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Alistair R. Anderson and Lorraine Warren

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Alistair R. Anderson

Robert Gordon University, UK

Lorraine Warren

University of Southampton, UK

Abstract

Employing a social construction perspective, this article argues that entrepreneurs are uniquely empowered by entrepreneurial discourse to bring about creative destruction. Analysis of the representation of entrepreneurship in the media suggests that entrepreneurs have a distinctive presence in society that is shaped by cultural norms and expectations. These images create and present an entrepreneurial identity. Yet identity has two facets: the general, identified as ‘what’ but also a distinctive individual identity as ‘who’. This article explores the identity play of one flamboyant entrepreneur, Michael O’Leary, to show how he deploys the rhetoric and rationality of entrepreneurial discourse, but shapes it through emotional games to establish his unique entrepreneurial identity. It finds strong evidence that entrepreneurs are culturally stereotypical and that this is amplified by the press, but also how O’Leary employs this typification to engage with the rational and emotional, explaining how this is used for strategic advantage.

Keywords

creative destruction, discourse, entrepreneur, entrepreneurial identity, media, narrative

Introduction

This article examines how entrepreneurship discourse is employed to produce entrepreneurial advantage. It considers the narratives and exploits of a colourful airline entrepreneur, Michael O’Leary, to see how he uses entrepreneurial identity to create competitive advantage. Our theoretical framework is the socially constructed parallel, but potentially contradictory, concepts of identity; the social identity as an entrepreneur coupled with O’Leary’s personal identity, which we see

Corresponding author:

Alistair R. Anderson, Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University, Garthdee, Aberdeen, AB10 7QG, UK.

Email: a.r.anderson@rgu.ac.uk

as a very personalized enactment of self. Identity can be seen as about sameness to others, yet identity is also about distinctiveness, the ways that we can 'identify' someone as a unique and hence different and distinctive self. As Watson suggests, 'the notion of identity has enormous potential as a bridging concept between individual agency, choice and creation of self, on the one hand, and history, culture and social shaping of identities on the other' (2009: 426). In this way we are able to show how O'Leary's clowning and jesting is not simply paradoxical to his identity as a successful airline entrepreneur, but also how it emotionally engages with the rational appeal of the entrepreneurial discourse. Rindova et al. put this well: 'celebrity is an intangible asset of the firm. How a firm may benefit from differential levels of public attention and positive emotional responses is a question that has not been widely considered' (2006: 51). Moreover, we see a contribution in how this identity play adds to our understanding of the socially situated entrepreneurial actor.

The article is located in what Cope (2005) describes as the growing interest in interpretative approaches to entrepreneurship, reflecting the appreciation that entrepreneurs can be understood better in their social milieu (Drakopoulou-Dodd and Anderson, 2007). In this milieu, social networking (Jack et al., 2008; Neergard, 2005; Shaw, 2006) and social capital (Anderson et al., 2007; Bowey and Easton, 2007; Cope et al., 2007) all try to locate the entrepreneur conceptually in their social context. One element in the burgeoning interest is the socialized meanings of entrepreneurship (Anderson, 2005; Thorpe et al., 2006). Methodologically, social construction has proved useful in explaining how meanings (Fletcher, 2006) inform what we understand to be entrepreneurship. Thus, metaphor (Anderson et al., 2009; Drakopoulou-Dodd and de Koning, 2002), narratives (Johansson, 2004; Smith and Anderson, 2004) and discourse (Anderson and Smith, 2007; Ogbor, 2000) have been employed in exploring the social constructions of entrepreneurship. A development has been an examination of how the press has engaged with reproducing the entrepreneurial discourse (Radu and Redien-Collet, 2008). This article employs similar methodology to examine entrepreneurial identity work played out in the media. In this context, identity is particularly interesting because it reflects entrepreneurial meanings and, as Hermans explains, media functions as 'machineries of meaning' (2004: 305).

The article addresses what Down and Reveley describe as the underdeveloped research topic, 'the social formation of the entrepreneurial self' (2004: 236). Employing social construction, we explore the production of an entrepreneurial identity. We juxtapose two different levels of analysis – the collective entrepreneurial identity and individual identity – through the study of the practices of the flamboyant entrepreneur, Michael O'Leary, chief executive officer (CEO) of Ryanair. Our argument is that there is a 'social' identity of entrepreneurs which reflects the enterprise discourse. Atherton (2004) notes how representations of entrepreneurs tend to be stereotyped and caricatured, but Goffman (1959) suggests that they become institutionalized as an abstract stereotype. This, then, is a cultural identity attributed to those who enterprise. However, there is also an individual identity which is about difference, how we know an entrepreneur as a unique individual. As Paul Ricoeur's (1992) philosophy argues, identity has two aspects – *ipseite* and *memete* – sameness and selfhood. Newspapers seem to play an important role in the production, even the combining, of both elements. Hannerz (1992) talks about the linking of culture and self. Rindova et al. (2006) found considerable evidence that mass media play a powerful role in directing the public's attention toward particular actors, while Hermans (2002) argues that some individuals are more easily heard. Moreover, by increasing the attractiveness of their news reports to readers, journalists create dramatized representations of these individuals. Boyle (2008) argues that this is a cultural shift in the media to place business and businesspeople more centre stage, and in so doing, they 'find' strong figures such as O'Leary. Guthey et al. (2009) go further, arguing that such figures are not 'self-made men', but are made by media exposure.

Consequently, the first part of this article examines newspaper coverage of entrepreneurs. We find that O'Leary has a very strong presence, appearing some three times a day. Moreover, the newspaper narratives reflect what entrepreneurs are expected to do, the social identity. However, interestingly, the reportage also presents a very individual identity of O'Leary, one which presents narratives of a rough tongued brawler who is the people's champion. Our sociological analysis of this data shows how O'Leary engages emotionally by his clowning, yet concomitantly produces a rational appeal. On this basis we argue that this strong entrepreneurial identity raises the profile of O'Leary's business and in turn, produces competitive advantage.

