SEEING ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHIES OF EMBODIED ENTREPRENEURS

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

Leeds' University Business School

June 2007

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Richard Thorpe and Jeff Gold for providing me with their support, experience, knowledge, time and energy throughout the last three years. I am very grateful for all the help they have given me and also for the countless opportunities they have provided me with along the way. Through continually challenging my thinking and encouraging me to develop my understandings they have greatly helped me develop as a researcher.

Secondly, thanks are due to the three entrepreneurs and their employees who took part in this research and allowed a stranger (and her video-camera!) to become part of their organisation for a short period of time. Thank you for taking time out of your very busy lives to help me with this research. Without your unwavering interest, this project would not have been possible.

I also wish to express my appreciation to my family, Lee Price and my friends (particularly those who did some proof-reading!). Thanks for providing me with endless support and for tolerating my absence on a number of occasions during the write-up of this thesis.

Finally to those in Cromer Terrace, especially the other PhD students, your company throughout this thesis has been motivating and much appreciated.

ABSTRACT

In the last twenty years, the term entrepreneurship has become of significant importance in political and cultural spheres promulgated as a source of economic growth and a solution to unemployment. While economics has been unable to model entrepreneurship mathematically, governments remain concerned with "picking winners" and consequently a variety of psychological approaches including trait, psychodynamic and cognitive understandings have been forwarded in an attempt to identify entrepreneurs. These studies are problematic as they treat entrepreneurs as isolated individuals who are disconnected from their contexts, and as a result these approaches are devoid of cultural, historical or social understandings. In an attempt to overcome these problems, a number of researchers have applied an approach known as social constructionism, which directs attention towards the meaning-making processes between individuals in context. These studies focus solely on meaning-making in linguistic dimensions and do not account for entrepreneurs as "embodied" individuals who exist in a material and visual context, which may enable or constrain the meanings they are able to create. This thesis therefore attempted to address this gap by examining entrepreneurs as "embodied rhetoricians" through a novel methodology known as visual ethnography. The findings from three ethnographic case studies suggest that entrepreneurs use a range of visual tools to "make" meaning and "give" meaning to others in their contexts, including their dress, appearance of physical settings, and physical artefacts such as high-status vehicles, which allude to wider meanings in the social and cultural domain. The findings also indicate that verbal and visual meanings must align in order to be most effective in persuading others of the legitimacy of the business venture. Finally, rather than understanding entrepreneurs as isolated individuals, the findings point to the importance of understanding entrepreneurship as a relational process where entrepreneurs attempt to develop meanings with those around them and in relation to their social contexts. The wider contributions of this thesis are outlined and discussed, including implications for policy-makers. The limitations of this study are then examined and suggestions for future research are outlined.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: EMBODYING THE ENTREPRENEUR

Entrepreneurship has become a topic of increasing importance in academic agendas, reflecting the socio-political relevance of the entrepreneur in political economic policy (Grant and Perren, 2002; Hisrich and Drnovsek, 2002). This interest began, in earnest, in the late 1970s and early 1980s as policy-makers across Europe and the US began to emphasise entrepreneurship as a possible means to overcome lacklustre records of economic growth and academics responded by directing concentrated attention towards understanding the entrepreneur (Audretsch, 2004; Gibb, 2000; Huse and Landstrom, 1997). The significance of the entrepreneur in academic agendas continues to grow, and research in this area is the topic of more than a thousand publications, over fifty conferences and twenty-five specialised journals (Filion, 1997). It is also increasingly attracting attention from leading mainstream management journals (Davidsson *et al*, 2001). This academic interest is not restricted to one bounded entrepreneurship discipline, but draws on a wide variety of academic fields that are all interested in attempting to explain entrepreneurship from their own unique theoretical understandings. As Curran and Blackburn (2001: 8) illustrate, investigations into entrepreneurship and the related area of small business research have drawn upon a range of disciplinary foundations which include fields as diverse as: anthropology, economics, psychology, sociology, geography, politics and history. It is perhaps unsurprising given the multi-disciplinarity of the field that there are difficulties in establishing commonalities in definitions of the term entrepreneurship, theoretical perspectives and levels of analysis (Brazeal and Herbert, 1999).

Given this diversity it has been concluded that there is no unifying theory of entrepreneurship (Bygrave, 1989) and entrepreneurship research is often referred to as being in an adolescent or pre-paradigmatic phase of development in terms of its theoretical content and methodological approaches (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). To suggest that entrepreneurship research is pre-paradigmatic would appear to imply that a range of paradigms and their attendant methodologies are currently in operation within the entrepreneurship research agenda (Perren *et al*,

2001). Yet despite the wide variety of disciplinary influences, an examination of the field of entrepreneurship reveals that the vast majority of entrepreneurship studies are embedded within realist understandings and stress objectivity, universal understandings and continuation of the *status quo* (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Haworth *et al*, 2005). Some have suggested that this is related to researchers' attempts to engage policy-makers in their results through presenting their understandings as "real", "true" and replicable in a variety of contexts. Jennings *et al* (2005), in particular, emphasise that many entrepreneurship researchers have simply accepted the pervading societal understandings of the term "entrepreneurship" unquestioningly. This appears to point to the suggestion that academics are designing and implementing research agendas that support current political discourse on entrepreneurship and consequently align their research with political ambitions, rather than questioning and examining the "validity" of policy-makers' assumptions.

This dominance of the realist paradigm within entrepreneurship research appears also to be related to the historical context of the topic (Ogbor, 2001). In particular, early accounts of entrepreneurship were embedded in economic understandings that attempted to explain conclusively the entrepreneur's role in the economic process of wealth creation. These theories were unable to model, through mathematical means, the behaviour of individuals in a process where the parameters continuously changed and modified (Bygrave, 1989). Yet, through emphasising the individual as central to the process of entrepreneurship, economics paved the way for psychology to emerge as the dominant force in the theory of entrepreneurship. Early studies in this vein focused on entrepreneurs' personalities, backgrounds and early experiences, attempting to profile these and develop a model of the archetypal entrepreneur (Carland *et al*, 1984). Yet these studies began to be widely criticised in the late 1980s and early 1990s for removing the entrepreneur from their environment, resulting in understandings devoid of context (Low and MacMillan, 1988; Gartner, 1990). Increasingly, cognitive understandings have become pervasive in the entrepreneurship domain, which place emphasis on behavioural and cognitive issues as related to the entrepreneurship process. Entrepreneurs are seen as having certain schemas and heuristics within their mind that allow them to assess certain situations and

negotiate their movements in an uncertain environment (Davidsson *et al*, 2001; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). This approach aims to carefully balance attention to the individual with an understanding of their environment, examined in the main through complex statistical analysis (Ucbasaran *et al*, 2001).

While cognitive understandings still hold a central role in the theory of entrepreneurship, there has been some disillusionment among the ranks of entrepreneurship researchers with this approach. Echoing the wider changes in organisational theory (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000; Westwood and Linstead, 2001) there has been some movement towards a "linguistic turn" in the study of entrepreneurship. This movement began to see language as non-representational of a "reality" external to the individual, suggesting that subjective experience did not provide an unmediated and direct link to a "real" external world. In this view, all cognitive categories are created by language and therefore any individual thought is essentially a communal activity subject to the language rules of the wider community in which the individual is embedded (Burrell, 1996; Ray and Sayar, 1999). While still very much in the minority, studies in this vein have contributed to our understanding of entrepreneurship through opening up new ways of conceiving the process. In particular, these approaches allow the possibility for multiple constructions of reality to take place and therefore present entrepreneurship as a local-historical and local-cultural process (Steyaert, 1999). In this view there is no attempt to understand the "truth" about entrepreneurship but rather entrepreneurship is understood as a process constructed through language and embedded in local and historical contingencies (Bouwen and Steyaert, 1990). In terms of methodologies this approach focuses on tools from linguistic, literary and textual analysis as a means to access the processes of linguistic construction (Dodd, 2002).

These studies have created new insights in the theory of entrepreneurship through understanding this process as a socially, culturally and historically based phenomenon. Yet, their sole focus on how language constructs the entrepreneurship process works to reduce the process of entrepreneurship to simply a textual experience and excludes any understanding of embodied entrepreneurial activities. Human experience is never simply a linguistic process,

where bodies are simply containers for the human mind, and there are currently movements in the social sciences, which attempt to highlight the essentially "embodied" nature of our understandings and insights (Buchanan, 1997). As Csordas (1994) outlines, feminist theory, history, literary criticism, philosophy, sociology and psychology have all made moves towards incorporating the body into their enquiries. This movement has begun to make some inroads into organisation studies (Hassard *et al*, 2000; Styhre, 2004), yet the entrepreneur, as an embodied individual has not been considered. In relation to this there has been little attention to methodologies, which may allow us access to these embodied activities. Obtaining an understanding of embodied activities would appear to suggest some aspect of visual understandings must be incorporated into our methodological approaches. Even those in the organisational domain who attempt to encompass an embodied dimension into their research do so predominantly through purely textual means. Therefore, visual methodologies are ignored and underutilised in both entrepreneurship and other organisational research activities.

This thesis aims to extend our current understanding of entrepreneurship through attempting to understand entrepreneurs as embodied individuals who make meaning both through language and the material environments within which they are placed. In order to examine entrepreneurship in this manner, this thesis develops an argument that suggests that entrepreneurship should not be examined using a de-contextualised or objective approach as it is inextricably related to the social, political and cultural context within which it is situated. This is initially achieved through emphasising the wide variety of ways that entrepreneurship has been conceived throughout the history of economic theory, and developing an understanding of how the current hegemonic status of the entrepreneur in political agendas relates to increasing economic problems in Europe and the USA. It is then further emphasised through an in-depth critique of psychological approaches with particular attention being paid to the problems encountered when the entrepreneurial concept, which is inherently a social and cultural phenomenon, is removed from the context within which it is placed. These ideas are then extended through an argument that emphasises the importance of accounting for entrepreneurs as "embodied" individuals who are placed in a

material context, which may enable or constrain their linguistic repertoires. This understanding of entrepreneurship is explored through three visual ethnographic case studies. Issues of reflexivity in ethnographic research and the problems encountered when using a visual ethnographic approach are also emphasised. Through attempting to "embody" the entrepreneur and through the use of an innovative methodology, this thesis adds to our current understandings through offering both theoretical and methodological insights, which are outlined and discussed in detail in the final chapter.

2.0 THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENTREPRENEUR

2.1 The Cult of the Entrepreneur

In the last twenty years, the terms entrepreneur and entrepreneurship have become of major importance in our political and cultural vocabularies and have a powerful hold on the imagination of both the general public and policy makers. Policies aimed at the creation of an "enterprise culture" enjoy a privileged position in the governmental agendas of Europe and the United States and have recently been forwarded as a regeneration strategy for "third world" countries (Gibb, 2002, Zafirovski, 1999). Indeed, for many years entrepreneurship has been considered a principle means by which to enhance the creation of new jobs through the development of the small business sector and has been seen as a key solution to an economic downturn and rising unemployment in the majority of industrialised countries (Carr and Beaver, 2002). This remains the case today as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, "entrepreneurship policies represent an effective response for countries wanting to strengthen their adaptability and improve their economy's ability to create jobs" (OECD, 1998: 28). Whilst the importance of entrepreneurship in creating new jobs remains a crucial aspect of government policy in Europe and the US, entrepreneurship has also increasingly been regarded as the political response to the wide-ranging and long-term effects of globalisation (Gibb, 2002). As Gibb (1985, cited in Armstrong, 2001: 534) highlights, "the entrepreneur has become the god (or goddess) of current political ideology and the leading actor in the theatre of the 'new economics'". Phrases such as the "new economy" and "market economy" resound with entrepreneurs as central to their functioning as "agents of change and growth" and reorganisers of the global economy (OECD, 1998: 11).

With such wide-ranging popularity, it seems imperative that we examine entrepreneurship and its current status within both political and academic understandings. In particular, it is important to discover when and how the importance of the entrepreneur in the economy emerged (Formaini, 2001). In order to develop this understanding, the historical position of the entrepreneur in

economic theory is examined. This historical overview does not attempt to report on all views of the entrepreneur throughout the history of economics but rather emphasises theories, which have become citation classics in the economic and entrepreneurship literatures. Attention will be particularly drawn to the great diversity in understandings of entrepreneurship that have been forwarded, and the contradictions and confusions that surround the term entrepreneur throughout the various epochs (Herbert and Link, 1988). This has resulted in economists being unable to model entrepreneurship in a mathematical manner as there is no underlying or agreed definition of what this activity entails (Long, 1983). The inherent problems economists encounter in attempting to explain entrepreneurship are somewhat peculiar given that government policies across Europe and the USA promote entrepreneurship as an essential element in the growth and development of the economy. It will consequently be argued that entrepreneurship is a phenomenon that is inherently socially and culturally based. In this view it is argued that entrepreneurship is not an "objective" or "real" concept but rather is a term that has been attributed to a diverse range of activities depending on the historical context within which it is placed.

Building on the idea that entrepreneurship must be examined in relation to the historical and political context within which it exists, the historical account of the entrepreneur in economic theory is followed by an examination of the political circumstances that led to the rise of the widespread promotion of the entrepreneur in policy-makers' agendas. In particular, it is emphasised that while there are a range of definitions of entrepreneurship residing in economic theory, in political discourse entrepreneurship has been mainly equated with small firm activity (Huse and Landstrom, 1997). This is related to the widespread economic problems and high levels of unemployment Western economies encountered in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which first directed the attention of floundering governments to the potential benefits of the small firm to cure these large-scale problems (Carr and Beaver, 2002). It was the flexibility and efficient nature of small firms that were particularly emphasised as admirable qualities which large firms and public-sector bureaucratic organisations should seek to emulate (Peters and Waterman, 1982). This understanding that the growth of the small firm sector is necessarily related to rapid economic growth and a widespread cure to

unemployment has been criticised by a number of researchers (e.g. Beaver *et al*, 1998; Gray, 1992, Thorpe and Clarke, 2007), with some arguing that very few small firms ever grow beyond a certain limited level (e.g. Davidsson *et al*, 2004). This issue has led a number of academics to distinguish between "small firms" and "entrepreneurial firms". While this distinction again remains unclear and conflated, there appears to be some agreement that entrepreneurship involves some level of innovative and growth-generating activity (Gartner, 1990).

Not only does the promotion of entrepreneurship exist in political agendas as the endorsement of small firm activity, but also the proposed utility of entrepreneurship has been developed as a wider cultural and societal phenomenon, aiming to develop a spirit of independence and a culture of self-help across Europe and the United States (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992). In relation to this, the concepts of management and leadership are being replaced to some extent by entrepreneurship, as executives in large organisations are encouraged to become more "entrepreneurial" in their managerial and leadership roles (Kanter, 1989). University chairs in this topic are becoming increasingly available and educational courses are being created to train and develop these eager executives and would-be entrepreneurs in the "art and science" of entrepreneurship (Kuratko, 2005). Such "entrepreneurial" education is taking place not only in universities and higher-level education, but also in secondary and primary education with the aim being to instil entrepreneurial qualities in children at an early age (Smyth, 1999). The "economic" entrepreneur has therefore gained enormous credibility and legitimacy in all aspects of public life, and interest continues to grow in this area in both academic and political circles. Yet some academics have argued that given the continuous changes in meaning and the related lack of understanding, that entrepreneurship should no longer be the subject of academic research (e.g. Hornaday, 1990). It is suggested here that given the important role the entrepreneur plays in our current cultural vocabularies it is essential that academics continue to examine this concept, although perhaps in a more critical manner. A definition of entrepreneurship is developed which is in line with current political and social understandings, which will serve as the basis of this study.

2.2 Historical origins of the Entrepreneur

While as suggested above there are a range of problems in the understandings of entrepreneurship in economic theory, in the main, contemporary economic theory recognises entrepreneurship as an independent factor of production on a more-or-less equal footing with land, labour and capital (Herbert and Link, 1988). Within this context, entrepreneurship is often referred to as the "thought process", which innovatively combines the other three factors of production in order to produce goods or services. This particular understanding is a relatively recent occurrence, as throughout the long history of economic theory there have been major shifts in both what being an entrepreneur means, their presence and importance in terms of the various factors of production, and the groups of individuals that the term has been attributed to. It is useful, therefore, in any analysis of the entrepreneur to begin with an examination of these conflicting images of the place of entrepreneurship within economic theory. As Formaini (2001: 3) notes "it is useful to look at the historical development of this concept...only by studying the past can we expect to understand the present." Schumpeter (1954: 12-13) similarly argues that "nobody can hope to understand the economic phenomenon of any, including the present, epoch who has not adequate command of the historical facts". In this overview some of the major historical influences are discussed, including the pre-economic treatment of entrepreneurship. While the goal here is not to produce a comprehensive history of the entrepreneur in economic thought, some of the most prevalent views held by economists throughout the centuries in relation to entrepreneurship will be highlighted.

2.2.1 Pre-economic History of the Term

The root of the word entrepreneur can be traced as far back as 800 years, to the French verb "entreprendre", which has a meaning similar to "getting things done" (Elkjaer, 1991). Prior to this, Ancient Greek and medieval philosophers often referred to knights and ancient Greek heroes in terms with a similar meaning to entrepreneur, yet due to the ill-defined nature of the concept even at this early stage, it was often used interchangeably with the term leadership.

Traders and merchants were also referred to as entrepreneurs yet, unlike military heroes, they were not respected members of society. As Herbert and Link (1988: 13) note "Aristotle...recognised the place of the merchant in society but did not regard him as having a high calling. On the contrary, he must be watched constantly, lest society suffer from his over zealousness and rapaciousness". Before the eighteenth century, economic activity was seen as a "zero-sum game", where one person's gain is another's loss, with no wealth or economic gains being created in this process, with the result that trade was seen as doing nothing to enhance the well-being of society but rather was the pursuit of wealth for personal gain (Jones and Spicer, 2005a). In this view, entrepreneurs were seen as avaricious and self-serving, concerned only with their quest for personal fortune. Therefore, up until the 18th century, the entrepreneur was not highly valued and did not figure as an important character in economic activity, rather "his" "zealousness" and "rapaciousness" was seen as potentially harmful faults rather than positive attributes necessary for the growth and development of the economy.

2.2.2 18th Century: Cantillon, the Physiocrats and the Liberals

Although understandings of entrepreneurship were therefore in existence prior to the 18th century, entrepreneurship was not explicitly recognised in economic theory until Richard Cantillon, a French businessman, developed an economic role for the entrepreneur in his "Essai sur la nature du commerce en general" (Spengler, 1960). Cantillon outlined what may be seen as the beginnings of the modern market economy recognising three classes of economic agents: (1) landowners or capitalists, who were seen as financially independent; (2) entrepreneurs, who engage in market exchanges at their own risk in order to make a profit; and (3) hired help, who receive a fixed stable income for secure employment (Herbert and Link, 1988). In particular, he further used the term entrepreneurship to specify all forms of earnings that involve an element of uncertainty therefore farmers, producers, traders and even criminals were included, since they all have earnings that incur some amount of risk (Elkjaer, 1991). In Cantillon's view, the entrepreneur was distinct from the capitalist, and might not risk capital but economic uncertainty, in order to pursue their chosen

"entrepreneurial venture". While Cantillon saw the entrepreneur as having an integral role in the economy, he did not classify entrepreneurship as a separate factor of production but felt there were only two factors of production - land and labour. As he outlined, "land is the source or matter from which we draw wealth; the labour of man is the form that produces it" (Cantillon, 1755: Chapter 1, cited in Jones and Spicer, 2005a). In this view then, entrepreneurs did not innovate or create new products; rather they were risk-takers who had the foresight to supply the right goods or services at the right time in an uncertain market.

After Cantillon's death, economic analysis became dominated to a large extent by a group of writers known as "the Physiocrats", who abandoned the distinction between entrepreneurial and capitalist functions and concentrated their analysis in the main on agricultural settings. One celebrated economist in this tradition, Quesnay, describes an entrepreneur as an owner of a large estate "who manages and makes his business profitable by his intelligence and wealth" (Quesnay, 1888: 218-219, cited in Herbert and Link, 1988). In Quesnay's view there is some implication of the importance of individual intelligence, which is suggestive of the personality of the entrepreneur being important, although he did not develop the idea further. Following on from this, another renowned economist, Turgot also emphasised and analysed the significance of ability and knowledge and treated the agricultural entrepreneur as a risk bearer, in the manner of Cantillon (Herbert and Link, 1988). In particular, Turgot extended economic theory by establishing the ownership of capital as a separate economic function in business. Turgot saw the ownership of capital as a qualification for becoming an entrepreneur. His entrepreneur-capitalist must decide whether to loan his capital to someone else or to invest it in a business enterprise of his own. Therefore although the Physiocrats seemed to emphasise the importance of individual entrepreneurial ability, entrepreneurship was equated with capital, rather than being viewed as having a separate economic function (Herbert and Link, 1988).

Developing the ideas of the Physiocrats, Jean-Baptiste Say was one of the earliest members of what is referred to as the French Liberal School and is viewed as outlining the beginnings of contemporary definitions of the

entrepreneur (Chell *et al*, 1991). Drawing on Cantillon, he distinguished between the entrepreneur and the capitalist, although in contrast to Cantillon "risk was incidental to Say's notion of entrepreneurship because he saw no necessary dependency of entrepreneurial activity upon capital accumulation" (Herbert and Link, 1988: 38). In this view, entrepreneurship is synonymous with a management role as it is equated with the function of organising goods for profitable outcomes. In particular, Say argued that the entrepreneur shifts economic resources out of an area of lower productivity and into an area of higher productivity and through this creates profit (Herbert and Link, 1988). Therefore it is the movement of economic resources and the management of the process that Say viewed as the entrepreneur's central function. He felt that the role of the entrepreneur is to "combine the factors of production into a producing organism" (Schumpeter, 1961: 555), and ensure that this process was effectively managed. Say's entrepreneur combined the factors of production in a firm by taking, a "formula approach" but did not reorganise these factors in an entirely novel way (Chell *et al*, 1991). While Say had begun to emphasise the innovative input of the entrepreneur, he stopped short of separating entrepreneurship as a separate factor of production in the way it is conceptualised today.

2.2.3 19th Century: The German Classical School

Following Say's significant contribution, much theorising about the role of the entrepreneur took place in Germany in a period of thought, known as the German Classical School. These economists began to place emphasis on how the entrepreneur was to be compensated for his activity, proposing that if entrepreneurial "talent" is a scarce resource then profit could be regarded as a form of payment (Herbert and Link, 1988). For example, one economist, Thunen, proposed that the profits made by entrepreneurs were inherently different from those made by the capitalist, and developed a formula, which calculated the return on entrepreneurial uninsurable risk. In Thunen's view the entrepreneur was also an innovator as "necessity is the mother of invention; and so the entrepreneur through his troubles will become an inventor and explorer in his field" (Thunen, 1960: 248, cited in Herbert and Link, 1988). This appears to suggest that the entrepreneur was a lone explorer, using *his* entrepreneurial

talents to venture where others had not. As Herbert and Link (1988: 59) state, "Thunen was quite explicit about the fact that there are two elements in entrepreneurial income: a return to 'entrepreneurial risk' and a return to ingenuity. Labelling the sum of these two as 'business profit', Thunen drew a succinct and precise distinction between entrepreneurship and capital use". In this view capital was necessary for profit to occur but not sufficient, there was a special "entrepreneurial talent" involved in ensuring capital was used in an effective manner and profit was the reward of this ingenious, risk-taking individual. This makes Thunen's theory a significant step towards modern conceptualisations of the entrepreneur as he combined previously separate strands of economic theory through the emphasis he placed on the entrepreneur as both as a risk-taker and an innovator.

A second writer of the German Classical School, Mangoldt, advanced a theory of entrepreneurship that became another notable milestone in the history of entrepreneurship. In this theory, risk was central and attention was also directed to the mode of production. In particular, Mangoldt distinguished between "production to order" and "production for the market". In this view "production to order" was seen as being a "safe" form of production since service and payment occurred simultaneously, eliminating any uncertainty and risk in the process. In contrast "production for the market" was viewed as infinitely more "risky" because the product was produced for an uncertain market, where the level of demand and potential pricing of the product were still unknown (Chell *et al*, 1991). The length of time taken to bring a product to market was also a particularly important factor, in Mangoldt's view, as he proposed that the longer it took to bring a product to market the more "entrepreneurship" was needed (Herbert and Link, 1988). This theory did not concentrate on an ideal type of entrepreneur but rather on the decisions he must make in an uncertain and competitive environment in order to produce the highest profit. In addition, Mangoldt developed the notion that entrepreneurial profit is the "leasing" of ability, in particular the ability to make effective decisions in an uncertain and constantly changing environment. As Chell *et al* (1991) note, due to this emphasis on the "special" decision-making ability of the entrepreneur, Mangoldt

was the first theorist to insist that the entrepreneur should be treated as a separate factor of production.

2.2.4 20th Century: Schumpeter

Of all the developments made to the economic theory of entrepreneurship, Schumpeter's contribution (1934) is particularly widely recognised, and his ideas continue to be seen as the most influential in the discourse. Consequently, no discussion of the history of the theory of entrepreneurship would be complete without an examination of his ideas (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). In particular, Schumpeter is often credited with emphasising entrepreneurship as an individualistic pursuit rather than a process or collective effort (Deutschmann, 2001). In his "Theory of Economic Development" he begins with an analysis of economic processes and proposes that the factors of production i.e. land, labour and capital, have a tendency to progress towards a state of equilibrium (Schumpeter, 1934). At this point of equilibrium the rewards for land, labour and capital are dramatically reduced. For Schumpeter, the source of economic development is the entrepreneur who, through innovative measures, carries out new combinations of these productive factors, allowing economic systems to avoid stagnation and move towards increased economic wealth (Deutschmann, 2001). Schumpeter essentially believed "without innovations, no entrepreneurs; without entrepreneurial achievement, no capitalist returns and no capitalist propulsion" (cited in McGraw, 1991: 380), therefore the entrepreneur was central to all profit-making activities. Although Schumpeter's conception of the entrepreneur borrowed on earlier ideas of disequilibrium theories in economics, rather than the generic and "faceless" factors seen in these theories, his theory of entrepreneurship appears to emphasise the importance of an individual entrepreneur who has certain inherent qualities (Herbert and Link, 1988; Santarelli and Pesciarelli, 1990). While Schumpeter does not provide a large amount of detail on the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, he did state that entrepreneurs must be highly energetic and possess a strong will to be successful (Long, 1983).

2.2.5 The Utility of the Economic Entrepreneur

While the historical sketch that I have provided here remains little more than an outline of a genealogy of the entrepreneur in economic theory. it has been suggested that throughout economic history, the entrepreneur has worn many "faces" and played a variety of roles in the economy. Only the most common themes in economic theory relating to what entrepreneurship entails, have been explicitly highlighted here, namely: the entrepreneur as a risk-taker, an innovator and as the owner of a business enterprise. Herbert and Link (1988) have shown the complexity of entrepreneurship theory at length and outline twelve distinct themes that reside within the history of economic thought including those mentioned above and: the entrepreneur as a decision-maker, industrial leader or manager, a person who supplies financial capital and an allocator of resources among alternative uses. This complexity results in serious problems when attempts are made to provide a succinct definition of entrepreneurship in economic terms, as doing this will inevitably exclude an element of this history (Long, 1983). Also, in terms of the entrepreneur's place in economic activity, it is clear, from an analysis of various economic writers in relation to the importance and position of entrepreneurship, that there is little agreement. Various epochs and traditions have contradicted and contested one another, not only in terms of what entrepreneurship is but also in terms of the position of entrepreneurship as a separate factor of production. Such variations would appear to be at odds with economic principles, which tend to be able to predict and repeat analysis backed up by mathematical laws.

This brings into contest whether entrepreneurship is a natural law, one that may be discovered through de-contextualised and deterministic study using mathematical formulas and other quantitative methodologies. In relation to this, some contemporary economists have begun to ignore the entrepreneurship concept when listing the factors of production due to the difficulties in classifying and quantifying entrepreneurship. The relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development continues to be a matter of ongoing debate (e.g. Deutschmann, 2001; Jones and Spicer, 2005a), which is somewhat paradoxical given that the entrepreneur's popularity in current political discourse

has been attributed to the valuable economic aspects of entrepreneurship as supported by economic rules and rationale. This directs attention to the question of whether it is appropriate to conceptualise entrepreneurship through economic study. In particular, the concept seems to defy a deterministic definition and appears to change over periods of time, suggesting that entrepreneurship is historically and culturally specific. This would suggest there is little point in looking for a universal definition of entrepreneurship since the only abiding feature of social life is that it is continually changing (Gergen, 1985).

Given this confusion of the place of the entrepreneur in economic theory, it seems appropriate to question why the "economic" entrepreneur has gained such an elevated standing in current political discourse. An answer may lie in the widely accepted argument that economics has won the battle for theoretical hegemony in both academia and society in general (Ferraro *et al* 2005a). In particular, economists are very influential in matters of policy-making and institutional design. For this reason Ferraro *et al* (2005b) argue, that the language of economists becomes extensively and mindlessly used and their assumptions and theories become accepted and widely disseminated. They propose that this occurs despite economists often not being able to demonstrate their theories are "empirically valid" or providing any evidence to suggest that their assumptions are "true". This appears to be particularly the case if economic arguments lend support to political agendas (Ferraro *et al,* 2005b). Building on this idea, an examination of the how the "economic" entrepreneur rose to prevalence in political discourse will allow us to examine the historical circumstances that give rise to the hegemony of the entrepreneur within political discussions and also the "validity" of the way the concept is used in political agendas.

2.3 The Rise of the Entrepreneur in Political Agendas

2.3.1 Small Firms and the Enterprise Culture

As outlined above there is a long and complex tradition of the entrepreneur in economic thought, but, its popular and political appearance in Europe and the United States has been relatively recent. In a British context in particular, Hobbs

(1991) notes, up until the 1970s the term "entrepreneur" was generally regarded as a term of mild abuse. Weiner (1980) relates this negativity towards entrepreneurship in Britain to a much wider cultural bias against business, rooted in the public schools and Oxbridge. In terms of governmental agendas, both in Britain and elsewhere, interest from politicians and policy-makers was also very poor (Huse and Landstrom, 1997). Beginning in the 1970s there began a dramatic rise in the prominence of the entrepreneur in political agendas across Europe and in the United States. In this political and economic context entrepreneurship had a particular meaning, namely entrepreneurship was seen as synonymous with the proliferation of small firms, and the concepts were used interchangeably. The beginning of this rise to prominence may be attributed to a major structural crisis in the economies of Europe and the United States beginning in the 1970s. Following the strong turbulence of the world economy during the early 1970s, and the first oil price shock in 1973, many large companies were hit by severe economic problems. While previously it was assumed that large companies were the driving force behind industrialisation, economic prosperity and technological development (Carr and Beaver, 2002), following this turbulent period they began to be viewed as inflexible and slow to adjust to new market conditions. In contrast, the importance of small firms began to be enforced as politicians emphasised their adaptability, efficiency and ability to cope with changing circumstances, hence large corporate firms were encouraged to emulate small-firm economic prowess through increasing decentralisation, downsizing, and outsourcing.

Alongside these changes, in Britain, the government initiated a comprehensive inquiry into the role of small businesses in the economy. This report was presented in 1971 (Bolton Report, 1971) and sparked much interest in the importance of small firms to the economy. This was later echoed by Birch's (1987) study of the place of small firms in the US economy. The 1980s saw the advent of Thatcherism, Reaganism, an emphasis on supply-side economics and a movement towards privatisation of public sector services (Perren and Jennings, 2005). In relation to this, political discourse began to actively promote the "enterprise culture" as a solution to the major economic problems occurring at the time. This view posited small business activity as the cornerstone of

enterprise, economic success and a solution to unemployment. While the concept of the "enterprise culture" may be seen as an attempt to provide a label for the large-scale economic changes occurring at this time, the meaning of the term appears to be highly ambiguous, with even its most frequent advocates having difficulty in defining it (Scase, 2000). Despite this confusion, interest in the "enterprise culture" has continued into the current decade, concurrent with deepening economic problems and increased unemployment in many Western countries (Audretsch, 2004; Gibb, 2000). In particular, governments have attempted to help this "enterprise culture" thrive, through the implementation of policies which aim to improve the situation of small firms and encourage more start-ups (Huse and Landstrom, 1997). Many of these policies concentrate on removing negative influences in the external environment, seen as hindering the performance of small firms, including "tax concessions for small businesses, de-regulation in the name of reduced 'compliance costs' and a wide range of subsidies, mostly offered through the mechanism of competition so as not to offend the sensibilities of the individualistic self-starter" (Armstrong, 2001: 536). These policies appear to be grounded in the belief that once negative external influences have been removed, growth and improved performance will be a natural consequence as the small firm is allowed to blossom in an enterprise-driven culture.

This assumption that the development of the small business sector is necessarily and objectively related to rapid economic growth, it seems, may also be misguided. In particular, governmental agendas on entrepreneurship and small businesses fail to account for the owner-manager's actual influence on the performance of the business, suggesting a de-contextualised growth model that presumes all owner-managers aim to pursue a strategy of improved performance and development (Thorpe and Clarke, 2007). Beaver *et al* (1998), for example, argue that small business growth and development is very much related to the values and "life views" of the owner-manager and their perception of what satisfactory performance is. Gray (1992) further argues that rather than aiming to move towards high-growth, the predominant motive for self-employment for many individuals is the desire for independence and the freedom to pursue non-business goals. Rather than economic growth being a natural consequence of the

development of the small business sector, small firm growth must be understood through reference to the life circumstances of the owner-manager and therefore cannot be separated from their motivations and actions (Beaver, 2003a). Indeed, Parker (2001) proposes that the "entrepreneurial economy" is a myth because many small firms have a propensity to remain small and are adverse to growth-oriented strategies. This proposal that small firms are not the basis upon which the growth and profitability of the economy is set, has led researchers to attempt to distinguish between "entrepreneurial firms" and "small businesses". As Beaver (2003b: 178) suggests "while academics and policy makers often regard self-employment as a major career change, likened to entrepreneurial activities, for many of those buying a shop or entering simple forms of enterprise it is simply another way of earning a living – an alternative job, with few, if any barriers to entry". In this view simply setting up a small firm is not sufficient to warrant the term entrepreneurship.

While the majority of researchers agree with the above argument that small firms are not simply equated with entrepreneurial activity, there is no widespread agreement on where this distinction lies. However, if entrepreneurship is to be a significant category upon which to base both research and governmental agendas, it needs to be distinguished from small firm activity. Within the myriad of conceptualisations aiming to distinguish between small businesses and entrepreneurial activity, many often draw on Schumpeter's (1934) classical definition of entrepreneurship. As discussed above, in this view entrepreneurial activity is seen as the combination of the factors of production in novel or innovative ways hence leading to rapid growth and development in the economy. This is distinguished from small firms, which are seen as simply cloning an existing form of business (Beaver, 2003b). Illustrating this view in an early but influential article Carland *et al* (1984: 358) characterise small business ventures as "any business that is independently owned and operated, not dominant in its field, and does not engage in any new marketing or innovative practices" while "the principal goals of an entrepreneurial venture are profitability and growth and the business is characterised by innovative strategic practices." Here the distinction lies in the growth orientation and innovative practices of entrepreneurial firms in contrast to smaller firms. Gartner (1990) demonstrates in

his study of the meaning of entrepreneurship, that entrepreneurial activity is viewed as being characterised primarily by: a focus on innovation or innovative activities, an emphasis on growth by the entrepreneur and/or the organisation and striving towards the creation of something unique. Therefore, while the enterprise culture seems to be bound up in ideas of the promotion of all small firm activity, entrepreneurship can be viewed as a related yet distinct concept often used to refer to individuals and companies where emphasis is placed upon the creation of something new and a continuous commitment to the growth and development of their company or organisation.

2.3.2 Entrepreneurship as a Cultural Phenomenon

The call for more "entrepreneurship" has not only been limited to the business domain but has also become a wider cultural and societal phenomenon. Even though as outlined above the connections between small firms, entrepreneurship, and economic growth remain confused, the proposed economic benefits of entrepreneurship have been further extended and outlined as the political response to globalisation and a new approach to contemporary life. As Gibb (2002: 244) argues "European government responses to the globalisation and competitiveness agenda have...been to accept the dominance of the 'market paradigm', resulting in their pursuit of deregulation, privatisation, the creation of markets in public services in the pursuit of a stronger 'culture' of self-help in society". Entrepreneurship is being seen as the ultimate "Westernised culture", which moves away from a dependent society and emphasises individualism, wealth creation, freedom, cross-global connections and competition. Effective management and leadership practices are increasingly being seen in entrepreneurial terms with emphasis being placed on organisational leaders being flexible, innovative and able to respond quickly to the constant presence of change (Kanter, 1989). Therefore, rather than placing emphasis on rationality, stability and control, current political discourse places emphasis on discovery, creation and the ability to deal effectively with the unknown in a global economy. This market paradigm is being extended to fields as diverse as education, health and police services with a wide variety of actors in many different levels of society being encouraged to become entrepreneurial

(Gilmartin, 1998; Kelly, 1991; Mast *et al*, 2000). As Du Gay and Salaman (1992: 622) point out, "there can hardly be a school, hospital, social services department, university or college in the UK that has not in some way become permeated by the language of enterprise. Enterprise has remorselessly reconceptualized and remodelled almost everything in its path". This overwhelming use of entrepreneurial discourse in contemporary life is emphasised in the Small Business Service (SBS) report on the enterprise culture commissioned by the British government, which proposes:

> "Today, the importance of having an entrepreneurial attitude has never been greater. As individuals change jobs more often, management structures become less hierarchical, and working methods become more network oriented – all these factors require individuals, and employees in small and large businesses alike to be able to spot opportunities, take initiatives and adapt to changing circumstances. Similarly, leaders and managers in public and private sectors need to change and shape complex organisations, to make them as flexible as possible and create environments within which initiative by employees is encouraged" (SBS, 2004: 4).

It seems clear from this outline that entrepreneurship has become, as Du Gay (1996) argues, the dominant discourse of the 20th century in the Western world at least, and has touched almost every aspect of public life. Yet, despite the growing hegemony of the concept, there would appear to be no common agreement as to what the pursuit of entrepreneurship means. It appears that the political solution to a wide variety of economic problems relies heavily on certain "entrepreneurial attributes" not agreed on in the economic literature, which achieve the catalysis of the conversion of land, capital and labour into new products, companies and industries (Armstrong, 2001). Despite this uncertainty, university chairs in this topic are becoming increasingly available while business schools set up courses to educate all manner of individuals in the "art and science" of entrepreneurship (Sexton and Smilor, 1986). Yet if our understandings of enterprise and entrepreneurship are so confused, it is unclear as to what these courses are teaching these would-be entrepreneurs. Armstrong (2001) demonstrates that

much of the content of these courses consists of the conventional business disciplines of finance, marketing, human resource management and accounting as applied to the small business arena. He argues for this reason that entrepreneurship education is bound-up in supply-side measures. Clarke *et al* (2006) have suggested these supply-side measures are often of little utility as entrepreneurial learning is contextually based and appears to occur naturalistically through discussion and critical reflection in the entrepreneur's environment. Gibb (2002) similarly describes the competencies for teachers of entrepreneurship as also being highly ambiguous, arguing that the growing numbers of available chairs in entrepreneurship, without suitable individuals to fill them, are attracting academics from traditional disciplines, without much experience or even knowledge of the entrepreneurial field.

Entrepreneurial education is also increasingly being encouraged in primary and secondary levels of education with the aim being to encourage a less-economically dependent future generation (Buck, 2000; Gibb and Cotton, 1998). Like the programmes promulgated at university level, there is little agreement about what attitudes and behaviours should be encouraged in children and adolescents (Gibb, 2002). As Gibb and Cotton (1998) argue entrepreneurial education in schools currently embraces a wide variety of measures including work experience, job shadowing and new venture simulations. One such venture simulation programme is known as the Young Enterprise Scheme, which gives students the opportunity to experience running their own business. As Stevenson and Lundstrom (2001: 397) report "in 1999-2000, about 70,000 students between the ages of 14-19 participated in Youth Enterprise programs, guided, encouraged and taught by more than 9,000 volunteers and teachers". The government has also recently emphasised the importance of building bridges between the "worlds" of entrepreneurs and that of schools. They emphasise the importance of engaging entrepreneurs in school-business links in the hope that some form of contact with these entrepreneurs will encourage more children to eventually set up their own businesses (Stevenson and Lundstrom, 2000). In this view entrepreneurship is simply "passed-on" to a future generation through contact with entrepreneurs and partaking in entrepreneurial activities.

Some critical writers for example, Smyth (1999) have claimed that this preoccupation with entrepreneurship in the policy and practice of schooling deflects attention from the underlying problems in society such as de-industrialisation, the changing nature of work and social injustice. Smyth further argues that enterprise culture draws upon a "social pathology", which locates problems within individuals and shifts responsibility for economic growth on to young people and their schools. In this way it may be argued that enterprise education is being used as a way of shifting the pressure of the increasing unemployment in young people on to the individuals themselves, which may be particularly harmful for those who are most disadvantaged and less likely to secure employment. Indeed, this critical suggestion may be seen as supported to some extent in a governmental report, which suggests that experience of entrepreneurship might be most vital and important for those who are less privileged and consequently less likely to gain the education needed to secure high-paid employment. This excerpt from the Small Business Service (SBS) proposes:

> "An understanding of what it means to be entrepreneurial is especially important for young people when they are going through transition points and weighing up choices about their future. Experience of enterprise for young people has been shown to have a positive impact...particularly amongst young people who face disadvantage" (SBS, 2004: 4).

In critique of the above strategy Peters (2001) argues that simply espousing the development of an entrepreneurial attitude through enterprise education for these underprivileged children, is suggesting simple solutions to highly complex and fundamental problems. Taking a Foucauldian perspective he argues that such education programmes are part of a wider governmental discourse which aims to "responsiblise the self". He proposes that this discourse ignores the issue that an increasing number of young people remain in deprived social circumstances without sufficient power to change their situation. Therefore, espousing a strategy, which simply encourages all individuals to become entrepreneurial, is unlikely to overcome long-term underlying economic and social problems.

2.4 Defining the Entrepreneur

This chapter has sought to outline the hegemonic nature of the concept of entrepreneurship and the important place the term holds within current political, economic and cultural discourses. It also aimed to portray how the "validity" of an objective "economic" entrepreneur is highly questionable, given that understandings of the concept have changed depending on the particular political and economic context within which the term is used. In line with this, both early economic understandings and modern-day academic conceptualisations have been similarly confused and conflated and researchers have been highly inconsistent in their definitions of entrepreneurship (Brockhaus & Horwitz, 1986, Gartner, 1988) with definitions emphasising a broad range of activities including the creation of organisations (Gartner, 1988), the carrying out of new combinations (Schumpeter, 1934), the use of entrepreneurial talent, the bearing of uncertainty, the bringing together of factors of production (Herbert and Link, 1988). Highlighting the ill-defined nature of entrepreneurship and the related concept of enterprise Hornaday (1990: 23) suggests the terms "are 300 years old and carry too much historical baggage. Researchers are trying to employ the concept of entrepreneurship in ways never intended by those who coined and developed it", and argues that these concepts are no longer of utility.

Given the revered place that the entrepreneur holds in political agendas, however, and the manner in which major policies are centred on this concept, it appears essential that academics should continue to study the concept of entrepreneurship, although perhaps in a more varied and critical manner than it has previously been understood. It will therefore be argued throughout this study that the varying cultural and social meanings attributed to entrepreneurship make it highly suitable for examination through in-depth, socially and culturally embedded understandings. In addition, because the study of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship is a wide domain with different definitions being used to set the boundaries for diverse studies, before any further arguments are developed, it is essential, as Gartner (1990) proposes, to clarify the definition of entrepreneurship used in this study at the outset of the research. Given its utility in distinguishing between understandings of small firms and entrepreneurial activity as described

previously in this chapter, this research will draw on Gartner's (1990) characteristics of entrepreneurial activity. Gartner (1990) contends that in the main, conceptions of entrepreneurship focus on small business ownership, innovation, the development of something unique and an emphasis on growth within the organisation. Whilst it is not suggested here that this is the "true" definition of entrepreneurship, or that entrepreneurship is a "real" phenomenon, using these dimensions serves as a tool to delineate some of the activities, which politicians and academics commonly refer to using the term entrepreneurship in the current social, political and cultural context. This approach draws on the Rorty's (1998) idea of pragmatism as the researcher accepts there is no ultimate truth and that truth can only operate within the artificial boundaries set within the context of the research project.

Despite the problems as described above with applying de-contextualised approaches to a concept saturated with cultural and social meanings, academics have continued to look for a new way to conceptualise the study of entrepreneurship within a deterministic model. One approach, which has gained major popularity and stature, following the decline of the economic approach to entrepreneurship, is the psychological approach, which advocates the search for traits, personalities, and cognitive abilities of entrepreneurs as distinct from non-entrepreneurs. Drawing on economic understandings, entrepreneurship is seen as essentially a quality intrinsic to individuals, which enables them to break through any resistance or cultural constraints to create new understandings for others around them (Zafirovski, 1999). Yet, far from subjecting the economic entrepreneur to a critique, psychological approaches also reflect an ideological approach to the study of the entrepreneur and avoid contradicting political ideas on entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000). Entrepreneurship is once again viewed as an innate and universal activity, which through examination using quantitative means, will lead to the discovery of the "average entrepreneur". A critique of this psychological approach will be outlined in the next chapter and another approach will be forwarded, which directs attention away from the individual and has the potential to incorporate the historical, cultural and political aspects of the entrepreneurship process.

3.0 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTREPRENEUR

3.1 From Personality to Process

It has been established in the previous chapter that the entrepreneur is an increasingly popular figure in contemporary Western political discourse, resulting from globalisation and the perceived need for countries to become more competitive in order to increase their respective wealth. This popularity has been rapidly increasing from the 1980s onwards, with politicians hailing the entrepreneur as the saviour of the economy and the "opportunist" who can increase gross domestic product while decreasing unemployment (Armstrong, 2001; Ogbor, 2000). In contrast to the proposed prowess of the entrepreneur in the salvation of economies, economic theories of entrepreneurship, paradoxically, have proved less than useful in understanding entrepreneurial activities. The contradiction, confusion and ambiguity surrounding entrepreneurship, resulting in a large variety of definitions in economic theory, did not fit well with economic models. Indeed, as Elkjaer (1991) notes, entrepreneurship has received little attention in economic research agendas, due to the major difficulties in measuring and modelling the concept mathematically, leaving it not amenable to many common research methods in economics. Economics, it appears, is unable to create a science of the economic behaviour of entrepreneurs, which can be adopted by policy-makers into economic and educational policies for the development of entrepreneurship.

Despite these problems, policy-makers and politicians remain fascinated with the idea of being able to "pick winners" (Chell, 2000: 63), and consequently academics have been looking for new ways to conceptualise entrepreneurship since the middle of the 20th century. Following the classical economic contributions of Schumpeter and others who emphasised the individualistic aspect of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur as an important agent in the economic system as outlined in the previous chapter, many researchers have focused their attention on the entrepreneur as a special type of individual distinctly separate from the rest of society. They propose that economics has recognised that entrepreneurship is essentially a quality, intrinsic to persons,

rather than a function or a set of practices (Zafirovksi, 1999). In particular, these individuals are seen as having "super-normal qualities of intellect and will" (Schumpeter, 1939: 82) and are a "special breed of heroic adventurer" (Collins and Moore, 1964: 5). Consequently, such research aims to understand not only the entrepreneur's role in the economic system, but also the psychological attributes such as personality and behavioural characteristics that are congruent with these roles (Zafirovski, 1999). Therefore, as Ogbor (2000) notes, economic discourse on entrepreneurship has insisted that the concept of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship should be dominated by the quantitative study of individual psychological characteristics.

Through focusing their ideas on developing the concept of the "economic entrepreneur", psychologists aimed to essentialise entrepreneurship through the formulation of research problems and questions, which reproduce this dominant ideology of the entrepreneur as a "special" and "heroic" individual. One of the earliest and most popular approaches in this vein was the search for the personality traits of entrepreneurs as distinct from non-entrepreneurs (e.g. McClelland, 1961). Yet, despite the great variety of personality traits applied to entrepreneurship spanning over a period of 40 years, the search for the entrepreneurial personality has yielded few advances and this approach has been heavily criticised. In another vein of psychological research, Freudian or psychoanalytic theories have also been used in an attempt to differentiate between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (e.g. Kets de Vries, 1977). Although applying this approach in a critical manner, may offer some utility in moving away from the individualistic perspective in entrepreneurial research as will be explained in this chapter, mainstream psychologists have largely discarded it due to its failure to follow the "scientific method". Rather, researchers have increasingly returned to the individualistic entrepreneur in the guise of cognitive entrepreneurial research (e.g. Busenitz and Barney, 1997; Mitchell *et al*, 2002; Korunka *et al*, 2003). Although originally aimed at examining not "who" the entrepreneur is but "how" entrepreneurship is enacted, it remains concentrated on entrepreneurs as different from non-entrepreneurs and as a solely individualistic act, concentrated inside the heads of entrepreneurs. Now, instead of entrepreneurs being unique due to their "entrepreneurial

personality", it is their "entrepreneurial thinking" that becomes the focus of attention.

