

**Self-directed entrepreneurial learning through digital media platforms:
An online autoethnography of the YouTube-channel “Impact Theory by Tom Bilyeu”.**

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ABSTRACT

Numerous possibilities and opportunities have opened up for students, employees, and creative professionals to improve their personal process of learning, and support their process of self-development by means of using digital media technologies. The problem is how to develop an understanding of the value of using digital media technologies for entrepreneurial learning, and how to effectively apply the self-directed learned knowledge in such a way that their professional lives will be improved. This research is situated in two emerging fields of inquiry: entrepreneurial learning in entrepreneurship research, and online self-directed learning in media education research. The main research question is: What is the value of entrepreneurship videos for online self-directed entrepreneurial learning? With this focus, the study provides insight into how online self-directed learning through digital media platforms can be supportive of conscious self-development as an entrepreneur, and for building a reflective appreciation of continuously developing knowledge around entrepreneurship. This includes learning what it means to become an entrepreneur by yourself (through online self-directed learning). This study uses and critically reflects on the content of recorded and uploaded interview videos of entrepreneurs and their self-development, which are presented on a specific YouTube-channel (Impact Theory by Tom Bilyeu). Two methods of analysis were used to evaluate the data sample of 10 semi-structured interviews that were published on the 'Impact Theory' YouTube-channel. The first method is a directed content analysis of the interview content, focusing on what they have learned about doing entrepreneurship. The second method of analysis is an autoethnography, that is used to examine the personal experience of the researcher. The overall aim is to enhance and produce a self-reflective auto-ethnography about what the author (me) can learn from watching videos on entrepreneurship and how this impacts a process of conscious self-directed entrepreneurial learning. The theoretical foundation of the directed content analysis is based on the work of two authors. Firstly, Rae's (2006) conceptual framework for analysing entrepreneurial learning for technology-based entrepreneurs. Including the themes: personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity, contextual learning and negotiated enterprise. Secondly, Cope's (2005) dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship is also used as a foundation for the directed content analysis including the themes: content dimension and process dimension. The

analysis shows that the entrepreneurial development goes hand-in-hand with the development as a person. Specifically, the entrepreneurs prioritized their self-development as a foundation for their development of an entrepreneurial identity, and then used this as a driver and basis to advance in their process of entrepreneurial learning. Through revealing their personal knowledge and reflecting on their experiences, they create a surface of intense self-reflection for audiences. A key take-away is that through optimizing the underlying mechanisms of self-development, one can better navigate the process of entrepreneurial learning and self-directed learning, and thereby become a more conscious entrepreneurial being.

KEYWORDS: self-directed learning, entrepreneurial learning, media entrepreneurship, self-development, digital media platform

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1. Introduction

This study focuses on the ways in which new learning environments such as digital media platforms can support self-directed learning (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012; Koh, 2014; Bonk, Lee, Kou, Xu & Sheu, 2015; Gan, Menkhoff & Smith, 2015) and explores if and how a student can develop and enhance her knowledge and entrepreneurial learning capabilities (Erstad & Green, 2013; Wang & Chugh, 2014; Fayolle, 2013; Rae, 2000, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006; Cope, 2005; Bergh, Thorgren & Wincent, 2011; St-Jean & Audet, 2012), specifically through autonomous self-directed online learning (Tseng, 2013). Through reflexive qualitative inquiry (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), this study weaves together an auto-ethnography (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Ellis et al., 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Vesa & Vaara, 2014) with a directed qualitative content analysis of a YouTube channel about entrepreneurship and personal development (Assarroudi, Nabavi, Armat, Ebadi & Vaismoradi, 2018; Elo et al., 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Puppis, 2019; Schreier, 2013). This provides a singular view and rich appreciation of the different modalities and opportunities of entrepreneurship videos that are available online. It contributes to the burgeoning stream of literature around entrepreneurial learning, by highlighting the content and process of entrepreneurial development (Cope, 2005; Fletcher & Watson, 2007; Menkhoff et al., 2012; Nielsen et al., 2018; Nooteboom, 2000; Rae, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006; Zaheer et al., 2019). Why is this relevant?

This is relevant because Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis, blogs, web-based communities, social networking sites, and video sharing sites have become increasingly more popular (O'Reilly, 2005). According to Karakas & Manisaligil (2012), such digital media platforms are having a significant positive impact on self-directed learning and talent development. Since these technologies are easily accessible, cost-effective, and are offering high-quality content online for free. Also, they are a more flexible learning tool than traditional ways of knowledge sharing such as formal education (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012). For example, learners can replay and pause online videos on YouTube and make notes in order to memorize the information. Correspondingly, the platforms provide new ways of sharing knowledge, creating collaborations and participations, and they are providing feedback to learners through interactions. Therefore, numerous possibilities and opportunities have opened up for students, employees, and creative professionals to improve their personal process of learning and support their process of self-development by using digital media technologies (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012).

First of all, research suggests that YouTube can be used productively as a learning environment that can facilitate online self-directed learning, by providing the necessary resources for learners to meet their self-directed learning objectives (Lee, Osop, Goh, & Kelni, 2017). According to Gan, Menkhoff & Smith (2015), teachers can innovate education and learning by understanding more about technology-enabled learning processes. This is important because students' expectations for effective education have changed rapidly due to the continuous influx of new technologies. Learners and educators are offered opportunities for innovative and flexible education through discovering such technology enabled learning platforms, as these apps and websites can be accessed at home, in the classroom or on the go. However, the challenges remain on how such interactive web technologies can be effectively integrated into course design, and how these technologies can enrich the learning experience of students in higher education (Gan, Menkhoff & Smith, 2015). Learners need to navigate and be supported in such a way that they actually learn something useful and understand how they can effectively apply this knowledge to improve their professional lives.

Secondly, education on entrepreneurship is often too disconnected from entrepreneurial practice (Donnellon et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Nooteboom, 2000; Rae, 2005; Shepherd & Gruber, 2020). This means, there is a gap between what is taught in entrepreneurship education and what entrepreneurs do (Menkhoff et al., 2012; Nielsen et al., 2018; Rae, 2004; Zaheer et al., 2019). This issue is not yet sufficiently addressed by the entrepreneurship education research (Fayolle, 2013). Essentially, there is a need for examining how to mix practice-oriented knowledge and theoretical knowledge in relation to the educational setting (Menkhoff et al., 2012; Shepherd & Gruber, 2020). Still, entrepreneurship education is helpful in better understanding the concepts supporting entrepreneurial learning and the development of entrepreneurial competences (Fayolle, 2013). Therefore, this research investigates the prevailing theories of entrepreneurial learning – with an online self-directed learning practice. Theoretically, the study draws on concepts from the realm of entrepreneurial learning, such as the process of opportunity identification, evaluation, and exploitation. Practically, this study integrates knowledge about how social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube could offer practical insights and alternative views on how entrepreneurs think, make decisions, behave, and act entrepreneurially. Therefore, two research questions have been formulated as follows:

RQ: What is the value of entrepreneurship videos for online self-directed entrepreneurial learning?

And, if self-directed learning can be applied to study the processes of entrepreneurial learning, then the sub-research question becomes:

SRQ: What can I learn by going through the process of online self-directed entrepreneurial learning?

In practice, learning how to become an entrepreneur is a “long-term and incremental process that evolves throughout the professional lives of the individual” (Tseng, 2013, p. 440). Since the entrepreneurial career is practically taking place outside of the formal education and training settings, it makes sense pay more attention to ways in which the process of learning can be connected to an individuals’ development of their professional career (Tseng, 2013). Bearing in mind that even though learning is stimulated in formal education settings, it is different than actually “experiencing”, “feeling”, or “getting close to” the entrepreneurial activities, experiences, and emotions an individual can have in their entrepreneurial careers (Tseng, 2013, p. 440).

However, if it is possible for students to be taught more about self-directed learning, then they could independently learn to become entrepreneurs in their professional career by connecting how to navigate their own process of self-directed learning (SDL) with their entrepreneurial learning (EL) (Tseng, 2013). Tseng (2013) defines entrepreneurial learning (EL), “as the process by which people acquire new knowledge from direct experience and from observing the behaviours, action, and consequences of others” (Tseng, 2013, p.428). Tseng (2013) understands entrepreneurial learning in terms of experiential skills, and how these skills are applied in new venture performance (Tseng, 2013, p. 428).

Tseng (2013) positions self-directed learning (SDL) as “a learning process in which individual take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (Brookfield, 2009 in Tseng, 2013, p.429).

Research has shown that there are several benefits to the pursuit of self-directed learning in the workplace. These benefits are increased confidence and problem-solving capabilities, increased performance, stronger affective commitment, improved critical thinking, saving costs in training programs, sharing knowledge and building networks with

others, and providing a sense of meaning at work (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012). According to Karakas and Manisaligil (2012), the current global media platform of the internet is a massive force in which millions of people collaborate in multiple ways to provide and participate in wealth creation, innovation, and social development (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012). Tseng (2013) and Candy (2004) expect that the demands of a changing world will lead to greater amount of self-directed learning (Tseng, 2013; Candy, 2004).

Senges, Brown and Rheingold (2008) argue that social technologies can be used by students for training critical inquiry – a central skill in education – because it enables them “to perceive the world as a learning opportunity space”. They provide a humanistic view in which educators can foster the professional as well as personal development of students (Senges, Brown & Rheingold, 2008, p. 126). Moreover, Tseng (2013) and Candy (2004), explain how self-directed learning is one keyway in which entrepreneurs are able to keep up with changes in the digital era. It is for this reason that self-direction involves “interaction between a person and his or her environment, where knowledge is tentative, evanescent, and socially constructed” (Candy, 2004 in Tseng, 2013, p. 429). Learning is seen as “a qualitative shift in how phenomena are viewed”, and individuals are engaged with their environment “in complex, mutually interdependent relationships” (Candy, 2004 in Tseng, 2013, p. 429). Therefore, it is important for individuals who are looking to become entrepreneurs to consider to the dynamics of independent self-directed learning – besides – the learning that takes place inside the formal education and training settings (Tseng, 2013; Candy, 2004).

In the next chapter the theoretical framework will be presented containing the conceptual frameworks of entrepreneurial learning. It describes how self-directed learning relates to digital media landscape, and how self-directed learning relates to entrepreneurial learning. A short summary of the entrepreneurial career of Tom Bilyeu the founder of the YouTube-channel *Impact Theory* will be given. The section includes a description and reflection of the concept of media entrepreneurship, including the type of innovations that are present in economies with media markets. It includes a description of how entrepreneurial opportunities are discover or created.

In the methods chapter the two different methods of analysis will be explained: directed content analysis and autoethnography. The details of the operationalization of the methods are stated. This chapter also includes a clarification of research design decisions, the methods of data collection, the ethical considerations, and the validity and reliability of the study.

The results chapter contains the findings of the directed content analysis and the autoethnography. First the findings of the directed content analysis in relation to Rae's (2006) conceptual framework will be presented, followed by the findings in relation to Cope's (2005) conceptual framework. Then, the findings of the autoethnography will be presented in the order of the interviews that were conducted.

Finally, the conclusion of the study is presented including theoretical and practical implications of the study, the limitations, and the suggestions for future research. The reference list and appendices are included at the end.

2. Theoretical Framework

The basis of the theoretical framework for this study has been derived from several other authors. One of the first building blocks is the conceptual framework presented by Tseng (2013) relating self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning to entrepreneurial performance. The second building block is the conceptual framework of entrepreneurial learning as an experiential process as stated by Politis (2005). The third one is Cope's (2005) dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship. The fourth block is Rae's (2006) conceptual framework for analysing entrepreneurial learning for technology-based entrepreneurs. Given the fact that Tseng (2013) has also used Cope (2005) and Politis (2005) for his framework, I investigated how these frameworks have come about and how they can be of used for this study. In the following sections the similarities and differences between the four frameworks are explored. Besides describing the conceptual frameworks of entrepreneurial learning, the concept of self-directed learning is reflected on in relevant manner. Moreover, self-directed learning is described and explained in relation to digital media platforms. The concept of media entrepreneurship is also integrated, specifically to include the type of innovations that are present in economies with media markets, and how entrepreneurial opportunities are discover or created. A short summary of the entrepreneurial career of Tom Bilyeu the founder of the YouTube-channel *Impact Theory* concludes this section.

2.1 Self-directed learning

Karakas and Manisaligil (2012) have performed a literature review on self-directed learning (SDL) in which they cited the following widely accepted definition of SDL by Knowles (1975): "a process in which individual take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (1975, as cited in Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012, p. 713).

For example, through taking initiative an adult can design, pursue, and carry out a particular education of interest independently. Following Candy (1991), the authors describe self-directed learning as "an independent pursuit involving a philosophy of personal autonomy and self-management". In which "identifying, selecting, and assessing particular learning resources and learning strategies" that are appropriate for studying specific content

are important skills that ought to be developed by self-directed learners (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012, p. 713).

It is expected by Brocket and Hiemstra (1991) that self-directed learners adopt “primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process” (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012, p. 713). In that way, the authors characterize the self-directed learner as someone who has to capacity to diagnose their own needs, formulate their own goals, and monitor and evaluate their own progress when learning (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012).

Still, providing students with skills of critical inquiry is a central task for teachers in education (Senges, Brown, & Rheingold, 2008). On the one hand, self-directed learning is a “critical competence” that needs to be fostered by formal educational organizations since it provides promising results for individuals when they are preparing themselves for their professional careers (Morris, 2019, p. 57). On the other hand, it is mentioned that students also need to be mastering study materials at “at their own pace without instructor’s aid” (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012). Self-directed learners are individuals who undertake learning for personal growth, which is increasingly taking place in informal settings, or in settings where there is no instructor present.

