



Entrepreneurial Myths: Using Biographies and (Ante)Narrative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract. This paper reports the results of an experiment in the use of (ante)narrative research methods to analyze entrepreneurial biographies in order to help students develop the kind of thinking that is entrepreneurial. The paper is a contribution to a call by Kirby (2004) for entrepreneurship education to focus more on stimulating in students the awareness of and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. In other words: the entrepreneurship experience should be added to the what-and-how question. As well, a more reflective, critical attitude is called for by Rae (1997). The experiment conducted aims to incorporate both these calls. The experiment's set-up is explained, as well as (ante)narrative as an approach and research methodology.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, narratives, story, myth, entrepreneurship education.

1. Introduction

This paper reports the results of an experiment in the use of (ante)narrative research methods to analyze entrepreneurial biographies in order to help students develop the kind of thinking that is entrepreneurial. Whereas a classical entrepreneurship course educates *about* entrepreneurship and enterprise (Kirby, 2004), the experimental course presented in this paper aims to teach *for* entrepreneurship. A course about entrepreneurship will typically make sure that “in 14 chapters and 450 pages, the student learns about the entrepreneurial process, opportunity recognition, entry strategies, market opportunities and marketing, creating a successful business plan, financial projections, venture capital, debt and other forms of financing, external assistance for start-ups and small business, legal and tax issues, intellectual property, franchising, harvesting, [and] entrepreneurship economics.” (p. 514). These skills, according to Rae (1997) are “essential but not sufficient to make a successful entrepreneur.” (p. 199). In addition to learning about entrepreneurship, the participant should learn

1. We thank Marco van Gelderen for his enthusiasm and ideas concerning the original concept. We thank Rene Brohm and Irene Lammers as well as the anonymous referees for their useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

for entrepreneurship. By learning for entrepreneurship we mean that we want to make students (more) enthusiastic about entrepreneurship as a career option and we want to appeal to and develop the kind of thinking that is intuitive, lateral and unconventional. According to Kirby (2004) it is precisely this type of thinking the entrepreneur needs. Or, as Chia (1996) phrases it, business schools need to weaken the thought processes so as to encourage and stimulate the entrepreneurial imagination. Imaginative, lateral and unconventional thinking implies realizing that there is more than one 'truth', more than one 'right' answer. A multi-voiced or critical perspective is expected to stimulate such thinking (see Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) on narrative thinking, in the next paragraph). The means by which we want to achieve this in the experimental course (introduced and discussed in this paper) is the entrepreneurial story.

Every once in a while someone interrupts the flow of experience and asks you to give an account of what is going on. Your mind races, experiences come to mind, a plot thickens, and you begin to speak, and a story is told. You are living experiences before narrating it, before someone requires you to provide a story with the coherence of beginning, middle, or ending. And then it is out there, but you know it is only one way to tell the story.

(Boje, 2001)

It is not the whole story, and the story never ends. The creator of the story goes on experiencing and, if asked, narrating the story. But the story keeps unraveling, keeps getting "restored" (Boje's term). In this experiment, biographies of famous entrepreneurs are used. The reason biographies have been chosen is their accessibility and the fact that they appeal to students (and not only to students; these entrepreneurial biographies are quite popular and tend to sell well). According to Phillips (1995), biographies and other forms of 'narrative fiction' can help motivate students to learn the theories in classroom settings. He states that "while we may find our models and theories of organization intrinsically interesting and believe that they are tremendously useful for our students, we may also find it is difficult to motivate our students to be equally enthusiastic." (Phillips, 1995, p. 635) The biography can mediate between the abstract organizational analysis and the subjective world within which the student lives.