It will be argued that the psychological approach to entrepreneurship has offered little more than the economic approach. Indeed, the positivistic approach favoured by both economists and psychologists, which involves controlling relationships between numerous variables, appears to be wholly inadequate for the study of entrepreneurship. While economic language governs the actions of the psychological approach, the complexities within economic theory and the cultural and historical specificity of ideas on entrepreneurial behaviour, outlined in the previous chapter, are not taken into account. As Popper argues (1996, cited in Gibb, 2002), "we are prisoners in the framework of our theories, our expectations, past experience and our language". As Gergen (1973) similarly argues in regard to understanding individuals, this chapter will suggest that the search for the essential "definable" entrepreneur, who may be captured through "objective" observation, with culture serving as mere error variance, is an ideological belief difficult to sustain. Rather entrepreneurship is a complex process, which cannot be separated from the social, political and economic realms within which it exists. As Bygrave (1989: 7) notes, "entrepreneurship begins with a disjointed, discontinuous, non-linear (and usually unique) event", consequently he argues that entrepreneurship cannot be studied by examining it as a smooth, continuous, repeatable process, rather entrepreneurship demands a non-reductionist understanding. Drawing on authors leaning towards an approach which views language and other forms of meaning-making as central to our constructions of reality, the psychological approach towards entrepreneurship will be critiqued and a line of argument will be constructed which suggests that in order to understand entrepreneurship, we must examine it as an activity, in on-going construction (e.g. Shotter, 1993a; Ogbor, 2000). In addition, the biased underlying proclivities of current psychological approaches will be highlighted. The aim of this chapter is therefore to review current approaches towards entrepreneurship, and through this critique argue for a different way of understanding entrepreneurship which will be the basis of this study.

3.2 Entrepreneurial Traits

The individualistic focus of psychologically based entrepreneurship research has meant that questions relating to the "inner nature" of entrepreneurs have long been of interest to researchers working in this area. The trait approach, in particular, builds on the assumption that entrepreneurs possess certain personality traits, which differ from the rest of the population, the rationale being that if entrepreneurs are needed to secure economic development it is important to understand how they can be identified (Cromie, 2000). Numerous, different measures have been employed. One of the earliest works in this area is the seminal work by McClelland (1961) who attempted to explain entrepreneurs through their need for achievement. Other researchers have subsequently proposed numerous other psychological characteristics of successful entrepreneurs including internal locus of control (Brockhaus, 1980a), risk-taking behaviour (Begley and Boyd, 1987) and creativity (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991), etc. Recently, more general personality measures such as the 16PF (Cattell, 1946) and the Big Five (Costa and MaCrae, 1985) have been used to differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs (e.g. Ciavarella *et al*, 2004). These various trait approaches differ in their explanations for the underlying relationship between traits and the development of entrepreneurial personality. Some of these traits, especially the more general personality traits, account for and explain the development of entrepreneurial individuals as predominantly biologically predetermined. Other traits, for example need for achievement, are seen to reflect the entrepreneur's social motives and are principally explained with reference to "nurturing" in the individual's environment. While still others, in particular locus of control, due to its utilisation and situational specificity may be seen in many ways to reflect a theory of attitude rather than personality (Stainton Rogers *et al*, 1995). Because the distinction between attitude and personality scales is often very blurred and, as Stainton Rogers *et al* (1995) note, they are operationally identical in that they are both assessed by psychometric tests, they are treated together here.

Although, there is a considerable volume of research on the characteristics, which make for successful entrepreneurship, it seems the field is more confused

than ever. As Jones and Spicer (2005b) state, from the very beginning of this approach to entrepreneurship research, the entrepreneur has not yielded to quantitative empirical understandings. Researchers continually ran into failure and none of these studies have produced conclusive results about the psychological profile of the entrepreneur. In particular, it appears the research has been plagued by a lack of agreement about which characteristics are essential traits of entrepreneurs. Hornaday (1982) lists 42 characteristics of the "typical" entrepreneur, (see Appendix 11.1) which as Gartner (1989) stresses, a person who possessed all such characteristics would be a generic "everyman", hardly an effective way to distinguish these "special" individuals from the rest of society. Furthermore, there is no standard agreed on the definition of the entrepreneur, leading to the selection of samples of "entrepreneurs" that are highly diverse, not only between samples but within samples (Gartner, 1989). This is demonstrated by Gartner's (1990) investigation of this issue among a number of American academics and business leaders, which yielded 44 different definitions of entrepreneurship. Many have highlighted this definitional problem as a central affliction of the field, and one which is unlikely to be solved given that the one enduring characteristic of the entrepreneurial population is that they are highly diverse (e.g. Carland *et al*, 1984; Smith, 1967). Indeed, Gartner (1985) suggests that the differences among entrepreneurs may be larger than the differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. While a large number of researchers have already critiqued the trait approach, these critiques (e.g. Begley, 1995; Chell *et al*, 1991; Gartner, 1989) often focus on methodological issues, the suggestion being that if it were somehow possible to rectify these problems, then entrepreneurial traits may still be uncovered. This overview examines these methodological problems given that much of the literature critiques the approaches on this level. Yet, it also attempts to offer a deeper underlying critique, which makes these methodological issues inconsequential and suggests it is unlikely that such an approach will ever prove useful for the field of entrepreneurship.

3.2.1 Need for Achievement

McClelland's work in the early-to-mid-1960s on achievement motivation is credited with launching the psychological approach to entrepreneurship. He suggested that the key to entrepreneurial behaviour, and hence economic performance, lies in the psychological state known as need for achievement, which is characterised by "a desire to do well, not so much for the sake of social recognition or prestige, but to attain an inner feeling of personal accomplishment" (McClelland, 1966: 76). Such individuals are high-achievers driven by their need to succeed, enjoy taking responsibility for their own performance, prefer challenging tasks to those of moderate difficulty, and constantly look for new ways to improve their performance. As Begley and Boyd (1987: 80) note, "high achievers set challenging goals and value feedback as a means of assessing goal accomplishment. They compete with their own standards of excellence and continuously seek to improve their performance". McClelland proposed that the underlying causes of need for achievement are rooted in an interrelated set of child-rearing practices and that this achievement motivation is transformed into economic growth through achievement-oriented entrepreneurs willing to take economic risks (Frey, 1984a). In particular, McClelland (1961), proposed that children (males in particular) who have a warm and loving relationship with their parents, a non-controlling father and an up-bringing which stressed independence and self-sufficiency, produced individuals who had a high need for achievement. It is proposed that the roots of such child-rearing practices are grounded in the individualistic values of certain religious and political ideologies. If such ideologies were present in a nation, the level of need for achievement would then be high, leading to a greater number of entrepreneurs and consequently greater and more rapid economic growth. Therefore, McClelland proposes the nation's level of economic growth is positively related to its collective level of achievement motivation (Frey, 1984a).

The results from studies on the relationship between entrepreneurship and need for achievement, however, have been far from clear-cut. Hull *et al* (1980) found little association between need for achievement and the propensity to start a business, while Roberts (1989) found evidence in a study of technical

entrepreneurs that not all of them had a high need for achievement. Begley and Boyd (1986) found that entrepreneurs have a higher drive to achieve than the population at large, while in a study of the effects of personality traits on venture growth Lee and Tsang (2001) found that high need for achievement had a positive impact. More specifically Cromie *et al* (1992) and Koh (1996) found that entrepreneurs had consistently higher need for achievement scores than groups such as undergraduates, naval officers and civil servants, but that other groups such as managers and university professors were equally high achievers. While these studies and similar others focused on applying McClelland's concept to entrepreneurs often defined as small business owner-managers, McClelland never made any specific connection between need for achievement and the decision to launch a business (Brockhaus, 1982). Indeed, much of McClelland's work concentrated on the managers of large organisations, as he defined an entrepreneur as anyone "who exercises control over production that is not just for his personal consumption" (McClelland, 1961: 65). Therefore, rather than being based on the expansion of the small firm sector, McClelland's conception of a nation's economic growth was predominantly based on the effective management of large-scale organisations. This is interesting considering that need for achievement is considered a seminal work in the small firm and entrepreneurship literature.

Apart from these problems relating to the operationalisation of the term entrepreneur, the underlying concepts of McClelland's thesis have also been criticised. In particular, his use of the projective Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) for the examination of need for achievement has been disparaged by a number of researchers. It appears that it has low "reliability" (Rauch and Frese, 2000; Sexton and Bowman, 1985) yet its "validity" is high (Spengler, 1992). This would suggest that rather than achievement motivation being a quality, which is developed through certain childhood rearing practices and which remains constant over time, it is likely to change temporally and is situationally dependent. Furthermore, the idea that economic development results from the simple linear relationship with the level of achievement motivation within the population is highly reductionist and has received little support from the literature (Frey, 1984a). Finison (1976), for example, investigated the

relationship between need for achievement levels of 30 countries and the ensuing economic growth for the period from 1950 to 1971 and found no support for the thesis that need for achievement has a positive effect on the economic growth of nations. Other work examining this thesis has also produced similar results (e.g. Frey, 1984b). In addition, it has been shown by numerous researchers that the procedures used by McClelland to assess the link between need for achievement and economic growth, including content analysis of small samples of literary work and other cultural artefacts, were limited in scope and representativeness (Wilken, 1979). Indeed, rather than aim to understand cultural aspects of other societies and their relationship to entrepreneurship, the theory starts from a highly Westernised view of entrepreneurship emphasising individual motives and achievements (Triandis, 1994).

3.2.2 Locus of Control

Another personality dimension used in entrepreneurial trait research is locus of control, a concept drawn from Rotter's (1966) social learning theory, which is an aspect of personal cognitive style and depicts the extent to which an individual feels in control of their destiny. Rotter differentiated between internal and external locus of control. Those with an external locus of control believe that the events that happen around them are due to external variables such as fate or luck. Those with a high internal score perceive that they are in control of their world and that any achievements or disappointments are down to their own actions. They believe that they can control the environment around them. Although the scale was never designed specifically for entrepreneurial settings, it is hypothesised that entrepreneurs are likely to have a higher internal locus of control than other populations. As Cromie (2000: 18) notes, "entrepreneurs display initiative in proactively seeking out innovative business opportunities and marshalling requisite resources, people who do not feel that they can exercise control in accomplishing these tasks are unlikely to create successful businesses". The proposal is that successful entrepreneurs consider that they are in control of their own success and, therefore, are more likely to be pro-actively involved in their environment and thus be more successful.

As with need for achievement, however, studies that examined the relationship between successful entrepreneurs and locus of control yield inconclusive results. For example, Cromie and Johns (1983) found that entrepreneurs had significantly higher "internal" scores compared to experienced managers. Caird (1991) also found that entrepreneurs scored significantly higher than other occupational groups including managers and teachers on the "internal" dimension. Brockhaus (1980a) found that locus of control scores differentiated between successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs, with successful entrepreneurs having a higher "internal" locus of control. On the other hand Brockhaus and Nord (1979) found no differences between the scores of managers and entrepreneurs, Duchesnau and Gartner (1990) similarly found that internal locus of control could not distinguish between successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs. In a quantitative review of the literature in this area Rauch and Frese (2000) found that only one study reported a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and business success (Goebel and Frese, 1999), however the "weighted mean correlation" of the six studies showed a small but significant relationship. They conclude that this suggests that the relationship between entrepreneurship and locus of control is mediated by other variables which future research should aim to uncover. Interestingly, in a study of Russian entrepreneurs Green *et al* (1996) reported there was a negative relationship between internal locus of control and entrepreneurship. This implies that rather than believing they can influence their environment, Russian entrepreneurs felt that external variables controlled their destiny, which may perhaps reflect the former communal and socialist characteristics of Russian society as well as the problems of transition to capitalism.

Given these highly diverse findings, internal locus of control has not proved to be a particularly useful variable in entrepreneurship research. There are also a number of sources of concern over the underlying concept. The original instrument developed by Rotter (1966) has been criticised by numerous researchers because of its uni-dimensionality, concentrating only on perceived control over personal environment (e.g. Furnham, 1986; Levenson, 1973) as people are likely to feel more in control over certain aspects of their lives. In relation to this, the concept has a highly de-contextualised nature as Cromie

(2000: 18) argues, "people may feel in control of a situation when they possess the attributes, knowledge and skill to complete a particular task. [however]...there are many political, social, organisational or interpersonal forces that assist or constrain in the acquisition of skill". Therefore, even if there was a relationship between entrepreneurship and locus of control, business success may not be a natural outcome, as it is highly likely that these forces would mediate the relationship. The impact of such forces on the locus of control concept can be clearly seen in Levenson and Miller's (1976) study which showed that individuals with radical, feminist or left-wing views were more likely to attribute control to "powerful others" rather than chance, yet this is still conceived as "external" on the locus of control scale. The concept, therefore, endorses the prevailing individualism of dominant US culture as it prizes the belief in control by the individual over the sense of being controlled by external forces (Smith, 1999). As Smith (1999) demonstrates, it is even viewed as psychologically unhealthy "to view yourself as on the receiving end of external pressure even if reality supports this interpretation" (773). These apparent contradictions emphasise the ideological basis and ethnocentric nature of the locus of control concept.

3.2.3 Risk-taking

Chell *et al* (1991: 42) describe the risk-taking entrepreneur as someone "who in the context of a business venture, pursues a business idea when the probability of succeeding is low". This conceptualisation of the risk-taking entrepreneur occupies a role in many contemporary definitions of entrepreneurship with most involving some element of risk-taking. This may be because the concept is intuitively appealing and in common parlance entrepreneurship is often synonymous with risk as it would appear that through new venture creation, an individual risks financial ruin, their reputation and their family's well-being. The financial commitments an entrepreneur makes to a business could result in major losses and jeopardise his or her future, and consequently it is assumed that entrepreneurs have a high tolerance to risk, and that this risk-taking behaviour is prevalent in all or most of their business dealings. As Cromie (2000: 19) notes, "enterprising people and entrepreneurs seek and realise productive opportunities

and consequently function in an uncertain environment. As a result they must not be overawed by risky situations". Even official government documents portray risk as synonymous with entrepreneurship, as is clearly seen in this abstract from the government's White Paper: "Entrepreneurs sense opportunities and take risks in the face of uncertainty to open new markets, design products and develop innovative processes...The UK needs more risk-takers who can rapidly turn ideas into products and businesses" (DTI, 1998: section 2.3). As risk-taking is being advocated by the government, as an important aspect of economic processes in the UK, it would be reasonable to assume that the evidence consistently substantiates these claims.

This is surprisingly not the case, and once again there has been mixed results for the relationship between risk-taking and entrepreneurship. Brockhaus (1980b) was the first to cast doubt on the widely held theory that there is a relationship between entrepreneurs and risk-taking. In his pioneering psychometric study comparing entrepreneurs' general risk-taking propensity to managers', he found no significant difference. This study was such a major deviation from the general ideas at the time that this null finding became a citation classic (Armstrong, 2001). Rauch and Frese's (2000) quantitative review finds that risk-taking is negatively associated with business success. On the other hand, Begley (1995) found an association between entrepreneurship and risk taking while Koh (1996) found that entrepreneurially inclined individuals have significantly higher risk-scores than the non-entrepreneurially inclined. Begley and Boyd (1987) found that risk-taking predicted success only up to an optimal point, beyond which risk-taking had a negative effect on success. This is synonymous with the assertion of Timmons, Smollen and Dingee (1985) that entrepreneurs only take calculated risks.

The suggestion that entrepreneurs take only calculated risks is also supported by the outcome of two different government schemes, which aimed to promote the spirit of enterprise, yet both initiatives were met with highly considered risk-taking, even risk-aversion (Armstrong, 2001). In both schemes, namely the Business Expansion Scheme and the Venture Capital Trust, the vast majority of investment went on low-risk property-related investments. Therefore, rather than

orientating towards risk-taking, it seems, entrepreneurs invested their funds in what was likely to be the least risky option available to them. These findings suggest that entrepreneurial risk-taking may be more beneficially conceived as a tension between risk-taking and risk-aversion. This idea may be developed by examining entrepreneurial risk-taking in the context of Billig's (1996) rhetorical approach to thinking. This would involve seeing risk-taking and risk-aversion as a pair of corresponding yet conflicting processes rather than viewing risk-taking as a one-sided process dependent on personality traits. In this approach it is not useful to examine one without the other, as they must be examined together in order to understand the continuing process of argumentation. These ideas are developed in more detail below in reference to cognitive approaches towards entrepreneurship.

Returning to the trait studies of risk-taking, the results of the relationship between risk taking and entrepreneurship have therefore been highly inconclusive. As in the studies of other traits there are many problems relating to the definition and measurement of the concept of risk, for example some studies focus on general risk taking and entrepreneurship, whereas others focus on a more specific risk-taking characteristic (Rauch and Frese, 2000). Indeed, for this reason Armstrong (2001) accuses researchers of gerrymandering samples and definitions in order to produce the desired result, namely that there *is* a relationship between entrepreneurship and risk-taking. Also, while it may be risky to decide to become an entrepreneur in the first place this is very different to continually doing business in a risky way (Rauch and Frese, 2000). As Liles (1974) argues, entrepreneurs cannot avoid risk when setting up a business, yet they may be willing to bear this risk to pursue a dream or ambition. Furthermore, there are also multiple perspectives on whether a situation is risky or not. For example Chell *et al* (1991) argue that from an observer's perspective certain behaviour might be judged to be of high risk, while a business owner might judge the same behaviour as an attempt to minimise risk. Cromie (2000) also argues that the decision to take a risk depends on the firm's stage of development, as more mature firms are less likely to take risks. As Brockhaus and Horwitz (1986: 30) note, "it would appear...risk-taking propensity varies greatly according to the situation." Therefore, like other trait studies, risk-taking

is highly de-contextualised, ignoring situational variables and clear evidence of risk-averse behaviour among entrepreneurs.

3.2.4 Innovation and Creativity

Innovation relates to perceiving and acting on business activities in new and unique ways (Robinson *et al*, 1991a). Originally brought to light by Schumpeter (1934), innovation has for a long time been seen as the focal point of entrepreneurship and pinpointed as an essential entrepreneurial characteristic. It is one of the recurring themes in the numerous attempts to define entrepreneurship (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991; Vesper, 1980; Gartner, 1990). It is further flagged as inextricably linked to entrepreneurship in the government's white paper: "*Entrepreneurship and innovation are central to the creative process in the economy and to promoting growth, increasing productivity and creating jobs*" (DIT, 1998, section 2.3). Innovation is seen as allowing entrepreneurs to "develop new ideas, spot market opportunities, or combine existing ideas and resources in different ways to create value" (Cromie, 2000: 20). Entrepreneurs, it is proposed, are unlikely to succumb to prescribed rules and procedures resulting in the creation of new and different ways of doing things (Timmons, 1989). Innovation is also related to the concept of creativity, which is defined as a useful novelty that can be applied to add value to an organisation's products and services (Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Some authors (e.g. Holt, 1983) have attempted to distinguish creativity from innovation by defining the former as inventing something new, while the latter is defined as adapting something, which already exists, or using it in a novel way. The distinction is not so clear-cut and the concepts are often treated as synonymous by many authors especially in the field of entrepreneurship, so they will be discussed together here.

Studies of creativity and innovation have not been able to distinguish comprehensively between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Some work has supported this hypothesis, for example Koh (1996) found that entrepreneurs are more innovative than the general population. Also Cromie *et al* (1992) using Caird's (1988) General Enterprising Tendency (GET) to measure "creative

tendency", similarly found that creativity was more likely to pre-dispose managers to set up their own businesses. The GET test measures five of the most salient dimensions of entrepreneurial personality namely "need for achievement", "locus of control", "risk-taking" and "need for autonomy" and, as previously mentioned, "creative tendency". Cromie (2000) also acknowledges that although numerous other researchers using the GET test found that owner-managers have a greater creative tendency than nurses, civil servants and clerical trainees, they also found that they are not significantly more creative than a number of other occupations including teachers, lecturers and trainers. Robinson *et al* (1991), using the Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation Scale (EAOS), which measures achievement, self-esteem, personal control and innovativeness, found that entrepreneurs are significantly more innovative than non-entrepreneurs. Although this test reflects a measure of attitude rather than personality as explained above, due the problems of separating attitude and personality scales, they are treated together here.

The trait approach towards creativity and innovation, focusing on individual differences in personality, has proved, like the other trait approaches outlined, to be an unsatisfactory way of distinguishing entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. By defining creativity as a personality dimension, the focus has been clearly placed on innovativeness as inherent within certain individuals. Furthermore, these approaches tend to rely on the individual's answers to a pre-constructed test, which is devoid of any contextual input. More useful are approaches that have begun to look at innovativeness and creativity as a process, which emerges from the activity of negotiating multiple meanings and potentially competing interests and understanding between groups within a particular environment (e.g. Drazin *et al*, 1999). This view recognises the importance of social processes and contextual issues in creativity. Therefore, creativity is bound to mutual sense-making and the shared interpretation of events, problems and situations. Within this perspective the entrepreneur engages with others in his or her environment and develops mutual understandings, which in turn motivate engagement and further insight into the environment, generating creativity. These ideas are interesting yet still remain tied to cognitive approaches towards entrepreneurship, the problems of which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

3.2.5 General Personality Scales – 16PF and the Big Five

For the most part, the trait approaches discussed above have been drawn from the social psychology literature, rather than individual differences research. Many individual difference psychologists (e.g. Cooper, 1998) argue that such tests are poorly constructed and consequently of little use, as when factor-analysed they rarely form a single scale. They argue that they are simply measuring aspects of more general or "universal" traits, often combining aspects of two very different or opposing traits, which makes their interpretation impossible. With these criticisms resounding throughout much of the personality psychology literature, it is hardly surprising that some researchers decided to turn to these more general traits in the hope of offering more useful explanations of entrepreneurial behaviour (e.g. Brandstatter, 1997; Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001). It is argued by individual differences psychologists that tests measuring these traits have been designed through the most effective and reliable test construction procedures and, for the most part, are independent of changes over time (Costa and McCrae, 1985; Alwin, 1994) and are not influenced by culture (Cooper and Denner, 1998). The most common of these personality measures to be applied in entrepreneurial research are the 16 Personality Factor model (16PF) and a five-factor model known as The Big Five and consequently they will be critiqued here.

The psychometrician, Cattell (1946), originally devised the 16PF and proposed that it measured 15 distinct personality traits plus intelligence. In an attempt to explain entrepreneurship, Brandstaetter (1997) compared people interested in starting up their own company, entrepreneurs who had taken over a business and entrepreneurs who had set up their own business but employed a manager, using a 16PA adjective rating scale (Brandstaetter, 1988), a measure closely related to the 16 Personality-Factor-Questionnaire. He found personality characteristics of founders were similar to those of people who were interested in starting up their own company, yet founders were distinguished from entrepreneurs who had taken over the business or managers through being more stable and more independent (Rauch and Frese, 2000). Fraboni and Saltstone (1990) compared

first generation entrepreneurs who had established their own businesses with second-generation entrepreneurs who ran businesses established by their parents on the 16PF. The results suggested that first generation entrepreneurs were more suspicious, assertive, imaginative, controlled and reserved than second-generation entrepreneurs. Aldridge (1997) also compared entrepreneurs' results from the 16PF to those of the general population, business executives and middle managers. The entrepreneurs differed from each group on a number of diverse dimensions and consequently the approach has not proved to be particularly useful in profiling the entrepreneurial personality.

The Big Five is probably the most established personality test within the psychological literature. It measures five personality factors, which are conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience (Costa and McCrae, 1985). Brice, (2002) applied the five-factor model to discriminate between entrepreneurs and others. He found there was a significant positive relationship between the personality dimensions of conscientiousness and openness to experience and entrepreneurship, and a significant negative relationship between entrepreneurship and agreeableness. Schmitt-Rodermund (2001) also found that successful entrepreneurs are higher in conscientiousness than unsuccessful ones. Ciavarella *et al* (2004) found a positive relationship between conscientiousness to business survival while openness to experience was negatively related. De Fruyt and Mervielde (1997), employing Holland's (1985) theory of vocational personality, showed that entrepreneurial interest and potential was related to higher levels of conscientiousness and extraversion, and to lower levels of agreeableness and neuroticism. Brandstatter (1997) found a link between entrepreneurship and low neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness and high openness to experience and extraversion. Openness to experience is also hypothesised to be associated with entrepreneurship (Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001), as this concept has been found by Holland *et al* (1991) to be related to creative and investigative interests. It seems that although some researchers have claimed to distinguish entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs on the five-factor model, no two researchers are in agreement on exactly which personality dimensions are important for entrepreneurship.

Rauch and Frese (2000) see the major problem with these "general trait" approaches as their "purely descriptive" nature and lack of theory, arguing that there is no particular rationale, which suggests that the 16PF or the Big Five should be related to entrepreneurial success. They propose that both the content of the personality variable and the level of specificity need to be adequate for the study, therefore if there are factors, which are of particular importance, they should be specified and backed up by a comprehensive theory. Although there may be some theoretical assumptions around the hypothesis that openness to experience may be related to entrepreneurship due to its high correlation with creativity, this has not been explicitly tested (Rauch and Frese, 2000). Furthermore, it is clear from the discussion of creativity that the relationship between entrepreneurship and creativity is far from clear-cut. There are also several major underlying methodological flaws, which are apparent in the construction of these general personality tests, which suggest, according to individual psychologists' own procedures, everyone who has been using the test has been scoring it in a meaningless fashion. For example, Cattell's (1946) 16PF supposedly measures 15 distinct personality traits and also intelligence. Yet very few studies find 16 factors when the 16PF is factor analysed (e.g. Barrett and Kline, 1982; Byravan and Ramanaiah, 1995). The five-factor model also suffers from similar drawbacks. In particular, the most important paper in the area upon which most other work is built (Tupes and Christal, 1961) is highly controversial. The major problem with this work is that the samples were predominantly young, male US Air Force officers. A test constructed from such a limited sample can hardly be claimed as representative of the entire human race.

More worrying than these methodological problems is the assumption that these personality traits are universally applicable and devoid of any cultural biases, a proposal that on closer inspection seems difficult to maintain. For example, the construction of the 16PF was based on the lexical hypothesis, which presumes that every interesting aspect of personality would have been observed in behaviour during the course of evolution and a term describing it would have entered the English language (Cooper, 1998). These descriptors were then used to rate the behaviour of a group of people and the correlations between them computed and factor-analysed. Gergen (1991) emphasises how assumptions

about the make-up of a person vary from one culture to another and how this is reflected in language. Using the example of emotions, which are often tied in Western culture to the type of person we are, Gergen elucidates that while in the West there are over a dozen broad emotional categories in our language, in some cultures it is difficult to locate any terms referring to "inner states" while in others, certain "inner states" are seen to exist, for which we in the West do not have a vocabulary. Therefore, even at this early stage in the questionnaire development, a cultural bias is evident, leaving it unlikely that such a test could provide access to basic and universally shared dimensions within the mind. Furthermore, numerous critical psychologists have critiqued the underlying method of test construction, factor analysis, for simply reproducing the categories, which the researcher has entered (e.g. Stainton Rogers *et al*, 1995). While this critique is relevant to some extent to all the traits described above, due to their particular attention towards factor analysis, it seems appropriate that this critique should be placed here. Stainton Rogers *et al* (1995: 50-51), for example, argue that what is being "tested is not an essence of personality but the extent to which the scale-designer and the people who complete the scale share a common understanding of 'what people are like'". Consequently, they argue if a scale-designer has a competent insight into the way personality is talked about in the given society, they are likely to produce a valid and reliable scale.

3.2.6 The Construction of the Trait Approach

It seems as Chell *et al* (1991) argue, judging by the array of problems described above, that the trait approach to entrepreneurship is, as a whole, obsolete. Indeed, in his ideological critique Armstrong (2001) claims that the attempts to establish a profile of entrepreneurial traits, has been nothing more than an attempt to programme the entrepreneur into the quantitative procedures of North American psychometrics and to ensure the entrepreneur yields to a statistical analysis. Indeed it has been argued by numerous authors that the entrepreneurial personality has been constructed within a particularly Western (North American) psychological viewpoint. Coming from a Marxian psychology perspective, Smith (1999: 770) argues that the "historically prominent entrepreneur-owner, restlessly adventurous – the proverbial 'captain of industry' controlling the

production and distribution of goods for profit – has served as an implicit model for desirable personality attributes for the mainstream". He proposes, the relation between modes of production or the exchange of goods and personality constructs is highly visible and the economic structure of Westernised society is mirrored in mainstream psychological concepts. Such a criticism of personality psychology uncovers the ideology of claims of entrepreneurship personality research as an objective science. Indeed, personality concepts based on a specifically Westernised economic system would be of little use in understanding entrepreneurship in a collectivist culture for example, where societal ideas are less individual and self-serving (Triandis, 1994). Furthermore, these individualistic, profit-driven personality types do not help our understanding of the recent rise in social entrepreneurs within Westernised cultures who seem to behave in a more communal manner practising co-operation rather than competition (Leadbeater, 1997).

Therefore, a major problem with this approach is that it overemphasises the importance of individual or personality factors in the operation of entrepreneurship and minimises the role played by wider social or societal pressures, which have been shown to impact on the decision of whether an individual becomes self-employed (Dickie-Clark, 1966; Stanworth and Curran, 1973; Scase and Goffee, 1980). Indeed it may be argued that this research can be seen to "blame" the economic situation of developing countries on their failure to produce entrepreneurial individuals or the scarcity of female and ethnic minority entrepreneurs, on their own inadequacies. With such underlying biased proclivities apparent in this approach, many authors such as Ogbor (2000: 605) have argued that by neglecting sociological, historical and political factors, entrepreneurship research is both ethnocentric and gender-biased. He argues that these studies are "discriminatory...[and] ideologically controlled, sustaining not only prevailing societal biases, but serving as a tapestry for unexamined and contradictory assumptions and knowledge about the reality of entrepreneurs". Ogbor's (2000: 605) deconstruction of this text exposes how this entrepreneurial discourse creates a myth of the "white male entrepreneur/hero", thereby reinforcing the existing power structure of the dominant groups in society. Bruni *et al* (2004: 407) similarly argue that studies based on the trait approach, even

those examining female entrepreneurship, have also involuntarily contributed to a process of "othering" the non-male, thereby making masculinity invisible and sustaining a model of economic rationality which is alleged to be universal and unbiased. By focusing on the multiple meanings embedded in entrepreneurial discourse, these deconstructive studies help to move us away from universal truth claims and "meta-narratives" and expose a number of different "realities".

There are also major problems with the measures used to examine personality traits. They presuppose that people are basically stable throughout time and that they have a core unchanging essence, which may be uncovered through the use of personality tests. Yet, as Gergen (1991) suggests no one knows what causes people to place various markings in various patterns on paper and no one has observed these "interior essences", rather they are simply inferred from other behaviour. He argues, "one would be equally justified to announce that test scores were caused by spontaneous creative urges or a torrent of insight" (Gergen, 1991: 46). Successful predictions are called evidence that the test has measured what it proposed to measure – as "something" has caused the individual to score as he or she did, and if these scores predict the future then that "something" must be what the test-maker has said it is. As Sabini and Silver (1982: 6) further elucidate, "the absurdity this leads to (intelligence is what an intelligence test measures) was simply embraced as a virtue of the method." They argue that researchers, therefore, simply use common sense in picking their operational measures; "they have to use the criteria implicit in ordinary language". Consequently as Potter and Wetherell (1987: 45) propose, when completing a personality test, individuals are not "performing a neutral act of describing or expressing an internal state [but are] engaged in producing a specific linguistic formulation tuned to the context at hand". For these reasons Stainton Rogers *et al* (1995) argue that personality measures are simply a projective test of the scale designer's socially mediated preconceptions, which impose a conceptual straightjacket upon the respondent through allowing only for a singular, standard response.

As Hampson (1988, 1995) argues, personality may be more appropriately seen as being continuously constructed between individuals within varying social

contexts, rather than residing within individuals. She argues, in line with the arguments above, that all attempts to explain personality, including those of psychometricians, are merely inferences based on the observation of behaviour. In this sense, a trait is a descriptive category used by an observer in the social context to describe the behaviour of other people, and as a result, it can never be truly independent of the social relationships between individuals. Gergen (1991: 157) further argues that the self is essentially relational as "ones potentials are only realised because there are others to support and sustain them; one has an identity only because it is permitted by the social rituals of which one is part, one is allowed to be a certain kind of person because this sort of person is essential to the broader games of society". Descriptions of the self are therefore a function of the linguistically constructed sanctions a society constructs for itself, which are in keeping with its desired values (Gergen, 1985). In this vein, Shotter (1993a, 1993b) argues for the idea of "joint action", which aims to move away from individuals' "internal essences" and move towards a self, constructed through social interaction. When people interact, their talk and behaviour is a joint endeavour between them, not the product of either's internal psyche. Rather they are constantly in action together, responding to each other's dialogue and behaviour. As Shotter (1989: 103) proposes, "we must replace the starting point in a supposed "thing"...located within individuals, with one located...within the general communicative commotion of everyday life." Therefore, rather than examining "the entrepreneur", the meaning-making process or activity continuously forming and re-forming between the entrepreneur and others in the environment, is the integral component in the study of entrepreneurship. Indeed, rather than studying entrepreneurship it could be argued that it is more appropriate to examine the process of "entrepreneuring", where the continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of meaning becomes the focus of attention (Steyaert, 1997). These ideas will be developed throughout the rest of this chapter.

3.3 Psychoanalytic Approaches

A psychoanalytic or psychodynamic approach has also been applied to entrepreneurship, based on Freud's theory of personality development. There is a

history in this research tradition of examining the problems experienced by "creative" individuals in work situations (e.g. Hatterer. 1960; Gedo and Gedo. 1992). Consequently, given this interest in "creative" individuals, it is not surprising that attention has been turned to applying such approaches to entrepreneurship. These approaches concentrate on uncovering aspects of the individual's unconscious mind through analysing their childhood interactions with primary caregivers, which are thought to be all-important for adult development. According to Freud, childhood is a battleground between the child's socially unacceptable inner drives and attempts of parents to ensure they behave in socially acceptable ways (Freud, 1966). These experiences during childhood will determine the adult personality and if certain negative experiences occur, this can result in long-term neurosis (Cooper, 1998). In keeping with this psychodynamic tradition, Ludwig (1995) argued creative individuals often live through some conflicts, difficulties or losses that affect their personality make-up. These conflicts have a lasting impact on their character and form the basis of their personality and the dissatisfaction that motivates them to be creative on an ongoing basis. Indeed, these dissatisfactions become the basis of significant life-long obsessions, which allow them to reach their creative peak. All these aspects together often leave creative individuals feeling isolated from the people around them as well as having a strong feeling of urgency to accomplish their life's work (Baronet, 2003).

Although many researchers have been interested in the early precursors of entrepreneurship, only a very few studies have been conducted to show such relationships (Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001). One researcher who has examined these relationships is Kets de Vries (1977, 1996), where he conducted interviews with 40 entrepreneurs, and concluded that the family of origin is highly relevant for the decision to become an entrepreneur. He reports that the entrepreneurs frequently reported having an absent (physically or emotionally) father. which by consequence led to a supportive yet overbearing and controlling mother who tried to fill the fathers shoes. Collins and Moore's (1970) interview-based research also reported the themes of illness. poverty, single parenthood and separation in the family. Like the psychoanalytic studies of creative individuals, such negative experiences in early childhood result in the entrepreneur becoming

a deviant or misfit, unable to accept authority and fit into a conventional organisation. In contrast to the more positive traits attributed to the entrepreneur in trait-based approaches, in psychoanalytic approaches the entrepreneur is seen as suffering from low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and helplessness (Kets de Vries, 1996). As Chell *et al* (1991: 55) argue, "their constant feelings of anxiety, distrust and dissatisfaction propel them to search for an occupation through which they can maximise their independence and control over their destiny." Baronet (2003) also puts forward a psychodynamic model of the creative entrepreneur, proposing that entrepreneurial personality is made up of creative psychodynamics resulting, as described above, from isolation and dissatisfaction in childhood. He proposes this leads to higher levels of hypomania, resulting in periods of elevated mood, idea production and originality and a superior ego strength associated with vitality, persistence and self-discipline. Comparing managers and entrepreneurs, he found that entrepreneurs scored significantly higher on these dimensions.

Although there is evidence to suggest that some entrepreneurs have suffered hardship early in life, these characteristics are not universally true of entrepreneurs (e.g. Collins and Moore, 1966). Indeed, Robbins (1979: 69, cited in Chell, 1986) identifies this as the main theoretical problem with this approach as "it tends only to describe accurately the extremes of a given population and leaves the vast majority untouched". As has been indicated above, the population of entrepreneurs has been shown to be highly diverse (Carland *et al*, 1984; Smith, 1967). Further evidence suggests that rather than the reason for business start-up being specifically linked to deprivation in early childhood; there is a wide variety of reasons and motives behind business set-up (Chell and Haworth, 1986). A more problematic critique in mainstream psychology of such psychoanalytic approaches to research is the critique of the underlying thesis of Freudian psychology due to its inability to satisfy the criteria of the scientific method. Firstly, psychoanalytic theory can "explain" any behaviour by making reference to deep unconscious desires resulting from childhood experiences, which makes it almost impossible to prove or disprove. Yet in order for this theory to be considered scientific, falsification of its central tenets must be possible. Also, Freud's theory does not satisfy the criteria of generalisability,

which is another important aspect of the scientific approach to research. This is because Freud's theories were based on a very small sample of people a century ago, namely a group of upper-class Venetian women from which he constructed a universal theory of human personality development (Cooper, 1998). Mainstream psychologists argue that building a universal theory on such a sample creates grave problems for generalisability and, perhaps more problematically, generates social and cultural bias. These problems have resulted in this theory being largely discarded in mainstream psychological research.

In a different vein, Carr (2003) has proposed that psychoanalytic theory may offer a means to move away from the self-other "separation thesis", which as previously highlighted, is inherent in psychological approaches towards entrepreneurship. Within this separation thesis the individual is conceived as separate from all others, the individual becomes an individual first and then forms relationships with others around them. Carr (2003: 118) proposes that within psychoanalytic theory, "self and other are, of necessity, mutually constituted and no privileged relationship need occur...self is not necessarily separate from, and prior to, or indeed in conflict with other." Rather, drawing on Freud's work he argues that self and other can be clearly understood as part of an inherently dialectical relationship. In particular, he focuses on the ego and the ego-ideal arguing they function in a self-other dynamic. Through the process of identification, which is a dialogue with the external world, the ego-ideal is established and re-established, never completely reaching but continuously aiming for an external ideal. Applying these ideas to entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur may be seen as continually in a state of flux as "self and other" psychodynamics are played out. As Erlich *et al* (2003) note, the psychoanalytical self is more like a process than like a state, with the result that entrepreneurship may once again be conceptualised as an activity, reflected in the ongoing relational psychodynamic of self and other. These ideas are reminiscent of Shotter and Gergen's ideas as briefly outlined in the previous section. Despite these cogent arguments that self and other should not be separated and the suggestion that it is imperative to examine engagement between individuals, the psychological preoccupation with the individual entrepreneur has remained and merely changed to the guise of cognitive approaches to entrepreneurship.

3.4 Cognitive Approaches

Despite the palpable failure of the individualistic approach in the form of trait theory and the burgeoning critique of the individual as distinct from activity, the fundamental idea that entrepreneurs are members of a homogenous group that is somehow unique, has not gone away (Mitchell *et al*, 2002). Increasingly, academics have been proposing that investigations of entrepreneurship should not focus on what it is, but how it is enacted (e.g. Gartner, 1990; Hisrich and Peters, 1995). This involves a focus on "what the entrepreneur does, not who the entrepreneur is" and viewing the creation of an organisation as a dynamic process of which the entrepreneur is part (Gartner, 1988: 21). While these ideas aim to move the research agenda away from the entrepreneurial personality, this has not dampened researchers' interest in the individual and psychological aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour, arguing, "a critical component of individual behaviour involves 'thinking'" (Gartner *et al*, 1994: 6). In this view entrepreneurs are once again seen as a homogenous group, distinct from non-entrepreneurs, although in this variation of the "entrepreneur as a special individual" idea, instead of entrepreneurs continuing to be unique due to their "entrepreneurial personality" it is now their "entrepreneurial thinking" that becomes the focus of attention. In order to examine this entrepreneurial thinking and reassert the importance of "the individual, sentient human being as an object worthy of being an empirical unit of analysis in entrepreneurial research" (Hindle, 2004: 587), researchers have increasingly turned to cognitive psychology for a "theoretically rigorous and empirically testable approach [that]...systematically explains the role of the individual in the entrepreneurial process" (Mitchell *et al*, 2002: 95).

Cognitive psychology as a whole is concerned with the study of individual perception, memory and thinking and examines the processes, by which sensory input is changed, reduced, expanded, stored, and eventually recovered and used (Mitchell *et al*, 2002). Cognitive mechanisms are predominantly seen as biologically given, allowing the individual to be seen as little more than an effective information processing system, "the individual is an active processor of information...the effect of a stimulus depends on how it is categorised and

interpreted by the perceiver" (Eiser, 1980: 8). It emerged in psychology as an answer to the limitations of earlier behaviourist approaches and aimed to help explain the mental processes that occur within individuals as they interact with other people and the environment around them. The development of social cognition theory followed to specifically manage this particular problem of how individual behaviour is shaped by the person-environment interaction (Fiske and Taylor, 1984). This focus on the interaction between the environment and individual is given pride of place in cognitive entrepreneurial research as entrepreneurial thinking is seen as "not just between people's ears: we are bound to consider the complex interaction of mind and environment" (Hindle, 2004: 587). Therefore mind and environment are emphasised in these studies but understood as separate and distinct entities, yet their interaction is central.

This interaction is seen as particularly important in the creation of new ventures, and, in particular, studies in this stream place importance on both entrepreneurial intentions and opportunity recognition. Entrepreneurial intentions focus on why certain individuals become entrepreneurs and what life circumstances and situational contexts impact on this decision, while opportunity recognition focuses on how cognitive abilities allow certain people to "spot" objective opportunities in the environment while others do not. A number of other studies focus on how entrepreneurs make decisions in highly ambiguous environments and propose that entrepreneurs must have certain cognitive attributes, which ensure they perceive their environments accurately, gathering appropriate information which enables them to make effective decisions. The final stream of cognitive research focuses on how entrepreneurs engage others in their venture and in doing so gain support for their activities. These studies suggest it is important to examine aspects such as defining an organisational vision, gaining commitment from employees and other stakeholders and acquiring legitimacy in the industry at large (Bird, 1992). While this final stream of cognitive research is particularly interesting given that it reveals how business ventures are essentially socially based, these ideas have been applied in a particularly cognitive manner. The next section outlines the main threads in cognitive studies of entrepreneurship and then moves on to the underlying problems with cognitive approaches.

3.4.1 Venture Creation: Intentions and Opportunity Recognition

In keeping with the trait tradition of entrepreneurial research, one of the questions which cognitive psychology has attempted to address is: what leads some individuals to become entrepreneurs while others do not? Instead of a focus on a particular personality trait, entrepreneurial intentions, defined by Bird (1988) as the state of mind that directs an entrepreneur's attention, experience and action toward a particular business goal, has been put forward. Intentions are seen to predict entrepreneurial behaviour whilst some attitudes predict intentions, yet they are also seen as dependent on the situation and person. This argument was first outlined by Bird (1988) in her conceptual paper in which she argued that the individual and social factors that influence entrepreneurial behaviour do so through the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. Since this original paper, numerous other studies on entrepreneurial intentions have emerged. Boyd and Vozikis (1994), for example, built on Bird's original model and suggested that self-efficacy also plays an important role influencing entrepreneurial intentions and actions. Other researchers have been concerned with how entrepreneurial intentions are formed. In this vein, Katz (1992) argued that cognitive factors, such as the heuristics of availability and representativeness, mediate the influence of demographic factors on individuals' decisions to set up a business. Kolveried's (1997) study attempted to examine what influenced entrepreneurial intentions and found that the perceived feasibility and desirability of entrepreneurial behaviour has the most impact on entrepreneurial intentions, while demographic characteristics influence intentions only indirectly, through their effect on cognitive factors. Krueger (1993) also suggested that prior entrepreneurial experience significantly enhanced perceptions of new venture feasibility and desirability. Other studies investigate how entrepreneurial education may influence and positively impact on entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger, 2007; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003).

Research in a similar stream focuses on the cognitive mechanisms that allow some individuals to "spot" entrepreneurial opportunities where other individuals do not. While entrepreneurial intentions focus on cognitive structures, which ensure some individuals set up their own businesses, opportunity recognition

takes a more Schumpeterian outlook, which emphasises the process of innovation in itself. Venture creation is seen merely as a vehicle through which the opportunity may be taken advantage of, and is sometimes unnecessary to realise the opportunity (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Opportunities in this context are seen to exist objectively, waiting to be discovered by individuals with the appropriate knowledge and accompanying cognitive structures, which allow them to recognise the potential opportunity. As Shane and Venkatarman (2000: 220) report, "although recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities is a subjective process, the opportunities themselves are objective phenomena that are not known to all parties at all times". The process of opportunity identification is therefore rooted in the interaction between the individual's attributes and the objective opportunities, which exist in the external environment (Shane, 2000). While in the main these studies focus on the special cognitive skills that individuals possess, which allow them to recognise opportunities (e.g. Baron, 2004; Shane and Venkatarman, 2000), others have emphasised a number of categories which can increase the likelihood that these objective opportunities will be recognised. For example, Arenius and Clercq (2005) place importance on networking skills in allowing individuals access into the environments where such opportunities may potentially exist. In another vein, which overlaps with the entrepreneurial intentions domain, some researchers have highlighted that opportunity recognition stems from intentions on the part of the individual to continuously examine the external environment for interesting and lucrative opportunities (Krueger *et al*, 2000; Lee and Venkataraman, 2006).

The original aim of these studies was to gain new insights into the *process* by which entrepreneurs identify opportunities and enact their business venture (Krueger *et al*, 2000), therefore attempting to move towards studying entrepreneurship as activity rather than the individual entrepreneur's personality characteristics (Shane and Venkatarmaran, 2000). While this research aimed to move entrepreneurship research to a *process* of intentional discovery and assessment of opportunities, it remains wedded to an individualistic approach to research. In these studies the individual is seen as separate from the enactment of entrepreneurship, and the action is overshadowed by attempts to understand the individual entrepreneur's behaviours and how their intentions and opportunity-

recognition behaviours were informed, developed and different from others in their environment. Opportunities are also seen to exist objectively in context, as real entities waiting to be discovered by intentionally oriented individuals. Opportunities, however, are inextricably bound to the historical, social and political context within which they take place, entrepreneurs must build on others ideas, interact with previous activities which have occurred in their context and communicate new ideas effectively and convincingly to others, in order to ensure the opportunity becomes embedded in the context. This is, as Fletcher (2006: 425) argues, a major problem with structurally-determinist and cognitive/agency oriented perspectives as they cannot account for "why people enact opportunities in the way (and at the time) that they do in relation to broader societal, economic and political processes", by focusing on the individual entrepreneur they cannot account for how opportunities are embedded in a wider historical and social context.

In addition, this individualistic focus devoid of any wider historical and social understanding suggests a parallel with older trait approaches. In particular, the emphasis placed upon the influence of "entrepreneurial cognition" on entrepreneurial intentions and opportunity identification is reminiscent of personality-based approaches. "Entrepreneurial cognition" is defined as a "special" combination of cognitive factors, such as perception of greater chances for success and reliance on decision-making shortcuts, unique to entrepreneurs (Forbes, 1999). While potentially not as limiting as some entrepreneurial personality approaches, given that entrepreneurial cognition may be developed to some extent through certain life experiences, there is little guidance offered in how such abilities may be developed. Busenitz and Lau (1996) offer one understanding proposing that the presence of "entrepreneurial cognition" is influenced by personal, social and cultural factors, arguing that cultural values such as lower uncertainty avoidance, individualistic orientation and long-term time orientation will positively influence the presence of entrepreneurial cognition on both the individual and societal levels. When this assertion is examined it appears that "entrepreneurial cognition" is little more than personality research, in the guise of special cognitive attributes, indeed, the idea of cultural impact on the development of these skills is reminiscent of

McClelland's need for achievement (1961). As with trait approaches such a proposal would seem to suggest that the "blame", for the economic problems of developing countries or other impoverished areas, may be firmly placed within the culture itself, as their underlying values or cultural understandings are not adequate to produce a sufficient number of individuals with entrepreneurial intentions who can discover opportunities within their context.

