a key motivation for subsequent entrepreneurial ventures for the two groups of participants discussed above. A third group of participants did not demonstrate a dominant, motivating identity. These participants, prompted by the threat of redundancy, uncomfortable work situations, the lack of employment opportunities or an unforeseen invitation to join a partner in their endeavour, embarked on the entrepreneurial process without being driven to fulfil the needs of a particular identity. In the following section, I will discuss the dynamic nature of identity formation by considering how all members of the three participant groups, regardless of their initial motivations, formed, in varying extents, an entrepreneurial identity as a result of their entrepreneurial experience.

4.3   Entrepreneurial identity formation: Becoming & identifying as an entrepreneur

In the section above, the motivational influence of the participants' dominant identities is examined in relation to a particular stage in time; the period when the decision to start a venture was made. However identities are multiple and dynamic and can evolve over time (Leitch, & Harrison, 2016) and therefore the participants' accounts revealed how their entrepreneurial identities formed over a period of time as a result of their entrepreneurial experiences. Participants' enactment of entrepreneurial activities and roles as well as their immersion in entrepreneurial networks and communities changed the way they saw themselves. Entrepreneurship was experienced as performative; a process of becoming through enactment and socialisation. New entrepreneurs undertake unfamiliar activities within new environments, make new contacts and build relationships within networks and join communities that they would not previously have had access to prior to embarking on their entrepreneurial endeavours, therefore, the enactment of entrepreneurship and the process of becoming is linked to the context in which it occurs. The accounts of

their entrepreneurial experiences given by participants from all three groups reveal an ongoing process of identity formation and development which was apparent in the participants' growing passion and commitment to their venture as well as their increased confidence in their own entrepreneurial capabilities. This will be discussed in detail below.

In the following section, the dynamic and performative nature of entrepreneurial identity formation is illustrated by the use of vignettes. Vignettes are narrative, story-like structures that, in keeping with an IPA approach, are written without reference to the academic literature but are constructed from the analysis and interpretation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, et al, 2009; Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

Identity formation takes place over time and therefore each 'moving' vignette allows the reader to follow the identity development of a representative participant within a specific context (Ely, et al 1997). Two representative vignettes from each participant group tell the story of entrepreneurial identity formation within the context of the entrepreneurial experience. For the purpose of drawing out how the participants experience the aggregate dimensions in contrasting and comparable ways, the following sections will also group the participants according to the link between their motivation to create a venture and their dominant motivating pre start-up identity. Therefore the three groups include participants with pre start-up non-entrepreneurial identities (see Table 4), participants with pre start-up entrepreneurial identities (see Table 5) and those participants who were not motivated to start a venture by dominant identity factors (see Table 6). However, whilst the criteria for the groups are based on a fixed point in time (the decision to start a venture) the participants assigned to the groups experience shifts in their identities and motivations over time. The vignettes, therefore, also enable us to compare how participants identify themselves prior to start up with how they identify themselves once they are engaged in entrepreneurial activities and communities. Furthermore, the vignettes allow for the individual's story to unfold in such a way that, whilst the common theme entrepreneurial identity formation over a period of time is apparent, sight is not lost of the uniqueness of the individual's experience of becoming an entrepreneur.

4.3.1 Entrepreneurial identity formation in participants motivated by a pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity.

The following vignette reveals how Darcie's sense of self evolves from being dominated by the pre-existing musician identity that provided the impetus for her to start a venture to also including a newly emerged entrepreneurial identity. The vignette describes how Darcie's emergent entrepreneurial identity is formed out of her lived experience of enacting an entrepreneurial role over a period of time. As the owner of a music publishing start-up, Darcie proactively pursues learning opportunities which open the door to new experiences and networks. These positively benefit the development of her venture in practical terms in that she can apply new knowledge and skills but also in terms of boosting her confidence in her entrepreneurial capabilities and providing her with a sense of belonging. The satisfaction gained from her achievements further reinforces her commitment to the venture and, by the end of the vignette, Darcie is keen to prioritise entrepreneurship over the potential employment opportunities which could result from her newly expanded networks. Therefore, what started as a project to create her own role in the music industry in order to protect and fulfil her musician identity resulted in her forming an entrepreneurial identity. The dynamic and ever changing nature of identity meant that her entrepreneurial experience led to the emergence of an entrepreneurial identity which she now sought to fulfil through entrepreneurship. Therefore, by pursuing her entrepreneurial endeavours Darcie fulfilled both her existing musician identity and her newly formed entrepreneurial identity.

Vignette 1: Darcie (music publishing)

Part-time masters student Darcie is first and foremost a musician. She lives her life immersed in music; performing, composing, studying, practicing and teaching. Motivated by her desire to have a career in music and faced with scarce employment opportunities, Darcie started a music publishing business whilst studying towards her master's degree in performance and composition. Prior to start-up Darcie was motivated embark on an entrepreneurial career in order to protect her dominant non-entrepreneurial musician identity. She had developed her musician identity as an undergraduate and now postgraduate student and she was concerned by the threat that the end of her course posed to this identity.

Although she knew very little about music publishing, she is now able to acknowledge the extent of the challenge as she reflects on how much she has learnt.

> *'I threw myself in at the deep end because I had to learn about it then to keep it running... I think if I knew everything I know now I'd be more worried about starting [a business]...You know, there is too much stuff to do to keep this business running, so I'd be like no, I'm not going to do that. So in a way, it was good that I kind of didn't know anything about it.'*

Darcie's to acknowledgement of her learning and achievements has boosted her self-efficacy or confidence in her entrepreneurial abilities and consequently she has begun to see herself as an entrepreneur as well as a musician.

On spotting an opportunity for a training scholarship within the music publishing industry, Darcie applied and, after a rigorous selection process, was successfully offered a place which further boosted her belief in her ability to make the business a success.

> *'And when I got the scholarship I was like "Yay!" I did it all on my own back...In a way, it's kind of nice that you've made this whole thing yourself.'*

The scholarship which included training courses, work experience and networking opportunities not only accelerated her learning but also enabled her to make invaluable contacts within the industry. The feedback she received about her venture had a positive impact on her confidence.

> *'People taking it seriously as well is a big deal because some people at university are like, yeah, yeah fine, yeah, whatever. And I've just been down to London and they've been saying like that is amazing, like nobody else has done that really.'*

Increased self-efficacy, the endorsement of her venture and a sense of belonging to a community has had an impact on Darcie's overall sense of self and her entrepreneurial identity has continued to form alongside her musician identity.

In fact, winning a place on the scholarship became a validating force for her business venture, a sign of credibility and success as well as a sense of belonging which has both motivated her and given her a feeling of achievement. As a result, Darcie has begun to enjoy the feeling of ownership that running the business has given her.

> *'I just kind of thought this will be something that I can... it's my thing. It's like*

my thing, I've made this. It's kind of like you know the cliché, so it's like my baby; like I've made this and it's completely all my doing and winning the scholarship is completely off my own back.'

As the venture develops she feels that she must change her mind-set in order for the business to be commercially viable. Fulfilling her musician identity is no longer the only aim as Darcie also seeks to fulfil her emerging entrepreneurial identity by ensuing the venture's sustainability. Primarily she feels that she must start assessing products for their commercial potential and rather than basing her decisions on her own music tastes.

> *'I suppose I've got to get out of thinking like that because, in a way, you've got to be driven in other ways. I know music is a big factor of it, but you've got to also be driven, am I making money on this?'*

Darcie has developed an entrepreneurial identity that is compatible with the other identities that make up her sense of self and intends to continue with her entrepreneurial endeavours. Looking to the future, she is planning a number of initiatives to develop her business including extending her customer base by developing a broader range of products and for the time being, Darcie will continue to re-invest any profit for that purpose. Although the scholarship has opened up opportunities of employment with some of the industry's leading companies, she now prefers to dedicate her time to developing her own business.

> *'I think my time there was good but I don't know… I think the information I've got now is what I need for now. I might do in the future but then I'll kind of jeopardise my time that I would put into my own business …'*

The vignette reveals how Darcie's immersion in her entrepreneurial endeavours enables her to enact and embody an entrepreneurial role and, over time, this has affected her self-perception from a musician to a musician and business owner. The activities Darcie carries out along with the social interaction she experiences contribute to the dynamic formation of her entrepreneurial identity.

The second vignette tells the story of Paige (dog walker) and the emergence of her entrepreneurial identity. The vignette reveals how Paige's socialisation into the entrepreneurial community contributes to her entrepreneurial identity formation. Her sense of self shifts as her self-confidence grows as a result of creating a viable dog-

walking business. The formation of her entrepreneurial identity is particularly apparent as she recognises the extent of her learning as well as in her growing confidence in her own entrepreneurial abilities.

Vignette 2: Paige (dog walker)

Paige's personal identity is characterised by her love of animals and, in particular, a long held ambition to work with dogs. This non-entrepreneurial passion provided her with the motivation, dedication and determination to start a dog walking business in her final year at university. Therefore, the motivation to start a venture initially came from the desire to fulfil a non-entrepreneurial identity.

As she began to overcome hurdles and progress with her venture her entrepreneurial self-efficacy started to develop and this has had an impact on the way she sees herself. Paige reflects on the steep learning curve she experienced.

> *'You don't have a manager to tell you what to do so you have to realise it by yourself and I really did research it a lot [...] but a lot of it you just learn and you just do it yourself and you learn about it...'*

Despite finance not being her strongest subject at university, Paige, with the help of the university enterprise support advisers, learnt how to tackle bookkeeping and tax returns for her business.

> *'You have to do your own books and do your own financial statements and all that sort of stuff and, yeah, don't get me wrong, I couldn't do it in my sleep or anything, but I'm learning it and I get a big boost when I know I've done it and understood it.'*

Paige's growing confidence to rely on her own judgement indicates that she is forming an entrepreneurial identity. Going against the advice she was given, Paige was determined to make her website reflect her personality.

> *'A lot of people said to me, why don't you just get a really basic website up with your number and then you'll start getting customers through. But, as a bit of a perfectionist and somebody who likes to put their own style on things, I was like no, no, no, I'm not posting it until it's perfect, until it's exactly how I want it to be.'*

Paige's entrepreneurial identity has become so central to her sense of self that that

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presenting herself and the business as one is of fundamental importance to her. She wants to ensure that her passion and commitment for the business is demonstrated through her website.

> *'I live and breathe my job. I do it every day and if I can show them that ....then I think they can only be left to think that you are, like, completely and 100% passionate about what you do'.*

The centrality of her entrepreneurial identity is highlighted by her future goals however her personal identity as an animal lover has not diminished. Paige sees the dog-walking business as a starting point that will allow her to diversify into other related ventures. Therefore, the two central identities can be fulfilled by her entrepreneurial endeavours.

> *'The intention is to build it up and learn and understand this service as much as possible and then move on to another one...'*

Although at times Paige rejects the advice given to her and prefers to follow her own judgements, she puts great value on being part of a community of entrepreneurs. The benefit of being part of a community extends beyond advice and validates her choice to start a business.

> *'I'm very lucky to have quite a few friends that run their own small businesses. My brother wants to start his own business, my boyfriend runs his own business, so although I actually started before them, it's lovely to be surrounded by that because you really do feel like you're a part of something that's very exciting and I think that's very important'*

In addition, she has proved that her business idea is viable.

> *'I've absolutely loved dogs ever since I was a very young child and it was only a matter of accepting that it was a viable idea and a viable career to go into, because that was the only thing that was holding me back and once I overcame that, I went for it'.*

Paige's entrepreneurial identity has emerged as a result of enacting an entrepreneurial role and feeling part of an entrepreneurial community. The non-entrepreneurial passion that motivated her to start the venture has guided her in her decisions and given her the confidence to challenge expectations. As a result of her engagement with entrepreneurship, she started to form an entrepreneurial identity that is aligned with

the non-entrepreneurial identity characterised by a passion for animals. Therefore, her dog-walking venture provides her with a sense of authenticity.

> *'My work is me and it's everything that I want to be and I think about it all the time'.*

The stories of Darcie and Paige represent entrepreneurial identity formation for the group of participants that were initially motivated by a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity. They demonstrate how the dynamic process of identity formation is situated within the context of their activities and social interactions. In both cases an entrepreneurial identity begins to form post start-up as a result of their enactment of the entrepreneurial role. The participants' self-perception begins to change as their self-efficacy and sense of belonging to entrepreneurial communities grows. However, their motivating non-entrepreneurial identity is not replaced by their emerging entrepreneurial identity as the multiple identities interact and reinforce the participants' commitment to their entrepreneurial careers. In the next section, I will discuss entrepreneurial identity formation in participants motivated to start a venture by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity.

4.3.2 Entrepreneurial identity formation in participants motivated by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity.

The following section considers a group of participants who were motivated to start a venture in order to satisfy their pre-existing entrepreneurial identity. For them, participation in the activities and social interactions associated with starting a business served to reinforce and shape their entrepreneurial identity. Two representative vignettes reveal the process by which the pre-existing entrepreneurial identity evolves after venture creation.

Vignette 3: Jon (exhibition agency)

Jon had felt for a long time that he would start his own business one day signalling an entrepreneurial identity that pre-dates venture start-up. Having given up a graduate role with the exhibitions industry in order to work full-time in his exhibition agency, Jon has found his entrepreneurial experience challenging in a number of unexpected

ways. Despite his entrepreneurial identity pre-dating the start of his business, these challenges have led Jon to question whether he should pursue his entrepreneurial ambitions. After working under the supervision of a manager for an organisation well known in its industry, he has first-hand knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of employment and self-employment. However, despite acknowledging the hurdles of being his own boss, Jon's experience of entrepreneurship ultimately served to reinforce and shape his entrepreneurial identity which was reflected in his commitment to achieve his seven year growth plan.

In the early stages of starting the business, Jon dedicated all of his time to getting the venture off the ground however the excessive hours were detrimental to his health and family life.

> *'Well when I first started off and when things actually started moving forward I was working stupid, stupid hours and I made myself ill...'*

As a result, he has begun to be more protective of his work / life balance.

> *'I just kind of realised that it's not worth that, it's not worth that person I become [laughs] when I'm stressed out and tired. There's more important things and it's about having that balance where you don't have to work...'*

In this way Jon has begun to craft his own unique entrepreneurial identity; one that combines commitment to the venture with the need to look after his physical and mental wellbeing. With several years of graduate-level work experience combined with his experience of running a business in the same sector, Jon is aware that he could walk into a high salaried role. After one particularly quiet period, he considered going back into employment but the centrality of his reinforced and re-shaped entrepreneurial identity prevented him from doing so.

> *'...but then you kind of sleep on and ......what am I doing this for?'*

By reflecting on his feelings about starting the business in the first place, Jon renewed his commitment to his business. After navigating the peaks and troughs of running a business he now realises how quickly things can change and tries to bear this in mind during slow periods.

> *'it always seems to have a way of sorting itself out but I can understand why people...people pack up, I really can at times. It's tough. It's not straight forward and anyone who thinks it is has never done it.'*

Jon feels that the best support can be obtained from those who have had experienced entrepreneurship.

> *'The best help I've had is just through talking to people who've done it and I spend a lot of time doing that because there are times when you get stressed, there are times when you think why am I doing this and it is absolutely the best support you can get.'*

Jon's feeling that he is unsuited to employment is also confirmed by his interactions with other entrepreneurs.

> *'there were some character clashes if I'm honest with the [previous] employer but I think that's kind of...probably a bit of a normal... everyone I speak to that's started their own business has that,'*

Through his interactions with other entrepreneurs Jon feels a sense of belonging to an entrepreneurial community, as well as a sense that he does not fit in as an employee and this serves to further develop his entrepreneurial identity. He feels that having overcome some of the barriers in the early days has given him credibility with other entrepreneurs in his network and this allows for more frank discussions about the difficulties they experience.

> *'I think that now, once people see that you are kind of credible, you know I've not just been about 2 months and packed up like quite a lot of people do, you start to get honest answers out of people.'*

This inclusion in conversations amongst entrepreneurs not only allows him to gain insights into the workings of other businesses but also has a positive impact on his self-efficacy.

> *'Actually, that business you thought was absolutely fine is having the same problems as you and we can talk about that and find out how they deal with it and learn from there.'*

By crafting his entrepreneurial identity Jon is able to reject employment and overcome some of the challenges of starting a venture resulting in his ability to commit to his business by creating a long term plan.

> *'...at the start I didn't really know why I was doing it, if I'm honest with myself I didn't. I was just doing it to see what happened and that's tough because you've got no direction.'*

In the first eighteen months of running his business, Jon has experienced some of the highs and lows of entrepreneurship. He has considered and rejected paid employment, developed a sense of belonging in a mutually supportive network within the business community and defined his long term business goals. For Jon, the experience of entrepreneurship has reinforced the entrepreneurial identity that pre-dated the start of his venture. The process of becoming an entrepreneur has enabled Jon to challenge expectations such as working excessive hours and through his interactions with new and established entrepreneurs he has shaped his own entrepreneurial identity.

Vignette 4: Ben (mobile catering)

Like Jon, Ben was also motivated to start his mobile catering venture to fulfil a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity. He also experienced many challenges in the first year of trading.

> '...the first year was very, very dodgy. Like, yeah, I had to put some stuff on credit cards and end up getting quite skint to be honest.'

Initially, he found that his lack of experience in the mobile catering industry led to costly mistakes.

> 'the first year, I got stung by a few things and ended up paying a lot of money for crap pitches, but just experience really, a lot of it'

He accepted losses as a learning experience which he could build on the following year and as a result his confidence in his entrepreneurial abilities began to grow. However, when the opportunity of full-time employment arose he decided to take it up alongside running his business in order to gain some financial security. He compares running his own business to being in employment.

> 'So it's very much feast and famine very often, rather than employment, where it's very steady income. Yeah, so some months it can be fantastic, other months it can be like you're ready to hang yourself, oh God, what's going on here?'

However, having recently completed his second season of working and running the business at the same time Ben is feeling the strain. As a result of the difficulties, Ben feels forced to acknowledge that *'something has got to give'* and he has begun to reconsider his priorities. He reflects on his changing priorities.

> 'I think I may have convinced myself that, you know, I needed the day job for

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money... But now, the more I think about it, the more I'm like, well, okay money… I would survive. Money isn't everything. So, you know, I'm trying to get the work / life balance back in view really'.

Through these reflections, Ben shapes his entrepreneurial identity so that it is more compatible with his overall sense of self. When holding down a full-time job whilst running a business became untenable, Ben's entrepreneurial self-concept meant that, despite the risk of not having a regular monthly income, it was the job and not the business that had to go.

> *'And I think about my business, how I think it should be run, which can cause problems [at work]. [...] I think it should be run in a certain way and, yeah, I've got a bit of a problem with just doing… If I'm told to do something, in the past I've not done it because I think I'll do what I want, which, you know, isn't a great mindset if you're being employed by someone, because they want you to do what they want you to do. And maybe I'm just not a good employee; I don't know [laughs].'*

Ben's engagement with entrepreneurship and employment simultaneously reveals to him the extent to which he identifies as an entrepreneur rather than an employee. In fact, with scale efficiencies in mind, Ben has invested in another mobile food van so that he can double up at events.

> *'So, you know, if I'm there with one, I may as well be there with two that kind of thing. Because it'd be just as easy to manage ...'*

Ben is now considering what needs to be done to get his venture into a saleable position. Uncertain that catering at outdoor events will still be attractive to him in ten years' time Ben is considering other ventures.

> *'I've grown up with property renovation. Like my mum and dad have always been doing it. [...] So, yeah, I think property renovation is something that I'd like to get into.'*

The dominance of his entrepreneurial identity extends beyond the nature of the venture, resulting in variety of entrepreneurial ambitions. As with his first business venture, any subsequent venture will be chosen on whether or not it fits *'the parameters'* of his capital and his skill set and he is aware of the challenges ahead.

