Restorying the Musician as Entrepreneur: A Research Note

Zuleika Beaven   University of Winchester, UK
                                                          zuleika.beaven@winchester.ac.uk

Robert N. Jerrard   Birmingham City University, UK
                                                          bob.jerrard@bcu.ac.uk

Introduction

These notes reflect on the processes involved in restorying within the author's research into nascent musician-entrepreneurs. The study is described prior to a discussion of restorying.

Restorying, as a precise form of qualitative research fits well with epistemological shifts in the study of entrepreneurship towards examination of the lived experience within an interpretivist framework (Cope, 2005). As Polkinghorne (2007) argues, such research is difficult because of the complex, dynamic and multi-layered nature of phenomena. Narrative inquiry offers a more natural entry into rich new worlds and restorying a means of analysing and presenting the individual narratives involved.

Restorying is the retelling of stories – about ourselves and about others. Kenyon and Randall (1997) describe it as the "literary process of re-composing the stores we have 'made up' about who we are, where we come from and where we are headed". The metaphor of a river accurately illustrates the constantly changing nature of our lifestories as they unfold, both through time and through re-viewing of past events. This process can have multiple applications, including the therapeutic, although restorying is used here as a device (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003) that usefully represents a phase of narrative data analysis (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

It is the process of analysing raw data to form a new story, the river journey from narrative shared with the researcher to narrative reported by the researcher (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). This involves the researcher as agent in the drawing out of stories from participants (Mishler, 2004), followed by the retelling of the stories told to them, where such stories are restructured, contextualised or prepared for different audiences (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003). Ollerenshaw and Cresswell (2002) note that stories told by participants in research are often unstructured and argue that the restorying process should involve giving a logical, often chronological sequence to the retold rendition, in a manner which will demonstrate a causal link between ideas and events. For Boje (2008), it is a means of exploring a dialogic 'multi-story' reality, which recognises both the role of the dominant or accepted story and the interrelation between big and small stories told within communities (Boje, 2001).

The researcher and participant have differentiated roles in the restorying process. Ollerenshaw and Cresswell (2002) advocate collaboration with the participant to narrow the gap between the "narrative told" and the "narrative reported", so

that the participant has a role in the restorying process. However, Mulholland and Wallace (2003) suggest that in demonstrating that different tellings may contain both the participant views and the theoretical contextualisation, the narrative reported is actually the narrative of the researcher. This suggests that restorying allows synergy between the data gathering and analytical processes within research.

Account of the Musician-Entrepreneur project

Despite sharing differing perspectives only the experience of the musician-entrepreneur project is related here, as the researcher's story working within a university business school. The aim of the research is to observe and explore the relationship between musician identity and entrepreneurial identity during the nascent entrepreneurship process.

The researcher recruited 12 music students who intended to set up, or were in the early stages of setting up, music-related ventures such as ensembles, bands, agencies and education projects. Recruitment was from music performance undergraduate courses; participants had to meet criteria for inclusion developed by the researcher. This allowed for the categorisation of the participants as 'musician-entrepreneurs', although from the outset this was a novel and problematic label for some of the participants. Most accounted for themselves as musicians and not as entrepreneurs.

Data gathering took 2 years through a series of face- to-face unstructured interviews held at six-monthly intervals. These sought to uncover the participants' experience of the nascent entrepreneurship process. This real-time approach allowed the detailed telling and retelling of stories of entrepreneurial nascency as they were unfolding – or, as it was explained to participants, capturing the real-time 'messiness' and complexity of the process of setting up a business. It supported exploration of perceived successes and failures, and of the participants' experience of ventures which 'fizzled out' or failed during the study.

At each unstructured interview, participants were invited to bring their story up to date since the last meeting. The researcher acted as an agent eliciting details of critical points or processes, and how the participant had responded to these. For example, during their accounts, they could be asked how they had been balancing long-term life goals with the more immediate need to make a living, or if there had been conflicts between ensemble members related to such goals. These questions often led to extended stories involving critical points and the decisions surrounding them. Towards the end of each discussion, participants were encouraged to set out their expectations for the following 6 months – before the next meeting – and identity what critical issues they expected to encounter. The sequenced meetings provided a framework for regular reflection by the participants where the researcher might invite [or encourage] them to retell a story recounted from a meeting 6 months earlier, supporting the development of a rich and multi-faceted account. Discussion of the initiatives or ventures which had not developed as expected, including those that had either 'fizzled out' or failed, was an important part of this discussion and often needed to be drawn out by the researcher. These accounts, in particular, were not always fully storied at their initial telling. Narratives were not easily rejected at this stage, however, as stories were gathered and ethically built by the researcher in an iterative process of gathering, reflecting and further gathering [including retelling by participants].