As Morris (2019) points out, is important to learn this SDL competence because it caters to the need for adaptation to social and contextual changes that are increasingly becoming more fluid and complex. Morris (2019) has summarized the following benefits of fostering the SDL competence: it enables individuals to update their skills which provides them with a certain protection against long-term unemployment; and as such it helps in the avoidance of knowledge and skill obsolescence; it empowers emancipatory action; and it is facilitating learners’ progression toward self-actualization (Morris, 2019). Through self-directed learning adults can become empowered in developing those abilities needed to survive in a vastly changing world (Morris, 2019). As such, following Guglielmino (2008), self-directed learning can be useful “in response to newness, problems, or challenges in the environment” (Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012, p. 713).

2.2 Online self-directed learning and the digital media landscape

Even though, the above-mentioned definition by Knowles (1975) does not include the word ‘online’, findings of the research done by Karakas and Manisaligil (2012) indicate that self-directed learning has been transformed and changed due to several technological developments in the creative digital era. The definition of SDL theory will be used

throughout this study as a working definition of what I will refer to for research purposes of this study as Online Self-Directed Learning (OSDL) instead. However, this does not mean that they are precisely the same thing.

Karakas and Manisaligil (2012) have researched how several transformations in the online media landscape have led to new perspectives on what it means to be a learner in the creative digital age. According to the authors, the phenomenon of self-directed learning (SDL) has been transformed in several keyways, namely by means of a) virtual collaboration, b) technological convergence, c) global connectivity, d) online communities and e) digital creativity.

First of all, according to the authors, SDL has become an increasingly more social and networked process in which learners can collaborate on a global scale by means of virtual collaboration. Self-directed learners can use the cyberspace to find new ideas and innovations, they can connect with peers for support and guidance, and they can co-produce new knowledge by using collaborative conversations, and they can learn from others in the network (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012).

Secondly, due to technological convergence, online learners can continue to learn throughout their lives because they have a wide range of devices, digital tools and platforms available to them (phones, tablets, e-mails, chats, social networking sites, video sharing sites, blog, wikis, texts, presentation slides, audio files, and photographs). Online learners may use these options to study in a flexible way and can adjust them towards their own interests and passions. As such, these technological tools and platforms can facilitate a continuous process of online learning. In which the learning process can be tailored towards the learners' own learning needs and learning preferences (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012).

Thirdly, not only can personal interests be established, but the online self-directed learners can also become informed global citizens by experiencing a sense of global connectivity. SDL online can lead to the development of a global mindset, greater decision-making skills, and feeling of being socially connected to a large community. Which in turns leads to social inclusivity, personal fulfilment and increased economic competitiveness (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012).

Furthermore, online communities can provide a sense of social responsibility that drives the self-directed learner to continue to successfully pursue their learning goals. Preferable, these efforts are pursued in such a way that it creates positive social changes in the community and establishes a desire to contribute to the well-being of other individuals (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012).

Lastly, according to the authors, that the nature of SDL in the workplace has changed. This cultural paradigm shift of creativity, innovation, and digital literacy has led to a demand for different sets of learning skills than those in the past. Examples of such new learning skills and professional competences are, e.g. “creativity, creative thinking, collective creativity, design thinking, open authorship, cooperation radar, signal/noise management, mobbability, fluency, and protovation” (McGonial, 2008, in Karakas & Manisaligil, 2012, p.720). The authors suggest that training and development programs, and human resource departments in organizations should provide plenty of opportunities for their employees, and support in terms of resources. So, that they will be able to continue the pursuit of learning new essential skills by means of SDL (Karakas and Manisaligil, 2012).

2.3 Self-directed learning and entrepreneurship videos on YouTube

Lee, Osop, Goh and Kelni (2017) have argued that the platforms such as YouTube (and similar social media technologies) are able to make available valuable resources for self-directed learners. Yet, caution should be exercised on using particular videos just because they are popular or because they have a high number of views and comments. The authors suggest that online videos resources need to be evaluated on their usefulness for formal and public education purposes, and that media literacy policies should be created to help navigate self-directed learners throughout the digital media landscape (Lee, Osop, Goh, & Kelni, 2017). More research is needed on this topic to further the development of such media literacy policies and facilitate self-directed learners in the attainment of their learning goals in an accountable way.

Yet, these findings also suggest that self-directed learners who, when armed with an actual sense of autonomy and control over what they want to learn and how they want to learn, can become effective in using YouTube to support their formal education (Lee, Osop, Goh, & Kelni, 2017). The authors conclude that self-directed learners take more initiative and have more motivation to become proactive individuals who can take appropriate action steps and make better decisions. Furthermore, self-directed learners are not passive consumers, but are (becoming) empowered and motivated through the knowledge they gained from watching YouTube videos. The authors suggest more research on SDL and YouTube as a platform for self-directed learning is required because different types of educational content need to be evaluated to allow for better generalizability of results (Lee, Osop, Goh, & Kelni, 2017).

2.4 Media entrepreneurship

The following definition of media entrepreneurship will be employed throughout this study, and is stated by Khajeheian (2017) as:

“Media entrepreneurship is taking the risk to exploit opportunities (creation/discovery) by innovative use of (radical/incremental/imitative) resources (ownership/control) in transform of an idea into activities to offer value (creation/delivery) in a media form content/platform/user data) that meets the need of a specific portion of market (businesses or consumers), either in an individual effort or by creation of new venture or entrepreneurial managing of an existing organizational entity and to earn benefit (money/attention/favorite behavior) from one of the sources that is willing to pay for (direct consumers, advertisers, data demanders or any customer of generated information of consumers)” (Khajeheian, 2017, p.102).

This definition is valuable because it captures the creative and innovative use of opportunities and resources, without being solely exclusive to social media and digital media practices. It can also apply towards traditional media companies and/or other forms of entrepreneurship practices in the creative industries. Essentially, this innovative function makes inquiry into current digital media practices so relevant. Additionally, the type of innovation that is used in media entrepreneurship can influence the potential success of that endeavour (Khajeheian, 2013).

For instance, the type of innovation that flourishes in developed economies where media markets are established is “disruptive innovation”. Disruptive innovation is “derived from identifying and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities through new combinations of resources to create new capabilities that lead to competitive advantages” (Khajeheian, 2013, p.128), and it produces a kind of change that is revolutionary. While, in developing countries “imitative innovation” has a greater potential because they play a major role in structuring the activities of media entrepreneurship (Khajeheian, 2013, p.128).

Another type of innovation is “sustaining innovation” which leads to incremental and smaller evolutionary changes in society and their economies because it is “the product of learning how to better exploit existing capabilities that contribute to competitive advantages” (Khajeheian, 2013, p.128). As such, traditional media markets tend to have been centred around sustaining innovation, whereas social media markets have been pointed out to make use of disruptive innovation (Küng, 2017). Although, these types of innovations are not

mutually exclusive in these markets. According to Khajeheian (2013), it is possible for strategic companies to engage in both the sustaining kind of innovation as well as the disruptive kind of innovation.

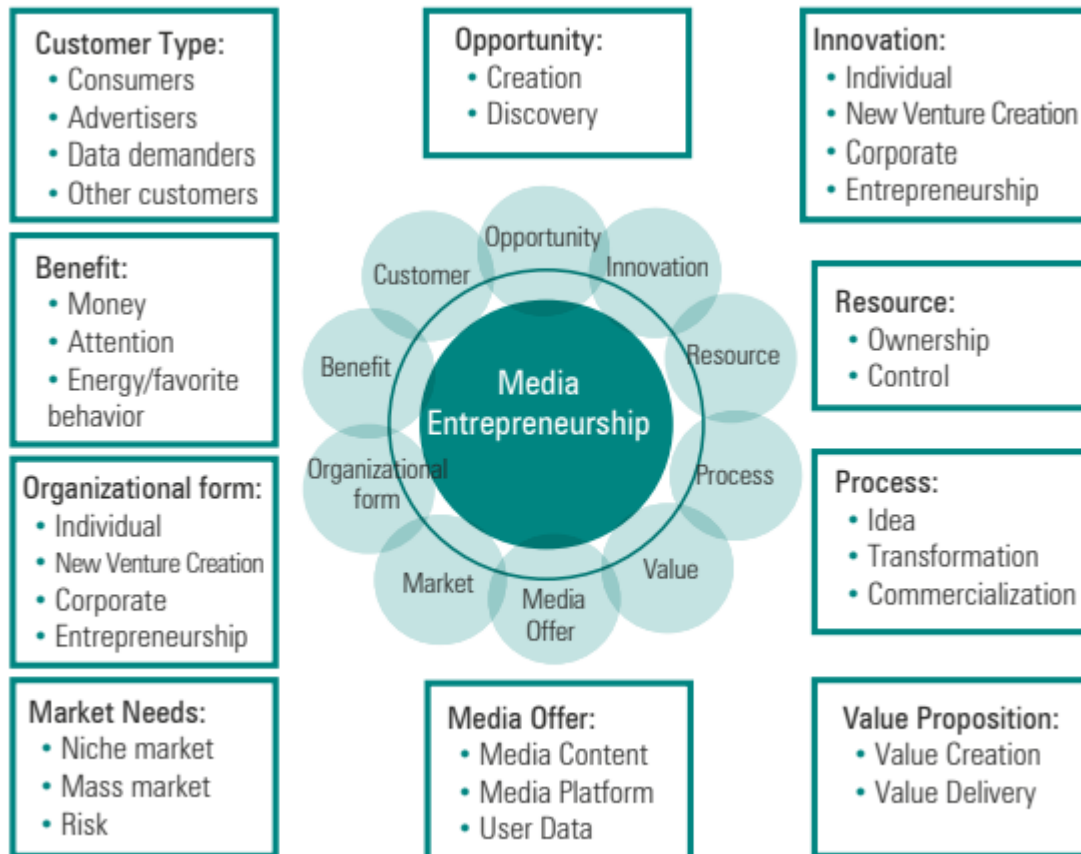


Figure 1. Elements of Media Entrepreneurship definition (Khajeheian, 2017).

Today, according to K ng (2017), this means that traditional media companies as well as new social media companies - such as YouTube - need to master this balancing act of trying to find the right type of innovations, and the accurate type of strategy and organization to accompany those innovations. In term of media content, this is an act of trying to find the correct balance between “novelty and recognisability”. Such concerns as how to reconcile the need to “innovate and optimise”, and the need for “diversity and harmonisation”, and the need for “autonomy and centralisation” are issues related to the strategy and organisation of the media industry (K ng, 2017, p.313).

However, investigating the total effects of new media companies such as YouTube on society will be another inquiry on its own. In this instance, this study will explore the

consequences that one YouTube channel might have on one individual (me, the researcher). I will focus on the work of a “media entrepreneur” called Tom Bilyeu, and his channel *Impact Theory*, which also revolves around entrepreneurship and media entrepreneurship by means of the topics that he addresses in his interviews. Very broadly, the role of a media entrepreneur in society is that of a “change agent” (Khajeheian, 2013, p.127) which contributes smaller or larger elements to the general innovation trends and capabilities that industries and societies can harness.

According to Achtenhagen (2008, pp.138-139), the role of change agent can be established through the following five functions:

“1) adopting a mission to create and sustain a kind of artistic, cultural and/or societal value (besides economic value); 2) recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission; 3) engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning; 4) by acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand; and lastly, 5) by exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created” (in Khajeheian, 2013, p.127).

In this sense, the media entrepreneur Tom Bilyeu is functioning as a change agent through his YouTube channel (Bilyeu, 2021a).

2.5 The entrepreneurial change agent Tom Bilyeu

In 2010, Tom Bilyeu co-founded the company *Quest Nutrition* with his wife Lisa Bilyeu, Shannan Pena, Ron Penna, and Mike Osborn (Yi, 2015). Additionally, Tom Bilyeu is the host, and co-founder of the show *Impact Theory*, which he has co-founded with his wife Lisa in 2016 (Impact Theory, 2019a). The company *Quest Nutrition* has effectively sold healthy protein bars (low-carb, soy free, gluten free, and high in fiber). Together with his team at *Quest Nutrition*, he developed the recipes, created the factory, and distributed the products (protein bars, cookies, chips, pizza, shakes, and powders) (Quest Nutrition LLC, 2019). *Impact Theory* is a “weekly interview show that explores the mindsets of the world’s highest achievers to learn their secrets to success”, and is “designed to give people the tools and knowledge they need to unlock their potential and impact the world” (Impact Theory, 2019b).

At first, the Bilyeu’s established their social media presence (on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) primarily as a means of generating more brand awareness for the

company *Quest Nutrition*, where they posted motivational content among other things. Later, they published multiple video-series on his YouTube channel, and the website: www.impacttheory.com. These shows are called: *Impact Theory*, *Health Theory*, *Women of Impact*, *Relationship Theory*, and *Conversations with Tom* (Impact Theory, 2019a). Where they discuss various topics with other influential individuals as interviewees such as entrepreneurship, business, health, relationships, and lifestyle among other things.

Currently, (15th of February 2021) Tom Bilyeu has 1,9 million subscribers on YouTube with 691 videos available including 210 full episodes of *Impact Theory*, and a total sum of 133.820.282 views (Bilyeu, 2021a). On Instagram, he has 1,7 million followers and 312 posts available (Bilyeu, 2021b). As of August 2019, *Simply Good Food* has bought the company *Quest Nutrition* for 1 billion dollars. In 2013, *Quest Nutrition* employed over 200 people, and had over 82 million dollars in revenue. In 2014, *Quest Nutrition* placed number two on the “Inc.5000 list” for the fastest growing private company in North America by growing 57000% in the first three years of operation. By the end of 2015, Quest products were sold in over 70 countries at over 4000 points of distribution (Forbes, 2016).