> *'It's just you've got to be prepared to put your heart and soul into it really.*

> *You've got to really give it everything you've got really, you know. And, you know, you've got to not give up'.*

Ben was motivated to start his mobile catering venture to fulfil the needs of his dominant pre-existing entrepreneurial identity. The routine business start-up activities reinforced his identification with the role and he regarded the outcomes of those activities as learning experiences. Despite the challenges of turning it into a sustainable business, the experience shaped his sense of entrepreneurial self and ultimately he rejected a career in paid employment in favour of entrepreneurship albeit through a range of different ventures.

The stories of Jon and Ben typify the classic image of the entrepreneur driven to start ventures by their pre-existing entrepreneurial identities. The vignettes demonstrate how undertaking an entrepreneurial role ultimately serves to reinforce and reshape their entrepreneurial identity as they craft it to fit their changing self-perceptions. The centrality of this identity to the participants' sense of self is challenged as they experience low points which make them question their decision to start a venture. Despite being motivated by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity neither participant had experienced entrepreneurship at first hand and the impact of the new role on their work-life balance forced them to re-think their priorities. Both had the choice of employment over entrepreneurship but the need to fulfil their dominant entrepreneurial identities motivated them to persevere with their entrepreneurial ambitions.

4.3.3 Entrepreneurial identity formation in participants not motivated by a dominant identity

Not all participants were motivated to start a business to fulfil the needs of a dominant identity. These participants were neither influenced by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity nor non-entrepreneurial identity. For these participants, other motivations came into play in the decision to create a venture. Chance encounters, unforeseen opportunities and difficult professional lives led these participants to consider an entrepreneurial career for the first time. The following vignettes for Kate (tech start-up) and business partners Claudia and Chloe (events company) illustrate how this group of participants, through their enactment of the entrepreneurial role and their

socialisation into entrepreneurial communities, begin the process of entrepreneurial identity formation to the extent that it becomes central to their overall sense of self.

The fifth vignette illustrates Kate's entrepreneurial identity formation as her dominant teacher identity is altered as a result of her involvement in a business accelerator programme. Prior to applying for the programme, Kate had not considered starting her own venture. Encouraged to adopt a role within the tech start-up, Kate was able to enhance her skills and develop new ones thus experiencing a shift in her self-perception. By reflecting on her professional development, Kate considers her learning journey and its implications of her emerging entrepreneurial identity on her future career.

Vignette 5: Kate (tech start-up)

Kate was on course to fulfil her ambition to work as a school teacher when, in the penultimate year of her teaching degree, an opportunity arose that was too good to pass up. Whilst helping a friend with his web design business, they began to consider the commercial potential of a piece of software that he had developed several years earlier for the hospitality industry. They pitched their idea to the organisers of an accelerator programme and were offered a place.

Being offered a place on the accelerator programme was, for Kate, an endorsement of the business idea and this gave her the confidence to accept.

> *'I just thought, you know what, if someone is throwing money at a company that they think is going to be successful, why not give it a go for three, six months? If it doesn't work it doesn't work.'*

This was the first in a series of endorsements and positive feedback that stimulated the formation of Kate's entrepreneurial identity. Initially, Kate's sense of self was dominated by her teacher identity and she started on the programme very aware of her lack of entrepreneurial experience.

> *'So we came in on day one. We'd just formed a company. None of us had a clue about business. None of us had done any business-related qualifications or anything like that.'*

A negative experience with a potential investor also made her question her suitability

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for the task.

> *'She was firing questions at us and we came out actually feeling pretty crap. We thought we're not cut out for this, [I felt like] I don't know what I'm talking about, I don't feel like I should be here.'*

Encouraged by the programme organisers to consider the roles that needed to be fulfilled in the business, Kate took a lead on the operational and sales aspects of the venture. Her role was dictated less by her skills and experience and more by the gaps left after her partners had taken up their respective software development and design roles.

> *'I was doing the operation stuff and sales stuff because no-one else was doing sales...so you've got to do what you've got to do, haven't you, if you've only got three people?'*

Kate's role in the venture prompted her to see herself as the 'business person' amongst the three partners and she reflected on the skills she brought to the team.

> *'I am actually quite organised. So I think I've got an advantage in one sense because I am quite on top of everything that I'm doing.'*

She was also able to identify how to build on her existing skills for the benefit of the business.

> *'... doing a teaching degree, [...] I could already present really, it was just the technicalities of what you put into a presentation for investors because I didn't know what they wanted to know. So it was all about learning that really.'*

Whilst the prototype was in development Kate began to seek out potential customers, obtaining agreement with one site to trial it. The feedback from the pilot site was positive and encouraged the partners to develop the final product in the next stage of the programme.

> *'So although it wasn't fully formed, we'd thrown it into a site and it did achieve some great results. So that was a big bonus for us'*

Kate likens start-up life to a rollercoaster ride of peaks and troughs. Being able to recognise and manage her emotional response helps her to cope with the highs and lows of starting a business.

> *'So it's like you almost need to jump over those negative things and maybe not take the positive things quite as positive as they are. You need to be quite flat*

> *lined in ..., you know, your emotions and your process. Otherwise, it's quite a high peak and a low trough.'*

She has also become part of a start-up community and has developed an informal network of like-minded individuals who are willing to share experiences and knowledge in a mutually supportive way. Being part of this community lessens the impact of the lows and further enables Kate to see herself as an entrepreneur.

> *'we've got friends, but they're all probably start-up friends. So they do similar things to us'*

She compares this with her social circle from home.

> *'how [do] you talk to your friend that works in an office job about raising investment through investors? They wouldn't have a clue.'*

By identifying with one group more strongly than another Kate shows that her self-perception has changed as a result of her entrepreneurial experiences. Prompted by the programme organisers, the partners decided to take on an adviser who had a long career in senior management in the hospitality industry to help them take the final product to market. The adviser's endorsement of the business boosted Kate's confidence.

> *'...he says he can see how it's going to work in the future and he... we've got a video actually that says "I think their business is going to be very successful". That's his words. And for him to say that from a position that he's been in is fantastic for us. [...] He's seen the software before and he thinks it's something revolutionary and he thinks it's quite exciting.'*

Having a well-connected industry professional represent and endorse their product opened doors for Kate and her partners and the feedback they received from potential buyers was positive.

> *'We even got to sit in front of the Ops Director for some of these companies, and some people in the organisation don't even know the Ops Director, never mind me, obviously, like, you know, I don't know them [laughs]. So we took a demo and showed them and, honestly, everybody we spoke to was so excited.'*

Although funds are running low and new investment looks unlikely the endorsements she has received from the industry prevent her from accepting defeat.

> *'I think it is only ever a 'no' if the hospitality companies are rejecting it or it's not*

> *working.'*

Her growing belief in their ability to found a successful start-up has been mirrored by her growing self-belief. She reflects on the changes she has seen in herself.

> *'Over the last 18 months I've changed professionally quite a lot, as in I'm a lot more confident, I guess, and I feel like I could go into any meeting and talk to people, whereas in the past I might have been quite reluctant to do that'*

When she joined the accelerator programme, Kate's teacher identity was central to her sense of self but, as a result of spending eighteen months as a start-up founder, Kate has learned to navigate the peaks and troughs of entrepreneurship. For Kate, the experience of entrepreneurship has been a process of becoming which has been shaped by her immersion in a start-up community and her interactions with advisers as well as potential investors and clients. Enacting the entrepreneurial role has altered her sense of self which now includes an emerging entrepreneurial identity.

The following vignette illustrates how employed individuals with no previous entrepreneurial aspirations can transition to entrepreneurship and develop dominant entrepreneurial identities characterised by confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities and passion for their venture.

Vignette 6: Claudia and Chloe (events company)

Claudia and Chloe were colleagues in a marketing services organisation when they decided to start their events agency. Whilst neither partner felt compelled to fulfil an identity need by starting a business, the emergence of an entrepreneurial identity is apparent in both participants as they become immersed in the entrepreneurial roles and networks associated with new venture creation. The support offered by the university enterprise team introduced the partners to an enterprise community; they were assigned advisers and shared office space with other start-ups. In addition, they entered an enterprise competition which encouraged them to write business plans, attend networking events and pitch their ideas to judges and audiences.

Initially, the partners were intimidated by these new activities. For Chloe, learning the language of business has given her the confidence to participate in networking events.

> *'it was strange first of all, networking, because people use different terminology and stuff that if you're not… if you're not used to it then it's… its quite daunting. And I think my biggest thing was getting over the fact that people weren't going to take it seriously, what we were doing.'*

Claudia expressed similar concerns;

> *'that's what we were worried initially about, you know, saying the wrong things, people will kind of know that we're new and stuff like that.'*

However, by repeatedly taking part in networking events and by getting to know people within the enterprise community their confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities grew.

> Chloe: *'So once we'd been to a few of them I was fine then and once we'd made some like… we started to get to know people there as well I was okay with it.'*
>
> Claudia: *'I can just see the transition that happened, you know, over this year, like not even a year, but very intimidated at first, very shy, not sure what to say, what sort of things, you know, should we be saying, not saying, how to act and whatever. And you just kind of get so much more relaxed as you do it more often, and you grow confident.'*

Chloe also saw an increase in confidence when it came to addressing audiences.

> *'Public speaking, that's been another big one. [...] It was my absolute number one, hated it in university, couldn't do it. I used to like shake, my voice'd go… I'm fine now [laughs]. [...] I don't know if it's because I'm more confident in what I'm talking about now, so because I kind of know it inside out then … if someone asks me a question I can answer it...'*

Claudia reflects that networking allows her to learn from other people.

> *'And you just learn on the way, but it's like if you meet people, and you talk to the right people, you are going to end up achieving things and doing things right. It's pretty much not what you know, but who you know.'*

With both partners in full-time employment in order to support themselves financially, they work on the business in their spare time. Although this presents its own difficulties, the enjoyment they experience and entrepreneurial passion enables them to overcome their tiredness and validates their pursuit of entrepreneurship.

> Chloe: *'And I enjoy it, so that always helps. Like it doesn't feel like I'm going to*

work. For those like few weeks where I didn't have another job as well, ... it's like the nicest feeling 'cause... you're still working hard but it's like you can make your own kind of timetables ... and you can prioritise exactly what needs to be done and it's freedom ..., I suppose I enjoy that [laughs].'

For Claudia, meeting successful business people is one of the highlights of running her own business because she finds it both inspirational and motivational. These role models reinforce her ambition to be a successful entrepreneur.

'[I] really enjoy it, because, obviously, you meet really inspirational people as well, you know, they've done some amazing things as well. We've met some people, obviously, very successful people, who've done great things, and it kind of keeps you motivated to try and achieve good things as well yourself.'

The partners' different roles in the business have enabled them to reflect on their entrepreneurial abilities and allow them to develop self-efficacy.

Claudia: *'I'm probably the person who goes out and talks to people and creates opportunities, whereas Chloe will be... she's very creative, she is the true event planner.'*

Chloe: *'The part I really enjoy is like coming up with all the sort of theme-ing ideas and like I like writing... so like blogs or PRs or like copy for websites and things like that.*

Chloe: *'I think I'm probably a little bit more creative whereas she's more like... like figures and things like that. She likes all of that. And she's good with money [laughs].'*

Claudia considers what the experience has enabled her to learn about herself and her partner.

'We're very resourceful people, so we managed to get things for free or do it ourselves.'

This recognition of her development has restored her confidence that was damaged by her negative experience in her last job.

Claudia: *'I don't give over easily and I'm very perseverant. And I think I've also learned that I'm quite good at I think building relationships with people, which I lost a lot of confidence in that last job. [...] And I think, obviously, I've got all my confidence back over the past year, [...] So, you know, I can actually have great*

> *things, I am good at what I do, and so I've got all that confidence back, whereas before I was questioning that.'*

From a starting point of being in paid employment, the partners created a venture and become immersed in business networks and enterprise communities. As a result of these experiences and interactions, both partners began to develop an entrepreneurial identity which is characterised by their increased self-efficacy, entrepreneurial passion and determination to persevere and succeed.

The stories of Kate, Claudia and Chloe represent how participants who were not initially motivated to start a venture by a strong sense of identity (either entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial) formed an entrepreneurial identity over time as a result of enacting an entrepreneurial role. As a result of their immersion in entrepreneurial activities and their socialisation into entrepreneurial communities, the entrepreneurs learnt how to be and began to internalise the entrepreneurial identity thus altering their self-perception and reinforcing their commitment to their respective ventures.

In summary, participants in all groups possessed multiple, dynamic identities however for the purpose of highlighting the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial identity formation they have been divided up into three groups based on the dominant motivating identity at the point of new venture creation. Therefore, the groups discussed include: those motivated to create a new venture to fulfil or protect a pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity, those motivated to fulfil an entrepreneurial identity that existed prior to venture creation and a third group for whom a dominant identity was not a significant motivating factor. Two representative vignettes for each group illustrate that, regardless of the uniqueness of the individual context, entrepreneurship was experienced as performative; underpinning the process of becoming an entrepreneur regardless of the influence of identity at the start of the entrepreneurial experience. The enactment and embodiment of an entrepreneurial role introduced participants to new experiences and interactions, gave them a sense of belonging, created new realities and consequently altered their self-image.

Across all three groups, participants' stories reveal a dynamic and evolving sense of self that is influenced by the context in which it is enacted. The emerging entrepreneurial identity is formed and reinforced as it finds its place amongst other previously held identities that make up a complex and multifaceted sense of self. In the following section, participants' attempts to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with more dominant identities are discussed. Those participants able to successfully reconcile their multiple and emerging identities within their overall sense of self were able to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours whilst, for others, the inability to fully integrate their identities undermined their commitment to the venture.

4.4 Perseverance and entrepreneurial identity: crafting, conflict and reconciliation

Participants actively crafted an entrepreneurial identity that was compatible with other identities within their sense of self. They tended to do this in reference to stereotypical representations of the entrepreneur by embracing or rejecting characteristics according to what felt personally authentic and meaningful. Through this active crafting, many participants were able to successfully integrate their evolving entrepreneurial identity with their other multiple and dynamic identities that made up their sense of self. As a result, they reinforced their commitment to the venture and persevered despite encountering difficulties. However, some participants with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities experienced identity conflict as their entrepreneurial identity emerged. Unable to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with their dominant identity, they questioned their commitment to the venture and this adversely affected their ability to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Whilst participants in groups two (motivated by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity) and three (not motivated by identity issues) seemed to successfully integrate their emerging entrepreneurial identity within their overall sense of self, some group one participants (those motivated to start a venture by a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity) experienced tensions between their pre-existing identities and their emerging entrepreneurial identity.

The following vignettes below illustrate how these participants worked with varying success to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with the dominant identity that provided the impetus for new venture creation. Luke's story (see Vignette 7) shows how the successful reconciliation of the multiple identities that make up his sense of self reinforces his commitment to his entrepreneurial career, provides him with the drive and energy to overcome hurdles and allows him to create a vision for the future. It is then followed by Andrew's story (see Vignette 8) which shows that, despite attempts to shape an acceptable entrepreneurial identity, only partial reconciliation is achieved and the resulting identity conflict between his developing entrepreneurial identity and his dominant creative identity leads him to question his commitment to the venture and consider other career paths. When identity conflict cannot be resolved participants' commitment to the venture wanes and they lose the motivation to persevere with their venture (illustrated by Vignette 9: Joanna). Joanna's story of the identity conflict between her emerging entrepreneurial identity and her creative writer identity shows that, despite a growing belief in her entrepreneurial capabilities, she is unwilling to commit to the venture.

Vignette 7: Luke (clothing label)

The motivation for Luke to start a venture came from his desire to make a difference. He sees his ethical clothing label as a 'lifestyle business' that reflects his values. He has been keen to build a brand that reflects his interest in social change and admires people who, like him, pursue a passion.

> *'The entrepreneurs I respect more are people who are doing something that they're passionate about, and are doing something that they really care.'*

However, he is aware of the negative stereotypes associated with entrepreneurs in popular culture.

> *'I think people can perceive the word entrepreneur as people who are just basically sharks, and people who just get what they can and whatever.'*

The negative characteristics he associates with the socially ascribed entrepreneurial identity include being ruthless, uncaring and having heroic innate qualities. Because Luke didn't identify with these characteristics, he had initially felt unsuited to an entrepreneurial career.

> *'And I think that's probably what created that air of mystery, and kind of, I guess, inadequacy that I felt towards what you need to be to be a businessman, I felt like I'm not that person, I'm not that shark, I'm not like that.'*

A comment from a friend prompted him to consider the negative connotations in terms of his own way of doing business.

> *'Someone said to me... you'll never get anywhere in business because you're too nice. [...] And that's just totally not true. The huge reason the business has been a success, or is becoming a success, is the people that I've connected with who have liked me...'*

Having had first-hand experience of running a business, Luke is now able to reject the negative stereotypes in favour of a more positive depiction of the entrepreneur that aligns with his sense of self. By carrying out identity work Luke actively crafts an acceptable entrepreneurial identity.

> *'I think I'd class myself as an entrepreneur. I think it's someone who's creative, who is a starter, a self-starter, who likes to create something new, likes to innovate.'*

Luke has been able to successfully reconcile his sense of self as someone with a keen interest in design, adventure and social change with his emerging entrepreneurial identity.

> *'Because I see my role ... is really, I guess, creative producer, if you like, because that is just making stuff happen, but I get to do some more of the creative stuff with the designer.'*

As a result of this identity reconciliation, he is able to commit his energy and enthusiasm to the venture despite also working in paid employment.

> *'And it's something I enjoy. As I say, I'm not packing boring things; I'm not selling something that I don't love. I'm interested in it, I love design, I love creative things, and that's what it is, and it's working, so it's kind of like a hobby that pays me, and I get to use some of my working week to do it. ... I am genuinely interested in it.'*

By creating a business closely aligned to his sense of self, Luke has formed an entrepreneurial identity in harmony with his identity as a creative person guided by values. As a result of the reconciliation between his sense of self and his emerging

entrepreneurial identity, Luke is able to sustain the drive and determination needed to pursue his entrepreneurial endeavours and is planning to work full-time in the business in the future.

> *'I'm happy for it to ... keep growing organically [...] but I am kind of working out what I want it to be, because it is very much a lifestyle business. You know, I think I do hope that someday I'll be able to work for it full-time.'*

Luke's account suggests that his first-hand experience allows him to actively shape and reshape his own entrepreneurial identity by emphasising aspects of stereotypical representations which are compatible with his overall sense of self. In shaping his own entrepreneurial identity Luke seems to reconcile his multiple identities with each other as well as with popular notions of what it is to be an entrepreneur. In the following vignettes, aspects of entrepreneurial stereotypes are rejected by Andrew and Joanna because they are incompatible with their sense of self. Popular portrayals of entrepreneurs contribute to the difficulty these participants experience when attempting to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with their overall sense of self.

Vignette 8: Andrew (product designer)

Andrew developed a creative identity at whilst studying product design at university and it was this dominant creative identity that motivated him to start a design venture. However, as a result of setting up a design partnership with two friends he has also formed an entrepreneurial identity that reflects his interest in '*how business works and how you can go about getting things to manufacture and that whole process.*' As a result of this interest, Andrew has begun to manage the more commercial aspects of the business.

> *'I guess I was more managing the business aspects of the partnership, looking at the cash flow...'*

Whilst he enjoys managing the business, he feels the term entrepreneur and the associated connotations do not represent him. Therefore, he does not identify with the entrepreneurial stereotype.