The biographies can be seen as 'the' story the author has collected and put down to paper to be read by a diverse public. But it is not the whole story. In some occasions the story has been told from different perspectives, with different voices, but still they are never conclusive. The students were asked to find stories that were left out, to discern the author's voice from other voices. Apart from never being conclusive, there is another aspect to these biographies: they have become reified, i.e. taken for granted by their audience. They are read to be 'the' story, the way it happened, the 'real' account of events, or at least as complete as

they could be. They appeal to the universal consensual validation on entrepreneurship: they appeal to and draw from the general understanding of entrepreneurship. In other words: they contain entrepreneurial *myths*, for myths portray “popular ideas on natural or social phenomena” (according to the Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary, 1991).

Finding stories that are left out and questioning the taken-for-granted ness of the biographies are instrumental in the quest for a more multi-faceted picture of entrepreneurship. The students’ exposure to stories of entrepreneurship was expected to make them more aware of and enthusiastic about entrepreneurship because of the stories’ portrayal of the entrepreneur’s life-world.

An (ante)narrative approach and (ante)narrative research methods (Sections 2 and 3) provide a framework that is suitable for ‘teasing out’ other possible accounts of the same events thus providing students with a multi-voiced perspective. In Section 4 we will provide our reader with background on the experiment’s content, set-up and context. In Section 5 we will present the students’ conclusions. This will be followed by an extensive evaluation of whether or not the learning goals have been achieved and the lessons we as authors have learned in teaching the course and evaluating the experiment.

2. Narrative, Antenarrative and Myth

Narrative – or ‘narratology’ – emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a way of studying primarily fictional literature. Since then, the field has changed considerably. Nowadays, the study of narratives not only applies to the literary and linguistic area; it has been adopted by all sorts of disciplines related to the human sciences as a means through which social and cultural life comes into being. Just as the field of organization studies has embraced narrative as an approach to and methodology for studying organizational phenomena, so too has the field of entrepreneurship (for example: Smith, 2002, Hytti, 2003). Actually, at present, there is “scarcely an area of qualitative organization research in which stories and storytelling have not been used as part of the methodology” (Gabriel, 2004). This interest dates from the last fifteen years or so. Stories are used in organization theory research in order to understand organizational politics and culture for example. Narratives in an organizational context can also be seen as a central form of expression of organizational culture and as such an important vehicle for socialization. As well, management gurus and consultants embrace the concept of stories as a professional skill of the contemporary manager. Stories are for example used in managing change and overcoming resistances (Dunford and Jones, 2000). Good stories educate, inspire, indoctrinate and convince (Gabriel, 1991). Narratives are on the one hand an approach to studying (social) phenomena – such as organizations, entrepreneurship etc. – and on the other hand a source of analysis in themselves (narratives as object of study, as data). In this

paper, both aspects of narrative will be employed as both we as instructors and the students conduct a narrative analysis of narratives.

As far as the field of entrepreneurship studies is concerned, the research using narrative as (part of the) methodology is at present not *yet* as plentiful as the field of organization studies (Smith, 2002).

Narrative provides a special kind of approach to studying certain phenomena; the narrative approach does not comply with the usual 'logico-scientific' (Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) on Bruner's (1986) work) type of research. The logico-scientific approach has one main objective: to discover the truth. It tries to do this by means of empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypotheses. Central to this are sound arguments, tight analyses and reason. Key characteristics include: theory-driven ness, categorical representation, generalisability, abstraction, de-contextualization and consistency. The narrative approach on the other hand is essentially meaning centred. Key characteristics of the narrative approach include association, particularity, context sensitivity and paradox (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001).