On the website of *Impact Theory* it is publicized that Tom Bilyeu has received multiple awards: “Success Magazine’s Top 25 influential people in 2018”, and “Synopsis Awards Finalist: for Best Host & Web series in 2017”, and “Entrepreneur of the Year by Secret Entourage in 2016” (Impact Theory, 2019a).

This shows that Tom Bilyeu is an entrepreneurial change agent in the best possible sense, because after his business success with Quest, he created a mission-based studio where he strives to provide social and cultural value the community. He created several web series such as *Impact Theory* where he initiated people’s learning process into entrepreneurial learning and self-development. Bilyeu is functioning at the forefront of the innovative content creation movement in the YouTube community. He offers content in which the world’s most successful people in the industry are invited to speak about their mindset and perspectives on life and business. Ultimately, with the aim to help the viewers to transform their own lives as well.

2.6 The challenge of identifying entrepreneurial opportunities

The success of the entrepreneurial story of Tom Bilyeu suggest that it might be easy to become an entrepreneur. It might suggest that anybody can become rich and reach millions of followers. However, this process is not as straightforward as it might seem. Politis (2005) points to the question of “why some individuals have the ability to *discover*

entrepreneurial opportunities, while other do not” (Politis, 2005, p. 403). Whereas Tseng (2013) has argued that individuals “who take the initiative to learn and accumulate their learning competencies *have more opportunities* to be successful in their entrepreneur endeavours” (Tseng, 2013, p. 439). An explanation of why Politis (2005) and Tseng (2013) have used different stances lies in the underlying epistemological differences.

As Alvarez and Barney (2010) have stated there is an incompatibility between approaching opportunities from a critical realist perspective, and from a perspective of evolutionary realism. From a critical realist perspective, opportunities must be discovered because they are objective opportunities that are formed by exogenous shocks to pre-existing industries. As of a perspective of evolutionary realism, opportunities must be created by the actions of entrepreneurs themselves (Alvarez & Barney, 2010).

In this way, “creation opportunities” are formed depending on the path that entrepreneurs have gone through. The reason that some entrepreneurs create opportunities and others do not is due to differences in the actions these entrepreneurs have taken on their evolutionary path (Alvarez & Barney, 2010). Contrastingly, the exogenous shocks occurring in pre-existing markets deliver competitive differences that can be exploited by alert individuals who are able to collect information and implement strategies to navigate the market; and consequently, *exploit* these “discovery opportunities” (Alvarez & Barney, 2010). Tseng’s (2013) paper can therefore be placed in this type of the evolutionary realism perspective, and Politis’ (2005) paper is to be read as written from a critical realist perspective. This shows, the notion of discovery or creation is not as simple as it sounds.

Additionally, those who are “forming creation opportunities” are fundamentally operating under conditions of uncertainty, whereas those who are discovering opportunities are operating under conditions of risk (Alvarez & Barney, 2010). Implying that risk follows the idea of using entrepreneurial *experience*, and uncertainty possibly follows the idea of using entrepreneurial *knowledge*. Yet, both including the underlying assumption that one needs the ability to identify these opportunities.

If this is the case, then it could be argued that – following the line of reasoning from March (1991) in Politis (2005, p.408) – *exploitation* concerns the exploitation of what is already known. This means that individuals are learning from experience by exploiting old certainties (such as refinement, routine, and implementation of knowledge). Whereas, *exploration* is concerned with creating variety in an experience, resulting in a change in behaviour that becomes the dominant state (Politis, 2005). Meaning that individuals are learning from experiences by exploring new possibilities (such as variation,

experimentation, discovery and innovation) (Politis, 2005).

However, Tseng (2013) seems to have neglected this important aspect of Politis (2005) paper, namely the essential inputs of the transformation process understood as: “exploration” and “exploitation” of opportunities. Not only, can these concepts of exploration and exploitation be useful in the process of identifying opportunities, they are fruitful for the development of entrepreneurial learning (Politis, 2005). This shows, a reflexive appreciation of the concepts and their background assumptions enables a more conscious application and understanding of the academic knowledge in practice. This becomes key for SDL.

2.7 Relation between SDL and entrepreneurial learning

Tseng (2013) has explored the relationships between self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning in a comprehensive literature review and has constructed a conceptual framework to show how these relationships can enhance entrepreneurial performance. Tseng (2013) has argued that the following key components of self-directed learning can have an influence on the essence of the learning process and can therefore – in the context of the entrepreneurial pursuit – be connected to entrepreneurial learning.

These key components are prior start-up experience, prior management experience, and the development of self-monitoring and self-management skills (Tseng, 2013). The author does point out how prior experience alone simply is not sufficient for entrepreneurial learning to happen. According to Tseng (2013), the self-monitoring and self-management capabilities are what makes it possible to directly lead to the development of that entrepreneurs’ career experiences. Thus, it stands that the prior experiences influence the development of self-monitoring skills and self-management skills, and that in turn, those skills are needed in the first place to make accumulation of entrepreneurial experiences happen (Tseng, 2013).

However, this argument echoes a circular reasoning, yet there is some ground to it because one can for example, dream about creating a start-up or managing a business all they want - but until they go out into the field and acquire some real experience by creating that start-up, or by experiencing how to manage a business, those entrepreneurial capabilities necessary to maintain the business are not properly developed. Of course, envisioning what kind of start-up one would want to start before doing it helps, but it is not enough. It is a first steppingstone in the process of learning to become an entrepreneur and learning by doing. Creating and maintaining a business is not a static property because a business operates

under the influence of many internal and external conditions, and this operation does not stop (Politis, 2005). It is a continuous process, and by that token it is important to understand that the process of learning how to become entrepreneurial is a continuous process as well.

2.8 The process of engaged and reflective entrepreneurial learning

Above I have shown how there can be a difference in the process of learning to become an entrepreneur depending on how well the individual is able to self-manage and self-monitor, and able to learn, explore and/or exploit (transform) their entrepreneurial knowledge and/or entrepreneurial experiences.

Rae (2006) has developed a conceptual framework for analysis entrepreneurial learning in the setting of technology-based enterprise. Rae (2006) demonstrates connections between the emergence of entrepreneurial identity, learning as a social and contextual process, opportunity recognition, and venture formation as a negotiated activity. This framework can be used to interpret entrepreneurial learning experiences (Rae, 2006). The definition of entrepreneurial learning as stated by Rae (2006): “entrepreneurial learning is a dynamic process of awareness, reflection, association, and application that involves transforming experience and knowledge into functional learning outcomes” (Rae, 2006, p. 42).

Rae (2006) has developed a conceptual framework for analysing entrepreneurial learning for technology-based entrepreneurs, based on Wegner’s social theory of learning (Rae, 2006). Similarities with the definition of self-directed learners and this framework for entrepreneurial learning can be found in the theoretical assumptions underlying this conceptual framework. The conceptual framework consists out of a combination of three themes. The first is the personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity, the second is contextual learning, and the third theme is negotiated enterprise (Rae, 2006).

The first theme includes: the narrative construction of identity; identity as practice; the entrepreneur’s role in relation to family; and the tension between current and future identity. Rae (2006) explains how the acquisition of an entrepreneurial identity comes into being. It emerges through a process of personal learning, in which the individuals change how they see themselves, and how other see them (Rae, 2006).

Secondly, according to Rae (2006) entrepreneurial learning is formed through the social, environmental, and economic context in which it takes place. It is this context that governs what is learned, how this learning takes place and how it is used. Contextual learning therefore includes social participation in communities, in the industry and other

networks where individuals experience, shared, compare, and relate to meanings. Rae (2006) emphasizes how it is through situated experiences and social relationships that people intuitively learn how to become entrepreneur and how they may develop the ability to recognise opportunities Rae, 2006).

The third concept is the notion the negotiated enterprise in which a business venture is the outcome of negotiated relationships with other parties. Such negotiations include: “processes of participation and joint enterprise, negotiated meaning, structures and practices, changing roles over time, engaging in network of external relationship; and interactively exchanging ideas with customers, investors and co-actors in the enterprise” (Rae, 2006, p.49).

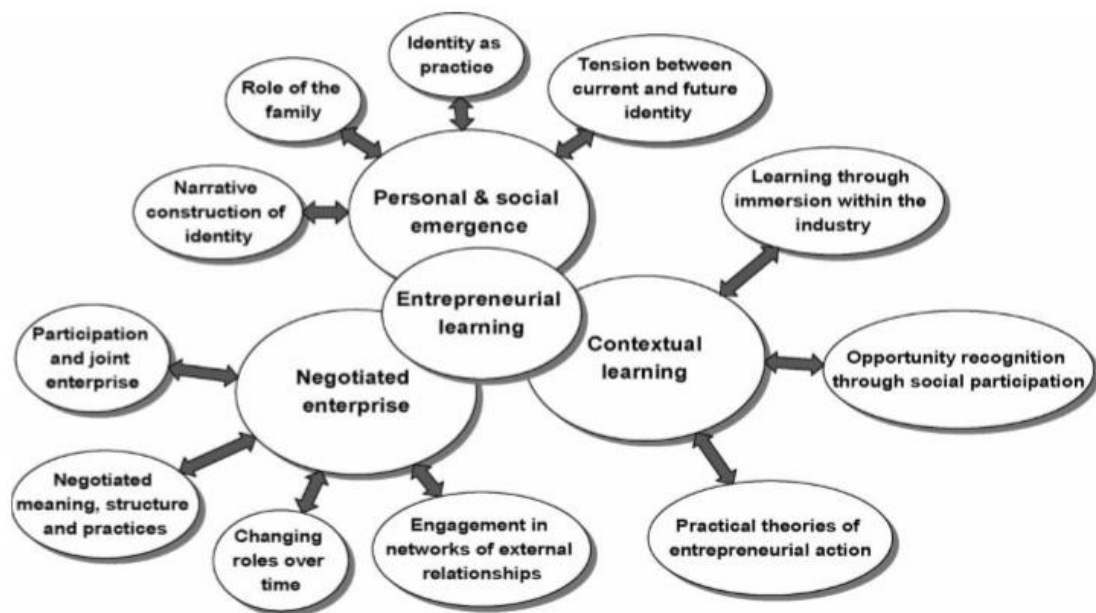


Figure 2. Rae’s (2006) triadic model of entrepreneurial learning. The basis of the conceptual framework for studying entrepreneurial learning for technology-based enterprises (Rae, 2006).

However, as Cope (2005) explains, defining entrepreneurship in terms of new venture creation, largely overlooks the ability of entrepreneurs to learn and adapt once the business is established (Cope, 2005). Therefore, because entrepreneurs are “continually learning and developing” their businesses in relation to the wider environment, it is rather useful to define entrepreneurs in terms of “becoming” instead of “who is” (Cope, 2005). Cope (2005) has reconceptualized the nature of entrepreneurial learning and emphasizes the importance of one’s learning history in the continuous evolution of the dynamic

entrepreneurial learning process. He asserts that “entrepreneurs learn by updating a subjective stock of knowledge accumulated on the basis of past experiences” (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001, p.5 in Cope, 2005).

Cope (2005) has conceptualized the development of a dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship based on two dimensions. The first dimension is the “content” of entrepreneurial learning task, and the second dimension is the “process” of learning that simulate the learning content (Cope, 2005). The content dimension has been defined in terms of five broad research areas, which are: a) learning about oneself, b) learning about business; c) learning about the environment and entrepreneurial network; d) learning about small business management; and d) learning about the nature and management of relationships (Cope, 2005).

In terms of the process dimension of entrepreneurial learning, Cope (2005) emphasizes the importance of “critical learning events”. Both positive and negative experiences, such as critical successes and failures, assert the continuous learning process because “confronting and overcoming challenges and problems can be rich sources of learning” (Cope, 2005). Another element of the process dimension is the “affective mode of learning”, where individuals “learn by encounter, by direct experience” and by “being immersed in an experience” (Cope, 2005).

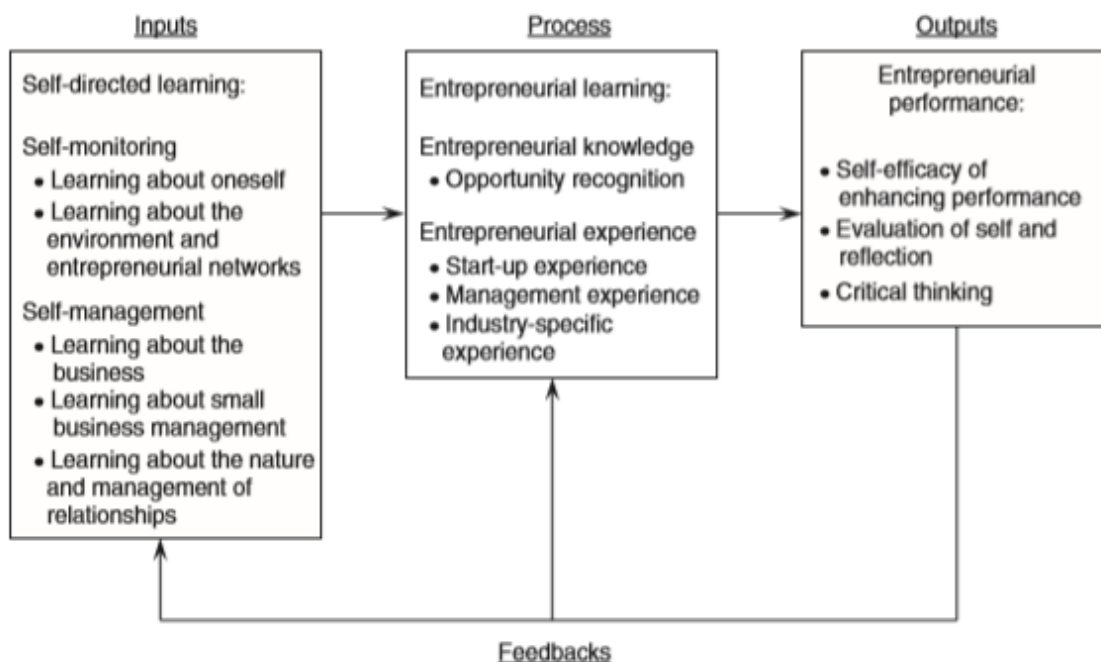


Figure 3. Conceptual framework by Tseng (2013) outlining the relationships among self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning, also illustrating how these relationships can

enhance entrepreneurial performance (Tseng, 2013).