The novel nature of the original participant stories is noteworthy. They naturally told the researcher rich stories about their musician lives – about gigs played, auditions taken, workshops led, concerts promoted, new work developed, successful collaborations or fallings out with band members - and occasionally they would tell rather dull stories about tax returns or similar, because they thought that was what the researcher was really interested in. In some cases, they would also tell stories about other musicians or a musical establishment, about feeling different or trying to find their own place in a very competitive world. This was particularly true of the classically-trained musicians who had stepped away from the path that they thought was expected of them by their teachers: entering competitions and pursuing an orchestral career. Some explained their self-concept in creative terms, and talked about which aspects of their musicianship were creative and which were not. They sometimes broke off from the stories of their musical life to query if this is what the researcher was interested in and to ask if there were other things the researcher wanted to know about instead.

The process of selecting and building stories during the analysis phase was complex. Care was taken not to reduce the data to abstract categories but instead the researcher drew on the original testimonies in context to build restoried accounts of creative entrepreneurships. These were based around entrepreneurial activities such as opportunity recognition and exploitation, and the details of resources for their ventures, building a market, building their brand by maintain the integrity of their product and so forth. These accounts benefitted from a receptive researcher with an interest in entrepreneurship and a flexible research design.

Discussion of the challenges of restorying

So far this account suggests a series of challenges for the researcher: the nature of the narrative and the relationship between dominant and non-dominant stories, the effect this has on the process of telling and retelling, and the 'ownership' of stories.

The nature of the narratives told and untold could not be separated from the personal understanding the participants had of the 'dominant' stories. A number of dominant cultural stories of entrepreneurship include that of the self-made man, the crusader, the fighter, the ambitious and the successful (Cohen & Musson, 2000; Down & Warren, 2008; Nicholson & Anderson, 2005) dedicated to their business and were driven in part, by material gain. The grand narrative of the musician is of the dangerous, other-worldly or wild figure (Leppert, 2004), where creativity is connoted with genius. Where do stories of musician enterprise fit with these dominant stories? Can these different stories be bridged? Current popular culture provides the figure of Simon Cowell, but – as has been noted by participants – he is a music entrepreneur and not a musician. Cowell was invoked in discussion as the 'anti-role model', the antithesis of the musician-entrepreneur.

Within the context of separate dominant stories of musicianship and entrepreneurship, musician-entrepreneurship presents a novel narrative. This raises the questions, what is the story and whose story is it? Are the accounts of either entrepreneurs who are musicians, or of musicians who are entrepreneurs? Would the participants recognise or even accept the retold stories? The research has shown a discordance between novel and dominant stories. Not only did participants struggle with the notion of themselves as musician-entrepreneurs, but some recognised a sense of 'otherness': from the perspective of the entrepreneur, that musician-entrepreneurs are not 'real' entrepreneurs and from the perspective of musicians, that they may not be behaving as musicians should. This interplay between dominant and other narratives had some affect on the stories the participants told. Boje (2008) argues that such interplay allows a dialogue that accentuates the storytelling, and the experience of this study was that, in some cases, it actually shaped the account given by participants. The misunderstanding by the participants, for example, of the nature of entrepreneurship (and therefore, of the scope of the study) drawn from the dominant narrative had two effects: it led to the telling [and further telling] of some stories that participant thought the researcher wanted to hear, and to other stories which were constructed to demonstrate a rejection of their dominant narrative.

The lens of the researcher had an effect on the restorying process through the analysis of the stories told by the participants. During analysis, the researcher constructed stories from the data which told of ventures, of entrepreneurship and of the musicians as entrepreneurs. Aspects of the stories retold by the researcher where not familiar to the participants, to some they may even have seemed dishonest or appropriated. So despite the collaboration between researcher and participants in the restorying process (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), the construction of the concept of musician-entrepreneurship was inevitably the researcher's. The restoried accounts fitted the researcher's narrative of musician-entrepreneurship, but in acknowledging the testimony of the participants, the original context was accurately maintained in the retelling.