> *'I don't think...entrepreneur kind of covers it. [...]...I see it as just relating a more American way of doing things...A kind of Silicon Valley ideal'*

Despite acknowledging his growing interest in business he considers his identity as a designer is more central to his sense of self. He has multiple conflicting and complementary identities and, throughout his interview, he tries to make sense of them.

> *'I'm either a designer or a business owner, probably more just a designer to be honest.'*

Andrew rejects the entrepreneur label with its 'Silicon Valley' connotations because he sees it as being at odds with his sense of self however as a product designer running a commercial business he tries to reconcile his designer and entrepreneurial identities in a way that makes sense to him.

> *'I don't see myself as an entrepreneur, I see myself as a business owner, an owner of this body of work or these products.'*

By seeing himself as an owner of a body of work, he is able to focus on what is important to him and his customers.

> *'You don't sell yourself as being a kind of entrepreneur, you are selling yourself as a creative or a designer because you want people to buy into that. They want something that is well designed, unique and kind of well manufactured rather than the business idea.'*

Andrew's motivating designer identity remains central to his sense of self and since he is intermittently employed in design-related roles his designer identity is at least partially fulfilled by paid employment. Therefore, he achieves a sense of authenticity by working in design-related paid jobs, lessening his need for entrepreneurship, which was originally motivated by a desire to fulfil his creative identity. With his entrepreneurial identity being subservient to his designer identity, he can question his commitment to the business during frustrating periods.

> *'I can just look at it sometimes and think I can just leave this, you know, I don't need this really and I can pursue other, you know, career paths I think.'*

But successes experienced to date stimulate entrepreneurial identity development and prompt him to persevere.

> *'But then we are so close to getting it right. ...we are getting to that point*

> *where we can do that [invest in stock production] and then we can really push it
> and see if we can take it to that next step'*

Unable to identify with the stereotypical entrepreneur, Andrew has constructed a version of an entrepreneurial identity that is compatible with his designer identity and overall sense of self. Having partially reconciled his designer and entrepreneurial identities, Andrew sees his immediate future in the business. After working in the business on a part-time basis over the last four years he is looking forward to dedicating himself to the business on a full-time basis.

> *'...we are almost at the point where we will be able to be paying ourselves from
> the business.'*

Whereas Luke seems to have integrated his entrepreneurial identity with the multiple identities that make up his overall sense of self, the centrality of Andrew's designer identity is apparent in his ambivalence towards the business. He actively rejects the stereotypical associations of the term 'entrepreneur' but partially reconciles his emerging entrepreneurial identity by viewing it as a means of serving his dominant creative identity. In the next vignette, Joanna, unable to reconcile her emerging entrepreneurial identity with her other influential identities, contemplates leaving the business to seek fulfilment elsewhere.

Vignette 9: Joanna (coffee importer)

Joanna was motivated to start a business to fulfil a personal identity which was characterised by her passion for social justice. Alongside two partners, she developed a coffee importing social enterprise as a result of her desire to make a positive impact on an overseas community. One year on, she is considering leaving the business. Although she appreciates the positive impact that the project can make, she also feels that, since graduating, her heart isn't in it.

> *'I just knew that it was a very cool thing to be part of [...] but it's not been like a
> decision that I just went "yeah great, that's what I want to do"'*

Joanna has multiple competing identities, she would like to teach English and have time for creative writing. Pursuing the social enterprise after graduation prevented Joanna from following other ambitions and her misgivings were compounded when a

chance occurrence made her reflect on her feelings about the business.

> *'But I walked into [local retailer] and I saw our product on the shelf and I was like "yeah that's really cool" but I think I should be far more proud of it than I am.'*

However, she feels some social pressure around entrepreneurship and her involvement in the social enterprise.

> *'But it can also make you feel like are you a bit of a sheep because you can think like people that own businesses like they are mavericks you know, they are doing something different, they're taking risks, they don't know when they are going to get paid blah blah blah and it's like oh are you just a sheep because you want to go in, get your salary and leave.'*

The cultural stereotype of the lone, maverick entrepreneur further alienates her from her entrepreneurial endeavours.

> *'Entrepreneur has that kind of like maverick feel to it like you've created something new. To me when I think of an entrepreneur I think of someone that's done something quite big...new... Entrepreneur to me always sounds like it's this lone individual that's doing something amazing'*

In contrast, Joanna's experience has been of working with an extended team on a small venture in an established industry.

> *'in fact business really for me hasn't been about being an individual it's been about groups, group skills [...] I think quite often you've got a huge team behind you'*

However, Joanna's first-hand experience of starting and running a venture has enabled her to form an entrepreneurial identity, although she prefers the term business person.

> *'I suppose I see ourselves as business people. We've gone into the coffee market which isn't new you know people have been doing it for a while...'*

Aligned with her construction of an acceptable entrepreneurial identity is her newly acquired understanding of the language of business. Initially, the unfamiliarity of the language of business caused her to doubt her ability to successfully manage a venture.

> *'I think that would be a low point for me with kind of coming in and feeling like doubt, like thinking am I good enough, ...thinking like I don't have a businessy*

mind, I'm not logical enough for this, I don't know enough maths,'

With the help of one of her partners, a business graduate, Joanna began to learn the language of business which helped her begin to develop self-efficacy.

> *'...so I could go into meetings with him and be like argh! Lots of these questions if they were framed differently I could answer them because I know all the information if you ask me but because of the way the questions are framed I think it was like having to learn all that language again...'*

However, her self-doubt was compounded by the apparent confidence of the men she encountered in this male-dominated environment. She witnessed this apparent confidence and it further alienated her.

> *'...that was a downside – feeling kind of like overwhelmed by the level of self-assurance of like lots of males'*

In addition to her business partner, Joanna sought out the support of a mentor.

> *'For me, I think it would be the most positive thing. Because someone who knows a lot about business but doesn't make you feel...you don't feel stupid by asking them certain questions because you don't have to feel professional in front of them'*

Her conversations with the mentor acted as an induction into entrepreneurship and enabled her to learn and gain confidence. Having overcome her self-doubt and feelings of isolation, Joanna now feels that staying in the business has become the '*safe option*'. She volunteers with a creative writing project for women whose first language is not English and she would like to pursue this as a career.

> *'...now that's the risk, is that a job? Does that exist? Can I make money from it? Do I have to do it part time?'*

Joanna has overcome feelings of isolation and self-doubt caused by her involvement in the creation of a social enterprise. Socialisation into entrepreneurial communities served as an induction that allowed her to learn the language of business. As a result, Joanna has developed self-efficacy and has come to the realisation that she does have the capability to run a business. However, despite beginning to develop a more acceptable entrepreneurial identity by challenging stereotypical notions of entrepreneurs as lone mavericks, she has been unable to reconcile her it with her dominant identity of an English graduate with a passion for using creative language for

social good.

> *'I'm not sure that's what I want...I cannot create what I want in the future through [the business].'*

The three vignettes demonstrate how participants manage the multiple dynamic identities that make up their overall sense of self as well as how they attempt to actively construct a compatible version of an entrepreneurial identity by both accepting and rejecting aspects of the socially ascribed and stereotypical entrepreneurial identity. The extent to which their entrepreneurial identity is central to their overall sense of self influences their level of commitment to the venture. Where the venture has been built in close alignment to the participant's sense of self, as in Luke's case, no tension is apparent between identities. Andrew constructs his entrepreneurial identity in relation to his dominant creative identity by describing himself as an owner of a body of work. For Luke and Andrew, first-hand experience of the entrepreneurial process enables them to construct an acceptable entrepreneurial identity that aligns (or partially aligns in Andrew's case) with their sense of self. Joanna's story shows how through the enactment and embodiment of the entrepreneurial role she learns how to be an entrepreneur, however, unable to reconcile it with her value-led, creative writer identity, she ultimately rejects entrepreneurship despite acknowledging that she has developed entrepreneurial capabilities.

4.5   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the role that non-entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial identities play in relation to the motivation to start a venture is discussed. The majority of participants interviewed revealed a strong link between their sense of self and their entrepreneurial endeavours. For some participants, new venture creation was carried out in order to satisfy a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity whereas, for others, a pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity provided the impulse to start their particular venture. Regardless of whether a pre-existing identity was a significant factor in their motivation to start a venture, for all three groups of participants the enactment of start-up activities and involvement in entrepreneurial communities had an impact on

their self-perception. Their socialisation into entrepreneurial practices and networks underpinned the dynamic identity formation process resulting in the emergence of an entrepreneurial identity as the participants came to see themselves as entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial identity was not passively accepted however and participants worked to shape it in ways that were compatible with multiple identities that made up their sense of self. For some group one participants (those with a dominant pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity characterised by creativity, passions and values) their emerging entrepreneurial identity was problematic both in terms of the popular and stereotypical representations of the entrepreneur as well as its relationship with other competing identities within their overall sense of self. Participants worked to manage the interplay between different identities by accepting and rejecting aspects of the entrepreneurial stereotype. If successful, the emerging entrepreneurial identity was reconciled, at least partially, with other identities within their sense of self. This reconciliation gave participants the drive to commit to their entrepreneurial role enabling them to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours, overcome obstacles and create a vision for the future. When reconciliation was not achieved, the entrepreneurial role was sacrificed in order to nurture other more dominant identities.

Chapter 5　　Discussion

5.1　Introduction

In this research project, I set out to explore the experiences of nascent entrepreneurs. In order to capture the participants' nuanced accounts of their entrepreneurial experiences, I conducted in-depth, participant-led interviews and only analysed these once they had all been carried out. I tried to ensure that the topics which interested the participants were brought to the fore. As a result, I was able to generate insights into entrepreneurial experiences which build upon the extant literature. In this chapter, I argue that a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship can be gained by exploring entrepreneurs' non-entrepreneurial identities in terms of how they motivate entrepreneurial action prior to new venture creation as well as how they interact with the emergent entrepreneurial identity once start-up has taken place. The central thesis put forward here is that entrepreneurial identities can form and evolve as a result of entrepreneurial experience and that this can take place after the start-up decision has been made. I take a multiple identity perspective, acknowledging that individuals have multiple, dynamic, sometimes contrasting, sometimes clashing identities within their overall sense of self (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) and I argue that the reconciliation of the emerging entrepreneurial identity with other identities facilitates perseverance whilst identity conflict can have a negative impact on the entrepreneur's commitment to the venture.

The entrepreneurship literature has been criticised for failing to question taken-for-granted assumptions about who the entrepreneur is and what entrepreneurship involves (Down & Warren, 2008; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; Welter et al., 2017). The prototypical entrepreneur that is evident both in academic literature and popular culture (Atherton, 2004) is heroic in his (I used this gendered pronoun deliberately) focus on wealth creation through the ability to identify and pursue opportunities (Ahl, 2006). As such this mythical hero (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007) has been attributed with static entrepreneurial personality traits, entrepreneurial passion and an entrepreneurial identity that precedes and promotes venture start-up. From this perspective the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and

entrepreneurial passion (Murnieks et al., 2014) as well as a stable entrepreneurial identity (Farmer et al., 2011) are necessary characteristics of the entrepreneurial individual in order for venture creation to take place.

In this chapter, I emphasise the importance of considering other identity types in the process of new venture creation and highlight how the need to participate in identity relevant activities, achieve feelings of authenticity and live according to personal values and passions can motivate individuals to act entrepreneurially. I discuss how entrepreneurial identities rather than being the instigator of entrepreneurial action can form as a result of the enactment of the entrepreneurial role. I consider how participants have agency in the dynamic crafting of their emerging entrepreneurial identity and how they do this in relation to their other multiple identities as well as in relation to the socially ascribed identity of the entrepreneur. I offer insights into how reconciliation of the entrepreneurial identity with other identities enables participants to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours and conversely, how conflict between identities can limit an entrepreneur's commitment to the venture and, if unresolved, can lead to venture exit. The insights discussed in this chapter provide a theoretical contribution to the extant entrepreneurship literature which emphasises economic rationality by portraying a contrasting conceptualisation of both the stereotypical entrepreneur and the transition into entrepreneurship. Therefore, I offer a more nuanced understanding of nascent entrepreneurship which is grounded in the experiences and context of the participants' lives.

5.2   Entrepreneurial motivations and identity

In line with the extant entrepreneurship literature which suggests that entrepreneurial identities lead to entrepreneurial action (see Down & Reveley, 2004; Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006; Obschonka, Silbereisen, Cantner, & Goethner, 2015), some participants in the study were motivated to start a venture by a chronically salient entrepreneurial identity which existed prior to embarking on an entrepreneurial career. As a result of their enactment of the entrepreneurial role, their entrepreneurial identity was reformed and reinforced (see Findings Chapter 4.3.2). These participants demonstrated the entrepreneurial traits and motivations claimed by the entrepreneurship literature such as locus of control (Rotter, 1966), a desire for

independence (Shane et al., 2003) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, in this chapter I will discuss how some participants only began to form an entrepreneurial identity after the start-up decision had been made. These participants did not see themselves as entrepreneurs prior to starting their business and, for many of them, the motivation to start a venture came from a desire to fulfil a dominant non-entrepreneurial identity.

The non-entrepreneurial identities illustrated in the study were characterised variously by creativity, passions and values. Those who had studied creative degrees designed to lead to careers in the creative and cultural industries were motivated to start a new venture by the creative identity that they had developed whilst at university. Linking the notion of career with that of identity (Holmes, 2015), my findings reinforce the view that students of higher education often form discipline based identities (Dahlgren, Handal, Szkudlarek, & Bayer, 2007). The end of university (or in one case, the end of an employment contract) coupled with the lack of relevant employment opportunities posed a threat to their creative identity and provided the impulse to start a creative venture in order to allow feelings of fulfilment and authenticity.

Other non-entrepreneurial identities, like those belonging to the graduates in Leach (2015), inspired entrepreneurial action as a means of fulfilling the passions and values that were unachievable through employment. These participants started their venture in order live according to their values and fulfil their non-entrepreneurial passions. Entrepreneurial passion is described in the literature as a love of running a venture (Zikic & Ezzedeen, 2015) and as a characteristic of entrepreneurial identity (see Cardon et al., 2009; Collewaert, Anseel, Crommelinck, De Beuckelaer, & Vermeire, 2016; Murnieks, Mosakowski, & Cardon, 2014). However, my study presents a broader consideration of the role passion plays in entrepreneurship by recognising that non-entrepreneurial passion, as a characteristic of non-entrepreneurial identity, can lead to business start-up.

I also offer new insights into the motivating force of non-entrepreneurial values in the start-up decision. Values reinforce and define our sense of self (Hemingway, 2005) however the role of values and motivations in entrepreneurship is not well understood (Fayolle et al., 2014) and studies of values tend to be limited to their influence on

business practice (see Rae, 2006). Following Hitlin, (2003), by viewing values as a characteristic of personal identity rather than a cognitive process (see Fayolle et al., 2014; Kirkley, 2016; Krueger, 2007) or a stable social identity (see Fauchart & Gruber, 2011) a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial motivations can be achieved.

The gap between the end of the degree programme and the beginning of their professional career is described in the careers literature as causing an identity vacuum and recent graduates are said to engage in the search for an occupational or a broader social identity (Reddy and Shaw, 2019). Being prompted to think about their future, participants with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities were motivated to act entrepreneurially in order to realise their future selves and avoid the possible selves that they did not want to become (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

My study provides an empirical basis to support Mahto and Mcdowell's (2018) proposition that those with a non-entrepreneurial identity can be motivated to start a venture as a result of an unsatisfactory self-assessment of their identity against their ideal selves. In addition, I build upon this proposition by showing how the temporal context (end of a university course) influenced my (initially non-entrepreneurial) participants as they considered what life after university meant for their sense of self. Circumstances prior to new venture creation, largely ignored by the literature (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018), should be taken into account in order to understand how those with non-entrepreneurial identities are motivated to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, my findings suggest that contextual factors, such as life stage, education or degree discipline, hobbies, career aspirations, work experience, geographic location and networks, should not be ignored when trying to understand the entrepreneurial motivations of people with non-entrepreneurial identities. Additionally, I build upon Mahto and Mcdowell's (2018) focus on salient role and social identities which, although consistent with the tradition in entrepreneurship literature, does not take into account the motivational potential of personal identities (Kašperová, Kitching, & Blackburn, 2018). Seen in this light, and in contrast to Mahto & Mcdowell (2018), I find that entrepreneurial motivations can stem from a satisfactory self-assessment of a current personal identity and a desire to reinforce and extend that identity through new venture creation. The findings thus support Karhunen, Olimpieva, & Hytti's (2017)

conclusion that entrepreneurship can be a vehicle for realizing a personal identity. My study, therefore, suggests that there are different routes to new venture creation by demonstrating that both unsatisfactory and satisfactory self-assessments by participants with non-entrepreneurial identities can result in entrepreneurship.

The findings build upon the extant literature's predominant focus on entrepreneurial identity in relation to start-up motivations and I emphasise the need to understand the motivating influence of other identity types in the start-up decision. I offer an understanding of personal identity (Hitlin, 2003) which bridges the dominant identity perspectives in entrepreneurship research, typically based on identity theory (Stryker and Burke, 2000) or social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and add empirical weight to the suggestion that identity type may affect the early start-up phase (Wry & York, 2017). I highlight how, by expanding the identity perspective to include other identity types, a more nuanced understanding of the role identity can play in entrepreneurial motivation can be achieved. Following Kasperova, Kitching & Blackburn (2018), I distinguish personal identity from entrepreneurial identity. Whilst research from the theoretical positions of identity theory and social identity theory allows insights into how entrepreneurial identity has an impact on entrepreneurial behaviour and offers typologies of founder identities (see Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009 and Fauchart & Gruber, 2011), other non-entrepreneurial identity types and their impact on the entrepreneurial process have been overlooked.

My findings suggest that non-entrepreneurial identities can influence the start-up decision in different ways and I advise caution against an exclusive focus on the influence of entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurial passion on the start-up decision; a perspective which risks reinforcing the entrepreneurial stereotype that is evident in contemporary Western discourse (as discussed by Atherton, 2004; Down & Warren, 2008; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007). The entrepreneurial stereotype of the prevailing social discourse can discourage people from pursuing an entrepreneurial career (Connolly, O'Gorman, & Bogue, 2003; Jones, 2014; Martínez, Mora, & Vila, 2007; Smith & Boje, 2017) and, if those who do not conform to the stereotype do act on their entrepreneurial ideas they can be disadvantaged in terms of their access to support (Orser et al., 2011). Therefore, my findings question taken-for-

granted assumptions about what constitutes an entrepreneur as well as the circumstances that lead to entrepreneurship by acknowledging the influence that non-entrepreneurial identities have on the entrepreneurial process.

My study builds upon the entrepreneurial motivations literature which traditionally portrays motivations as dichotomous and hierarchical distinctions, ignoring both life course and context (Jayawarna et al., 2011; Welter, 2011). I find that the entrepreneurial motivations of all participants are closely linked to their sense of self as well as their life stage (finishing university or an employment contract). Therefore, my study provides an empirical illustration of the complexity of entrepreneurial motivations and demonstrates that the motivation to start a new venture can only be understood in relation to the context in which the entrepreneurial actor operates. As a result, I call into question simplistic push / pull explanations of entrepreneurial motivations by linking push factors, such as the lack of suitable employment opportunities, with the concept of identity suggesting that a greater understanding of entrepreneurial motivations can be gained by understanding the impact that push or pull factors may have on an individual's sense of self. In this way, I extend the entrepreneurial motivations literature by illustrating how non-entrepreneurial participants are motivated to start a venture. My research suggests that people may become entrepreneurs in order to fulfil the needs of their ideal selves or to protect identities that are under threat. Through this fulfilment they achieve a feeling of authenticity that comes from being immersed in meaningful activities and communities.