Tseng (2013) states the definition of self-directed learning as: “the process by which entrepreneurs acquire new knowledge, including skills and specific competences, from experience or by observing others, and assimilate and organize with entrepreneurial learning in memory to make them retrievable for the determinants of entrepreneurial performance” (Tseng, 2013, p.428). Tseng (2013) also states that self-directed learning is: “an approach in which entrepreneurs carry personal responsibility and collaboratively control cognitive (self-monitoring) and contextual (self-management) process in constructing and conforming meaningful and worthwhile learning outcomes” (Tseng, 2013, p.429). In which self-management involves “shaping the contextual conditions in the performance of goal-directed and decision-making actions for entrepreneurs” (Tseng, 2013, p.429). Whereas self-monitoring is “the process whereby the entrepreneur takes responsibility for the construction of personal meaning” (Tseng, 2013, p.429). As such, self-monitoring belief are useful for developing a start-up business because it “contributes to the formation of entrepreneurial development and to become self-directed as an entrepreneur” (Tseng, 2013, p. 429). Therefore, it is through self-directed learning that entrepreneurs learn to self-manage and self-monitor their entrepreneurial careers (Tseng, 2013).

2.9 Reflexive-analytical comparison of the frameworks

Tseng (2013) has based his “input” on Cope’s (2005) “content dimension” but ordered them into two new categories called: “*self-monitoring*” (i.e., “learning about oneself; and “learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks”, (Cope, 2005)); and “*self-management*” (i.e., “learning about business”; “learning about small business management”; “learning about the nature and management or relationships” (Cope, 2005)). However, Tseng (2013) seems to have substituted aspects of Politis’ (2005) “process of entrepreneurial learning” in place of Cope’s (2005) “process dimension” under Tseng’s (2013) “process”.

Although, Tseng (2013) mentions the outcomes of the process to be aimed at entrepreneurial performance: “self-efficiency of enhancing performance”, “evaluation of self and reflection”, and “critical thinking”. Politis (2005) distinguishes two different outcomes of entrepreneurial learning: 1): “increased effectiveness in opportunity recognition”; and 2) “increased effectiveness in coping with the liabilities of newness” (Politis, 2005). It seems to be that Tseng (2013) has understood “increased effectiveness in opportunity recognition” to

be an essential of the process of learning to acquire entrepreneurial knowledge. And has loosely rendered “increased effectiveness in coping with liabilities of newness” as an output of entrepreneurial performance instead of entrepreneurial knowledge.

Tseng (2013) has stated that entrepreneurial learning can be distinguished from self-directed learning by using other relevant theories of learning such as *Experiential Learning* and Kolb’s learning cycle (Kolb, 1984): “whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.41, in Tseng, 2013, p.433). Yet, the question remains how experiences can be transformed into knowledge. According to Tseng (2013) it depends on how the entrepreneurs themselves go about it, and therefore stresses the aspect of “self” in self-directed learning. Moreover, as it is useful for entrepreneurs to become self-directed learners, they therefore need not only knowledge and experiences but also the ability to assess their current understanding of entrepreneurial learning (Tseng, 2013).

Whereas Politis (2005) has presented following definition of entrepreneurial learning: “entrepreneurial learning is an experiential process where the personal experience of an entrepreneur is transformed into knowledge, which in turn can be used to guide the choice of new experiences” (Politis, 2005, p. 407). Furthermore, Politis (2005) suggests that the process of entrepreneurial learning consists of three main components: “entrepreneurs’ career experiences, the transformation process, and entrepreneurial knowledge in terms of increased effectiveness in opportunity recognition and in coping with liabilities of newness” (Politis, 2005, p.415).

Politis (2005) continued to argue how experience is transformed into knowledge, it is: “through the exploration of new possibilities and the exploitation of pre-existing knowledge, which in turn influence the development of the entrepreneurs’ ability to discover and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities as well as coping with the traditional obstacles facing new ventures” (Politis, 2005, p. 415). Consequently, suggesting to need to draw a distinction in Politis’ (2005) framework between: “the events experiences by an entrepreneur and the knowledge thereby acquired when studying the process of entrepreneurial learning” (Politis, 2005, p.415). Politis (2005) argued that acquiring (grasping) knowledge is corresponding to entrepreneur’s experiences, and that transforming knowledge is corresponding to entrepreneurial knowledge (more specifically meaning, “experientially acquired knowledge”) (Politis, 2005, p. 401).

A conceptual framework of entrepreneurial learning as an experiential process

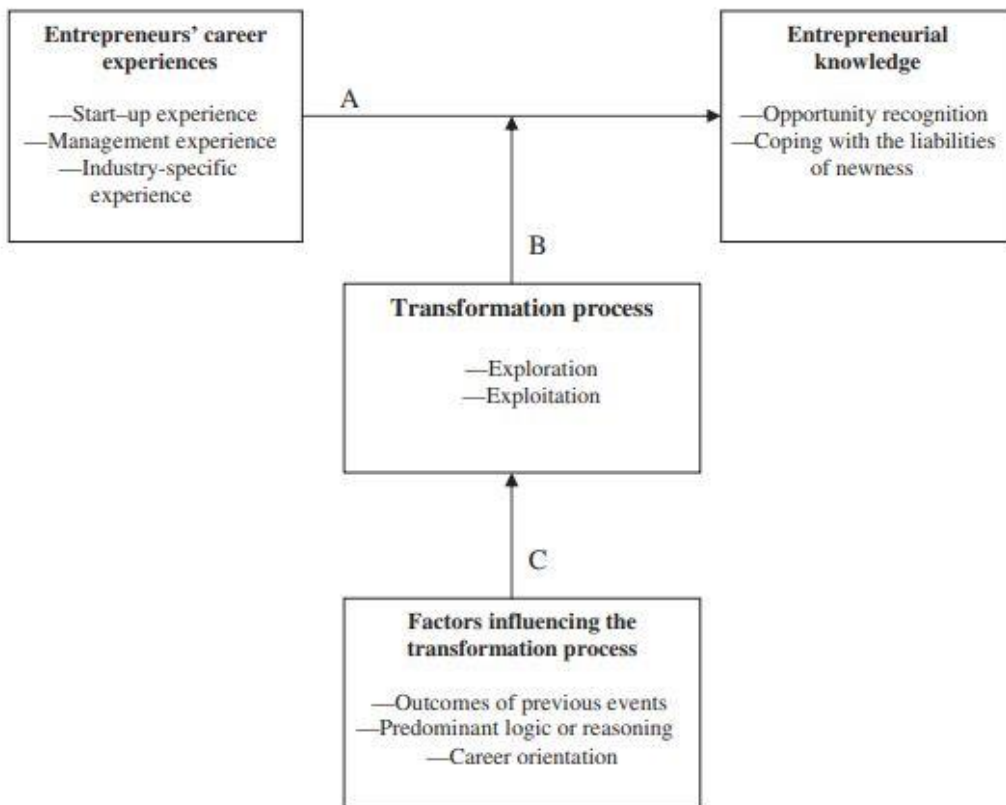


Figure 4. Conceptual framework by Politis (2005) for entrepreneurial learning as an experiential process (Politis, 2005).

3. Methodology

This chapter explains how the research was conducted. A general description of the research design will be given, as well as a description of the research methods that were used. Additionally, the operationalization process and the data collection process will be explained. Moreover, the sample and the sampling method will be clarified. Furthermore, a detailed description of the data analysis process will be given. The ethical considerations of this research are addressed as well. Finally, the validity and reliability of the research will be stated.

3.1 Choice of methods

A reflexive qualitative research design was chosen to learn more about the social- and cultural reality of doing entrepreneurship (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Generally, qualitative approaches to research are aimed at describing, explaining, or exploring a social phenomenon (Alasuutari, 1996; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Figueiredo et al., 2017). A thick description will be given to build a depth of understanding of some aspects of the social- and cultural life of the entrepreneurs (Cunliffe, 2011; Van Burg et al., 2020). In this thick description, the meanings these entrepreneurs ascribe to events, activities, situations, or artefacts will be researched (Steyaert, 1997; Van Burg et al., 2020). The purpose of the research is to investigate the learning processes and the meanings ascribed to those, and not to come towards generalizations of the findings. Qualitative research methods are used to acknowledge the subjectivity of the social- and cultural lives of the entrepreneurs (Leavy, 2014).

The data about the entrepreneurs comes from a naturalistic setting, namely a studio in which they are interviewed for a YouTube channel. As such it uses data about practice and tales from/about the field (Van Maanen, 2011; Wadham & Warren, 2014). This study about online self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning, draws on already existing in-depth interviews which are available online on the YouTube-channel. The method of data collection is therefore a combination of documentary/existing interview data and autoethnographic reflections about self-directed online learning (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Ellis et al., 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Vesa & Vaara, 2014). In the interviews, the entrepreneurs will express their experiences, ideas and insights in their own words. A directed content analysis (Elo et al., 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Puppis, 2019; Schreier, 2013) is used as a means of investigating the manifest content that was presented - focusing on what the participants have learned about doing entrepreneurship.

This content analysis will be complemented by the second method of analysis (autoethnography), which aims at describing the ways in which learning takes place and ideas form in relation to the entrepreneurial storytelling, with the possibility of discovering new ways of learning by the researcher. Autoethnography is used as a method of analysis to investigate the personal experience of the researcher, with a focus on what the researcher can learn from the previous experiences of the entrepreneurs (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Ellis et al., 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Vesa & Vaara, 2014). To conduct an autoethnography the researcher needs to be able to think reflexively, analytically, imaginatively, symbolically and metaphorically (Leavy, 2014). Since it demands from the researcher to position herself into the research project as a participating subject in relation to the ethnographical study, and who also needs to be able to report about her own experiences systematically (Ellis et al., 2011).

Furthermore, several pragmatic considerations were made in this research design. Choices of methods were also based on the previous experience and skills of the researcher who has already executed an ethnographic study and a directed content analysis before. The supervisor also stated a preference for qualitative methodology over quantitative methodology based on their expertise. Additionally, it was possible to get access to the needed participants for a study into online self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning by gathering data from the interviews that were conducted on the YouTube channel. Gathering the data online is neat way to stay within the limited amount of funding and time needed to execute the study (Leavy, 2014).

3.2 Research design

This qualitative research has an exploratory design, which is situated in the social constructivist paradigm. The researcher uses an interview methodology as means of data collection and uses directed content analysis and autoethnography as techniques of analysis (Creswell, 2007; Schreier, 2013; Boeije, 2010; Silverman, 2011; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Green, 2008). The transcriptions of the interviews will be placed into the software program NVivo12. The transcriptions will be used as textual data to foster the process of the directed content analysis. The research will keep track of their personal experience with notes while being emerged into the data, performing the autoethnography while transcribing, coding, and analysing the data (Creswell, 2007; Ellis & Adams, 2015; Kvale, 2011; Leavy, 2014; Salmons, 2012; Brown, 2014; Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012;). The study is connected to existing literature on entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial learning

and online self-directed learning by means of the theoretical frameworks used in the directed content analysis (e.g., Senges, Brown & Rheingold, 2008; Wang & Chugh, 2014; Bonk, et al, 2015).

This study has an exploratory research design because there are few or no earlier studies performed (Gan, Menkhoff & Smith, 2015; O’Neil, 2018; Labaree, 2009) on learning what it means to be an entrepreneur through online self-directed learning, by means of analysing and critically reflecting upon the content of videos as presented on a specific YouTube-channel.

Exploratory design is used to develop an understanding of how to best proceed (Labaree, 2009) in the two emerging fields of inquiry: entrepreneurial learning in entrepreneurship research and online self-directed learning in media education research. The purpose is to gain insights and familiarity with a previously under-researched subject. More specifically, the provide insight into the how online self-directed learning through digital media platforms can be encouraging for knowledge development around entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning.

The strengths of this research design are: a) it has a flexible approach which can address research questions of all types (e.g. what, why and how questions); b) issues underlying the research problem can become known and refined during the investigation of the research problem; c) provides opportunities to “define new terms and clarify existing concepts” and develop “new research question” (Labaree, 2009); d) new theories or hypothesis could be developed during the process; e) the study provides insight, understanding into the subject through which other researchers can become more familiar with the details, settings and concerns of this field of inquiry; f) it can be determined whether or not similar approach to study this research problem are feasible in the future; e) future research designs and techniques can be developed and directed towards appropriate orientations in the future (Labaree, 2009).

There are some limitations of using an exploratory research design: a) often uses small sample sizes and therefore findings are not generalizable to the population at large; b) due to the exploratory nature of the research design, it is not possible to make definitive conclusion about the research; c) problems can arise during the research process because of the “unstructured” or “messy” nature of this type of research (Labaree, 2009).