Conclusion

Musician entrepreneurship does not sit comfortably the accepted stories of either entrepreneurs or musicians. This Special Edition looks at restorying entrepreneurship, but the challenge for this study is that the stories told by the musicians are not stories of entrepreneurship, and in constructing a novel narrative of the musician-entrepreneur, the perspective of the participants in the original telling cannot be ignored. Their sense of separation from what they see as entrepreneurship (which could be argued to be as the result of the historic restorying of musician-entrepreneurship to fit an economic model) locates their stories in the framework of the musician. The researcher, therefore, has a responsibility to acknowledge the original telling of the data and of the factors that have influence the restorying process. The accuracy of participant stories in such a complex area was related more closely to their ownership than to the research methods applied.

In acknowledging this complexity, we argue that the process of restorying is an ethically based, often participatory one where a narrative is acknowledged to be retold by the researcher from original testimony, as opposed to being scientifically reduced and 'explained'. This is grown-up qualitative research which emphasises an accurate truth to the original over analytical patronage.

References

Boje, D. M. (2001). Narrative methods for organizational and communication research. London: Sage.

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organization*. London: Sage.

Cohen, L., & Musson, G. (2000). Entrepreneurial Identities: reflections from two case studies. *Organization, 7*(1), 31-48.

Collison, C., & Mackenzie, A. (1999). The power of story in organisations. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 11*(1), 38-40.

Cope, J. (2005). Researching Entrepreneurship Through Phenomenological Enquiry. *International Small Business Journal, 23*(2), 163-189.

Denning, S. (2006). Effective storytelling: strategic business narrative techniques. *Strategy & Leadership, 34*(1), 42-48.

Denning, S. (2008). Stories in the Workplace. *HRMagazine, 53*(9), 129-130, 132.

Down, S., & Warren, L. (2008). Constructing narratives of enterprise: cliches and entrepreneurial self-identity. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research, 14*(1), 4-23.

Driscoll, C., & McKee, M. (2007). Restorying a Culture of Ethical and Spiritual Values: A Role for Leader Storytelling. *Journal of Business Ethics, 73*(2), 205-217.

Ford, J. D., Ford, L. W., & McNamara, R. T. (2002). Resistance and the background conversations of change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 15*(2), 105 - 121.

Grisham, T. (2006). Metaphor, poetry, storytelling and cross-cultural leadership. *Management Decision, 44*(4), 486-503.

Harris, J., & Barnes, B. K. (2006). Leadership storytelling. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 38*(7), 350-353.

Kenyon, G. M., & Randall, W. L. (1997). Restorying Our Lives: Personal Growth Through Autobiographical Reflection. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Langer, R., & Thorup, S. (2006). Building trust in times of crisis: Storytelling and change communication in an airline company. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 11*(4), 371-390.

Leppert, R. (2004). The Musician of the Imagination. In W. Weber (Ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur 1700-1914: managers, charlatans and idealists*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Mishler, E. (2004). Historians of the Self: Restorying Lives, Revising Identities. *Research in Human Development, 1*(1), 101-121.

Mulholland, J., & Wallace, J. (2003). Strength, Sharing and Service: restorying and the legitimation of research texts. *British Educational Research Journal, 29*(1), 5-23.

Nicholson, L., & Anderson, A. R. (2005). News and Nuances of the Entrepreneurial Myth and Metaphor: Linguistic games in entrepreneurial sense-making and sense-giving. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 29*(2), 153-172.

Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(3), 329-347.

Ooi, C.-S. (2002). Persuasive histories: Decentering, recentering and the emotional crafting of the past. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 15*(6), 606 - 621.

Pandey, J., & Tewary, N. B. (1979). Locus of control and achievement values of entrepreneurs. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 52*(2), 107-111.

Parry, K. W. (2008). Viewing the Leadership Narrative through Alternate Lenses: An Autoethnographic Investigation. *Management Revue, 19*(1/2), 126-147.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity Issues in Narrative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(4), 471-486.

Prasad, P. (2005). Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharp.

Warren, L., & Smith, D. R. (2009). Special Issue on: "Restorying entrepreneurship in a changing world", from http://www.peaceaware.com/tamara/calls/call%20restorying%20entreprenurship.htm

Yolles, M. (2007). The dynamics of narrative and antenarrative and their relation to story. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 20*(1), 74-94.