5.2.1 Summary

I explore the entrepreneurial motivations of the participants in this study and find links between motivations and identity. In contrast to traditional entrepreneurship literature which approaches research from the perspective of economic rationality (Gruber & MacMillan, 2017), not all participants were motivated by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity and I find that other non-entrepreneurial identity types, characterised in this study by creativity, passion and values, were also strong motivating influences in new venture creation. I also emphasise the role of life course and temporal context to the understanding of entrepreneurial motivations. At the end

of university and the early stages of their professional lives, participants embarked on an entrepreneurial career in an attempt to fulfil their sense of self. Therefore, my study contributes to the motivations literature in entrepreneurship research challenging the push / pull dichotomy which dominates the field by linking entrepreneurial motivations to the concept of identity. Furthermore the study makes a theoretical contribution to the entrepreneurial motivations literature by offering insights into the start-up motivations of individuals with non-entrepreneurial identities; an area which is currently under researched (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018). By providing empirical evidence of the motivational influence of non-entrepreneurial identities, the study contributes to the entrepreneurial motivations literature by illustrating how entrepreneurship can be a vehicle for identity fulfilling identities other than the entrepreneurial identity.

5.3   Entrepreneurial Identity Formation: becoming and identifying as an entrepreneur

In this section, I argue that an entrepreneurial identity can form and reform dynamically after venture start-up both in entrepreneurs who identified with the entrepreneurial role prior to new venture creation (see Findings Chapter 4.3.2) as well as those who did not have an entrepreneurial identity before starting up (see Findings Chapter 4.3.1). Figure 6 illustrates how participants with different pre start-up identities went on to form entrepreneurial identities as a result of their enactment of the entrepreneurial role. The entrepreneurial identity is characterised by a growing passion for and commitment to the venture, self-confidence in one's entrepreneurial abilities, growth plans and a vision for the future. The enactment and performance of the entrepreneurial role including involvement in practical start-up activities, participation in business networks and inclusion in start-up communities had an impact on the formation, and facilitated the crafting, of the entrepreneurial identity in my participants. A model of entrepreneurial identity formation in the three different participant groups is presented in Figure 6 below. The model illustrates the dynamic process of entrepreneurial identity formation with different motivational starting points and differing entrepreneurial outcomes.

Figure 6 Entrepreneurial identity formation, crafting conflict and reconciliation in all participant groups

Dominant Motivating Identity (prior to start-up)

Entrepreneurial identity (6 participants) - *motivated to fulfil pre-existing entrepreneurial identity, business idea sought to fit parameters of skills & resources*

Not motivated by identity factors (4 participants) - *contextual circumstances & chance encounters*

Non entrepreneurial identity (11 participants) - *motivated to fulfil pre-existing non-entrepreneurial identity, business idea precedes entrepreneurial identity formation*

Enactment of Entrepreneurial Role (post start-up)

-start-up activities
-entrepreneurial communities & support
-sense of belonging

-sense of isolation

Identity Change, Crafting, Conflict & Reconciliation

-challenges entrepreneurial stereotype- accepts & rejects aspects
-gains self-confidence / self-efficacy
-reflects on progress / learning
-feedback / endorsement
-positive emotions / enjoyment

-negative emotions / lack of enjoyment

Accept or Reject Entrepreneurial Identity

Entrepreneurial Identity reshaped, reinforced & reconciled with other identities (19 participants)
-commitment to venture
-entrepreneurial passion
-vision of the future
-growth plans

Entrepreneurial identity only partially reconciled or rejected (2 participants)
-questions commitment to venture
-visions of alternative future
-considers different options

Following Lewis (2004), the transformational shift into business ownership led to significant changes in the participants' sense of self. People tend to identify with activities that they are good at (Cardon & Kirk, 2015) and, for my participants, a growing confidence in their own abilities enabled them to internalise the entrepreneurial role. The positive emotions experienced in relation to their entrepreneurial activities also encouraged participants to identify with the entrepreneurial role (Markowska, Härtel, Brundin, Roan, et al., 2015). In the accounts of their entrepreneurial experiences, participants revealed that the passion for their venture stemmed from engaging in meaningful activity and, as a result, the venture was closely linked to their sense of self. This builds upon the claim that emotions play a role in the formation and reinforcement of the entrepreneurial identity (Markowska, Härtel, Brundin, & Roan, 2015) and supports the assertion that entrepreneurial passion results from engagement in activities that are meaningful to their sense of self (Cardon et al., 2009).

The extant literature views entrepreneurial identity as shaping entrepreneurial behaviour (Alsos, Clausen, Hytti, & Solvoll, 2016; Lewis, 2016; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). Identifying with the entrepreneurial role can influence start-up behaviours even before the individual occupies the role (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010) and distinct founder identities are viewed as shaping the key decisions entrepreneurs make during new venture creation (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). Accordingly, these objectively defined stable role or social identities (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) are viewed as directing the type of entrepreneurial behaviour that entrepreneurs engage in (see Cardon, Wincent, Singh, Drnovsek, 2009; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). However, my study suggests that the entrepreneurial identity is more fluid than the static phenomenon depicted above. Whilst all my participants experienced the emergence of an entrepreneurial identity, only some were motivated to start a venture by an entrepreneurial identity that existed prior to start-up (see Figure 5) (see Findings Chapter 4.3.2).

However, other participants, those not motivated by an entrepreneurial identity, also experienced entrepreneurial identity emergence. Therefore, I put forward a view that entrepreneurial behaviour can result in entrepreneurial identity formation after venture start-up (see Figure 5).

Thus, I build upon the view that entrepreneurial identity is earned through actions and produced performatively (Anderson et al., 2018). The participants, through their enactment of entrepreneurial activities and commonplace start-up practices (Rae, 2006), changed the way they saw themselves (King, 2017) as well as how others saw them. Participants who had not previously considered an entrepreneurial career emphasised their initial lack of knowledge and experience and spoke of a growing confidence in their ability to undertake entrepreneurial tasks. This suggests that entrepreneurial confidence, or self-efficacy, can develop post start-up and, therefore, can be understood not as a static trait associated with economic motivations and driving entrepreneurial action (see Brändle, Berger, Golla, & Kuckertz, 2018) but a fluid element of entrepreneurial identity evolution. My study, therefore, offers a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial identity formation by emphasising the interrelationships between entrepreneurial passion, self-efficacy and identity.

The rich descriptions of the participants' entrepreneurial experiences also support the claim that actions and performance involve engagement with context (Anderson et al., 2018) which for most of these participants was the institutional context of the university, the geographic context of the city as well as the temporal context in relation to their life and career stages. The university context includes enterprise support, discipline based expertise, access to extra curricula activities and peer networks. Some participants were not able to fulfil their career aspirations in their university city and therefore entrepreneurship was seen as an alternative to an undesired relocation. Finishing university was a significant transition period for many participants and prompted them to reflect on their lives in general and their career aspiration in particular. Entrepreneurship is influenced by temporal, social, institutional and locational factors (Johnston, Lasalle & Yamamura, 2018) and by offering contextualised insights my study contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon (Welter, 2011).

Participants' relationships with others had an impact on the development of their venture ideas and these exchanges with sensegivers enabled participants to enact their new venture (Hoyte et al., 2019). Interactions with informal and formal advisers and supporters, as well as involvement in business networks and start-up

communities, were an opportunity to give and receive feedback as well as a source of learning and a sense of belonging and legitimacy. Positive feedback can lead to positive emotions (Markowska, Härtel, Brundin, Roan, et al., 2015) and I support the view that engagement with others is important to the process of identity formation (Anderson et al., 2018) and that interaction with key stakeholders legitimizes the entrepreneurial identity (Williams Middleton, 2013). Identity, therefore, can be said to be produced not only through social discourses and categories but also in the lived experience of participation in specific communities (Wenger, 1999, p. 151).

My findings support the view that business and entrepreneurial networks can provide social benefits such as identity, social learning and enacting environments (Jack et al., 2010). Through their membership in these communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) participants developed a sense of belonging which engendered an internalisation of the entrepreneurial role and gave them a sense of sameness (to other entrepreneurs) and otherness (from employees) (Down & Reveley, 2004). In their narratives, these participants contrasted themselves and their day to day lives with those of paid employees. These "dividing strategies" (Parker, 1997 p.135 in Down & Reveley, 2004) signalled a sense of distinctiveness from employees and created a sense of belonging with the entrepreneurial community. The findings, therefore, support Wenger's (1999) assertion that identities are defined by both participation and non-participation in communities of practice. The assertion that the participants gained a sense of belonging through their enactment of the entrepreneurial role contrasts with Shepherd & Haynie's (2009a) proposition that an entrepreneurial career choice cannot satisfy this psychological need. Therefore entrepreneurial identity development can be seen in the context of the community of practice, reinforcing the notion of identity as multiple, temporal, context dependent and continuously developing and interacting (Wenger, 1999). This view of the entrepreneur, therefore, offers an alternative characterisation of the entrepreneur to the typical portrayal of the lone wolf character with little desire for social contact or positive interactions with others (Decker, Calo, & Weer, 2012).

5.3.1 Identity Crafting

I find that, once immersed in the enactment of entrepreneurship, participants had agency in the crafting of their entrepreneurial identity through their acceptance and rejection of the characteristics attributed to the stereotypical entrepreneur. They rejected certain behaviours typically associated with entrepreneurship such as focused wealth creation, excessive working hours or unwillingness to work with others and instead put more emphasis into building relationships and achieving a work life balance. They also emphasised aspects of the stereotypical entrepreneur, such as creativity or self-sufficiency, that were consistent with their sense of self whilst rejecting other stereotypical characteristics, such as ruthlessness, which were incompatible. Participants also rejected aspects of the entrepreneurial stereotype by emphasising the lack of something typically associated with the entrepreneur such as business knowledge or entrepreneurial ambition.

Like the professional immigrant entrepreneurs in Zhang & Chun's (2017) study who, like my participants were also facing challenging transitions, the participants who hadn't initially identified with the entrepreneurial role gradually began to see themselves as entrepreneurs by starting small, learning and expanding their knowledge along with their venture. In this way, participants were able to craft an entrepreneurial identity that was acceptable to their individual sense of self. Therefore, the entrepreneurial identity that emerged as a result of their enactment of the entrepreneurial role was actively crafted with reference to both personal and social identities.

My findings suggest that individuals have agency in the formation of their own entrepreneurial identity (Down & Reveley, 2004) and therefore they build upon the notion which sees an individual's entrepreneurial identity as being constituted purely by external discourses (see Cohen & Musson, 2000). The multiple identity perspective which takes personal identity into account allows for a more nuanced understanding of identity construction which, following Down & Reveley (2004), demonstrates that, in the formation of an entrepreneurial identity, individuals do more than just reproduce the prototypical entrepreneur.

The attribution of agency to the process of identity formation can be understood through the concept of identity work (Watson, 2008, 2009). My findings add to the concept of identity work by demonstrating how individuals are influenced by entrepreneurial stereotypes or "discursively located 'personas'" (Watson, 2008, p. 127) but the extent to which they embrace or reject elements of this discursive resource depends on the salience of the other identities (social and personal) that make up their sense of self (Watson, 2008, 2009). Therefore I support the view put forward by Chasserio, Pailot, & Poroli (2014) that identity work can range from accepting and integrating norms and expectations to challenging accommodation or transformation leading to redefined norms. My study, therefore, supports the view that identity is a bridging concept between the individual and the social (Leitch & Harrison, 2016).

I suggest that entrepreneurial identities are not discursively imposed but are created through action, interaction and reflection. However, the findings support the cautionary comment made by Kašperová & Kitching (2014, p. 443) warning against over-attributing the role of narrative processes and linguistic expressions (see Down & Warren, 2008; Downing, 2005) in identity construction. The narratives, although important, are not the full engagement in practice (Wenger, 1999). Whilst the participants' re-counting of their entrepreneurial journey provided them with an opportunity to reflect and subsequently craft their personal narrative (Down & Reveley, 2004), the importance of the 'embodied practice' (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014, p. 445) and enactment to identity development was apparent in, and ran alongside, their stories.

5.3.2 Summary

The findings make a theoretical contribution to the extant entrepreneurial identity literature by challenging the view that entrepreneurial identities necessarily precede and shape entrepreneurial behaviour. Instead, the study contributes to the extant entrepreneurial identity literature by offering a more nuanced picture of entrepreneurial identity formation and reformation which can occur post start-up and, whilst unique to individuals, shares common themes of enactment, socialisation and interaction with others and with the context of life and career stage, geography and time. The area of entrepreneurial identity formation is under researched (Leitch &

Harrison, 2016) and my findings lend empirical weight to the argument that entrepreneurial identity is a personal and social construct which is dynamically and fluidly shaped by experiences and interactions (Leitch & Harrison, 2016).

5.4   Perseverance and entrepreneurial Identity: Conflict, Reconciliation and Commitment to the Entrepreneurial Role

Participants experienced the emergence and formation of an entrepreneurial identity which enabled them to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours. The emergence of an entrepreneurial identity was characterised, in part, by a growing confidence in their ability to overcome obstacles. Therefore my study supports the assertion that entrepreneurial self-efficacy promotes greater persistence in the face of adversity (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Trevelyan, 2009; Zhang & Chun, 2017). The participants' increased self-efficacy also contributed to their positive emotional experience of the entrepreneurial role. In turn, this entrepreneurial passion (Cardon et al., 2009) further enabled them to overcome obstacles and persevere through difficult times (Cardon et al., 2005; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). Therefore, by emphasising the link between self-efficacy, entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial identity, my study offers new understandings of entrepreneurs' ability to persevere with their endeavours.

My study suggests that, in order for participants to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours and commit to the entrepreneurial role, it was necessary for them to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with the multiple and interacting identities that made up their overall sense of self. Whilst all participants carried out identity work to craft their emerging entrepreneurial identity, not all participants managed to successfully integrate it within their multiple identities. Following Wenger (1999), I take the view that identity is at the same time one and multiple (p.59) and that identity formation is non-linear (Stokes & Wyn, 2007) and ongoing throughout an individual's life (Josselson, 1987).

Those participants who managed to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with their other identities were better able to persevere in order to overcome the barriers they encountered. However, for other participants, the struggle to reconcile their emerging entrepreneurial identity with their other identities negatively affected

their commitment to their entrepreneurial endeavours. My study, therefore, supports Nielsen & Gartner's (2017) proposition that the more the entrepreneurial identity is reconciled with the individual's sense of self, the more entrepreneurially persistent they can be. Reconciliation was necessary in order to overcome barriers and, where it was not achieved, participants questioned their commitment to the venture and were able to envision other, more favourable, futures. According to Wenger (1999), the presence of tensions implies that effort is being made to integrate different identities and therefore, seen in this light, I can support the use of the term 'reconciliation' to describe the identity formation process (Wenger, 1999).

My study shows that the ability to integrate the entrepreneurial identity within their overall sense of self, and therefore commit to the venture, depended on the dominance and compatibility of other identities. Participants who gained a sense of fulfilment and belonging from their enactment of the entrepreneurial role were motivated to persevere through difficulties. Using Wenger's (1999) concept of community of practice, this can be explained in terms of the entrepreneurial community of practice being central to their sense of self.

Whilst most participants were able to integrate their evolving entrepreneurial identity into their overall sense of self, some experienced conflict between their emerging entrepreneurial identity and their other dominant identities. I find, therefore, that participants differed in their ability to integrate the emerging entrepreneurial identity into their overall sense of self. Those participants with a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity embraced and actively shaped their entrepreneurial identity because it reinforced their sense of self (see Findings Chapter 4.3.2). Similarly, participants who were largely uninfluenced by identity factors experienced minimal identity conflict (see Findings Chapter 4.3.3). However, those participants with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities (characterised by creativity, passions and values) experienced conflict if their enactment of the entrepreneurial role did not fulfil their identity needs and led to feelings of unauthenticity (see Findings 4.4). These themes of identity reconciliation and conflict are illustrated below with reference to the participant groups outlined above.

Where participants exhibited a chronically salient, singular entrepreneurial identity (Powell & Baker, 2014) there was no conflict with the other identities within their sense of self. The findings provide empirical support for Hoang & Gimeno's (2010) proposition that individuals whose entrepreneurial identity is central to their sense of self would vigorously respond to negative environmental feedback in order to defend their identity. Faced with adversity, these participants demonstrated their determination to persist. However, in contrast to Powell & Baker's (2014) study of entrepreneurs with a singular identity, the entrepreneurial identity of this group of participants was not only centred on being the "keeper of the bottom line" (p.1418) but also extended beyond a focus on making money to encompass fulfilment through autonomy and the freedom to pursue their ideas.

Identity conflict was also minimal amongst participants who did not exhibit dominant or motivating identities. They were able to embrace their emerging entrepreneurial identity without evidence of conflict with their other identities. Being either yet to take up paid employment or having left a job, these participants had a vacuum to fill (Reddy & Shaw, 2019) and, as a result, they embraced participation in the entrepreneurial community of practice. This liminal condition allowed these participants to question and explore potential futures outside of the constraints of an institutional or social position (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2018). However, the experience of these participants highlights the need to take context into account when considering entrepreneurial commitment and persistence. The life circumstances of these participants meant that the integration of their entrepreneurial identity with other identities was unproblematic for different contextual reasons than for those with a pre-existing singular entrepreneurial identity.

Participants with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities (characterised by creativity, passions and values) differed in their ability to embrace their emerging entrepreneurial identity. Like the immigrants in Zhang & Chun's (2017) study who were transitioning from professionals to entrepreneurs, participants with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities strove to find meanings in their emerging identity. For some of these participants, entrepreneurship satisfied the need to be creative or to act in accordance with their passions and values through engagement in identity-relevant activities and

communities. They were thus able to enact their creativity, values and passions as a result of their entrepreneurial endeavours and this allowed them to internalise the entrepreneurial role. Whilst these dominant non-entrepreneurial identity needs were being met by the enactment of an entrepreneurial role, the emerging entrepreneurial identity was in congruence with the other identities that made up their sense of self. The findings echo those of Powell & Baker (2014) whose participants with multiple congruent identities approached the running of their ventures in a way that did not constrain other identities (see Figure 5).

As their entrepreneurial identities emerged, participants with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities readily identified with some popular conceptions of entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovativeness or creativity which were compatible with their overall sense of self. These participants looked for evidence from their past such as historical experiences and family involvement in entrepreneurship (Rae, 2006) to make sense of their emerging entrepreneurial identity. By linking past experiences to the present entrepreneurial endeavours, these participants were able to develop an integrated understanding of who they were becoming resulting in a reconciliation between their entrepreneurial identity and their dominant identities. They also reflected on key events and activities that had enabled them to learn entrepreneurial knowledge and skills such as representing their venture in public and building relationships with stakeholders and this, in turn, developed their confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities. These participants saw the business as an extension of themselves, a manifestation of their creativity, passions and values and, as a result, they identified with the venture.

Conversely, others with dominant non-entrepreneurial identities revealed the struggle they experienced in trying to integrate their emerging entrepreneurial identity into their overall sense of self. The incongruence (Powell & Baker, 2014) of their emerging entrepreneurial identity caused internal turmoil and led this set of participants to question whether entrepreneurship was the right choice for them and ultimately impacted on their commitment to the role and venture (see Figure 5).

I find that these participants were also uncomfortable with the label entrepreneur and distanced themselves from the term by rejecting it and considering alternative labels that suited their entrepreneurial roles such as business owner or owner of a body of work. This confirms Down & Giazitzoglu's (2014) assertion that the enacted entrepreneurial identity may be at odds not only with other identities within an individual's sense of self but also with the social identity of the entrepreneur in the prevailing discourse. I support the view put forward by Lewis & Llewellyn (2004) that the moral uncertainty of the term entrepreneur can have an impact on the individual's willingness to adopt the identity of the entrepreneur. By implication, this could mean potential entrepreneurs choose not to pursue entrepreneurship due to the seemingly incompatible nature of the ascribed social identity of the entrepreneur and their own sense of self. My study, therefore, adds to the (currently limited) discussion (Jones, 2014) regarding how representations of entrepreneurship may act as barriers to entrepreneurial careers.