3.3 Data collection method

For this qualitative research into online self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning 10 semi structured in-depth interviews of around 45 minutes were transcribed (Kvale, 2011). These interviews are conducted by Tom Bilyeu and published on his YouTube-channel “Impact Theory” (Impact Theory, 2019c). This data set consists of interviews with elite entrepreneurs. Normally, it would be difficult to get access to these elite entrepreneurs myself. Therefore, this data provides an opportunity to use existing resources with an auto-ethnography for further appreciation and reflection. The auto-ethnography leverages the existing resources and creates significant added value by driving the level of reflexivity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Ellis et al., 2011). Overall, the type of information that is collected are interviews on the digital media platform YouTube, and fieldnotes on the autoethnographical interpretation of the data.

The data are gathered through a non-probability sampling technique that is useful in qualitative research. The researcher decided to use a purposive sampling technique in which the participants are intentionally selected based on whether the participants are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied (Gill, 2020). Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood (2015) suggest that in addition to being knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon of interest, the participants should be able to communicate their experiences and opinions in an articulated, expressive, and reflective manner. It is also important to note that the participants should be available and willing to participate (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). To make the most effective use of limited resources, the researcher decided to opt for a combination of intensity sampling and maximum variation sampling (Benoot, Hannes & Bilsen, 2016). According to Assarroudi, Nabavi, Armat, Ebadi and Vaismoradi, the sampling process ends when saturation of the information is reached. This happens when all aspects of the phenomenon under study are explored in detail, and no additional data are revealed in subsequent interviews (Assarroudi, Nabavi, Armat, Ebadi & Vaismoradi, 2018).

Intensity sampling involves selecting studies that are excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not highly unusual cases (Benoot, Hannes & Bilsen, 2016). It has the same objective as extreme case sampling but with less emphasis on extremes. In extreme case sampling, both the unusual and the typical cases are illuminated (Palinkas et al., 2015). With intensity sampling, strong examples of the phenomenon of interest are chosen during the data collection. This process requires from the researcher to do some additional exploratory work to determine the nature of the variation of the situation under study. Intensity sampling does lean towards emphasizing similarity (Palinkas et al., 2015).

However, to also obtain prominence on variation, a second sampling strategy of maximum variation was included. In the data collection process, those cases were selected that manifested sufficient intensity to understand the nature of the phenomenon under study but had a focus on deriving their significance out of heterogeneity (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Practically speaking, this meant that the researcher had watched 20 interviews on the YouTube channel *Impact Theory* by Tom Bilyeu, and after investigation selected 10 interviews that were rich examples of the phenomenon under study yet paying attention to achieving heterogeneity in the sample. Including people with different professional background such as athletes, authors, artists, scientists, motivational speakers, professors, and businessmen into the sample. Yet, these people all had their own experiences with becoming an entrepreneur. It was only coincidental that this intensity sample consisted out of males, because most of the interviewees on this channel called *Impact Theory* happened to be male. Tom Bilyeu has dedicated a different show on his YouTube channel to successful females called *Women of Impact* (Impact Theory, 2019c).

Nonetheless, the sample consisted out of males having ages from 34 years-old to 75 years-old, coming from different socio-economic backgrounds, and having different levels of education, ranging from high school diploma to bachelor’s degree to Doctor of Philosophy. Producing a sample of successful people in their respected fields. Arriving from different perspectives but aiming towards the same objective of becoming an entrepreneur. Combining that with the intention of the YouTube channel itself, *Impact Theory*: “how to learn the skills needed in order the execute on the entrepreneurial dream” (Impact Theory, 2019b). This YouTube channel generated excellent examples for this study. This sample made it possible to study elite entrepreneurs. Moreover, it made it feasible to study how the participants were becoming entrepreneurs by viewing their learning experiences.

Table 1. Data sample

#	Name interviewee	Occupation	Age	Gender	Nationality	Higher Education	Genre
1	Robin Sharma	Author, speaker, entrepreneur, leadership expert	55	Male	Canadian, Indian origin	LLB and LLM from Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University	Self-help, motivational speaker, author

2	John Paul DeJoria	Entrepreneur, businessman, investor, environmentalist, philanthropist	75	Male	American, Italian and Greek descent	High school, United States Navy	Hair care products and styling tools, self-made billionaire
3	Michael Ovitz	Entrepreneur, businessman, investor, philanthropist	73	Male	American	BA degree in film and television from University of California Los Angeles	Talent agency, former president of The Walt Disney Company
4	David Meltzer	Entrepreneur, author, speaker, broadcaster, media personality, life coach, lawyer	51	Male	American	Juris Doctorate Degree from Tulane University Law School	Sports marketing agency, humanitarian, family man
5	Aubrey Marcus	Entrepreneur, author, motivational speaker	39	Male	American	Degree in Philosophy and classical civilization from University of Richmond	Nutrition, holistic health philosophy, business, and athletics
6	Dean Kamen	Entrepreneur, engineer, and inventor	69	Male	American	Multiple Honorary Doctorate degrees	Engineering, innovation, science, and education
7	David Eagleman	Neuroscientist, author, professor, science communicator, entrepreneur	49	Male	American	PhD in Neuroscience from Baylor College of Medicine, and post doctorate at Salk Institute	Neuroscience, CEO medical devices, science advisor, council member, and member of board of directors
8	Chase Jarvis	Entrepreneur, photographer, director,	49	Male	American	B.A. in Philosophy from San	CEO of CreativeLive online

		artist, author				Diego State University	education platform, lifestyle, sports and landscape photography, Best Camera app
9	Shaun White	Athlete, professional snowboarder, entrepreneur, musician,	34	Male	American	High school	Snowboarding, skateboarding, music, events and entertainment industry, clothing brand
10	David Goggins	Athlete, motivational speaker, author	45	Male	American	High school, United States Air Force, United States Navy, United States Army Ranger School	Ultramarathon runner, ultra-distance cyclist, triathlete, motivational speaking, writing, US Navy SEAL and Air force

3.4 Ethical considerations

For this study, I had to consider the ethics of using existing data from participants, and the ethics of researching my own subjective sense of self. According to Salmons (2012), an official informed consent is not required, since the data is collected through observation in an online public environment (Salmons, 2012). Moreover, the participants already have formed a consent with Tom Bilyeu before filming, recording and publishing the interview online (Impact Theory, 2019b). The interviews are already recorded and posted on YouTube, therefore the information that was shared by the participants is communicated in such a way where they would not have revealed any sensitive information that was not supposed to be known by others.

The same principle applies to the researcher, who has chosen not to reveal any sensitive information that should not be known by others. When writing down the personal

experiences and self-reflections of the researcher, the researcher made sure to not go into any irrelevant life stories that were not related to the topics at hand. Furthermore, the life of researcher exists in social relation to other people such as friends and family. Whose privacy needs to be respected. If there were any personal experiences that could have contained information about the lives of those people, these experiences were excluded in the narrative ethnography (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Ellis et al., 2011; Watson, 2012). Ensuring that information will be treated confidential and in a secure manner, conducting this research has minimal risks, and no harm would be done to the lives of other people (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

There are also social and cultural reasons to respect ethical issues in research. The researchers had to take into account diversity manners as gender, race, sexuality, disability, age and mental health issues (Matthews & Ross, 2010). People that participate in the research may have a different background than the researcher and they may have other norms, values, standards of social skills. The researcher needs to respect these differences in people and will need to have a clear designed and planned research. By communicating why and how the research has been done, the readers and the participants will feel safe and respected, instead of mistreated what could have evolved in conflicts. By distilling the validity and reliability of the planned research, and respecting the ethical issues, the researcher has decreased the risks of performing the study.

3.5 Technique of analysis

In this research two different techniques of analysis were used. The first method is a directed content analysis that is used to investigate the manifest content of the participants, focusing on what they have learned about doing entrepreneurship (Puppis, 2019; Schreier, 2013). The second method of analysis is an autoethnography, that is used to examine the personal experience of the researcher (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Ellis et al., 2011). The aim is to discover what I can learn from watching videos on entrepreneurship and going through the process of online self-directed entrepreneurial learning.

3.5.1 Directed content analysis

Directed content analysis is a specific form of qualitative content analysis which uses previous theory as guidance for the coding process. This approach can be used when there is enough relevant research to build upon. This research technique is used to subjectively interpret the meaning from the content of the textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The

purpose of content analysis is to understand the research phenomenon, and to provide knowledge about the phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis is defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1278) as: “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systemic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. Performing a directed content analysis is different from doing a conventional content analysis or a summative content analysis. In the former approach, the textual data is used to generate the coding categories. In the latter approach, the content, keywords, or coding categories are counted and compared, then the underlying context is interpreted as well (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is also often used as a quantitative research method. Here the textual data will be counted and coded into categories representing similar meanings, and then described by means of statistics. The difference with qualitative content analysis is that qualitative approach considers the language characteristics, the content as means of communication, and the contextual meaning of the text. With the qualitative approach, the researcher can investigate the manifest content or latent content of the textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Textual data can come in several forms, such as print, verbal, or electronic form. Sources for textual data can be narrative responses, interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions, or observations. Textual data can also be obtained from printed media such as books, articles, and manuals (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It can also be used to study the narrative content and form of films, tv programs, or the editorial content of advertisements, newspapers, and magazines (Macnamara, 2005). In this study, the textual data is obtained from an online interview format, where the verbal text is transcribed into text. The interviews are conducted by Tom Bilyeu in a semi-structured way on his YouTube-channel Impact Theory.

The aim of the directed content analysis is to validate or to conceptually extend an existing theory or theoretical framework. The research question is formulated using prior research on online self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning. The advantage of choosing a directed content analysis approach is that the researcher can determine an initial coding scheme. The existing theory will be used deductively in the development of coding categories. Placing the role of theory as the foundation for the initial coding scheme. The researcher can provide predictions about the relationships between codes, or the variables of interest, or the relationships among variables (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This process has been referred to as ‘deductive category application’ (Mayring, 2000). DCA can be used to provide further description about a phenomenon that may be under researched (Hsieh &

Shannon, 2005).

3.5.2 *Autoethnography*

An autoethnographic technique of analysis will be applied, where the main focal point of the study is the introspective narrative of the researcher (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). Meaning, the autoethnography will have a strong reflexive nature, by critically analysing the “narrative of their oneself” (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). Therefore, the study will be approached from an emic perspective (Salmons, 2012). Firstly, autoethnography will be written about my own learning process regarding self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning (EL) through watching these video’s (Gartner, 1988; Seneges, Brown & Rheingold, 2008; Wang & Chugh, 2014; Leavy, 2014). Valuable knowledge can be gained from watching and transcribing the interviews (Kvale, 2011). Based on the assumption that I would like to explore and learn how to become an entrepreneur myself, I will reflect on my own learning throughout this process (Ellis & Adams, 2015).

This form of analysis is also used to critically assess the content and language use of the entrepreneurs, who are interviewed on this particular digital media platform. Attention will be paid to the subjects’ positions within a (foreign) culture and a community. Discursive and narrative interviews generally serve the purpose to co-construct knowledge between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale, 2011). It has been recognized that there are “varying degrees of self/other combinations” within the field of autoethnography. A reconceptualization of these “(self)/ethno (Other) combinations” by Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) has provided a continuum on which these autoethnographic relationships fall. On the one hand, there are autoethnographic relationships in which the researcher and the researched are more separate (“e.g., auto \leq ethnography”). On the other hand, there are autoethnographic relationships where the researcher is researched (“e.g., auto \geq ethnography”) (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012).

Ellis and Adams (2015) have defined what is expected of autoethnographers. Firstly, they have “use personal experiences”. Secondly, they should be “familiar with existing research”. Thirdly, they are expected to “describe and/or critique cultural experiences”. Additionally, they can provide and/or “illuminate insider knowledge”. Furthermore, they can “break silence and reclaim voice about a topic”. Ethnographers are also expected to “maneuver through pain, confusion, anger and/or uncertainty”. Lastly, they should “be accessible” (Ellis & Adams, 2015). These authors have stated additional criteria for

evaluating autoethnographic texts, namely: good autoethnography helps us to “understand cultural life” and has “aesthetic merits” by shaping the text in a “artistically satisfying, complex and not boring” way, so that all important sides of the “author’s subjectivity” are presented (Ellis & Adams, 2015). Therefore, quality criteria in terms of generalizability, validity and reliability also must be addressed in a non-traditional manner.

3.6 Operationalization of the autoethnography

In this study, autoethnography has been used as a method of analysis for studying the researcher’s personal experience with online self-directed entrepreneurial learning. Narrative ethnography has been chosen as the specific form of autoethnography for this research (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012; Watson, 2012). Narrative ethnography is a text that is presented in the form of stories where the ethnographer’s experiences are incorporated into the ethnographic description and analysis of others (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). The narrative often intersects with the analysis of patterns and processes. However, the emphasis is on the ethnographic study of others, while the researcher is reflecting and understanding their own experiences in relation to experiences of the members of the group being studied. The autoethnography is accomplished by attending to encounters between the researcher and the respondents of the interviews (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). In this research, it is through watching the videos of the YouTube-channel Impact Theory that the researcher encounters the members of the group being studied. While watching the videos, reading the transcriptions, and performing the data analysis the researcher is keeping track of personal experiences and autoethnographic memoirs by writing down fieldnotes, and writing up reflexive journal notes. These notes are used as the foundation of the narrative ethnography that will be presented in the form of stories. These stories are presented in the results chapter, including examples of the data that were used during the self-reflection process to make clear the relation between the personal experiences of the researcher and the data.

3.7 Operationalization of the DCA

Assarroudi, Nabavi, Armat, Ebadi and Vaismoradi have proposed a 16-step method of the directed qualitative content analysis. This method is based on the work of several other authors (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Mayring, 2000, 2014) and is deemed practical, reliable, transparent. It is comprehensive as it can increase the accuracy of the data analysis and make it possible to compare the findings to other studies. The 16-step method leads to a practical process in which the data analysis is

organized into three phases: the preparation phase (steps 1-7), organisation phase (steps 8-15), and reporting phase (step 16) (Assarroudi, Nabavi, Armat, Ebadi & Vaismoradi, 2018).