A narrative or story in its broadest sense is anything told or recounted, by an individual, group of individuals, organization etc. Narratives and stories can take many forms. They can be oral or written (even filmed, according to Linde, 2001), fictional or non-fictional. A story is one of the basic means of humans to organize events and facts in such a way that they make sense (Van Eeten et al 1996); stories are sense making devices. What makes a story a story and not just an account of events and facts is a *sequence of events*, connected by a *plot* (for example: Van Eeten et al, 1996, Czarniawska, 1998). The sequence of events is usually characterized by a beginning-middle-end structure, and there is always some kind of transformation. The plot moulds the story into a meaningful whole (Czarniawska, 1998). Polkinghorne (1988) states that stories contain 'narrative meaning', the stories reveal how authors make sense of something, in other words, how the author organizes elements of awareness into meaningful episodes. Pentland (1999) refers to the author as the 'narrative voice': a story varies depending on who is doing the telling. People trying to make sense of something reduce 'equivocality' (Weick, 1995) till reaching a tolerable level of it. It is in human nature to try and make the incoherent coherent. That is what plot does to a story. One of the means to do this is chronology (time sequence); another one is moral positioning (who or what is good? Who or what is bad?); and yet another one is causality (A automatically leads to B). Whatever strategy used, the plot is *put* in the story (Czarniawska, 1998). Boje (2001) therefore makes a distinction between antenarrative, story and narrative: the antenarrative is a 'pre-narrative', a story that is 'not yet'. Antenarratives are fragmented, non-linear, incoherent and 'unplotted'. According to Boje, story is the account of incidents and events as they happened, but narrative comes after and adds more plot and tighter coherence than 'spontaneously' present in the story. Narrative is retrospective; it is a finished or concluded story. This is also what Brockmeier (2001) refers to by

‘the retrospective teleology’ of life narratives: a life, if told in hindsight, seems to have been lived towards a goal, a ‘telos’. Antenarrative comes before story and narrative comes after story.

Table 1: Story, narrative and antenarrative

Antenarrative	Story	Narrative
Fragments of story, incoherence, no plot.	Account of incidents and events as they happened.	Plotted story (tighter coherence).

The constructing of both story and narrative can – in Boje’s terms – be seen as ‘mythologising’ of the pre-story. Narratives as data and as a method of analysis were chosen for this course because of our intention to ‘uncover’ or ‘tease out’ the myths of entrepreneurship. This aspect of uncovering needs elaboration. ‘Uncovering’ myths is not the same as ‘uncovering the truth’. A narrative is *not* a deception of any kind. Even though a narrative is plotted and plot is a sense making device used to give an account more coherence, it does not make the narrative ‘untrue’. Antenarrative, story and narrative are all seen as *accounts* containing authors’ voices. ‘Uncovering’ the myths (plots pertaining to common understanding) in the entrepreneurial biographies is about finding stories that are left out and about being critical of the taken-for-granted ness of an account. Deconstructing the narrative – or uncovering the myths – then means delivering *more* stories about the same experience(s), the same event(s). And – as well – delivering more, other myths. So, when a narrative is analyzed—as the students in the course ‘Entrepreneurial Myths’ have done – other, new stories emerge.

3. (Ante)Narrative Research Methods

There are many ways to analyze narratives, some of them can be called traditional (i.e. content analysis), some of them are ‘in-between’ methods (narrative structures, i.e. plots, roles etc.) and others are ‘critical’ methods. These latter methods all revolve around some way of deconstruction. To deconstruct is to analyze the relations between the dualities in stories (Boje, 1995). Examples of dualities include: a happy as well as a dark side, central and marginal stories, essential and inessential stories. Deconstruction ‘reveals’ how one side of the story masks other sides, since there is no such thing as ‘the’ version of a story. When deconstructing, the story *elements* remain the same, however the *readings* are different. In order to be able to deconstruct a dominant story, one needs to collect official accounts as well as the subversive stories (another side of the same story) and other (outsider) stories. Deconstruction analysis (Boje, 2001) consists of 8 possible activities: duality search (dichotomies like male domination etc.), reinterpreting the hierarchy (the dominant interpretation is marginalized), find

rebel voices, reversing the story (by “putting the bottom on top, the marginal in control, or the back stage up front”, Boje, 2001, p. 21), denying the plot (changing the plot from romantic to tragic, for example), find the exception, trace what is between the lines and – the most important step – resituate all these, for the aim of deconstruction is a resituation of the narrative so that there are no more ‘centres’ that marginalize or exclude.