3.4.2 Making Decisions: Scanning and Interpretation

Another area of cognitive research that aimed to concentrate on the process or activity of entrepreneurship is research on the scanning behaviour of entrepreneurs. These studies are concerned with the sources from which entrepreneurs and new ventures get their information and the manner in which they look for it (Forbes, 1999). It is suggested that this scanning behaviour contributes to performance as entrepreneurs act as information processors who effectively scan and monitor the environment around them (Daft *et al*. 1988; Starbuck *et al*, 1978). This scanning behaviour is also seen to increase when the entrepreneur becomes aware of threats or opportunities present in the external environment (Pineda *et al*, 1998; Lang *et al*, 1997). While Mohan-Neill (1995) found that firm size and age were inversely related to the intensity of scanning behaviours, therefore proposing that entrepreneurial firms scan less extensively than large firms, other research has suggested that entrepreneurs may make use of more informal sources of information from social networks, rather than government publications or high-tech databases. In particular, they were more likely to use both human and written sources of information, rather than written sources alone (Brush, 1992; Schafer, 1990; Specht, 1987). Kaish and Gilad (1991), for example, showed that entrepreneurs rely less on objective financial data than managers and instead look for "subjective cues", such as the identity of deal participants, which provide strategic insight. While these ideas remain cognitively based, they emphasise the social aspects of entrepreneurship and the importance of issues such as social relationships and networking. These results also support the results of the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership (CEML. 2000) study of entrepreneurial education, which found that entrepreneurs respond to informal approaches such as networking and coaching

rather than formal management courses. This emphasises the importance of situating and researching entrepreneurship within its contextual environment.

Another aspect of cognition, which cognitive entrepreneurship researchers have studied, is how entrepreneurs interpret the implications of information once it has been gathered, typically through the examination of the decision-making processes of entrepreneurs (Forbes, 1999). A number of studies have found that entrepreneurs are less "rational" in decision-making than professional managers. Using the concept of cognitive style, which encompasses modes of both thinking and decision-making, Allinson *et al* (2000) found that entrepreneurs applied a more intuitive, rather than analytic, form of cognitive style as compared to general managers. Similarly Sadler-Smith (2004) found that effective management action in small firms is better served by "creative intuition" rather than "rational analysis". Smith *et al* (1988) also found that managers of smaller, entrepreneurial firms are less comprehensive in their decision-making behaviour than professional managers in larger firms. In returning to the trait-like concept of risk-taking, Palich and Bagby (1995) conceptualised risk as a subjective experience and compared the decision-making processes of entrepreneurs and managers using ambiguous business scenarios. They found that entrepreneurs were no more predisposed than others to recommend courses of action, which they themselves perceived to be risky, although they did evaluate the possibilities contained within the scenarios more positively. Palich and Bagby concluded that this suggested that entrepreneurs were more likely to perceive ambiguous situations as opportunities. As Armstrong (2001: 543) notes, "the psychological definition of risk raises the question of how positive evaluations of uncertain situations can be while still falling short of stupidity". He argues that such interpretations merely endorse one of the favoured formulas of enterprise ideology, namely that entrepreneurs are risk-takers. This suggestion of irrational decision-making and risk-taking, which may verge on stupidity, seems to be somewhat at odds with the "logical cognitive brain."

Based on the reasoning that successful entrepreneurs must generate valuable ideas for new goods or services, there has been an interest in creativity within the field of cognition as in the other psychological approaches outlined above. As

Ward (2004) outlines, the creative cognition approach, views creative ideas as being the natural result of applying basic mental processes to existing knowledge structures. Basing his ideas on previous studies of the cognitive processes involved in creativity, he outlines three important processes which may be useful in examining entrepreneurial creativity, namely; conceptual combination, which involves two previously separate concepts or images being merged into a single new unit; analogy, which is the mapping of knowledge from a familiar domain to a less familiar one; and problem formulation which is the various approaches people adopt in problem solving. In regards to how creative entrepreneurs are in their problem-solving, the Kirton-Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) is one of the major tests used. This test looks at creative style and suggests that this style may be characterised by an adaptive or innovative mode of problem solving and decision-making (Kirton, 1976). The analytical and decision-making processes of "adaptors" are confined to the frame of reference, within which they perceive the initiating problem. They are capable of initiating changes that improve the current system but fail to see possibilities outside the accepted pattern. On the other hand, "innovators" are very good at generating ideas for more radical change, but due to their radical nature often fail to be accepted. Engle, Mah and Sadri (1997) used the KAI in measuring the differences in creativity among entrepreneurs as distinguished from employees, the results revealed that entrepreneurs displayed a tendency to be significantly more innovative and less adaptive in their problem solving and decision-making than employees and had significantly less respect for rules and authority structures.

There is, however, an underlying problem with these cognitive studies of entrepreneurial thinking as brought to light by Billig's (1996) critique of cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychologists not only make the basic assumption that thinking or cognition is important for understanding human activity, but they also make assumptions about the nature of thought. In particular, cognitive psychologists see thinking in terms of isolated individuals gathering and processing perceptual information by means of categories, which Billig argues removes some of the essential ingredients of thought from cognition. Through concentrating on categorisation as the single psychological process of thought, cognitive psychologists have tended to construct one-sided

theories of thinking. This is because cognitive psychologists equate thinking with problem-solving, an equation which Billig suggests is highly problematic as it ignores what he refers to as rhetorical thinking. Problem solving may be equated with a logical or rational style of thinking where there is arguably a correct solution, as by setting their "subjects" (in this case entrepreneurs) problems, which have "right answers", psychologists can distinguish between the successful and unsuccessful. In rhetorical thinking the matter is never comprehensively closed as arguments can always "be opposed by counter-arguments, justification by criticisms etc...in the looseness of rhetoric" (Billig, 1996: 126). This "looseness" is not conceived as error, just that there would always be differences of opinion and "no logical calculus could be guaranteed to still their argumentative momentum."

Billig (1996) proposes that in order to avoid the dangers of a one-sided understanding of thinking, psychologists should see the basic psychological units of thought as pairs of conflicting processes of logic and rhetoric. In the studies of entrepreneurial interpretation above, there is some suggestion that there is a continuous conflict between logical or rational thinking and irrational thinking. These studies have found that entrepreneurs are more "irrational" than managers in decision-making. Taking a rhetorical approach, rationality and irrationality or more specifically risk-aversion and risk-taking may be seen as pairs of corresponding, yet conflicting processes. In this way, entrepreneurship may be conceived as a process of argumentation, highlighting the discursive and linguistically constructed nature of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Billig's concept of rhetorical thinking underscores the problems of approaching the study of entrepreneurship only from a logical or scientific perspective, which would result in a one-sided theory of entrepreneurship. In order to avoid this we must also incorporate a more rhetorical approach to the study of entrepreneurship.

3.4.3 Gaining Legitimacy: The Enactment of Entrepreneurship

Another group of studies, focusing on cognitive approaches to entrepreneurship, aims to concentrate on the enactment of entrepreneurship and emphasise the importance of gaining legitimacy. It is argued that due to the novelty and

uniqueness of their ventures (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994), entrepreneurs often confront problems associated with lack of legitimacy (Low and Abrahuamson, 1997) or external validation (Stone and Brush, 1996). Therefore these studies pay particular attention to the ways that entrepreneurs represent their new ventures to others, both inside and outside the organisation (Forbes, 1999). Gartner *et al* (1992: 18), for example, differentiate between entrepreneurial and organisational behaviour, and argue that established organisations are "bound up in non-equivocal events"; entrepreneurs must continually act "as if equivocal events are non-equivocal". New ventures are "enacted" by a series of interactions between entrepreneurs and their environments. Over time, as entrepreneurial behaviours are interpreted and responded to by environmental actors, a set of "understandings" is developed on the part of entrepreneurs and environmental actors, which serve to reduce the potential uncertainty associated with future interactions (Gartner *et al*, 1992: 18).

One example of this kind of approach is Hill and Levenhagen's (1995: 1068) conceptual paper which focuses on the use of metaphors and mental models by entrepreneurs, arguing that as entrepreneurs characteristically operate "at the edge of what they do not know", metaphors are an effective way to create and share understanding within and outside the nascent organisation. They propose, in order to "enact" a new organisation, a new vision or mental model of the given business environment must be developed and communicated to others, yet in entrepreneurial settings mental models are often not fully developed due to the ambiguous nature of the entrepreneurial environment. In these circumstances, the development of metaphors, which Hill and Levenhagan (1995: 1059) define as "simplified articulations or representation of not yet formalised mental models", is very important. In this way metaphors are seen as a way of passing a mental picture inside the entrepreneur's head, into the public domain and helping others to build their own internal mental models of the entrepreneurial organisation in order to achieve "shared cognition".

While this approach is interesting, as it aims to understand entrepreneurship as an activity and suggests that new ventures are socially constructed through a series of interactions and a development of shared meanings between entrepreneurs and

others whose commitment is required for the ventures' success (Stone and Brush, 1996), these ideas have been applied in a particularly cognitive manner. Rather than concentrating on the process of constructing shared understandings through language, these studies focus on how the entrepreneur's internal mental models are developed and internalised by other individuals. Therefore, like the trait studies of entrepreneurship it is still framed by scientism, with the individual and situation being conceived as a set of determinable, observably presentable factors, which exert a causal effect on "behaviour" (Stainton Rogers *et al*, 1995). Aiming to enhance current cognitive understandings and overcome this information-processing based perspective Sarasvathy (2003, 2004) has developed a concept known as effectuation, which attempts to understand entrepreneurial processes as placed in an uncertain and ever-changing world. Entrepreneurs in this view are "designers" of firms, who see "possibilities" rather than opportunities in the environment and work to embed their ideas in the world around them. Turning "possibilities" into action, Sarasvathy (2004) proposes, involves much more than simple information-processing and problem solving; rather it is a process of engaging others in new meanings and requires some level of imaginative action. This imaginative action is based in the linguistic and metaphorical domain; entrepreneurs connect with others, create new realities and enable action through linguistic and imaginative projection. Contemplating what such an approach offers in terms of methodologies, Sarasvathy (2004) suggests focusing on tools from linguistic, literary and textual analyses in order to understand the nature of entrepreneurial goals.

A number of examples exist in the cognitive domain, which aim to apply concepts from literary and textual domains in order to account for the metaphorical and imaginative aspects of entrepreneurial projects. Drawing on both cognitive and literary concepts, Pitt (1998) explored the personal theories of action of two entrepreneurs, through treating their conversational narratives as quasi texts. Pitt proposes that while such theories of action are relatively inaccessible, experientially grounded narrative accounts permit some degree of systematic access, as entrepreneurs are often motivated to tell dramatic stories of their adventures in the business arena. In particular, Pitt (1998) emphasizes the importance of imaginative and metaphoric qualities in the entrepreneurs'

personal theories, which allowed them to go beyond local understanding and overcome situations that were saturated with ambiguity. These approaches to entrepreneurship are very interesting as they uncover the problems with understanding entrepreneurial activity as a simple process of information-processing and place importance upon engaging others in the venture through linguistic and imaginative projections. While linguistic dimensions are emphasised, entrepreneurial thinking, as an internal mechanism and a special individualistic ability, remains central to the process within such cognitive based approaches. As Mitchell *et al* (2007: 8) note, commenting on Sarasvathy's (2003, 2004) model of effectuation, this concept "represents a special case of expertise in that it assumes that a venture will develop along the lines of a means or expertise that are a part of the entrepreneur's repertoire, a part of the way they think and make sense of an evolving situation". Therefore, the emphasis in cognitive research remains focused on what is "in" the individual rather than what transpires "between" individuals, the problems with this understanding are further developed below.

3.4.4 Cognitive Dualities: Internal and External Worlds

It is clear from the latter studies outlined above, which focus on entrepreneurial enactment, that entrepreneurship is inherently an ambiguous process. Entrepreneurs are placed in an environment where past histories do not predict future events, where continuous ambiguity, constant adaptation and improvisation are the only predictions that can be made with any measure of certainty. Therefore, entrepreneurship cannot be understood within any approach that proceeds simply on the understanding that entrepreneurship is concerned with implementing objective strategies and pursuing goals irrespective of environmental constraints. Rather, it seems, entrepreneurship should be understood as a continual and on-going meaning-making process. Once again the problem with the majority of cognitive studies is that they concentrate on the individual entrepreneur rather than understanding entrepreneurship as a process, which is ongoing and occurs between people situated in a social and political context. There is an inner being that has internal mental models or schemas that can be applied, to an external outer world, through communicating with them

using a language, which objectively represents the external environment. While, as suggested above, some recent cognitive studies have argued that linguistic and imaginative processes are an essential aspect of entrepreneurial activity (e.g. Pitt, 1998; Sarasvathy, 2004), these studies retain a focus on the thinking aspects of entrepreneurs which are seen to predict and enable entrepreneurial actions located in an external material world.

There are a variety of critiques of this distinction between internal and external worlds, for example, applying an evolutionary perspective Lock (1994) offers a critique of this distinction between cognitive mechanisms and an objective and representational language, which can be used to describe and study them. Drawing on findings from the human archaeological record, he argues that there was a transition point 40, 000 years ago, where modern human practices came into being, however, the morphologically modern human existed long before this point in time. He argues the biological appearance of modern human is independent of the cultural appearance of modern human behaviour. He further outlines that social practices of modern human beings changed at this time and these changes provided the ground for a "sustained elaboration of pre-modern language communication towards modern ones" (Lock. 1994: 7). As language and other meaning-making systems such as drawing and imagery became a regular feature of everyday human life, they provided a "culturally conserved environmental feature that influenced the ontogenetic elaboration of cognitive systems, such that those features which we tend to regard as biological are in fact originally constituted and...maintained by what we today label as discourse processes" (Lock, 1994: 7). In this way cognitive processes are no longer within the head of the individual but distributed in the symbolically-mediated practice that comprises human cultures; distributed between the individual and the social.

Liebrucks (2001) also offers a critique of the internal and external distinction in cognitive psychology, taking issue with the proposed biological basis of meaning within a cognitive approach. He argues, drawing on ideas from social constructionism, that there is a fundamental distinction between the physical "material" world and the meaning or "discursive" world. He suggests that while it may be possible to describe and explain the behaviours of human organisms on

the level of physiological processes, such a natural scientific analysis would have to be completely separate from the meaning these behaviours have for the participants. He proposes that in their attempts to do natural scientific psychology, cognitive psychologists have turned the duality between "physical" and "meaning" levels of description, into a dualism between "inner" and "outer" processes. In this view they have located the meanings in the mind of the individual person and the material processes in the external world. Liebrucks (2001: 383-384) argues this binary positioning is a central flaw of cognitive psychology as he notes, "on the one hand, from a genuinely natural scientific viewpoint, the inside of an organism is of course not made up of cognitions (i.e. meaningful units), rules (i.e. social standards) or attitudes (i.e. value judgements), but consists of nothing more than biomass. Meanings cannot be adequately analysed in the framework of a psychology that is fixated on the individual". Meanings are inter-subjective, created between individuals, which in this case are entrepreneurs, and are inherent in their everyday activity in the community of which they are a part. Therefore, in order to understand entrepreneurship it is imperative that we examine entrepreneurship as a process of meaning-making which entrepreneurs engage in with others in context in order to proceed with their business venture.

3.5 A Process of Meaning-Making

As outlined above, the vast majority of entrepreneurial research treats entrepreneurs as disconnected and isolated beings, who may be studied through their responses to various external stimuli using positivistic methods, which control extraneous (social) variables. Yet, as Stainton Rogers *et al* (1995) argue, the underlying problem with this typically psychological approach to research is that an individual is never in a situation that is not subject to social influence, and therefore it is not possible to clearly separate them. Rather, the entrepreneur is part of, and involved in, the creation of the conditions, which make up his or her world, through engagement and interaction with the circumstances around them and consequently social processes are what researchers should be interested in. In short, the individual entrepreneur, as distinct from activity, is not a viable unit of analysis as they are part of, and create the complex systems within which, they

are situated (Chell, 2000). As Bygrave (1989: 20) notes, "we cannot separate entrepreneurs from their actions, after all in a start-up company, the entrepreneur and the company are one and the same...We should avoid reductionism in entrepreneurship research...Instead we should look at the whole". Therefore, the entrepreneur may not be examined as simply present at hand, but rather is placed within a social context that places restrictions on his or her action possibilities, which are continually constructed, transformed and negotiated. This appears to suggest that if the individual entrepreneur and entrepreneurial process may not be separated, we need to examine the means through which this process is coordinated. Such a focus emphasises the importance of examining how meaning is made in the entrepreneurial setting, in particular, how entrepreneurs make meaning and give this meaning to others in their environment such as employees, suppliers or bank managers.

Another important aspect of entrepreneurship which suggests it should be examined as a process of creating and negotiating meaning, is that the cultural meanings attributed to entrepreneurship vary historically, continuously changing over time; the entrepreneur is not an objective or "real" entity. For example, as discussed in the first chapter, in pre-economic times entrepreneurship was seen in a negative light, mostly typical of greedy, materialistic individuals. This is very different to the conceptualisation of entrepreneurship in Thatcherite Britain, highlighted by the discourse of the enterprise culture, which elevated entrepreneurship to a career path unlike any other, one which all individuals should aspire to. Research into entrepreneurship must, therefore, understand it as a continuing process, which exists in time, and is historically and culturally situated. This approach would be in direct contrast to the psychological studies outlined above that see the entrepreneur as present, observable and unchanging. This detemporalises entrepreneurship which as Bourdieu (1997: 9) argues "is never more pernicious than when exerted on practices defined by the fact that their temporal structure, direction and rhythm is constitutive of their meaning". For these reasons, entrepreneurship researchers are increasingly being encouraged to take a more dynamic view of entrepreneurship (Low and MacMillian, 1988). In line with this Gartner (1993) suggests using an emergence vocabulary when talking about entrepreneurship in his paper "Words lead to

deeds". Steyaert (1997: 18) moves beyond this view and argues, the "use of process language goes further than changing your vocabulary but requires a theory of language that explains the discursive impact in the construction of reality", as in the process of "entrepreneuring" described above, in such a language theory words do not lead to deeds, rather words are deeds.

Throughout this chapter a similar argument has been put forward which emphasises the importance of linguistic and meaning-making dimensions of the entrepreneurship process and numerous researchers have been drawn on to reach this conclusion. In the main, these authors lean towards a social constructionist tradition of research, which rejects the mainstream view of the social world as an objective one, amenable to impartial exploration and discovery (Gioia, and Pitre, 1990). Rather, this approach emphasises the "primacy of relational, conversational and social practices as the source of individual psychic life" (Stam, 1998: 1999). Consequently, social constructionism abandons the task of "representing" the world in theories and claims that such a representation is at one level futile and at another impossible (Stam, 2001). Knowledge is considered an interpretation, which is local and fleeting, linguistically generated and socially negotiated between people within a given context and time frame. Instead constructionists emphasise "the generation, sustenance and social ramifications of systems of intelligibility" (Shotter and Gergen, 1989: x). A number of researchers in the entrepreneurship domain have attempted to apply this approach and in doing so have drawn attention to the importance of becoming embedded in social networks (Downing, 2005; Jack and Anderson, 2002) and also the importance of making meaning through linguistic means (Dodd, 2002; O'Connor, 2002; Steyaert, 1997). While such approaches aim to overcome the dualistic divide between internal and external worlds, which has been suggested as highly problematic in psychological approaches, through emphasising only what is possible in the linguistic domain, these studies have left gaps in our understandings. These studies are outlined in more detail in the next chapter and an argument put forward which suggests we should examine how entrepreneurs create meaning through a multitude of modes in their unique contexts.

4.0 BEYOND DUALISMS: THE EMBODIED ENTREPRENEUR

4.1 Moving Beyond Language

It has been demonstrated in the previous chapter that psychological approaches to entrepreneurship treat entrepreneurs as disconnected and isolated individuals, who are separate from the historical, cultural and social context in which their entrepreneurial activities occur (e.g. McClelland, 1961; Mitchell *et al*, 2002). This approach results in a fundamental distinction between "inner" personality and cognitive processes, which occur inside the mind of the entrepreneur and the external, material world where activities take place. An argument has been put forward in the previous chapter which suggests that entrepreneurs are inextricably linked to the wider conditions of their lives and it is impossible to separate them distinctly (Stainton Rogers *et al*, 1995). Entrepreneurial processes are placed within a social context and the meanings attributed to entrepreneurship are different depending on the time, location and cultural understandings. The entrepreneur is not a "real" entity but rather is a social construction between people in context and therefore should be examined as such. In relation to this, entrepreneurs cannot be examined as removed from their unique contexts but must be understood in relation to their external environments and the constraints this context imposes on them. If the individual entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial process may not be separated, we need to examine the means through which this process is coordinated. Such a focus emphasises the importance of examining how meaning is made in the entrepreneurial setting. In particular, attention should be paid to how entrepreneurs "make" meaning in order to negotiate action in an environment where ambiguity is omnipresent and how they "give" meaning to others in their environment in an attempt to engage them in the feasibility of their venture.

Consequently, in order to examine entrepreneurship in this way, an approach is needed that is diametrically opposite to previous cognitive and personality approaches. As suggested briefly in the previous chapter, an approach known as social constructionism, which centres meaning-making processes as constitutive of social life, allows us to understand entrepreneurship in this processual manner.

This approach proposes that language does not objectively represent an external. "real" world outside of language and the individual; rather reality is in continual construction and reconstruction (Burr, 2003). In this view we cannot know the world outside discourse because the only knowledge that we have, is that which we have constructed through language. Where social constructionism runs into difficulties, however, is explaining the extent to which the external world that exists outside of language affects our discursive lives. Many versions of social constructionism, referred to by Shotter (2005) as "linguistic" constructionist approaches, argue that material reality has no relationship to our ability to discursively generate meanings and understandings. While linguistic approaches have as their goal to move beyond the problematic dualisms in cognitive and personality approaches, these approaches ignore the essentially embodied nature of individuals though privileging language as a self-contained system with little or no relation to the external world (Shotter, 2005). These versions of social constructionism remain wedded to what is referred to as a Cartesian view of the world where the mind holds a privileged position in relation to the body. This has left a legacy for much social constructionist work in the entrepreneurial domain, which focuses predominately on meaning-making in the linguistic domain (e.g. O'Connor, 2002; Steyaert, 1997).

A number of social constructionists have criticised such "linguistic" versions of social constructionism, arguing that they do not account for individuals as essentially embodied beings placed in physical environments which inevitably constrain, enable, and relate to certain linguistic constructions (Willig, 1999). A number of these social constructionist researchers and others in related domains have sought to highlight the importance of re-embodying the Cartesian agent. In particular, two interesting strands of this research have emerged which are potentially of interest to the field of entrepreneurship. Firstly, some researchers focus upon the impact of the physical properties of our bodies and how we use our bodies in our meaning-making processes (e.g. Harre, 1995; Radley, 1995, 1996). Others focus on the effect of the organisation of the physical and social environment in which we live and the artefacts that are placed within these environments (e.g. Parker, 1992) on the way we linguistically construct the world. In parallel with this, a number of theorists have begun to place importance

on the persuasive aspects of entrepreneurial activity, which extend beyond what is possible simply through language. In particular they argue that entrepreneurs must use a range of meaning-making tools to make meaning with others and convince them to become part of the business venture (e.g. Baron and Markman, 2003; Mason and Harrison, 2000). While these ideas have been applied only within a cognitive framework with these "skills" being conceived as individual traits or attributes, they are useful because they suggest that it is not just what the entrepreneur says that is important, but also their whole "way of being". This includes an ability to judge the "mood" of their audience and present themselves effectively, ensuring that others see the business venture as an interesting prospect. A natural extension to this idea would be how the entrepreneur uses their physical settings, and built environment to engage others in a similar manner.

This study, therefore, aims to "embody" the entrepreneur through building on other social constructionist studies in the entrepreneurial domain. In particular, it attempts to develop these ideas, through investigating not only the linguistic aspects of the entrepreneurial endeavour, but also examining how entrepreneurs make further understandings through non-linguistic modes of meaning-making. In order to understand these processes, however, a relational approach is needed which overcomes the dualistic understandings inherent in linguistic versions of social constructionism. In an attempt to examine how such an approach could be conceived, a number of approaches are outlined which could be conceptualised as relational-constructionist approaches (Fletcher, 2006, Hosking, 2000; Sampson, 1989). While these approaches overcome dualisms through emphasising the inter-relatedness of individuals and their environments, they do not provide sufficient guidance in terms of methodologies or frameworks for analysis and also do not seem to address the persuasive aspects of entrepreneurial endeavour. Consequently, another approach is put forward that draws on Shotter's work on rhetorical-relational constructionism (1993a, 1995, 2005) and Billig's work on rhetoric and argumentation (1990, 1993, 1996) which, affords the opportunity to encompass both the persuasive aspect of entrepreneurial activity and meaning-making beyond linguistic understandings within a relational framework. This framework, which allows the entrepreneur to be seen

as an "embodied rhetorician", is outlined in the final section, followed by a succinct outline of the aims of the study.

4.2 Realism and Relativism in Social Constructionism

Social constructionists draw on a wide intellectual heritage, as Pearce (1992: 145) argues, "the most important traditions include the 'other' voice in Western intellectual history (e.g. the sophists, Vico's hermeneutics, Vygotsky); narrative theory (Bakhtin, Derrida, Foucault); deconstructionism (Heidegger, Man, Fish, Wittgenstein); the American Pragmatists (James, Dewey, Mead) and the ecological epistemology of Bateson." Many also point to two strands of knowledge as having a dramatic impact on the development of the approach. Firstly the sociology of knowledge (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Kuhn, 1962; Mannheim, 1991), which emphasises the impact of socio-cultural forces on human knowledge and behaviour, and secondly post-modern perspectives in social psychology (e.g. Gergen, 1985; 1987), which purport that language is the sole constructor of our experienced reality. With such a range of very different intellectual precedents it is unsurprising that it is difficult to neatly conceptualise the basic assumptions of a social constructionist approach. Yet one enduring resemblance that may be outlined as common to all versions of social constructionism is that language does not objectively represent an external, "real" world, outside of language and the individual. Rather, in this view, reality is seen as in continuous construction and reconstruction through our language communities (Burr, 2003). Given that language is not seen as simply representational of a "reality" outside of discourse, a critical stance to all our received knowledge is seen as an essential component of social constructionist understandings. Indeed as Pearce (1992: 140) proposes, all social constructionists engender a deep scepticism for received views of the "outside" world and "delight in repudiating cherished virtues of 'mainstream' ways of dealing with social life" (Pearce, 1992; 140). In this view, existing knowledge of the world is not simply accepted as "truth". Rather social constructionists work to uncover underlying proclivities within our understandings.

Social constructionism therefore purports, that we can never have knowledge of the "real" world since the categories we apply to it are socially constructed and consequently, the only knowledge of reality that may be obtained is that which is constructed through discourse. As Edley (2001: 437) proposes, "talk involves the creation or construction of particular accounts of what the world is like, we cannot see reality for what it is and then translate this into words". This particular aspect of social constructionism has been energetically critiqued by realist accounts of social constructionist arguments, who take issue with what they see the social constructionist position as advocating; that there is no reality outside discourse. This position is often referred to as relativism or sometimes simply nihilism, and as Stam (1998) notes, has caused a recurrent philosophical problem which centres on the "relativism-realism" divide. The realist's argument is based on the claims that there is a real world and that it is knowable and proposes that to argue that nothing exists outside discourse is irresponsible and potentially dangerous (e.g. Held, 1995). This proposal has been referred to as the "death and furniture" argument by Edwards *et al* (1995: 29), as "when relativists talk about the social construction of reality, truth, cognition, scientific knowledge, technical capacity, social structure, and so on, their realist opponents sooner or later start hitting the furniture, invoking the Holocaust, talking about rocks, guns, killings, human misery, tables and chairs". As Parker (1999) elucidates, "death" in this argument refers to the events during the Holocaust where realists vehemently argue that it is morally reprehensible to suggest that such a historical event is socially constructed. In addition "furniture" refers to the material reality which can be touched, seen and used by individuals who inhabit this reality; material entities do not simply come into being once they are spoken about (Parker, 1999).

Edley (2001) attempts to overcome these divides and demonstrates that such divisions have been on-going in philosophical debates since the time of Kant, Hume and Locke, arguing that social constructionism "has done less...to rattle philosophic certainties than it has to ruffle the feathers of contemporary common sense" (Edley, 2001: 434). He maintains that many complaints and critiques of social constructionism centre on the central confusion of ontological and epistemological senses of the approach. He proposes than when social

constructionists say, "we can *know* nothing outside of discourse" they are making an epistemological, rather than an ontological argument, about what the world is actually like. Yet realists see social constructionists as suggesting, ontologically, that "there is nothing outside of discourse" i.e. reality doesn't exist until it is spoken about through discourse. He argues that the reverse is the case and proposes that any attempt to describe the nature of the world is subject to the rules of discourse, in that we can only represent reality through the language we possess to do so. From an epistemological perspective, we can never know the reality outside of discourse, as language operates as the medium through which we understand and construct knowledge of the world. As Edwards *et al* (1995: 29) argue, "we cannot step outside language and perceive aspects of the world that we have not constructed through it". Therefore, for social constructionists to propose ontologically that there is nothing outside discourse, would appear to invite, as Potter (1997) argues, a logical contradiction. In particular, to claim that there is nothing outside of discourse implies that one can somehow know that is the case without doubt, which is precisely the assumption that social constructionism sets out to disturb (Potter, 1997). The argument is therefore not that reality doesn't exist, but reality exists as being a socially constructed reality, therefore this "reality" can never be objectively known to us.

While Edley's (2001) argument offers a means of conceptualising what exactly social constructionists mean when they say it is impossible to know anything outside discourse, it does not offer an insight into the more nuanced problem of the relationship between the "material reality" and discourse. In particular, it does not address the issue of what effect the "material reality" may have on the possible linguistic constructions that we are able to make. Therefore, while social constructionism purports that we cannot know the world outside of discourse because the only knowledge that we have is that which we are able to conceptualise, articulate and share through language, it is not clear to what extent the world that exists outside of language affects our discursive lives. Many approaches to social constructionism, which Shotter (2005) dubs "linguistic" versions of social constructionism, advocate that material reality has no relationship to our ability to discursively generate meanings and understandings. One example of such an approach is Gergen's post-modern constructionism (e.g.

Gergen, 1985; 1989; 2001) where he argues, that understandings of the world derive solely from our linguistic, cultural and historical contingencies. In this view, "understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship" (1985: 263). He further emphasises that we should view our "mental predicates as semantically free-floating. That is, the vocabulary of mind is not anchored in, defined by or ostensibly grounded in real-world particulars in such a way that propositions about mental events are subject to correction through observation" (Gergen, 1989: 71). Understandings are not dependent on the empirical validity of a perspective but rather on the vicissitudes of social processes (Gergen, 1985). For Gergen language is the sole basis of understanding about the world and is no way constrained by any material properties; there is no limit on the potential "reality" constructions that are possible. He further argues that to propose an external world, limits or enables only certain constructions to be made, finalises debate and brings to a close any further arguments in this domain. He proposes that social constructionists need to continue debate and argument, tolerate a variety of perspectives and unravel truth-claims and power-relationships (Gergen, 2001).

A growing number of social constructionists have criticised such "linguistic" versions of social constructionism arguing it has moved too far beyond its original conception of an approach which problematised the construction of social knowledge. Linguistic versions of social constructionism do not only propose that our understandings are subjective and consequently should be examined critically but rather all knowledge is merely just a social construct (Hruby, 2001). If it is argued that everything is discursively constructed then there is no way of positioning our views between multiple perspectives. In this way, it seems, for linguistic versions of social constructionism "anything goes", no further position can be forwarded or dismissed (Willig, 2001). While linguistic constructionists argue that this relativism is a merit of the approach, through ensuring that no claims to "truth" can be forwarded and gain precedence over other realities, on closer examination it seems this social constructionist position is highly problematic. In particular, while the aims of linguistic versions of social constructionism are emancipatory, in that they open "the way to anti-

racist and feminist critiques of [social science's] pathologizing gaze and practice", relativism cannot combat the inequalities and problems in social scientific understanding as it is unable to position itself morally or politically in regards to any single truth (Parker, 1999: 63). Relativists are unable to state that any claim is more "true" than another, which as Burr (1998: 14) suggests leads to "the claim that...the only reality that things have is the reality they are given in the symbolic realm of language". She argues this sets us "down a road to social and personal paralysis...[as] we are left with a multiplicity of perspectives, which become a bewildering array of realities in themselves" (Burr, 1998: 14). Such a position results in social constructionists being "inevitably twisted into a reflexive loop, in which the perspective from which we describe systems of intelligibility is itself a system of intelligibility" (Pearce, 1992: 141), resulting in a self-undermining paradox where everything is a social construction including the concept of social constructionism itself (Hruby, 2001).

Perhaps more fundamentally problematic is that, in this view, it not just knowledge that is viewed as socially constructed but rather subjects and subjectivity, i.e. individuals, their biology and constraints imposed on them by their biology and external structural forces, are seen as merely social constructions. For this reason there has been a growing movement within social constructionism away from linguistic approaches and understandings (Burr, 2003). One approach forwarded proposes that material reality does have an impact on the linguistic constructionism we are able to utilise in our daily lives, which has been referred to by some as new realism or critical realism (e.g. Parker, 1992; Willig, 1999). As Hruby (2001: 57) argues, "these scholars believe that there is a coherent and dependably consistent reality that is the basis for our sensations, even if our sensations do not resemble the causative phenomenal bases...that prompt them, or demonstrate the same presumed cohesion or consistency". Hruby (2001) further emphasises, many of these positions stress the importance of the embodied nature of the human condition and argue that if we are to develop our understandings of human social behaviour we should begin to direct more attention to bodies placed within ecological systems. This position has been embraced in mainstream anthropology over the past quarter of a century (Hruby, 2001). Therefore, while linguistic social constructionism has as its goals

to move beyond a Cartesian approach, which sees internal processes that are universally given, though privileging language as a self-contained system, they ignore the external conditions of our lives and the embodied nature of individuals (Shotter, 2005) (See Table 4.1 for an epistemological matrix outlining the differences between versions of social constructionism). This version of social constructionism remains wedded to a Cartesian dichotomous view of the world where mind is privileged over body leaving a gap in our understandings. This approach has also left a legacy for much social constructionist work in the entrepreneurial domain, which has focused predominately on understandings constructions in the linguistic domain. This point is further developed below with reference to entrepreneurship studies in the next section.

Table 4.1: Epistemological Matrix (Adapted from Guba and Lincoln, 1994)

	ONTOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY	METHODOLOGY
REALISM	- Single reality operating according to natural laws - There is an ultimate truth which may be realised	- Truth established by objective researcher - Biases prevented from influencing outcomes - Findings true and replicable	- Control of confounding variables - De-contextualised - Objective researcher, puts aside any biases or values
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM - LINGUISTIC VERSIONS	- It can never be known if there is an ultimate truth - Multiple constructed realities, ungoverned by natural laws	- Reality cannot be known as categories we apply to it are socially constructed - Knowledge obtained through discourse	- Language is central - Centres multiple socially constructed realities - Researcher involved in construction or reality
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM - EMBODIED APPROACHES	- Some enduring reality which impacts our constructions but cannot be objectively known	- Linguistic constructions impacted by an external reality - Enduring social structures impact our understandings - Knowledge obtained through language, physical surroundings and embodied aspects	- The performative nature of language is central - Takes account of visual and embodied aspects of meaning-making - Multiple realities - Researcher involved in construction of reality

4.3 Mind and Body in the Entrepreneurship Domain

As we have seen above, the aim of social constructionism has been to turn our attention to the many taken-for-granteds in society and problematise the truth claims of these "realities", by focusing only on how our understandings are linguistically generated. In relation to this, social constructionist approaches have attempted to move away from what is often referred to as a Cartesian understanding. This Cartesian understanding privileges the mind as pre-given and superior to the body, which is seen as secondary and often inconsequential in comparison to superior inner processes. In an attempt to turn our attention away from such Cartesian systems of thought which highlight the importance of self-contained, intra-psychic processes such as cognitive mechanisms or personality traits, social constructionism has brought much needed attention to how our internal "realities" are on-going constructions in the linguistic domain rather than being pre-given entities (Shotter, 2005). However, by focusing solely on language without adhering to the impact the material world may have on our linguistic constructions, many versions of social constructionism remain tied to this Cartesian view. Through emphasising the superiority of discursively-generated constructions over the material realms of the external world, linguistic social constructionists unwittingly legitimise Cartesian understandings, and conduct their investigations as if human experience is divided by a fundamental dichotomy – the physical versus the mental or the body and the mind. They therefore enforce the separation of the rational mind "as a source of intellectual powers, from the body, as a source of sense, desire and animality" (Belova, 2006a: 95). Within this understanding, conscious acts of the mind are unrelated, separated and distinct form corporeal acts; the body in space remains a secondary extension to the knowing, objective and neutral mind.

Over time this dualism has become deeply engrained in our language and the way we see the world: "mind and other personal characteristics are 'differentiated' (set apart), 'nominalised' (made into nouns) and 'spatialised' (viewed as something in some space)" (Hosking, 2000: 150). In this way the mind is removed from the body and made into something distinct from the physical conditions of our lives. As Pearce (1992: 149) argues work in this vein

focuses "on language as an entity which establishes the parameters for identity and action; on personal identities or emotion which result from the formative process". Such research has dramatically reframed concepts such as "selfhood", "personhood", "identity" and "emotion" by treating them as products of social construction rather than some intra-psychic phenomenon (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Within the field of entrepreneurship, researchers who have aimed to reconceptualise ideas about an internal entrepreneurial personality and understand it as entrepreneurial identity, could be located within this stream (Cohen and Musson, 2001; Fournier and Lightfoot, 1997; Warren. 2004). Cohen and Musson (2000) for example studied the construction of professional identity of both GPs and a group of women who had moved from employment to self-employment. They found that entrepreneurial discourse had entered into the accounts of both the GPs and the group of female entrepreneurs. Interestingly, the majority of female entrepreneurs did not identify themselves with the term, with many viewing it in a pejorative manner. Cohen and Musson (2000) speculate that this may be due to negative connotations of entrepreneurship relating to the exploitative entrepreneur of the 1980s and Thatcher's Britain. Fournier and Lightfoot (1997) were similarly interested in entrepreneurial identity, in particular how people produce a sense of being a family business owner. In their study they argue that entrepreneurs use a range of discursive strategies to combine family and business together by continually rearranging and interweaving both components to provide coherent and contextualised accounts of their action. In these studies we see that entrepreneurial identity needed continual readjustment and redefining depending on the situations in the contextual environment.

Another vein of linguistic studies have attempted to understand entrepreneurship as a series of "stories", through applying ideas from narrative psychology e.g. (Sarbin, 1986) and investigate the stories that entrepreneurs use to talk about and make sense of the life-business-narratives (Bouwen and Steyaert, 1990; Downing, 2005; O'Connor, 2002; Rae, 2002; Steyaert, 1997). In an ethnographic study of entrepreneurship, O'Connor (2002) attempts to "story" entrepreneurship through examining entrepreneurs' narratives about their entrepreneurial ventures. She found that entrepreneurs used a range of intertwining and changing

entrepreneurial narratives to justify their goals in founding the business, to persuade others of its viability and to control and make sense of the ambiguity inherent in the environment. She identifies six basic narrative types, namely; founding, visionary, marketing, strategy, historical and convention, which she argues were variously applied depending on the demands of the situational context. Steyaert (1995; 1997) similarly puts forward a narrative approach to entrepreneurship, which conceptualises the entrepreneurial process as embedded in a paradigm of "becoming" (1997: 15). In order to concretise this process view, he decides to focus on dilemmas within the entrepreneurial environment, arguing that in a context where actions depend on the environment and uncertainty is rife, it seems appropriate that entrepreneurship be conceptualised in a problematic vocabulary. Others have placed importance on the imaginative and metaphorical aspects of the entrepreneurial narratives, arguing that entrepreneurs work in highly ambiguous environments where they grapple to make meaning with the language currently available to them and hence the use of figurative language is essential. Dodd (2002) found that entrepreneurs often reached for a range of metaphors, which collated around dynamic and often difficult human activities to give meaning to their lives. These metaphors included entrepreneurship as war, passion or a journey. This focus on imaginative aspects makes some move towards visual and imaginative aspects of entrepreneurship but does not take this beyond what is possible in the linguistic domain.

Such linguistic and narrative approaches provide very valuable insights as they conceptualise entrepreneurship as a process. They also encompass both individual and structural levels of understanding through outlining the impact societal discourse can have on individual constructions and also the agency of individuals to construct themselves and others. However, understandings are based solely in the realm of language and no account is taken of the material context within which these understandings are created. Taking a higher-level structural approach, which accounts for how entrepreneurs are situated in social networks, a number of studies have developed this process view through focusing on the wider context or the "embeddedness" of entrepreneurial process (e.g. Downing, 2005; Jack and Anderson, 2002; Hjorth and Johannisson, 2003). These studies often utilise approaches such as Gidden's (1979) structuration

theory to help theorise about these processes. While Gidden's structuration theory, which focuses on the duality of structure between levels of the individual and society, comes from a sociological understanding and is not specifically a social constructionist theory, it is often utilised by social constructionists to explore structure-agency processes (Burr, 2003). Jack and Anderson (2002), for example, use Gidden's theory of structuration to develop an understanding of entrepreneurship as an embedded socio-economic process. They found that embeddedness plays a key role in shaping and sustaining business, through creating opportunity and improving performance.

The focus of these studies is therefore based around activities and the relationships within which the entrepreneur is embedded; yet these studies do not account for the "embodied" entrepreneur placed within a physical context or how this space is used to make meaning in context. Fletcher (2006) proposes that structuration studies focus on how using "structure guided scripts" affects the entrepreneurial process and consequently the details of construction processes receive little attention. In relation to this, she highlights that these studies are "limited to describing the socio-cultural context in and through which particular practices are situated/produced (focusing on structure-agency dualities) rather than explaining the relatedness between the physical objects, ideas, images, people, discourses and practices that constitute reality" (Fletcher, 1996: 433). Therefore, these studies can only operate at the level of all individuals within a particular structure and do not transfer well to examining single individuals in their own unique contexts. She argues that social constructionist work should be more concerned with a range of representation systems (e.g. language, images, spaces etc) that are produced in explaining the duality of structure (Fletcher, 2006).

It seems clear from the above that social constructionist studies in the entrepreneurial domain have dramatically reconceptualised positivistic concepts such as personality and cognitive mechanisms, by focusing on entrepreneurship as a process, which is linguistically constructed and reconstructed in an ambiguous and unknown environment. They have also helped to emphasise the cultural significance and the social situatedness of the entrepreneurial endeavour

through emphasising how entrepreneurs are inextricably intertwined with their contextual surroundings. Where these studies leave gaps in our understandings is their failure to address the relationship between entrepreneurial bodies in a physical environment and how the "body in context" enables and constricts the constructions that entrepreneurs make. Such studies, to an extent, are still influenced by a Cartesian thought form which still orientates them towards "language as a self-contained systematic means of human expression with only an arbitrary relation to the conditions of our lives" (Shotter, 2005: 1), thereby excluding "the inherently embodied character of human endeavour" (Sampson, 1996: 602). While as suggested above, there is no research explicitly in the entrepreneurship domain that we can draw on to "embody" the entrepreneur, there is a literature in the wider realm of social constructionism and also a number of related approaches in organisational studies where researchers have sought to highlight the importance of re-embodying the Cartesian agent. In particular, two interesting strands of this research have emerged which are potentially of interest to the field of entrepreneurship. Firstly, some researchers focus upon the impact of the physical properties of our bodies and how we use our bodies in our meaning-making processes (e.g. Harre, 1995; Sampson, 1996). Others focus on the effect of the organisation of the physical and social environment in which we live and the artefacts that are placed within these environments (e.g. Parker, 1992) on the way we linguistically construct the world. This will be developed below and their relevance for the field of entrepreneurship will be examined.

4.4 Re-Embodying the Cartesian Entrepreneur

As suggested above there are a growing number of researchers calling for attention to be paid to the embodiment of individuals and the effects such embodiment has on our linguistic constructions. Yet as Rohrer (2007) notes there are a range of different, if related, senses to the term "embodiment" which interact to form a number of diverse research clusters all investigating aspects of embodiment. These dimensions range from the physiological and neurophysiological influences on the mind, to the physical body's interactions with the external world and the social and cultural experiences of the body.

Therefore before any attempt is made to develop the idea of embodiment in relation to entrepreneurship, it is essential that the meanings attributed to this term in the context of this study are clearly outlined. Rohrer (2007) aims to bring some coherence to the literature on embodiment and outlines twelve different senses of embodiment in relation to thinking and language. Yet he further argues these dimensions are not necessarily distinct, and to adequately address their research questions, researchers often combine two or more of these elements. The understanding of embodiment forwarded in this study could be seen to encompass three of Rohrer's twelve dimensions. The first of these dimensions is the philosophical understanding of embodiment, which is used to express a position diametrically opposite to the Cartesian philosophical account of the mind as outlined above. Secondly, the approach used in this study sees embodiment as encompassing the social, cultural and physical environment in which the body is situated and how this relates to thinking and language. The final dimension is the phenomenological understanding of embodiment which accounts for the lived experience of our bodies in relation to our identities and culture. In summary, embodiment is viewed as an understanding of the body as placed within a physical and social environment and how this embodied state impacts on the experience of individuals and their ability to construct linguistic meanings.

In line with this understanding the perspectives drawn on to develop the idea of embodiment in entrepreneurship hail from new realist and critical perspectives in social constructionism, theories of social space, and finally the field of organisation studies where the most critical perspectives on management studies reside. The first strand of this research focuses on how the physical body constrains and enables meaning-making processes. For example Harre (1995, 2000), while stressing the role that language plays in the construction of the self, also emphasises the importance of understanding the role of the body in the construction of social discourses. Harre (2000: 403) further argues that "personhood is so bounded by the singularity of each human being's embodiment that neither more nor less than one person per body is permitted to stand". Harre proposes that the body and the linguistic concept of self are inextricably intertwined and cannot be separated. Others have emphasised the

importance of encompassing an understanding of the construction of "reality" as occurring not only through discourse but also through the development and use of physical environments (Nightingale, 1999; Yardley, 1996). Radley (1996: 559) has put forward an interesting understanding of the expressive nature of the body in social life and how it can be used to make meaning, arguing "it is the medium for individuals to display things that matter to each other, and how they matter". Drawing on Goffman's (1951; 1961) dramaturgical perspective, he argues that bodies allow individuals to "display" certain meanings to each other. This can include, for example, adorning the body with certain clothes or jewellery or taking part in certain activities in particular contexts, or simply placing oneself within particular contexts. In this way the individual is using their body to create certain understandings and express these understandings to others. While he notes, "they do not require an audience to occur, the presence of an audience would often seem to be assumed in the form of their execution" (Radley, 1996: 565), therefore the individual internalises an external audience for whom the "display" is constructed.

In another vein, some writers have placed importance on the physical space within which bodies are placed, and how this effects our linguistic constructions. For example Parker (1992) argues that we are born into pre-existing societies where our lives are lived within the constrictions of current space and structures, which have historical and cultural meanings, and encourage us to act and speak in certain ways. These spaces such as houses, schools, hospitals and factories, are physically and socially arranged in ways that limit and enable certain linguistic constructions. Willig (1999: 44) similarly emphasises the social and physical arrangements in our contexts, proposing, "meanings are afforded by discourses, accommodated by social structures and changed by human acts". In the organisational studies domain both Hatch (1990) and Hofbauer (2000) have examined the impact of the spatial design of offices on social relations and the potential meanings that can be created within context. Yanow (2006) also stresses the importance of examining "design gestures", or how physical spaces relate to other surrounding spaces, through drawing on Hall (1966) and his idea of design proxemics, which emphasises how physical space is organised to reproduce social relations. Social constructionism also converges with

developing theories of social space on this point, which outline how certain spatial productions constrain and enable the production of certain meanings (e.g. Harvey, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). These theories argue that social space, which could potentially mean both physical and virtual space, is not present, waiting to be "acted into", but social spaces are themselves produced through interaction and meaning-making processes. They therefore become products for future relations enabling and constraining further possible meaning-making activities. The on-going meaning-making process involved in constructing space is highlighted by social space theorists as suggesting that analysis should focus on the on-going use of this space, rather than simply focusing on static "things in space" (Lefebvre, 1991: 37), space can be utilised to create a variety of different meanings.

In relation to physical space, artefacts that reside within these social spaces must also be examined. Burkitt (1999) argues that individuals not only discursively create their "realities" but also physically create them through developing and creating a range of physical artefacts. These artefacts help to further enable, constrict and create new "realities", revealing the importance of examining not only discourse, but also the artefacts, which people create that have the potential to transform their current understandings. For example the development of the computer has dramatically transformed our lives through changing the potential "reality" constructions we are able to make. Within the organisational studies area, there has been some examination of the role artefacts play in creating organisational "realities". Gagliardi (1990: 8) emphasises the importance of examining corporate artefacts, by which he means both physical space and objects, proposing that they are "the most evident concrete and tangible manifestations of the culture of an organisation". Yanow (2006) also directs attention towards the importance of artefacts, which reside within organisational contexts. In particular Yanow stresses how "décor", which she uses broadly to refer to desks, chairs, and other furnishings and also displays of artwork, photographs or cartoons, can be analysed to understand the wider organisational and social meaning-making processes occurring in the setting. Belova (2006b) takes a different view and not only examines what artefacts say about their creators or contexts but also what they are perceived to mean by active

interpreting agents. In doing this she transfers concepts often applied in the linguistic domain to the realm of visual artefacts including "author", "receiver". "message" and "context". In this way she proposes that the meanings of artefacts are not simply transferable from one individual to another but rather their understandings are determined by the context within which they are interpreted.