The following 16 steps were set out to undertake:

“Preparation phase:

1. Acquiring the necessary general skills
2. Selecting the appropriate sampling strategy
3. Deciding on the analysis of manifest and/or latent content
4. Developing an interview guide
5. Conducting and transcribing the interviews
6. Specifying the unit of analysis
7. Being immersed in data

Organisation phase:

8. Developing a formative categorization matrix
9. Theoretically defining the main categories and subcategories
10. Determining coding rules for main categories
11. Pre-testing the categorization matrix
12. Choosing and specifying the anchor samples for each main category
13. Performing the main data analysis
14. Inductive abstraction of main categories from preliminary codes
15. Establishment of links between generic categories and main categories

Reporting phase

16. Reporting all steps of directed content analysis and findings”
(Assarroudi et al., 2018, p.45).

The detailed description of all the steps taken in the operationalization of the directed content analysis can be read in Appendix C.

3.8 Validity and reliability

For the autoethnography, generalizability can be assessed through asking readers if the story speak to them about their experiences or about lives of others they know. It cannot be assessed by “thinking in terms of replicability”. Validation can be provided by “comparing their lives to ours”, and by thinking about the reasons why and “how our lives are similar or different” to theirs (Ellis & Adams, 2015). As such: “Validity in autoethnography means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that

the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible” (Ellis, 2004, p. 124, in Ellis & Adam, 2015, p.269). Considering the above, it is noted that ethnographers should be concerned with “(1) literary values, (2) narrative thrust, (3) reflexivity, and (4) the ethics of research and representation” (Richardson, 2009, p. 346, in Ellis & Adams, 2015).

The trustworthiness of the directed content analysis was enhanced by thoroughly presenting the three phases of ‘preparation, organization and reporting’ (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The presentation of the steps taken in the directed content analysis needed to show in detail how the categories were developed in relation to the data. To accomplish this, appendices and tables were used to depict the analysis process. The adoption of the 16-step methods had strengthened the trustworthiness of the directed qualitative content analysis (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

4. Results

First the results of the directed content analysis will be presented systematically corresponding to the relation with the coding schemes. First the findings of the directed content analysis in relation to Rae (2006) will be presented, followed by the findings in relation to Cope (2005). The coding scheme based on Rae (2006) contained ‘personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity’, ‘contextual learning’, and negotiated enterprise’. The coding scheme based on Cope (2005) included ‘content dimension’, and ‘process dimension’. Then, the findings of the autoethnography will be presented in the order of the interviews that were conducted.

4.1 Development of entrepreneurial identity

According to Rae (2006), the outcome of the process of personal and social emergence is the development of entrepreneurial identity. The entrepreneurs went through the process of personal and social emerges where they renegotiated their identities, reconstructing their personal and social identities that express who they are, who they want to be, and how they prefer to be recognized within their social context (Rae, 2006).

4.1.1 *Entrepreneurs role in relation to family*

Every entrepreneur mentioned the value of personal relationships with family members or partners. They become motivated to be more successful in business because they need to be able to take care of the children, to make their partners happy or they aspire to be as successful as their siblings. Besides being a good family member, another great motivation to become an entrepreneur was being of service to other people. When you offer a great service and you bring value to them, you could receive something in return. The entrepreneur thinks it is important to always do something to help somebody else out.

“DM: One of the energies I carry that ruined me was, I had an energy that I was stupid, and I projected it that I was smarter than everyone else. Because I carried a core energy because of my siblings and the way I was raised, and my grandma telling me ‘only stupid people get bored, smart people think of things to do’. Then I literally projected this insecurity that caused me to over sell, back-end sell, lie, manipulate, and not feel good about myself. No matter how much I had, I still needed more. And it was for myself, to prove that I was smart enough.”

This entrepreneur felt inferior to his successful siblings. One of the reasons that made him try harder to succeed in business because he felt the need to prove that he was smart enough to do it. He is one of six children and all his siblings went to the Ivy league schools and none of them got a B. He worked on feeling good around his siblings and change his energy that he carried around.

“JPD: If the kids could study, great. If they couldn't, I would take them to work with me or something like that. Right. Some of my kids just did something on their own, starting their own little business with no money”.

Not only did this entrepreneur mention that, before he owned the companies, his motivation to get a job was to survive and provide for his family. He also wants to set a good example for his children. His daughter started out by having every job in the company so she could learn from every perspective of how the business works. Eventually, everybody in the company loved her and she became Vice Chairman of John Paul Mitchell Systems. His children have learned how to become an entrepreneur by gaining job experience and through learning from their farther in practice. He has taken the responsibility to take care of his children.

“MO: Dad who was a liquor salesman and used to give away broken cases of liquor to the local police and fire and service people, so we got great service, even as a lower-middle-class family. And I brought a little gift for the head of the file room, and worked until she gave him access the file room”.

This entrepreneur learned from his father the importance of being of service to other people. This turned into a motivation for him to become an amazing human being and to always do something to help somebody else out. This mission of being of service to other people contributed to him landing a job offer because he had brought a gift to the head of the file room. Bringing value to the head of the file room led to him getting access into the file room so he could study the files and eventually become the the assistant of the president of the most important theatrical agency in the business.

4.1.2 *Process of personal learning*

Most of the entrepreneurs state the importance of the process of personal learning for achieving their entrepreneurial endeavors as well as self-development. A substantial number of entrepreneurs talked about using introspective methods such as journaling or meditation as habits that support their entrepreneurial learning and personal development.

“AM: The strongest reactions are typically coming from places of wound or fear insecurity. So it’s just the practice of really looking at those things. And you know that kind of deep introspection that requires getting really still. And clearing out you know your identity as the ego, as the body, and accepting your identity as consciousness as the observer of things. When I’m upset, I’ll put myself in the third person, what’s the Aubrey feeling? So it always typically comes back to some kind of fear. And so being objective allows you to kind of look at that stuff.”

Remarkably, using meditation and being introspective is critical to creating the optimal entrepreneurial mindset. They use this introspection to identify their insecurities and fears in order to be able to eliminate them and execute more effectively in their businesses by not being held back by these negative emotions.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs have spoken about how being knowledgeable is useful as an entrepreneur. The process of learning is the underlying mechanism of gaining knowledge and understanding something.

“MO: Learning to me is strictly a frame of reference. Knowledge is power and I believe I will never know what I need to know. I am a voracious reader of everything. I just like to know, I like frame of reference. I felt it was important in the business, that I was to be able to talk to everybody about something that was interesting to them. You got to have some wide sense of not so deep but peripheral information. But I tried to then go deeper, reading files from A to Z gave me an immediate deal reference. So that was off my plate”.

MO describes his curiosity as an important driver to actively learn because he believes knowledge is power. This knowledge can be useful for being able to socialize with the individuals he encounters during his entrepreneurial career. Having knowledge about a variety of topics creates a secure position from which he can relate to the other person which

he tries to do business with. Being knowledgeable is also useful for the process personal learning in the sense that it can lead to more developmental opportunities through which the entrepreneur can create their business venture and cultivate their entrepreneurial identity (Rae, 2006).

Moreover several entrepreneurs have stated in the interviews that they are focused on achieving daily growth. The entrepreneurs want to make progress in their personal development as well as in their business ventures. They explain the importance of doing something every day, being committed to learning, and making small steps that will add up to exponential progress in the end. For example, the entrepreneurs do this by setting up goals, and creating effective habits, rituals, and routines.

“RS: I've coached many billionaires over the past 20 years, if you look at the greatest producers on the planet, these people have one thing in common. They are ridiculously curious. And no matter how much money they make and no matter how much impact they have, they maintain a white belt mentality. One of the keys to epic performance is a relentless commitment to daily growth. So, that's the 20-20-20 formula that the 5 a.m. method is built around, and the premise is basically this. As you begin your day, so you handcraft the rest of your day. And if you have consistently great days, you're gonna have consistently great weeks, quarters, a year, and a lifetime. So, your days are life in miniature and you've got to get those morning's calibrated if you really want to win.”

Having your morning rituals set up in such a way that you will be productive throughout the day, will lead to better exponential results if you stick to it every day. According to RS, to get into a state of learning, one has to maintain a white belt mentality. With the implication that you must approach the learning process as if you are a beginner in order to grow, make progress and learn more about that specific field. According to Rae (2006) becoming an entrepreneur requires social- and cognitive learning. It is through personal interests, work experience and social life experiences that the entrepreneur will create their (new) identity as an entrepreneur (Rae, 2006).

4.1.3 Narrative construction of identity

Through sharing autobiographical stories in the interviews, these entrepreneurs reveal the journey in which their entrepreneurial identity has been shaped. They describe

how they have been in constant development through the choices they made and the path they took in their careers. This implies that their narrative has been evolving over time and that has constructed their entrepreneurial identity.

“DK: By the time I got into high school I was making a lot of stuff and making a lot of money. And I turned my parent’s little basement in my little electronics production facility. And by the time I got to college I was making insulin pumps for diabetics because my brother was then at the med school. I was making all sorts of things that people needed. And I was using the faculty there as advisors. I love learning. I think people said, ‘boy you were a terrible student and you hated school’, no those are two different statements. I love learning. To me that's why life is all about. I just don't do it in a way that's... schools are not a very efficient way for me to get information”.

DK has re-invented himself during high school. He has reconstructed his identity from being a terrible student who did not like school into a person who is capable of learning and understanding knowledge since he has started his own electronics production company. He became an entrepreneur who has been successful in creating innovative solutions and selling electrical products that are in demand. The audience of the YouTube channel can learn from his life story and narrative construction of identity that you do not have to give up on your dreams because you are not that good in school, but you may be good in something else and you can pursue that as an entrepreneurial venture outside of school if you want. This is an indication that identity is fluid, it is everchanging and not fixed. Therefore, if a someone in audience is seeing the interview, he or she can become inspired to also re-invent their identity and go on a different career path or change jobs, in order to pursue that passion or interest.

“TB (AM): By his own admission, his amazing success story has been less a classic business case study and more an intensely personal journey of self-development that happened to reflect itself outwardly in business success. This raw and authentic approach to growing a company has made him one of the most fascinating examples of the modern mission driven entrepreneur”.

TB refers to AM as an example of how his emphasis on self-development has been a major

contributor to entrepreneurial success. The interviewer is creating a narrative of the modern mission driven entrepreneur who has done a lot of personal development work to create the entrepreneurial identity. Instead of the classic business narrative about an entrepreneur whose main prospect is the development of the business. Another entrepreneur has added to this premise that an entrepreneur needs to develop a strong sense of character. This is something that someone may not immediately think of doing when trying to start a business. Illustrating the importance of self-development is pioneering vision that can be found on this YouTube-channel regarding online self-directed learning and entrepreneurial learning. In the sense that the modern mission driven individuals have set the development of their character as a priority in becoming entrepreneurs.

“RS: It’s not just mindset, heart-set, it’s soulset. Soulset is about working on your character. You re-access your nobility, bravery, authenticity, decency. Find a cause that is larger than your life. People might ridicule you because every genius is ridiculed before they’re revered. People might throw stones at you, but you use them to build moments of mastery. People might not understand you because any disrupter is gonna be misunderstood. Even if you’re an army of one, you continue at all costs”.

This progressive statement illustrates how development of strong characteristics such as nobility, bravery, authenticity, and decency form a critical basis to be a disruptive entrepreneur. These characteristics allow you to have the perseverance and personality that is needed to overcome the adversities of going against the grain in entrepreneurship and becoming a disruptive leader.

4.1.4 Individuals change how they see themselves and how others see them

According to Rae (2006) the person who is acting as an entrepreneur is transforming his or her identity through a process of personal and social emergence. When people become entrepreneurs, their identity of how they see themselves and how others see them changes through a process of personal learning and emergence, including the sense of self and future aspirations (Rae, 2006). One topic that occurred in the interviews was the idea of being intrinsically motivated as an entrepreneur. Acting and doing things because you want to do them and not because of external pressures such as cultural forces or pressure from family expectations. Another aspect that has changed how the interviewees were seeing themselves was through knowing their strengths and weaknesses. Stating that the entrepreneurs could

provide more value if they were acting on the basis of the things they are good at and believing in themselves, or trying to better themselves on those areas they were lacking in.

“AM: Understand that you're not the same person that you were then. You're the person has learned from all those things. You know. Heraclitus has a quote, “no man steps in the same river twice where it's not the same river. It's not the same river and he's not the same man”. You know we're, we're different in any different moment, and we can decide to be different. We can decide to have listened to this and change something and change everything or change whatever. We have that ability. We have way more power than we recognize, and what people will tell us that we have. So stepping into that power and deciding for ourselves what we want to do with it”.

This statement shows how an individual is not the same person anymore, he or she is the person who has changed and has learned from the experiences he or she has encountered. Acknowledging this will have an influence on the self-perception and acting accordingly allows for personal development. This reflects on to other people’s perception of the entrepreneur.

“SW: Any which way you spin it, I'm winning in a way. If you look at a competition, like this last X Games I went to. I didn't win, but I really feel like I won, because I know exactly what I need to work on now. I know exactly what happened. I did wrong, and I've got to go back. That's why it's still winning to me. Where, if I did win, I think about it like, "Wow. I'm exactly on the path I'm supposed to be going. The training and the ideas I've had before are working. This is where you go." It's not like even the slight step backs are actually to leap forward in a way, because how are you going to know where you lay in the whole field of things and what's going on. It's to take a step back, and then go, "Okay." You reassess, refocus.”