The findings, therefore, support Wenger's (1999) conceptualisation of identity as the nexus of multimembership where identities both clash and reinforce each other. Like the founders of Powell & Baker's (2014) study, participants were able to overcome adversity because their venture enabled them to defend who they were and who they wanted to become. This suggests that in order for individuals to persist with their entrepreneurial endeavours they must form an entrepreneurial identity, successfully integrate it into their sense of self and reconcile it with the prevailing characterisation of the entrepreneur in social discourse.

My study, therefore, builds upon the dominant perspective in entrepreneurship research, which conflates the motivation to start a venture with the motivation to persevere (Shane et al., 2003) once the venture has been created. By demonstrating the importance of identity integration to the participants' ability to persevere through difficult times, my study supports the view that start-up motivations are not always directly linked to entrepreneurial persistence. Entrepreneurial motivations can change over time between the idea and the launch of the venture (Williams & Williams, 2014) and I argue that start-up motivations can differ from the motivation to persist. The

identity which influenced start-up motivations evolved over time and, as the entrepreneurial identity emerged, the motivation to persist was fuelled by the need to fulfil this emerging identity as well as the non-entrepreneurial identity that had initiated start-up. The identity perspective offered by my study extends the understanding of entrepreneurial persistence by offering empirical evidence to support the link between the motivation to persevere and the integration of the entrepreneurial identity within the sense of self (Duening, 2017). Therefore attempts in the entrepreneurship literature to predict business growth by studying start-up motivations are called into question (see Birley & Westhead, 1994; Burke, FitzRoy, & Nolan, 2002; Cassar, 2007; Hessels, Van Gelderen, & Thurik, 2008; Renko & Freeman, 2017).

5.3.1 Summary

[The study contributes to the extant literature by showing how entrepreneurial passion and self-efficacy emerge from engagement in activities which are meaningful to the sense of self link to perseverance] [agency in crafting]

My study showed that the participants' newly formed and reformed entrepreneurial identity enabled them to persevere in the face of obstacles and negative feedback and commit to the entrepreneurial role. Therefore, the study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by linking entrepreneurial perseverance to the entrepreneurial identity rather than entrepreneurial start-up motivations. Participants worked to reconcile the entrepreneurial identity that emerged from their enactment of the entrepreneurial role with their other identities. Therefore, the study contributes to the entrepreneurial identity literature by illustrating how entrepreneurs have agency in the crafting of acceptable versions of the entrepreneurial identity. Some were more successful than others and those who experienced identity conflict questioned their commitment to their venture. Those participants who had a dominant entrepreneurial identity prior to business start-up found that the experience of entrepreneurship reformed and reinforced their entrepreneurial identity and strengthened their commitment to an entrepreneurial career. Participants without chronically salient identities did not experience identity conflict either and were also able to embrace their emerging entrepreneurial identity. For those with dominant

creative or personal identities, the emerging entrepreneurial identity could only be integrated into their sense of self if the experience of entrepreneurship enabled them to undertake activities that allowed creative expression or were in line with their passions and values. However, when entrepreneurship did not fulfil their creative or personal identities, the experience had a negative impact on their feelings of authenticity. As a result, these participants envisioned alternative futures and questioned their commitment to the venture. Therefore, the study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by linking identity reconciliation to entrepreneurial perseverance.

Persistence is an underexplored area of venture founding (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). My study answers a call for research into how entrepreneurs are motivated at stages of the venture other than start-up (Shane et al., 2003). Currently entrepreneurial persistence is understood in terms of personality traits (Bandura, 1997; Holland & Shepherd, 2013; Sibin et al., 2007), job satisfaction (Benz & Frey, 2008; Block & Koellinger, 2009) and entrepreneurial passion (Cardon et al., 2005; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). By linking entrepreneurial persistence with identity reconciliation my findings build upon the understanding of the role that identity has within the entrepreneurial process. My study, therefore, broadens the understanding of identity conflict between different identity categories by considering the relationship between personal and creative identities and the emerging entrepreneurial identity. Typically entrepreneurial identity research focuses on role and social identities (see Duberley & Carrigan, 2013; Hytti, 2005; Mills & Pawson, 2006; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009a, 2009b) therefore, a more nuanced understanding of the impact of identity on entrepreneurial persistence is gained. By illustrating how the entrepreneurial identity evolves as well as by linking it to entrepreneurial persistence, the study offers a new understanding of the interrelationships between identity, identity integration and commitment to the role.

5.5   Chapter Summary

During the study, I set out to gain insights and generate thick descriptions of the - experience of nascent entrepreneurs. Keen to access the participants' perspectives and minimise my influence on topics covered during the interviews, my research aim was to *Explore nascent entrepreneurs' understanding of their entrepreneurial experiences'.*

Repeatedly, participants made links between their sense of self and their entrepreneurial experience, often referring to aspects of their lives outside of the immediate realm of their venture.

My study shows three main themes emerged from the data; the role of non-entrepreneurial identities in entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial identity formation and the link between perseverance, identity reconciliation and commitment to the entrepreneurial role. Non-entrepreneurial identities, characterised by creativity, passions and values, were a significant motivating factor for many participants. Participants motivated by non-entrepreneurial identities sought to fulfil their creativity, passions and values and achieve a sense of authenticity through new venture creation. Therefore, the study makes a theoretical contribution to the entrepreneurial identity literature by exploring the link between the motivation to start a new venture and non-entrepreneurial identities and passion. As a result of this exploration the push / pull dichotomy prevalent in the entrepreneurial motivations literature is challenged.

Entrepreneurial identities emerged and were shaped as a result of the enactment of the entrepreneurial role even in those participants who did not initially aspire to have an entrepreneurial career. Participating in entrepreneurial activities and communities changed the participants' sense of self and they actively crafted their emerging entrepreneurial identity in a way that felt authentic to them. Therefore, the study contributes to the entrepreneurial identity literature by challenging the conceptualisation of a static entrepreneurial identity that exists prior to, and is a prerequisite for, new venture creation. It also makes a theoretical contribution to the entrepreneurial identity literature by challenging both the conceptualisation of discursively imposed entrepreneurial identities and narratively constructed ones by emphasising the performative and embodied nature of identity formation.

The emergence and formation of the entrepreneurial identity was not straight forward for all participants. Dominant non-entrepreneurial identities clashed with emerging entrepreneurial identities and some participants experienced identity conflict which led them to question their commitment to the venture thus impeding their ability to persevere. Therefore, the study contributes to the entrepreneurship motivations

literature by challenging the notion that the original start-up motivation remains static overtime. By illustrating how entrepreneurial perseverance can result from entrepreneurial identity formation and reconciliation, the study makes a theoretical contribution to the entrepreneurship literature.

Entrepreneurial identity is an important but under researched source of dynamism during the founding stage (Zhang & Chun, 2017) and my study shows how it can act as a motivating factor prior to start-up as well as an influential factor in terms of commitment to the role once the start-up decision has been made. The participants' accounts of their entrepreneurial experiences illustrate entrepreneurial identity formation and reformation, suggesting that identity is a dynamic construct embedded in context. The study goes beyond the traditional focus on entrepreneurial identity to consider how non-entrepreneurial identities can motivate participants to start a venture.

This perspective challenges some of the taken-for-granted assumptions entrenched in the characterisation of the homogenous entrepreneur (Jones, 2014) and suggests that individuals can arrive at entrepreneurship in different ways and not necessarily as a consequence of the attributes that are considered to enable the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities or the tendency to respond to the situational cues of opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). The study offers an alternative view of new venture creation which is not reliant on an individual's assessment of the value of a set of resources or, indeed, primarily economically driven (Casson, 1982; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Viewing entrepreneurship through the lens of identity extends the traditional conceptualisation beyond the behaviours and attitudes within the dimensions of the entrepreneurial orientation construct (see Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) and allows for an alternative reading of the entrepreneurial process.

Entrepreneurship research has been criticised in general for its inadequate understanding of what entrepreneurs do (Gartner, 1988) and concerns have been expressed about the narrow conceptualisations of both the entrepreneurial actor and the entrepreneurial process (Ogbor, 2000; Welter et al., 2017). Specifically, within the field of entrepreneurship lacks there has been a tendency to focus on high growth ventures (Galloway et al., 2019) leaving the experiences of nascent entrepreneurs

under-explored..   Therefore, the current study offers insights into entrepreneurial identity formation and entrepreneurial behaviour in general as well as the specific context of nascent entrepreneurs.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

6.1   Introduction

Within the dominant entrepreneurship literature, new venture creation is depicted as resulting from opportunity discovery and exploitation by an entrepreneur who is naturally equipped with the required skills, knowledge and attributes to intentionally assess value and pursue profit (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; Gill, 2017; Lerner et al., 2018; Rindova et al., 2009). This dominant depiction does not reflect the diversity of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship (Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers & Gartner, 2012) and privileges the voices of those that fit the stereotype (Kašperová & Kitching, 2014; Rindova et al., 2009).

In order to contribute to an enhanced understanding of entrepreneurship, I suspended a priori theoretical propositions to access my participants' perspectives about their lived experience of entrepreneurship. By engaging with the double hermeneutic, my interpretative account of the participants' interpretations highlights the diversity amongst both entrepreneurial actors and routes to new venture creation.

Therefore, my study presents a view of entrepreneurship that questions assumed entrepreneurial characteristics, motivations and experiences. I suggest that entrepreneurship can be driven by the need to fulfil both dominant entrepreneurial *and* non-entrepreneurial identities and can be sustained by the dynamic formation, reconciliation and integration of an entrepreneurial identity *after* the initial start-up decision has been taken. Therefore, my study suggests that new venture creation can be arrived at in ways that are different to the commonly understood route and by individuals who do not initially identify with the entrepreneurial role.

In the following chapter, I will sum up the central arguments of my thesis by linking the research aim and objectives to the research outcomes and contextualising these outcomes with the literature in the field of entrepreneurship research. In the first section I will briefly revisit the rationale, aim for the study and the resulting research objectives. As well as discussing my theoretical contribution to the entrepreneurship literature, I also outline the implications for policy and practice that this study makes in terms of supporting nascent entrepreneurs as they embark on their entrepreneurial

careers. This will be followed by a consideration of the limitations of the study and suggestions for areas of future research.

At the start of my doctoral journey, I was aware of the stereotypical entrepreneur portrayed in the media and, as a result of reading the extant entrepreneurship literature, I became aware of the pervasiveness of this characterisation as well as conceptualisation of entrepreneurship as a rational exercise in wealth creation. It seemed to me that the entrepreneur and the path to new venture creation were narrowly portrayed and I was motivated to explore what entrepreneurship meant to entrepreneurs themselves. Stereotypical depictions of both the entrepreneurial actor and entrepreneurial phenomenon can result in individuals choosing not to pursue an entrepreneurial career (Smith &Boje, 2017; Treanor, Jones & Marlow, 2020) and if they do, the prevailing social discourses around entrepreneurship can inhibit the formation of an entrepreneurial identity (Down & Giazitzoglu, 2014). This suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of nascent entrepreneurs' experiences is essential in order to support them in the creation and development of sustainable new ventures.

Therefore the focus of the study was to explore entrepreneurship from the perspectives of individuals currently enacting entrepreneurial roles. In doing so, I have developed a nuanced picture of entrepreneurship that resonated with the research participants who were invited to give feedback on their narrative accounts. In response to my concerns over the taken-for-granted assumptions prevalent in the entrepreneurship literature, I developed the research aim to:

Explore nascent entrepreneurs' understanding of their entrepreneurial experiences

The empirical focus of my study was student and recent graduate entrepreneurs who had started ventures during or after university. The participants' ventures were the type of micro and sole trader businesses that, despite representing the bulk of entrepreneurial activity, are underrepresented in the entrepreneurship literature (Galloway et al., 2019; Welter et al., 2017). Through my interpretations of the in-depth interviews I conducted with them, I explored how their experiences of entrepreneurship both converged and diverged. In doing so, I gained insights into, and

generated rich descriptions of, their entrepreneurial experiences. Methodologically, I adopted a participant-led approach which would allow any divergence, tensions and ambiguities to surface and I used an interviewing style that would enable participants to talk about the areas of their experience that were pertinent to them. As a result, we covered topics that were broad and diverse highlighting the uniqueness of each individual's experience. However, there was also noticeable convergence within the participants' stories. Specifically, my interpretations of the participants' accounts highlighted the links between the multiple identities within their sense of self and their entrepreneurial experience. Therefore, as a result of my engagement with the data, I developed the following research objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial motivations
2. Gain insights into the process of entrepreneurial identity formation
3. Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial perseverance

Many participants did not initially identify with the entrepreneurial role and therefore, by adopting an identity perspective, the findings offer contribute to the entrepreneurial motivations literature by offering insights into how "non-entrepreneurs" (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018, p. 515) develop entrepreneurial motivations and subsequently engage in entrepreneurial behaviour and actions.

The findings contribute to the entrepreneurial identity literature by highlighting the dynamics of entrepreneurial identity formation and reconciliation as well as relating this process to entrepreneurial perseverance. This answers calls for entrepreneurship research to explore how the process of identity formation relates to the everyday activities involved in entrepreneurial endeavours (Leitch & Harrison, 2016).

The theoretical contributions, resulting from my analysis and interpretation of the data are discussed in more detail in the following section. They can be summarised as follows; non-entrepreneurial identities, characterised by creativity as well as personal passions and values, largely ignored by the extant literature, can, nevertheless, act as a motivating force for new venture creation. Entrepreneurial identities, often

conceptualised in the literature as stable, static and prerequisite for new venture creation, are shown here to emerge and form after the start-up decision has been acted upon. Additionally, individual actors have agency in the crafting of these identities. The study, by highlighting the link between identity reconciliation with entrepreneurial persistence, challenges the extant literature which typically conflates the motivation to start a venture with the motivation to persevere. In the following sections, I will discuss the research outcomes for each objective list above.

6.2. Objective 1 Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial motivations

In contrast to the extant entrepreneurship literature, my study suggests that entrepreneurial identities are not a prerequisite for new venture creation (see Down & Reveley, 2004) nor do they necessarily provide the motivation for entrepreneurial action (see Obschonka et al., 2015). My study responds to the calls (see Huyghe et al., 2016; Rindova et al., 2009; Wry & York, 2017) for more consideration to be given to the role of personal identities, passions and personal values in entrepreneurship by demonstrating how non-entrepreneurial identities, characterised by creativity, passion and values, can motivate individuals to start a venture.

I found that, for many of my participants, the motivation to start a venture came from a need for authenticity and a desire to engage in activities that were meaningful to their non-entrepreneurial identity. By enhancing our understanding of entrepreneurial motivations our understanding of entrepreneurship in general is also enhanced (Shane et al., 2003) however entrepreneurial motivation is an under researched area (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018). The entrepreneurship literature categorises entrepreneurial motivations in dichotomous terms such as push/pull or opportunity/necessity (Bridge, O'Neill & Cromie, 2003; Williams & Williams, 2014) and these are understood hierarchically with opportunity and pull motivations rating more highly than necessity and push motivations (Welter et al., 2017).

My study looks beyond superficially apparent motivations to how these were linked to the participants' sense of self. By taking a holistic approach, my exploratory study was able to look at contextual factors such as how the (prospective) end of a university degree, likened to a push motivation in the literature (Nabi et al., 2015), motivated

participants to pursue new venture creation, in order to fulfil a non-entrepreneurial identity developed during their course. My study, therefore, offers a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial motivations which, by taking into account other aspects of the participants' lives, goes beyond push / pull motivations. Therefore, by taking an identity perspective, I extend the understanding of how identities can motivate entrepreneurial action by illustrating how both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial identities can be linked to the decision to start a new venture.

Too often the extant entrepreneurship literature assumes that individuals who start ventures are motivated by a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity (Obschonka et al., 2015). My research makes visible other types of entrepreneurs who do not conform to the entrepreneurial stereotype by suggesting that people who do not identify with the entrepreneurial role can also become entrepreneurs. In the case of the participants of my study, it also highlights how geographic and temporal context should be taken into consideration when seeking to understand entrepreneurial motivations. Where the participants lived had an impact on the employment opportunities available to them and, whilst they were reluctant to move to a larger city, they were also determined to fulfil the non-entrepreneurial identity they had developed whilst at university. Therefore, entrepreneurship provided them with the opportunity to embark on a career which felt personally authentic to their sense of self.

The qualitative approach I adopted allowed participants to deeply reflect on their entrepreneurial motivations and, as a result, my study portrays entrepreneurial motivations as linked to dominant identities (entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial), life stage (the end of university and early stage of their professional lives) and place (in terms of employment opportunities, support available as well as where participants do and don't wish to live).

6.3   Objective 2 Gain insights into the process of entrepreneurial identity formation

Answering a call for a greater understanding of the dynamics of entrepreneurial identity formation (Leitch & Harrison, 2016), my study of nascent entrepreneurs found that entrepreneurial identities are performative, dynamically forming and evolving after start-up has taken place as a result of the enactment of the entrepreneurial role

and socialisation into entrepreneurial communities. I found that performing entrepreneurial tasks and actions and making decisions related to new venture creation had an impact on my participants' sense of self (Anderson et al., 2018; King, 2017). Therefore, following Anderson et al. (2018), my study illustrates the links between performativity of the entrepreneurial role in context and identity emergence.

Following Anderson et al. (2018) and Rae (2004), I found that a sense of belonging, receiving feedback, and gaining endorsements prompted entrepreneurial identity formation. Belonging to a community of practice has an impact on an individual's identity (Wenger, 1999) and my study offers insights into how entrepreneurial communities of practice can stimulate the evolution of the entrepreneurial identity through sharing experiences with like-minded people and the positive emotions and self-confidence this generates. I show how the participants enjoy and benefit from these interactions with others. Taking an identity perspective, therefore, calls into question the theoretical entrepreneur as an autonomous lone operator. The entrepreneurs in this study sought out and enjoyed contact with networks and were embedded in entrepreneurial communities. Although the importance of networks is acknowledged in entrepreneurship research, this finding builds on network theory by suggesting that entrepreneurial networks can provide more than resources and knowledge by offering entrepreneurs with identity building opportunities (Jack et al., 2010). At firm-level, EO states that autonomy is a necessary dimension of entrepreneurial behaviour that enables opportunity search and exploitation (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005; Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014) however for my participants it was the sense of being part of a bigger community that enabled them to form an entrepreneurial identity and persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours.

My study, following Leitch & Harrison (2016), offers a view of the entrepreneurial identity as a fluid and dynamic construct rather than as stable, static and a necessary prerequisite for new venture creation. I found that, where entrepreneurial identities existed prior to venture start-up, they continued to evolve and reform after the creation of the new venture. This contrasts with the depiction of entrepreneurial identities as static (see Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Consequently, my study questions the taken-for-granted characterisation of the

entrepreneur as an autonomy seeking individual who, prior to start-up, sees him or herself as naturally entrepreneurial and in possession of the necessary self-efficacy for the role. The entrepreneur is theorised as being different from other people in terms of his or her ability to evaluate profitable opportunities and assess risk before acting entrepreneurially (Galloway et al., 2019; Lerner et al., 2018). However, my findings question the notion of the differentiated entrepreneur and show that possession of a pre-existing entrepreneurial identity is not required for an individual to recognise and act upon an entrepreneurial opportunity. This finding questions theories that link founder identities (see for example, Fauchart & Gruber, 2011) with the strategic direction of the venture because they assume that founder identity is a constant through all stages of venture development. When considering the influence of the CEO on a firm's entrepreneurial orientation, it cannot be assumed that the nature of his or her influence remains the same overtime and, therefore, the dynamics of identity formation should be taken into account in process theories of entrepreneurship.