This focus on bodies, physical space and artefacts it seems may be an important aspect of the processes involved in entrepreneurship, in particular how entrepreneurs use them to make meaning and construct plausible realties for their business ventures. Previous social constructionist studies, as detailed above, have reconceptualised our understandings through focusing on the linguistic strategies used by entrepreneurs and emphasising how entrepreneurs influence and engage others in their surroundings through the use of language. In another vein, social network approaches examine how entrepreneurs gain access to useful networks through which they can develop and sustain worthwhile relationships. Yet neither of these approaches account for how entrepreneurs make meaning, beyond what is possible in the linguistic domain. Recently a number of theorists have highlighted the importance of what is being referred to as "social competence", which emphasise the importance of social skills that relate to entrepreneurial success (e.g. Baron and Brush, 2000; Baron and Markman, 2003; Mason and Harrison, 2000). The idea of social competence goes beyond ideas of persuasion through linguistic domains, as Vecchio (2003: 318) outlines, social competence "encompass the ability to correctly gauge the current moods or emotions of others, proficiency in inducing positive reactions in others by enhancing one's own appearance and image (i.e. impression management), effectiveness in persuasion, and the ability to adjust to a range of social situations with a range of individuals". There is some suggestion here of entrepreneurship as a persuasive act, where the "mood" of the audience must be gauged before any activities take place, and a number of tools applied, including language but not limited to, in order to accomplish the given task of engaging others in the venture. It is likely the entrepreneurs are often to be found in situations where persuasion and engagement is important, for example when finding finance, gaining customers and engaging a supportive and loyal workforce. Indeed through employing Kant's concept of "maturity" Thorpe *et al* (2006) have

highlighted the importance of the social and persuasive aspects of entrepreneurial activities.

While this "social competence" is conceived in a cognitive and information processing manner, with all the attendant problems of "special inner traits", as discussed in earlier chapters, where these studies are relevant to the embodiment of entrepreneurs is that work in this area emphasises the importance of face-to-face interaction in the process of persuading others to engage with their entrepreneurial venture. In this view it is not simply what they say but their whole "way of being" which is under examination; namely how entrepreneurs interact with others and successfully pursue their venture using a variety of means in context. In aiming to access meanings beyond what entrepreneurs simply say, Baron and Brush (2000) videotaped entrepreneurial presentations and rated entrepreneurs social skills, emphasising the importance of persuasiveness, emotional intelligence (or how effective they were in perceiving others' emotions) and personal appearance. Mason and Harrison (2000) similarly visually recorded entrepreneurs while conducting presentations to gain finance from business angels. They found that if entrepreneurs did not "sell" or persuade the business angels of the utility of their product through effective use of language, display and artefacts these business angels did not invest as they felt the potential entrepreneurs would be unlikely to be able to engage future customers in the venture. Therefore, there is an emphasis on the entrepreneurial aim as engaging with others around them not only through language, but applying whatever means available to engage others in the venture. A logical extension to the visual and embodied aspects in entrepreneurial engagements is the physical surroundings of the entrepreneur and how this contributes to the perceived legitimacy of the given venture.

Given the social constructionist approach of this study, the linguistic domain of entrepreneurship is emphasised as important, however, it also aims to encompass an understanding of the linkage of language and embodied "displays", which are intertwined and used to make meaning in the entrepreneurial setting. None of the approaches described above are oriented towards advancing such multi-modal understandings. While studies in the social constructionist domain do emphasise

that meaning is made through a variety of social practices and physical structures (e.g. Parker, 1992; Harre, 1995), it is unclear in these analyses what position language, body and environment play and to what extent they influence each other with researchers often suggesting an uneasy equality between these components. Yet as Burr (1995) argues if we give due credit to physical and social structures which impact on the lives of individuals and hence the language they can use to construct their realities, must we then suggest that individuals and the language they use are simply the products of social structures? If the individual is simply determined by their bodies and social structures then examining the language that they use becomes redundant, as structures constrain and determine the language forms available to individuals. This suggests viewing the world as a series of binary oppositions that encompass either/or understandings such as language/structure or body/mind are not useful in conceptualising entrepreneurship in a relational manner. In contrast in the organisational studies domain, the symbolic meaning of artefacts and physical settings is often the focus of attention (Yanow, 2006), rather than the manner by which they are utilised to make meaning by individuals. However, as Shotter (1990: 54) argues "in everyday life, words do not in themselves have a meaning, but a use, and furthermore, a use only in a context; they are best thought of, not as having already determined meanings, but as means, as tools, or as instruments for use in the 'making of meaning'". It is not the words that are spoken, the artefacts that are created, buildings that are built, that are important but rather how language, artefacts, physical spaces and bodies are used and related within the world to make meaning in a particular context. As neither approach is sufficient for the aims of this study, it seems, therefore, that we need a very different worldview. An attempt at conceptualising such a worldview is made below.

4.5 Conceptualising a Relational Worldview

As suggested above, it seems essential that we escape a binary understanding of the world if the aim is to examine entrepreneurship as a multi-modal relational process. Yet, how we might do this is highly problematic as this view of the world, as a number of contrasting opposites, is deeply engrained in our language

and therefore thought processes. Both Burr (1995) and Sampson (1989) highlight the work of the French philosopher Derrida (1974, 1978) on deconstruction, as one way of potentially overcoming this problematic dichotomous worldview. Derrida recognised that views of the world are structured around binary oppositions in which one term dominates the other. He further outlined that this binary opposition was not a "peaceful co-existence of a vis-à-vis but rather...a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment" (Derrida, 1981: 41). Derrida demonstrated the oppositional and differential forces at work in our thought and language, through emphasising that within language "signifiers" can only gain their meaning from other signifiers. For instance, when talking about the mind and the body, one can only make sense through an implicit reference to the other; the mind would not have meaning if we did not recognise that the mind is not the body, yet mind dominates over the term body. Therefore, when we talk about something, we are always implicitly referring to what those things are not, resulting in a continuous tension "between what [the text] manifestedly means to say and what it is nonetheless constrained to mean" (Norris, 1987: 19). This continually occurs through the way we talk about the world and is not a conscious decision on the part of the speaker, "deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organisation of a subject" (Derrida, 1991, p. 274). Therefore as Sampson (1989: 12) suggests "if presence always contains absence there cannot be a neatly drawn line of opposition between these two notions. It is not that presence and absence are opposites, not that there is either presence or absence, but rather that there is an inevitable defining of one through the other."

Derrida argues that this binary positioning in our language is arbitrary and that it is possible to conceptualise the world in another manner, moving from a logic based on "either/or" towards a logic based on "both/and". In this understanding, he proposes, hierarchies would not be inherent in our talk; rather talk would be ongoing. In addition, meaning-making processes would not be based around a series of contrasting opposites but work as relating to one another (Derrida, 1974). As Burr (1995) argues, this approach overcomes the problems of the

binary nature of thought processes as when we study any phenomenon, in order to understand it properly, we should take as our unit of study both what it is taken to be and what it appears to exclude. Thus, in the case of the entrepreneurship, rather than seeing the entrepreneur and their material and social environment as forming opposite sides of a dichotomy, we should instead think of them as inseparable components in a mutually defining system. If we aim to conceptualise the world within a "both/and" logic, we inevitably move towards an inclusive view of the world, where mind is not emphasised over body, or language over structure etc. This view examines the relational processes involved in the social construction of meaning rather than "static", "nominalised" products of the construction process. In the present case, this means treating "relating", as the vehicle in which entrepreneurship is in continuous ongoing construction.

Drawing on these ideas, there are a small number of social constructionists that have attempted to theorise about social constructionist processes within a "both/and" logic. For example, Sampson's work on embedded individualism (1989, 1990, 1993) offers one possible conception of what a relational approach could look like. In line with Derrida, he argues that our modes of language and hence thinking are founded on a binary logic, which he proposes is a feature particular to Western cultures (Sampson, 1989). Sampson (1990) argues that this binary positioning in our language has resulted in understandings of individuals being based on ideas such as "self-contained individualism" or "possessive individualism". This approach describes a character whose clear boundaries work to separate self from other, and is seen to be able to function independently of the others around them (Sampson, 1990). Drawing on Bateson's (1972) ideas on the ecology of the mind, he argues it would be more beneficial to view the world as an ecological system, where everything is intertwined and interconnected; effecting one part of the system will effectively impact on other parts (Sampson, 1989). Sampson also brings attention to the increasing globalisation occurring in the world, further arguing that the binary positioning in our language is no longer suited to an increasingly inclusive and interconnected world. He therefore proposes that the unit of analysis should not be understood within an "either/or" logic, such as organism/environment, mind/body, entrepreneur/material context,

rather all systems should be seen as mutually defining and involved in the meaning-making processes occurring in the setting. Within this perspective, people's lives are seen as relationally created, characterized by ongoing conversations or dialogues and their interactions with others or otherness around them as they go about their everyday activities. In this view, the most important thing about people in not what is contained within them but the activities and interactions they take part in on a daily basis (Sampson, 1993). Within this understanding then, entrepreneurs may be seen as embodied individuals, intertwined and related to the external system and material environment within which they are placed.

Hosking (e.g. 1999, 2000) has also put forward another relational view towards social constructionist practice, which she refers to as relational constructionism. Hosking argues that this view involves a move away from an "entitative" view of the individual, which presumes that individuals are separate from the others and otherness around them and moves towards a view that places individuals, as constructed through their communication processes i.e. language and action. Her approach views language as performative as the process of dialogue is seen to create people and worlds (Hosking, 2000). Language in this view is conceptualised in a much wider understanding than in linguistic versions of social constructionism. As she outlines language is seen as any action and includes "written and spoken words, non-verbal gestures, voice tone, and artefacts of human activity such as logo, a company uniform, interior layout and décor, music" (Hosking, 1999: 120). Relating, therefore, is seen as a co-construction rather than an individual affair, even when acts are separated in time and space, and between human and non-human entities. For the purposes of this research, the entrepreneur could be seen as relating to his or her material and physical surroundings as much as relating to other individuals around him or her. She proposes that any act is not intrinsically meaningful but is made meaningful by the way it is "supplemented" or co-ordinated. Different supplements result in different meanings being attributed to the act and inviting the process to continue in a variety of ways. However, she does see these co-ordinations as local-cultural and local-historical, therefore, some co-ordinations are more likely or probable than others depending on the conventions of the context. These co-ordinations

make and remake social constructions, therefore, change is central in this view and stability is seen as an ongoing active achievement or re-construction (Hosking, 2000).

Within the entrepreneurial domain, Fletcher (2006) has gone considerably further than any other researcher, aiming to re-construct the idea of entrepreneurial opportunity recognition within a relational understanding. Fletcher argues that in thinking about opportunity recognition, we should move away from structurally-determinist and cognitive/agency-oriented views and try to understand how opportunity formation is relationally and communally constituted. She argues this will widen our theoretical understandings of the activities that we label entrepreneurship. To aid this line of enquiry Fletcher conducts an analysis of an autobiographical account of two sibling entrepreneurs' accounts of the founding of their high profile venture. Fletcher evaluates these accounts and illustrates that in constructing their accounts the entrepreneurs are constantly bringing to their dialogue previous understandings, experiences, interwoven conversations, and a history of relationships that are culturally, socially and politically situated. In particular, Fletcher emphasises three relational aspects that the entrepreneurs commonly drew on to explain their activities namely: family processes, enterprise discourses and changing consumption patterns. Interestingly, while Fletcher does not explicitly examine the entrepreneurs as "embodied", she does place their venture "in space" emphasising how various discourses, social practices, ideas and images are related to the space in which they occur.

Fletcher's approach therefore demonstrates how useful a relational understanding of entrepreneurship can be, however, in order to fulfil the aims of this study, because her approach focuses solely on discourse it is not suitable. Furthermore while Hosking's (1999; 2000) and Sampson's (1989, 1990, 1993) approaches show us what is possible and further elucidate the advantages of a relational approach they do not provide sufficient guidance in terms of methodologies or frameworks for analysis and also do not seem to address the persuasive aspects of entrepreneurial endeavour. Consequently, another theory will be put forward which draws on Shotter's work on rhetorical-relational constructionism and

Billig's work on rhetoric and argumentation as outlined below, which will be used as theoretical framework for this study.

4.6 Theoretical Framework: The Embodied Rhetorician

As suggested above, in order to examine the multi-modal meaning-making and persuasive processes of the entrepreneur in context, a theoretical framework is needed which provides some guidance in examining the persuasive aspects of entrepreneurial activities. In an attempt to provide such a theoretical framework, this research draws on Shotter's rhetorical-relational model of conversation (1995, 1998, 2005) and Billig's work on rhetoric and argumentation (1990, 1993, 1996). While Shotter and Billig approach human interaction from different angles, where they converge is their emphasis on the importance of the rhetorical processes involved of our interaction with others and our environments. Although rhetoric is often applied in the field of entrepreneurship, such studies use rhetoric in a pejorative manner, in an attempt to refer to a discourse that is empty of any real meaning and in direct contrast to reality. As Billig (1990: 47) notes "to call a piece of discourse 'mere rhetoric' is to dismiss it, with the implication that the discourse contains no substance." Research in this vein assumes that by stripping back this rhetoric they can somehow uncover the "true" reality of the situation. Language is seen as representative of an independently existing reality, which is currently being obscured from view by the rhetoric blocking our understanding of the real world. Therefore, phrases such as "rhetoric and reality" or "beyond the rhetoric" are often heard in the entrepreneurship literature as rhetoric is juxtaposed against a knowable reality (e.g. Dees, 2004; Edwards *et al*, 2002). In this view rhetoric is seen as a misleading discourse, obscuring the reality of the situation, which must be removed so we can begin to understand what's really going on. Billig (1996) argues this accusatory understanding of rhetorical processes has its roots in the writing of ancient rhetoricians such as Aristotle. The rhetoricians often claimed to be able to "win over any audience" and it was this claim, which "provoked the hostility from those who feared the hidden powers of rhetoric" (Billig, 1996: 122).

With this claim of immense power of persuasion. it would seem as Billig (1996: 122) notes, "the ancient study of rhetoric does not seem to offer dialogic skills, since it was typically presented as the art of the monologue", or the ability to construct a convincing monologue which persuades the audience of the validity of the argument forwarded. Rhetoric, however, must always be inherently dialogic or relational rather than monologic, as in order to convince an audience the rhetorician has to engage with the arguments already inherent in that context. As Billig (1996) further elucidates, the orator cannot operate in a rhetorical vacuum, but has to win arguments and being successful in the art of rhetoric involves defeating the counter-arguments of opponents. Therefore, the context of rhetoric is inherently relational. In this view, thinking and communication is a continuous process of relating to other conversations and arguments already inherent in our environment in an attempt to create meaning, therefore, the use of certain arguments is not arbitrary but is informed by the arguments already in the context (Shotter, 1993a). The study of rhetorical processes of human communication were revived in the 1970s and 80s within the field of social psychology to counter the increasing dominance of cognitive understandings (Potter, 1996). This allowed researchers to understand thought and communicative processes in a more inclusive and situated manner through viewing them as a series of contrasting argumentative dilemmas situated in the contextual environment. While rhetoric is often applied as a way of understanding linguistic processes, it offers the potential to be extended, to have a wider understanding, as Aristotle (cited in Roberts and Bywater, 1954: 24) outlines, "rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion". Shotter (2005) similarly emphasises the importance of examining "embodied responsiveness" in communicative processes. Therefore, in this view, artefacts, bodies and physical environments can be related to, where appropriate, within the rhetorical endeavour of communication. Placing the entrepreneur within a context of the "available means" of persuasion, entrepreneurship is no longer conceived as simple information processing, or a linguistic endeavour, bur rather an embodied relational project, which allows us to examine how entrepreneurs use a variety of means to create meanings and convince others of the validity of the venture.

As outlined above, one conception of this rhetorical structuring of communication is Shotter's (1993a; 1995; 2005) rhetorical-relational understanding of human interaction. He theorises about these processes, through drawing on a range of philosophers and theorists often from a soviet background and understanding (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981, 1986, Voloshinov, 1986). In contrast to Gergen (1985) and other linguistically oriented social constructionists, Shotter (1993a; 1995; 2005) proposes that while our words and actions are not predetermined, there are certain limitations on our abilities to make new meanings, in that these meanings must relate to the others around them, allowing them to respond in a meaningful way to our dialogue. As Shotter (2005) argues, "in the moment of our speaking, if we want to influence those around us…we must be able to speak…with the anticipation that those we are addressing will respond to us in ways that will progress our mutual attempts to communicate with each other". The challenge for speakers, then, is to decipher what manner of speech or action is appropriate for that particular moment in order to influence others and make sense with them. This, as Shotter (2005: 9) has argued, is not only how language is used but we must also attend to the "spontaneous expressive-responsiveness of bodily activities", emphasising the importance of understanding the embodied aspects of communication. These rhetorical processes are seen, as being located in specific times and space – an argument made in one context, doesn't necessarily transfer unproblematically to another, because the argumentative context may be entirely different (Shotter, 1993a). Conversations or arguments are part of an unfolding chain of events, where what has gone before and what goes after shapes the meaning of the conversation, therefore, it is important to situate the argument within a "larger, natural, social, cultural and political context" in order to make sense of what the argument means (Shotter, 2005). Therefore, when an individual speaks they not only anticipate a response from the individual they are talking with, but also from a "third agency or "superaddressee" which is the embodiment of broader social and cultural understandings (Shotter, 1995).

In a related vein, Billig (1990, 1993, 1996) similarly forwards a relational conceptualisation of the rhetorical structuring of human interaction. Rather than drawing on soviet relational theories, Billig draws on the ancient studies of

rhetorical communication in particular Protagorean rhetoric. This approach assumes that any "logos" could be matched by a counter-statement, or an "anti-logos", therefore, concentrating on opposing one logos to another logos, or discovering the presence of such an opposition in an argument, thing or state of affairs (Hamilton, 2001). As Diogenes Laertius states (cited in Billig, 1996: 71), Protagoras "asserted that in every question there are two sides to the argument exactly opposite to one another". Billig (1990: 51) argues that in persuasive communication, "speakers and writers attempt to present their discourse as reasonable by giving justifications for their position and for countering objections with criticisms". Arguing effectively involves basing your proposals on those that have gone before, and continuously relating these proposals to the external argumentative context. Therefore, speakers not only argue to others around them but also relate these arguments to the ones already occurring in the wider contextual environment. In this rhetorical form of communication and thinking, arguments are continuously being countered and opposed by varying and changing arguments in context. Therefore this approach stresses the enthymemic aspects of rhetoric, which may be defined as a statement together with a justification, this "justification might then be criticised, and it in turn will need an enthymemic support, which in its turn will be open to criticism, and so on" (Billig, 1993: 50). In this way, there is activity on the part of the speaker and the audience. As Gate (cited in Hamilton, 2001) notes the task of the speaker is to do "something with" the audience rather than "do something to them". The process of rhetoric is therefore one of adjustment and readjustment, of construction and reconstruction, of negotiation and renegotiation as the speaker derives an understanding from the audience with both speaker and audience influencing each other and attending to wider contextual understandings and constraints. It is an ongoing process; it is not about closure, but about continuous argumentation and response (Bialostosky, 1995).

While both approaches draw on different intellectual traditions to come to their understandings, the underlying assumptions and understandings that arise from both provide similar insights as theoretical frameworks. In particular, both Shotter and Billig emphasise the importance of a continuous relational dialogue between individuals, which works to influence their future communications and

also give meaning to their past communications. All such arguments or communications take place within a context, which not only impacts on the arguments individuals are able to make, but also how successful their arguments are likely to be. These conversational or argumentative activities may be extended from the linguistic domain to encompass other activities and the use of a variety of meaning-making tools in context, through which successful arguments may be put forward and other individuals may be influenced. This rhetorically oriented approach then provides a theoretical framework for this study, as it affords the opportunity to examine how entrepreneurs, in context, make sense of their activities and also persuade others to engage in their venture, through a multitude of means. It also allows us to encompass a "both/and" logic rather than an "either/or" understanding. Ongoing dialogue, meaning-making and persuasion are seen as inherent components of the entrepreneurial process, which are inextricably linked and continuously related to other aspects of the contextual surroundings within which the activities are placed.

Such a theoretical framework also has implications for an appropriate methodological approach, through which such an understanding may be gained. As Shotter (2005: 4) argues, in order to understand the rhetorical-relational structuring of the setting, the researcher must aim to gain "ontological" skills, in other words, become "sensitive to the local and interactional properties in operation". In order to gain these "ontological skills" the researcher must engage in a living, flowing interaction with the participants over an extended period of time. He refers to this as "entering into" another's world and getting a sense of that other as an individual with a life of its own, yet inextricably linked to the context in which they are placed. Echoing Derrida, he further elucidates that only as an insider within a social group's affairs can one discriminate between what is said from what else is not being said, which he refers to as "unprevailing discourses" (Shotter, 2005: 2). While Shotter (2005: 7) makes a point of emphasising that he is not advocating any "special methods or methodologies", it seems from his arguments that applying this approach would involve an examination of relational activities and be extended over a period of time in order to gain some level of understanding of the contextual setting. Therefore, in order to engage in a living, flowing interaction it would seem that some form of

ethnographic approach would be needed, where the researcher enters "the field" and attempts to develop an in-depth understanding of the processes over an extended period of time, using a range of methods such as interviews, observation and field notes to gain this understanding.

While an ethnographic approach may be highly useful to gain access to how language is used in or about the entrepreneurial setting to make meaning, it does not appear to be sufficient to capture a range of other meaning-making activities occurring in the domain, particularly those that are not spoken, but rather, must be seen. Echoing the binary positioning of mind and body in our worldview, text-based approaches have long been privileged over visual understandings (Fyfe and Law, 1988). This research attempts to bring the visual aspects of entrepreneurship to the forefront through applying an approach referred to by Pink (2001) as visual ethnography. This involves encompassing a visual dimension, in this case videotaped images, into more routine ethnographic techniques in order to gain access to some of these multi-modal meaning-making activities. While this approach has been applied in fields like sociology and anthropology (e.g. Becker, 1998; Harper, 1989; Mead, 1995; Prins, 2002), it is relatively rare for visual techniques to be applied in management, entrepreneurship and organisational domains, with the use of moving images being the most underdeveloped area. Therefore, this research is not only an attempt to investigate how we may "embody" the entrepreneur and examine how entrepreneurs make meaning using multi-modal means, but is also an investigation into how an innovative and underused methodology can be applied in the entrepreneurship domain. These aims are outlined explicitly below. The application of this novel methodological approach under the above theoretical framework, the issues encountered in applying such a novel approach and the analysis of data will be discussed and developed in the next chapter.

4.7 Aims of the Study:

- To use an innovative methodology known as "visual ethnography" and investigate the issues around applying such an approach.

- To explore the rhetorical-relational aspects of entrepreneurial meaning-making.
- To examine how entrepreneurs make meaning and persuade others through the use of both visual and verbal means.
- To consider the impact of embodied aspects of the entrepreneurial process.
- To develop an understanding of the relationship between material artefacts and linguistic understandings.

5.0 SEEING ENTREPRENEURSHIP: VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

5.1 Employing a Visual Methodology

It has been outlined in the previous chapter that due to an underlying dualism in our understandings of the world, much social constructionist research, while purporting to reject the Cartesian separatist approach to mind and body, through focusing solely on linguistic meaning-making continues to privilege the mind as detached from the lesser body. In the entrepreneurial domain, previous social constructionist studies have greatly increased our understandings by examining how entrepreneurs linguistically influence and engage others in their surroundings (e.g. Bouwen and Steyaert, 1990; O'Connor, 2002). In addition, other social constructionist studies have further added to our insights through focusing on how entrepreneurs gain access to networks which allow them to engage others who are important to the success of their venture (e.g. Downing, 2005; Jack and Anderson, 2002). These studies do not, however, account for how entrepreneurs make meaning beyond what is possible in the linguistic domain. A number of theorists have begun to place importance on the persuasive aspects of entrepreneurial activity, which extend beyond what is possible simply through language, because entrepreneurs, it seems, must use a range of tools to make meaning with others and to convince others to support their business venture (e.g. Baron and Markman, 2003; Mason and Harrison, 2000). This study aims to understand these processes in a relational manner, which suggests that such understandings do not arise within people but between people and their inextricable relations to their environments. In this way, this study builds on other social constructionist studies in the entrepreneurial domain and attempts to develop these ideas through not only investigating the linguistic aspects of the entrepreneurial endeavour but also "embodying" the entrepreneur through investigating how they make meaning using a range of non-linguistic tools.

A theoretical framework has been put forward drawing on Shotter's rhetorical-relational understandings (1993a, 1995, 2005) and Billig's rhetoric and argumentation approach (1990, 1993, 1996). These theoretical approaches focus on the rhetorical structuring of interaction and afford the opportunity to

encompass the persuasive aspect of entrepreneurial activity and meaning-making beyond linguistic understandings within a relational framework. In an attempt to gain an in-depth and ongoing interaction with participants, an ethnographic approach will be taken in this research; an approach, which continues to remain under-utilised in the entrepreneurship literature (Steyaert, 1997). Ethnography entails spending extended periods of time with participants in naturalistic settings and collecting data through observing, interviewing or sometimes participating in activities. Yet it is not merely a neutral method of data collection, but rather a methodology, which encompasses the researcher's disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles (Pink, 2001). Given the rhetorical-relational approach of this research, a discussion follows, which explores how an ethnographic approach should be applied within such a framework. In particular, the idea of accessing the multiple arguments in context is explored through employing a polyphonic approach which emphasises not only the "truths" forwarded by the entrepreneur but also engaging with the arguments forwarded by others in the entrepreneur's context (Bate, 1997). In relation to this, the researcher's role in the construction of the account is also examined. In particular, an attempt is made to move away from narcissistic reflexivity where the researcher becomes central to the investigation through lingering on the effects of their personal characteristics on the research process. Instead, an approach known as disciplined reflexivity (Weick, 2002) is advanced which emphasises openness in the research process and suggests particular attention should be paid to the researcher's underlying assumptions and how this informs their understandings of the data. Furthermore, the work is not presented as an objective account but rather a rhetorical product in itself, where "I" as the researcher actively recognise that I am engaged in an exercise of persuading the readers of this text of the meaningfulness of my findings (Clifford, 1986; Watson, 1995).

While an ethnographic approach can then potentially allow some level of access to the dialogues occurring within a context, it seems to truly embody the entrepreneur, some understanding of how visual surroundings impact on meaning-making processes needs to be developed. This would point to the importance of the visual or imagery aspects of the entrepreneurship process. Yet, in line with this mind/body distinction, there has been a paralleled division

between verbal and visual forms of research (Emmison and Smith, 2000; Fyfe and Law, 1988). Organisational and management research has long privileged verbal forms of communication over visual forms, which are often viewed with the suspicion of being "subjective" and highly susceptible to researcher biases and consequently unsuitable for "valid" and "reliable" research (Pink, 2001). Most qualitative research in these fields are limited to textual data gathering techniques and representations which are seen as providing increased objectivity in comparison to visually-based accounts. These include transcribed interviews and verbal observations of visual events published in text-based journals. Yet, as Secrist *et al*, (2002) note, despite all the thick description and detail that writers provide, they often suggest that words alone are not enough to communicate the complex social interactions which they encounter. Consequently there has been a small but growing interest in what visual methods may add to current text-based approaches, such as the occasional example of the use of visual images through still photographs (e.g. Buchanan, 2001). Visual approaches remain rare in research in or about organisations, and it is even rarer to find any evidence of embedded ethnographic work that applies a visual method in research design, analysis or representation. The small number of studies that have incorporated moving images will be reviewed. This includes a body of work collectively referred to as "workplace studies" (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002; Luff *et al* 2000) and also Cunliffe's (2002) post-modern perspective on management practice which offers insights that are particularly relevant to the rhetorical-relational approach of this study.

Building on these arguments as briefly outlined above, this study attempted to conduct visual ethnographies of three entrepreneurs in the context of their respective businesses. Building on the arguments outlined in the first chapter, the entrepreneurs who became involved in this study fulfilled the criteria set out in Gartner's (1990) definition of entrepreneurship, which emphasised innovative practices and growth-oriented strategies. The visual aspect of the study involved the researcher using a video camera to capture videotaped interviews and also images of people including entrepreneurs and staff performing their everyday jobs within the businesses. The use of the moving-image by capturing data on video camera was chosen because it allowed the researcher to capture ongoing,

embodied interaction between the entrepreneurs, others and a variety of material objects in their context. This rich data could not have been captured through the use of fieldnotes and interviews alone. Yet, while video adds a unique dimension of the moving image to research, it became apparent throughout this study that participants were averse to being videoed in difficult or emotional situations. This not only emphasises the importance of supplementing video data with text based methods but also suggests a raft of ethical questions about video-based research, as participants are easily identifiable by visual images. In view of this, issues such as informed consent and confidentiality become paramount, and as a consequence are discussed in detail within this chapter. Finally the transcription and analysis of the collected data is outlined, in particular, it is argued that while transcription is often simply treated as a practical matter, attention is paid to how transcription affects both analysis and results of the study. The approach taken to both verbatim transcription and analysis is emphasised as being in line with the rhetorical-relational theoretical framework of this study.

5.2 Reflexive Ethnography: A Disciplined Approach

As has been outlined above this research takes a visual ethnographic approach in an attempt to re-embody the entrepreneur through engaging in an ongoing interaction in order to investigate how verbal and visual meanings are made and remade in the entrepreneurial process. Brewer (2000: 10) describes ethnography as "the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means or methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally". Pink (2001) criticises definitions such as this for being limited in their suggestion that ethnography is simply a collection of methods, awaiting neutral application to any research problem or situation. Indeed, throughout the history of ethnography both generally and within organisational and management studies it has been applied within a variety of theoretical agendas and approaches or "moments". These "moments" range from the realist projects in the middle of the last century (e.g. Roy, 1958; Lupton, 1963) to approaches termed the "fourth and fifth moments" by Denzin and Lincoln (1994)

which are non-representational, emphasise reflexivity through questioning the researchers' objectivist truth and move towards a relativist epistemology (e.g. Collinson, 1992; Kunda, 1992; Watson, 1994). As Pink (2001) argues ethnography may be more beneficially seen as a methodology encompassing the underlying epistemological foundations of the research, which are reflected in the researcher's practice. Bate (1997: 1152) similarly argues ethnography "is not so much about doing and technique as about thinking, about looking at the world and oneself in a particular kind of way". Therefore before any attempt is made to understand the practical issues involved in carrying out this research an attempt is made to align the ethnographic approach applied in this study with the underlying theoretical concerns of the researcher.

As has been previously proposed, in order to investigate the multi-modal meaning-making activities of "embodied" entrepreneurs, an approach must be applied which gives access to how these meanings are subjectively made through verbal and visual means within the entrepreneurial setting. Under the theoretical framework as described earlier, which draws on Shotter's rhetorical-relational approach (1993a; 1995; 2005) and Billig's understanding of rhetoric (1990, 1993, 1996) these processes are seen as rhetorical structures constantly in a state of flux. These meanings are continuously negotiated and renegotiated both through interaction with immediate others in their environment and also through dialogue relating to a "superaddressee" or the embodiment of social and political norms and understandings. It therefore involves developing a wide and inclusive understanding, as Billig argues, "one should not examine merely the words within that discourse or the images in the speaker's mind at the moment of utterance. One should also consider the positions which are being criticised, or against which a justification is being mounted" (1987: 91). In this view visual ethnography is seen as enabling the researcher to gain access to these constructions through obtaining what Shotter (2005: 4) refers to as "ontological skills" or an understanding that allows us to become "sensitive to the local and interactional properties in operation" in the entrepreneurial setting. Echoing Shotter's call for "ontological skills", Collins (1998: 285) similarly places importance on acquiring "native competence" in the setting. Drawing on his work on the sociology of scientific knowledge Collins argues this may be gained

by immersing oneself in the community or organisation and learning the language pertaining to that domain. He refers to this acquisition of the language or discourse used within the relevant research context as gaining "interactional expertise" (Collins, 2004: 126). In this way the researcher is "laden with informal and tacit knowledge pertaining to the language even if one does not have the practical skills to pass as a fully competent member of the form of life once we move beyond language" (Collins, 2004: 126). "Entering into" another's world in this way, allows us to gain access to the understandings and meaning-making activities of that individual, through accessing current dialogues and wider social understandings. Therefore, wider contextual issues should be outlined in each ethnographic account in order to situate the arguments of the entrepreneur and others in their environment.

Such a theoretical framework does suggest that there are limitations on the constructions we are able to make. However, it also emphasises that many multiple constructions vie for position and importance among a range of potential meanings aiming to make constructions of what is "real" (Billig, 1996). Consequently, a "polyphonic" approach is essential in this research, which means that the entrepreneurs "arguments" should not be privileged over what others say in their contextual environment. Attention should also be paid to the arguments that others in context such as customers, employees and other business associates put forward in an attempt to uncover "unprevailing discourses" (Shotter, 2005). This approach contrasts with much of the work in the entrepreneurial domain, which tends to centre the entrepreneur as the principle and sometimes only actor. Yet, even if the entrepreneur does start out on their venture alone, they are inherently part of a wider social system through constantly relating to others and to wider social and political understandings. While the entrepreneur's arguments should not therefore be centred as the "only" truth, this privileging of one voice also extends to my own arguments, which "I" put forward as the narrator of this text. Echoing the rhetorically constructed communications within the entrepreneurial setting, the content of this analysis cannot be seen as a simple matter of detached reporting. As the researcher, I am attempting to make my observations and arguments meaningful to the reader of this text through taking part in my own rhetorical strategy. As Bate (1997: 1160) notes "'proof', 'truth',

and 'validity' are as much an issue of style as of content". I am not simply reporting a series of events, but rather developing these events into a coherent narrative which makes sense to the readers of this text. In particular, through drawing on arguments within the wider domain of entrepreneurial research and intertwining various understanding, I am attempting to convince the "audience" that my arguments are "credible", "useful" and "meaningful" by attending to various academic rhetorical conventions.

Some have stressed the problems with such academic conventions, as the researcher's version of events has greater "warrant" and is given more "voice" than that of the "subject" and "reader" (Burr, 1995). In an attempt to accommodate this paradoxical position of the researcher, as both the narrator of a text and also forwarding just one potential argument within a multitude of different meanings, many researchers often advocate a reflexive approach. As Pink (2001: 19) outlines, "a reflexive approach recognises the centrality of the subjectivity of the research to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge". Such an approach suggests that the researcher should continuously be aware throughout the research process of how the various elements of their identities become significant during the research process and write this into the research presentations (e.g. Pink 2001; Brewer, 2000). As Weick (2002: 895) argues in this approach "we are reminded in no uncertain terms, of the ways in which our culture, ideology, race, gender, class, language, advocacy, and assumed basis of authority limit, if not destroy, any claim our work has to validity in some interpretive community". This strategy, it is proposed, allows the researcher to understand how their personal characteristics may have in some way influenced the research process and affected their understanding of the results. Furthermore, it also affords the reader the opportunity to examine whether they agree with the researcher's analysis of the effect that these personal characteristics may have had on the results of the research.

Yet while such reflexive work attempts to remove the powerful position of the researcher in the construction of the text, some writers are beginning to argue that some researchers have taken reflexivity too far. Weick (2002: 894), for example, proposes that some reflexive work is a narcissistic endeavour on the

part of the researcher and undermines what they are trying to achieve through once again privileging "the voice of the author while the subjects of organizational life are kept at a distance [research thus becomes] a forum for the exercise of academic indulgence". In particular Weick (2002) suggests that life is lived forwards yet we aim to understand it backwards. During data collection the researcher and researched act in a non-objectified, engaged manner or what Weick refers to as "absorbed coping" (2002: 895). Once removed from the field, the researcher no longer sees the world in a holistic manner but starts to see patterns of discrete de-contextualised physical objects and events. As Weick (2002: 895) notes after the data collection stage "and with detachment, we can, if pressed, enumerate the many ways in which our unique biography may have shaped the observational moment". This unique biography is then treated as an object, which can be "labelled", "separated" and "differentiated" from the actual event being studied, in order to increase the "validity" of the conclusions. Such a method of reflexivity would seem to result in a research approach that is very different to the rhetorical-relational approach of this research. Indeed, such "narcissistic reflexivity" appears to continue the mind-body dichotomy as it objectifies the research context as a place where personal characteristics and other physical and non-physical entities in the setting may be "differentiated, nominalised and spatialised" through backward introspection (Hosking, 2000: 150). Such an approach proposes that researchers can somehow label the processes occurring and objectify their own part in the research practice.

Within this view the emergent and contingent nature of achieving meaning by both the researcher and the research participants is lost, as the researcher's "narcissistic reflexivity" glosses over the phenomenon it is trying to reveal. This results in what Shotter (2005) refers to as an understanding of "dead forms at a distance" rather than a relational, ongoing and embodied understanding. In line with the argument made by Weick (2002), some attempt is made here to move away from this form of reflexivity, and move towards a form of "disciplined reflexivity." Weick (2002: 897) proposes that we cannot assume that "the world of subjects and objects that becomes visible in a detached, present-at-hand moment is anything like the ready-to-hand moments where there is no separation between subject and object. What we see after the fact as bias, before the fact

was flow." Therefore in this work, the personal "spatialised" characteristics of the author, which may or may not have affected the research process and the representation of results, are not laboured over. Weick (2002: 897) argues that we need to be reflexive about a very different set of personal categories, such as "grasp of wholes, situational awareness, and sensitivity to the big picture". Such an approach emphasises wider institutional constraints, which impact our understandings of the research process including time constraints, opportunities for access to organisations, fund-seeking behaviour and paradigm-conforming regardless of the research questions at hand. Openness is therefore key to this reflexive process while narcissistic reflection certainly is not, within a disciplined reflexive approach "the producer deliberately, intentionally reveals to his or her audience the underlying epistemological assumptions that caused him or her to formulate a set of questions in a particular way to seek answers to those questions in a particular way and finally to present his or her findings in a particular way" (Ruby, 2000: 156). Given that the previous chapter was dedicated to outlining the particular epistemological position of this research, it is felt that some level of this openness has been achieved.

In an attempt to incorporate further openness within this study, it is further acknowledged that this work is one of "craft and artifice" (Watson, 2000: 501) and can only ever hope to be an "inherently partial – committed and incomplete" account of the processes at work in the entrepreneurial process (Clifford, 1986: 7). Indeed, as outlined above researchers are as much involved in the processes of argumentation as the participants that they study. In some ethnographic accounts, such rhetorical conventions are often concealed through the use of impersonal reporting and an aversion to any self-mention in the ethnographic text. This strategy proposes that studies are simply objective texts and that human agency had no part in the process of reporting, in this way the "eradication of self is therefore seen as demonstrating a grasp of scholarly persuasion as it allows the research to speak directly to the reader in an unmediated way" (Hyland, 2001: 208). This approach to academic writing gives the stamp of "knowledge" or "truth" to the researcher putting them in a relatively powerful position with respect to those people whom they are researching and to

those who are reading the text. This works to maximise the credibility of the writer and to reduce the authority of the reader and subject (Hyland, 2001).

There is an attempt to overcome this issue within this study through making explicit the author's presence within the research setting. This is done firstly through outlining dialogue where I am a part of the unfolding interaction. Secondly, while the personal pronoun "I" has been used sparingly up to this point given the normal conventions of academic writing, it will be used throughout the ethnographic write-ups to situate the researcher within the context of the research setting. Watson (2000) proposes that this approach allows the reader to some degree to judge how the writer is part of the "reality" being presented. It must therefore be acknowledged that in any ethnographic account "the story will never be a telling but a retelling, never a transcription but a translation. There really is no such thing as 'insider out,' only an ambition to get closer to the natives, and a commitment to learning something about their world and what they make of it all" (Bate, 1997: 1160). Therefore, the attempt is not to uncover what is "really" going on but rather a narrative where a number of different stories are intertwined to make some meaning from the research experience of the author and in some way advance our understanding of the entrepreneurship process.

5.3 Visual Ethnography: An Embodied Understanding

While as outlined above an ethnographic approach can help develop an understanding of the linguistic aspects of the entrepreneurial process, to fully embody the entrepreneur and understand how visual surroundings impact on linguistic meaning-making, common text-based ethnographic tools must be supplemented with a visual dimension. Echoing the mind/body distinction in our worldviews, research in and about organisations and more generally in the social sciences has long privileged the verbal or textual over visual forms of research. As Fyfe and Law (1988: 5-6) argue drawing on Turner (1984) that with the removal of the body in the social sciences so too went the eye. Despite the "visual" being "a pervasive feature not only of social life but of many aspects of social enquiry aswell" (Emmison and Smith, 2000: 2), the vast majority of social science research is limited to textual data gathering techniques and

representations such as transcribed interviews, verbal observations of these visual events published in text-based journals. Even in fields where there are long-standing traditions of the use of visual images, such as visual sociology (Becker, 1998; Harper, 1989) and anthropology (Mead, 1995; Prins, 2002), the visual understandings are not placed at the centre of the inquiries. Indeed, visual aspects are often viewed with the suspicion of being "subjective", highly susceptible to bias on the part of the researcher, difficult to interpret conclusively, and consequently unsuitable for an objective understanding of the processes occurring (Pink, 2001). This leads to a paradoxical situation given that the majority of qualitative research is based on descriptions of situations, interactions and events (Buchanan, 1998), which took place in an "embodied" and "visual" context. Given the highly visual nature of the majority of our research endeavours, it seems as Emmison and Smith (2000) argue in order to enhance the quality of our research, we should become more reflexive about the visual, and more methodologically capable in researching the visual. Therefore in order to embody the entrepreneur we need to move beyond methodologies commonly applied in entrepreneurship and management studies, which focus predominantly on meaning-making in the linguistic domain and draw on other literatures to develop a visual approach.

As in the case of mainstream ethnography, encompassing a visual dimension into a research project is not simply a case of assigning a method, which may be useful in any research question but must be linked to the underlying theoretical agenda and epistemological concerns of the researcher. As Pink (2001: 3-4) argues, the methods we use "should serve the aims of the research, not the research serve the aims of method." Yet, much of the literature on visual methods focuses on the practicalities of applying such a method and the analysis of the results. For example, the issues discussed often include: the optimum distance for researchers to photograph or videotape participants, the type of camera angle and view which is most favourable to participants "acting naturally" and what frameworks to use to "read" images objectively once collected (e.g. Collier and Collier, 1986; Prosser, 1998). Such manuals focus on realist issues and aim to ensure visual methods are applied in an objective manner in order that the results are as "valid" and generalisable as possible. Pink

(2001: 3) similarly outlines that such texts "propose problematically prescriptive frameworks that aim to distance, objectify and generalise, and therefore detract from the very qualities and potential that the ambiguity and expressivity of visual images offers ethnography". For example, one of the most influential texts in this area is Collier and Collier's (1986) guide on photography and video in ethnographic research and representation. They propose "good video and film records for research are ultimately the product of observation that is organised and consistent" (Collier and Collier, 1986: 149). While they recognise that ethnographic photographs and film cannot illustrate the whole of the situation, they do not account for the reflexive turn in ethnography where the account is seen as only ever being a partial construction on the part of the researcher (Atkinson 1990; Watson, 2000). Distinguishing between "shooting scripts" often used in films and their own "objective" approach to visual recording, they propose that the researcher must aim to gather "the whole circumstance in a compressed sample of items and events observed in time and space", in order to report the "reality" of the situation occurring (Collier and Collier, 1986: 163).

Despite these attempts at objectivism, as Pink (2001) and Prosser (1998) both note, many researchers continue to remain suspicious over the utility of visual images, contending that images as a data collection method are subjective, partial and ultimately too difficult to interpret conclusively for any "valid" research project. This is particularly true of research within the management and entrepreneurship domains. However, within the ethnographic tradition, a move towards more subjectivist, non-representational and reflexive approaches has helped to create a more supportive environment in which visual ethnography is becoming a more received form of research. As Pink (2001: 9) notes, "the emphasis on specificity and experience, and a recognition of the similarities between the constructedness and 'fiction' of film and written text, created a context where ethnographic film became a more acceptable form of ethnographic representation". There remains, however, an issue around how the visual can add to and also be embraced into the process of ethnography, which relies overtly on textual means of explanation and representation. Coming from an anthropological perspective, Pink (2001) argues that rather than attempting to fit visual images into this textual process by acting as a support or back-up to verbal

observations, the whole project of ethnography should re-examine itself in the light of understandings that may only be accessible through non-verbal means. Within this view images have their own unique meanings separate from those that are constructed through the ethnographic text, which suggests researchers using visual images need to move towards different objectives and methodologies. Citing McDougall (1997: 292), Pink (2001) states that researchers need to "shift from word-and-sentence-based anthropological thought to image-and-sequence-based anthropological thought", which, she outlines, means that images need to be considered as separate from text but by no means less important or less relevant to the research process. Others such as Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) aim to understand the meanings of visual images, as separate from text, through examining the semiotic content of the images rather than how individuals use these images in context.

It seems, however, that this separation of the textual and visual understandings, maintains a dichotomous mind/body approach to the research process. In this view, visual and verbal meanings can be extracted and separated from the context within which they are occurring and their relationship with one another. Problematising the underlying distinction between verbal and visual modes of understanding, Palczewski (2002) argues "words careen towards the imagistic (as in metaphor) and images careen toward the discursive (as with icons and symbols), suggesting that the separation between linguistic and visual is often quite an artificial division. Finnegan (2000: 340) further argues when researchers aim to investigate both verbal and visual meanings, their focus should not simply be to "compare images to text, but rather to recognise the inherent tensions in the marriage of image and texts and investigate how those tensions make or negotiate meaning". Both visual and verbal meanings are therefore part of an ongoing relationship where meanings can be negotiated and renegotiated. Therefore, as Asen (2002) outlines, the point is not to assert the primacy of either visual or verbal modes of meaning-making but rather to explore how meaning is made through their irresolvable interaction within context. In line with this view, the visual and the verbal, or images and words do not have a fixed or stabilised meaning. Rather their meanings are made within their use and words and images are consequently inextricably related to the context in which they are used. As

Shotter (1990: 54) suggests "they are best thought of, not as having already determined meanings, but as means, as tools, or as instruments for use in the 'making of meaning'". While as suggested in the previous chapter, Shotter (1990) is referring to the meaning-making process of spoken and written words, this idea can also be extended and applied to the use of images in context. While meanings are not stabilised and may be renegotiated, some meanings are more likely to occur than others. As Hosking (1999) proposes, words and images or "language" as she collectively refers to them as, are local cultural and local-historical therefore some meanings are more likely, depending on the conventions of the context.

In line with such an embodied understanding of the process and representation of research, Cunliffe (2002) has attempted to apply a video-based research design, in the field of management studies, in an attempt to understand how "we create our social realities, meanings, and selves in embodied and situated dialogue" (128). While not an embedded or ethnographic approach, this study is particularly interesting as it places importance on the embodied and situated practice of meaning-making in context. Cunliffe videotaped interviews she conducted with a number of managers and subsequently played these videotaped interviews back to the managers to explore with the manager how they had co-created meaning together through dialogical practices. Referring to her approach as "social poetics", Cunliffe emphasises the embodied forms of talk and action that the managers used, such as metaphors and particular gestures as means of constructing momentary and transient meanings. Therefore, Cunliffe highlights not only visual aspects in the form of gestures but also linguistic forms of meaning-making, which bring about symbolic or imaginary understandings. In this way, rather than understanding entrepreneurial metaphors as tools for simply passing information from one individual to another which as seen in the cognitive approaches described in earlier chapters (e.g. Hill and Levenhagen, 1996; Pitt, 1998; Sarasvathy, 2004), they may be seen as "potent dialogical practices, creating vivid images, immediate reactions and embodied responses" (Cunliffe, 2002: 137). In this view entrepreneurs may be seen to use metaphors as a way to connect with others thorough strong symbolism allowing them to construct ways of talking and acting. While this study emphasises the importance

of the embodied and relational nature of meaning-making processes, Cunliffe focuses on the minute detail of situated meaning-making but refrains from relating this to any wider implications for management practice. Rather her study is a reflexive examination of situated and embodied participation of both the researcher and participants in the process of research and how meaning is transiently constructed, rather than an attempt to understand the wider implications for management theory and practice.