A social construction approach helps us to explore the paradox of identities: sameness and otherness. As socially constructed, any entrepreneurial 'identity' is the outcome of active perceptual constructions (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Handley et al., 2006), an ongoing project of construction (Lash, 1999). According to Somers (1994), people construct identities through a repertoire of interlinked, but partial, fragmentary and sometimes contradictory narratives over time. For Holland et al. (1998), this is not about experiencing scripted positions, but engaging with cultural worlds as knowledgeable and committed participants. This engagement is important because being identified as 'entrepreneurial' enables specific forms of actions: it acts as a licence to challenge the status quo and bring about entrepreneurial change. Thus, the construction of a convincing entrepreneurial identity may have strategic advantages. We demonstrate how social construction has explanatory value beyond an abstract conceptualization of meaning – it helps to explain what entrepreneurs are expected to do. Our analysis shows the role expectations that exist in the macro of entrepreneurial discourse, and how these are enacted agentially at the micro-level of practices. At a practical level we note how discourse becomes ideologically empowering and how this can be used as a strategic and marketing tool. Moreover, we see how the explanatory power of Schumpeter's creative destruction can apply beyond new products or services displacing the old. In addition, creative destruction, as a purposeful revolutionary process, can explain the deployment of narrative in entrepreneurial unsettling of the stability of established practices (Schumpeter, 1934).

This theoretical framework accords entrepreneurial agents their due (Downing, 2005), but also allows us to recognize that the social structure, and entrepreneurs' relationships with that structure, its meanings, norms, beliefs and values, are an intrinsic part of the entrepreneurial process (Drakopoulou-Dodd and Anderson, 2007; Jack and Anderson, 2002). In this way we can avoid the problems of methodological individualism, where too much explanatory power is attributed to an entrepreneurial agent at the cost of underestimating the constraints (and opportunities) of structure (Elster, 1989). Moreover, we can avoid the pitfalls of the 'over-socialized' entrepreneur (Granovetter, 1985), where structure or society is given theoretical priority.

Social constructions, discourse and entrepreneurial identity

Radu and Redien-Collot (2008) explain how social representations, such as press reports, are the result of cognitive constructions of reality. These transform social objects, such as people, contexts and situations, into symbolic categories of values, beliefs and ideologies, thus social constructions are underpinned by the powerful influences that pervade our political and social culture. Such discourses become relevant when they produce meanings that are widely accepted (Ogbor, 2000). The 'enterprise culture' is an example. Since the economic turbulence of the 1980s, the enterprise discourse has emerged as a powerful meta-narrative of the free market capitalist system (Doolin, 2002; Ogbor, 2000). Indeed, Lewis and Llewellyn (2004) suggest that the enterprise culture is a moral crusade that validates the power and capacities of individual entrepreneurs to change institutions and organizations. Nonetheless, the idea of an all-embracing culture remains problematic (Drakopoulou-Dodd

and Anderson, 2001). Atherton (2004) argues that representations influence and shape our views of the world. How people, events and phenomena are presented informs and reflects shared values and views, but these representations are not objective or factual – they are ‘values-driven’.

Consequently, entrepreneurial meanings are not free-floating (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005), but are anchored in a modernist project that somehow tomorrow will be made better entrepreneurially than today. In this discourse, the entrepreneur emerges as a ‘*new cultural hero of the Western world*’ (Carr and Beaver, 2002; Ogbor, 2000). Lustick and Miodownik (2002) suggest that the processes institutionalizing discourse can produce collective identities that take on an aspect of immutability, thus reflecting stereotypification. Boyle and Magor (2008) argue that this process helps to legitimize entrepreneurship. Media stories and representations are inevitably an influential part of that cultural discursive milieu, shaping, reinforcing and legitimizing a stereotypical entrepreneurial identity, something that is ‘like an entrepreneur’ in the public imagination. This heroic entrepreneur emerges with attractive sets of characteristics that mirror the discourse, albeit sometimes contested (Drakopoulou-Dodd and de Koning, 2004).

Tourish and Vatcha (2005) suggest that organizations can be viewed as narrative spaces, but Downing (2005) points out that identity and power can be manipulated through discursive processes. As Down (2006) puts it, identity is a mutable achievement in time and space through relationships with others. Following the epistemological foundations laid by Steyaert and Bouwen (1997), narrative resources have been used to illuminate the processes of entrepreneurial self-identity formation. Discourse, for us, is how social actors articulate their meanings (Hytti, 2000). Discourse is beyond any one individual and a mode of action as well as of representation (Fairclough, 1992). Foucault (1972) described how discourses produce patterns of meanings, but also construct a version of reality embodying ideology (Cohen and Musson, 2000). Thus at root, we argue, the entrepreneurial discourse has become a legitimizing frame of entrepreneurial meaning. Cohen and Musson (2000), Mallon and Cohen (2001) and Warren (2004) have utilized the ‘discourse of enterprise’ to examine the relation of entrepreneurial identity to the wider environment. Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) and Downing (2005) link self-identity and organizational identity formulation. Moreover, Drakopoulou-Dodd and de Koning (2002, 2004) and Nicholson and Anderson (2005) provide convincing evidence that media texts emphasize the entrepreneur as a mythical or heroic figure valorized to effect economic betterment for all. As such, this discourse produces the entrepreneur as an ideal type (Shuhtz, 1962), a caricature or stereotype that reflects a social constructed reality. The discourses are based on ‘commonly accepted definitions’ (Blumer, 1962), or public and cultural narratives (Somers, 1994), or a scripted role (Anderson, 2005; Goffman, 1959). Thus, in the public imagination, by and large, an entrepreneur is a good thing to be – an exciting collective identity for the individual to aspire to become (Down and Warren, 2008).

Hjorth and Johannisson (2003) see entrepreneurship as an enacted collective identity often portrayed as the individualized practice of singular individuals. Hence entrepreneurial practices are a rich medium to explore identity (Hytti, 2000). Like entrepreneurship itself, identity is mundane, extraordinary and paradoxical. First, identity incorporates two parallel but contradictory concepts: sameness and difference. Identity, as in ‘identical’ or identifying with, is about sameness, yet identity is also about distinctiveness, the ways that we can ‘identify’ someone as unique, and hence different. Identity is a contested concept in the literature (Bauman, 2004; Jenkins, 1996), but there is an emerging consensus across disciplines that it is constituted through interaction between the individual, society and culture. Giddens (1991) sees identity as a process of becoming, where narratives of the self are negotiated and recrafted over time, through and within the sense-making systems of the surrounding cultural milieu that delineate sameness and difference (Jenkins, 1996). From this perspective, we argue that identity is related to social and cultural forms, but is not

predetermined by them (Creed et al., 2002; Goffman, 1959; Holland et al., 1998; Lash, 1999). Goffman (1959) was influential in developing this line of thought, placing an emphasis on roles in shaping identity. He argues that roles become institutionalized sets of social expectations, with stereotypes emerging as a more fixed form of meaning and stability. Thus in this light, identity is a product of a internal–external dialectic (Jenkins, 1996); the self is an ongoing synthesis of self-definition and external definition by others (Cooley, 1962; Mead, 1934). Symbolic interactionists explain this process by placing emphasis on roles in shaping identity, expectations of behaviour and obligations to other actors (Merton, 1957). Goffman (1959) calls these ‘ideal typifications’: social fronts that become institutionalized as an abstract stereotyped expectation which takes ‘on meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name’ (1959: 37). As Atherton notes, ‘representations of entrepreneurs, and hence of entrepreneurship, tend to be stereotypes and caricatured’ (2004: 122). It seems, then, that enterprise rhetoric privileges entrepreneurs as change masters to challenge the power of established elites – to be the architects of Schumpeterian creative destruction.