Another method to deconstruct a narrative – and obtain an antenarrative proposition – is microstoria analysis. From this perspective, a narrative is said to contain a – so to speak – ‘grand’ narrative: the dominant story line or story interpretation, but will contain ‘micro’ stories as well. These micro stories are exceptions to the grand narrative. Sometimes they are explicit in the story (a reference to another possible interpretation), sometimes implicit. Micro stories are what appear to be ‘minor details’. If put together, they show an altogether different picture than the grand narrative.

In general, students in our experimental course could choose from the total range of narrative analysis methods: the traditional as well as the critical, antenarrative way of analyzing text. Their source of data is the narrative (the biography they have chosen), the topic is entrepreneurship, and the research question can be plentiful. More about the course’s set-up can be read in the next paragraph.

4. The Experiment’s Content, Set-Up and Context

The experimental course ‘Entrepreneurial Myths’ is an optional course for senior business students. All of the optional courses are open to a limited, small number of students and an important aspect is conducting a self-supporting research project. Students can choose among a number of courses with different subjects and titles (in the period during which this specific course was taught, students could choose from as many as 11 courses with subjects such as ‘Human Resource Development as competitive advantage’, ‘Change Management’, ‘Electronic Human Resource Management’, ‘Strategic Management’ and ‘Electronic Government’. There was one other course featuring entrepreneurship).

The students in the ‘Entrepreneurial Myths’ course have to 1. form small groups (3-4 students), 2. choose a biography (as a group), 3. read the book, 4. write an initial analysis of the book (individual), 5. form their own research question (as a group), 6. choose a (narrative) method of research (as a group), 7. conduct the analysis (as a group), 8. hand in a (group) paper with the results and 9. hand in an individual reflection on the course.

The students chose their own book, as a team. The rationale behind this was that their own interest and curiosity were very important ingredients if this course was to inspire them. A list of possible books was provided, but any additional title was welcomed. The initial analysis of the book is meant as a means to get the

students in a more evaluative frame of mind when reflecting on what they have read, at the same time providing the lecturer with a good possibility to differentiate between the students' stories before and after the analysis. The course manual described the initial analysis as follows: what stood out in this book for you? What did you find 'hard to believe', i.e. what made you skeptical? What did you like? Students are asked to include example passages of the book.

Narrative methods of research are new to these students who have been brought up in the tradition of quantitative research, having to proof some beforehand-conceived statement or answer a question with the preferred conclusion in mind. To them, narrative analysis is searching, working with no plan. An introductory class and initial literature is provided, as well as examples of narrative research carried out by various researchers. This introductory class is given after the students have first read the book and handed in their initial analysis.

5. An Overview of the Students' Conclusions

The experiment discussed in this article was conducted in the spring of 2003. The biography chosen by the students was: "Heineken, a life in the brewery" by B. Smit (1996). For those readers who do not know Heineken: he was a successor in the Heineken beer brewery firm, one of the largest in the Netherlands and a well-known, illustrious public figure. As far as the narrative analysis methods are concerned, two teams chose a critical method and one team chose a more traditional method (content analysis).

The 'traditional' team had the following research question: "What influence did Heineken's personality have on the Heineken Company?" They based their research on the work of Kisfalvi (2002). She explored the relationship of strategic decisions and priorities in entrepreneurial firms and the entrepreneur's character as expressed through the associated life issues ('thorny' issues and experiences). Kisfalvi based her choice on the psychodynamic school of thought, where the individual's early experiences are seen as shaping their characters and life issues are played out in both their personal and professional life. The categories (the entrepreneur's life issues and the strategic orientations of the firm over time) were divided in a number of themes relevant to the data. For Heineken (according to this team), life issues included the following categories: survival, pleasure, manipulation and creativity. Strategic priorities included: marketing, European beer market, control, brewery, innovation and chances. By counting the number of times the themes were discussed in the book and relating them to each other they found weaker and stronger themes and weaker and stronger relationships between the life/personality issues and the company's strategic priorities (Table 2).

Table 2: The relationship between strategic priorities and life issues of Heineken according to team 1.