In another vein of research, a body of research known collectively as "workplace studies" (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002; Luff *et al.* 2000) has also made use of videotape in the context of organisations, to examine the fine detail of naturally occurring interaction. Such studies aim to account for the effects of the material environment on action and interaction, often with a particular focus on the effect of technology. The roots of this tradition can be traced back to the field of proxemics, which is the study of how people use space culturally, and also the related field of kinesics or the study of body language and gesture (Emmison and Smith, 2000). As Heath and Hindmarsh (2002: 5) argue such studies "examine and explicate the interactional and contingent character of practice and action" and place importance on "the emergent, practical and contingent accomplishment of work". Emerging through ethnomethodology and also conversation analysis (Drew and Heritage, 1992) which focus on the accomplishment of activities through linguistic interactions, the interest in a visual record of naturally occurring interaction became a natural extension of this linguistic dimension (Kendon, 1990, 1992). While interesting given that these studies attempt to "embody" everyday work activities, they tend to disregard meaning and the wider context in favour of purely formal studies of conversational sequencing or turn-taking (Moerman, 1988). As Heath and Hindmarsh (2002: 7) note, this "commitment to demonstrating empirically the relevance of particular features of the context to the actual production of action by participants in interaction removes any liberal appeal to an array of potentially, but undemonstrable, 'broader' contextual characteristics". This often results in a functional analysis of how activities are achieved rather than any attempt to relate back to the wider context in which the activity takes place (e.g. Goodwin and Goodwin, 1996). By

contrast, a rhetorical-relational ethnographic approach balances attention to the minute detail of everyday life with wider social structures.

In attempting to gain an embodied understanding of entrepreneurship, this research aims to focus on how the material and discursive are used to make meanings within context. As suggested earlier the de-contextualised meanings of images and words are not the focus but rather how these discourses, bodily conduct and material features of the setting are used to create meaning in context. Through combining the meaning-making properties of visual and textual data in this way, this research does not simply attempt to add an extra visual dimension to more traditional methods. Rather it examines the relational and inherent tensions between a variety of meaning-making modes, and in particular, how the visual impacts on verbal meaning-making. Therefore, it not only allows us to examine on a micro level how entrepreneurs use a variety of means to make and give meaning, but also by examining the wider physical settings within which entrepreneurial activities takes place permits a multilevel analysis. This was achieved through videotaping interactions in context, such as meetings between the entrepreneurs and others in their environment, and also through interviews with the entrepreneur and their employees. While the interviews and even some of the meetings were pre-arranged it is not suggested that they are "naturally occurring interaction". However, the focus in on-going relational construction of meaning, and how meaning is created, rather than the objectivist notion of aiming to capture naturally occurring talk as if the researcher wasn't present (Pink, 2001). Therefore while every attempt is made on my part, as the researcher, to be as open and transparent as possible, the account as argued previously is openly a partial, rhetorical and constructed account and it could never be anything else (Watson, 2000). Continuing this attempt to be as transparent as possible in the meaning creation of this work, some of the video images captured during the study are also presented to the reader as visual stills peppered throughout the findings of the study. This presentation of the images to the reader provides the opportunity to show the data upon which observations are based and inviting the audience to co-author the images as well as subjecting the author's analysis to academic scrutiny. This adds another dimension of reflexivity to the research, as the author is not standing between the informants

and audience (Strecker, 1997) through solely imposing an interpretation on the images and dismissing the possibility that the images may have more than one potential meaning.

5.4 Negotiating Access and Collecting Data

As briefly outlined above, the ethnographic data upon which this thesis is based, is based on investigations into three entrepreneurial firms in the North of England. As outlined in chapter one, there are numerous definitions of entrepreneurship, with many associating the term with the founding of a new business venture (Low and MacMillan, 1988), hence the privileged place of small firms in the economic agenda. Entrepreneurship cannot, however, be simply equated with the setting up of a small business, given that many small businesses wish to remain small and are motivated by achieving life-style goals rather than enhancing the growth and development of their company (Beaver *et al*, 1998; Gray, 1992; Parker, 2001). For these reasons many researchers have aimed to distinguish between small firms and entrepreneurial firms in terms of innovation and growth orientation (e.g. Carland *et. al.* 1984). As outlined in the first chapter, the definition used in this study focuses on Gartner's (1990) approach which views entrepreneurial activity as being composed primarily of a focus on innovation and innovative activity, an emphasis on growth by the entrepreneur and/or the organisation and an emphasis on the creation of something unique. It is not suggested that this is what entrepreneurship "really" is but rather it is used as this is the understanding of entrepreneurship commonly held by policy-makers and the general public. In this way, this definition coincides with social and political understandings of the term. Therefore for the purposes of this study, entrepreneurship was equated with owner-managers of growth-oriented and innovative businesses who were currently working on projects that they hoped would expand their businesses.

In order to gain access to companies who suited this profile I contacted the Operations Manager in the Keyworth Institute in Leeds University, which is a multi-disciplinary unit based in the engineering section which aims to establish mutually beneficial links between the university and outside industry. An e-mail

was written describing the aims of the study. This included the length of time that would be spent in the organisation which was suggested to be two months at maximum and also stipulating that the company had to have the propensity to grow and develop and needed to be working on innovative projects which they hoped would expand their business (see Appendix 11.2). This letter was e-mailed to twelve companies, which were involved in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships in the University, which are strategic projects that the company works on in close collaboration with the university. From this, one entrepreneur, **Paul Morrison** from **Coupland Speciality Wires,*** agreed to take part in the study, outlining that he had had a very positive experience working with Leeds University in the past and would like to become involved again. The majority of companies stated that they didn't feel that they met the criteria set for involvement in the study, or that the time-scale was too demanding. A second round of e-mails was sent to a wider range of mainly high-technology companies who were listed on the Keyworth Institute database. While a number of entrepreneurs responded asking for more information, only one entrepreneur, **Simon Hensley** from **XYZ Technologies,*** actually agreed to take part in the study. The final entrepreneur involved in the study was accessed through personal contacts as the researcher sent out the same e-mail to a number of businesses on the recommendations of colleagues; once again one entrepreneur, **Dave Sutton** from **Sorby Power Tools,*** agreed to take part in the study.

Following this agreement with the entrepreneurs that they would take part in the research, I went to meet them in their respective companies to discuss the details of the research in more depth and to determine if they were suitable to take part in the research. During these meetings, the use of the video camera was explained to, and discussed with, the entrepreneurs and all agreed to be involved in the visual study. Given the intrusive nature of a camcorder they also asked that I discuss the use of this instrument with staff and ascertain that they felt comfortable with it being used. Consequently, on commencing each ethnographic study the video camera was not introduced immediately into research activities, but rather the researcher attempted to become familiar with the staff over the first few days of the research period. During this period I had many casual conversations with staff members explaining the purposes of my

research, where I was based and why I needed to use a video camera. Interestingly, a number of participants compared my research to the BBC 2 pseudo-documentary style comedy "The Office". This comparison enabled participants to better understand the goals of my research and what type of data I needed to capture. By the end of the first week in each organisation I had obtained permission from all staff members apart from one female staff member in Coupland Speciality Wires to use the video camera in and around their workspace. Although it may be argued that not introducing the video camera immediately may have resulted in the loss of some potentially interesting data, it was felt, on-balance, that this was the best strategy. In particular it allowed participants to gain some knowledge about the project I was undertaking and why using a video camera was necessary. As Massey (1998) argues the success of ethnography depends on the researcher developing and maintaining a positive personal relationship with participants. It was thought therefore that to immediately introduce an intrusive device like a video camera could potentially damage the level of access to participants (Shrum *et al*, 2005).

The video camera was therefore introduced in the three companies at the beginning of the second week. The camera used was the Sony Digital Camera Recorder HC94, which collects images onto mini DV tapes of up to 90 minutes. This model was deemed to be suitable for this research project as it is small, relatively affordable, portable and easy to use. It also allowed the opportunity for a larger microphone to be attached which became essential in meetings or occasions when there was a number of individuals talking as it allowed me to zoom the sound features into particular speakers' dialogue in meetings or other occasions when a number of individuals were talking at the same time. The camera also had a LCD screen that could be flipped out so that I could view the scene as it unfolded and also what I was recording on the LCD. Pink (2001) argues that this creates distance between the researcher's eye and the camera, allowing the researcher to maintain better eye contact with participants as the camera is not hiding their face, while they can continue to view the scene unfolding through the LCD screen and assess whether the material being captured in usable and viewable. I found this aspect of the LCD screen particularly useful, as it allowed me to interview and question participants in a

normal manner without having an intrusive instrument obscuring my face. Indeed, the camera easily sat in the palm of my hand and often participants remarked that they had forgotten the camera was there. In meetings or at other times when I was involved in the research activity and therefore could not hold the video camera, the video camera was positioned on a tripod in order to capture the interaction. Also, pragmatically, the video camera cannot be held for long periods of time, so the tripod became a very useful tool during interviews and other extended conversations with participants.

While the camera was an integral part in the data collection process, it was not used continuously as there were long periods where there was little interaction as employees often worked individually and it was difficult to ensure the camera was always ready once interaction began to occur. In addition, the camera's battery only lasts for one-and-a-half-hours of continuous use and then has to be recharged. Consequently, I also spent time simply observing participants speaking to them informally and questioning them about their activities. As Fetterman (1998: 9) notes "the most important element of fieldwork is being there – to observe, to ask seemingly stupid but insightful questions, and to write down what is seen and heard". This use of participant observation (Waddington, 1994) helped me to gain the "ontological skills" needed to allow me to understand the meaning-making processes occurring in the context of the entrepreneurial setting and become familiar with the language used in the particular context (Collins, 1998). Also, as Bruni *et al* (2004) argue, participant observation does not have rigidly pre-established spatial or temporal boundaries and tends to eliminate the dichotomy between public and private, allowing the researcher to observe informal and naturally occurring interaction. These observations were recorded in a research diary, along with any other observations that I made. Although I did not have any specific role in the companies apart from that of researcher, I would occasionally answer the phones, take and give messages and make tea and coffee as a means to embed myself in the setting. This strategy was particularly useful in two of the companies namely Sorby Power Tools and Coupland Speciality Wires where I was allocated my own private office from which to work from. While the intention of both entrepreneurs was to ensure I had my own space within the company and felt

comfortable, this meant I had to negotiate ways of gaining access to the entrepreneur and other participants. Therefore, partaking in the above activities allowed me to become part of the setting and afforded me an excuse to wander around the company rather than remaining segregated from on-going action, with the result that I rarely spent time in these offices and used them as "base-camps" where I kept tapes, tripod and other essential equipment.

In total, forty pre-arranged videotaped interviews were carried out across the three organisations, and of these, ten were second or follow-up interviews with key participants including the entrepreneur and others who had played a significant role in the research process (see Appendix 11.3). These follow-up interviews provided an opportunity to reflect back on issues that had arisen as the research project had progressed, and to revisit important topics towards a latter stage of research. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, but there were some wide variations within this overall tendency. In addition to these interviews, I also had the opportunity to videotape meetings in two of the companies, which involved members of staff and in one case an external Business Link Advisor. Ten individuals also agreed to take part in video clips where they showed me on video the activities that they took part in on a daily basis. This included a number of engineers in Coupland Speciality Wires and Sorby Power Tools allowing me to gain access to the shop floor, and also develop a grounded understanding of the variety of production processes occurring in both companies. As XYZ Technologies was a software company, it did not have a shop floor; however, I did capture a range of interactions between the entrepreneur and his sole employee discussing various software problems. In total sixty hours of videotaped data was collected. Aside from the videotaped data I collected large amounts of field notes detailing observations that hadn't been caught on camera, including how the participants interacted with their environments and also interesting casual conversations that I had with the entrepreneur or other members of staff. Material artefacts such as brochures, company documents and marketing literature were also collected in each company. The videotaped data was by far the most problematic data source to collect, which relates to a number of ethical issues in the use of visual research. Therefore it seems appropriate that these problems by discussed in more detail to

develop understandings of the potential problems encountered in visually based research. They will be outlined and considered below.

5.5 Ethical Issues in Video-based Research

Although ethics are central to all research activities, incorporating a visual dimension into any research programme extends the ethical dilemmas inherent in the research process (Pink, 2001). In particular, in visual research it is not possible to protect participants' identities to the same extent as in a solely textual study, as people's faces and places of work are identifiable. Initial consent was obtained from the entrepreneurs and all members of staff to videotape them interacting in their work contexts. With some exceptions, they also agreed that this data could be used in my PhD, but names and personal details must be changed. For any further use of the visual data I would need to obtain additional ethical approval. It soon became clear as the study unfolded that the use of a video camera was unacceptable to participants in a number of organisational situations. For example, in situations of conflict or where tensions were running particularly high, I was often asked to turn off the video camera yet allowed to witness the event myself. On other occasions where sensitive material was being discussed or important clients were on company premises, I was invited to join the discussion and meet clients but once again was asked to leave the video camera behind. Organisational participants are therefore often uncomfortable with the use of video in situations that I as a researcher found interesting and informative, perhaps recognising how informative and insightful the tangible, concrete nature of a moving image can be at critical moments. This emphasises the importance of incorporating textual field-notes into visual research projects as this ensures the researcher can, to some extent, record interactions and make observations where the video camera is forbidden (Clarke, 2007).

In relation to this, it was also very difficult to capture participants in naturally occurring interactions. While some amount of this data was collected as outlined above, in practice, a sole ethnographer is unlikely to be able to capture much of this interaction on videotape. Capturing this data is particularly problematic because over the course of an ethnographic study it is likely to occur sporadically

and unannounced at any given moment in a number of different locations. It is therefore impossible to ensure that the researcher will always be close to where the interaction occurs. Indeed, while initially most participants agreed that I could videotape their interactions, it seemed that they often engineered these casual discussions so they were out of the range of the video camera. Also, on a number of occasions when I did happen to be in close proximity to naturally occurring conversations, when I began to focus the video camera on participants, the talk often discontinued became stilted when my movement and presence interrupted the flow of the talk and engagement. Therefore, as the study unfolded I realised that most participants were uncomfortable with any form of videotaping of their informal talk. A number of participants proposed that this was because their *"chat"* was often unrelated to work issues and they therefore felt it inappropriate for me to videotape these interactions. As one participant pointed out to me *"It's not to do with work, so you won't be needing that"* pointing at the video camera. This reaction to the video camera could not have been foreseen as participants initially indicated that this form of data collection would not be problematic, but in practice they felt it was unnecessarily intrusive.

Drawing on her experience of applying a video-based research approach in anthropological settings, Pink (2001) argues that it is difficult for researchers to have predetermined ideas and expectation of what they will be able to achieve through the use of visual methodologies in any research context. She proposes that it is often better to negotiate ethical issues as they appear in the field rather than having a fixed strategy (Pink, 2001). The ethical approach used in this research was therefore based on this emergent understanding, and as my understanding of the participants' boundaries grew I adopted my research approach and data collection strategies in a contingent manner. Flewitt (2006) applies a similar approach through drawing on Simons and Usher's (2000) "situated ethics". In line with this view Flewitt (2006) does not adopt a coherent set of values but attempts to respond reflexively to situations she encounters in the field. As Flewitt (2006: 31) argues "rather than following a detailed pre-conceived code of conduct imposed upon participants by the researcher, 'provisional consent' assumes an ethical stance that evolves out of researcher/participant relationships where ethical dilemmas are resolved as they

emerge in the field, in their local and specific contexts on a minute-by-minute basis." Therefore, while on entering the field I was open with participants about all the features of the research, and explained all aspects of the process, gaining consent at this stage is not sufficient, rather I continued throughout the period of research to assess whether participants' attitudes to consent changed over time.

5.6 Transcription and Analysis

Although I negotiated access to each organisation for a period of two months, after approximately one month in each organisation I felt I had reached a saturation point. As Gold (1997: 393) suggests, the fieldwork phase is complete once the "ethnographer and his or her informants have exhausted their ability to identify other kinds of informants and other sorts of questions of relevance to the research objectives". Therefore I followed Fetterman's (1998: 9-10) advice where he suggests that the ethnographer should stay in the field until "enough data has been gathered to describe the culture or problem convincingly and to say something significant about" the phenomenon they are trying to describe. Upon leaving the field, the fieldnotes were typed up and the video data collected was transferred onto Windows Movie Maker, a free, video-editing software system included in recent versions of Microsoft Windows. This programme allowed the images to be captured from the camera and transferred in real-time onto a desktop computer, where they could then be subjected to a range of video-editing procedures. Having digitised the audio-visual recordings, the video data needed to be transcribed and analysed along with the fieldnotes and other data sources. While transcription is often treated as a practical, objective matter of simply scripting what participants said, researchers are increasingly arguing that the process of transcribing is a powerful act of representation in itself (Flewitt, 2006; Oliver *et al*, 2005). In this view, transcription is not simply a pragmatic activity but rather it affects what information is highlighted as important. Consequently if a researcher begins data analysis without considering their transcription style, they may find that their form of transcription and hence analysis is unsuitable for their research objectives. Therefore, before any transcription or analysis begins the researcher should consider their theoretical position and how this impacts the mode of transcription and analysis they should apply (Oliver *et al*, 2005).

As outlined earlier, the theoretical framework applied in this study is a rhetorical-relational approach, which emphasises the relational and ongoing aspects of meaning-making that occur between individuals and also in relation to their contextual surroundings (Shotter, 1993a, 1995, 2005; Billig, 1990. 1993, 1996). In an entrepreneurial context, then, this approach not only demonstrates how entrepreneurs make sense of their own activities in a relational and continuous manner, but also adds a persuasive aspect which aims to understand how entrepreneurs "sense-give" to others in order to convince them of the feasibility and potential success of their venture. This approach also has the potential to include not only what the entrepreneur says, but also how they make use of a variety of other meaning-making tools in context and how they relate to wider social and cultural understandings. Within this relational framework, transcription should not aim to focus on the grammatical and stylistic properties of words, phrases or sentences, as language is not examined by itself but rather in relation to the larger extra-verbal context such as the situation, physical or material setting and prehistory. Therefore, the transcription approach of this study did not warrant an examination of pauses, gaps or other micro-linguistic aspects of the participants' talk often applied in other rhetorically oriented studies (e.g. Potter, 1996; Samra-Fredericks, 2004). Such an in-depth form of transcription allows the researcher to analyse the figurative uses of language and examine what effect these tropes have on the argumentative turns of the interaction in question (Billig, 1996). Yet, this intra-linguistic approach fails to account for the embodied nature of activity, ignores the argumentative and contextual nature of human interaction and is much too systematic to accommodate a multi-modal examination of meaning. Consequently, the transcription approach of this study aimed to pay attention to the arguments forwarded by participants and their use of visual tools, but did not examine micro-linguistic detail (see Appendix 11.4). When quotes are used in the following cases, certain segments of text have been reduced (marked by '...') due to word limit constraints; however, great care has been taken to retain the meaning recounted by participants.

In terms of the analysis of the transcripts, fieldnotes and other sources of data, within a relational-constructionist approach it is important to consider the use of

language and other meaning-making tools as being located in a specific argumentative context. Therefore, rather than developing an abstract *a priori* understanding of what a word or visual tool means, attention should be paid to the context in which it occurs and how it relates to the other arguments occurring in that context. Given that the mode of analysis was highly contextualised and required an iterative process where attempts should be made to continuously relate meanings and understandings, it was thought that it would be inappropriate to use a qualitative data analysis software package to analyse the data. While such programmes are increasingly being used in qualitative analysis, a number of researchers have expressed concerns about the uncritical acceptance and utilisation of these programmes, particularly in in-depth case study work where contextualised understandings are of utmost importance. Agar (1991) for example expressed grave concerns that such programmes were beginning to become the methods of research rather than simply aids to analysis. In addition such programmes place emphasis on coding and retrieval of qualitative information, and while the data collected during this research needed to be indexed in order to analyse the meanings, coding was a relational procedure which related to the background and understanding of the case rather than arriving at de-contextualised and objective pieces of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

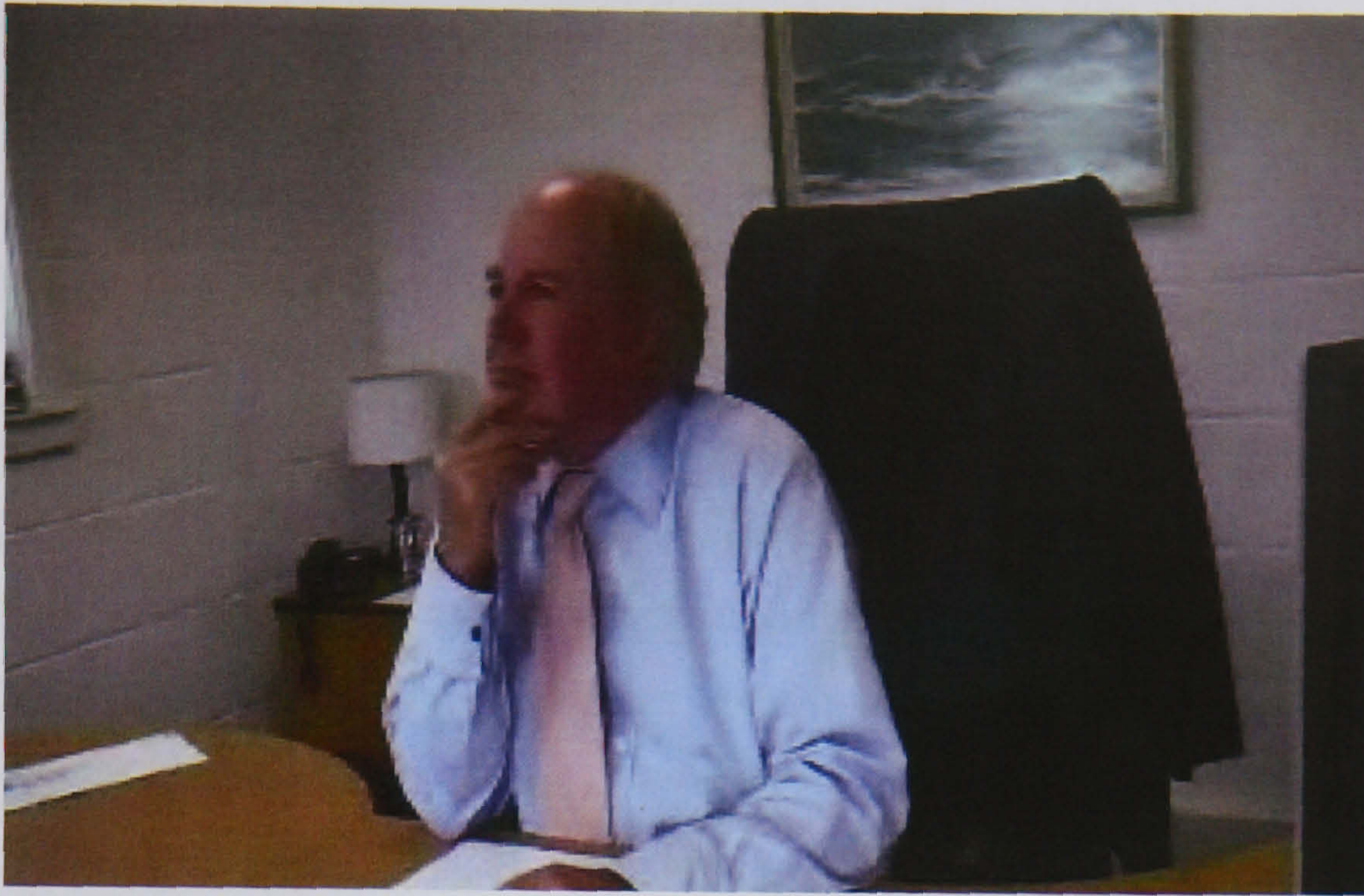
The analysis of the data drew on a form of analysis outlined by Smith (1995). The initial part of this analysis required the researcher to repeatedly watch the videos, read the transcripts (annotated with notes from the videos) and fieldnotes in order to become familiar with the data. The text was then analysed inductively within each case using a grounded approach. Pieces of text, which were relevant to the research questions, were coded and the emergent themes were interpreted qualitatively. Connections were then looked for between the text and the videos in each particular case, and the wider contexts within which they were placed. In order to ensure the researcher's coding did not fix meaning too early in the analysis, early coding acted as signposts or indexes to interesting pieces of data, while codes were applied when the researcher believed that the theme had regularity or stability in the way in which they occurred across different contexts (Seale, 2000). Connections between the pieces of coded data where examined

and these codes where then grouped under a number of higher level codes within each case (see Appendix 11.5). Attention was paid to spoken references of how participants used a variety of visual tools to "make" and "give" meaning and also what became evident through an analysis of the videos. Drawing on Cunliffe's work (2002) on social poetics, some attention was also paid to the use of the embodied metaphors by the entrepreneurs. This did not include the omnipresent metaphors in our normal speech (Tsoukas, 1991) but rather metaphors that created "vivid images, immediate reactions and embodied responses leading to arresting moments" (Cunliffe, 2002: 138). Meaning was therefore central throughout the analysis with the researcher aiming to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings. In this way it was attempting to understand what the participants were saying but as part of the process, drawing on the researcher's own interpretative resources.

Given the importance of building up a contextualised understanding of the meanings created, each case is examined separately in the following three chapters, allowing the meanings to be related to and understood as placed within a historical and cultural context. However, some attempt to synthesise the analysis of the three cases in the final chapter. In aiming to move beyond previous psychological approaches, there is an attempt in each case to set the background, and then particular attention is paid throughout the cases to the creation of the new ventures, decision-making and strategy formation and engaging others in the legitimacy of the venture, given that these aspects are frequently emphasised in individualistic understandings. These findings therefore attempt to embed these processes, which are usually conceptualised in an individualistic manner within a wider social, cultural and historical context.

*** Names of individuals and companies have been changed to protect identities**

6.0 ACTING AS IF: THE "CORPORATE" ENTREPRENEUR



6.1 Paul Morrison

6.1 Situating the Entrepreneur

The first ethnography involved **Paul Morrison (57)** (see video still 6.1) managing director of a company known as **Coupland Speciality Wires** based in a rural area of West Yorkshire close to the market town of Skipton. Over the last twenty years the company had specialised in the manufacturing of a range of fire resistant and speciality wires for large contracting and building companies. Recently the company had become involved in designing a range of products for the aerospace manufacturing industry. While the company remained relatively small with just thirteen employees, including two engineers, moving into the high-tech and fast-paced world of aerospace had resulted in them beginning to compete against large multinational and high-profile companies. Most of the work in this industry is geared towards the design of products for military defence and other governmental work, including the production of component parts for aircraft, missiles and space vehicles. Developing these aerospace products had also resulted in the company being heavily involved with a large multinational electronics manufacturing, which had subcontracted them to do the

research and development aspect of the aerospace product design. In an attempt to develop an image in keeping with that of an aerospace company they had recently moved from their small premises in a nearby town to an exclusive business park with extensive office space. As will be outlined below the cultivating of this visual image, was seen by Paul as being integral to the continued success of the company in the aerospace industry. It is therefore a major focal point of this case study.

The findings of this case are divided into three main sections. Firstly, there is an examination of the relational aspects of the venture creation. In particular, attention it drawn to how the entrepreneur saw possibilities in the external environment and how these possibilities were constructed through discussion with others in a relational manner. Emphasis is also placed on the rhetorical aspects of the entrepreneurship process and the use of others within the context to help enhance the rhetorical dimensions of decision-making. The discursive strategies that Paul employed to make sense of his own venture, which involved evoking arguments of both isolation and independence, are also examined. The second section outlines the importance of the visual surroundings in context. In particular, emphasis is placed on how physical and material contexts can construct certain arguments in a similar manner to linguistic argumentative processes. It is also suggested that the linguistic and visual aspects are inter-related and therefore must make sense together in order to engage influential others in the business venture. The interpersonal aspects of how the entrepreneur encouraged others to become part of the business venture are also examined. Finally, the imaginative dimensions of the entrepreneur's meaning-making are outlined. In particular, consideration is given to how a journey metaphor is used by the entrepreneur to bring forward meanings and engage others in action. In addition the use of décor and other physical artefacts in creating certain meanings will also be discussed.

6.2 Seeing Possibilities: Relational Dimensions

In contrast to the understandings forwarded by psychological theories, rather than having a longstanding desire to become an entrepreneur Paul had originally

set out to become a meteorologist hopeful that he would one-day travel to Antarctica as part of the British Antarctica Survey. Once, he became qualified. however, *"the funding dried up for Antarctica so I was left just being a meteorologist and that it just one boring life I'll tell you"*. So reasoning that he had little interest in remaining in this area, he decided to take part in a graduate training programme in the early 1970s in a renowned marketing-driven consumer products company. Following training, Paul went on to work successfully as a brand manager, responsible for the advertising and marketing activities of a number of different products over a period of ten years. Describing this period in his life as his *"formative years"*, he outlined, *"when you leave* [the consumer products company] *you leave with a training that has made you into some kind of person"*. In particular, he suggested this training had contributed to his *"professionalism"*; this was also evident in the language he used which was peppered with corporate and management phrases. He attributed this *"management speak"* to his time in a corporate environment and suggested that he ran his business as if it was a large corporate organisation, arguing *"there's no difference between a large company and a small company just the number of zeros on the balance sheet"*. While Paul suggested that he had some limited interest in eventually developing a business, there was not sufficient motivation for him to consider it a serious option and he was reluctant to leave his enjoyable and rewarding job until a *"catalyst"* in his environment caused it to happen:

> Paul: *"I suppose I did think at some point it would be great to do this yourself to actually have a blank sheet of paper and develop something and at the end of the day you could say or you could feel that you know you've done it... but it's hard when you are well paid and you've got a nice lifestyle and an interesting job... it's actually quite hard... There has to be at some point a trigger or a catalyst or an event that causes it to happen."*

Rather than striving for independence, aiming to control his own destiny, or being unable to accept authority or fit into a conventional organisation (e.g. Collins and Moore, 1964; Kets de Vries, 1996), Paul was highly satisfied with his position within a corporate environment. A *"catalyst"* came, however, when

an old business colleague contacted Paul, and asked him for some advice. This colleague's family had previously owned a company called Coupland Wires but had recently sold it to large PLC. Once it became part of this large PLC, Coupland Wires had begun to run into serious financial trouble as the PLC had taken five different wire-making companies and merged them onto two sites in an attempt to regain some lost finance. However, all five companies were highly diverse with different product types and different manufacturing processes, as Paul outlined, *"the only common ground was that they were all called wire... but it wasn't common enough and it all fell apart"*. This colleague had decided to try and buy back the company but wasn't allowed to register the name Coupland Wires. Paul suggested he try the name Coupland Speciality Wires, which the business colleague successfully registered and as a reward for coming up with this strategy Paul was given five percent of the shares in the company. From beginning with this small stake in the business, Paul began to take an interest in the *"possibilities"* of this company and over the next two years became the sole owner of the business:

Jean: *"So when did you decide that you would become involved in the business full-time?"*

Paul: *"I had continued to work* [in previous job] *up to this point but nothing was really happening... there were possibilities but we needed to sit down and think, craft a strategy, arrange things really... We had meetings in a local pub... We had a few things in mind but nothing concrete... I gave up my job, bought thirty percent of the shares and started full-time in the business, gradually things started to pick up and then* [his business partner] *wanted to retire so the business was valued at whatever amount and I bought him out... I was then the owner of a business"*

Jean: *"So it wasn't planned then really... it just sort of emerged?"*

Paul: *"Yeah, I think that's probably right, it just sort of happened."*

The creation and ownership of Paul's business was not simply a linear pathway of opportunity recognition, effective planning and decision-making as suggested by information-processing models of the entrepreneurship process (Boyd and

Vozikis, 1994; Katz 1992; Kolveried's, 1997). Rather this "emergence" of a business suggests a link with Sarasvathy's work (2003, 2004) on effectuation where she sees entrepreneurs as "designers" of firms who turn "possibilities" into action through creating new realities and enabling action through linguistic and imaginative projection. In particular, Paul appeared to suggest that the creation of the business and developing a strategy was a process of deciphering meaning from a series of *"possibilities"*. Paul's understanding was, therefore, that rather than simply implementing objective plans he *"crafted a strategy"* suitable for the particular context. While Sarasvathy's model continues to emphasise a particularly cognitive and individual aspect to these linguistic projections, Paul's outline of the creation of the venture appears to emphasise the importance of the collective *"we"* in the creation of the venture. Even Paul's intimation that they had a few things *"in mind"* appears to be a communal activity between him, his partner and the environmental constraints. It seems, rather than the emphasis being placed on what happened "in" the entrepreneur, what appears to be important was what transpired "between" the entrepreneur and others in his unique context. Therefore, the business *"happened"* in the discussions between Paul and his partner and engagement with their environment, rather than an being individual activity it was a communal and relational achievement. This was further emphasised in the important role his suggests that his partner had in setting the strategy and direction of the initial business:

Paul: *"You need two, you need a sounding board, you need to get a response, you need somebody to say 'ah no that's crap' or you need 'oh no you can't do that but how about doing it in that way'...I've not replaced that role with anybody else so I tend to have to do that on my own now and I find that not as easy."*

Jean: *"It wouldn't be as enjoyable to talk to yourself."*

Paul: *"It's not as enjoyable either no, no...you just do it whilst you're driving or you try and do it in an operational sense...but they're not actually moving the business forward through it's next ten years...they are really just the A-Z of how we're actually going to function within this position that we find ourselves in."*

In this case, to simply view the creation of the strategy in a cognitive manner in terms of an isolated individual, gathering and processing perceptual information would remove the essentially rhetorical nature of the thought processes and decision-making described above (Billig, 1996). In this example, Paul developed his thinking and strategy in a rhetorical manner through discussion and argument with his business partner. Rather than objectively setting a strategy for the business, Paul's decisions were formulated through enthymemic processes, in that every argument and justification for this argument forwarded, "might be then criticised, and it in turn will need an enthymemic support, which in its turn will be open to criticism and so on" (Billig, 1993: 50). In this case, it seems, problem solving and decision-making cannot simply be equated with a logical style of thinking where one correct solution sits objectively in the environment, awaiting discovery. It appears, therefore, that the process may be more beneficially examined as a linguistic and rhetorical construction, where no decisions are ever definitively closed as arguments are continually opposed by counter-arguments as the entrepreneur struggles to formulate strategy in an uncertain environment (Billig, 1996). In order to make more effective meanings and decisions in ambiguous environments, it appears that Paul not only drew on others to enhance the argumentative dimension, but also on wider arguments in the external context to make meaning out of his entrepreneurial activities:

Paul: *"There's a credit and debit side to life as there is on a balance sheet in a company and I think by doing something like this the credit side is...you can make your own decisions and be very creative in the sense that you can totally plan and execute a particular direction or a particular idea...The debit side of running your own business or being an entrepreneur is that it's lonely...in the sense that you cannot initially surround yourself with colleagues because colleagues are expensive...and you tend to have subordinates rather than colleagues...But there are one or two people here at all levels of the business that you can confide in and I find the process of confiding in them quite beneficial in terms of being able to unravel the issues as you go along and they*

might not contribute anymore than a sounding board 'oh I don't think you should do that Paul' but...I find that very valuable."

In this discussion Paul made sense of his activities through drawing on the contrasting arguments of independence and isolation. In particular he emphasised the issue of independence as he suggested that owning his own business allowed him to *"make his own decisions"* *"be very creative"* and *"plan and execute a particular direction"*, emphasising that he was placed in an enviable position through owning his own business. Yet he immediately contrasted this positive context with the isolation of owning a business intimating that *"it's lonely"* and *"colleagues are expensive"*. He did, however, suggest that he had limited his isolation to some extent by ensuring that some *"subordinates"* acted as "sounding boards". Therefore, while Paul argued that he valued his independence, he had organised his business to ensure that there was some level of input from others in his context. In this case, it may be more beneficial to conceptualise understandings of the entrepreneur's need for independence in line with a rhetorical approach to thinking which would allow entrepreneurship to be viewed as a tension between independence and isolation. In this way independence and isolation are conceived as a pair of corresponding yet conflicting processes that must be considered together in order to understand this continuing process of argumentation (Billig, 1996).

6.3 The Persuasiveness of Visual Surroundings

In addition to the argumentative processes in the linguistic domain as described above, the visual surroundings were also used to create certain meanings and forward a number of arguments. As briefly outlined in the introductory section, the company had recently moved into the high-technology arena of aerospace, and was working on a number of confidential projects with a large multinational corporation. This large electronics corporation was becoming increasingly involved in the aerospace industry yet no longer had a research and development team. Consequently, they usually subcontracted their product development out to other large companies specialising in aerospace product development. Coupland Speciality Wires had been working with this electronics company for the last

three years and given that they were now competing in the *"big boys market"* whereas they were only a *"small boutique"*, Paul considered it a major feat that his small business had become a research and development outlet for this worldwide corporation. Paul suggested that his success in collaborating with this company was related to the changes in *"image"* he made to the company when he first saw this *"possibility"* for the co-development of aerospace products. He argued that these changes ensured that they were seen as a suitable partner to work on such a high-tech project. At first the company was reluctant to have such a small company become involved with the development of these high-end products but they eventually agreed to send over a team of people from the American branch to talk to Paul and discuss some ideas:

Jean: *"So how did you manage to eventually get involved with the aerospace products?"*

Paul: *"They said...we're sending some guys over from California and we want to talk to you about it* [aerospace product development]*...and we were in the back streets of Keighley which is a little industrial town just down the valley there, we were in rented premises and it was pretty grim, the offices were nice but the factory side was pretty grim, it was old and it had one of those horrible ceilings...with windows full of cobwebs and lots of metal frames holding the roof up it looked awful."*

Through this description of these premises, Paul suggested that a *"grim"* factory in the *"back streets"* of an industrial town, created certain meanings, which were inappropriate if his business was to succeed in becoming a research and development outlet for aerospace products. As Yanow (2006: 51) notes "built spaces may be literally mute, but they have their own "language" of design elements through which they articulate properties, identities, values and so on in a non-verbal way". Therefore Paul viewed the premises as conveying certain visual understandings, suggesting certain underlying values and beliefs of the company that inhabited this built space. In particular, he suggested this building conveyed an *"image"* of the company as a 19th century industrial factory rather than 21st century high technology unit. It therefore did not embody the values of

an aerospace company or convey suitable values to the "readers" of this space, which in this instance was the American branch of the electronics company. While to some extent Paul may have linguistically been able to persuade these customers that his business would be a suitable partner in the development of these high-technology products, as he outlined *"I knew I'd be able to relate to them"*, this meaning could only be wholly successful if the visual surroundings also supported the meanings he was trying to create. Indeed, it was seen by Paul as being so integral to convey the correct visual image that he decided to make drastic changes to the factory prior to the arrival of the American product development team:

> Paul: *"I got some people in to put an entire suspended ceiling in to hide all this lot purely and simply because these guys are coming over and they wanted to talk about Aerospace not to give me an order they just wanted to talk. But I thought well...these guys do not fool around...they wouldn't come and say what if what if what if...you've got to know your people...I knew it would be worthwhile and I also knew that coming out of California and they did 90 million pounds worth of business each year with Boeing on different types of Aerospace cables that they would be used to factories that would just look like something out of Startrek, you know, and so coming to the backstreets of Keighley to something that looked like something out of Dickens was not going to be good."*

It seems that Paul assessed his audience's needs and responded to this by "acting" in a manner that his audience expected. In particular, he outlined, *"you've got to know your people"*, which appears to suggest he felt he had to be adept at understanding others' expectations in order to be successful in achieving his entrepreneurial objectives. In particular, he emphasised that they would be used to factories that looked *"like something out of Startrek"*, but also that *"these guys do not fool around"* therefore it was worthwhile for him to make these changes in order to ensure that he successfully convinced them that they could work together effectively. In this case, entrepreneurship is clearly placed

within a physical environment, which inevitably constrains, enables and relates to certain linguistic constructions. The persuasiveness of the entrepreneurial process is suggested as encompassing much more than simply creating meaning through what is "said" but also what is "implied" from the contextual surroundings. Therefore, in Paul's view it would not have been sufficient simply to assure the American product design team that they were a professional company; rather the visual surroundings had to support and develop these arguments in order to ensure they were successful in achieving the contract:

> Paul: *"They came and they never said a thing. They never said it was great, but they never said it was grotty either so as far as I was concerned they accepted it because they didn't comment on it, you know, the building. But they commented on how superb some of our products were and how we could put this product range together with them. So the whole thing started to work...So we then said right, ok, we're going to move so we moved to premises that were three times the size i.e. here and spent like a million pounds on all this lot and made it look right so if anybody flew in from Boeing or from Airbus at least it looks like it could be an aerospace factory."*

It appears then that Paul took the American product design team's silence on the physical surroundings as an acceptance of the environment. By not commenting on whether the building was suitable or not, this was taken to mean that it was sufficient for the purposes. In this way he saw the desired meaning, of his company as a potential aerospace research and development unit, as being successfully co-created with others. As Yanow (2006) notes because of the non-verbal character of the spatial and physical communication of built settings, and their highly tacit nature (Polanyi, 1966), it is often difficult for individuals to explicitly express the meanings created by these design gestures. Rather she suggests there is a tacit "sense" gained or an understanding developed which is difficult to verbalise explicitly, that the physical environment is suitable for the activities it will contain (Yanow, 2006). Having become a research and development unit for the production of aerospace technologies, Paul moved the

company to large modern premises in a recently developed business park, arguing that if they were to continue working in the aerospace industry it had to at least look *"like it could be an aerospace factory"*. As Paul suggested "*lets face it, the trappings of big blue-chip companies are nice buildings, smart people, nice surroundings, switched on people, use of modern techniques"* In the "culture" of the aerospace industry, then, modern furnishings in *"nice"* buildings was spatially associated with the status of the company and their ability to use and understand modern technologies:

6.2 Factory Floor

Paul: *"My role as I see it is to create an environment for this company or within this company where the likes of the corporate purchaser or the corporate engineer from a large aerospace company will not feel out of place when he comes in. If you do it properly he won't ask how many people you employ. Sometimes they say 'God there's hardly anyone ever working out there' and I say 'well we work three shifts', which we do, and 'we also have a subsidiary in Manchester which does a lot of our subcontract manufacturing', which we do...the building looks very smart - it's in a very smart area, it's got a nice car park, you come into the reception and it's pleasant enough...we meet with them in what is a comfortable and business-like room. We don't necessarily take them on the factory floor because that's where it starts to, um, not unravel - that's the*

wrong word - but that's where you start to get the negatives coming in because some of our machines are old."

In this statement Paul emphasised it was important to ensure the *"corporate engineer"* will not *"feel out of place"*, suggesting a reference to the manner in which built spaces interact with their inhabitants in an embodied manner. Rather than simply interpreting physical spaces, individuals "experience" them, in a physical and non-verbal sense, rather than linguistically constructing arguments as to why the settings are appropriate for the activities in question (Yanow, 2006; Gagliardi, 1996). Yet there is a suggestion that while built-spaces can embody certain meanings, they cannot always be simply left to "speak" for themselves. Rather, Paul proposed in order to *"do it properly"* there is sometimes a need to manipulate how the settings are perceived in order to ensure that the company is viewed in an appropriate manner and avoid any difficult questions being asked. This involves using linguistic means to interpret the settings for others and explain any anomalies in the physical layout or setting. In this case, it seems that Paul strategically created an understanding of the company for the *"corporate engineer"* or *"corporate purchaser"* through emphasising certain areas of the built-space, and its contents while other areas were overlooked. In particular, the business-like rooms, nice entrance and good car-parking facilities were all made available to the visiting customers while other aspects including the small number of employees in the company and the age of the machines on the factory flow were concealed (see video still 6.2). This strategy was also extended to the research and development lab where the engineers carried out experiments as it was viewed as being inappropriate for customers to see. As one engineer outlined as he gave me a tour of the research and development laboratory:

Jean: *"So the laboratory is out of bounds for most customers then?"*

Rod: *"Well we've got lots and lots of customers coming round and if they were to see some of the stuff that myself and* [another engineer] *bodged together, should we say, they'd be thinking 'what sort of company is this that's doing stuff like this...that looks like it's just been glued together!'. So you just make sure that instead of bits of metal being welded together you make it*

into a nice fancy shape, it looks like it should be there…We're supposed to be now with air frame wire, it's the cutting edge of the wire industry, they don't expect to come to a garage or anything like that or an old shack, they expect to come and look at something that looks like a technological site."

6.3 Laboratory

When customers were onsite they were directed away from the "laboratory" (see video still 6.3), and if these experimental machines were ever needed on the factory floor, attention was paid to making them into *"a nice fancy shape"* to ensure they look like they *"should be there"*. The machinery can be seen as a "display" used to convince the audience that the company was indeed a technological site rather than an amateurish business unable to afford or effectively design high quality machinery. Therefore all "displays" within the setting must make sense in relation to each other in order for the whole "scene" to be effective (Radley, 1996). As the engineer explained, even though the machine or tool continued to do the same job, in order to be part of the current "design conversation", or fit the context within which it was situated it had to be aesthetically pleasing (Hofbauer, 2002). This suggests it is not sufficient just to ensure that the company employs high quality processes, tools and procedures, but also to ensure that others visually perceive them as employing these quality processes and tools. There is a sense that Paul effectively managed the entrepreneurial environment to ensure that useful "impressions" were formed of

the company. Interestingly, Paul explicitly employed a theatre-based metaphor were he suggested he *"stage managed"* the company through his use of visual surroundings to convey effective meanings to others:

Paul: *"As long as you can show them products and pictures, and show them around discreetly in certain areas they go away with the right impression. I mean look at* [the large electronics company] *you know that's a classic example, they employ 255, 000 people and they're up here every other week and they treat us like equals but I think it's because we've stage-managed it,* [he considers the use of this term] *that's probably the wrong word, stage managed sounds like you're not quite what you are"*

Jean: *"I know what you mean."*

Paul: *"I think we've managed, we've managed, no I think we've run the company in the knowledge that you have to behave and be seen to behave in a certain way."*

Through applying this metaphor we gain a sense of Paul as the director of a stage production carefully managing each scene to ensure it is credible, makes sense and consequently persuades the audience before him. Paul emphasised the link between his entrepreneurial activities and performance or persuasion through highlighting, that in order to continue to present an image of a high-technology company he *"stage managed"* his surroundings, employing a range of suitable visual artefacts and "displays" or embodied activities in order to convey certain meanings (Radley, 1996). As Radley (1996: 565) notes "displays are important because they can be more than a portrayal, the demonstration of a claim or the avowal of a belief". Through an embodied presence and use of visual or physical tools, these displays are acted out in the world, not simply linguistically created and consequently are more persuasive in their use. As Paul outlined he managed the company in the knowledge that *"you have to behave"* in a suitable manner. Yet he further emphasised the impression created as being critical to the process, proposing that *"you have to be seen to behave"* in a certain way. Therefore through his use of language against a background of appropriate visual tools, Paul effectively "managed" the impression that others have of his business

activities. Paul similarly highlighted the importance of interpersonal activities, which further add to the visual impression created:

> Paul: *"Somebody faced with choices, and lets face it we've nearly always got choices in a modern company...will end up evaluating the ifs and buts of those choices and at the end of the day they'll come down and work with people they like because it's a fair human trait...they want to be successful in what they're doing and they'll feel happier working with people they feel they can work with...I think it's as simple as that...I think if we're seen to be reasonably professional and we have a positive approach to what we're doing, and the products are good and the guys feel comfortable that the company is running in a modern and effective way, then they'll go home and think: 'there's not a lot at risk with me dealing with these people'...I think if you can give the impression that you are a little bit more on the ball and quite sort of openly friendly people with a positive attitude...I mean we all have to come to work, we might as well enjoy it, and we might as well enjoy doing what we do which is interface with other people."*

Paul suggested that he placed importance on the role that interpersonal or social skills played in an entrepreneurial venture. In particular, he proposed that as companies are always faced with choices; the most important way that any company can gain an advantage over others is by ensuring that they are people that others *"feel they can work with"*. These ideas are reminiscent of the idea of social competence as described in previous chapters (e.g. Baron and Brush, 2000; Baron and Markman, 2003; Mason and Harrison, 2000). In particular, this idea encompasses not just the manner in which the entrepreneur articulates but also their whole "way of being", including an ability to judge the "mood" of their audience, presenting themselves effectively visually in order to ensure others see the business venture as a tempting prospect. While as suggested in previous chapters these ideas have previously been understood in a cognitive manner, in this case attention has been drawn to their relational properties through focusing

on linguistic dimensions, embodied and physical spaces. This further emphasises the importance of social aspects of the entrepreneurship process and the importance of developing an understanding of both linguistic and visual dimensions of meaning-making.