Entrepreneurs in the media

We have argued that an entrepreneurial identity has two elements – identity as ‘what’, the categorical identity; and personal identity, ‘who’ – which serve to differentiate one from the other. Thus identity provides a means for calling up similarities and for social negotiation in delineating difference (Jenkins, 1996). The process can be understood as the juxtaposition of culturally available meanings and an enactment of these meanings. Clegg captures this rather well: ‘Identity is seen as always in process, as always subject to reproduction or transformation through discursive practices which secure or refuse particular posited identity’ (1989: 151). The press plays an important role in discourse: the daily records of entrepreneurial endeavour not only reflect but shape society’s attitudes, understandings of and interests in the entrepreneurial phenomenon. Ljunggren and Alsos note that the ‘media has an important impact regarding creation of attitudes as well as making potential role models visible’ (2001: 2). Hall (1980) suggests that although journalists typically present a news account as an ‘objective’, ‘impartial’ translation of reality, this can be understood as an ideological construction of contending truth claims about reality. It seems reasonable to argue that although press accounts are inevitably caught in the double hermeneutic of our interpretation of journalist’s interpretation, they do present a socially constructed version of what it means to be entrepreneurial. Thus this public arena offers scope to capture any interplay between identification and identity, and to reflect on processes, to inform us of what might be going on here.

Airline entrepreneurs offer an interesting example of identity work through discourse and narrative. Grint (2000) reports how Richard Branson wore a leather flying helmet for Virgin Atlantic’s maiden flight, dressed as Peter Pan for the inaugural flight to Miami, and dressed as a pirate for the first departure from Heathrow. Indeed, like O’Leary, much of the narrative history of Branson was enacting a colourful role and challenging the establishment. Grint also talks about Freddie Laker, another pioneering airline operator, describing how he ‘learned to speak in headlines and would do whatever was necessary to get into the newspapers or on television’ (2000: 14). Thus our choice of O’Leary seems to offer a suitable entrepreneurial subject, and our ‘data’ of press reports appear justified.

Methods, mistakes and emerging constructs

Michael O’Leary is well recognized as an entrepreneur by the press: he has legitimized his epithet by entrepreneurial actions. As CEO of the low-cost airline Ryanair, he is credited with the dramatic

Table 1. Mentions of leading entrepreneurs

	Michael O'Leary	Stelios Haji Ioannou	James Dyson	Richard Branson
Jan–June 2001	170	138	184	2052
Jul–Dec 2001	460	292	143	1830
Jan–June 2002	449	455	255	1526
Jul–Dec 2002	331	338	188	1407
Jan–June 2003	473	226	283	1627
Jul–Dec 2003	539	203	234	1492
Jan–June 2004	614	258	93	1522
Jul–Dec 2004	414	377	184	1687
Jan–Dec 2005	360	284	193	1295
Jul–Dec 2005	403	241	124	1325
Total	4213	2812	1881	15763

Note: All UK newspapers including regionals and the *Irish News* tabloid

turnaround of the company (Calder, 2003; Lawton, 2000). In 1991, O'Leary reorganized Ryanair as a low-cost, 'no-frills' operation. By the end of 2003, Ryanair had progressed from being a loss-making regional carrier to Europe's eighth largest airline, with profit margins (more than 20%) that are without precedent for European airlines (Directorate-General for Transport and Energy; DG TREN, 2003). O'Leary's personal fortunes have prospered alongside the company, which was established by the Ryan family (hence 'Ryanair'). Although O'Leary did not found Ryanair, he has a major shareholding worth in excess of £250m. We studied newspaper reports to examine presentations of O'Leary's entrepreneurial identity. Our objectives were fourfold. First, to establish if entrepreneurs have a newspaper presence; second to see if we could determine what entrepreneurial roles were played out; third, to try to ascertain what was going on and why; and finally, to develop some way of conceptualizing relationships between discourse and identity, in order to provide an explanatory account.

Method

Sample and data collection

We looked at newspaper articles published between 1 January 2001 and 31 January 2005 using Lexis-Nexis Professional. *The Irish Times* archives were searched separately. Our first trawl was a straight count of the number of articles mentioning O'Leary in comparison with other entrepreneurial figures. Table 1 shows that this approach yielded 4213 articles.

Remarkably, O'Leary appeared in the press on average three times a day, establishing that he had a strong press presence. We also looked at two other airline entrepreneurs, Branson and Stelios Haji Ioannou of Easyjet. They too had a strong newspaper presence, with Ioannou appearing about twice a day and Branson almost 10 times each day. James Dyson, the famous inventor, appeared less than twice a day. Table 2 shows that we looked only at the national UK press to establish national presence. A very similar pattern emerged, but with Dyson presented considerably less often. This seems to indicate that airline entrepreneurs are considered newsworthy, and that both Branson and O'Leary were national figures.

Given that O'Leary is well recognized as Irish and a 'character', we looked at the serious Irish press, the *Irish Times*, to gauge frequency in the purely Irish context. Table 3 confirms O'Leary's significant Irish presence, appearing six times more often than Branson and some 33 times more often than Ioannou.