This entrepreneur explain how he has learned from making mistakes, and that if he would not have made those mistakes he would not have learned as much. Evaluating where things went wrong is valuable to be able to know how it should be done better next time. He uses self-reflection and critical assessment to evaluate where his practice could be improved. In this way, the entrepreneur is constantly changing his perspective along the way in order to make progression.

4.1.5 *Identity as practice*

According to Rae (2006) people can practice their identity from the activities they undertake and the roles they develop in social interactions. People can discover their talents and abilities from experience and can learn how these can be applied in a practical setting. Their social identity becomes valuable as people learn how to apply and negotiate these abilities in relation to other people.

A entrepreneur stated that he is still a work in progress even though he has been working very hard already, he still wants to achieve his mighty mission, serve people, and bring value to other people. He also states that great leaders are crazy because the nature of being a disrupter and a leader means that you are not a follower. It is about willing to be different and sticking to your purpose as an entrepreneur in order to achieve greatness. Part of the practical application of transforming yourself into a leader means that you must know your core values, knowing what you want to pursue in your lifestyle, career, and business. This entrepreneur is acting based on a principle of joy. The actions that he takes and the pursuits he follows up on are things that bring him joy.

Another entrepreneur explains the value of shaping your own life with the power of your intentions, your beliefs, and your choices and free will. According to this entrepreneur, this is where the individual needs to make a differentiation in his or her identity between the person 'who is the artist' and the one 'who is the canvas'. The artist is painting the masterpiece of their life. They are holding the brush. They decide what they want to make of themselves. The canvas illustrates the one who constantly gets paint splattered on by other people. This serves as a metaphor for people who are passive in identity development and tend to be shaped by other people's opinions or expectations. For example, their parents telling them who and what they should be. AM makes the point that you must take control of your life and make your own decisions. Deciding who you want to become and putting that into practice.

“JPD: When I worked for other companies, some of them, not to mention any names, were so bad. They would treat people the old way, ‘I'm the boss. Here's what you're going to do because I'm the boss’. Right. There were times, for example, when maybe you had a dollar for lunch. You can't get a lot for a dollar. So I just knew that that's how I was, and if I had a company that I had a control of, my gosh everyone's going to be treated the way I wanted to be treated”.

JPD shows here that he would be a leader with a core value, treating others the way you want to be treated. This value is part of his identity and he aligns his leadership role with this value and puts it in into practice, which has an impact on his social interactions within the business environment. He is practicing the role as leader with a new strategy. Instead of being the boss who is overly dominant, he wants to make sure that he treats his employees the right way. JPD positions himself as a leader who guides and provides for his employees, showing that he understands them and has compassion for his people.

4.2 Contextual learning

According to Rae (2006), the outcome of a process of contextual learning is the recognition and enaction of opportunities. Contextual learning includes learning through immersion within an industry, opportunity recognition and innovation through participation, and the formation of practical theories of entrepreneurial action. Through situated experience and social relationships people learn intuitively and may develop the ability to recognize opportunities (Rae, 2006).

4.2.1 What is learned?

The entrepreneurs who have been interviewed are all very experienced and successful. They speak about how their experience facilitates the learning process and helps them to create practical theories. From these practical theories they learn what works and what does not work in the business, how they should proceed and why. They can coordinate their decision-making process in order to maintain and grow their businesses. One entrepreneur has started a business called Creative Life, an online platform that offers classes where students can learn skills from experts. He mentioned that he started this business because he himself wanted access to top experts to learn more about photography, so he decided to start sharing his own skills about photography online. With the idea that by providing value and opportunities for other people that he could build a community that helps to support his vision and mission.

“CJ: This is what it's like to suck, this is what it's like to get a job and lose a job. Providing access to my life, it was totally incidental. I was trying to help my industry, because I figured if I could send a paradigm for sharing secrets about photography, that I could actually, someone else would reciprocate and I can learn

something too. That's access and community. Was there a third one? Community is also, I think it's fundamentally one of the reasons that I'm sitting here on your couch. Having built community and having, you know, when I mentioned earlier. Why did you start the show? You're also, you're building community, you're serving your own needs by having people that are inspirational to you, sit here on the chair, in the chair next to you, but everyone in the room and beyond, ultimate that distills to community and if you've given value to that community, I'm sure you've also received a ton of value of the folks, who are liking and sharing, and helping support your vision and mission here. Same is true for Creative Live. We have 10,000,000 students, we serve every country on the planet. This is crazy, global community of creators, who are all trying to figure it out. Who are all told that, you know, only some of us are creative, we're all told that in order to be a greater artist you shouldn't touch business, and in order to be a business person, then you just have to be cutthroat and you know, I just don't believe in those paradigms and if we can learn and leverage one another's skills and share information, then how much better would the world be? That's sort of three of the core values, three out of seven. These are how we make decisions in the company”.

CJ has learned from his own experiences as a photographer, and a student of photography, that there was a need for a platform to share this knowledge with other people so they could learn more skills as well. CJ has created three core values from his personal experience which serve as guidelines to make decisions in the company. These three core values are creativity, access, and community. The benefits of building a community are demonstrated by how great this community has expanded. With 10,000,000 students, the members of this community can provide value to each other as well. This creates a stronger network which is more appealing for people to join. This allows the community to grow at a rapid pace and ultimately this scales the business as this brings in more clients. This example shows essential it is to provide value and opportunities for your clients and learn from your experiences what works in the business.

Several entrepreneurs have talked about how critical it is to face adversities and to continue working on the business even though there have been problems along the way. Successful people have failed many times but what differentiates them from unsuccessful people is that they kept going until they succeeded. Entrepreneurs know that it is key to do the things that are difficult to do. JPD has given advice to entrepreneurs in any business, that

is to be prepared for a lot of rejection. So, when the rejections happen it does not come as a surprise and you are able to handle it well and continue on your path.

Another entrepreneur has mentioned that the key to success is believing in yourself and believing in your success rather than believing in your failures. Overcoming your fears and insecurities and knowing that you are capable of succeeding by controlling your mindset. Making progress when things go wrong by knowing exactly what happened and what can be done better and needs to be worked on. Practicing until it becomes easy to do and can be mastered. Several entrepreneurs have developed habits in order to improve themselves and to establish the optimal mental foundation for success. Also, the entrepreneurs asserted that it is essential to create a plan, set up goals. Then it takes alignment, action, and adjustment of that plan along the way, in order to go forward. Similarly, it was expressed by the entrepreneurs that an entrepreneur needs skills, integration of skill, knowledge, and maintenance of desire. Also, accountability was put in high regards. It is critical for entrepreneurs to take responsibility for their actions, being available and reliable. Because as an entrepreneur you have a lot of people that rely on you, your actions, and decisions. For example, if the business loses profit then some employees might lose their job and their income with which they are providing for their families.

The entrepreneurs have also mentioned that whenever you can do something for somebody else, you ask nothing in return. Because you must believe that what you are doing is good and that it provides benefits to somebody else. Additionally, it is important that an entrepreneur learns how to cooperate and be professional. This can be taught through education or can be learned by direct experience. The entrepreneurs can also train themselves to not get caught up or distracted by emotions. For example, during a deal making process it is important to understand how the other person is feeling, what his or her wants and needs are. You must act on those rationally and make an offer that is based on logical reasoning, instead of emotions.

4.2.2 How does learning take place?

Learning takes place by having the right mindset to learn. It starts with looking for evidence that your ideas could be wrong, instead of looking for confirmation that they are right – so as not to fall for confirmation bias. One entrepreneur who is a neuroscientist addresses that in order to learn you need to seek novelty and new experiences, these form new connections in your brain and creates new neural pathways. This is the underlying mechanism of your brain to learn and to absorb new information. Another entrepreneur

states that as our understanding of the world gets better, we have to change what we believe to be true. Acknowledging this allows you to have the right mindset to learn. This is previously referred to as the white belt mentality. The concept of the flow state has been mentioned as well by another entrepreneur. The flow state is when your mindset is not preoccupied with negative notions or emotions and allows for a neutral perception of what is in front of you. This improves the ability to access insight and to execute on them effectively. In a flow state the sense of time disappears which increases your focus and optimizes your mental state for execution. This showcases again that managing your mindset is essential for entrepreneurial learning.

4.2.3 How is learning used?

Self-directed learning through platforms like Creative Live or Impact Theory can increase your self-awareness. As previously mentioned by our entrepreneurs, self-awareness is an essential factor for your learning process and entrepreneurial development. Part of the process of improving self-awareness is identifying your flaws and insecurities and to know what can be worked on. This awareness makes for better choices and therefore better results. The reoccurring theme of failure is crucial as well. Failures provide the opportunity to question what there is to learn and improve. Failure can be motivating and gives direction on what can be done better, if dealt with in the right manner. An example of improving your self-awareness is by writing in a journal. With journaling you can write down your gratitude, relive experiences and deconstruct them to think about what you have learned from those experiences. Using these methods as an entrepreneur makes you mission driven and focused, which optimizes your process instead of just working without a clear purpose.

4.2.4 Social participation in communities, the industry and other networks

Another reoccurring theme is that actively participating in the industry and building on knowledge and experiences from the industry is valuable for creating and maintaining businesses. The entrepreneur explains in the interview how he recognized possibilities within the industry and acted on an opportunity to create a new venture. Rae (2006) acknowledged that drawing on knowledge of the community context and the industry context can turn out to be beneficial for the creative process of developing and innovating new products and businesses. The entrepreneur put together technologies and resources in a new way, by combining telecommunications with life assurances. Also, the entrepreneur was acting on the opportunity when the time in the market was right (Rae, 2006).

“JPD: The best way to explain it is by actually doing something. Let's take a huge business throughout the world, one of the biggest, telecommunications. You have giant phone companies, you have servers that on your cellular phone. It's almost like a lifestyle now, right? Well how does someone get on that industry, and all of sudden, you got all the Giants you're going up against that have multi millions and billions of dollars. How do you do it? Well you look at what the industry is lacking and pull the industry into it. Give you an example. It's one of my latest companies ROK, R-O-K Mobile, ROK Mobile. Believe it or not, we found the openings, and I'll tell you how we did it. For \$49 a month on your cell phone, any cell phone, any smartphone, we found a way to give people all their telephone calls to United States and, Mexico 500 international minutes free, their texting, their data, all their music, over 20 million songs, \$100,000 worth of accidental life insurance, Telemedicine seven days a week, 24 hours a day”.

By figuring out what the community needed and what the industry was lacking, he found an entrance into a highly competitive market in a creative way. Providing the customers with an abundant cell phone service, internationally, and combining that with extra perks such as music, additional life insurance, and Telemedicine. The entrepreneur has innovated new products in the industry by seeing the opportunities and acting on them.

“TB (AM): What's so interesting to me is he really is showing the new version of the modern entrepreneur or somebody that isn't just trying to sell product but instead is building product around something that they really believe it to the core of who they are. Their company starts anyway, as a pure reflection of where they are and where they want to go and building a community and creating products that serve that, is truly extraordinary. ... When you read the blog post, when you listen to the podcast, when you look at things that he was doing five six years ago, and that it's all still out there. And you can watch him go in the journey, and share insecurities, and share difficult things that he went through, and talk about struggles with the business, and what that moments like and how you engage with it”.

Here is another example which demonstrates the importance of social participation in communities, the industry, and other networks. Producing content on social networking

sites, writing blog posts, creating podcasts and marketing those around the online community has strengthened the perception and appreciation of his business. Story telling creates a marketing cycle through which people are more inclined to buy his products because they start believing in the story of the company behind the products. Following this journey and learning about the steps this entrepreneur has taken can also provide the opportunities for online self-directed entrepreneurial learning. The knowledge this entrepreneur has gained throughout the years is still available online and can be used as a resource to learn more about his personal development as an entrepreneur, and the problems he had to solve in order to make the business work.

4.3 Negotiated enterprise

The enaction and growth of a business venture is an outcome of negotiated enterprise. The negotiated enterprise includes processes of participation and joint enterprise, negotiated meaning, structures and practices, changings roles over time, and engagement in networks of external relationship. The notion of the negotiated enterprise is that a business venture is not enacted by one person alone but is dependent on the outcome of negotiated relationships with other parties. The ideas and aspirations of individuals are realized through interactive processes of exchange with other within and around the enterprise, including customers, investors, and co-actors such as employees or partners (Rae, 2006).

4.3.1 Structures and practices

The data has shown that entrepreneurs have developed practical theories. A big portion of these practical theories that were found in the interviews were rituals and routines performed by one individual. Such as meditation, journaling, developing the mindset, and practicing self-growth. However, Rae (2006) described the significance of structures and practices to be the dissemination of those routines into a ‘shared repertoire’ of what works within the business. Creating a community that practices these practical theories and routines. As such, the principles that have been learned do not belong to one single person, but are dispersed among the community (Rae, 2006). This entrepreneur offers an example of how these principles are applied throughout the company culture.

“TB (JPD): It's really, really interesting, because I'm imagining them all following you, like the four P's and then making sure they have the best product. And so yeah, it's the four P's. JPD: It's the four P's, you got it. We've got a Profit, People, be

Positive, and help the Planet.”

TB mentions here that he can imagine the people of the company following JPD’s structures and practices of the four P’s: Profit, People, be Positive and help the Planet. JPD agrees with this statement. His personal practices have an impact on the way his employees operate, and these practices become a structure for the company as a collective, instead of just him as an individual.

“TB (CJ): Just wanting to learn, you know. Wanting to encounter people and so, at the time that we started, it was originally a show called inside quest. We have 1,400 employees. And we had, in fact, this is something I want to talk to you about. We had this list of our core values and I didn't want them to memorize it and not live them. I wanted to bring people in, just because I was utterly convinced, that some, there were 25 bullet points. That every guest that came on, would relate to and just naturally [inaudible 00:35:04] one, two, three, four, five of the different bullet points and people would see. Like, hey, these are, because it wasn't like this is what you need to do to successful at quest. This we needed to do to be successful at anything. Hearing these high-level people come in and talk about it naturally and then be able to go, okay, yeah, that really is exactly what is on this list. That was real big driver for me as well. CJ: So true. We talk about the same thing at Creative Live. We have core values. It's the thing we spend the most time talking about in all our meetings”.