6.4 Making Meaning through Imaginative Forms

The importance of visual meanings in this case was not only limited to the persuasion of customers or influential others in the contextual environment. Indeed, images and metaphorical projection were used within the company to create meanings and coordinate action. In his movement into the arena of aerospace, Paul increasingly relied on two engineers in his company to develop the new products for market, which helped move the business forward. However, while the engineers were highly trained in their product design, they were often unwilling to experiment with designs or take any action until a perfect blueprint had been created. Paul argued that this approach was highly problematic as the aerospace market moved at a rapid rate and if there were delays in product development they were likely to be usurped by other businesses in their market space. As argued in previous chapters, in highly ambiguous conditions, entrepreneurs often draw on imaginative aspects of meaning-making it order to create possibilities for action within these uncertain environments (Pitt, 1998; Dodd, 2002). In particular, entrepreneurs often conceptualise future goals for their business through metaphorical projection, helping them to move forward and expedite progress in an erratic and unpredictable world. It seemed in this case to open up possibilities for action Paul used a *"journey"* metaphor, which enabled him to create these meanings. While the quotation below is taken from a semi-structured interview I conducted with Paul, the use of this metaphor was also evident in a number of recorded research and development meetings (see video still 6.4) with the engineers:

Paul: *"If I was an engineer like them, nothing would ever happen because an engineer in my mind is someone who makes sure it's 100% correct before you actually put pen to paper. I think you can get to 95% very quickly and very valuably and the last 5%*

could take forever and you are much better off starting the ball rolling with your 95% of knowledge. It's not going to be perfect because it's not 100% but you learn as you go along and you know it's not going to be perfect but that's not what you're trying to achieve. What you're trying to achieve is to start the journey, and when you start the journey you get feedback because something you thought maybe step two at 40% or step three at 60% of the knowledge trail was easy it could turn out to be very difficult and it could turn out to be a dead end."

Jean: *"So at 95% you should go with it and try it out?"*

Paul: *"Yeah, well, you should start the ball rolling...because you're probably at 95% as precise as you're going to be in a theoretical sense, practically if you know what I mean. Engineers could sit forever getting into that getting that last 5% down, and it's pointless, Jean, because the last 5% is if you're walking from here to Skipton and you're worried about the last 5% which is the roundabout into the town for God's sake you've got all this before you get to the roundabout and you don't know for sure that that's going to be ok, so get to the roundabout and then have a look and it may be that you don't actually need the roundabout at all because you go along the canal bank."*

6.4 Research and Development Meeting

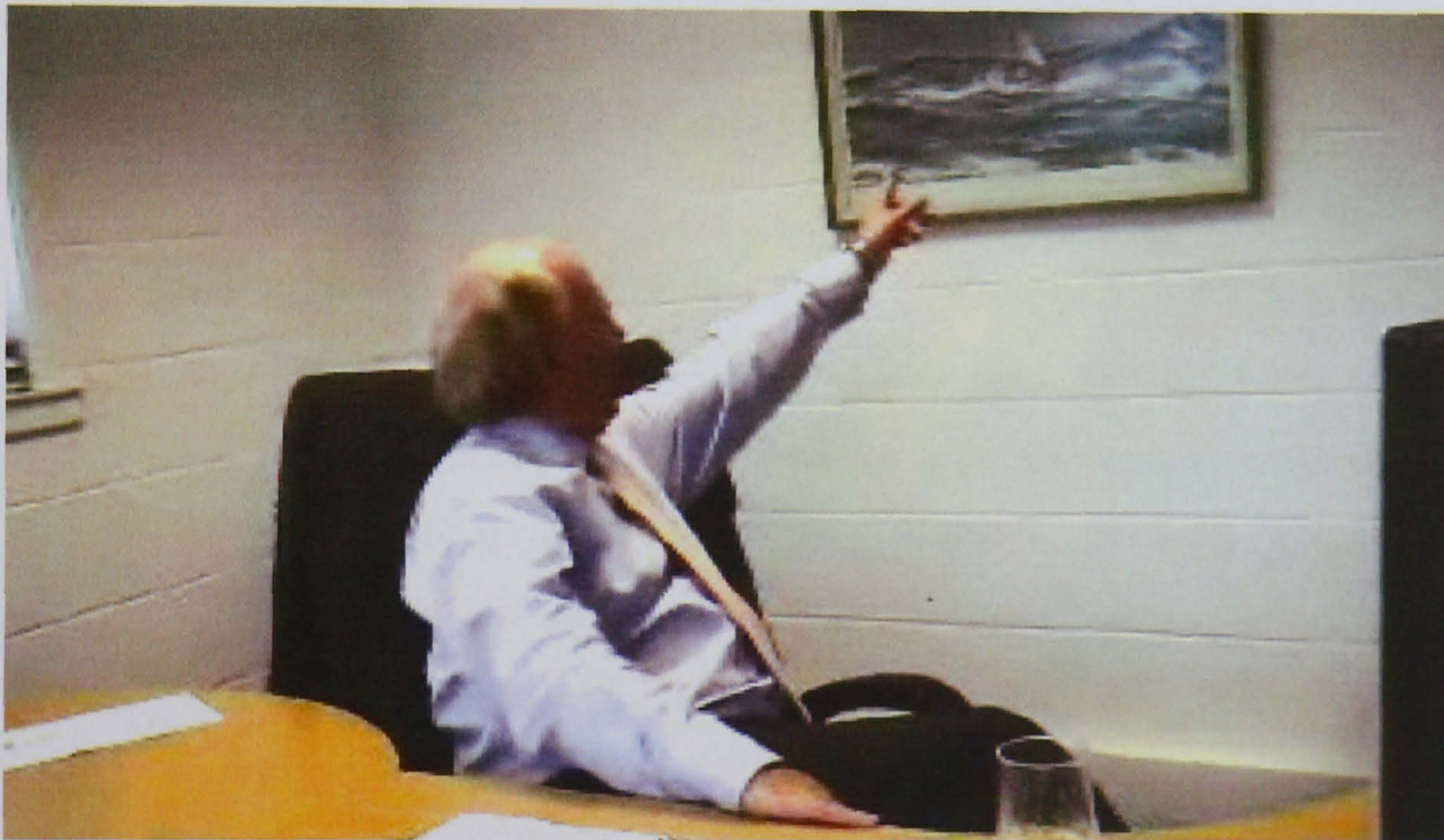
In this way Paul described the movement of products to market in terms of a journey with an uncertain end, suggesting that it is more beneficial to make an initial start on this journey rather than waiting for a perfect plan to be formalised outlining the exact route and where it will lead. As the context is continuously changing, highly formal plans are unlikely to be useful in such an ambiguous context. In doing this, he created a meaning for the engineers that helped portray to them that theory is not perfect in the "real" world, through suggesting *"you're probably at 95% as precise as you're going to be in a theoretical sense practically"*. He therefore utilised the engineers' specialist skills but guided them in the direction he needed for the future benefit of the business. In Dodd's (2002) metaphorical study she similarly found that entrepreneurs described the entrepreneurial process as a journey of some kind. Drawing on Goatly (1997) she argues that one of the most basic root analogies of the English language is the description of developments or successes in terms of physical movements forward. In particular, she argues, in terms of entrepreneurial processes, the appropriateness of this metaphor for giving meaning to these activities "is striking, since it contains allusions to the process of business creation and its complexity, leading to success once obstacles and problem have been overcome" (Dodd, 2002: 535). In this case, the obstacles Paul faced were the tendencies of the engineers to design rather than implement, which he overcame through encouraging them to put their ideas into practice as soon as possible, rather than planning until perfect. This comparison of his entrepreneurial activities to an uncertain journey was not only created in a metaphorical sense through the language he used, but also through the visual imagery he displayed in his physical surroundings. In particular, behind Paul's desk in his office there was a picture of a boat perched precariously on the edge of a wave, which he further drew to image his entrepreneurial venture:

Paul: *"If you're on a sailing boat and there's six or seven of us going and it's forty odd foot so it's quite big...you can get caught out in big seas and big winds, particularly in Ireland and Scotland where we go and I've been a skipper for twenty years so you have a sense of responsibility for everyone...I think that you get into - or you can get into - potentially very difficult situations, and you*

can get practically into very difficult situations, and I think you've got to be able to get through those one way or another..."

Jean: *"So maybe that's helped?"*

Paul: *"Yeah, I think it has helped because you think, you know, 'God what a mess this is' you know 'but it's not as bad as that'. If you get through the rainy day, the sun comes out so you've just got to...I could look at that* [pointing to picture on wall] *and say God look at the state of that, that's Cape Horn in the background, gee whiz that's Francis Chichester - the guy was in his 70s he had been diagnosed with cancer and he sailed round the world in Gypsy Moth. I mean God, what the hells is facing me - would I rather be on that you know?"*



6.5 Paul Pointing at Image

Through this comparison of his entrepreneurial venture to guiding a boat through difficult and hazardous conditions, Paul described his activities as a dangerous and uncertain journey. In comparing his entrepreneurial activities to a boat at sea, there is a suggestion of the business being inextricably related to changes in the wider environmental conditions, which impact on the stability, and eventual success, of the expedition. Dodd (2002) similarly suggests that through narrating their lives as uncertain journeys, where they struggled through their activities in a context where the destination was unclear and movement was potentially

hazardous, entrepreneurs were able to make sense of their actions and activities and express this meaning to others around them. She further argues that the journey metaphor is a particularly Westernised ideal, suggesting a restless and individualistic adventurer, and therefore portrays the cultural context in which entrepreneurship takes place (Dodd, 2002). Paul further expressed this metaphor through pointing to a picture above his desk which portrayed Francis Chichester's yacht, "Gypsy Moth", in high and dangerous seas on his epic round-the-world voyage (see video still 6.5). He also suggested that he sometimes used this image to compare and make sense of his own business issues, stating that even though his destination was unknown and times were often difficult, it was not comparable to the extreme circumstances pictured above his head. It was not only imaginative projection, which allowed Paul to make meaning of his entrepreneurial activities, but also his physical and spatial surroundings. In describing the development of strategy with a director in the business he outlined how important it was to be in a suitable physical and material context:

> *Paul: "It's nice to do it in a nice environment with a glass of wine because it helps you it stimulates you...If you're going to be big and successful then think about it in the environment of trappings of success, you know, in a good hotel with good food and comfortable surroundings. That's where you want to be, so that's where you need to be to think along those lines."*

In this case it appears that Paul used his surroundings as a form of rhetorical tool, allowing him to develop meanings in a context that suggested success, growth and prosperity. Being in an environment that "implied" success encouraged him to *"think along those lines"* and to build up a strategy that would lead to long-term success and development. In line with this finding Yanow (2006) similarly notes that building's "design vocabularies" or the social values and beliefs they suggest through their décor can affect acts and also certain feelings. In an examination of what effect a modern. exclusively furnished community centre had on the inhabitants of a derelict and underprivileged area she suggests "the effect on residents, removed from the immediacy of the everyday, was to create a receptivity to the organizational meanings represented in these design elements –

a socio-economic and cultural identity that might be theirs some day" (Yanow, 2006: 62). There appears to be some comparison with the finding presented here as being placed in an the surroundings of an exclusive hotel markedly contrasted with the everyday setting of Paul's business activities and allowed him to create future meanings for his business in a setting which he aspired to and may one day achieve within the context of his own business. Therefore in this case it appears that visual surroundings were used to create meanings not only for others but also to create meanings for the entrepreneur himself.

7.0 OVERCOMING COMPLEXITY: THE "TECHIE" ENTREPRENEUR

7.1 **Simon Hensley**

7.1 Situating the Entrepreneur

The second ethnographic study was based on an entrepreneur, known as **Simon Hensley (32)** (see video still 7.1), managing director of a company known as **XYZ Technologies** based in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. The company also employed one staff member **Pete Mansfield (32)**, who also held a small stake in the business. As the company was so small, there was little formal structure and they both worked from a one-room office where they conducted all of their business activities. The company had been in existence since 2001 and specialised in a form of software development and support known as Open Sources. This form of software is in direct contrast to copyright software such as Microsoft as the source code in this form of software development is available for use or modification to the general public free of charge. The company was one of the first to develop this technology as a means of providing remote IT support to small businesses across the UK. In this system, customers do not pay for the software but pay for the support they receive with any IT problems they encounter on a daily basis. The company, therefore, had little face-to-face contact with customers, with most interaction being conducted remotely by email or by

phone. They had also recently begun to develop an innovative line of products, which brought TV and recording facilities through the Internet on multi-resident sites. At the time of this study they were unaware of any other companies in the market pursuing this kind of technology.

The findings are divided into three main sections. Firstly, there is an attempt to understand Simon's opportunity recognition as placed work within a wider social and political context. It appears that in this case, a business opportunity was not simply "spotted" but rather related to wider contextual changes, which were occurring in the environment at this time. This is followed by an examination of how Simon engaged others in a complex product such as software and how others made sense of this technology. In particular, the problems encountered due to the intangible nature of software are discussed and illustrated effectively through a meeting conducted with a Business Link Advisor during the ethnographic study. The visual and persuasive aspects of the entrepreneurial process are then examined. As previously mentioned the company was not usually customer facing and therefore its visual surroundings were not specifically designed to cater for their audience's needs. On occasion, customers and influential others did come to see them on-site and Simon had developed a number of strategies to overcome these problems. Yet, sometimes not fulfilling others' expectations did lead to problems and these are explored through reference to the meeting with the Business Link Advisor. Finally, Simon's entrepreneurial activities are examined as rhetorical and discursive processes, with emphasis being placed on the continuous and relational process of meaning-making.

7.2 Contextualising Opportunity Recognition

As in the previous case, Simon did not strive to be an entrepreneur or suggest that he had an underlying desire to control his own destiny, rather the process of becoming an entrepreneur was inextricably related to the social and economic context within which he found himself placed. In particular, in the 1990s there was a dramatic rise in Internet related technology leading to *"a nice big bubble of stuff"* where demand for websites and other Internet communication networks

reached an all time high. This dramatic growth was followed by a corresponding collapse in the market *"when the bubble burst"* and highly skilled Internet professionals found it difficult to find jobs in a market where few positions were available. Around this time, Simon and Pete both lost their jobs in a website design company, and found it difficult to find any work, apart from some limited agency-based freelance contracting work. Against this background, Simon *"spotted essentially there was a bit of a change afoot in the world of computing"* with the growth of the Open Sources movement in the arena of software development. Seeing the potential for bringing this new technology to small businesses and with no stable employment, Simon decided to create a business which sought to offer small businesses access to this advanced technology as an alternative to Microsoft Windows. Outlining his experience of the previous growth and rapid decline of Internet-related technologies, he argued that it was essential to become part of this new movement at the very beginning rather than *"jump"* on at the end when there is little profit to be made:

> Simon: *"You can see bandwagons coming. Essentially there are certain things in the market-place that are going to be a boom, if you get on at the beginning it's easy to make a lot of money, if you get on at the end when everyone else is jumping on, there's an awful lot of players in the marketplace and it becomes very confusing. Sometimes it just collapses because the thing never really lived up to the hype and some people got quite carried away or there were so many people doing it that for every one customer there's twenty suppliers fighting over it. The market collapses just because of the number of suppliers who end up dropping out all of a sudden and usually it goes in a big wave where lots of them can vanish overnight."*

Simon therefore suggested that spotting opportunities is like *"jumping on"* a *"bandwagon"*, and in order to benefit from the opportunity, a position in the market must be established at the very beginning. This ensures that if the market collapses some profit has been made. In this description there is a sense that Simon viewed himself as being at the receiving end of changes in an external

environment, which impacted on the entrepreneurial venture. This suggests that rather than being in control of the success of the venture, Simon's entrepreneurial activities were related and to some extent dependent on conditions in the contextual environment. This finding aligns with the view forwarded by Fletcher (2006), which emphasises the importance of placing opportunity identification in terms of relational rather than cognitive understandings. In particular, she argues that if opportunity recognition is conceptualised in terms of a cognitive/agency view we lose the ability to account for "why people enact opportunities in the way (and at the time) that they do in relation to broader societal, economic and political processes" (Fletcher, 2006: 425). In particular, Fletcher suggests that the most problematic issue with cognitive approaches is that they view opportunities as existing objectively in the environment, and place too much emphasis on the "special" abilities of the individual which allows them to "spot" these opportunities. Therefore, beyond some examination of the entrepreneur's social networks or educational background they pay little attention to the wider cultural or historical practices that shape entrepreneurial processes. In this case, a relational approach seems particularly appropriate as Simon decided to set up a business when he became unemployed due to external economic conditions. Simon's "opportunity" was also related to wider changes that were occurring in the computing field, which allowed him to access and make use of new knowledge:

> Simon: *"The market was changing, there was a lot going on. People were becoming more aware that there was something outside of Microsoft, so I though oh actually it might not be a bad idea, I'm actually pretty good at that and I may as well do something about it sooner rather than later...I suppose with the IT industry it's spotting a trend that may develop before everyone else becomes aware of it and starts to do stuff with it. With this* [Open Sources] *in particular I've been doing stuff with it since sort of 95 '96, when most people hadn't even heard of it. It was capable of doing an awful lot of things that commercially you would have been paying a fortune for...and I thought you know there is some money here, eventually people will cotton onto this, more people will cotton on*

so if you're already there providing services and support for it you'll be ready to go really."

As Simon suggested the *"market was changing"*, outlining the wider structural changes that allowed Simon to realise his venture. In particular, there is a suggestion that the situational context ensured that *"people were becoming more aware"* which allowed his ideas about this new technology to be understood within this context. While Simon used his own unique experience in the Open Sources field to develop these ideas, their implementation into the world of small business would not have been possible without wider changes in the environment. These wider contextual changes ensured that people had begun to understand that there were a number of other software approaches apart from Microsoft. Therefore, in this case, it seems, the individual agency of the entrepreneur cannot be privileged in the process of opportunity recognition as the realisation of the opportunity was placed within a wider context, which enabled these actions to take place. Understanding the process of entrepreneurship in this way encompasses a much broader and more inclusive view than those forwarded by psychological studies as it accounts for the cultural, societal and economic factors which impact on any attempt to identify opportunities. In addition, the concept of Open Sources itself has a wider philosophy set in a cultural context, through which Simon made meaning for his entrepreneurial activities:

Simon: *"Philosophically it's* [Open Sources] *quite different from the way most computer software works...It comes with the source code for it and you're allowed to modify it. The programme as such doesn't belong to anyone. The rules are basically, if you get a copy of the source you can modify the source but you have to modify the source with the rest of the world...I suppose while the idea of giving away your software is not a money-making idea...you use it to build products that you can sell and you can build those products a lot quicker and that improves the software that makes up parts of the product, so everyone benefits essentially."*

As Simon explained, the Open Source movement has a very particular philosophy with a strong ideological element, which stressed communal goals over corporate dominance. Rather than creating knowledge solely for corporate gain, Open Source programmes are developed in a collaborative effort between the designer and others in the Open Sources network and any changes are then shared with the community. While profit isn't gained from the development of the software, the software can be turned into a range of products, which can then be sold to businesses along with future support for these programmes. Simon argued that this collaborative effort was an integral part of his business processes, as he was interested in the idea that *"everyone benefits"* from the knowledge created rather than one or two individuals. Of greatest interest to Simon was the potential this approach had to become a competitor to US dominance in the software industry and a means to redress the current imbalance through offering an approach that benefits a range of individuals rather than just one giant corporation:

> Simon: *"This way everyone can gain some benefit essentially from the software and it moves away from the dominance of Microsoft...I'd much prefer to create something like this then go around installing Microsoft Office onto peoples' computers...It's a community you know...everything I create gets used by others, I'm not keeping my knowledge and using it for my profit alone...I like that idea."*

In this case, the development of a business was much more than simply an individual's attempt at creating a self-serving project. Rather the entrepreneurial processes occurring were set within a wider argumentative environment. In particular, communal benefits and collective achievements were emphasised over individual needs. This understanding of entrepreneurship is in direct contrast to the view forwarded in the psychological literature, which as argued in previous chapters, is constructed from a particularly Western and individualistic ideal. This individualistic understanding simply equates entrepreneurship with "the production and distribution of goods for profit" (Smith, 1999: 770) and consequently offers little guidance into understanding motives, which extend

beyond the profit-making arena. If the entrepreneurial activities described in this case were simply viewed on an individual level, the social, cultural and political understandings, which played such an integral role in the process, would not be examined and hence our understandings would be greatly reduced. Therefore, in order to make sense of entrepreneurial behaviour, it seems, attention must be paid to the situational environment or ongoing argumentative context within which the venture is based.

7.3 Engaging Others in Complex Projects

As described above entrepreneurial activities must be understood in relation to the context within which they exist, but, another important aspect of the entrepreneurial process is how others relate to and are engaged in the entrepreneur's venture. In particularly novel or innovative ventures, entrepreneurs often confront serious issues associated with a lack of legitimacy or external validation (Low and Abrahuamson, 1997; Stone and Brush, 1996), which can result in a venture failing if effective meanings involving the utilisation of the new product or service are not created. As Gartner *et al* (1992: 18) note, entrepreneurs must therefore continually act "as if equivocal events are non-equivocal" in order to create meanings which others can understand and subsequently engage with. In this case the problem of gaining legitimacy and consequently engaging others in the utility of the venture was often particularly problematic given that the technology was relatively new and infrequently applied. In addition, these problems also appeared to be related to the intangible nature of software products. Software is not a physical entity and cannot be simply viewed by others but rather works as a series of codes within the computer system, and therefore the benefits it offers are often not immediately obvious. In an attempt to overcome these problems, Simon sought to create possible "futures" for the use of his technology through relating these complex ideas to the everyday lives of his customers:

> Simon: *"Essentially you sell it based on that* [how it relates to daily lives] *and people get that. They don't need to be computer geniuses to get that concept, it's just there - it relates to their daily life, what*

they do in their businesses and they get the idea. If I do things simpler I can do more in one day, if I do more stuff in one day, I can make more money in one day and, you know, put off that hiring of that other person possibly or make better use of that person who at the moment is just answering phones or photocopying stuff...So if you persuade them this will make life easier in your business it will save you money or, you know, it will substantially reduce the effort you take doing x, y, z people go 'ah, yes that makes sense'."

Even though his customers could not physically see the product as a "real" entity, Simon avoided the problems associated with lack of legitimacy, through emphasising the practical utility of his product. This process involved Simon assessing his audience and understanding what would make sense to them in order to convey the utility of his software. In particular, he stressed how their futures lives could be made easier, how they could reduce their current effort and still create more profit. It seems that Simon constructed his arguments with the anticipation of what others in the context would understand and respond to in order to ensure that his arguments made sense and enabled him to develop further meanings with his customers. As Shotter (1993a; 1995) notes in order "influence those around us" the meanings that individuals create must make sense and be "logical" to others around them. The challenge for the entrepreneur, it seems, is therefore to decipher what manner of speech or action is appropriate for that particular moment in order to influence others and make sense with them. Simon further emphasised that bringing new products to market was also a process of assessing understandings and developing meanings. In particular, he highlighted that meanings must be created for products over a period of time allowing customers to develop their understandings, ensuring that they could make sense of the benefits that the new products could offer:

Simon: *"There's a limit to how much you can shove into the market place too quickly without just overwhelming people with too much stuff...If you blind them with science they won't buy anything...You can only persuade your customers that you've got*

so many new products a year and have them take off to their potential. So there are things that technically we could deliver this year but are being held back because there are already too many new things to get across in the marketing concept."

Again, it is clear that Simon assessed the needs of his audience and sought to continually create meanings that made sense to them. As he explained, even though his firm was technically ready to place new products into the market, he understood that there was a limit to the number of new technical products that customers would be able to assimilate and accept within a given period. He argued that to put forward too much technology too quickly would *"blind"* customers *"with science"* and result in the technology no longer making "sense" as they were unable to decipher the meanings behind the software or understand its utility for their everyday lives and consequently *"they won't buy anything"*. This creation of meaning was not only important in a linguistic sense but visual understandings also played a role in creating these meanings for customers. Simon viewed it as essential to ensure the product *"looked good"* and communicated certain non-verbal meanings to customers. Even though the software could not be physically seen, it came with packaging such as information leaflets and guidance on use, which should look *"pretty"*, encouraging the customer to believe that the product was *"nice and simple"* to use. While the underlying technology did not change, the products needed to be packaged and presented in a manner that was aesthetically pleasing to the customer:

Simon: *"You've got to package it up, make it look pretty. Essentially it does the same thing but you have to make sure it looks nice and simple for the customer to use...The user doesn't care, shouldn't care about the underlying complexities...it's all about appearances at the end of the day. The product could be amazing but if the look's all wrong, on the other hand it could be a load of crap bundled into a pretty package...which one do you think sells best?"*

Jean: *"The pretty one?"*

Simon: *"Exactly, so you have to please the customer."*

Simon outlined that it was not sufficient just to ensure that the products were of a high standard and suitable for their purpose but it was important to make sure the product *"looks nice"* for the customer. In particular, it appears that in order to win customers, it was important not to attempt to explain the underlying technology, but rather to produce products that appealed to customers on an aesthetic level. As Gagliardi (1996: 570) notes "the 'power' of an object derives from its capacity as a symbol – of awakening sensations, feelings and reasons for acting". In this way, packaging the software into a *"pretty"* form allowed customers to relate to the product and see "something else that might exist" (Gagliardi, 1996: 570). The importance of having some physical object, which represented the software and could be viewed by customers or interested others, was seen on a variety of occasions over the course of this ethnographic study. In particular, during my time in the organisation I arranged for a local Business Link Advisor to come to the company and talk about possibilities for funding and developing the company's new stream of technologies (see video still 7.2). As Simon had yet to *"productise"* this technology, there were a series of problems during this meeting as Simon struggled to explain the utility of a product, which could not be physically viewed or touched by Business Link Advisor:

B.L.A: *"It* [the grant] *is primarily for research and development... there is a micro project which is for companies of nine employees or less and that's there to help fund the creation of prototypes of innovative products or processes."*

Simon: *"Yeah, can those include software products or does it have to be a physical lump of stuff?"*

B.L.A: *"Software is a product but it is a difficult subject to get across and therefore to be funded."*

Simon: *"Obviously the software will be deployed on a physical unit... You buy this piece of hardware from anywhere and you use it... It's the software that lives on top of it that actually makes it do anything useful... It's a bit of a weird thing about designing."*

B.L.A: *"Yes right well...you've got to be able to see an output from the software that you've created physically on the screen. You know it's actually got to be seen to do something, as opposed to something that lives deep inside a computer."*

7.2 Business Link Advisor Meeting

The Business Link Advisor emphasised to Simon that in order to assess whether this innovation would be suitable for a Research and Development Grant, he had to able to see the technology. Therefore the non-physicality of software created problems for Simon, as he struggled to outline the utility of the technology without any physical artefact to present to the Business Link Advisor. This problem is also evident in Mason and Harrison's (2000) study, where they find that technology-based small firms often encounter specific problems in engaging others in their business due to the complexity of the technology. In order to establish this, Mason and Harrison (2000) videotape entrepreneurs while conducting presentations in an attempt to gain finance from business angels. They highlight that entrepreneurs who are most successful in persuading the business angels of the utility of their product use a multitude of meaning-making tools including language, display and artefact. In this case, while Simon attempted to give the Business Link Advisor a display of the potential utility of the software on his computer, he was unable to physically show him a package of the technology or how customers would purchase it. Simon was therefore

unsuccessful in convincing the Business Link Advisor of the utility of his venture and the Business Link Advisor left the company unsure of what their product could potentially do:

B.L.A: *"What does it do?"*

Simon: *"It lets people watch TV on a web browser, to summarise it quite nicely."*

B.L.A: *"Ok is that new?"*

Simon: *"Yep"*

B.L.A: *"You can't do it currently?"*

Simon: *"Nope...or not particularly well."*

B.L.A: *"Ah ha...that's different."*

Simon: *"Viewing things on web browsers is obviously possible already but it's usually a pre-recorded stream - it's not live TV as it comes off the air...this is essentially."*

B.L.A: *"It's a long way of getting around not paying your TV licence."*

Simon: *"Eh no, no...you still have to have a TV licence, it's for mass residential properties... its core market."*

While this appears to emphasise the importance of being able to physically present high-technology products to potential funding bodies, Simon further suggested that the Business Link Advisor had been unwilling to engage with the new technology because he was *"old school manufacturing"*. In particular, Simon argued that the Business Link Advisor was not only unfamiliar with the technology he had presented but also was accustomed to certain dress-codes and physical surroundings, which were in direct contrast to the surroundings of Simon's office. As he outlined *"he didn't understand this, you know, first of all it's the technology but it was also because I didn't bring him into a dark oak panelled room and wear a suit...I suppose I could have booked the meeting room"*. Visually there was a dramatic contrast between the Business Link Advisor's and Simon's mode of dress as can be seen in the above video still. As customers rarely visited the office it wasn't equipped for visitors or customers, with empty boxes. pieces of hardware and pages strewn haphazardly across the floor. Although on occasion some smaller or similar "techie" customers would

have informal meetings in the office (see video still 7.3), this was quite a rare occurrence. In particular, Simon was aware that the larger professional customers would not appreciate this workspace and admitted that it might create a visual meaning, which suggested they were *"scruffy and unprofessional"*. Therefore, if important customers happened to come on-site they would ensure that the communal meeting room downstairs was booked for the visit, although there had not been sufficient notice to book it for the Business Link Advisor:

Jean: *"Do you usually bring clients up here?"*

Simon: *"Not often, occasionally they would pop in to pick up hardware or drop stuff off. Normally if we have meetings with them we'll go and see them in their offices. There are a few customers who understand how we work and we don't mind them coming in here. But if we wanted to look swish there is a meeting room downstairs that we can use; we book it in advance."*

Jean: *"Is it important sometimes to look swish as you say?"*

Simon: *"From a customer sales point of view, occasionally it is if you're working with bigger companies they expect you to look professional which is fine we can do that. Day-to-day they know that we're techies essentially and most techies are usually informal, but if you're trying to push something to someone then it is important to look good."*

7.3 Informal Meeting with Customer

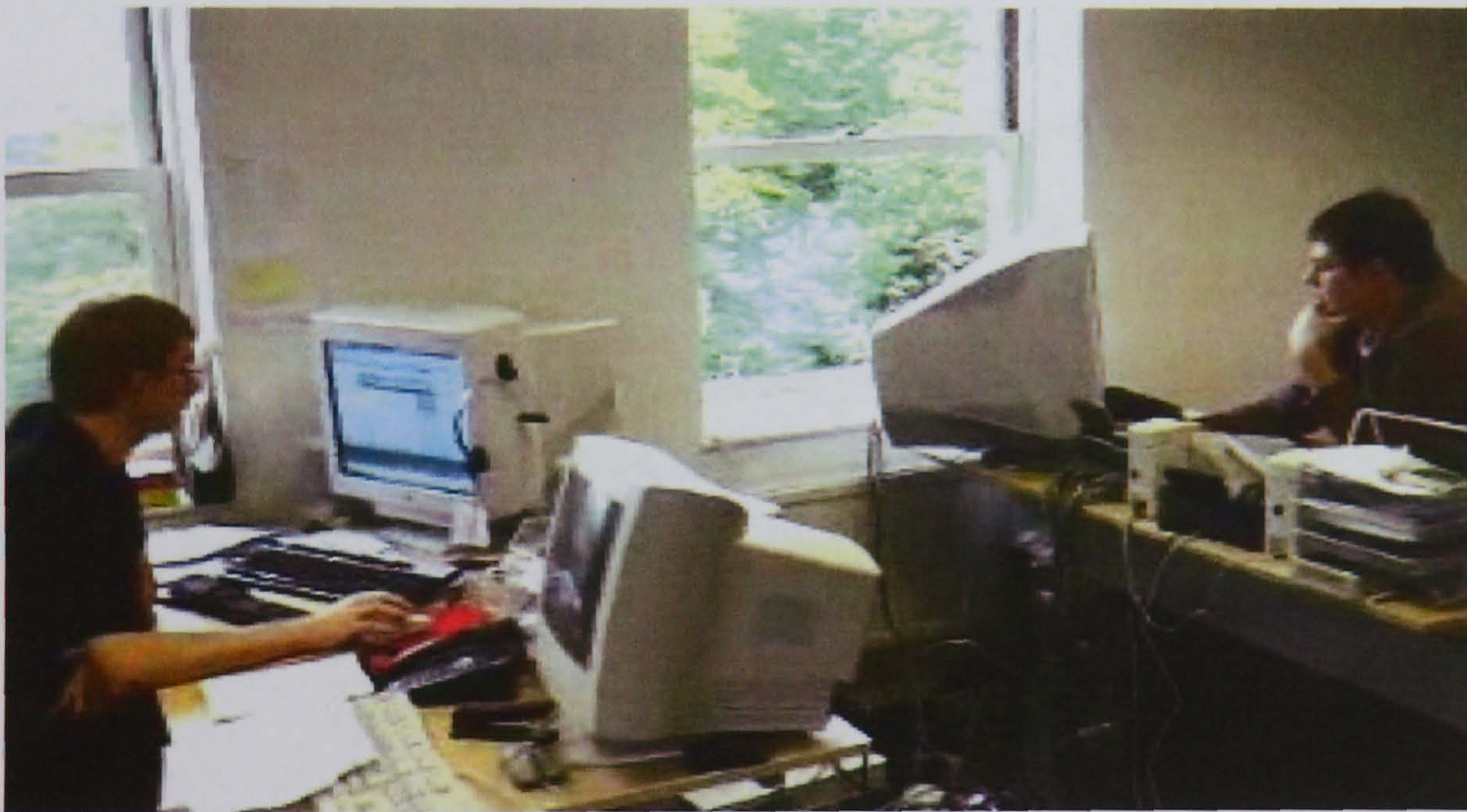
As Simon described, the physical appearance of their workspace was important if they needed to persuade customers that they were a professional company. While he explained that *"day-to-day they know that we're techies"*, on occasion they had to create another image that was more appropriate for a particular audience. While it was usually appropriate for Simon and Pete to be *"informal"* and *"techies"* in their own environment on a *"day-to-day"* basis, when they were removed from this context or had to create a certain impression they had to adapt and manipulate their visual appearance and the appearance of their contextual surroundings. As in the previous case, it was not just the language used that is important in the entrepreneurial process of engaging others in the venture but also the "expressive responsiveness of bodily activities" (Shotter, 2005). In this context, in order to ensure appropriate meanings were created, Simon and Pete changed their embodied displays (Radley, 1996) by wearing different clothing and placing their bodies in another space, which suggested a range of social and cultural values, therefore "speaking" to the customer in a more appropriate manner (Yanow, 2006).

7.4 Communal and Linguistic Activities

It can be seen from the argument developed above that in this case the entrepreneurial process was not simply an individual affair but was a communal and relational achievement. In particular, it has been highlighted that both the wider context and expectations of others in their environment impacted on the decisions and activities of the entrepreneur. In addition to these relational aspects, it appears the processes of strategy development and decision-making were also relational activities. As similarly argued in the previous case, rather than Simon being a de-contextualised individual, orchestrating objective activities, he appeared to act in a communal manner and develop his understandings in an ongoing and co-ordinated effort between him and his employee Pete. As Simon outlined, *"we work as a team, it's a whole big circle...he covers what I don't and visa-versa"*. In this way Simon's role as entrepreneur could be conceptualised as just one component in a mutually defining system (Sampson, 1990), where each component is necessary to achieve the end result. Therefore, in this case, the entrepreneurial process appears to be

an assemblage of different sources of capacity, all necessary to maintain the success of the business venture:

> Simon: *"One of the reasons for having Pete on board is that he's a picky individual. He's one of these people who's fairly picky and he likes being picky and it's greats because I'm not...I'm more of a grand ideas kind of person so Pete's there to do the picky bits, the detail...and you need somebody like that in a company as well...My general idea is to carry things forward, see the bigger picture and have something that we'll aim towards which is something Pete's not very good at, bearing it in mind that that's not his thing. Pete likes details and doesn't think about the wider stuff too much because he finds it difficult to nitpick if he's looking at the bigger picture. That's my job I look at the big picture."*



7.4 Pete and Simon at Work

This suggests that it would not be useful to understand Simon's approach in terms of an isolated individual, acting as an information processor who scans and monitors the environment around them which allows them to make decisions (e.g. Daft *et al.*, 1988; Starbuck *et al*, 1978), as this would neglect an integral part of the process. Rather Simon's strategy formation and other managerial activities may be more beneficially viewed as rhetorical and social processes

(e.g. Billig, 1996). In particular, it appeared that Simon used Pete's tendency to be *"picky"* to compensate for his own inclination to see only *"the bigger picture"* and neglect small but important details (see video still 7.4). In this way, Pete could be viewed as a rhetorical "tool" which Simon employed to *"pick" at* his ideas, which added a discursive and rhetorical dimension to his own thought processes through arranging his decision-making and strategy creation around a conflicting argumentative process. This emphasises once again the discursive and linguistically constructed nature of the entrepreneurship process. Pete similarly understood his role in the company in this manner, noting that his role was central to *"organising"* Simon's *"thoughts"* through offering Simon the opportunity to verbalise his ideas and to construct an argument which convinced Pete that that the strategy he proposed was an effective one:

Jean: *"So how does the company decide strategy?"*

Pete: *"Usually Simon comes to me having pre-thought of something, I think we should do this, do I agree... We'll discuss it together and work out firstly if we are just going down a blind alley. He does think big but he also thinks in a lot of different places at once, so it's a lot of organising his thoughts and then we would work out the logistics of it, would it work, how fast we can implement it, what we'll charge for it, that sort of thing."*

Jean: *"So that sounds like a good combination?"*

Pete: *"It is. That's how we've managed to keep going quite happily. Essentially he is more of the entrepreneurial thinker because he thinks of things on bigger scales."*

While Simon was the initiator of the strategy as he *"pre thought"* about certain directions the business could potentially go in, an important part of this process may also be attributed to Pete who ensured that they didn't go down a *"blind alley"*. In particular, Pete assessed whether Simon's *"entrepreneurial"* thinking made sense and if they could usefully apply his ideas. As Pete emphasised, while Simon thought *"big"* his thoughts were often incoherent and confused, which Pete helped to unravel through their dialogue. This allowed them to think about the *"logistics of it"* and develop understandings about how the idea could be

practically applied. This is reminiscent of the previous case as the entrepreneur continuously tested his ideas on others around him. This rhetorical process was expanded through visualising their arguments on a whiteboard, which was constantly used throughout the period of the ethnography. When ideas or strategies were being developed, Simon would use the whiteboard to display their idea diagrammatically in order to make further sense of them. There appears to be some overlap with the previous case, as Simon also used visual images to make meaning for the uncertain future of his business through creating visual images, which gave some level of certainty to the process:

> Simon: *"A lot of the time we just have an informal discussion. We spend several days passing ideas back and forth... normally Pete sitting in his chair and me pacing back and forth* [laughs]. *That diagram* [points to chart on wall] *came out of discussions like that. Just to write it down and make sure we've got some of the ideas visualised and then Pete roughed up the basic core software... It's useful in that way because it visually reminds us where we are and where we got to, plus it's a constant reminder of where we need to be."*

Simon suggested it was important to *"get some of the ideas visualised"* as turning an elusive idea into a physical "reality" aided them in discussing the idea and assessing its utility. There is also a suggestion that the omnipresence of the visual image of the technology in the office was a constant *"reminder of where"* they needed to be as it represented in a tangible manner some future "possibilities" in an uncertain and ambiguous context. In this way the visual image was used to develop pathways for action, which may continuously change. However, at any one time they were directed towards achieving a certain visualised goal. Therefore, while Simon was the *"entrepreneurial"* thinker who thought of the new ideas and gave the business a future direction, there were also a number of problems with Simon's tendency to *"think big"*. In particular, on one occasion software packages had gone out to customers before they were fully developed which had resulted in a number of complaints. When asked about this Simon outlined that, *"sometimes you've just got to get things out there"*,

however, Pete's *"philosophy"* on this issue once again appeared to be in direct contrast to Simon's understanding:

> Pete: *"He's much better at thinking bigger about things. He can see a potential little piece of technology, he can see a potential product in it which is great, and he can go and he will tell people it's going to be great even if he's not got everything entirely working, whereas I'm much better at looking at things and working out the detail of how they're going to work, putting them together, making sure that they're reliable and following through essentially...So a slightly different philosophy on that really but it works well."*

This appears to be in line with the findings of the previous case where the entrepreneur encouraged the engineers to implement the design of the product as quickly as possible in order to ensure that their competitors did not take their market share. The findings here suggest that Pete appeared to be working in the same manner as the engineers and aimed to ensure it was 100% theoretically perfect before it was developed into a saleable product. Simon's understanding was that rather than waiting for a perfect design it was more appropriate to bring the product to the market. Rather than waiting for the blueprint to be perfect, he aimed to develop a product from the plan as quickly and efficiently as possible. While as suggested above this approach had previously caused a problem, the differences in the viewpoints of Simon and Pete, usually ensured that the products that were brought to market were not always theoretically perfect yet able to work in an appropriate manner. Therefore, Simon and Pete functioned in a rhetorical manner were the tensions between them worked to ensure that products worked effectively and were brought to market as quickly as possible.

8.0 PLAYING THE PART: "PIT-LAD" OR ENTREPRENEUR

8.1 Dave Sutton

8.1 Situating the Entrepreneur

The third ethnographic study centred on **Dave Sutton (37)** (see video still 8.1), managing director of **Sorby Power Tools**, which was a power tool repair company based in Doncaster South Yorkshire. In outlining the findings of this case it is of particular importance to consider the political and historical context prior to any understanding of the meaning-making processes occurring in the context. This importance arises due to the emphasis placed by the participants of this case study on the area's coal-mining past throughout the interviews and observations. In particular, participants frequently referred to the town as a *"pit village"* and highlighted the deprived economic status of the area. This suggests that the historical context still heavily impacted the meaning-making processes of the individuals in this setting. In interviews and discussions, participants often outlined that up until the 1980s coal mining had been the major industrial focus of the area. Given that both the entrepreneur and other participants frequently emphasised the social and economic impact of the area's mining past, with the entrepreneur often describing himself as a displaced miner or *"pit lad"*, it is

important before any of the findings are outlined to embed the results within this wider understanding.

The findings of this case are divided into three main sections. Firstly there is an examination of the process of venture creation with particular attention being paid to the relational aspects of this process. It is suggested that Dave managed to successfully create and develop the business through a variety of rhetorical-relational activities with others in his context including family members, customers and employees. Secondly, the visual and persuasive aspects of the ongoing enactment of the entrepreneurial endeavour are examined. This includes both visual and verbal meaning-making and the importance of aligning visual meaning-making with meanings created in the linguistic domain, in order to ensure others are successfully engaged in the venture. It is then further suggested that the entrepreneurial processes occurring in this context were fundamentally interpersonal achievements placed in a contextual environment, which enabled and constrained certain linguistic constructions. It is argued as in the previous cases that the entrepreneurship process may be more usefully examined as a communal activity set in a unique environment rather than a de-contextualised individual activity. The use of the term "entrepreneur" and how it relates to the context is further examined. It is noted that Dave associated the term with a particularly exploitative and negative meaning. This appears to suggest that entrepreneurship is not a "stable" or objective concept but rather its meaning and understanding depend on the context within which it is applied

8.2 Relational Aspects of Venture Creation

Within the climate of economic deprivation described above, Dave Sutton, the son of a local miner left school at fifteen in 1984 having achieved no formal qualifications. With few or no feasible employment opportunities in the area, Dave took part in a Youth Training Scheme (YTS), a government-funded initiative whereby local employers were funded to employ young people and train them in a variety of trade-based jobs. Dave was placed in a local tool repairing company and over the next ten years, got promoted within the company, gradually becoming a senior service engineer, and began to represent

the company to a number of large multinational corporations throughout the UK. In 1995 the company began to run into financial problems and Dave was one of the first to be made redundant. Having spent three months searching for work in stagnant economic conditions, while surviving on state benefits and trying to provide for two young children, Dave decided he could either end up *"sticking cherries on top of cakes in the local factory"* or attempt to set up his own business. He borrowed a small sum of money from his father to buy some machinery and an old van and set up a power tool repairing business under the stairs in his family home:

Jean: *"So how did you set up this company, for example, where did you get your expertise from? Just tell me the story about the whole thing."*

Dave: *"I borrowed some money off me Dad and we put us policy together and we went and bought a van and I started repairing tools underneath me stairs at home, and I had no compressor or anything like that. I did no groundwork, didn't register for VAT, didn't register the company on the Companies House, didn't have any promotional goods, didn't have any software...didn't have any stock, it was just generally a man with a van, as they say."*

For Dave, his entrepreneurial venture was born out of the "necessity" of the situation, rather than having a long-term aim to become an entrepreneur (e.g. McClelland, 1961; Shane and Venkataraman, 2001). Rather this conception of the entrepreneurial venture aligns more closely with a contextualised understanding of the entrepreneurship process as being embedded in an environment, which places restrictions on, but also possibilities for, action (Dodd, 2002). In this view entrepreneurs do not action sets of pre-determined goals and then work to achieve them, rather goals are continually and linguistically conceived through an understanding of what meanings it is possible for the entrepreneur to create based on the circumstances, their understanding of prior events and experience and the environment within which they are currently placed (O' Connor, 2002). In addition, Dave's described the act of venture creation as inherently relational, "supplemented" by his father's monetary support rather than being an individual achievement (Hosking, 2000). Dave

emphasised these collective and relational aspects through the language he used to describe the process of venture creation. In particular, he stressed collective action outlining that *"we put us policy together"* and *"we went and bought a van"* rather than emphasising a personal endeavour. By emphasising a collective understanding of the business creation, Dave outlined the process as being an interpersonal achievement, one where he created a space for action, based on knowledge of what was possible for him to achieve and through a relational process "gave" this meaning to his father and convinced him of the feasibility of his entrepreneurial idea. Having set up the company, it grew rapidly as Dave persuaded many of the large corporations he had built up relationships with during his previous role to move their accounts over to his new venture:

Dave: *"I then started to go round all me old customers...most of the companies were blue-chip companies British Steel, European Gas Turbines, Siemens, Rolls Royce...I mean from not having proper premises, a VAT number or a company registration number and only a carbon copy blue book to write in you don't get big accounts like Siemens...and you don't rivet rocket engines together for Rolls Royce."*

Whilst Dave, it appears, did not have the equipment, premises and official documents expected of a company that wanted to trade with large corporations, Dave had successfully persuaded his contacts within these companies to become part of his venture. This seem to suggest some level of rhetorical activity where Dave constructed an argument or developed a meaning which despite the limited resources which Dave had available to him engaged these companies, constructed a plausible reality and convinced them that the venture was likely to be successful (Shotter, 1993a). Dave's persuasive activities also seemed to go further than those solely in the linguistic domain, rather Dave emphasised an embodied aspect to his rhetorical activities. In particular, he proposed that being the representative service engineer within these companies had allowed him to become *"the face"* of his previous organisation. As he outlined *"I was then the sort of face of the company, you know, they all knew me"*. In this view Dave was the "embodiment" of his previous organisation, and consequently the contacts within these large organisations associated Dave's *"face"* with the long-term

service support they had received from the previous company. Dave therefore used the embodied metaphor of *"the face"* to emphasise the importance of the face-to-face interaction, he engaged in with these companies, which ensured they became part of his new venture. What he lacked in material resources over this period of time he compensated for by being there and persuasively engaging with those around him. This embodied metaphor was also extended by Dave to compare his place within these organisations to those of his previous manager:

Dave *"I went out and I actually dealt with all these customers, whereas my boss was then sort of the faceless person of the organisation, they all knew me."*

There is an emphasis placed by Dave on engaging others around him not only through language but also through the application of whatever means "available" to engage others in the venture (Aristotle, cited in Roberts and Bywater, 1954). In the early period of Dave's business venture, he lacked financial, material and physical resources that usually accompany a successful business venture. However, through his embodied presence within the organisation and effectively engaging with individuals who were placed to make decisions he ensured that a range of large corporations became part of his business venture. These relational skills also allowed him to engage a number of highly skilled employees despite the limited finances available at the time and also engendered a sense of commitment among these individuals. Indeed, just three months after first setting up the business when the future of the business was highly uncertain, Dave took on his first employee, Jim, another service engineer whom he had worked with in his previous company. Despite Jim already being placed in permanent employment, Dave convinced him to become part of his new venture, even though there was no guarantee of success and his salary would be reduced until the business became more established (see video still 8.2). In this way it seems that Jim could be seen to an extent as engaging in the risk-taking behaviour normally attributed solely to the entrepreneur (e.g. Brockhaus, 1982), as Jim had potentially more to lose both financially and personally at this time:

Jim: *"I got a telephone call out of the blue from Dave saying he was going to have a crack himself, he didn't know how it was going to pan out, but if I fancied a bit of a gamble because my job was secure at* [previous company]*...He said 'you know I can't promise you too much in the early part, but you know if we make a go of it I'll take you all the way'. So I handed my notice in on the strength of that and the rest is history, as I say I've been here for ten years."*

Jean: *"You weren't nervous?"*

Jim: *"Yes, very nervous at the time I mean I was young, I'd got a new family, yeah so a lot of decisions to be made really...I'm over-dramatising that really because it wasn't that much of a decision...I believed in him to be honest."*

8.2 Jim in Workshop

In Dave's persuasive argument he promised that if the business was successful, he would take Jim *"all the way"*, ensuring that Jim believed that he would share in the success of a profitable business. This resulted in Dave having a loyal and supportive employee, the first of a growing number as the business developed over the following years. When this ethnographic study was conducted Dave no longer had limited resources but was now located in large corporate premises in a suburb just outside Doncaster city centre. The company also employed 13 full-

time staff, including five service engineers and a number of office staff. The business continued to specialise in refurbishing power tools for large manufacturing companies throughout Britain with whom they had on-going contracts and had also expanded their services through innovative techniques for the analysis and assessment of tools, which ensured they remained one of the principal tool repairing companies in the North of England. Not long prior to the beginning of this ethnographic study, Dave has also expanded his business portfolio into a 3.6 million pound project focusing on developing a large business park, funded by his own capital and a large grant from the EU Regional Development Fund.