Table 2. Mentions of leading entrepreneurs in all UK national newspapers

	Michael O'Leary	Stelios Haji Ioannou	James Dyson	Richard Branson
Jan–June 2001	98	73	66	1027
Jul–Dec 2001	239	155	63	874
Jan–June 2002	267	266	93	776
Jul–Dec 2002	213	174	60	683
Jan–June 2003	317	122	91	767
Jul–Dec 2003	351	131	67	732
Jan–June 2004	377	146	33	719
Jul–Dec 2004	257	189	81	819
Jan–Dec 2005	227	178	92	633
Jul–Dec 2005	249	148	61	711
Total	2595	1582	707	7741

Table 3. Mentions of leading entrepreneurs in the *Irish Times*

	Michael O'Leary	Stelios Haji Ioannou	James Dyson	Richard Branson
Jan–June 2001	0	0	2	11
Jul–Dec 2001	0	2	0	13
Jan–June 2002	40	2	0	1
Jul–Dec 2002	26	2	1	4
Jan–June 2003	52	1	0	6
Jul–Dec 2003	50	2	0	7
Jan–June 2004	73	1	0	3
Jul–Dec 2004	58	2	3	10
Jan–Dec 2005	76	0	3	8
Jul–Dec 2005	50	1	0	7
Total	425	13	9	70

This suggests that if frequency is important, something interesting was happening. Goffman (1959) talks about how, in the dramatic realization of roles, the individual typically infuses their activity with signs that dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts. If done well, notes Goffman, these exemplary practitioners 'become famous and are given a special place in the commercially organized fantasies of the nation' (1959: 41). This seemed to be the case for the flamboyant O'Leary.

Problems

Our original method was to scan the material individually to discern descriptive themes. Three jointly agreed themes readily emerged from the data:

1. *rational manager* – at home with facts, figures and rational analysis;
2. *entrepreneur* – leading the company by introducing new routes and new flight innovations, such as the proposal of in-flight gambling; and
3. *challenger of bureaucracy* – leading other airlines from the front in challenging governments, industry agencies and supranational regulatory bodies such as the European Union (EU).

These seemed to fit well with a framework of entrepreneurial identity. The rational manager, for example, indicated the enactment of superior business skills; the entrepreneur as doing things differently and better; and the challenger of bureaucracy seemed to encapsulate the stereotype of challenges as enterprising – all echoed the discourse of the stereotypical entrepreneur. However, when we tried to fit examples into the themes, we disagreed about which fitted into each category. Moreover, many of the articles contained contradictions and overlaps, so that convincing categorization proved difficult and we lost confidence in the validity and reliability of this analysis. We had found a multifaceted, contradictory bricolage of style, content and processes including:

- entrepreneurial business pronouncements typical of a high-profile CEO of a fast-growing innovative company;
- incisive analyses of complex legal and financial situations;
- high-profile media stunts often aimed at competitors, such as turning up in a military tank at Luton Airport to jest with low-cost competitor Easyjet; but also vituperative, highly-personalized, long-running feuds with powerful figures such as Bertie Ahern; in addition, oddly, an enthusiasm for aggressively confronting Ryanair's customers;
- a willingness to actively engage the public in jests;
- a verbal style peppered not only with humour, sometimes backed up by scathing (yet comical) cartoon attacks on individuals, but also often couched in profane and uncouth language.

Nonetheless, we were convinced that identity was presented in the data and that we were simply analysing it badly. We saw a complex figure emerging from the data, someone rough, sharp and aggressive but a man of the people, locking into their ordinary everyday concerns about air travel, cost and convenience but engaging through humour and straight-talk. O'Leary is a charismatic man of action, ready and willing to battle to get cheap air fares for the masses, yet one who knows the routine business of Ryanair down to the last penny; a man who taunts, teases and jests, using playground humour to lampoon and subvert authority by drawing opponents into battles at a time and place of his own choosing. An entrepreneurial identity indeed, and one informed by the collective discourse, but with diverse, contradictory and distinctively individual playful elements. As Barbara Cassani, the founder of low-cost airline Go noted:

It's interesting that Michael O'Leary has this image as a rough-and-tumble profane Irish farm boy. He's a trained accountant who went to one of the finest universities in Ireland. (Calder, 2003: 96)

The incongruity identified by Cassani gave us the clue that we needed. O'Leary's identity is complex and his presentations of self reflect that complexity. Our attempt to categorize by the content of *what* he presented was flawed because of the intrinsic ambiguity; what matters was *how* he projected, in what ways and how he managed the paradoxical roles. After some trial and error, we shifted from descriptive categories to conceptually richer units for analysis. Two 'mechanisms' emerged from the data: his appeal to the rational, and his appeal to the emotional. By presenting himself in these two modes, sometimes simultaneously, he mobilizes essences of the discourse to be identified *with* the rational entrepreneur, yet also employs emotional appeal to identify himself *as* a particular individualistic entrepreneur by using the aesthetic appeal of humour, jest and clowning. Unfortunately, this more abstract categorization does not lend itself to simple tabulation or counts, so instead we present our analysis in examples explaining our reasoning, showing how O'Leary mobilises discourse in his identification of self.

Data analysis

Our method, a sociological analysis (Ruiz, 2009), is a type of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is heterogeneous with a multiplicity of models of analysis and endless possibilities in the study of discourses (Alonso and Hyde, 2002). However, the point of departure is almost always the manifestation of some characteristics that play an explanatory role in the text. Despite the bewildering range of methods for discourse analysis, there are some fundamentals across approaches. Some forms take the discourse (or text) as the *object* of study: for example, content analysis. In this textual analysis, which is rooted in a positivistic tradition, what is being said is the focus. However, more interpretative approaches, seeking explanatory power, argue that this is only a preliminary form and that we should use discourse as the *subject* of study. So questions about what the discourse does, lead us towards understanding the discourse. Consequently, this type of analysis, a sociological discourse analysis, sees discourse as informational or even ideological and as a social product. The analysis directs us towards an interpretation of what is implied and invoked by the discourse.

Our analysis works iteratively across these three levels. The first level, the textual analysis, is concerned with the object in the newspaper articles, the entrepreneurs, how many, how often. This allows us to establish that the airline entrepreneurs have a significant presence and are presented as a reality in the press. The second level is more interpretative and treats the discourse itself as the subject. This is because discourse not only reflects meanings, it is an act as well as being an object. Language both mediates and constructs our understanding of reality and identity (Watson, 2009). Moreover, it is intentionally used to accomplish some personal, social, political or business project. Here we are interested in meanings: what meanings are constructed and how. This, then, is contextual analysis: our interpreting what is said to why and how it is said, and how it is socially situated. This second level has greater conceptual purchase because we are primarily interested in inter-subjectivity. In this case we want to know how the socially produced identity as an entrepreneur engages with O'Leary's idiosyncratic and individualist identity, and to what end. Moreover, we want to investigate how this is accomplished. It is also inter-subjective in that our role as researchers engages with these discourses – we interpret them in our subjective way. However, inter-subjectivity extends even further in that to have meaning, a text has to be read or seen. In this way, meanings are co-produced by the speaker and the listener, and importantly this dialogue of meanings is itself socially situated. This inter-subjectivity is important because all discourses, texts and the like, not only use or represent socially constructed meaning, but are involved in their creation.