My study illustrates how entrepreneurs are actively involved in the crafting of their entrepreneurial identity and they do this with reference to their other (personal and creative) identities as well as the social identity of the stereotypical entrepreneur. The ubiquity of the entrepreneurial stereotype means that individuals engaged in entrepreneurship are aware of the popular characterisation of the entrepreneur. They select or reject aspects of this social (ascribed) identity according to the characteristics that are compatible with their sense of self. This suggests that nascent entrepreneurs do not have to embrace the social identity of the entrepreneur in order to embark on an entrepreneurial career but, through their reflections, can shape their entrepreneurial identity in ways which feel authentic to them. This challenges the theorisation of entrepreneurship as an outcome of an individual's desire to adopt the social identity of the entrepreneur and suggests that entrepreneurial identities can be an outcome of experiencing entrepreneurship.

Therefore, following Down & Reveley (2004) and Watson (2009), the study shows how participants had agency in the crafting of their own entrepreneurial identity. Through their participation in entrepreneurial communities, participants developed a narrative account to represent themselves and their ventures (King, 2017; Rae, 2004). Following

Down & Warren, (2008) this suggests that entrepreneurial identities can be narratively constructed and reconstructed through dialogue with others. However, my study also offers a caution to over-attributing dialogue to the construction of identity and supports Kašperová & Kitching's (2014) claim that embodied entrepreneurial action is also important to entrepreneurial identity formation and reformation. Therefore, in considering the formation of entrepreneurial identities it is important to take into account the experiential aspects of entrepreneurship that contribute to identity evolution.

Following Lewis & Llewellyn (2004), I found that many participants were ambivalent about the label 'entrepreneur' and, whilst they actively accepted aspects of the stereotypical entrepreneur that were relevant and meaningful to them, they rejected other characteristics that were incompatible with their sense of self. Therefore, in contrast to the view that emphasises the power of prevailing social discourses in identity construction (see Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008 and Cohen & Musson, 2000), the participants' evolving entrepreneurial identities, although influenced by the social discourse, were not just passively received but actively shaped.

6.4 Objective 3 Develop an understanding of the role identity plays in entrepreneurial perseverance

In my study, I provide an empirical illustration of identity reconciliation which supports Nielsen & Gartner's (2017) proposition that the participants' ability to persevere depends on the extent to which the emerging entrepreneurial identity is reconciled with other identities within the sense of self. My study suggests, therefore, that identity conflict, as a result of the emerging entrepreneurial identity clashing with other identities, can cause the entrepreneur to question their commitment to the role and envision other alternative future selves. Therefore, by emphasising how identity conflict has a negative impact on entrepreneurs' ability to persevere with their entrepreneurial career, the study highlights the temporary and episodic nature of entrepreneurship and challenges the conceptualisation of the differentiated entrepreneurial individual. Furthermore, the identity perspective offers insights into the challenges faced by entrepreneurs which the extant literature tends to frame in

terms of structural barriers such as lack of knowledge or resources (see for example (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003; Smith & Beasley, 2011).

My study answers a call from Warren (2004) for research into the interplay between multiple identities in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the transition into entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurship literature is limited to a consideration of interplay and conflict between role identities (for example, roles within the venture) (see Hoang & Gimeno, 2010; Mathias & Williams, 2018) and social identities (such as gender or motherhood) (see Duberley & Carrigan, 2013; Mills & Pawson, 2006) and therefore my study contributes to the field by highlighting the interplay between creative and personal identities and the emerging entrepreneurial identity.

My study suggests that reconciliation of the emerging entrepreneurial identity with other identities enables persistence. By focusing on identity reconciliation and conflict, the study enhances our understanding of entrepreneurial perseverance. Currently, the field of entrepreneurship research conflates entrepreneurial persistence with the motivation to start a venture. As such, start-up progress, business survival and growth are linked to entrepreneurs' start-up motivations (Cassar, 2007; Hessels et al., 2008; Renko & Freeman, 2017). I found, however, that once the start-up decision had been taken and participants' entrepreneurial identity began to evolve and integrate into their overall sense of self, they became motivated to persevere with the venture in order to fulfil their emerging entrepreneurial identity. This suggests that the motivations to start a venture can differ from the motivation to persevere with developing the venture after start-up. Therefore, by adopting an identity lens to understand entrepreneurial motivations, insights are gained into the motivations of entrepreneurs at different stages of the venture's development.

Whilst both entrepreneurship literature and public policy discourse focus on high growth entrepreneurship (Welter et al., 2017), the participants presented a different view of entrepreneurship which centred on identity fulfilment and perseverance. This suggests that, for low value businesses, such as those represented in this study, the emphasis is on making a living rather than making a significant financial contribution to the economy. By showing how the emergence and reconciliation of the entrepreneurial identity enables participants to persevere, my study moves away from

traditional approaches which focus on structural barriers such as skills deficits or lack of access to start-up capital and instead considers how identity emergence and reconciliation enables entrepreneurs to overcome difficulties.

6.5 Theoretical Contributions

The entrepreneurship research typically explores the phenomenon by focusing on the individual entrepreneur's personality traits, skills and abilities, motivations and entrepreneurial identity or fragmented aspects of the entrepreneurial process such as opportunity discovery and exploitation, networks, survival and growth. Due to the dominance of quantitative approaches in the field, these areas are studied in isolation of each other and of the context in which they occur (Berglund, 2007). Entrepreneurship is closely linked to different aspects of an entrepreneur's life (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991) and, by exploring participants' entrepreneurial experience holistically, my study highlights the links between the need for identity fulfilment, identity emergence and reconciliation and the motivation to start and persevere with a venture. Therefore, my study answers a call for research to present an expansive, rather than the traditionally tidy, view of entrepreneurship (Rehn & Taalas, 2004) which moves away from stereotypical portrayals of the entrepreneur.

The study makes five key theoretical contributions to the field of entrepreneurship research: 1) non-entrepreneurial identities can influence the motivation to start a venture; 2) entrepreneurial identity formation can begin after the decision to start a new venture has taken place; 3) entrepreneurial identity formation is a dynamic process that is stimulated by action, interaction and reflection; 4) individuals have agency in crafting their own entrepreneurial identity in relation to the social identity of the entrepreneur and the multiple identity that make up their sense of self; 5) in order to persevere with their entrepreneurial endeavours, entrepreneurs must resolve identity conflict by reconciling their emerging entrepreneurial identity with their other identities.

Firstly, the thesis found that non-entrepreneurial identities could provide the motivation for new venture creation. The motivations of individuals who did not initially identify with the entrepreneurial role are under-researched (Mahto & Mcdowell, 2018) and therefore the findings provide a greater understanding of how

the decision to start a new venture could come from the need to fulfil a non-entrepreneurial identity. By linking entrepreneurial motivations with the concept of identity fulfilment the thesis contributes to the growing evidence that motivations are more complex than the dichotomous and hierarchical representations found in the traditional entrepreneurship literature (Williams & Williams, 2014). The thesis answers calls for consideration of other identities types in entrepreneurship (Wry & York, 2017). These findings show that there is value in extending the focus to include the broader context of the entrepreneurs' lives and to consider the multiple identities that make up their sense of self. An important aspect of these findings is that they challenge the stereotypical conceptualisation of the entrepreneur and demonstrate that there are alternative routes into entrepreneurship.

Secondly, the thesis shows that entrepreneurial identities can start to form after new venture creation has taken place. Entrepreneurial identity has been conceptualised as preceding new venture creation (Down & Reveley, 2004) and these findings extend our understanding of entrepreneurial identity formation by illustrating how can emerge as a result of engagement with the entrepreneurial process. Thirdly, the thesis answers calls for further investigation into the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial identity formation (Leitch & Harrison, 2016) by positing that entrepreneurial identity can emerge as a result of meaningful engagement in activities and socialisation into communities. These findings therefore challenge essentialist views of entrepreneurial identity that assume it is fixed and static (see for example Fauchart & Gruber, 2011).

Fourthly, the thesis contributes to growing evidence that individuals have agency in crafting their own entrepreneurial identity (Down & Reveley, 2004; Hytti, 2005) and challenges the notion that the entrepreneurial identity is discursively imposed. These findings provide a clearing understanding of that entrepreneurial identity formation involves more than the use of dialogue and interaction in order to narratively construct identities. Instead, the thesis shows that there is value in extending the focus to consider how entrepreneurs shape their entrepreneurial identity in relation to their other identities as well as the socially ascribed entrepreneurial identity.

Finally, the thesis shows that there is value in considering entrepreneurial perseverance in relation to entrepreneurial identity formation. Typically, the

motivation to persevere has been conflated with the motivation to start a venture (Shane et al., 2003). The study contributes to the growing body of evidence which suggests that entrepreneurial motivations change over time (Williams & Williams, 2014) and these findings show that if the entrepreneur successfully reconciles the emerging entrepreneurial identity with other identities the more likely he or she will be able to commit to the venture. However, failure to reconcile means that entrepreneurs seek identity fulfilment by other means.

6.6   Practical and Policy Implications

My study has implications for nascent entrepreneurs and those who support them. In terms of the practical implications my research contributes to the practice of entrepreneurship by emphasising the importance of identity fulfilment and authenticity. Aspiring and early stage entrepreneurs should devote some attention to developing self-awareness and explore their values and passions holistically in order to engage in entrepreneurial activity that feels meaningful. They can gain reassurance from the understanding that there is not one type of entrepreneur but many and that they have agency in crafting an entrepreneurial identity that feels personally authentic. The study has a critical view of commonly held notions of entrepreneurial characteristics and I recommend that individuals challenge stereotypes rather than strive to conform to them. Given that the study found that entrepreneurial identities emerge as a result of enactment, aspiring entrepreneurs are encouraged to seek out entrepreneurial experiences that push them out of their comfort zone, challenge their perception of themselves and expand their networks rather than focusing on trying to identify the perfect opportunity.

In terms of policy business supporters and enterprise educators should critically engage with discourses of privilege and deficit in order to avoid designing entrepreneurship and start-up programmes (and the selection criteria for entry on to these programmes) which reinforce narrow representations of the entrepreneur (Jones, 2014, 2015). Discourses of entrepreneurship depict entrepreneurs as heroic characters in possession of the necessary and naturally occurring characteristics, skills and propensities to discover and successfully exploit commercial opportunities in order to obtain profit. By implication, therefore, individuals who do not fit the

stereotype are framed in terms of a deficit (Jones, 2014). There is evidence to suggest that, for those individuals who do not identify with the stereotypical characterisation of the entrepreneur, it could act as a barrier to them pursuing an entrepreneurial career (Connolly et al., 2003; Jones, 2014; Martínez et al., 2007). Business supporters, entrepreneurship educators and policy makers should consider how entrepreneurs are represented in their course descriptions and marketing materials. Similarly, an awareness of potential ambivalence and even aversion to the term 'entrepreneur' could lead educators and policy makers to consider how they present their offer to different groups. Given that the majority of private sector business activity is classed as micro-business and self-employment (Galloway et al., 2019), my study questions the use of high growth discourse in public policy designed to promote and support start-up activity and suggests that attention should be paid to notions of perseverance. My findings suggest that a more inclusive language of start-up support is required that recognises the entrepreneur as an individual made up of multiple identities and not as a generic entrepreneur.

One way this can be achieved is to include guest speakers and case studies from a broad range of entrepreneurs and ventures types. Rather than focusing on the venture and the functional aspects of running a business, speakers could be asked to discuss how they see themselves and how their self-perception has evolved as a result of their entrepreneurial experiences. Given that the enactment of entrepreneurial activities prompts entrepreneurial identity emergence, courses and training programmes should include opportunities for aspiring and nascent entrepreneurs to experience entrepreneurship, albeit in simulated circumstances or small scale projects. In a recent Special Issue on Entrepreneurship Education in the Journal of Small Business Management, Santos, Neumeyer, & Morris, (2019) propose that these concrete experiences contribute to the development of participants' belief in their ability to perform entrepreneurial activities. In addition, it is suggested that receiving feedback on the development of their business empowers aspiring entrepreneurs and increases their self-belief (Santos et al., 2019). Therefore, in order to promote identity development through socialisation and belonging, business support services and educational institutions can create start-up communities as well as facilitate

connections with mentors and established business networks through the creation of co-working spaces, informal and formal events and social media networking.

The re-design of business support and entrepreneurship programmes, rather than traditionally emphasising the development of skills and knowledge which are assumed to be deficit in the aspiring entrepreneur (Jones, 2014), could stimulate entrepreneurial identity development and identity reconciliation. Giving aspiring entrepreneurs structured opportunities to reflect individually and collectively on their values, passions and motivations as well as the values, passions and motivations of a broad range of entrepreneurs can promote entrepreneurial empowerment (Santos et al., 2019) as well as develop self-awareness and self-efficacy. Through their enhanced self-awareness, aspiring and nascent entrepreneurs can create ventures that enable them to experience feelings of authenticity and compatibility with their overall sense of self thereby enhancing their motivation to persevere.

Aspiring and nascent entrepreneurs can also be encouraged to critique representations of the entrepreneur in the entrepreneurship literature as well as the media. The emphasis of the initial stages of entrepreneurship and start-up programmes should be on encouraging nascent entrepreneurs to consider what type of entrepreneur they want to become by enabling them to recognise their agency in the crafting of their entrepreneurial identity rather than emphasising the need to emulate those entrepreneurs celebrated by the media. In this way, business support and entrepreneurship programmes can equip nascent entrepreneurs to overcome difficulties by enabling them to create ventures that fulfil their identity needs and provide them with a sense of authenticity.

6.7 Limitations of the study and areas for future research

The study has several limitations which present opportunities for future research. I present findings which offer a "photographic slice" (Cope, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 155) of my participants' lives which is rich in detail. The nuanced representation of entrepreneurship given here is not intended to be definitive; I challenge the entrepreneurial stereotype but do not intend to replace it with another 'type' or to generalise from it. However, I have shown that further insights can be gained by researching other kinds of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

My study demonstrates a link between identity and entrepreneurial motivation. Future studies could explore entrepreneurship from an identity perspective to understand how individuals develop an entrepreneurial identity prior to new venture creation. The study represents a snap shot in time and therefore cannot provide insights into the long term impact of identity evolution and reconciliation on the entrepreneurial experience. A longitudinal study could lead to further understandings of the entrepreneurial experience over a period of time and provide insights into how identities influence the strategic direction of the business.

My research is based in one region of the UK and therefore has limited geographical reach. It is also informed by the Western depiction of the stereotypical entrepreneur and I acknowledge that other countries are likely to view the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship through their cultural lens. Furthermore, the stories and circumstances of entrepreneurs operating in different geographical areas are likely to vary considerably and future research could develop insights by focusing on other regions.

In conclusion, entrepreneurship research is still dominated by the use of quantitative research methods and therefore our understanding of the phenomenon is limited to the questions that can be answered by this methodological approach (McDonald, Gan, Fraser, Oke, & Anderson, 2015). However, these findings contribute to further understanding of entrepreneurship as a multifaceted and complex social construct and, although entrepreneurship research has become more plural in recent years (McDonald et al., 2015), more diverse approaches are required in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Leitch et al., 2009). Future research should examine different entrepreneurial situations and actors in order to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon and surface the taken-for-granted assumptions about entrepreneurship in general (Gartner & Birley, 2002).

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Appendix 1 Call for participants via a group email and blog post

Recruitment Materials- email

Dear [Participant]

Your details have been passed to me by my colleague [name] who indicated that you have agreed to be contacted regarding a project researching the experiences of graduates who start their own business soon after leaving university.

Just to introduce myself, my name is Felicity Mendoza and I work in Sheffield Business School as a research associate. I am currently studying towards a doctorate of business administration and my focus is on graduates who, within three years of leaving university, set up and run their own business.

In order to research this area, I would like to interview a number of business owners who:

- graduated between 2007 and 2014
- have less than 3 years graduate-level work experience as a paid employee
- started a venture within 3 years of leaving university

If you fit these criteria I would really like to interview you. The interviews will take up to 2 hours and can be conducted at your premises or on campus at a time and date to suit you. They will be audio recorded and transcribed and a copy of the transcription will be sent to you for your comments. Anonymised excerpts from your interview will be used in the final thesis.

If you would like to have a chat about participating in the research project please don't hesitate to give me a call on the number below. If I don't hear from you I will follow up this email with a call next week.

Best wishes

Felicity

Felicity Mendoza

0114 225 3613

<u>Graduate entrepreneurship – what is it like for you? Participants sought for a research project...</u>

Hello everyone! I'm writing this because, like you, I'm interested in entrepreneurship. Fascinated by it in fact. But it's a love / hate relationship because of the clichés, stereotypes and assumptions the word 'entrepreneurship' carries with it. On the one hand you've got the media portraying the entrepreneurship as a dog eat dog world where only most hardened alpha-males can survive and on the other hand you've got the academic obsession with generalising about what an entrepreneur is or isn't – sometimes without even talking to a single entrepreneur. Looking at some of that literature, you'd be forgiven for thinking that you had to have 20 years professional experience and a bottomless pit of capital behind you before you could even think of starting a venture.

Each time I encounter these sweeping statements about entrepreneurship I can't help thinking of recent graduate entrepreneurs and their experience of starting and running a business – how does it compare? So this gave me an idea for my doctorate – I want to collect the stories of recent graduate entrepreneurs, gather their perspectives and highlight the experiences of this specific group. The better the understanding of what graduate entrepreneurs experience, the better support can be tailored to their needs.

Can you help me? If you're student or have graduated in the last few years and you're an entrepreneur, business owner or self-employed I'd love to interview you. If you think you might be able to help, get in touch for a chat and find out more (no obligation!). My contact details are f.mendoza@shu.ac.uk or find me on LinkedIn.

<u>About the author</u>

I'm a part-time doctoral research student on the DBA programme at Sheffield Business School and I also work there part-time in an employability role. Both my course and my job give me the opportunity to talk to lots of different businesses and I get a real buzz from learning about the innovative solutions that are thought up to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. When it came to choosing a research topic it was a no brainer – the perfect mix of all the things that are most interesting about my

job (students, graduates, employability, businesses) combined to make something new – graduate entrepreneurship.

Appendix 2 Recruitment Materials

LinkedIn announcement

Business owners and entrepreneurs wanted for research project. If you graduated between 2007 and 2014, started a venture within 3 years of leaving university and have less than 3 years graduate level work experience as a paid employee, I'd like to speak to you about participating in a research project. The project is investigating the perspectives and experiences of graduates who have started their own venture and will involve a face to face interview at a time, date and location to suit you. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more.