8.3 Visual and Verbal Persuasion

As recounted above, Dave's early success in the business was due to a large number of companies that had followed him from his previous employment to his new company, and it was argued that this was because through his dealings with these companies he had become *"the face"* of the service they received. The continued success of the business also seemed to be related to the embodied and relational activities that Dave engaged in with others. In particular, Dave and others in this environment emphasised that he knew how to *"talk"* to people in order to convince them that the business was a worthwhile endeavour. These processes appeared to go beyond simply having the ability to access organisations, emphasised as important by social network studies (e.g. Jack and Anderson, 2002). Rather Dave appeared to have the ability to change his *"talk"*, create suitable meanings and alter his arguments depending on the particular audience he was presented with. In this way, Dave constructed meanings with his audience, doing something "with" them rather than "to" them (Hamilton, 2001). Dave's business activity was, therefore, a relational activity as both the Dave and his varying audiences including employees, customers, solicitors and others professionals in his context influenced each other attending to the wider contextual understandings and constraints. For, example in a discussion on why Dave's business continued to be successful, one service engineer explained that Dave's "talk" changed depending on the needs of the situation, and suggested that this is related to his business success:

Tom: *"You do know that he's got no qualifications? Where does he get it from? You know what I mean? I think it's all his people skills all the way through and he's just picked it up as he's gone along."*

Jean: *"So you think it's the skills he has in dealing with people?"*

Tom: *"I can't talk to people how he talks to people...He just wades in, gets himself in a big hole and he loves it...He just talks to people whatever way he needs to. I think that's what's got him where he is today...It's a bit crude but he's sort of blagged his way through it, if you like, but it's worked perfectly for him."*

The entrepreneurial processes described here may be seen as a co-ordinated action through language between Dave, his customers, employees and others in his context. As Deutschmann (2001: 395) argues "the entrepreneur can succeed only if he/she manages to mobilise the social environment for his/her ideas". Yet, what was particularly interesting about this service engineer's analysis of how Dave continued to be successful was his suggestion that Dave had somehow *"blagged"* his way to achieving entrepreneurial success. Tom appeared to be arguing that despite his lack of qualifications Dave had somehow "talked" or rhetorically persuaded customers and others into joining him in his entrepreneurial venture. Dave also put forward a similar argument when considering his entrepreneurial achievement, stressing the need to *"perform"* for the audience. As he outlined *"I've always done things like this, I've always been able to perform"*. This appears to suggest that in order to be understand entrepreneurship, it is not important to understand "who" the entrepreneur "really is" in the sense of underlying personality traits, or other enduring characteristics. Rather what appears to be of significance is how the entrepreneur interpersonally engages with others around them through taking account of the context within which they are placed in order to create understandings. As in previous cases, it also appeared that "talk" alone was sometimes not sufficient to engage others in the venture and other visual modes of meaning-making needed to align with the entrepreneur's dialogue in order to ensure customers supplemented the entrepreneurial act. This can be seen in Dave's discussion of his movement away from the sales side of the business, towards a more strategic role:

Dave: *"I don't go hitting big companies and selling myself the way I used to, people would probably see I'm a little bit too flash for that now as well...I can't drive to somebody in a Jaguar can I? Even though I want to because I bought and paid for it and earned it. I can't go and try to sell them a drill at thirty pounds on a site in my Jag, so do I have to play my part down?"*

It is suggested here that even though Dave had the potential to convince a customer to *"buy a drill at thirty pounds"* through his *"talk"*, the visual image of driving on-site in a Jaguar would result in him being unsuccessful in achieving this goal. In this description Dave once again placed importance on accounting for his audience/customers in his entrepreneurial activities. In order to convince customers the persuader must not partake in monologue but rather a dialogue, engaging with the arguments and "ways of being" already in context (Shotter, 1993a). Dave therefore proposed that the visual signs that accompany a businessman selling tools should ensure that he is relating to customers in an appropriate manner in order to gain custom. By driving to a company in a high-status vehicle, Dave's visual symbols do not align with his *"talk"* as the visual suggests that he wealthy and affluent, implying that he has little need to sell a small tool of little value. Acting in this manner would also be perceived as *"flash"* within the context of a *"pit-village"*, therefore while in one context his *"Jaguar"* is justifiable as a visual symbol of his hard work over the preceding years, in the context of driving to customers to gain custom, it is highly unsuitable. Dave further questions whether this means he has to *"play his part down"*, and portray to his audience a image more in line with *"a pit boy"* accompanied by more suitable "props" or visual meaning-making tools. Dave appeared to use a theatre-based metaphor to describe these activities, suggesting that he "played a part" to ensure his audience and their expectations are catered for. In discussing his reasons for no longer taking an active role in the sales side of the business, Dave further developed this theatre-based metaphor:

Jean: *"You seem to have found something that no-one else is doing."*

Dave: *"It's the service, it's just all down to the service...I don't do that side of the business now myself, I don't want to do that side now,*

it's not something that you enjoy because it's threading the boards isn't it as such? Nobody wants to be a backing singer all their lives do they? So it's taking centre stage and planning my own stuff."

In this statement Dave further emphasised the link between his entrepreneurial activities and performance or persuasion through highlighting that going on-site to sell to customers was like *"threading the boards"* or constructing himself, his "props" and his activities in a manner which catered for the audience before him. Dave attempted to create a meaning for his activities through reaching for a metaphor that described this process in an embodied and visual manner. In this sense there is a direct comparison by Dave, between his entrepreneurial activities and an activity involving actors, scripts and props. As Mangham and Overington (1987) suggest, the audience plays an integral part in the theatre, actors pre-empt their reactions, scripts are written to ensure they are believable and make sense to the audience, props are designed to further engage them and increase the believability of the story that is unfolding. Through applying this metaphor we gain a sense of Dave as a wearied performer ready to leave his *"backing singer"* role and take *"centre stage"* and finally enjoy the rewards of a long and tiring service. There is some suggestion here that *"taking centre stage"* means no longer having to account for the needs of an audience to the same extent and being able to drive his *"Jaguar"* and enjoy the wealth he has created. This new role involved developing strategic links within the business and working on his large property development. While he no longer had to "play down" his wealth, Dave continued to emphasise the importance of the visual aligning with his linguistic meaning-making. This is clearly seen in the incident described below. It occurred on my third day at the company when Dave called me into his office and explained why he wouldn't be able to spend much time with me or allow me to observe him on that particular day:

Dave: *"I won't have time to talk much today I've got a very important meeting, they want to make sure that everything is running down on the site."* [Pulling on a suit jacket, positioning his tie in a small mirror and paces across the room]

Jean: *"Oh right the grant people?"*

Dave: *"Yeah that's right I'm going to explain where we're up to and what we've been doing with their money."* [He starts to scatter plans for the business park haphazardly across the meeting table some fall on the floor. He then pins some glossy printouts on the wall; one is placed strategically in a side-ways position while the other is upside down.]

Jean: *"Why are you doing that?"*

Dave: *"I want it to look busy, busy like there's lots of things going on."*

This meeting was with a number of individuals from the government agency who was had forwarded 1.6 million to aid the development of the business park in the area, which he had matched with his own capital. Therefore in order to ensure that their funding continued it was essential that Dave convinced them that the site was continuing to run efficiently and that he was managing the process effectively. As outlined above, before these individuals arrived Dave busily prepared his "bodily display" (Radley, 1996) through wearing a formal suit for the occasion and also preparing the office by spreading plans and glossy printouts across the office as if to suggest that they were being moved continuously and constantly examined throughout the building process. This ensured that when Dave constructed his linguistic argument, aiming to persuade the funding body that he was actively involved and occupied with this project and that is was being effectively managed, the visual surroundings supported and aligned with these meanings. Alongside these visual aspects of meaning, Dave had to present himself in a professional manner through a number of other Medias, in order to cater for the higher-level audience he was liaising with. This included written business communications such as emails and formal letters, which Dave suggested, were often difficult for him, given his lack of formal qualifications. He had, however, overcome this problem to some extent through the use of certain "tools" which helped him disguise this lack of ability, and ensured that he continued to be perceived by others as a capable and professional individual:

Dave: *"I've said to you off the record, Jean, I'll say it to you on the record I'm a fitter that's been put into the position of being a managing director of a million pound turnover company and now a 3.6 million pound project, I'm in a place I shouldn't be."*

Jean: *"Why do you think you shouldn't be?"*

Dave: *"I've got no qualifications to do it; I can't write my own letters to some degree, I can only dictate them, I can dictate a mean letter but I can't write it, my grammar is poor, my spelling is poor but computers are making things easier now. My programme has a sounds-like button, so I press the sounds-like... it produces a word or an item or a phrase for me so it makes me appear to be a lot brainier than I am."*

Dave had specifically commissioned a computer programme, which allowed him to compensate for his language deficiencies through helping him to write in a coherent and eloquent manner. In this way, Dave aimed to construct an image of an individual who was capable of being the managing director of a company with over a million pound turnover and a 3.6 million pound building project. There is a sense that once again Dave had assessed the requirements of the situation and subsequently "performed" in an appropriate manner, rather than expressing any "real" underlying self or personality. In order to influence others around him Dave spoke and acted "with the anticipation that those we are addressing will respond to us in ways that will progress our mutual attempts to communicate" (Shotter, 2005). The challenge for Dave was to decipher what action, words or tool was appropriate for that particular situation in order to influence and make sense with others. In this way, the entrepreneurial processes occurring in this setting cannot be seen as individual acts; rather they may be more beneficially viewed as a process of co-enactment as the audience continuously impacted on Dave's activities and the way he presented himself to others around him. In addition to the audience of the business venture, the success of the venture was also a joint achievement in a more direct way. Given Dave's declining interest in *"threading the boards"* and his suggestion that he was no longer able to relate to customers in a convincing manner as he was *"a little bit too flash for that now"* he needed another employee to continue in the role of interacting with customers.

Dave had transferred this side of the business to another employee, Eddie (see video still 8.3), whom he felt had the rhetorical skills necessary to ensure that customers remained engaged in the business:

8.3 Interview with Eddie

Eddie: *"We started off with a lot of customers. Dave went out on the road, he got the customers...through his capabilities like me. Dave and me are pretty much the same, I can talk and he can talk...To deal with someone you don't have to be friends but you've got to put a face on."*

Eddie's embodied description of putting *"a face on"* in this context is not used to suggest suitable facial expressions when dealing with customers, but rather a whole "way of being" which acts to persuade customers to become part of the venture. Eddie suggested that he has certain *"capabilities"* which allow him to be able to *"talk"* to customers effectively and act in an appropriate embodied manner through putting a suitable *"face on"*. In this way he argued that it is not about forming friendships or relationships but rather reacting "in the moment" with "spontaneous expressive-responsiveness of bodily activities" (Shotter, 1995). However, arguing a case or engaging others effectively also involves proposals or arguments based on those that have gone before and relating these arguments to the external context through assessing what is appropriate for the particular setting. Therefore, speakers not only make meaning with others around

them but also relate these meanings to the ones already occurring in the wider contextual environment through reference to the social norms of what is expected in a particular context. This act is inherently dialogic and relational as in order to convince an audience the speaker or rhetorician has to engage both other individuals but also refer to the appropriate "ways of being" in this context. Eddie further elucidated this, by suggesting he engaged with certain individuals through reference to his wider societal knowledge of the "way of being" expected by different "types" of individuals:

> Eddie: *"You get your people who are your shirt and tie guy, and you get your workshop floor lads...you can have a laugh with them. Some people your health and safety manager...know all the laws and don't got time for just chatting they want to talk about work... Like sometimes I'll go in and I can tell just by looking at him that he's a bit straight laced so it's professional side, put the professional side on, shake his hand, power shake him, grab hold of his hand and they relate to it straight away. I mean they always say you can tell about someone just from their handshake. I mean there was a guy who used to come here and he'd grab your hand and squeeze it off, you could hear your fingers cracking and everything... because you're a power customer you know."*

Here Eddie described the visual cues, which suggested a certain "way of being", and enabled him to react in an embodied and relational manner and immediately respond to the demands of the given situation. If he meets a *"shirt and tie guy"* he changes his activities and talk to relate to this particular dress code assuming that such an individual will *"know all the laws"*, doesn't want to act informally and is focused on work tasks. The processes here describe Eddie's "self" being made through interaction, he suggested that he can tell just by looking at the individual if *"its professional side, put the professional side on"*. He further emphasised his "spontaneous" embodied response in such a situation where he would *"power shake"* the individual. The social meanings he had developed in previous situations suggested that *"shirt and tie guys"* relate to powerful handshakes, as they see them as representing in an embodied manner the social

or intellectual of business prowess of the individual. In both Dave and Eddie's interactions with customers there appears to be a sense of Shotter's (1993a, 1993b) idea of "joint action" where the "self" is not the product of inner "psyche" but rather constructed through social interaction. When Dave and Eddie interacted with customers, their talk and behaviour was a joint endeavour between them, the customers and the context, rather than the result of some "internal essence". They were therefore constantly in "action" with customers, responding in an embodied and relational manner to each other's dialogue, behaviour and visual understandings.

8.4 Communal and Relational Achievements

As has been argued above and demonstrated in the previous cases due to its inherently rhetorical nature, the process of entrepreneurship is never simply an individual activity as it always involves some level of engagement and interaction with others in context in order to achieve legitimacy and gain support from a variety of different parties. In addition to this rhetorical process of engaging others, Dave continuously emphasised that rather than his business success being an individual achievement, it was based on co-ordinated and collective activity between him and a variety of individuals in his context. Dave proposed that each one of his staff had particular inputs to the entrepreneurial process, which he used to ensure that the business functioned effectively. In particular, he had a number of key staff that he argued were integral to his success. For example, Dave suggested that Jim one of the service engineers, who had, as outlined above, been part of the business almost since the very beginning, was central to the early and continued success of the business venture due to both his level of skill and also his unwavering commitment to his job:

Dave: *"I worked with him* [Jim] *at the old place and he was my apprentice before I left and he repairs tools and he's probably the best fitter that we've got, he's always been a good fitter, and it's part of the secret of my success as well because he does bend over backwards and he is very conscientious in his job."*

Jean: *"Is that why you call him your number two?"*

Dave: *"Yeah, yeah, he'll be the one who turns the light out so, it works well we've got a good partnership."*

In this context, entrepreneurship theory considers only the start-up of the business by the entrepreneur and their role in confronting risk and uncertainty, yet doesn't account for the ongoing co-ordinated efforts between the entrepreneurship and their employees which ensures that the business grows and becomes successful. In this view, if employees are effectively engaged in the business venture by the entrepreneur, they can become central to the entrepreneurial process as they support the entrepreneur and also enhance the business venture through their own unique activities. Dave further argued that he was *"only as good as his backroom boys"*, therefore rather than viewing himself as a sole individual controlling the business and managing for effectiveness, he saw his engineers as integral to this process as they provided and maintained a high-quality service. The findings of this case further suggest that employees or significant others in context are often integral to the management of the business as they assist the entrepreneur in making decisions and negotiating action in uncertain environments. Dave suggested that each member of staff enhanced the business through adding a distinct personal component, which he "collected" and used to ensure the business continued to run effectively:

Dave: *"I collect what I need from other people and use it to my own advantage...each one of the staff that's in key places and especially my wife...I take little bits from them that I need...My wife is my six inch of backbone that I haven't got, so when I can't manage people...when I've got problems I go to see Helen, talk to Helen about it, and I say should I do this or...and she flies off the handle...and it triggers it in me then, and then it fuels me."*

Dave emphasised that his wife in particular plays an integral role in the activities of the business through providing him with the motivation or "fuel" to overcome a variety of problems within the context of the business. What is particularly interesting about the above quote, is that he uses a metaphor of his wife as being part of his own body, his *"six inch of backbone"* to describe the additional

strength she provided him with, necessary to overcome certain issues in the business environment. In this way, there is a suggestion that his wife was almost a visible or bodily extension to his entrepreneurial abilities, compensating for and overcoming his own deficiencies. This assertion by Dave that he *"collects"* what he needs from a variety of others in his context in order to make the business successful suggests a very different form a business activity than what is currently suggested by much of entrepreneurship theory. Rather than presenting himself as a self-made profit-driven individual, Dave placed his success in a communally based activity of relying on others and their individual knowledge and skills to the advantage of his business. This idea was also extended by a number of employees as they forwarded the idea of the business being a *"family"* rather a *"faceless organisation"*. As one office worker outlined:

> Jane: *"We're like a whole big family really so this is our life and this is our livelihood. You're not working for a faceless organisation and you know people care about what you do and what you're doing, and you want to do a good job. So for me it makes working easier."*

A particularly interesting component of Jane's argument is that she further extended the importance of the embodied presence of the entrepreneur within the company through emphasising that she felt fortunate that she didn't have to work for a *"faceless organisation"*. Another interesting aspect of Jane's argument is that she viewed the entrepreneurial venture as a *"whole big family"*. Rather than seeing the ownership of the business as exclusively residing with the entrepreneur she suggested the business was a communal achievement and the *"livelihood"* of all employees. In this way, each individual within and related to the business venture could begin to be seen as "living, embodied participant parts of a larger on-going predominantly living whole" (Shotter, 2005: 7). Within this worldview, employees, customers, the entrepreneur and others stakeholders are participants in this "living whole" and find themselves "subjected as respondents to 'its' requirements", no part of the system acts alone rather they are all dependent on each other and the wider contextual environment (Shotter, 2005: 7). Dave similarly viewed it as important to consider the *"livelihood"* of others

in his business activities, this can be seen in his description below of what he considered corrupt business practice:

> Dave: *"Going down with an entourage looking at a piece of land... it's up for two hundred, we'll screw it down to 100 grand because we've got a 100 grand cash so we'll pay cash for it. So we'll throw that wagon off that's parked there we'll throw that café off there... we're not bothered about their livelihood and we'll make a quick buck and sell it to Tesco's for six, seven hundred thousand... a quick buck then he goes home."*

For Dave good business practice was rooted in consideration for others, and was not simply about self-preservation. While entrepreneurial processes are often conceived as starting from highly individualistic motives and achievements (Triandis, 1994), it seems, in this case, that both the entrepreneur and employees conceived entrepreneurial achievement as an inherently communal activity. As suggested above, employees and significant others are vital to the process not only as supportive participants in the process, but also as "tools" used by the entrepreneur to increase the effectiveness of the decisions made in context. In addition, as Dave outlined above in achieving his entrepreneurial goals, it is important to ensure that this does not impact negatively on the wider community within which the venture is part. In this way Dave's activities could be described as having a collectivist rather than individualistic orientation as his personal interests are seen as subordinate to the goals and achievements of others in the wider context (Hofstede, 1990). This may perhaps be related to the historical associations of the coal-mining context of this case. These areas are often seen as "possessed of a social culture which emphasises collectivism and collective advancements as opposed to individualism and individualistic advancements" (Turner, 1994: 207). Dave's communal approach to his business activities was also visually represented in the company through his use of space. During my time in the company I was allocated Dave's office as a space to work, store my equipment and access emails, and decided to question why he had allowed me the use of the *"managing director's office"*:

Jean: *"I've taken over your office, are you sure you don't mind me using it?"*

Dave: *"No I rarely sit in there I prefer to be in and amongst them* [the staff]*...it's there for when we need to look the part...I don't like too much sitting behind my desk and talking to people because I'm more passionate than that then going to sit here and laud it up."*

It seemed to Dave that to physically position himself, in a separate office to his employees, would have the result of creating a differentiation between him and them in both role and position. The office had originally been designed for a *"managing director's needs"*; the wall was covered in dark wood panelling, a large mahogany desk dominated the room and an engaged/free sign was displayed at the entrance. While studies of the impact of spatial design on social relations (e.g. Hatch, 1990; Hofauer, 2000) emphasise the impact that designers of office landscapes have on those that inhabit these spaces, these meanings do not appear to simply transfer to the users of these contexts. Rather individuals can use and interpret settings in a variety of ways. While Dave's office suggested a certain "way of being" he had subverted the meanings intended by the creators of this room, by using it a storeroom for paper and other office supplies and rarely using for any form of managerial duty. Through sitting *"in and amongst"* the staff he expressed his position as being part of their community rather than separate and superior to them (see video still 8.4). On occasions when the office was needed to visually persuade others of certain meanings, for example when meetings were being held with important clients, in order to *"look the part"* Dave would position himself behind the desk as a managing director of a successful and growing business. In this way it is clearly seen that meaning of objects and physical surroundings within the entrepreneurial setting did not have pre-determined meanings but rather a meaning within their use (Shotter, 1990). The same objects and surroundings were used in a variety of ways depending on the requirements of the situation.

8.4 Communal Work Area

Given his position as a successful businessman and the entrepreneurial activities described above that he engaged in, it is interesting to note that throughout the ethnographic research Dave did not also did not align himself with the term entrepreneur or his business activity with the label entrepreneurship. Rather he suggested that these were derogatory terms rather than positive attributes. When I initially referred to him as an entrepreneur in reference to my research activity, he questioned me as to why I had referred to him in this way, explaining that he did not think it was an appropriate label for him or his activities. In Dave's view, entrepreneurship was not simply an "objective" term used to describe innovative and high-growth business activity or even a term that was related to high-achieving and successful individuals, but was rather it had negative connotations and suggested self-serving personal attributes. The term entrepreneur, therefore, did not align with the meanings that Dave had developed for himself and his business venture or the meanings that he created for others. Indeed, he saw his role and activities as directly contrasting to the understandings that he related to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. For example in one conversation he described an entrepreneur as:

> Dave: *"Somebody who would be...bombastic, quite nasty, quite straightforward, quite channelled to strike gold, quite straight down...but rich it always reminds me of rich person."*

This description of an entrepreneur is very different to the positive understanding forwarded by policy-makers and academics, which portrays entrepreneurs as flexible and innovative risk-takers, whose activities should ideally be emulated by all individuals in society (Gibb, 2002). For Dave, the meanings attached to the entrepreneur appeared to relate to an exploitative and malevolent individual with excessive riches, unwilling to allow obstacles to stand in the way of his or her relentless pursuit of increased wealth. This aversion to the term entrepreneur is reminiscent of Cohen and Musson's (2000) study, as described earlier, which examined entrepreneurial identity in a number of women moving from employment to self-employment. They found that a large percentage of these women saw the term in a particularly exploitative and negative manner related to the 1980s and Thatcher's Britain. In particular, they proposed that the women in this study did not find it useful to "make" meaning for themselves or describe their activities to others through the use of this term. Cohen and Musson (2000) suggest this may be related to the historical context of the entrepreneurship discourse, which has typically rendered women invisible through "othering" the non-male and making masculinity the norm for economic and entrepreneurial activity. The findings of this case also seem to suggest that Dave did not find it useful to make meaning through the use of this term as it did not make sense in relation to his own particular historical background. Highlighting his *"working class"* status, Dave contrasted his visual understanding of what an entrepreneur should look like and his own physical appearance:

Dave: *"I'm a working class lad. For a start I couldn't spell it* [entrepreneur]*...I've never seen it wrote down...I think it's just a flash aristocratic sort of word, entrepreneur."*

Jean: *"You see it* [entrepreneurship] *in a negative way?"*

Dave: *"Yes a negative way, as something that a pit lad that uses his hands and sits here slouched like that - do you know what I mean? Rather than me being in a Henry Lloyd suit and tie or a Paul Smith thousand pound suit."*

8.5 Dave at Office Desk

Dave not only related entrepreneurship to terms such as *"flash"* and "*aristocratic"* consequently unsuitable for a *"pit-village"* context, but also differentiated and related entrepreneurship to his own attributes by arguing that entrepreneurship is not a term that should be associated with a *"working class lad"*, particularly one who had no formal education. Interestingly, Dave further emphasised how both his visual appearance and embodied presence were also unrelated to the term entrepreneurship. In particular, through an embodied description of himself as a *"pit lad"* that uses *"his hands"* and sits in a slouching manner, Dave simultaneously related entrepreneurship to an individual who would not use *"his hands"* in the sense of physical labour and would assert his physical presence in an upright and confident manner (see video still 8.5). Dave therefore used his body for expressive purposes in order to construct a meaning, which suggested he should be seen as a *"working class lad"* rather than an entrepreneur. This bodily "display" (Radley, 1996) was further emphasised by Dave through outlining the appropriate clothing for an entrepreneur, which would be expensive and designer. Therefore, through emphasising the "dress" of an entrepreneur and contrasting this to his own, Dave ascribed different social and cultural values to the wearer of this clothing. In addition, to Dave being unwilling to present himself as an entrepreneur, the wider community in which Dave was placed also appeared to view the term as unrelated to the context. This was illustrated in an incident with some of Dave's customers, where I was introduced as a researcher from Leeds University conducting a study on

entrepreneurship. Following this introduction, the customers and Dave began to laugh about the use of the term entrepreneur being applied to Dave. Later that day, Dave discussed this event we me:

Dave: *"It's made me smile as I've introduced everybody to it* [the term entrepreneur] *and everybody smiled back as well, so what's in that? They* [the customers] *more or less wet themselves didn't they?"*

Jean: *"Yes but I don't know understand why."*

Dave: *"Because you're in Doncaster in the middle of a pit village."*

Jean: *"But some would say that's where you need entrepreneurs?"*

Dave: *"Entrepreneurs are from London - the one's who buy the little office blocks and sell it for four million...and they bought it for a couple of thousand pounds or something."*

Dave did not make meanings for himself or his activities using the term entrepreneur, as it did not relate to his unique context of a *"pit-village"* in an appropriate manner. In this respect, Dave used the term *"pit-village"* to suggest certain geographical, historical and social meanings and contrasted these meanings with those of a large cosmopolitan city like *"London"*. This context, Dave suggested, was more closely associated with entrepreneurial activities, which Dave saw as including huge and unwarranted profits. As outlined in previous chapters, Fletcher (2006) has examined this relating of business activities to certain cultural and spatial understandings in her relational constructionist study of entrepreneurial processes and the construction of opportunity. In doing so, she emphasises that the success of a business venture is very much related to how effectively the business relates to wider cultural, societal and institutional meanings. For Dave then, the continued success of his business venture related to an understanding of the meanings that made sense in his context and how he could express his business goals to others in a language with which they were familiar. This further demonstrates the historical and contextualised nature of the word entrepreneur; it is not simply a "real" concept with unchanging and static meanings as suggested in de-contextualised psychological and individual studies. Rather the meaning of the term varies

depending on the particular environment within which it is exists and therefore is inextricably linked to the wider social, cultural and political contexts.

9.0 BEYOND LANGUAGE: AN EMBODIED APPROACH

9.1 Extending Current Understandings

The aim of this study was to account for entrepreneurs as "embodied" individuals who exist in material contexts, which may enable or constrain the meanings they are able to create. While entrepreneurship has become an increasingly important concept in both political agendas and our cultural lives (Du Gay, 1996; Du Gay and Salaman, 1992), the vast majority of understandings of entrepreneurship have focused on entrepreneurship as a de-contextualised activity devoid of any cultural, social or historical meaning. While recently there has been increased attention towards the "constructedness" of entrepreneurship (Downing, 2005), these understandings have only examined the linguistic aspects of this process. In attempting to "re-embody" the Cartesian entrepreneur, this study focused on both linguistic and visual aspects of the entrepreneurship process through applying a theoretical framework which examined the entrepreneur as an "embodied rhetorician". This approach considers not only linguistic meanings but also the use of the body, placed in material and physical spaces, to express certain meanings. In order to investigate these embodied activities this thesis incorporated a visual dimension into its methodology through applying a visual ethnographic approach (Pink, 2001). This involved supplementing routine ethnographic techniques with moving images in the form of videotapes of three entrepreneurs and a range of other organisational participants. This chapter attempts to synthesise the analysis of the three cases with the aim being to capture the commonalties across the cases rather than revisit the details of each specific ethnographic study, and to highlight the wider implications and contributions of this study.

The first section of this chapter will summarise the theoretical framework of the thesis, followed by an outline of the theoretical dimensions emerging from the data. These dimensions can be seen as the three key components of the framework of the embodied rhetorician. The first theoretical dimension to emerge from the analysis of the data is the importance of the visual aspects of the entrepreneurship process. While other studies have pointed to the importance of

the visual in entrepreneurial meaning-making (Baron and Brush. 1999), through the application of a visual methodology this study has been able to develop an in-depth understanding of these processes at work. In addition, this thesis has contributed further to the literature on entrepreneurship through developing an understanding of the complex and entangled relationship between visual and verbal modes of meaning-making in entrepreneurial processes. This suggests that we should not simply view the visual as an additional dimension, which may or may not add to text-based understandings but rather view visual aspects as an integral part of our investigations of entrepreneurship. The third theoretical contribution of this thesis is that is has highlighted the importance of understanding entrepreneurs' visual and verbal meaning-making as a contextual, communal and relational activity. While, in the main, entrepreneurship theory has focused on entrepreneurship as an individual and de-contextualised activity (Steyaert, 1997), this thesis suggests that entrepreneurship is a process that involves a range of contributing individuals, placed in a particular social, historical and cultural context, which inevitably impacts on the process. The implications of these theoretical dimensions for the study of entrepreneurship are then outlined.

It is also argued that this thesis has offered a methodological contribution to the wider discipline of management and business. While this research focused on small entrepreneurial companies it appears to offer wider insights that are relevant to a range of organisational applications. Through applying a visual methodology, this thesis has highlighted the chronic lack of attention that we as management researchers direct towards visual understandings. This paucity of interest is in direct contrast to the wider social sciences where visual methodologies have become of increasing importance to researchers attempting to investigate cultural and social issues (Harrison, 2002). Echoing the binary positioning of mind and body in our worldviews, visual approaches are rarely applied in the management domain with text-based understandings being privileged as more "valid" and "reliable" (Fyfe and Law, 1988). An argument is forwarded here which suggests that rather than increasing our objectivity through ignoring visual aspects of meaning-making, we may be limiting our understandings through investigating only a small proportion of the insights

available to us. It is further highlighted that management research could benefit from drawing on the growing literature in the social sciences on visual methodologies to provide guidance on incorporating image-based methodologies into management and organisational research.

Finally, this thesis has also contributed to current understandings through developing a number of implications for policy. Firstly, it is suggested that this thesis offers implications for the training and development of entrepreneurs. It is argued that policy-makers should begin to incorporate an understanding of persuasive and rhetorical skills into the training of entrepreneurs. This would involve directing attention to how both verbal and non-verbal meanings can be used by entrepreneurs to engage others in their entrepreneurial activities. In relation to this, it is suggested that policy-makers should also move away from supply-side measures in the development of entrepreneurs, which continuously fail to connect with the needs of entrepreneurs due to their generic nature (Stewart and Beaver, 2004). Due to the contextualised nature of the entrepreneurship process, it is argued that policy-makers should begin to develop entrepreneurs in a relational and idiosyncratic manner rather than promulgating generalised offerings to all entrepreneurs. The final policy implication relates to the importance of incorporating visual methodologies into management research training. In particular it is suggested that we should reconsider our current text-based approaches to the training of management researchers and develop strategies to train future researchers in the use of visual methodologies. This is followed by an overview of the limitations of this study and an examination of future areas of research, which could be developed in the light this thesis.

9.2 Developing the Theory of Entrepreneurship

This thesis has developed an argument which suggests that it is important to examine entrepreneurs as "embodied" individuals as placed within social and material contexts. A theoretical framework was forwarded which focused on the entrepreneur as an "embodied rhetorician", drawing on Shotter's rhetorical-relational model of conversation (1995, 1998, 2005) and Billig's work on rhetoric and argumentation (1990. 1993, 1996). Through moving beyond an

"either/or" understanding and moving towards a "both/and" logic, this framework drew attention to the importance of examining continuous relational dialogue in the entrepreneurial context, and how it influenced future communications and gave meaning to past communications. In addition, the framework highlighted that all communications take place within a unique context, which not only impacts on the arguments individual entrepreneurs are able to make, but also how successful these arguments are likely to be. Ongoing dialogue, meaning-making and persuasion are seen as inherent components of the entrepreneurial process, which are inextricably linked and continuously related to other aspects of the contextual surroundings within which the activities are placed. These communications encompass not only those in the linguistic domain but also meanings that are created through visual means, thereby extending to examine multi-modal meaning making in the entrepreneurship domain. This framework therefore afforded the opportunity to examine how "embodied" entrepreneurs make sense of their own activities and also persuade others to engage in their venture, through a multitude of means. This section aims to extend this theoretical framework in relation to the results from the analysis of three ethnographic cases. While each case is unique, a number of theoretical dimensions emerged which were common across all of the three cases. These theoretical dimensions are outlined below and offered as contributions to the study of entrepreneurship.

9.2.1 Visual Processes in Entrepreneurial Activities

The first theoretical dimension which emerged from the analysis of the cases was the important role that visual meanings play in the entrepreneurship process. While increasingly there have been suggestions in the entrepreneurship literature that visual processes are important in entrepreneurial activities (e.g. Baron and Markman, 2000), through introducing the idea of "embodiment" into understandings of entrepreneurship and applying a novel visual methodological approach, this thesis has made it possible to analyse how these processes occur. While the entrepreneurs involved in this study came from highly diverse industries and contexts, they all employed similar processes to create meaning visually. The results have shown that a wide range of embodied activities and

physical contexts were used by the entrepreneurs in this study to convey meanings to others in their context, including embodied "displays" (Radley, 1996) such as clothing, physical surroundings such as their built environments and artefacts such as high-status vehicles and interior décor (Yanow, 2006). Therefore, by studying in detail, through the means of a visual ethnographic approach, how entrepreneurs use their visual surroundings and embodied "ways of being" to create meaning, the thesis has shown that language is likely to be only one of the meaning-making tools used by entrepreneurs. This expands previous understandings by accounting for how entrepreneurs construct their realities beyond what is possible in the linguistic domain and illustrates the importance of bodily, material and physical modes of meaning-making in the entrepreneurship process.

This thesis not only contributes to our understanding of how visual modes of meaning are used by entrepreneurs to create meaning for others but also develops further theoretical insights through pointing to the importance of visual artefacts in helping entrepreneurs to make sense of their own activities and negotiate action in highly uncertain contexts. In this study visual artefacts used by the entrepreneurs to develop meanings for their own activities included artwork, diagrams and physical surroundings, however, it is possible that a range of other visual medias are used by entrepreneurs to help them make sense of their ambiguous environments. This aspect of entrepreneurial meaning-making has been previously unaccounted for in the entrepreneurship domain, and offers an interesting area for future entrepreneurship researchers to investigate and develop further understandings. Presently, the vast majority of methodological approaches in the field of entrepreneurship focus solely on understandings in the linguistic domain and ignore the visual and embodied aspects of the entrepreneurship process. Through highlighting the "invisibility of the visual" (Fyfe and Law, 1988:1), and emphasising that entrepreneurship is essentially a visual activity acted out in a material and physical context, this thesis has not only developed insights into entrepreneurship which have previously remained unexamined in this research domain, but also emphasises the importance of future entrepreneurship researcher developing these insights further through the use of visual methodologies.

9.2.2 Relating Visual and Verbal Meanings

A second theoretical dimension emerging from the data was the intricate relational relationship between visual and verbal meanings in the entrepreneurship domain. While, as described above, visual meanings are integral to the entrepreneurship process, through collecting a range of both visual and textual data, this thesis also points to the importance of understanding visual and verbal aspects of meaning-making as inextricably intertwined and related. This was seen throughout the cases as the entrepreneurs aimed to make both linguistic and verbal constructions consistent and coherent in order to increase the likelihood of others seeing their business venture as an interesting and viable business prospect. Physical and material contexts were therefore developed, created and manipulated by entrepreneurs to help ensure that no divergences in the meanings between "words" and "deeds" could be uncovered (Yanow, 2006). This conflation of visual and verbal meanings is further emphasised through the use of imaginative language by the entrepreneurs. This imaginative language was often used to negotiate action and to help others develop meanings of their entrepreneurial activities. This appears to suggest that the visual and verbal do not exist independently of each other, but rather create meanings simultaneously and are therefore mutually sustaining (Palczewski 2002).

This thesis has therefore developed an understanding of the entrepreneurial process as a strategic alignment of a range of multi-modal meaning-making activities that encompass linguistic, embodied and physical dimensions. While previously the meaning-making and rhetorical processes of entrepreneurship have been examined only through language (Downing, 2005; O'Connor, 2002; Rae, 2002; Steyaert, 1997), this thesis suggests that examining entrepreneurship in this manner will only allow us access to partial and incomplete meanings. This suggests that visual dimensions should be incorporated into our investigations of entrepreneurship. However, it also suggests that examining the significance of the role played by visual dimensions in the entrepreneurship process goes further than simply expanding areas of interest for future researchers in the entrepreneurship domain into visual understandings. Rather, it implies that the process of entrepreneurship may be essentially achieved through drawing on

multi modes of meaning-making and therefore should be understood in this manner. This would suggest that researchers not only need to incorporate a visual dimension into their methodologies but also develop more sophisticated methods of analysis which can tease apart the complex relationship between visual and verbal meanings. Through obtaining a full view of the multi-modal means through which the entrepreneurs in this study created understanding in context, this thesis has extended our theoretical understandings and highlighted the importance of future researchers accounting for the relationship between visual and verbal meanings in the entrepreneurship domain.

9.2.3 Contextual, Communal and Relational Activities

A final theoretical dimension which emerged from the data is the importance of understanding entrepreneurship as a communal and relational activity situated in a particular spatial context rather than examining the entrepreneur as an individualised and de-contextualised instigator of all activities. The first aspect of this communal activity is the processes that entrepreneurs go through to influence and engage others in their venture (Deutschmann, 2001). As we have seen in the sections above, this involved the entrepreneurs developing coherent and consistent verbal and visual meanings and portraying these meanings effectively to others in their context. Entrepreneurs drew on a range of social and cultural meanings embedded in various artefacts, physical surroundings and embodied displays (Radley, 1996) such as clothing to create certain meanings and convey these meanings to others in their context. These meanings did not always transfer unproblematically to various audiences. Rather entrepreneurs often used and manipulated these "tools" to create a variety of different meanings depending on the particular audience and their associated argumentative context. Therefore, they did not have fixed or pre-determined meanings, but rather a meaning within their use. This finding therefore results in an evidence-based claim that rather than focusing on linguistic resources alone in entrepreneurs meaning-making process, entrepreneurship research can derive much more from the analysis of entrepreneur's uses of different modes of meaning-making as intentional, socially organised activities used to create understandings and persuade others to engage in their entrepreneurial ventures.

In addition to engaging others in the venture, this thesis also further challenges conventional cognitive understandings which theorise entrepreneurial processes as being inherently individual acts (e.g. Busenitz and Barney, 1997; Mitchell *et al*, 2002; Korunka *et al*, 2003). This thesis suggests that processes such as opportunity identification and venture creation are often relationally and communally based as entrepreneurs seek to create and develop meanings with a range of others in their context. In this view, entrepreneurship is not simply an isolated individual process but rather a communal activity where verbal and visual meanings are created in order to create commercial possibilities in uncertain contexts. Additionally, entrepreneurs are not only engaged with others in their context, but also with wider arguments occurring in social and cultural domains which they had to relate to in order to develop business strategies which were likely to succeed in their own particular contexts. Similar suggestions are increasingly being made by researchers in the entrepreneurship domain, for example Minkes and Foxall (2003) put forward an approach known as "dispersed entrepreneurship", which views entrepreneurship as a process of engaging with distributed knowledge which must be drawn on in order to make effective decisions. This thesis therefore encourages a move away from understandings that view the entrepreneur as a heroic individual and suggest that entrepreneurship is a social process rather than an individual performance.

9.2.4 Implications of the Embodied Entrepreneur

The framework developed here provides the opportunity to investigate entrepreneurship as an embodied and intensely social activity. Through the application of this framework to three ethnographic cases, a number of theoretical dimensions have emerged and have been elaborated on above. These theoretical dimensions focus on the important role that visual meanings play in the entrepreneurship process, the relationship between visual and verbal meanings, and the importance of considering entrepreneurship as a communal and relational activity. This suggests that the "embodied entrepreneur" is very different to previous understandings in the expansive yet quantitatively based literature on entrepreneurship. As outlined in great detail in the literature review section of this thesis, psychological approaches, dominate the literature on

entrepreneurship. These studies largely ignore the historical evidence of the contextual specificity of the entrepreneur and focus instead on establishing the personality characteristics or cognitive abilities of entrepreneurs as distinct from the general population (Carland *et al*, 1984; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Ucbasaran *et al*, 2001). The results of this study suggest that aiming to understand entrepreneurship at the level of "inner" traits or abilities is futile given that entrepreneurship is an activity which occurs between individuals in context. This suggests that our attention should be directed away from the "methodological individualism" and psychological reductionism which have resulted in the biased proclivities of previous approaches to entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000) and towards approaches which examine what transpires between individuals in the entrepreneurial context as related to the social and historical context within which they are situated.

Therefore, while acknowledging that identifying the "real" and "definable" entrepreneur is unachievable and highlighting entrepreneurship as a process of social construction, the embodied entrepreneur allows us to engage with this process of meaning-making by situating these activities within a historical, cultural and social context. The framework of the embodied entrepreneur therefore provides the opportunity to examine entrepreneurship as an activity that is constantly in a state of flux as the entrepreneur and others in context create and recreate meanings. This has been achieved through providing a basis for understanding how entrepreneurs create meanings in the present moment through drawing on cultural and social histories to make sense and engage others in equivocal and imagined futures. The entrepreneurship process often involves the entrepreneur engaging others in new meanings, and this study has shown that these meanings must relate to the historical and cultural contingencies of the particular context. While some social constructionist studies have attempted to account for the social and cultural aspects of the entrepreneurship process (Steyaert, 1999; Dodd, 2002), these studies have failed to account for the embodied aspects of entrepreneurial activities and as a consequence a Cartesian perspective continues to pervade previous understandings of the entrepreneur.

Therefore, where this thesis dramatically departs from the existing literature in the entrepreneurship domain is its attempt to understand entrepreneurship as an embodied endeavour. Through attempting to understand the embodied aspects of the entrepreneurship process, this study has made significant inwards into increasing our understanding of entrepreneurial activities. Firstly it has provided a framework which ensures that entrepreneurial activity is not understood as simply a process of linguistic persuasion, but rather as an "embodied" practice which is inextricably tied to the physical and material context within which it exists. Secondly, through an in-depth qualitative examination of three ethnographic cases, this thesis has also demonstrated the integral role that visual and embodied aspects play in the process of entrepreneurship. In this way, this thesis moves beyond both psychological and previous social constructionist studies of entrepreneurship through identifying the limitations of these studies and providing a theoretical framework which allows entrepreneurship to be examined in a more situated and embodied manner. The theoretical framework applied in this study could potentially be extended through comparing entrepreneurs along the various theoretical dimensions and establishing whether more successful entrepreneurs engage in these activities. This would offer further insights into the embodied aspects of the entrepreneurship process.

9.3 Developing Visual Methodologies

This thesis also contributes to understandings in the wider domain of management and organisational studies through exploring how visual methodologies may be employed to increase our understanding and relate text-based observations to visual understandings. Despite visual processes being pervasive in organisational contexts, management researchers continue to ignore the potential insights that visual methodologies may offer. This thesis has highlighted the deficiencies in our current perceptions and illustrated the potential utility of visual methodologies in the management and business domain. Exploring these processes through an examination of the entrepreneurship process has been particularly useful as the small entrepreneurial companies that took part in this research may be seen as microcosms of larger organisations through which to explore and better understand the role that visual

aspects play in organisational processes. In larger organisations there are likely to be multiple groups, diverse understandings and complex, intertwined relationships. In this context the associations between visual displays and participants' underlying beliefs are more likely to be highly intricate and related to a range of power issues occurring in the organisation. In the small companies involved in this research project the entrepreneurs were largely in control of their businesses and it was therefore easier to gain access to how their values and understandings were expressed through visual means. Through the application of a visual methodology the researcher was able to directly relate the entrepreneurs' textual meaning-making to meanings created through visual displays within their organisations.

While this research was conducted in the context of small organisations, it also points to the importance of incorporating a means of exploring visual understandings into a range of management inquiries. In the wider social science domain, researchers are increasingly realising the value of the application of visual methodologies and the last two decades have witnessed a rapid growth in visual research in this domain (Prosser and Loxley, 2007). Yet, just as qualitative methodologies used for decades by our social science counterparts were once discounted by management researchers as being largely subjective and lacking "validity" and transparency (Bryman, 1994), visual methodologies currently appear to be enduring the same treatment. In addition, while we have increasingly recognised the utility of qualitative techniques as a means of attending to contextual, power and political issues in management and organisational contexts (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1998), this thesis has shown that as a result of ignoring understandings in the visual domain, we continue to neglect a whole dimension of rich information about the processes we seek to examine. Despite purporting to add rich texture into our inquiries through the use of in-depth qualitative methodologies, it seems we are greatly limiting our understandings through examining human experience in the organisational domain as simply a linguistic-semiotic process. This ignores the issue that organisational activities are fundamentally embodied and visual processes. It seems, therefore, that encompassing an understanding of visual meanings is central to increasing the value of our insights into organisational processes.

This suggests that it is highly probable that there are elements that a solely textual approach to the study of management may ignore and hence we should incorporate a visual dimension into our research practices. In addition, this research suggests that visual and verbal sources of data are often inextricably related and in order to gain a more inclusive understanding of the convoluted processes of visual and verbal meaning-making we must examine both sources together. Specifically, it appears to be quite difficult to clearly separate the verbal from the visual and hence through aiming to understand just one of these sources we are "stripping" away a large proportion of potential understanding. In addition, rather than simply adding another dimension to textual sources of data, understanding the visual may also give us access to differences between what organisational participants "say" and what their visual artefacts "display". As Yanow (2006) argues, examining both textual and visual sources of information can often uncover differences between espoused theory and theory in use in organisations. In this way, visual methodologies can incorporate aspects of value pluralism that we are unable to obtain through simply examining textual based understandings. Therefore, through ignoring visual sources of data rather than increasing objectivity and transparency management researchers are detracting from the relevance of and utility of their research by way of offering an account of the processes at work in organisations which is conceptually inadequate and crucially incomplete.

The dominance of textual methodologies has largely gone unnoticed in the management and business domain, despite the ubiquity of visual images in organisational life. This thesis has, however, put forward a number of good reasons why we should reconsider this stance. It is becoming increasingly easy for management researchers to consider incorporating visual methodologies into their research designs as a large literature on visual approaches exists in the social science domain which can act as a guide for management researchers pioneering visual techniques in their research (e.g. Pink, 2001; Rose. 2001). This new wealth of academic scholarship includes journals such as "Visual Studies" and "Visual Communication". and highly profiled international conferences, which offer insights into investigating the role that visual aspects of communication play in our cultural and societal lives. In addition recent technical

innovations in the field of digital photography and video are also making it much easier for researchers to consider incorporating visual technologies into their research projects (Shrum *et al*, 2005). These new technologies are increasingly affordable, portable and easy to use offering high-level quality audio and visual data. Journals are also becoming more open to accepting the use of visual media in publications, and with the advent of on-line journals this is likely to be increasingly the case (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002). It seems, therefore, that the techniques and understandings are available for management researchers to take advantage of, but what needs to change is our attitude to the utility of visual methodologies. This thesis, therefore, has offered insights into how useful and insightful visual media can be in the organisational domain. Therefore, while in terms of theoretical contribution, this thesis can only claim to have implications for the entrepreneurship domain, the methodological contribution offers wider insights into research practices in the management arena.

9.4 Implications for Policy

In addition to the theoretical and methodological contributions as outlined above, this thesis offers a number of practical implications for policy. The importance of visual methodologies established in this thesis also has implications for the education and training of entrepreneurs. In particular, it seems that policy-makers should move away from aiming to assess the entrepreneur's context-independent personality or cognitive abilities and how these characteristics relate to the success of an entrepreneurial venture (e.g. Brockhaus, 1982; Forbes, 1999; McClelland, 1960). This thesis suggests that policy-makers should place emphasis in development of entrepreneurs' expertise in using both verbal and visual "tools" when trying to engage others in their venture. While some advice exists for entrepreneurs on what should be "said" when they are aiming to engage others such as venture capitalists in their ventures (e.g. Mac Millan and Narasimha, 1987), there are few practical insights for entrepreneurs on how they can use other modes of meaning-making to present themselves in an effective manner. The development of these skills could take place in group workshops where entrepreneurs "act out" various scenarios and then receive feedback from experts trained in the use of social skills. Approaches such as this have been

widely used by clinical psychologists for many years, with many reporting high rates of success (e.g. Bellack, 2004). Unlike personality traits and cognitive abilities, which are seen as being stable over the lifetime of an individual, the interpersonal skills emphasised in this study may potentially be developed in a range of individuals. Therefore, in this view entrepreneurs are not seen as having "special" rhetorical abilities, which allow them to become successful over others in the general population. Engaging others in arguments and convincing them of the efficacy of certain situations are activities which we all partake in throughout our lives. Given the nature of entrepreneurial activities it is likely that entrepreneurs will often be in situations where such these skills are needed, this appears to suggest that entrepreneurs should become especially effective in these areas.