Thus, put another way, we are taking the content of the texts as our problematic. This is, of course, very different from content analysis, where the text is the unit for analysis. We problematize this by asking: 'What is going on here?' Meanings are not taken for granted but questioned, so that our overarching enquiry is how these meanings are produced and used. We ask: what is the logic, and what is the rhetoric in this discourse; how are we persuaded, and how are we impressed? Underpinned by the assumption that discourse has an intentional dimension, we enquire about the strategies that are employed to realize intentions.

Solutions

We decided to first focus on one example, probably O'Leary's most significant battlegrounds over the last five years: his feud with Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister (*Taoiseach*) over the break-up of Aer Rianta, and the Terminal 2 at Dublin Airport. This was particularly useful on several counts: the subject matter was Irish, thus reflecting our finding about O'Leary's strong Irish presence; the topic had a distinctive national narrative theme; it was relatively contained and, significantly, both O'Leary and Ahern as characters are almost ideal typifications of entrepreneur and politician.

Table 4. Categorization of the Ahern–O’Leary interchanges

	Ahern/O’Leary interchanges	Aer Rianta and Terminal 2 issues	Type of articles about the airport issues
Jan–June 2001	1	0	0
Jul–Dec 2001	29	13	Business analysis (1) News reports (12)
Jan–June 2002	12	6	Business analysis (3) News (3)
Jul–Dec 2002	9	2	Business analysis (2)
Jan–June 2003	17	11	News reports (7) Business analysis (4)
Jul–Dec 2003	41	28	Business analysis (16) News reports (10) Quote of the week (1) Company report/meeting (1)
Jan–June 2004	30	20	Business analysis (11) News reports (6) Self penned piece by O’Leary (1) Quote of the week/year compilations (2)
Jul–Dec 2004	25	10	Business analysis (6) News reports (4)
Jan–June 2005	63	56	Business analysis (26) News report (27) Private letter from O’Leary (3 appearances)
Jul–Dec 2005	16	7	Letter from member of public General business analysis (3) Piece penned by O’Leary News report (2)
Total	243	153	

Figure 1 presents some key features of the entrepreneurial discourse and provides us with a guide to the nature of an identity, especially in contrast with bureaucracy. Moreover, the articles contained some of the most lively and vivid interchanges between O’Leary and others. These 153 articles are characterized in Table 4, showing the mix of reportage.

Findings

O’Leary and Ahern: an entrepreneurial identity in action

O’Leary is an ‘exemplary practitioner’ in the Goffman mould. He has earned acclaim as a skilled entrepreneur, winning the CNBC Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2005 and features in the Irish business press as a ‘Father of Entrepreneurship’. However, Ahern is a formidable opponent, an elected prime minister and influential in EU affairs. A recognized statesman, winning European Statesman of the Year in 2004 when in the same poll, O’Leary won European Businessman of the Year. Their feud originated in the Dublin baggage handlers’ strike in 1998, a bitter dispute where Ahern famously accused O’Leary of ‘tooth-and-claw capitalism’ (*Observer*, 16 June 2002). Ahern introduced a parliamentary bill in 2004 to break up Aer Rianta, the state-owned monopoly which ran the three major Irish airports. The bill, which was eventually successful, was supported by Ryanair, but Ahern did not move at the speed that O’Leary wanted, and animosity flared up. Alongside this debate was a heated exchange

Contra-entrepreneurial identifiers Grey (2004)	Entrepreneurial identifiers Hendry (2004)
Bureaucratic management Pedantic Inert Unimaginative Uncreative Inflexible Producer-focused Rule-bound	Self-reliance Self-motivation Competitiveness Autonomy Boldness, energy Creativity Initiative, innovativeness Productivity, efficiency Willingness to take risks, Personal responsibility, self-regulation

Figure 1. Identifying enterprise, contrasts with bureaucracy

about a new terminal at the notoriously overcrowded Dublin Airport: who owns it, builds it, where exactly is it to be built, who uses it and when. From these data, we show how O’Leary enlists and manipulates the power of an entrepreneurial identity, how he sets himself up as the heroic entrepreneur, employing a rhetoric that resonates with enterprise, and how he sets up Ahern as anti-entrepreneurial. In so doing, O’Leary ignores alternative views, sometimes even logic. For example:

With a low-cost second terminal in place, Ryanair has confirmed it will base another 10 aircraft here in Dublin, open up 20 new low-fare routes to Europe, guarantee an additional five million passengers a year, and this will create 5,000 new jobs here at Dublin Airport as well as over 25,000 spin-off jobs in the wider tourism industry in Ireland. (*The Sunday Tribune*, 13 June 2004)

The statement by O’Leary is obviously one of entrepreneurial promise, but with entrepreneurial conditions strongly attached. ‘If a low cost terminal is built ...’ suggests that (a) it has to be low-cost, a reflection of Ryanair’s business model and only suited budget airlines; and (b) if you do it my way, as an entrepreneur I will create 30,000 new jobs. So the presentation here is one of entrepreneurially wrought value-generation with the implication, assertion even, that only he as an entrepreneur could make this work in this way. It is a bold entrepreneurial statement, strongly founded in the discourse about the generation of values. It emphasizes O’Leary as the entrepreneur who will make this happen.

As the largest airline in Ireland, we are deeply concerned at the Government leaks over the weekend which suggest that the Dublin Airport Authority will be allowed to build a second terminal ... Competition has already proven effective in forcing improved services and lower prices out of other State monopolies such as the ESB [Electricity Supply Board], Eircom and indeed Aer Lingus. Two terminals run by the DAA [Dublin Airport Authority] will not be competition. (*The Irish Times*, 22 October 2005)

Beginning with a statement about how well Ryanair has done in the past, this polemic draws heavily on the danger of monopoly. In particular, it emphasizes Ryanair’s record compared to state-run enterprises. Here, we see O’Leary carefully selecting his ground to challenge: the logics of scale and the obvious advantage of the entire airport being run by one organization are ignored. He completely shifts the argument to one based on how well he has done in running an airline, overlooking the significant issue that this is a terminal and not an airline. It is as if he is saying: ‘Look at what I have already done for you as an entrepreneur, so let me do more.’ This presentation of entrepreneurial achievement is O’Leary associating himself, identifying with, the entrepreneurial discourse. He subtly calls up his entrepreneurial identity to strategically shift the debate into his own chosen grounds.