Direct Message via Facebook
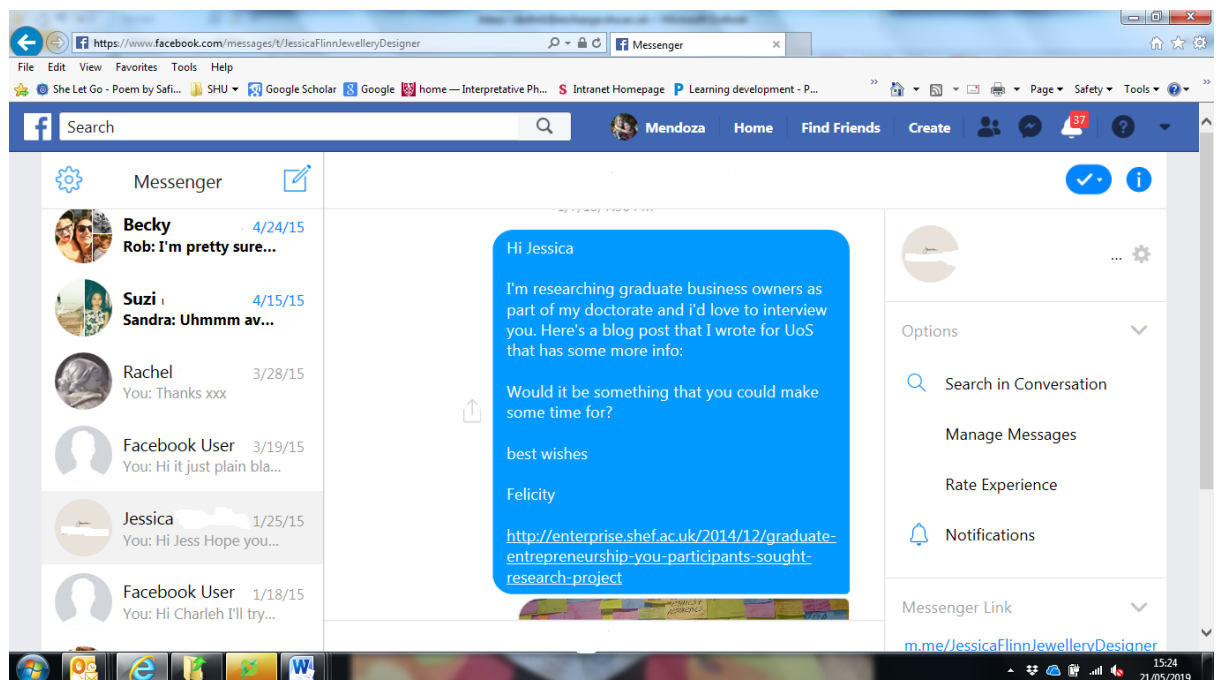
Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Pseudonyms	participant:	business:	
Name		Age:	
Business name			
Overview of business			
Year of graduation			
University			
Course			
Year started business			
Number of years grad level work experience			
Type of grad level work experience			
Business address			
No. of employees			
Business status and set up (e.g. limited company / partnership. Profit / not for profit)			

Does the nature of the business need to be changed to protect the participant's identity?

Appendix 4 Confirmation email to participants

Hi

Thanks for taking the time to talk to me earlier and for agreeing to be interviewed next week. The details are:

Monday 18th August at 4pm, Stoddart Building reception.

Please report to the reception and they'll notify me that you've arrived and I'll come and meet you. I've booked a meeting room on the third floor which should be quiet enough for the audio recorder.

Just to reiterate, the interview is informal in the sense that I don't have a list of questions that I need to get through. I'm interested in hearing about your experience of starting and running a business, as well as your priorities and concerns.

As mentioned, it might take up to 2 hours and I will audio record it. I'll then transcribe the recording and write up the interview in narrative format. I'll send you the narrative to read through and ideally would like to have a second meeting with you to discuss your feelings about it – whether you think I've represented your perspective accurately or if anything should be amended or added.

The audio recording will be confidential and stored on my private computer. I will only share it with those people directly involved with the research, for example my academic supervisors and if I use the services of a transcriber. All participants will be anonymised in the resulting narratives and thesis - I will change your name and your businesses name and if necessary other details of your business (we can discuss this). Before the interview starts I'll ask you to sign a consent form.

I'll book you a parking permit and will forward it by email.

I'm really looking forward to meeting you and hearing more about you and your business.

Best Wishes

Felicity

Felicity Mendoza

Research Associate – Employability Hub

Sheffield Business School

www.shu.ac.uk/sbs

Sheffield Hallam University | Stoddart Building | City Campus | Sheffield | S1 1WB

tel: 0114 225 3613 | e-mail: f.mendoza@shu.ac.uk

Appendix 5 Informed Consent Form

Dear Research Participant

Thank you to agreeing to be interviewed as part of my doctoral research project. I'm interested in finding out about the experiences of recent graduates who set up and run their own business. I intend to interview a number of graduate business owners in the course of the project and I have asked you to participate because you fit my current criteria of business owners who:

- graduated between 2007 and 2014
- have less than 3 years graduate level work experience as a paid employee
- started a venture within 3 years of leaving university

After the interview:

The interview will be audio recorded both on a digital audio recorder and a smart pen with a built in audio recorder. I will transcribe the recording in order to analyse the conversation in detail. Once transcribed and analysed, I will use the information to write a narrative account. It's important for me not to misrepresent you so I'll send the narrative account to you to review. I would then like to arrange a second meeting to discuss your impression and consider any amendments, additions or clarifications. Direct quotes and aspects of the narrative account will be used in the final thesis and academic papers for publication.

Timescales for the project:

August 2014-August 2015 - interviews and analysis

September 2015 - December 2016 - write and submit thesis

Anonymity:

I will change your name and your company's name in order to protect your anonymity. There may be other details that will make it possible to identify you - these can also be changed. We can discuss this in more detail.

Confidentiality:

The recordings, transcripts and subsequent accounts will be stored on my SHU drive (only accessible via my log in) as well as on my own personal laptop and USB in accordance with data protection legislation. The only people with access to the recording and transcripts, besides me, will be those directly involved in my research, for example academic supervisors and transcribers.

Right to withdraw:

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time prior to submission of the thesis without any consequences, penalty or damage to your relationship with the university or the researcher. Nor will you be required to give reasons for your withdrawal.

Any questions?

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions at any time?

	Please answers the following questions:	Yes	No
1.	I have read the above information for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.	☐	☐
2.	My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
3.	I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined above, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.	☐	☐
4.	I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out above.	☐	☐
5.	I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out above.	☐	☐
6.	I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.	☐	☐

Participant:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Researcher:

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

Contact details:
Room 7301, Stoddart Building, Sheffield Business School, City Campus
Tel: 0114 225 3613 / email: f.mendoza@shu.ac.uk

Alternative contact details for concerns or complaints:
Dr Tracey Coule
Principal Lecturer - DBA Programme Leader
Tel: 0114 225 5909 / email: t.m.coule@shu.ac.uk

Appendix 6 Interview topics and question types

Questions

Icebreaker:

Could you give me a bit of background into your company?

Journey – the beginning:

Can you tell me about your experience of starting a business? (narrative)

What motivated you to start the business?

Where did the idea come from?

What did your friends and family think at first? And what do they think now?

Where there any points that you thought you'd give up?

Support:

Have you received support?

How do you feel about the help or support you receive? (evaluate)

Who is most influential in your business decisions? (evaluate)

Current situation:

Describe to me a typical day / week (descriptive)

       Prompt – What activities do you get involved in?

       Prompt – Who do you come into contact with?

       Prompt - How do you find customers?

       Prompt - How do you source suppliers?

What are the main differences between a good and a bad day? (contrast)

       Prompt - How do you feel after a good day? (evaluate)

Prompt – How do you usually feel when you wake up in the morning and start thinking of the day ahead?

What do you do or who do you turn to on a bad a day?

Do you have peaks and troughs of enthusiasm for your business?

Skills

What skills do you use?

What skills have you needed to develop? (contrast)

Prompt – who or what helped you develop them?

Prompt – what skills would you like to develop further? And how will you develop these?

Self awareness

What has been you biggest personal challenge?

What have you learnt about yourself during this experience?

Emotional aspects

Do you feel under pressure – how do you manage it?

Is achieving work life balance something that you give much thought to?

Emotionally – in terms of being employed and having your own business – what are the differences?

Emotionally - what is the difference between working on your own and working with others?

Reflection

How do you measure success?

What does success look like?

Have your expectations changed?

Would you do anything differently?

Do you feel as if you have taken a risk?

What would trigger you to give it up?

Does your age bring any challenges to the business?

How do you feel about the term entrepreneur? What do you call yourself?

Appendix 7 Example Participant Narrative Account

Paige the animal lover

Paige has always wanted to work with animals, especially dogs. As a child she wanted to be a dog breeder but as her values developed she became more interested in rescue dogs. When she opted to study business and enterprise at university she already had a business idea in mind. She recalls, 'I think I actually went to uni thinking I was going to set up like a dog kennels or something, so I knew I wanted to go to uni to get a business degree to work with dogs, that was always the objective.' Knowing that she lacked experience of working with dogs she set about seeking some voluntary work. She explains, 'I got a job as a volunteer dog-walker in my first year. I knew that's what I wanted, I knew I wanted to work with dogs and I was very proactive about it from the beginning. I wrote to loads of different charities ..., asked them all if I could volunteer and one said yes, so I started volunteering and I did that for the first two years'.

Looking for a placement for her third year she came across an opportunity that was 'right up my street'. She remembers, 'it was all about helping people set up their own businesses, being surrounded by young entrepreneurs and I thought it sounded amazing and it completely 150% was. It was amazing and I'm so glad I did it.' Hearing people's ambitions and plans and seeing them starting up their ventures was inspiring and prompted Paige to re-focus on her own unwavering ambition to work with animals. She explains, 'I couldn't get a job working with animals because I didn't have any experience. People wouldn't take me because ..., apart from volunteer work ... I didn't have any experience.' Encouraged by spending time with like-minded people and witnessing at first hand the support and funding available, Paige began to consider business ideas in earnest. She reflects, 'it was kind of inevitable that one day I was going to think "well, why am I sitting here talking to people about their passions and why am I not doing it myself and getting started now" ...'

Paige's hesitation came partly from the issue of the substantial investment that she would need to set up a dog kennels. She explains, 'I didn't have any financial support and I still don't now, to be honest with you, [...] I think there's a huge generalisation on the fact that people that get involved in business get financial backing from their parents, but I don't think that is necessarily true.' Her parents suggested a cautious

219

approach but Paige knew it wasn't for her. She explains, 'one thing my dad has said many a time... is "well why don't you just get a job that earns you a lot more money and then ... you'd like save up loads of money and then you can put it all into a business one day?"'

Lack of confidence also affected Paige, 'If people said "what do you want to do?" I used to say "I don't know". And I knew I was saying one thing and I was thinking "dogs". Because I just felt embarrassed, I just felt like it was stupid. And it was like that for quite a long time.' However she took a pragmatic approach and started to consider an idea with low start up costs. She recalls, 'I think I just thought, dog-walking, it's a pretty simple thing, I don't need to have a qualification, I don't need to have a licence, I don't need a lot of money to start it up and so I just thought, yeah, I'll go for it'. With this in mind Paige spend the rest of her placement year developing the idea, gathering inspiration, choosing a business name and getting a logo designed by an artist friend.

Returning to university after her placement, she made the most of her final year modules to work on her business idea, Paige recalls, 'in my final year, I think two modules, you could do your assignments on your own business ... So I was like great, because that just made me so much more enthusiastic about my work and it really helped me analyse what I was doing and how I was going to approach setting up my own business. So that helped me prepare as much as possible'.

As Paige researched her competitors she began form ideas about how she could differentiate. She explains, 'But the one thing I spotted was that all of their websites were rubbish [...] I started thinking about what I'd want mine to look like and I had a really good idea in my head.' She started paying attention to websites that she liked and went to a talk about website design in order to pull together her ideas. Seeking feedback from friends and associates resulted in conflicting advice and she had to decide between putting up a basic website and then upgrading or spending more time and money developing a site that incorporated her ideas. The decision for Paige was simple, she explains, 'But, as a bit of a perfectionist and somebody who likes to put their own style on things, I was like "no, no, no, I'm not posting it until it's perfect, until it's exactly how I want it to be"'.

Another advantage of her placement was the range of contacts she had made. It was to these contacts that she turned to when it came to designing her website. She recalls, 'At the time, I had no understanding of how expensive a website would be, I had no idea what it would take to set up my own website and [the design agency] really helped me in a huge way and what I paid would be significantly higher if I approached them without knowing them'. Having little start up capital, Paige has learnt the importance of 'never being afraid to ask people for help,' she adds, 'most of them will either do it for nothing, 'cause they love to see you progress, or they'll only charge a massively discounted price.'

Gaining the trust of her customers is important to Paige and it is her passion and commitment that she has most wanted to demonstrate through her website. She explains, 'I live and breathe my job. I do it every day and if I can show them that ....then I think they can only be left to think that you are, like, completely and 100% passionate about what you do'. Having studied business and worked with start ups Paige knew that she would need to improve on her competitors offer. She explains '[I] was taught that you've got to have a USP, you've got to be the best that you can be and do it in new and exciting ways,'. Paige has aligned the business to her own values and donates a percentage of her fees to charity. She explains, 'the charity thing is a big thing for me and, I mean, I don't earn a lot of money, but it's important for me … I think every organisation should do it, small or large.' In addition she is keen to develop responsible practises such as limiting the number of dogs per walk, she explains, 'And that kind of gives a bit of a professional look about it so I'm trying to be as responsible as possible which you really don't get with many dog walkers'.

As the end of Paige's final year at university approached, the website went live and within less than a month she had her first customer. She recalls, 'I got my website and I got my first customer and I'll obviously never forget it, when I was sitting in [the library] revising for my exams and I was going out to walk them as a lunch-break while I was in the library from like nine 'til nine revising'. The first customer was closely followed by another and then another so Paige returned to the enterprise support service to ask for their help. She secured a place at the start-up office and met with a range of specialist business advisers. She also received funding by joining a start-up

graduate scheme and this enabled her to buy her van. 'I went from having a tiny Corsa full of dogs to a van so that was amazing,' she recalls.

With little experience but lots of enthusiasm, Paige also set about learning about dogs, she reflects, 'I've never had anyone train me to do this job. I've done it all based on my own initiative and based on me forming those relationships with those dogs and seeing what works and what doesn't in terms of training and so it's important for me to read books and watch videos and watch TV programmes about dogs as much as possible because then I can learn that information and apply it to what I do.' With a dedication and determination that has arisen from her passion for working with dogs, Paige has also had to learn how to run a business. She explains, 'You don't have a manager to tell you what to do so you have to realise it by yourself and I really did research it a lot [...] but a lot of it you just learn and you just do it yourself and you learn about it...'

Despite finance not being her strongest subject at university, Paige, with the help of the enterprise support advisers, has learnt how to tackle book keeping and tax returns for her business. She explains, 'You have to do your own books and do your own financial statements and all that sort of stuff and, yeah, don't get me wrong, I couldn't do it in my sleep or anything, but I'm learning it and I get a big boost when I know I've done it and understood it.' In addition, managing a schedule and communicating daily with customers are skills that Paige has utilised in her new role however her friendly disposition means that this comes naturally to her. She reflects, 'I don't really have to turn on enthusiasm [...] I'm just being me. [...] I'm just being friendly and chatty and happy and I guess I had that before I started working, but it's definitely been used throughout my working life.'

Being a 'social creature' Paige is wary about being pigeon-holed as someone who prefers animals to humans and an unforeseen downside to her job is that she can spend hours without talking to another person. She reflects, 'I am a huge people person and I love to work with people and it's very important to me and it's something else I didn't see coming, was that I'd be in a lonely job, […] because not only, I don't currently have anyone that I work directly with in the business, the nature of my job is

that the owners aren't there so… [...] So yeah, you don't actually talk to people that much.'

As well as the 'boost' that Paige gets from impromptu conversations on walks, she also seeks out the company of other business owners and the advice of friends and family. She explains, 'I'm very lucky to have quite a few friends that run their own small businesses. My brother wants to start his own business, my boyfriend runs his own business, so although I actually started before them, it's lovely to be surrounded by that because you really do feel like you're a part of something that's very exciting and I think that's very important'

Another unforeseen aspect of the business is that it gives her a lot of time to think but very little time to put her thoughts into actions. She explains, 'another thing I never sort of predicted was [...] is that your mind is almost always free to think. So I'm always watching the dogs and I'm always thinking about what they're doing, but you're either driving or you're walking so it's quite easy for you to be thinking about, [...] your job, how you can make it better, new ideas, new customers, what happened yesterday, what's going to happen next week, and so you do fall into this way of sort of analysing yourself all the time.' Since, during busy periods, she could be walking from eight until six all other tasks have to wait until she gets home. She explains, 'I have all my admin to do, emails to reply to, keeping my website up to date, any ideas that I have, any new developments that I want to work on, all of that has to happen after work and so it's extremely time-consuming...' As a result this has a direct impact on Paige's social life but passion for her business means that, for now, she can make that compromise, 'as sad as it sounds, sometimes the social life is the thing you actually want to do less because I love it that much that I want to get better and I wish there was just more time in the day'.

Paige sees the dog-walking business as a starting point that will allow her to diversify into other related ventures. However lack of time and resources can be a frustration in terms of what she wants to achieve both inside and outside the business. She explains, 'I had quite a quiet summer which was a shame, and it was all right, it was enough to keep me going, but it's difficult when you've got ideas and things you want to do, if you've got no money to spend, if you've got no money to put into those ideas, you can

feel quite stuck like you're not going anywhere.' Her plans include taking on a member of staff to free up her time to focus on growth, she explains, 'the intention is to build it up and learn and understand this service as much as possible and then move on to another one and hopefully take on someone to cover me so that I hold on to that service but then start to offer another one which I then get to grips with, hire someone else to do that instead of me and then move on to another one.'

Although she has been 'warned off by it' by many people on the grounds that her service would be too easy to imitate, Paige has interviewed a potential candidate and feels confident that recruiting is the right decision. She defends her decision, 'I'd like to think that I've got a pretty good brand going so far and I've got a lot of ambition, a lot of things that I want to do and if I can get that going and involve them in it, then they'll hopefully stick around and view my business or my service as something that's worth being a part of rather than something worth competing with and if they do decide that it's something worth competing with, then go for it and that will just always keep me on my toes.'

Paige feels that she has taken a 'huge risk' by not taking up the conventional graduate employment opportunities. She sees friends earning 'probably twice as much' but being happy is more important for her. Paige has also seen her self-confidence grow with the business. Lack of confidence and concern for what people think held her back initially but now she is proud of what she does. 'And I think the main reason for that ... is I'm proud of what I do because I'm happy. And do you know [...] if I did ever think that anyone's judging me for what I do, I'd just think are you happy in your job? Like, do you love your job that you do every day?' In addition, she has proved that her business idea is viable, 'I've absolutely loved dogs ever since I was a very young child and it was only a matter of accepting that it was a viable idea and a viable career to go into, because that was the only thing that was holding me back and once I overcame that, I went for it'. She concludes, 'my work is me and it's everything that I want to be and I think about it all the time'.

Themes

Out of 16 headline themes the 12 most weighty are covered in the narrative. They are listed below along with their subthemes. Themes and subthemes in bold have not been included in the narrative but are recording here for reference for the cross case analysis.