In addition to incorporating an emphasis on the persuasive aspects of the entrepreneurial process, policy-makers should develop training that encompasses an understanding of entrepreneurship as a process, which is inextricably bound to its contextual surroundings. Such an approach would suggest a dramatic move away from current supply-side approaches, which often focus on simply supplying entrepreneurs with knowledge of the conventional business disciplines of marketing, finance etc scaled down for application to small businesses (Armstrong, 2001). Such generalised offerings from support agencies result in generic strategies and simplistic assumptions about the desire for entrepreneurs to grow and develop their businesses. A problem with these forms of training is that they are unable to account for contextual contingencies and minimise the role played by the complex interaction between the individual and their wider social, physical and material context. As Shotter (1993) emphasises such attempts by outsiders to provide alternative ideas for business development can be viewed as dangerous and deviant and often rejected as unworkable as they do not relate to the "ways of working" associated with their contextual environment. This thesis suggests that the development and improvement of entrepreneurs' skills needs to be addressed in a more subjective, idiosyncratic manner, concentrating on the entrepreneur within their own unique environment. This would point to developing approaches such as mentoring and coaching (Sadler-Smith *et al*, 2000) which are able to embrace and understand entrepreneurs as a

diverse and heterogeneous group characterised by the pursuit of a variety of different, contextually bound objectives.

The final implication relates to developing the use of visual methodologies in the management domain. It has been argued above that management researchers should begin to question the dominance of text-based approaches in management research and incorporate visual methodologies into the management domain. In terms of policy this would appear to suggest that we need to rethink how we train new management researchers and encourage them to engage with visual understandings. This would involve providing the resources necessary to develop a national programme of training and development in visual methodologies across management departments. Through incorporating visual methodologies into doctoral level training, this may build capacity in diverse methodologies among a future generation of management researchers. This may result in visual methodologies being regarded by future management researchers as equally "valid" as text-based approaches, and potentially as a more insightful approach to management inquiry. In addition, such programmes should be aimed not only at postgraduates and doctoral researchers but also at established researchers in the management sphere. By illustrating what is possible when visual methodologies are incorporated into research designs, these programmes may potentially develop interest among more experienced management researchers in using visual approaches.

9.5 Limitations of this Study

In order to evaluate the research carried out, it is important that the limitations of this study are specified and given careful consideration. Firstly, in order to maintain a degree of disciplined reflexivity (Weick, 2002), the impact of the underlying epistemological assumptions of the researcher on the issues investigated and the subsequent findings must be examined. Given that this thesis focused on visual and verbal meaning-making certain aspects of the data became more important to understand and investigate as they related to the questions set out in the aims of the research. Furthermore, the quantity of data and variety of emergent themes necessitated some selectivity of these themes which the

researcher deemed particularly insightful and interesting (Seale, 2000). The researcher's interests also impacted on the form of analysis used and consequently the data collected during the ethnographic studies could be used and interpreted in a different manner. For example this could involve a more in-depth examination of the gestures entrepreneurs used in expressing meaning or linguistic turn-taking in naturally occurring conversations. This could potentially add additional insights into the visual aspects of the entrepreneurial process.

In addition to emphasising certain aspects of the data and applying a particular mode of analysis, this research has also privileged certain aspects of the entrepreneurial process. While the visual and linguistic aspects of entrepreneurship appear to be central in allowing entrepreneurs to make meaning and engage others in the entrepreneurial venture, this does not suggest that they are the only aspects of the entrepreneurial process which merit attention. In particular, while it is essential to persuade others that the business venture is a profitable and legitimate activity, the entrepreneur must first have access to suitable networks of individuals who will be useful to engage in the venture. This includes suitable employees, good professional support and other individuals who have the ability to fund entrepreneurial businesses such as venture capitalists. It would therefore be of little use if entrepreneurs had the ability to engage others but was unable to access suitable groups of individuals. This points to the importance of considering this research alongside research on social and business networks (e.g. Jack and Anderson, 2002) and attending to how entrepreneurs gain access to groups of individuals with whom it is fruitful to engage.

The findings of this research are also, to some degree at least, context-dependent as they are based on just three entrepreneurial companies in Yorkshire. As Perakyla (1997) states, it is difficult to generalise the results from a small sample to a larger population. Therefore there are implications in terms of how far the findings can be generalised from this sample to the wider population of entrepreneurs. However, it has been acknowledged that entrepreneurs are a highly heterogeneous group (Gartner, 1990) and the three companies involved in the research came from different industries, involved with highly diverse

projects. Despite this, it may be argued that the entrepreneurs across the three companies appear to be engaged in similar processes of engaging with others and creating meaning. Therefore this research sought not to specify "what" entrepreneurship "really" is but rather to understand "how" the processes labelled as entrepreneurship occur and leave the particulars up to local-construction (Hosking, 2000). In addition, it has been emphasised throughout this research that no account has been made to suggest it is an impartial or "true" account. Rather the researcher's subjectivity has been emphasised and attempts have been made to be as open as possible throughout the various stages of the research project (Atkinson, 1990; Clifford, 1986; Watson, 1995). It is hoped that this in some way has allowed the reader to develop their own understanding and interpretations of the data with which they have been presented.

9.6 Suggestions for Future Research

In terms of progressing research in this area, there are several suggestions that can be made in the light of this study, which could extend the methodological and theoretical contributions of this thesis. Firstly, it may be interesting for future researchers to develop the "both/and" understanding of the entrepreneurial process taken in this thesis. While this research moved beyond an "either/or" logic in terms of its understanding of entrepreneurship through incorporating an understanding of visual dimensions, this could be further extended into the practice of the researcher. In this approach the researcher would "join with" the researched in a process of co-construction. This would involve using an interactive methodology in which they the researcher fully engages with the activities they study and theorise about the relational processes between the researcher and researched. One example of how such an interactive methodology could be put into practice is Holliday's (2000) video-diary study. In an attempt to overcome issues of representation in visual research and examine the "performativities" of identity, Holliday (2000) enabled participants to "investigate" themselves. This involved giving respondents a camcorder and asking them to create their own "video diaries", thereby removing the researcher's "gaze" and allowed participants to freely "perform" their identities through visual means. This approach and other interactive methodologies could

be extended and applied to develop our understandings of visual processes in entrepreneurial activities.

Another interesting area for future researchers is to incorporate an understanding of how visual artefacts and material contexts are used to develop persuasive arguments in a range of organisational contexts. The theoretical framework developed in this thesis could potentially be used as a guide for researchers attempting to pursue this line of investigation. This would allow researchers to examine a range of activities as processes created through visual practices and performances rather than simply focusing on linguistic dimensions. One area of potential interest is an examination of the visual and performative aspects of the process of management. As in the entrepreneurship domain, little attention is paid to how managers create meaning beyond what is possible through language. This framework could be particularly useful in managerial situations where managing others' impressions and convincing them of the utility of certain activities are an important aspect of the process. This would provide future researchers with the opportunity to move away from cognitive approaches, which understand managerial decision-making as a de-contextualised activity and move towards an understanding of management as a socially negotiated and culturally dependent process.

Finally, the application of video-based data collection method could be extended and developed to further understand the meanings of gestures and micro-actions of organisational participants. This could be used in conjunction with other visual material as a means of creating a more in-depth understanding of organisational processes. Videotape data may be subjected to repeated examination through the use of slow motion, still frames and zooming features, affording future researchers the opportunity to collect an enormous amount of unique micro-detail. As it records thirty frames of visual data every second, video-data allows researchers to capture the emergence of gesture in organisational situations, such as what the minute details of what participants are doing, where they are looking and who they are interacting with (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002). In addition, a range of research projects could also benefit from incorporating a video-based element even if in-depth visual analysis in not the central goal of the research. In

particular, video stills and short clips often interest audiences and effectively illustrate the central findings of the research. Modern digital camcorders bear little resemblance to the cumbersome and complex machines that existed prior to the introduction of digital technology, and data can be easily transferred onto a desktop computer and edited in a variety different ways. Therefore it is progressively easier for researchers to consider using video in data collection, analysis and dissemination.

9.7 Conclusion

In summary, this thesis has pointed to the importance of examining entrepreneurship as an embodied activity that is inextricably linked to the social and cultural context within which it exists. Little has been written about the visual or embodied aspects of entrepreneurship, so this thesis has opened up possibilities for future research through emphasising the potentially rich sources of data we are overlooking by focusing on entrepreneurship as a solely linguistic activity. This thesis has therefore attempted to stress the disparity in emphasis between linguistic and visual aspects of the entrepreneurship process, and to begin to understand the "embodied" aspects of entrepreneurship through applying a novel visual ethnographic approach. In this way, it has been suggested that promoting acceptance and understanding of visual aspects of the entrepreneurship process it has the potential to generate many more interesting and useful insights than focusing our understandings on linguistically-based studies alone.

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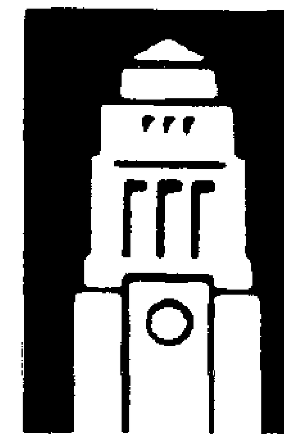
APPENDIX 11.0

11. 1 APPENDIX: CHARACTERISTICS OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE ENTREPRENEUR (HORNADAY, 1982)

1. Confidence	22. Maturity, balance
2. Perseverance and determination	23. Responsiveness to suggestions and criticism
3. Energy, diligence	24. Responsibility
4. Resourcefulness	25. Foresight
5. Ability to take calculated risks	26. Accuracy, thoroughness
6. Dynamism, leadership	27. Cooperativeness
7. Optimism	28. Profit-orientation
8. Need to achieve	29. Ability to learn from mistakes
9. Versatility; knowledge of product, market, technology	30. Sense of power
10. Creativity	31. Pleasant personality
11. Ability to influence others	32. Egotism
12. Ability to get along well with people	33. Courage
13. Initiative	34. Imagination
14. Flexibility	35. Perceptiveness
15. Intelligence	36. Toleration for ambiguity
16. Orientation to clear goals	37. Aggressiveness
17. Time-competence efficiency	38. Capacity for enjoyment
18. Ability to make decisions quickly	39. Efficacy
19. Positive response to challenges	40. Commitment
20. Independence	41. Ability to trust workers
21. Honesty, integrity	42. Sensitivity to others

11.2 APPENDIX: LETTER TO ENTREPRENEURS



Leeds University Business
School
Maurice Keyworth Building,
The University of Leeds
LS2 9JT

Hi,

As part of a PhD study I am looking for three interesting small business owner-managers in the West Yorkshire area to take part in a new and unusual study. The study is based around making a mini-film about the everyday activities of the small business owner-manager. The research is fully funded and there is no cost to the companies involved. The companies need to be growth-oriented and currently pursuing innovative and interesting projects.

The research aims to examine whether it is the activities entrepreneurs engage in that makes them successful rather than a special, innate personality trait or being a special type of individual. If these activities are understood, this opens up the possibility of developing entrepreneurial behaviours in other individuals and companies.

The study will involve observing what the entrepreneur does on a daily basis. This will involve the researcher asking questions about what they doing and why and potentially videotaping some of their actions and interactions with other people. The researcher would be based in the company for a maximum period of two months in order to get a full view of what goes on in the company. Financial or other confidential information are not important to the study or of interest to the researcher rather it is the interaction of the entrepreneur with other individuals in their environment and their thoughts and opinions that of interest to the researcher. If you think you like to be involved in this innovative research or would like to find out more please get in touch

Best wishes,
Jean Clarke,

Post Graduate Researcher
Leeds University Business School

11.3 APPENDIX: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES

11.3.1 TOPICS FOR ENTREPRENEURS
• History/background of entrepreneur/business
• Roles/activities on a daily basis
• Employees/roles of others in context
• Management of staff
• Working relationships
• Meetings? Formal/informal
• Problems/issues
• Procedures/processes
• Clients/outside relationships
• Office lay-out – effectiveness
• Décor – importance?
• Understanding of entrepreneurship
• Long-term goals of entrepreneur/for business

11.3.2 TOPICS FOR EMPLOYEES/CUSTOMERS
• **Background/how they came to work in/deal with business**
• **Roles/activities on a daily basis**
• **Contact with entrepreneur**
• **Contact with clients**
• **Motivation/work ethics**
• **Perceived importance of their role for success of business**
• **How entrepreneur manages staff**
• **Input into decision-making**
• **Problems/issues**
• **Procedures/processes**
• **Knowledge of long-term strategy**
• **Office layout – effectiveness?**
• **Décor – importance?**
• **Understanding of entrepreneurship**

11.4 APPENDIX: SAMPLE VERBATIM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Follow-up Interview with Paul Morrison

The interview starts and Paul is moving things around on his table. His head is down and he is writing, moving paper, arranging things etc...

Jean: I've just got a few questions that came to me since I've been working here and as the study is on entrepreneurship I was wondering what do you think an entrepreneur is?

Paul: What do I think one is? (Jean nods, silence for 12 seconds). The pursuit of risk for profit something like that

Jean: Do you think you risked a lot in setting up this business?

Paul: Oh certainly sure.

Jean: Yeah?

Paul: Oh yeah, yeah...well there's a credit and debit side to life as there is on a balance sheet in a company and I think by doing something like this that the credit side is one or two things that we talked about earlier where you can make your own decisions and be very creative in the sense that you can totally plan and execute a particular direction or a particular idea um...also the credit side is you can reward yourself according to your success in a multitude of ways and it's not just a salary which is obviously restricted by the company's ability to pay it, not by profits but the company's ability to pay if you've got plenty of cash you can go on for years without making profits and also things like benefits can be tailored much more individually for example what kind of car we drive, how many holidays we take, how we fly, how we travel, when we travel where do we stay, how long do we take over a trip, you know I mean my trips to Ireland are one day business three days fun...

Jean: Sounds good.

Paul: Well typically you know there not always like that are they? Because it's not always like that but it would be nice if it could be like that and we'll go on to the debit side but we'll just expand on the credit side and that kind off lifestyle suits me because I don't mind the risks in fact I probably pursue to a certain extent the risks. Having said that I've always known the bail out point or life boat point in any situation in this business since we started it....

Jean: What do you mean by that?

Paul: It means that if the business got to a certain size or got into a certain situation and I didn't particularly like either or things didn't particularly like us, how could I, would I be left high and dry or could I walk away from it and I've always been and I still can even with this one know that if it came to hey that's it the end of the road I could walk away from it, I might lose a bit of money but I wouldn't lose everything. Having said that there's a hell of a lot of risk I mean I've still got I would think within this company just shy of £300, 000 of my own money that I don't have that's borrowed in the company at this point, the majority of that has gone to fund [new aerospace business] and it's in [new aerospace business's] balance sheet, so and [new aerospace business] is now a successful business so the *quid pro quo* is the company may owe me that money and I may owe others that money but I've got a super business that's what it's cost me, and that business is now starting payback time, cash wise so it's taken three to four years. The debit side of running your own business or being an entrepreneur is that it's lonely, it's lonely in the sense that you cannot initially surround yourself with colleagues because colleagues are expensive and it's not the nature of the game anyway you started something and you tend to have subordinates rather than colleagues. Some subordinates you can actually develop into what I would call not so much equals it's a strong word I don't think I'm any more or any less equal than anyone else here it's just that I've got everything on the line and they haven't so that will always be the defining difference but there are one or two people here at all levels of the business that you can confide in and I find the process of confiding in them quite beneficial in terms of being able to unravel the issues as you go along and they may not contribute anymore than a sounding board and oh I don't think you should do that Paul but...

Jean: It's helpful?

Paul: Yeah and I find that very valuable so that's the debit side is that it's lonely. The debit side also is that you're putting a lot at risk and it may be your home, in my case it's the security of my home but my home happens to be worth a lot of money so it's only secured to the tune of 25% of the value of my home and so that at the end of the day if I lost all that I'd still live in reasonable surroundings. So the loneliness, the risk, and the fact also that you tend to work at a lot of different levels all the time because in a cooperate environment you work very structured within the level that you're in, you're the managing director or you're the chief executive and this is the deal, you're the works manager and this is the deal, you're the office junior and this is the deal.

Jean: You have more of a set role?

Paul: Yeah everybody has more of a set role in a larger company because there's not other way you can operate, there's a plus and minus to that, the plus is that (a) you like being a bit of everything and the minus side is for example I spent half and hour in the post office yesterday posted a load of mail for [new aerospace business] mailing shot and for things going abroad because it's one of the things that I can do without losing sight of the key things that I have to do and I'll explain that in a second but if I didn't take the post up and [receptionist] or somebody had to take the post up which would mean the default to that would be or the opportunity cost to that would be nobody answering the telephones and you know you can get a telephone call that makes all the biggest difference in the world to this company with an order or an inquiry and what have you. So we don't have anybody who has any spare time to go up to the post office but I see my role as making sure the company survives therefore I am responsible for making sure that the working capital within the business is sufficient. You don't spend every minute of the day doing that you work on that at key moments and put things in place and review it and at the moment we're in a happy position, but six months or three or four months ago we weren't in a particularly happy position and two years we in a fairly dire position where the key issue was where are we going find some more working capital we've invested heavily in this building, we've invested heavily in [new aerospace business], we've invested heavily in aerospace and the business that was the driver of all this lot was stuttering so if we're working in a situation where for the next six weeks or so or the foreseeable future things are looking good then one of the key tasks that I have is put to bed...

Jean: So you're always thinking are we going to be ok in the long term but then also working on the lower level of smaller things like I need to get this posted off...

Paul: Yeah I'm free to go and do that because you cannot operate at the sort off strategic level every minute of the day well I suppose you could try but you'd be rewriting strategies like chapters in a story and that's not how it is...

Jean: How would you usually define your strategy would you usually sit down and write it or does is continuously change?

Paul: It doesn't continuously change but it continuously modifies and I would think there's quite a fundamental difference there I would see if you called change a tweak here and there then it changes but I don't call change that, I call change like the difference in the seasons which are quite substantial.

Jean: So a massive redirection?

Paul: Yeah you've blown it if you're getting into that...or something occurs in the life of the company that can necessitate the need for a substantial change, the loss of a colleague, the loss of a contract some kind or strange legislation that means you can't do this anymore, um...but we've had sort of strategies here that have evolved over a period of ten years, modified significantly every five years, they're written down after meetings, meetings in casual surroundings I used to do it with [ex-employee] who used to be the other director. Now I don't have anybody now particularly to do it with at the moment but it's not as necessary because we're still in the middle of pursuing the detailed strategies as you can see from the aerospace we're not actually making anything in anger as it where we're still producing trial material that trial material is going in aeroplanes and we've got a furnace delivered this week that will enable us to make those products in commercial volumes in commercial terms and we're pursuing a new product that has come to us for the [air-craft development] there's a years work there...

Jean: Yeah there's so much going on....

Paul: Yeah so the strategy there is to a certain extent put to bed and you only modify it when you get to a point where the feedback says hey we can't make any money out of this or hey we can't actually meet this specification because it's changed slightly and we don't have that kind of capability anymore or there is some government reason why this particular airframe manufacturer won't buy from England. [New aerospace business] on the other hand is now a fledgling business turning over half a million pounds and two years or the year before last I should say because it's not quite two years ago it turned over £100,000...and we tweak occasionally here and there, a little change in direction a little bit of marketing input but that has to be left alone now to pursue it's chosen course until we get to a point where again something happens and we say hey this is not going quite as we want or there's an opportunity over there that we could move to or something happens within the company like somebody leaves where you need again to make changes but other than semi force nature situations the strategy is laid out you know lets get it to a million pounds a year doing what we're doing

Jean: See how it goes?

Paul: Yeah and after that it will be quite a reasonable size business so we will have to change not so much our strategy we'll have to change our policy in terms of how we deal with things on a day by day week by week basis because logistically it will be necessary....

Jean: Everybody here, has their own office how do you think you've instilled in them to work, how have you motivated them? Because they are such private offices you could do what you want because they're obviously all working really hard and committed to the success of the business

Paul: How do I think I've done it? Well first of all they're the kind of people who are capable of pursuing specific objectives as long as those objectives are spelt out reasonably sensibly otherwise we wouldn't have employed them for that role. Secondly because I think it's in my nature to set the strategy and the key issues. the key hurdles and then let people get on with it. I think I understood a long time ago it's actually very hard getting a business up towards a million it takes a long time because you're building bricks upon bricks from the first pound to the second pound and it seems to take forever but the only way you're going to get around a million and then move on is by not trying to do everything yourself. A lot of people have nice small businesses that will always be small businesses because they do everything themselves and I don't mean go to the post office like I did yesterday I mean I do that for quite fundamental reasons to allow people to get on with what they're doing in their offices and I can get on with what I'm doing which is strategy and financial issues and generally overseeing the sort off general management without being over bearing, I can get on with that and still go to the post office but some people in businesses small to medium businesses, literally come in share an office with somebody else they may even be a relative and they do everything and physically you are limiting or restricting. It's not necessarily the size of the market that restricts it or the size of your manufacturing capacity that restricts it, it's the man power and the way you're running it that can restrict it because you physically can't do anymore and I've probably sussed that by accident or it's just my nature to let people get on with it within the guidelines of what I think we should be doing and because of that I think the business can grow quite dramatically and I think the business can do what is probably too much. in the sense that four years ago we built this new factory we entered into a fairly complicated confinement stock agreement in Finland that took a lot of money, we entered into establishing [new aerospace business] which strategically is a very, very ambitious project and no less ambitious we ended up in an aerospace programme in partnership with [large electronics company] in California and England. So I couldn't have done any one of those things, if I'd been opening the post and burying myself in oh we've got a letter here from somebody and worrying it to every word. every I don't mean worrying about it I mean worrying like a dog worries whereas I just dismiss things like that and say you deal with it.

Jean: So it's important to step back?

Paul: It's important to step back and it's important to step up as long as the controls are in place so that if something is going wrong you can identify and then you can take steps to bring it back in line but you know you need to step back to even see that.

Jean: When Mike came in the other day from [large electronics company], you mentioned it's useful when he comes in because you get access to what big organisations are doing, the tools that they're using with their staff in what way do you think that's useful?

Paul: Because it acts in a tiny way, Jean, as a thought catalyst don't forget I came from big companies so your background tends to be very formal, with structured training, you came to this scenario for all the good, the bad reasons and it's not particularly structured but we equally don't do much training and that's probably quite a serious admission. We like to send people on specialist courses and I think we're good at that but we don't do much in-house training and we don't do the sort off detailed appraisals that a major company has to do, largely because a major company hasn't got a cat in hell's chance of knowing how Mike [from large electronics company] ticks in the day-to-day going on because some guy sat in California will not know Mike [from large electronics company] other than the fact that he runs part of the British operation and he is whatever he is and this is what we pay him he'll just meet him occasionally at conferences. So they need to supplement that kind of feedback with specialist activity feedback to identify the good guys identify the bad guys and identify lines of weakness and training opportunities and development opportunities and you can't do that when you employ 220,000 people without specialist agencies coming in. We can do it here by the fact that we rub shoulders together every day you know and I know what [the chief engineer's] strengths are and I know what his weaknesses are and his weaknesses are huge but as long as I steer him away from relying on those weaknesses or being exposed to those weaknesses in his job description and his job function then I feel that we're using [the chief engineer] to his strengths, [the assistant engineer] is quite a totally different individual. I'm just using those two because it explains easily what I'm trying to say. I don't need to send those two on specialist courses that say well you've to be careful with him because of this, you've got to be careful with him because of that but overall the guy is ok which is what Mike has to rely on. I just make sure. [the chief engineer] is quite a bright engineer and a very practical guy in the sense of making machines work and things like that but he's an absolutely dreadful manager, he's a dreadful man manager and we moved him off what you might call production/works management to concentrate on product development for two reasons: one is he was fairly terrible at managing the operators,

and I would be too because quite frankly you know half the time you would sack them, and then secondly that wasn't his strength but then whilst he was doing that the opportunity cost was that we weren't doing any research and development and I could not go home at night happy if all we were doing were playing today's music because there is a limit to how long any company can keep doing that and you wake up one morning and you find that actually the business has moved away from you so you need to make sure or I need to make sure that we have new products in the process of being developed all of the time so that when tomorrow comes and the today's products are waning or they're not contributing what they should then we have things on the shelf that are on their way in and I think the company has a great history of that but we needed [the chief engineer] to do it so moved him out of the area where his greatest weakness was and moved him into the area where his greatest strength was and you get nothing for a couple of years so you have to invest, and for a small company that is taking it on the chin because you've got to replace him with a production manager but that's what we did. My one concern about [the assistant engineer] (looks around at door) is that, the door's closed isn't it, in that working so closely with [the chief engineer] he picks up [the chief engineer's] weaknesses and from time to time [the assistant engineer] reports to [the chief engineer] but I act a little bit like an uncle or an angel it's a horrible word that but a guiding angel that sits on [the assistant engineer's] shoulders and says every now and then after a meeting 'look [assistant engineer], [the chief engineer] would take ten days to get his head round this but don't do that, you know, do it tomorrow'. So you know because I'm aware of the weaknesses I can make sure, without doing it on front of [the chief engineer], I can make sure that [the assistant engineer] is not led by Rod's weaknesses and you know I think we have. [The new aerospace business] is very exciting as I mentioned earlier which has all been entirely developed here in the last few years and is now adding half a million pounds to the business and will grow exponentially, and we can do entirely the same in 2007 and we've now got another product which is for [aircraft development] which in spite of the fact that we haven't got all the aerospace products on the market because that furnace as you've seen was only delivered this week, I've got them making another product that we can't actually make at the moment but you know I only want a little bit of time every now and then to tweak this and it's the product for the [aircraft development] and it's that one that's the specification for it and that's the product route actually on that chart and it stays there so I can keep looking at it and think have we done anything today about that and we had an aerospace meeting this morning and we went through all the issues with where we're at so far and then I said where are we on that and I got some feedback some good some not so good and I said come on get on with it you know I asked you to do that on the 15th of

July, no it's not that long since, it is because I did it on an email (tapping table) so it's there, Oh God....

Jean: So you use such notes to help you remember things?

Paul: Yeah, yeah because when they come up what I quite like it is they are not particularly structured meetings and they are not particularly formal meetings but having said that they are within an environment of notes and minutes and a lot of them are public and I keep them on these walls because this is a great way with development because you could write chapter and verse every time you meet and I don't think there's a point in that because people don't read backwards they might check something but they don't keep re-reading so if we keep a schematic up there.

Jean: It's more precise

Paul: It's more precise, it's more open and when they come in we look at it and say ok start off with [an type of aerospace wire] then you sinter it then you wrap this extra tape on it, we don't have any of that tape no we don't we better get some because it's different than anything we've ever had before but we found out that Mike has bought some for us in California and it's being shipped over and we're not even making this product for them.

Jean: So it's just a favour?

Paul: It's just a favour.

Jean: That's nice...

Paul: Yeah it's good but that's the kind of relationship we have with this major player and at the end of the day he would definitely want this product but we're actually working with a guy in Italy, a customer in Italy for it, but it's not unique we can sell to others so we can sell it to [large electronics company] so we've now got a triangle (makes gesture of triangle) we've got [a major customer] in Italy, we've got [large electronics company] in America and we've got us here, and Mike is working with us even though the product is for [a major customer] in Milan.

Jean: Have you known Mike a long time?

Paul: Yeah for about fifteen years, but you then go through this and you look at that and then [the chief engineer] will say yeah we need a so and so, so and so, so and so on that or we're going to change that marking we're going to put it on before the oven so I just walk down the room and move that marking on this side which is the labelling on the side round to another part of the schematic

and it stays there and we normally write minutes and notes but that stays there and it's an easy record of where we're at.

Jean: Do you find it difficult because they where explaining to me about [an aerospace product] and it went over my head a bit to be honest?

Paul: Yeah it does me

Jean: And I was just wondering how you deal with that because you have to understand what they're talking about but it must be difficult as well because you're not an engineer...

Paul: No I'm not an engineer but I think if I was an engineer like them. nothing would ever happen because an engineer in my mind is someone who makes sure it's 100% correct before you actually put pen to paper. I think you can get to 95% very quickly and very valuably and the last 5% you could take forever and you are much better off starting the ball rolling with your 95% of knowledge. It's not going to be perfect because it not 100% but you learn as you go along and you know it's not going to be perfect but that's not what you're trying to achieve. What you're trying to achieve is to start the journey, and when you start the journey you get feedback because something you thought maybe step two at 40% or step three at 60% of the knowledge trail was easy it could turn out to be very difficult and it could turn out to be a dead end

Jean: So at 95% you should go with it and try it out?

Paul: Yeah well you should start the ball rolling, yeah because you're probably at 95% as precise as you're going to be in a theoretical sense practically if you know what I mean. Engineers could sit forever get into that getting that last 5% down, and to it's pointless Jean, because the last 5% is if you're walking from here to Skipton and you're worried about the last 5% which is the roundabout into the town for God's sake you've got all this before you get to the roundabout and you don't know for sure that that's going to be ok, so get to the roundabout and then have a look and it may be that you don't actually need the roundabout at all because you go along the canal bank...do you understand?

Jean: Yes I see the comparison

Paul: It's hard to explain but if I was an engineer we wouldn't do, we'd all sit and try to get to the 100% theoretical.

Jean: So you're coming in with the business edge?

Paul: Yeah, I'm just simply saying I think of it in terms of products, opportunities, invoices, cash, products, opportunities, invoices, and cash.

Jean: Whereas they're thinking of it in terms of design and mechanics?

Paul: Yeah, yeah they never get past, well they never get into that cycle....

Jean: Because that's not where their interests are...

Paul: That's not where they're at. We did a schematic similar to this on the quality system, ISO2000, ISO9000 or whatever they call it, they're always changing it and it's a real bureaucratic headache in the way that we are expected to execute it and run it but it's not a bureaucratic headache in the way that it defines your business in a sort off structured sense but the thing that slightly irked me about it a few years ago after we do all this every year, we get audited, we do audits, they come in, the people who accredit us and audit us and it's all about the just the mechanics off a part of the business from when you get an order to how you raise an invoice, and I feel that it's artificial and I commented to them that this was not how a business actually operates, a business operates in a sequence of events, in that you get an inquiry, you quote that inquiry, who get an order or you don't get an order, but lets say you do get an order you pursue then what they want but then you raise an invoice and then you collect the cash and put the cash back into the working capital and then you go out an get another order and I said you seem to neglect the whole picture and they found that quite fascinating, everybody agreed and they found that quite fascinating so what we did was instead, we jumped the sort off initial preamble in our quality manual that just rabitted on about the bureaucratic elements and we put in there a schematic like a pie chart with a big arrow right round the outside edge that went say clockwise from enquiry to order, ta thump, ta thump to manufacturing to all the ISO procedures, to invoice, to cash, into working capital and back round again and I said if you look at that, then that is how a business operates.

Jean: And that makes more sense?

Paul: Yeah it made more sense to me I could see the point of it but I can't see the point of being bureaucratic to six digits in one part of the business cycle.

Jean: What part of the business does the ISO look at?

Paul: Manufacturing.

Jean: Just the manufacturing side

Paul: Yeah

Jean: And the benefit of that is just being able to tell people we're off a certain quality?

Paul: We have been assessed at a quality standard that is repeatable

Jean: It's useful in that way

Paul: It is useful in that way. It's useful as PR and it's useful in terms of internal structuring, by that I mean the processes you have to go through are formalised within the quality system and if something isn't quite right it's checked and if it doesn't conform then it falls into an area called non-conformance and so you then report that into a file that is for non-conformances, so you are building up a picture of issues so at any moment in time you can go and monitor and say gee whiz why have we got all this non-conformance what the hell is going wrong, it's either the product is not designed properly, it's either the people who are running the machines are not doing it properly or it's the raw material that's not performing properly or it's some other alien thing so it's valuable in that sense but it's a snapshot along the journey of a part in the journey and I think it's more appealing and more meaningful if it actually encompasses the whole thing yeah....

Jean: You mentioned that the ISO is useful for PR purposes do you think it's important then for the business to look professional...you mentioned you moved here for that reason?

Paul: yeah I did.

Jean: Why do you think that...it's probably an obvious question?

Paul: No it's not an obvious question and it's not easy to give an obvious answer. I think it's a complex answer so lets try and play around with it, you might have to edit some of this and change it around a bit, we might ramble a bit. I've always said that there is no difference between running a company this size and running a company the size of [large electronics company] or the size of Proctor and Gamble or the size of I wouldn't say Tesco because Tesco is a retailer, I'm talking about manufacturing, the only difference is the number of noughts on everything but the fundamental issues and the steps along the way are the same, but you are very, very rarely perceived like that from the outside because people say how many people do you employ 23, oh we employ 223 or 23, 000 or 223,000 therefore they perceive you as something different and you're not any different you're just not as big but you're not any different the fundamental processes that we go through whether it's our ISO quality system or whether it's

you know the processing of inquiries, orders accounts sorry inquiries, orders manufacturing, raising invoices, cash, cash back into working capital, that is exactly the same you know it's the processes of the business, but a lot of people in big companies don't see small companies operating like that, they see them more as a corner shop, they're not incorrect but they're not seeing the whole picture, and I think that if you're target market or your market are these large blue-chip companies, and the kinds of things we sell we don't sell to companies our size who would have a similar culture to us and we don't sell to companies smaller than us, we sell into these big blue-chip guys and the problem with that is, this earlier comment that the big blue-chip guy expects to see when he comes to visit you, something that is not alien to him something that feels natural to him which are lets face it the trappings of big blue-chip companies, nice buildings, smart people, nice surroundings, switched on people, use of modern techniques, we use PowerPoint a lot in fact I need to show you a lot of our PowerPoint stuff

Jean: Yes, I haven't seen that yet?

Paul: No it's because the projector oh I've brought it in now to show you so we can do it tomorrow if you want...we use PowerPoint presentations for these guys and we've put together a really special one which you would not get the impression that we are a small company.

Jean: Oh yes that would be really good to see?

Paul: And when we were faced with people from Bowing coming over and people from Airbus coming over, exactly those principles apply, if you brought them into a tatty little place that was dirty and scruffy, and in a sort off back of an industrial estate somewhere with people who where not particularly confident or people who where not particularly on top of their jobs then it's very unlikely that they would want to work with you unless you had something that was particularly unique. Now it's probably fair to say that nobody has something that is particularly unique there's almost always an alternative, and therefore my role as I see it is to create an environment for this company or within this company where the likes of the corporate purchaser or the corporate engineer from large Aerospace company will not feel out of place when he comes in. If you do it properly he won't ask how many people you employ. Sometimes they say 'God's there's hardly anyone ever working out there' and I say 'well we work three shifts' which we do and 'we also have a subsidiary in Manchester which does a lot of our subcontract manufacturing' which we do. Ok fine...they don't see that as a sort off downside you know they pitch the building looks very smart it's in a very smart area, it's a nice car park, you come into the reception it's

pleasant enough, [receptionist] does a good job and we meet with them in what is a comfortable and business like room, we show them a PowerPoint presentation. We don't necessarily take them on the factory floor because that's where it starts to um not unravel that's the wrong word but that's where you start to get the negatives coming in because some of our machines are old but not on the Aerospace they're all brand new but there are some old machines that some of the processes that we do on Fire resistant cables but as long as you can show them products and pictures, and show them around discreetly in certain areas they go away with the right impression. I mean look at [large electronics company] you know that's a classic example, they employ 225,000 people and they're up here every other week and they treat us like equals but I think it's because we've stage managed it, (he considers the use of this term) that's probably the wrong word, stage managed sounds like you're not quite what you are...

Jean: I know what you mean

Paul: I think we've managed, we've managed, no I think we've run the company in the knowledge that you had to behave and be seen to behave in a certain way.

Jean: Because the processes could be the same with a different look but it's important to have this look so you can present yourself in an equal manner.

Paul: Absolutely, yeah absolutely...and I think also the other side to the coin is a more basic thing in that at the end of the day, somebody faced with choices and let face it we've nearly always got choices in a modern company unless you're called Microsoft, somebody faced with choices will end up evaluating the ifs and buts of those choices and at the end of the day they'll come down and work with people they like because it's a fair human trait because at the end of the day they want to successful in what they're doing and they'll feel happier working with people they feel they can work with.

Jean: What do you mean by people they like; do you mean you get on with them in an interpersonal way when they meet you?

Paul: Yeah I think to a certain extent I do you know I think it's as simple as that, I think you will get some hard headed people who say I don't need to be liked, likes probably the wrong word, because I don't mean that we make a fuss of them, or we butter up to them, or we give them gifts and things, we don't do anything like that but I think if we're seen to be reasonably professional and we have a positive approach to what we're doing and the products are good and the guys feel comfortable that the company is running in a modern and effective way then they'll go home and

think: 'there's not a lot at risk with me dealing with these people' because at the end of the day somebody whose role is a purchasing guy in a big company he's appraised on how good he does his job and it's not just does he buy a commodity cheaper than was previously bought or cheaper than the competitors that's only one of a whole bunch of mix, he's also appraised on how successful the supplier is dealing with the purchasing company in terms of quality, performance, responding to special requests and I think if you can give the impression that you are a little bit more on the ball and quite sort of openly friendly people with a positive attitude then which everybody likes to be. I mean we all have to come to work, we might as well enjoy it, and we might as well enjoy doing what we do which is interface with other people.

Jean: We have a word for that in 'academic-speak' which is social capital you can actually add money to your business by being good interpersonally.

Paul: It's just taken me five minutes to get that point/

Jean: It's interesting because I've found that with other companies as well; different people who get on together seem to work together because why not if you can get the same somewhere else you're going to work with the person that you like...that's what happens isn't it?

Paul: Yes it is, you see the really weird thing, and Mike actually took from this, is that I've always got on famously, and it's a hard word that it's a horrible word, I've always got on well with the people at [large electronics company] to the point where quite a number of people actually thought that I worked there, I got invited to the VP of Marketing Worldwide retirement party. it wasn't actually well it was a retirement party but retirement's the wrong word they actually sacked him, he's a great guy actually, but he was only sort off fifty and he's not got a similar job with a large competitor in the states and still commutes around the world but they just felt within the new [large electronic company's] ideology that they didn't need [him] and so I was invited to this guy's sort off leaving party and there was maybe 150 people there and I think I was the only non-member but 90% of the people there thought I worked at [large electronics company] and Mike said that well most people think that Paul works at [large electronics company] anyway (laughs) and I think it's because I do spend a lot of time down there and I have done over a fifteen year period but it's also that I've been involved in lots of different projects with them so I've met a very substantial cross-section in formal meetings of [large electronic company's] people and I suppose in a way I am not untypical of the kind of people they employ.

Jean: What do you mean?

Paul: They employ people who are, the simplest way to say is like me (laughs), people who are enthusiastic about business and are reasonably bright and see businesses at something that you work hard at and get results from in a disciplined way.

Jean: Do you think because you come from [large consumer products company] do you think that's affected how you run the business now?

Paul: Yeah.

Jean: In what way…I know you mentioned about changing 30% of the business every three years but is that the main thing?

Paul: Yeah that is huge because there's not much empathy between fire resistant cables and [detergent] and [washing up liquid] but I think the biggest thing I took from it was, apart from the fact it was a most enjoyable place to be and enjoyable place to be trained because it was full of enthusiasm and very very positive objectives and demands and you where expected to be good and if you weren't good then it was bye-bye Mr Chips, but I think the one thing I took from it apart from whatever that does to you when you are 21 which you know to me was like going to university again and doing a business degree…

Jean: It was very formative of the way you are now?

Paul: Well you see I went away and became a meteorologist which was just not me God when I see these guys on television in the morning you know and they're going on, and on and on about this front and that front and the clouds and I think shit why did I think I could do that?

Jean: Sometimes you don't know yourself.

Paul: Well I did I wanted to go to Antarctica.

Jean: So there was more of an adventure there?

Paul: Yeah I wanted to go to Antarctica and they said you need to be a geologist or a meteorologist and I failed A level geology so meteorology became an easy option but then they stopped the funding for Antarctica, British Antarctica Survey in that year stopped the funding so I thought God I can't stand this. I had five years of it training and doing it so I was more than 21 when I went to [large consumer product's company] I would have been 23 but I went into their graduate programme at that time if you are the right kind of person they tend to, by the right kind of person I

mean the right kind of person for them. and they tend to only recruit the right kind of people, male or female because their selection processes are so rigorous that you're filtered down through a whole series of processes.

Jean: They got the occupational psychologists in?

Paul: Yeah and you end up I would think that most people are successful in [consumer products company] but the nature of the beast is that you can't all progress so they have a high turnover level after about five, six, seven years because people say 'eh I want to be a brand manager I've been assistant brand manager. I've been doing this for long enough'. and so the incumbents only 32 he's doing a fantastic job or she's doing a fantastic job. so you go to Mars or you go to Petfoods or you go to Tesco, well not Tescos because it's retailing you go to some other big consumer goods manufacturers or you do what I did and decide in actual fact it's alright all this frivolity of marketing toilet soaps and what have you but I think I'd like to get into something a big more technical which is what I did but getting back to your question when you leave [large consumer products company] you leave with a training that has made you into some kind of person and you may not easily because I'm finding it difficult now to be able to say I learned this, this, this and this because it's sublime or subliminal.

Jean: More of a culture thing?

Paul: It's a culture thing you come out after five years of thinking you've been with one of the best marketing companies in the world which is as good as going to a business school which it was in those years but you don't sort off tot those things up on a sheet of paper and say boom, boom, boom, boom. boom. well I didn't anyway, but you cannot not have some of it engrained into you. But I think the only thing, well not the only thing apart from those things whatever they are I think the real thing is that business of you've to replace 30% of your products every three years and that to me is one of the things carved in stone above the doorway to this business because I really get scared of the product life cycle turning down and there's nothing in the cupboard I really do get scared about that you know I think that if you allow that to happen then what you're really saying to yourself is that you don't care about this business anymore and you don't care about being in business and you're going to get out of it. because that is in fact what you are doing. Other than that I think that. I don't think that anything else came up that I think...The other thing you need to do or be with this entrepreneur bit. and it's a heck of a word is that, and I'm not really even sure what it says in the dictionary but I think that you also need to be able to get through difficult times I think you need to be able to because difficult times hit you once a

month, once every six months but they hit every business like that, but in huge companies you've got departments who deal with all these things and people go into a huddle and say how are we going to get through this, what are we going to do about this and you've got the sort off collective battalion, regiment team bonding scenario that can get you through that because you ain't on your own guys you know but I think that the entrepreneur particularly in a company which we touched on earlier the size of an SME the size of this, hasn't got that so you have to be able to get through that yourself.

Jean: Because you are mostly by yourself...

Paul: Yeah, and I think I've done a lot of things since I was a child like rock climbing, sailing boats, particularly sailing boats, not racing boats around buoys, but sailing boats to distant islands and rushing up hills and I think and I still do it every year, and I think that has helped to instil in me some kind of, I don't know what the word is here, some kind of inner keep, where if you're on a sailing boat and there's six or seven of us going and it's forty odd foot, so it's quite big and you know you can get caught out in big seas and big winds particularly in Ireland and Scotland where we go and I've been a skipper for twenty years so you have a sense of responsibility for everyone...

Jean: Skipper is that the ....

Paul: Captain or whatever you want to call it, skipper on a small boat, captain on a big boat I think that you get into, or you can get into potentially very difficult situations, and you can get practically into very difficult situations and I think that you've got to be able get through that one way or another without...

Jean: So maybe that's helped...

Paul: Yeah I think it has helped because you think you know 'God what a mess this is', you know, 'but it's not as bad as that'. If you get through the rainy days there's one thing that happens after a rainy day the sun comes out so you've just got to...

Jean: Plough on? So is that why you've got the sailing things on the wall?

Paul: Well it's not like [employee's] things in there to remind her that she has to be inspired.

Jean: But maybe it reminds you of previous things you've done?

Paul: I could look at that and say God look at the state of that, that's Cape Horn in the background gee whiz that's Francis Chichester

the guy was in his 70s he had been diagnosed with cancer and he sailed round the world in 'Gypsy Moth' I mean God what the hells is facing me would I rather be on that you know?

Jean: Do you actually do that really?

Paul: I probably have done maybe three times in fifteen years...

Jean: I suppose it reminds you as well as what you've previously done?

Paul: Yeah the rest of it is just, is just we frame things to keep them you know that's a patent (pointing at framed document on wall) a shared patent with [another company].

Jean: yeah for the [new product] was it?

Paul: Yes, that's the original certificate of indemnity of the original business in 1865 if we didn't frame them and stick them on a wall we wouldn't know where they where.

Jean: It's nice to see them as well because it gives some history to the company...what's that up there (pointing to device on wall)?

Paul: That's a barograph, that's the meteorological bit in me that is a air pressure you know say it's high pressure or low pressure that's what that measures...(talks about humidity measures for a few minutes)....this is air pressure and the pressure is rising because this morning I put that cursor on the thing maybe it was yesterday and it's gone up substantially...so we're heading for better weather...that actually is not a concession to my meteorology no it was on the office wall fifteen, twenty years ago, I don't know who brought it but I brought it with me.

Jean: Do you think it's important to leave something behind for a legacy or would you be happy to sell it and move on?

Paul: That actually is another very complex question that, and the answers to that question I find change fairly frequently in me, I used to think, yeah first of all I think it's right to try and leave a legacy because what you're saying if you don't leave a legacy is that the business is in rat order at the point where you're leaving it for whatever reason you're leaving it and I certainly don't want that, I used to think that I would pass it on to a son but I've one son who lives in Edinburgh who doesn't want to know and the other son is twelve who thinks he wants it but I'm not sure. The problems of running a manufacturing business these days are many and it's actually increasingly less fun, because the international obligations, international legislation, the bureaucracy is quite overbearing at times and I think if you're quite bright and I think [his son] is reasonably bright, then I think there are better

ways of making money, if you take an example I think if I could wind the clock back and say if you weren't in industry what would you do I'd be a lawyer because I quite like the analytical side of things, and I quite like the planning the way through them and I quite like the sort off confrontational thing of the courtroom the debating bit and I think well if I was a lawyer I could charge a lot of money for fees, I don't have to employ anybody other than maybe a secretary or two, I don't have stocks, I don't have to buy things...life is so much simpler I would not contribute as much to the economy but they're making it so difficult these days to be a manufacturer why should I bother, they're making it so difficult to employ people...

(Tape ends, speaks about employing people, law suits from employees, protecting their welfare for a few more minutes then over)

END

11.5 ANALYSIS OF CASES: CODING PROTOCOL

CASE STUDY 1 – Acting as if: The Corporate Entrepreneur

HIGHER-LEVEL CODES	SUBSIDARY CODES
• Seeing Possibilities: Relational Dimensions	• External environment impacts on business creation • Creation of business through relational discussion • Strategy dependent on context • Developing strategy as rhetorical process • Use of arguments in wider context
• The Persuasiveness of Visual Surroundings	• Visual surroundings used to create certain meanings • Understanding other's expectations of the visual • Tacit and non-verbal nature of visual surroundings • Aligning visual and verbal meanings • Importance of managing other's expectations
• Making Meaning through Imaginative Forms	• Use of journey metaphor • Working as system • Using visual imagery to "make" and "give" meaning • Using surroundings as a rhetorical tool

CASE STUDY 2 – Overcoming Complexity: The "Techie" Entrepreneur

HIGHER-LEVEL CODES	SUBSIDARY CODES
• Contextualising Opportunity Recognition	• Business creation linked to social and economic context • Success of activities related/dependent on conditions in external environment • Importance of communal rather than individual goals
• Engaging Others in Complex Projects	• Influencing others through effective arguing and rhetorical activity • Importance of aesthetics in product development • Problems caused by non-visual nature of software products • Importance of visual surroundings in creating meaning/aligning visual and verbal
• Communal and Linguistic Activities	• Developing understandings through rhetorical and communal activities • Organising thoughts through discursive process • Visualising rhetorical processes • Working as system

CASE STUDY 3 – Playing the Part: "Pit-lad" or Entrepreneur

HIGHER-LEVEL CODES	SUBSIDARY CODES
• Relational Aspects of Venture Creation	• External environment impacts of venture creation • Business creation as collective action • Embodied relational aspects "the face" • Engaging others through rhetorical activity
• Visual and Verbal Persuasion	• Importance of "talk" in persuading and engaging others • Ability to "perform" – use of theatre based metaphor • Visual surroundings need to align with verbal meanings • Using "tools" to help disguise lack of ability • Self constructed through interaction
• Communal and Relational Achievements	• Business success seen as communal achievement • Collective activity/working as system • Importance of communal rather than individual goals • Little hierarchy - visually represented through working "in and amongst" staff • Visually and spatially representing entrepreneurs as the "other"