In Figure 1 we see the contours of entrepreneurial identification based on Hendry (2004), and in contrast with Grey's (2004) of contra-entrepreneurial indicators. This presents a template for recognizing the entrepreneurial qualities presented by O'Leary and the qualities he vilifies in Ahern. In the following quotes, it is possible to see how O'Leary shifts the debate to present Ahern as contra-entrepreneurial and himself as enterprising.

In the first half of next year Ryanair will open two new bases in Rome and Barcelona. Why does Ireland continue to mismanage its airport policy so that it forces all of this rapid traffic growth to other lower cost airports in Continental Europe? Why are Ireland's airports so uncompetitive? Isn't it time for change? (*The Irish Times*, 22 October 2005)

Here again Ryanair is identified as doing well, acting entrepreneurially and thus helping Rome and Barcelona. In this way O'Leary is mobilizing the entrepreneurial discourse, but he also draws our attention to Ireland, where the government is presented as resisting entrepreneurial change and, by implication, identified with the contra-entrepreneurial list:

Ryanair, Ireland's largest airline, has not been consulted on the location, design or cost of these facilities. It is ridiculous that the second terminal and other planned facilities will cost €1.2billion – which must be funded by passengers. There is a better way. Allow the private sector to build a competing terminal. Charges would not rise for the next four years, if at all. The Dublin Airport Authority would respond by lowering charges in advance of some much-needed competition, just as Aer Lingus did when Ryanair first entered the market. (*Sunday Times*, 25 September 2005)

This is another appeal to let the entrepreneurial O'Leary get to work. Passengers have to pay dearly for bureaucratic management. Later, he begins to develop themes of risk-bearing and initiative, linking unimaginative management to disadvantages for passengers:

If the DAA is to proceed with a second terminal at Dublin, then force it to fund the project from its own resources instead of gouging hard-pressed passengers ... Only in 'Bertie's Blunderland' are passengers faced with queuing to get into Ireland's main airport, as well as to get out of it.

Here we see a shift from the rationality of entrepreneurial action into a more humorous mode with emotional appeal, 'Bertie's Blunderland ... queuing to get in ... and out' – this seems to ridicule Ahern, but is entertainingly portrayed.

Passengers would have a choice of airlines, terminal facilities and car parks. Competition would have delivered these facilities by 2006, reduced costs to passengers, and improved services. Competition works. Ryanair works. Ahern's transport policy clearly doesn't. From the M50, where the cars don't fit, to the port tunnel, where trucks don't fit, to Dublin airport, where sadly nothing fits, this government has repeatedly failed the Irish people. We have a first-rate workforce suffering a Third World transport system. Unless we get rid of these clowns and end the protected civil-service monopolies in the transport sector, then we will be doomed to long queues and higher costs for many years to come. (*Sunday Times*, 25 September 2005)

Again, entrepreneurial rhetoric is employed, holding up Ryanair as an example of competitive excellence, but he turns much nastier. His aggressive language denigrates the lack of commercial ability; he castigates his opponents as nameless 'protected civil service authorities' that have to be got rid of, but he presents his arguments as an entrepreneurial spokesman for the people. These are

strong words, making much of bureaucratic failures, inflexible and lacking competition, especially Ryanair's entrepreneurial touch. O'Leary's statements are couched in the terms of entrepreneurial rhetoric and identify him as the entrepreneur who will get things done. These resonate with the discourse and make a rational appeal, and present his case as the creative destructor, attempting to destroy the old and create the new.

However, O'Leary does not rely on rationality in his role enactment; he enthusiastically shifts into a singularly personalized entertaining identity with emotional appeal. We found him involved in media 'stunts' to embarrass Ahern, such as being photographed with a giant copy of his tax cheque; humorous advertising campaigns that tease and hold Ahern up to ridicule; engaging the public in his jests, such as offering free tickets for emailing Bertie Ahern with requests to keep his promises, often peppered with profane language. Goss (2005) suggests that entrepreneurs shortcut to the emotional: to engage with, or become a follower of, an innovative, unconventional leader is to gain the 'emotional energy' of entrepreneurship vicariously through processes of identification. Goss points out that such entrepreneurs are exciting to those who live within the constraints of social convention. This is emotional contagion, an exhilaration of associating with a prime mover. According to Goss, momentum is created for new combinations to be embedded in social practice.

We argue that O'Leary's distinctive self-identity play, his jesting and bullying, shifts debate to unexpected ground. He pulls the rug out from under opponents, decentring and repositioning debates. His identity play discomfits his opponents and, we argue, is creatively destructive. The Ahern debates resonate with the collective understanding of the heroic entrepreneur. Yet threaded through the rational rhetoric are themes of clowning, lampooning, jesting and bullying that suggest that O'Leary's particular bricolage is distinctive indeed (Lash, 1999). These themes are not separate identity categories; they intertwine with the identities of being entrepreneurial and the entrepreneurial self.

Ahern has been the subject of a number of cartoon campaigns by Ryanair, notably the 'Bertie the Builder' campaign, which lampooned Ahern as a failed building project manager of Terminal 2. This was O'Leary's play as a jester. Boje and Smith (2005) argue that Bakhtin's (1973[1929]) carnivalesque, where the hero turns into a jester, is to be expected in entrepreneurial identity. Entrepreneurs are ambivalent caricatures and the freedom of the clown's cap allots licence. The jester is 'a universal character, more or less interchangeable regardless of the time or culture in which he happens to cavort – the same techniques, the same functions, the same license' (Otto, 2001: xvi). Thus, jestering offers wit and insight across cultures, and therefore can be employed to challenge in new ways. Moreover, Oswick et al. (2002) note the power of the jester's toolset, tropes that privilege dissimilarity, acting to suggest ground-breaking change and decentring of conventional identities and meanings. In adopting his jester-ish mask, through the subversive potential of laughter (Kuschel, 1994), O'Leary takes a distinctive turn in his identity play. Through clowning, he engages and sustains public interest in debates which are central to the growth of Ryanair, but which normally might be of marginal interest to the public, thereby enacting emotional enlistment (Goss, 2005). The rationalist project of economic betterment, the heart of the collective understanding of entrepreneurship, remains central, but the debate is decentred and subverted by humour, to the discomfiture of his opponents and competitors. We see this humour in advertising as Ryanair employs cheeky, 'end-of-the-pier' fun in its advertisements. However, this goes beyond a quick laugh; it also can be an attempt to draw out an opponent into seemingly playful battles – with a hard commercial edge – in the media. These advertisements throw down a gauntlet and use entrepreneurial identity to make play, to create a theatrical presentation of what was in many ways a somewhat dry, legal comparison of fares, times and conditions of local flights – again, a process of enlistment. The example below, a 'knock British Airways (BA)' campaign (Calder, 2003) shows precisely how this jesting, mocking, juxtaposes tomfoolery and logic:

'EXPENSIVE BA----DS' was the strapline of a 1999 Ryanair advertisement in the London *Evening Standard*. BA was accused of greed, claiming that travellers would save by flying Ryanair. BA complained to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) that the headline was 'likely to cause serious or widespread offence'. The ASA upheld the complaint, and Ryanair undertook not to repeat it. BA then took the case to the High Court, claiming trademark infringement and malicious falsehood, that Ryanair had not compared like with like. The judge ruled in favour of Ryanair, but added that it was 'immature' for two large companies to fight such a dispute in court. Outside the court, O'Leary cheekily accusing BA of adopting bully-boy tactics, stating 'Today's a victory for the small guy, it's a victory for Ryanair and it's a victory for the consumer'. So far, an airline industry spat, with O'Leary playing the 'people's champion'. However, O'Leary went further in his humorous 'play' by placing an advertisement with the banner: 'IT'S OFFICIAL – BA ARE EXPENSIVE'. Identity was not only used to promote Ryanair's brand, but it was used to shape debate, challenge established airlines, pick a fight that inflicted damage beyond the court ruling. We see how O'Leary jester's cap mobilized discursive resources, yet subverts it in a profane but humorous manner, and all playing out the heroic entrepreneur. His highly individualistic identity play draws this out quite splendidly in the final advertisement. The mocking, the lampooning, the holding up to ridicule, the inversion of conventional logic, through jesting and clowning, is at the expense of his opponents and to the benefit of Ryanair. Thus, identity plays out a process of creative destruction.

Another vivid example of self-identity play is O'Leary's use of his entrepreneurial licence by swearing, itself part of his bullying and jesting behaviour, but demonstrating his 'man of the people' credentials:

Screw the travel agents – take the fuckers out and shoot them. What have they done for passengers over the years? (*Observer*, 7 November 2004)

In the same article, O'Leary also attacks the competition:

Weber [Chairman of the Lufthansa Supervisory Board] says Germans don't like low fares. How the fuck does he know? The Germans will crawl bollock-naked over broken glass to get them.

We found that he used obscenity regularly: 'fuck' appeared 16 times; 'bastard', 24 times and 'bollocks' 15 times. This unusual language adds verve to O'Leary's projection of self, where this distinctive identity manifestations form part of his repertoire of shock tactics. Ruddock (2007) describes O'Leary's move from being a dull accountant to an exciting, charismatic figurehead. He has earned a place in the hall of fame of exemplary entrepreneurial practitioners and can be understood as identifying with entrepreneurship. Yet his idiosyncratic practices are also central to his purposeful use of entrepreneurial identity to gain strategic advantage for Ryanair. Seen this way, the dynamic entrepreneur is not inconsistent with the foul-mouthed clown. As Goss (2005) and Jones and Spicer (2005) argue, harking back to Schumpeter, enlistment – the ability to draw other in – is central to entrepreneurship. Goss notes how the attractive qualities of 'the entrepreneur' in our cultural milieu taps into the emotional. The clowning, jesting and shock tactics may not fit an entrepreneurial stereotype; rather, it forms a statement of who O'Leary is, a personal and unique identity. The plays on emotion, in conjunction with entrepreneurial rhetoric, create a singularly unique entrepreneur.

Significantly, as the head of Ryanair, O'Leary has been responsible for the disruption of an industry, operating as the disequilibrating force which has dislodged the protected market of traditional carriers from the somnolence of equilibrium (Kirzner, 1999). We can see Ryanair's part in pioneering the low-cost revolution in the Single Market for Air Transport. DG TREN (2003)

contends that there is evidence of structural change in the European air transport market. Indeed, Ryanair now carries more passengers than British Airways, low-cost fares are the norm, weekend overseas trips to regional airports unheard of 10 years ago are commonplace – creative destruction indeed.

Discussion and conclusion

So what does this all mean, and how might we use it to further our understanding? We have drawn on a diverse literature to problematize entrepreneurial identity and to propose an explanatory perspective combining collective and individual identity. We have shown what patterns exist in the press and attempted to theorize what these mean and why they occur. By employing a social constructionist stance, we find that entrepreneurial discourse presents an assembly of entrepreneurial virtues. These qualities, characteristics and actions are valorized as constituents of the enterprise culture to invent and fashion an entrepreneurial ideal type. Thus we can see an identity category emerging from the discourse, an entrepreneurial self. The media, an integral player in discourse production, takes up and makes this recognizable as it animates and personifies a collective identity by ascribing it to entrepreneurial individuals. Thus we find that the typifications of the entrepreneur, and their behaviours, are amplified in the press. This entrepreneurial identity becomes a framework of the attributes and qualities deemed desirable in changing environments.

In our analysis of O'Leary's presence in the press we see how he enacts the entrepreneurial self. His presentations draw upon the rhetoric of competition, but are expressed in the vocabulary of enterprise (Figure 1). He legitimates his opinions, views and actions by recourse to the logic and desirability of the entrepreneurial metaphor. This is particularly vivid when he lambasts regulators and authorities as the very antithesis of enterprise. However, O'Leary's presenting of his entrepreneurial self seems to go far beyond a virtuous re-enactment of entrepreneurial credentials. He is not afraid to vulgarize in his rough-tongued polemics. His ostentatious displays are brash, uncouth invectives; his tirades employ obscenity tempered with saucy humour. O'Leary plays with the collective identity to produce an idiosyncratic but dramatic personal identity as a champion, a people's champion, of enterprising values. This is his identity, this is who he claims to be. He does so in his own unique and colourful terms, but couched and underpinned in the logic of enterprise.

In exploring entrepreneurial identity, we have found that identity is rather more than simply something we have, or just about who we are. What we have done is to 'defamiliarize' (DiMaggio, 1995) notions of identity to show that it is not well explained as a passive ascription of qualities or personal attributes. Rather, identity seems to be something that we do identity work to acquire. Once acquired, it can be worked to considerable advantage. Although entrepreneurial identity is a relatively complex social construction, it can be usefully explained by deconstructing into the two aspects of collective and personal identity. We engaged with paradox and incongruity: paradox in the notion of identity as categorizing with, and identity as different, but also the incongruities at the micro-level of O'Leary's identity. We explained the inconsistency of how someone educated first at a public school, considered to be the 'Eton of Ireland', then at one of Ireland's best universities as an accountant, becomes identified as a rough-tongued entrepreneurial jester. Thus identity, conceptually and in entrepreneurial use, provides a useful explanatory framework to help understand the social constructions and applications of the entrepreneurial self.