	Survival	Pleasure	Manipulation	Creativity
Marketing	0	0	++	++
European market	0	0	+	0
Control	0	0	++	0
Brewery	0	0	0	0
Innovation	0	0	++	+
Chances	0	0	0	0

Horizontal axis: life issues. Vertical axis: strategic priorities. 0=no influence, +=a little influence, ++=a strong influence

Based on the findings as presented in Table 2, this team posited that in the biography, no direct connection between the life issues ‘survival’ and ‘pleasure’ and the strategic priorities of Heineken could be found. At the same time, they concluded that Heineken’s manipulative personality was of influence on the company’s marketing policy, its expansion on the European beer market and its innovation. Heineken’s creativity influenced the marketing policy and innovation.

According to this team, their analysis did nothing to ‘break’ the Heineken myth. Evidently, their methodology (categorizing the themes *as proffered by* the biography without questioning their possible one-sidedness or taken-for-grantedness) does not reveal mythical qualities just like that. Being creative and manipulative form *supposed* traits of Heineken. In order to find out whether these are actually traits of a mythological caliber, they should be questioned.

And that is what the second ‘Heineken-team’ did. They had a similar research question: they were interested in how Heineken’s character and charisma influenced the success of the Heineken Company. This second team of students chose to uncover the microstoria. The micro stories were complemented by various quotes of the entrepreneur himself, thus presenting the character as expressed by himself and as perceived by others and not constructed into coherence, as the author of the biography did. The microstoria portray:

- a manipulative side, but in relation to humor;
- they show creativity, but of a multifaceted nature;
- they portray Heineken as intimidating, but thoughtful as well.

This team concluded that to many of the micro voices as uncovered by their analysis, Heineken indeed was a charismatic person. People apparently felt

overwhelmed by him. He always made an impression, whether positive or negative.

The third team discussing the Heineken biography chose a bifocal question: the degree of 'tolerance' in the personality as presented by the narrative (to be compared with the grand narrative of the personality) and the deconstruction of the 'presence' of the author in the narrative. They chose Boje's (2001) deconstruction analysis.

What this team did was first filtering the book for all aspects connected with Heineken's character, then show the character as dominantly put down in the narrative, and then search for all exceptions to this dominant character description. After this they searched for the contradictions (rebel voices) and dualities. Then they replaced character traits to see if the dominant narrative would still 'hold' ('reversing the story'). These steps led to the margin in the personality as well as an overview of the author's point of view in the story. They showed that Heineken's proclaimed extravagance, sense of humor, creativity/innovative side, and vulgarity showed significant tolerance. These traits were exactly the traits the author of the story encountered in some (negative) way in her contacts with Heineken, so these items can also very well be indicating the 'color' of her writing, i.e. her presence in the biography.

These are the teams' conclusions concerning the Heineken-myths and their analyses. Now we will move on to the next section where we will discuss the students' interpretations, what they have learned, the usefulness of the chosen methods, whether the students have learned *for* entrepreneurship and whether the demystification of stories about entrepreneurs made the choice of an entrepreneurial career more attractive to the students.

6. Results and Evaluation of the Entrepreneurial Myths Course

Let us start by restating the aim of the experiment which is providing students with a heterogeneous picture of entrepreneurship and stimulating in them the awareness of and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. Biographies are a way to access the entrepreneur's life-world, but the story provided by the biography is not conclusive.

In evaluating this experiment we should look at whether the students have come to think differently, more evaluative and 'critical' (realizing that there is more than one 'truth') and whether they have become more enthusiastic about entrepreneurship. In other words: did this course indeed make a contribution to students learning *for* entrepreneurship? Apart from that we will include a more general evaluation: what did we learn from this experiment? And how can it be improved?