1. Personality and self (inc. values, view of self, learning about self)

2. Challenges (inc. **concerns**, problems and solutions, **peaks and troughs**)

3. Impact on life (inc. work life balance, **switching off**, stress or pressure)

4. Success and achievement

5. Support (inc. formal support, informal support, family and friends, networking)

6. **Partnership (roles within the business, benefits of working with partners, difficulties of working with partners, communication between partners)**

7. **Critical incident**

8. Current position (inc. typical activities, sales activities, **suppliers, product**, customers)

9. Future plans

10. Learning and skills (learning about industry, learning, skills, hindsight, **expectations**)

11. Starting up (inc. initial idea, first activities, timing, investment)

12. Careers and employment (inc career prospects, **employment vs. self employment**, work experience, **attitude to employment and careers**, influences on career choice, employability, income, financial reward)

13. Risk

14. Credibility

15. **Reflecting**

16. **Luck**

Appendix 8 Identifying Recurring Themes

(Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009 p.107)

Themes	Darcie the musician	Andrew the designer	Jon the business owner	Kate the start up founder	Dan the social enterprise founder	Caroline the future cleaning company boss	Robert the ideas man	Present – out of 7
Personality & self	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7
Impact on life	y	[impact on friendships, time commitment]	y	[life outside business]	y	y	y	7
Challenges	[motivation, access to information, problem solving, working with partners]	y & [peaks and troughs]	y	y	y	y	y	7
Future Plans	y	[success]	n	n	y	n	y	4
Risk	[attitude to starting up]	y	y	y	y	n	y	6
Credibility	[being taken seriously, response to business]	n	Y [in Support]	y	y	y	y	6
Careers and employment	[career prospects]	y	y	y	y	y	y	7
Partnership	n	y	n	y	y	y	y	5

Learning and skills	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	7
Support	[family and friends, relationship with uni leading to access]	y & [family and friends support]	y	y	y	y	y	7
Success and achievement	[view of self]	Y	y	y	y	y	y	7
Luck	[fortune and luck]	n	y	n	y	n	n	3
University and course	y	[expectations, partnership]	[link between uni and business]	y	y	n	y	6
Critical incident	n	[crunch point]	y	n	y	y	n	4
Starting up	y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	7
Current position	y	Y	y	[typical day]	y	y	y	7
Endorsement	[response to business]	n	n	y	[success and achievement]	n	n	3
Reflecting	y	[reaction to interview]	n	[feelings about experience]	y	n	y	5

Themes	Paige the animal lover	Stephanie the spin out company director	Chloe the start up partner	Claudia the networker	Christa the creative manufacturer	Georgie the food innovator	Joanna the lover of creative writing	Present – out of 7
Personality & self	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Impact on life	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Challenges	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Future Plans	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Risk	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Credibility	y	y	y	n	y	y	Y	7
Careers and employment	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Partnership	n	y	y	y	n	y	Y	6
Learning and skills	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Support	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Success and achievement	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Luck	y	n	n	n	n	n	N	1
University and course	y	n	y	n	y	y	Y	5
Critical incident	n	n	n	y	n	n	Y	2
Starting up	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Current position	Y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	7
Endorsement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Reflecting	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	6

Themes	Will the coffee business founder	Luke the creative producer	Ben the opportunity seeker	Lauren the social entrepreneur	Gemma the designer	Nicole the business woman	Simon the travel geek	Present – out of 7	Total
Personality & self	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Impact on life	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Challenges	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Future Plans	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	18
Risk	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	20
Credibility	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	5	18
Careers and employment	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Partnership	Y	Y	N	n	N	Y	Y	4	15
Learning and skills	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Support	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Success and achievement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Luck	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	3	7
University and course	Y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	7	18
Critical incident	N	Y	N	y	n	N	N	2	8
Starting up	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Current position	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	21
Endorsement	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	6	9
Reflecting	N	n	n	y	Y	Y	n	3	14

Appendix 9 Cross Participant Analysis -Mind Maps of Four Questions

Question 1 What prompts the participants to act?
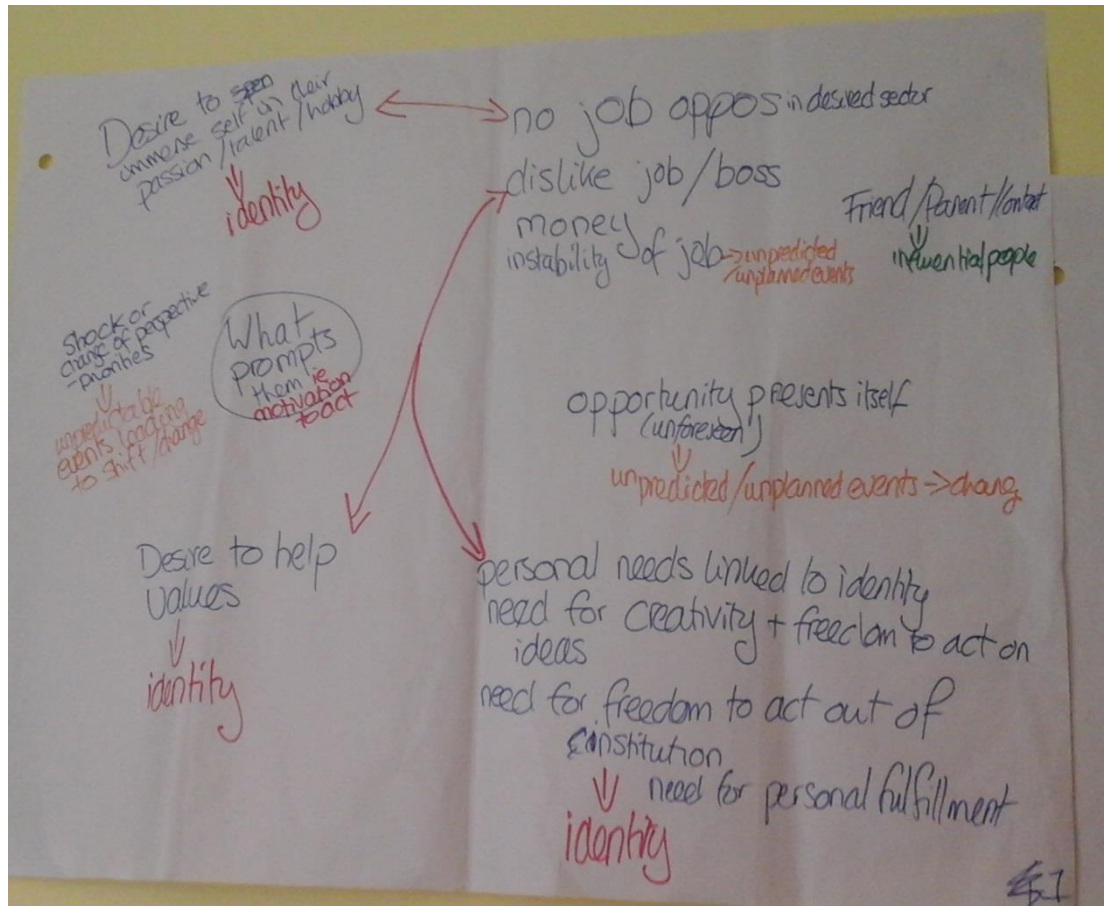
Question 2 What enables them to start?

Question 3 What enables them to persevere (even when faced with obstacles)?
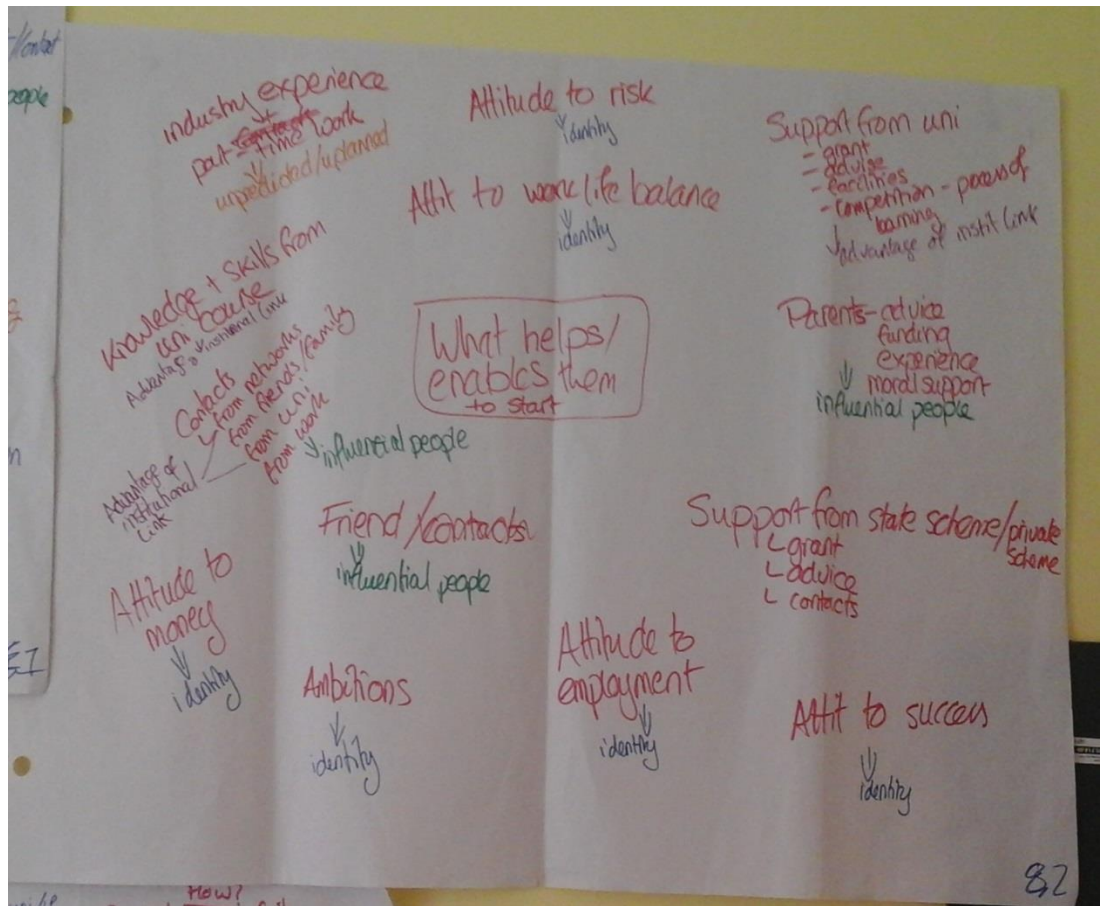
Question 4 How do they know what to do?

Attend networking events

Attend talks

⟶ try it out + make changes

learn as they go
↓ identify (att to risk)

google

How do they
know what to
do?

talk to people
↓ influential people

Read books

refer to studies
↓ advantage of link c̄ in

Attend courses
↓ advantage of link c̄ instit
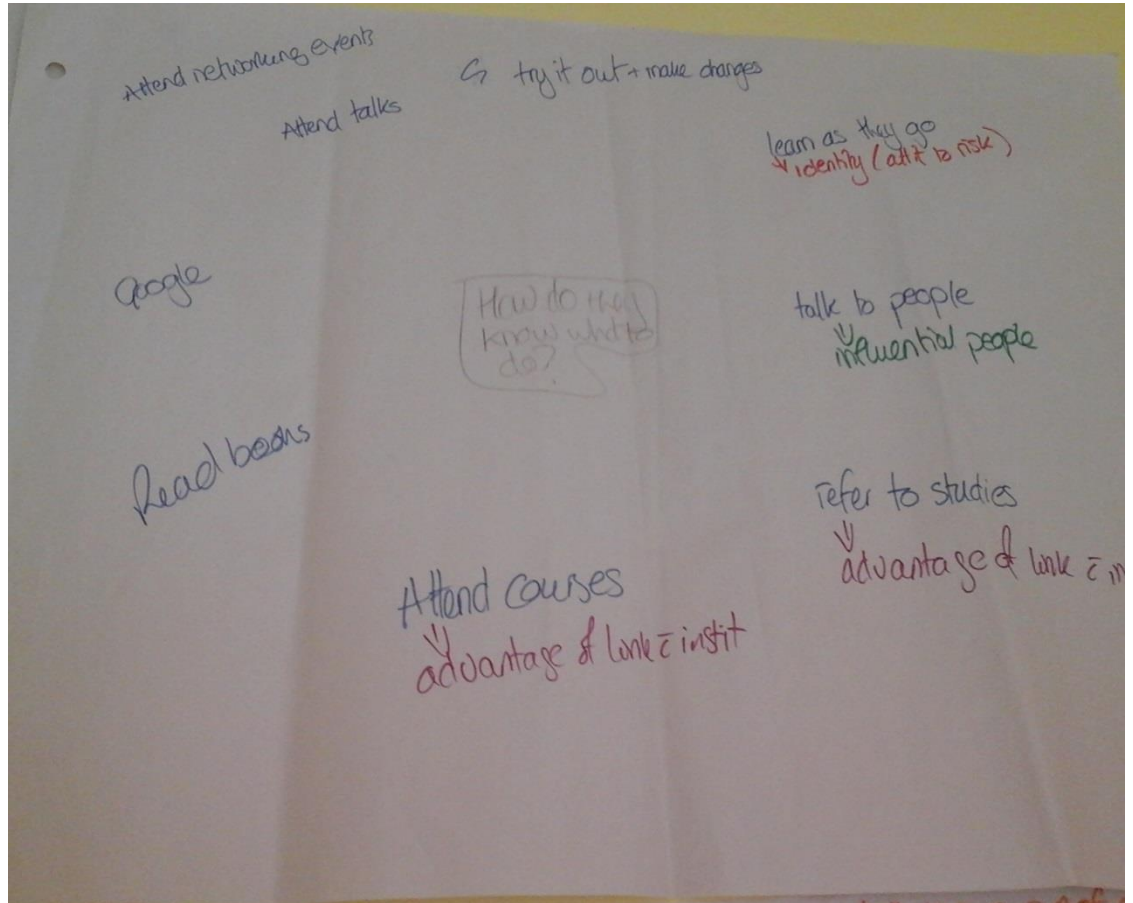
Appendix 10   Cross Participant Analysis - Mind Maps of Themes

Identity
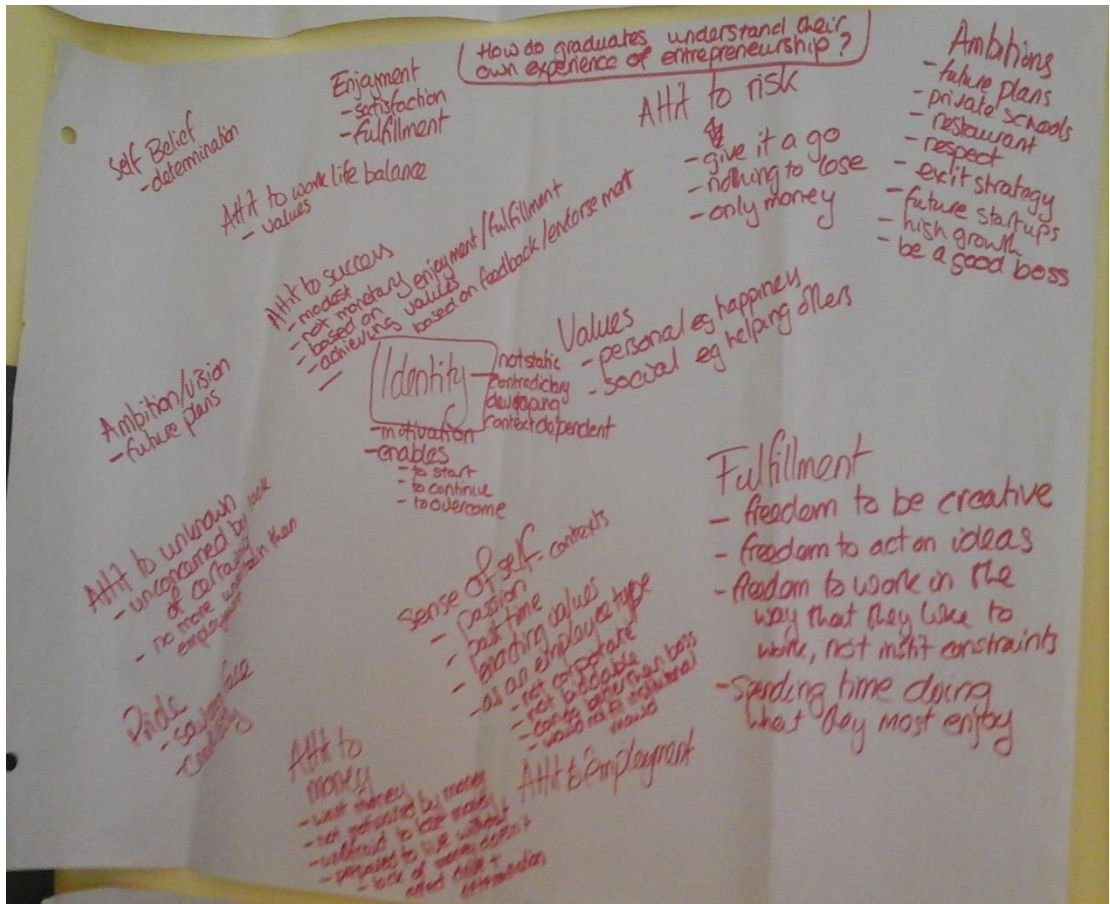
Appendix 11 Participant Profiles (in alphabetical order)

Name	Andrew
Type of business	Product design
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (designer)
Number of years in business	4-5
Employment status (outside the business)	Employed full-time, fixed term contract
Business partners	Yes
Age	31-35

Name	Ben
Type of business	Mobile catering
Pre-existing identity	Entrepreneurial
Number of years in business	3-4
Employment status (outside the business)	Employed full-time, permanent contract
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Caroline
Type of business	Domestic and commercial cleaning
Pre-existing identity	Not a motivating factor
Number of years in business	Less than 1
Employment status (outside the business)	Employed part-time
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Chloe
Type of business	Event organiser
Pre-existing identity	Not a motivating factor
Number of years in business	Less than 1 year
Employment status (outside the business)	Employed full-time, permanent contract
Business partners	1 (Claudia)
Age	21-25

Name	Christa
Type of business	Candle maker
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (guided by values)
Number of years in business	Less than 1 year
Employment status (outside the business)	Full-time student
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Claudia
Type of business	Event organiser
Pre-existing identity	Not a motivating factor
Number of years in business	Less than 1
Employment status (outside the business)	Employed full-time, fixed term contract
Business partners	1 (Chloe)
Age	21-25

Name	Dan
Type of business	Coffee importer -social enterprise
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (guided by values)
Number of years in business	Less than 1
Employment status (outside the business)	Employed full-time, fixed term graduate scheme
Business partners	2 (Joanna and Will)
Age	21-25

Name	Darcie
Type of business	Music publishing
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (musician)
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	Part-time masters student
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Gemma
Type of business	Wedding dress designer / maker
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (designer)
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Georgie
Type of business	Allergen free cakes
Pre-existing identity	Entrepreneurial
Number of years in business	1-2 years
Employment status (outside the business)	Full-time student
Business partners	1
Age	18-20

Name	Joanna
Type of business	Coffee importer - social enterprise
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (passion for social justice)
Number of years in business	Less than 1
Employment status (outside the business)	Part-time
Business partners	2 (Dan and Will)
Age	21-25

Name	Jon
Type of business	Exhibition agency
Pre-existing identity	Entrepreneurial
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	No
Age	26-30

Name	Kate
Type of business	Tech start-up
Pre-existing identity	not a motivating factor
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	2
Age	21-25

Name	Lauren
Type of business	College - social enterprise
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (passion for social justice)
Number of years in business	5-6
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	No
Age	26-30

Name	Luke
Type of business	Clothing label - social enterprise
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (guided by values)
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	Full-time (4 days per week), permanent
Business partners	No
Age	26-30

Name	Nicole
Type of business	Confectionary
Pre-existing identity	Entrepreneurial
Number of years in business	2-3
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Paige
Type of business	Dog walking
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (passion for animals)
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	No
Age	21-25

Name	Robert
Type of business	E-commerce
Pre-existing identity	Entrepreneurial
Number of years in business	2-3
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	1
Age	26-30

Name	Simon
Type of business	Travel website
Pre-existing identity	Entrepreneurial
Number of years in business	1-2
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	1
Age	26-30

Name	Stephanie
Type of business	Design of accessibility products
Pre-existing identity	Non-entrepreneurial (designer)
Number of years in business	3-4
Employment status (outside the business)	No
Business partners	No
Age	31-35

Name	Will
Type of business	Coffee importer - social enterprise
Pre-existing identity	Non - entrepreneurial (guided by values)
Number of years in business	Less than 1
Employment status (outside the business)	Part-time
Business partners	2 (Dan and Joanna)
Age	21-25