In narrative terms, we can explain this example of entrepreneurial identity production and use as primarily enacting a storyline. The storyline is an animation of the enterprise discourse as role enactment, but the performance of this role is not simply replicating stereotype; instead, donning the jester's cap allows O'Leary to idiosyncratically play out his own scripts to considerable

advantage. The storyline chimes with enterprise discourse to weave a plot of enterprising challenge, but the acts, lines and even the costumes are O'Leary's skilled accomplishments.

These findings allow us to extend Goffman's ideas about the presentation of self. Goffman (1959) talks insightfully about impression management, how we act out the social roles that people expect of us. Goffman captures an understanding of the complexity of identity; that in particular contexts people may play out different roles. For Goffman, this acting out lubricates social interaction; role expectations lead to understanding particular actions in context. Goffman stops short of telling us much about what these roles are, and how they may be enacted. What we are able to show is how entrepreneurial role expectations are socially constructed from the entrepreneurial discourse. We show the congruence between what is expected of an entrepreneur, role enactment and what O'Leary does. Thus we are able to link the micro of Goffman to the macro of entrepreneurial discourse. Within the milieu of the press, we noted how role enactment and role presentation operated in a self-perpetuating spiral of amplification. How the newsworthiness of being entrepreneurial led to greater media cover: in turn this may lead to a strengthening of entrepreneurial identity at the collective level, and most clearly at the level of an individual identity. This is what Tourish and Vatcha (2005) call the poetic trope of attribution of agency. Indeed, O'Leary's acting provides reportable news, thus sustaining his media presence; but the application of our perspective has showed that while the macro of discourse provides a stereotypical role expectation, the micro enactment involves a repertoire of presenting to produce a unique individual identity.

For us, what makes O'Leary's identity unique is his skill at combining both rational and emotional appeal in his presentation of self, providing both 'bread and circuses'. The bread is the rational appeal as a good businessman, offering cheap flights, increasing competition to benefit consumers. This logic appeals to the rational and is set in the context of the entrepreneurial discourse, mobilizing ideas about value, competition and entrepreneurial benefits, but the circus is entertainment: his jesting, his clowning, his undeferential acting out of the rough-tongued protagonist are set up to capture emotional attraction which seems to overcome ennui about political squabbles. In classical rhetoric terms, as a reviewer pointed out, this pattern is explained (Erickson, 1974) in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: ethos, which is a speaker's ability to convince the audience that they are qualified (credible) to speak on the particular topic; logos, which is an appeal based on logic or reason; and pathos, which is an appeal based on emotion.

We want to argue that this production and use of identity is purposeful. In terms of construction, we see O'Leary's transformation from a privately educated accountant to an entrepreneurial hero ostentatiously championing air travellers' rights as deliberate. Charlie Clifton, an executive at Ryanair, states:

'Who's gonna run it? Are you trying to say, we're really like Southwest, but we've got a dull accountant running the company?' It wouldn't have washed. Michael knew he had to lead from the front. (cited in Ruddock, 2007: 194)

Boru (2006) also picks up on the influence of Southwest's CEO, Herb Kelleher, although O'Leary claims to have modelled himself on Branson: 'As Branson demonstrated, the way to punch above your weight is to shoot your mouth off' (*Observer*, 15 June 2003). Whatever the model for O'Leary's entrepreneurial self, his application of this identity is purposeful. We see it as both strategic and tactical. We have seen how he uses the power and licence of his entrepreneurial identity to strategically shift and decentralize debate into his chosen territory, to where Ryanair had strategic advantage. Indeed, we have seen identity employed to attempt to disrupt institutions to Ryanair's strategic advantage. Tactically, we argue that such press exposure promotes Ryanair and O'Leary and markets their brand.

Our analysis helps to explain the power of the entrepreneurial discourse. We see discourse iterated as an urgent call to entrepreneurial arms, a mode of action and representation to address some perceived need for change. However, it uses a broad brush to sweep together a miscellaneous grouping of attributes and actions as an entrepreneurial rubric. In this broad economic and social scoping of the entrepreneurial, the emergent identity category identifies with qualities, rather than with whom, so the generic entrepreneurial identification is equally broad. Thus the label, an entrepreneurial identity, is sufficiently malleable to allow practising entrepreneurs to employ it to build their own individualized identity.

Schumpeter insightfully argued that creative destruction is what entrepreneurs do. Here, we can see how it is not limited to products; by taking a broader view we can see how identity practices can be explained as an example of creative destruction in practice. The creative destructor of established airline business models also aspires to be the creative destructor of what he sees as the moribund establishment. Thus the idea of creative destruction has some explanatory power outside its normal domain of the evolutionary replacement of product or service. In this application, we can see how O'Leary employs his entrepreneurial identity to destructively challenge the establishment in the hope of creating something new.

The contribution of this study is to extend our understanding of entrepreneurial identity production and use. In so doing we have illustrated an approach for understanding the power and application of the entrepreneurial discourse. By juxtaposing the notions of identity category and personal identity, we have been able to show that entrepreneurial identity and power are not just to be read off the discourse. While discourse locates entrepreneurs in a particular entrepreneurial trajectory, it seems that entrepreneurial practices may be needed to mobilize the constituent elements as enacted, or at least re-presented as enacted. It is in this way that entrepreneurial action can become legitimized; an entrepreneurial identity becomes a licence. Thus we show how discourse can be put to work, and can become a strategic tool in skilled hands.

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Alistair R. Anderson is director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship at Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University. His research interests include the social aspects of entrepreneurship- social constructions of entrepreneurship, networking and social capital.

Lorraine Warren is a Senior Lecturer in Innovation and Director of the Centre for Strategic Innovation at the University of Southampton School of Management. Her research interests are in disruptive innovation and industry change, developing insights into how new business models and new value creation systems emerge in volatile new sectors. Specific projects in this area are focused on the creative arts, start-ups in the science sector, photovoltaics and management practices in incubators. Aligned to those projects are parallel studies that reflect on the significance of entrepreneurial identity in new concept develop.