The experiment was evaluated in two ways: by comparing the initial analysis and the individual reflection and by a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained

the following questions: 1. Do you think you will ever start your own company? 2. Why (not)? 3. What, according to you, is entrepreneurship? 4. Who, according to you, is a successful entrepreneur? 5. Why? The questionnaire was filled in before and after the course. The after-questionnaire contained questions about the course in itself and possible suggestions for its improvement.

The first question we are going to answer in this evaluation section is: Did the students become more enthusiastic about entrepreneurship as a career option? In other words: do entrepreneurial biographies inspire business students as to their entrepreneurial inclination? The results of the questionnaire (11 students, all male) show that – before as well as after the course – *all* students claim they want to start their own company in the future; one of them has even already started. It appears that they already had an above average interest in entrepreneurship (and were most probably triggered by the course's title containing the term 'entrepreneurship'). As far as the question if stories in educational settings can indeed inspire/stimulate entrepreneurship is concerned, this course does not provide a clear answer since the students – according to the questionnaire – were already interested in entrepreneurship as a career option and still were after the course. The fact that students were still interested in becoming an entrepreneur after the course does at least suggest that a critical reading of entrepreneurial stories does not alienate the students from entrepreneurship as a career option.

On the other hand, we as teachers of this course observed that the group of students generally consisted of highly motivated, above average students; except for one team. This team was notably less motivated than the other teams. This was so at the beginning and this was still so at the end. So we cannot conclude from this experiment that the course in this set-up is a way to – in general terms – motivate students.

The second question we will answer is whether the students have come to think differently, more evaluative and 'critical' through this experiment. The students' initial analysis and individual reflection (the 'what I have learned' narrative) are the basis for answering this question.

As stated before, the students had no previous experience with narrative analysis. At first they were puzzled by it. To them, narrative analysis was like a journey with no clear destination and it took them some time to get used to this kind of research. In Kirby's (2004) words, the students were more used to the kind of thinking that is focused and systematic, requires hard facts and aims for single conclusions.

In the initial analysis almost all students came up with a summary of the biography they read. Although the assignment for the initial analysis was accompanied by questions such as: what stood out in this book for you? What did you find 'hard to believe', i.e. what made you skeptical? What did you like? and the students were asked to include example passages of the book, a summary was apparently all the students could come up with. Some of them went as far as to describe what did and did not appeal to them in the story. These descriptions were

very much 'face value', i.e. without 'critical' insight: "what amazed me was that he [the entrepreneur] did turn out so successful after all. After all he has been through he definitely deserves recognition", "what I didn't like so much about Heineken as a person is his arrogance", "I did not really like chapter 5 and 9 because in these chapters not so much was told about Heineken's entrepreneurship" etc.

Whereas the 'before'-narrative or initial analysis was dominantly about the students taking the Heineken-narrative at face value, the 'what I have learned'-narrative or individual reflection is dominantly about nuances and differentiations ("after taking a closer look at the book, it appeared to be not quite like that" and "I now have a more balanced understanding of Freddy Heineken"). Dominant storylines or plots are: 'narrative analysis leads to more insight' ("reading more consciously, more thoroughly") and 'I have gained a more critical understanding'. The individual reflection sometimes even takes the form of an 'I have learned so much'-*propaganda*, marginalizing or excluding the 'before'-narrative ("I think that in the future I might take a more critical stance towards any book or newspaper article and not take what has been written for granted" and "I used to take for granted what was written in newspapers and books", implying 'but now I won't make that mistake anymore'). The individual reflections seem to imply that the 'before'-understanding is 'wrong' and the 'after'-understanding is at least 'more right'. What was understood and written before was not as 'true' as what is understood in the after-narrative. An exception is formed by the members of the team that chose the traditional narrative analysis method (content analysis). Their narratives claim that "there has been no real difference in our understanding of the book before and after the analysis", "an analysis such as this one has in itself no true value" and "the Heineken myth has perhaps even become stronger through the analysis". As well, the narratives of the 'traditional' team show more 'centeredness' than the narratives of the other teams ("this, to me, is still the essence of entrepreneurship" and "I perceive taking initiative and risks as essential characteristics of an entrepreneur").

Yet another part of deconstruction is the 'rebel voice', or as Boje (2001) phrases it: who speaks for the trees? The rebel voice in all the students' narratives is Freddy Heineken himself. He is the absentee. What would he have had to say about the conclusions drawn and reflections described by the students; since he is no longer alive, we cannot ask him directly, but the fact remains that in all the students' efforts to collect and present alternative voices, no one has even wondered what he would have had to say about it.

What now can we conclude from all this? What have the students learned? First of all, they have evidently learned to conduct a narrative analysis as well as to read a book thoroughly. But these were only *instrumental* aims of this course. They have gained a more critical understanding of Heineken as an entrepreneur. They have come to question *any* account of what Heineken must have been like as potentially one-sided, too dominant or just simply 'colored'. Through their

analysis they have come to find proof of the actual one-sidedness, dominance or coloredness of a given account. To conclude that they have gained a more critical outlook 'on life' and entrepreneurship in particular might go a bit far; there is still evidence of centeredness and one-sidedness in the students' own accounts, albeit more so in the traditional team than in the other two and less so than in the initial analyses.

And have the students practiced their imagination and intuition, or, as Kirby (2004) phrased it, their lateral thinking? Since the students had no experience with narrative analysis and were brought up in the rigorous, logic-centered type of research, based on sound arguments and tight analyses, they were puzzled by the course's assignment to just pick a biography, 'find' a problem definition to guide them and conduct a narrative analysis. All their accounts narrate of puzzledness, and this was obvious from the face-valuedness of their initial analyses as well. Their researches were journeys where they had to let go of their desire to plan the outcome beforehand and just had to 'go with the flow'. They had to follow their suspicion and hunch instead of hypotheses. To encourage them in this was our most important task as supervisors during the process.

7. Discussion

As far as the general evaluation of the experiment is concerned, we can make the following observations:

- In order to find out if this course set-up makes students more enthusiastic for entrepreneurship, we could consider simply teaching the course far more often (thus collecting a much larger sample) and see if we can find shifts in their intentions. Nevertheless, these are still intentions as provided by the students at that point, during this course. Their answers could just as well be their distant hopes or even attempts at pleasing us as supervisors instead of actual intentions. And at the same time, these intentions might very well never materialize since starting an enterprise depends on so many other factors as well as intention (f.e. Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Tracking the students throughout their life-course for a longer period of time might be a solution.
- In this experiment – the first time that we tried this course format – our approach did include a trial-and-error component. For example, students in this experiment could choose from the total range of narrative analysis methods: the traditional as well as the critical, antenarrative ways of analyzing text. One of our 'ulterior motives' was to see which analysis method would work best. In consecutive courses

we have and will only advise students to conduct an antenarrative, deconstruction-type of analysis in order to fully reach our learning goals.

- In this paper, only one undergraduate ‘Entrepreneurial Myths’ course is discussed. This course was chosen because of 1. the fact that all teams chose the same biography and therefore, a comparison could be made, and 2. the fact that this course’s evaluation provides a clear example of an enhancement of critical insight. This course was taught more often, but not with all teams analyzing the same biography. The evaluation results were not as comparable. Nevertheless, in order to advance our understanding of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship teaching techniques and the content of entrepreneurship education courses, more than one course should be analyzed and compared with other courses.
- Is it possible that while the narrative analysis of entrepreneurial biographies puts some issues to the fore, it simultaneously hides other issues? As can be observed by the problem definitions the students chose, the biography stimulated questions about Heineken as a person, thus focusing on the entrepreneurial *personality*. A biography deals more with personality-related issues than for example the entrepreneurial process. If we would use *autobiographies*, the text could include more background on the entrepreneurial process; how one event leads to another, what decisions are made and why. Another issue – more related with the fact that it is a *narrative* analysis that has to be conducted – concerns the fact that a narrative analysis is about sense making and – in its critical outlook – deconstruction. The fact that it does not and cannot take the biography at face-value means we lose most of the learning effects of the literalness of the facts in the biography. Since this is a course about learning *for* entrepreneurship, it is definitely not *about* entrepreneurship. This is something the narrative analysis of the biography obviously shadows.

In conclusion, in further improving the course, we suggest to use only the antenarrative methods and to use autobiographies. For evaluation purposes it is best to have the teams work with the same (auto)biography. This has the advantage of comparison between the teams and thus an even more heterogeneous picture of an entrepreneur and entrepreneurship.

8. Conclusions

In this paper we have introduced, evaluated and discussed an experiment conducted in the form of an undergraduate entrepreneurship course called 'Entrepreneurial Myths'. The aims of this experiment were: making students more enthusiastic about entrepreneurship as a career option and stimulating in students the kind of thinking that is intuitive, lateral and unconventional – in other words their entrepreneurial imagination. It is this type of thinking the entrepreneur needs (Chia, 1996, Kirby, 2004). This type of thinking implies realizing that there is more than one 'truth' and this requires a multi-voiced perspective, or in other (Boje, 2001) words, an (ante)narrative perspective.

As far as the first aim is concerned, we have had to observe that it is hard to conclude from this experiment whether or not the entrepreneurial biography and an (ante)narrative analysis of it inspires students as to their entrepreneurial inclination. In the discussion we have retrospectively wondered whether the entrepreneurial inclination of the students can be assessed based on a course such as this at all, for all we can 'measure' is the students' *intention*. One could contend that a life-course approach is more suitable to reach insight into intentions materializing into action. What we can conclude from our experiment is that as far as intentions are concerned, the experiment at least did not alienate the beforehand entrepreneurially inclined students from entrepreneurship as a career option.

As far as our second aim is concerned, we can draw much stronger and more interesting conclusions. In the results and evaluation-paragraph we have indicated that the students have gained a more critical understanding of Heineken as an entrepreneur, questioning any account as potentially one-sided. The results show that the students indeed show a shift towards a realization of the one-sidedness, dominance or colored ness of a given account.

And did they gain a greater insight in entrepreneurship? As we have contended in the discussion section, not in the sense of learning *about* entrepreneurship. The experiment in itself was an exercise in practicing the entrepreneurial imagination, in learning *for* entrepreneurship; it was an exercise in 'mental agility', in lateral thinking and using intuition – and thus in entrepreneurial thinking. And the students have managed to go through and complete this exercise. Whereas their initial analyses voiced their puzzled ness as well as a capacity to only understand the biography at face value, they have proven able to produce a narrative analysis of Heineken. And they have shown the capacity to be reflective – not only about Heineken, but about their own process and work as well. Although there is still evidence of centeredness and one-sidedness in the students' accounts, this is more so in the traditional team than in the other two and less so than in the initial analyses.

So, in more general terms we can suggest that narrative as research data and approach and antenarrative as method in entrepreneurship education stimulates

lateral, imaginative and critical thinking in students. What are the implications of these findings for entrepreneurship education theory and practice: based on the results of this experiment, we would like to encourage and stimulate entrepreneurship educators to embrace narrative in their teaching as well as reflect on their experiences as we did and build on our findings.

Of course there are certain limitations to our findings: they are based on an experiment involving a limited number of students and – as we have already suggested in the discussion – a number of improvements could be made when the format is to be adopted for repetition. These improvements include: in the future we will not have the students choose *any* narrative analysis method they want; we will only advise the students to conduct a deconstruction-type of analysis and we will use autobiographies instead of biographies.

We feel that a narrative approach to and in entrepreneurship education can serve to build on the propositions made by Kirby (2004), Rae (1997) and Chia (1996) to add to the learning-about-perspective on entrepreneurship education the learning-for-entrepreneurship-perspective. Perhaps not so much in the sense of inspiring students to pursue entrepreneurship as a career option, but definitely in stimulating their entrepreneurial imagination; their skills in lateral, intuitive and unconventional thinking.

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