TB and CJ both agree on the notion that having core values and disseminating them throughout the company culture is needed to be successful as a business. They both actively talk about their core values and express them to their employees. Conveying this set of principles as goals and pushing them throughout the company culture. TB emphasizes that his employees can learn these twenty-five bullet points to become successful at anything outside of the company as well. TB also mentioned that he himself has learned a lot from creating this show, and he says that the people he has interviewed in the show also speak of the same content that was on the list of bullet point. Confirming TB’s idea that those structures and practices are what is needed to be done to become a high-achieving individual.

4.3.2 *Negotiated meaning*

The previous section shows how structures and practices of an entrepreneur can be disseminated into the collective company culture. In the previous example of the bullet points list and sharing core values with the employees, the employees are likely to incorporate these sets of values into their behavior and interactions with each other as colleagues. This will have an effect on the affective engagement between the people and the business. According to Rae (2006) the emergence of a distinctive company culture depends on negotiated meaning. The meanings are expressed through the style, language, behaviors and feeling between people in the community (Rae, 2006).

“DM: And then the other construct is ego. So the two ways I help them is I teach them gratitude, empathy, accountability, and effective communication. To help them get out of their own way because that ego and time will be two things that will reduce all the resistance in their lives and allow them to attract what they want. And if you understand ego and you understand time, you can have faith to be of service”.

DM is a renowned business coach. He teaches entrepreneurs these four practices: gratitude, empathy, accountability, and effective communication. He coaches them to be a better example for their employees. By helping them to understand ego and not allowing ego to create resistance in their life and business. This will likely have a positive impact on how employees interact with each other as well and thus how the company as a collective interacts within the industry. As the head of the company, DM is a role figure inspiring others to realize these principles. By accomplishing valuable structures and practices as a leader, these practices will be reflected on the culture of the company. This way it will have a ripple effect onto the company and the community it interacts with and having a stronger corporate culture may lead to business growth. Customers and co-investors are more likely to be interested in and engaged with a company that has strong core values and has built a community of positivity.

4.3.3 *Joint enterprise, participation in enterprise*

According to Rae (2006), the ability to constructively engage others towards creating the venture is a vital aspect of the learning process of entrepreneurship. Conveying a shared belief in the continuation of the venture and realizing this personal aspiration through collective action (Rae, 2006). Including employees in the business creates a sense of

belonging and when the employer is taking good care of them helps building secure and stable relationships within the community. For example, enabling employees to be part of a company culture which acts on altruistic principles like doing philanthropy and providing service for others further strengthens this sense of being part of greater mission. Spreading the core values throughout the company culture.

“JPD: We let all the companies know what we do and why we do it. We have a culture. Let me give you an example. We have, oh, God, almost 120 Paul Mitchell Schools throughout the United States, cosmetology schools. Every one of them has to be involved in our culture. Not only do you learn how to be a great hairdresser, hair stylist, a great colorist, right. But you have to be part of the culture. They raise money. Every school we have has to raise money every year. Part of that money goes to local community, parts of the nation, and part to the world. They learn in school while it’s good to give and help others out. They also learn what our principles are”.

His company has a low turnover rate because there are many people who love what they are doing for the community and want to work at John Paul Mitchell Systems. The employees are treated well and are praised for their work. Through philanthropy and volunteering the people are raising money to help support the less fortunate and with that they are striving to make changes in the world. During this social process of doing philanthropy people learn how to work together toward a shared purpose. According to Rae (2006), the significance lies in the sublimation of the individual identity into a collective identity of the enterprise (Rae, 2006).

4.3.4 Exchanging ideas with customers, investors, and co-actors in enterprise

According to Rae (2006), maintaining and developing relationships with networks of people is an essential theme for entrepreneurship. Through this network of people several resources can be accessed. The enterprise exists within the responsiveness and openness of its environment. The network of an entrepreneur includes customers, suppliers, investors, lender, and others such as opinion formers and technology experts (Rae, 2006).

“CJ: When I looked around, I didn't have access to experts. This is really pre your early net, the idea of behind the scenes video, those words didn't even, they were never put together. ... Providing access to my life, it was totally incidental. I was

trying to help my industry, because I figured if I could send a paradigm for sharing secrets about photography, that I could actually, someone else would reciprocate and I can learn something too. That's access and community. ... And if you've given value to that community, I'm sure you've also received a ton of value of the folks, who are liking and sharing, and helping support your vision and mission here”.

The entrepreneur describes the interaction between him and his network within the industry. By sharing his knowledge of photography, he was trying to provide value for his associates in the industry. This way he gained access to the community, which in turn has provided benefits for him as well. CJ also points out how TB has a similar interaction within his community and how he can receive value from his audience to support his mission. His audience can like and share the content of the Impact Theory show, and thereby gaining more prospective viewers on the YouTube channel. For a media company on social networking sites, it is especially valuable to understand your audience and connect with them as they will cultivate the ideas and principles among the rest of the community. Expanding your network and having networking skills is essential as an entrepreneur.

4.4 Content dimension

The content dimension of the entrepreneurial learning task consists of “what” entrepreneurs have to learn about. Much of this learning remains context-specific but can also be discovered through identifying the learning needs of growth-oriented entrepreneurs. Some of the proposed topics include learning about management succession and the problems and pitfalls of growth. It is also indicated that learning priorities of entrepreneurs may vary according to their industry sector (Cope, 2005).

4.4.1 Learning about business

Entrepreneurs must identify specific learning needs for entrepreneurial learning. Politis (2005) presented the following definition of entrepreneurial learning: “entrepreneurial learning is an experiential process where the personal experience of an entrepreneur is transformed into knowledge, which in turn can be used to guide the choice of new experiences” (Politis, 2005, p. 407). Transforming experiences into knowledge that guides their entrepreneurial learning process as the entrepreneur is trying to develop the business. According to Cope (2005), it is through diagnosing internal business needs and requirements for growth that the entrepreneurs learn how to develop their business. Learning about

business also consists of defining opportunities and threats, and strengths and weaknesses of the business. Determining the future direction of the business is vital for growth-oriented entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur also needs to be aware of the employee's needs and understand them and facilitate resources for them (Cope, 2005). Results from the data analysis have shown how the entrepreneurs have not talked directly about business, because most of the time they did not go into detail about the specific processes that are present in a company's growth. This could be due to the fact that every business is different and is catering towards a specific niche. Yet, some elements of learning about business as defined by Cope (2005) were present in the data. Such as determining the future direction of the business and identifying opportunities and threats.

“TB: I totally get that. I want to go back to this notion of not just learning, but really applying what you learn. So, you start in the file room, you just go in A to Z, but now, I'm assuming you have probably a better path. So one, how do you approach learning now? Like when you went to Silicon Valley and we're a new entrant into just really learning about the raw technology, how do you, and this is I'm asking on the behalf of the people watching this, this is one thing I know they all struggle with. I have this interest, but I feel so hopelessly lost it is so big and I don't know where to start, and then once you get on the train of learning, how do you see those opportunities to use it? ... MO: So that was off my plate. You could come to me as the host of a new show, say 'I want to put this show together, here's what it's about I want to make it about social change and how people impact each other, and I want to get to the widest audience'. I had all that frame of reference in my head from seeing what was done in the past, and then innovating what could be done in the now, and then thinking a little bit about the future, how do we disrupt?”

TB is asking how a new entrant in the industry can get into the process of entrepreneurial learning. He asks where MO starts in the learning process and how he has identified the opportunities for starting a business. MO describes that once he has an idea for business, he starts with determining a future direction for the company to work towards. In this case, when starting Impact Theory for example, he would state the direction as it being about social change and how people impact each other and wanting to get the widest audience. MO explains that he used a frame of reference from prior experiences and used that as knowledge to create opportunities for innovation. Shaping the future direction of the

business and innovating.

“JPD: No advertising. Just whoooosh. Just got it out there. Because the people used it and said, ‘Wow, this is something. This stuff is unbelievable’. Right? And there's nothing, you know large chains that have it, but for sure, Rite Aid has it, Target and CVS has it also. So we could go in that industry and say, ‘we have something new, we have something different. It's realistically priced. We're not ripping everybody off’. So as people think about it, look at even these big businesses. What niche would you like to see happen? Cell phones, God, we'd love to see it less expensive, no limitations, all these other goodies. Look for that niche. What does it need? How can you put it together, and help the environment along the way. If you could do it?”

Another example of identifying opportunities and threats by another entrepreneur. JPD has put his hair products on the market without advertising because he knows that his product is made of good quality, and he lets the costumers use it right away. JPD went to the large chains and sold the product to them on the premise of having something new and different that is realistically priced. JPD uses his knowledge of the industry that he has gained over the years to define the opportunities and threats. The opportunity was there for a new and different hair product, and the threat was overpricing it and putting on the market in the wrong stores. He described that the entrepreneurs should look for a niche within the industry and find out what the industry needs. Then the entrepreneurs can start to think of how to make that happen, putting the product together and selling it.

4.4.2 Learning about oneself

The entrepreneurial learning process also includes learning about oneself. Learning about oneself was defined by Cope (2005) as understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, one's changing role within the business, areas for personal development, personal interests and motivations, and personal and family needs and objectives (Cope, 2005). The results from the data analysis show that the entrepreneurs have talked a lot about personal development, personal motivations, and objectives. Focusing on self-growth and self-transformations seems to be a critical aspect of the entrepreneurial learning process. Having knowledge about your own strengths and weaknesses was also touched upon by the entrepreneurs. As well as understanding your motivations and objectives about why they want to work on their professions and what they want to achieve. Most of the entrepreneurs

were passionate about their work and they feel grateful for being able to work on something they love to do. From experience they have learned that following their intuition that has guided them into the right direction in life, career, and hobbies. Also, a reoccurring theme that the entrepreneurs talked about was that of developing their mindset.

“TB (SW): I tried to do all the things that she was good at. I was terrible at them, because I had a fixed mindset. I didn't believe that I could go practice and get better. It never occurred to me. Practice time was just facing my inadequacies over and over and over. I wasn't able to compute that, "Hey. If I do this, I'll actually progress and get better." As an adult, though, I found that, and business became that for me. That, "Hey. If I treated this like practice and I'm really just trying to get good. Then, over a long enough timeline this will add up to something."

TB touches on the importance of developing the right mindset here. He puts emphasis on how his fixed mindset was holding him back from learning new things and once he let go of this and changed it into a growth mindset, he experienced how his learning process accelerated. In a fixed mindset the person believes that traits such as talents and intelligence are fixed. Whereas in a growth mindset the person belief that with effort, teaching and persistence these capabilities can be progressed to a better level. Believing in your own capacity to learn and working hard to make progress are found to be crucial for entrepreneurship. As an entrepreneur you will face many difficulties and you need to be able to solve these problems in order to make your business succeed. Having the right mindset to see these adversities as learning points will make you go forward, not only as a entrepreneur but also on a personal level.

“CJ: You have to have the right state, before you can tell yourself the right story, before you can get the right strategy in place. Anytime you try and go right to one of the other things, like if you try and go right to the right strategy, but you're in a shitty head space. You're not gonna get the strategy right. Tony Robbins calls his daily routine priming. Whatever the activities that we all do every day or morning or in this case visualization. If I realize that those things are true for me too. If I first and foremost and control my state, my emotional state. I can be in a positive head space, and know that the world's out there, looking out for me and that I am in part, in control of my destiny. That helps me create a great narrative, whether this is a

narrative of self-empowerment or supporting others or just creating the world that I'm hoping to create. The strategy is like, oh I have to wake up and I have to go do this thing, or help this person or be receptive to these ideas, such that I can tap into my dreams. ... I have put these techniques to work for me. I don't preach them, but I can't think of what my life would be like, you know, you talked about how would your stress level be, what your health would be without some of the practices that you've made use of. I'm in the same boat. I can't even imagine, I wouldn't be on the show, if it wasn't for some of these techniques and tools”.

CJ explained here how he uses techniques like visualization for his self-development. He realized that his performance is dependent on his emotional state. Having this self-awareness, he implemented these techniques to create a narrative of self-empowerment, knowing what he wants to achieve and using that as motivation. He recognized his emotional state and took control of it by using these tools and steered it towards a positive head space. This positive head space helps him to implement the right strategies. Making the right strategic decisions is important for entrepreneurial learning.

4.4.3 Learning about environment and entrepreneurial network, and managing relationships

A business is never solely dependent on one person. An important aspect of entrepreneurship is knowing how to build and maintain relationships not only in the business environment but in private life as well. These relationships can be supportive for your business and can help you achieve your goals. According to Cope (2005), learning about the nature and management of relationships forms an integral part of the learnings task for entrepreneurial learning and ties in with the other elements mentioned previously. This regards internal relationships to the firm and external relationship. Managing relationships is done within the entrepreneurial network with existing and potential customers, suppliers, and competitors. Maximizing the relationships with advisory agencies and support services such as the bank and the accountant (Cope, 2005). Besides working on the relationships within the entrepreneurial network, an entrepreneur also needs to be appreciative of the relationships in his or her personal life with friends, family and acquaintances.

“DM: Well number one, when you feel superior it's usually a direct projection of your insecurities. And so I, I was projecting my feeling that I was inferior to other

people, that no matter how much money that I made and the successes I had, when I met other people, like you that are so successful, I had this energy like I wasn't good enough. I lived in a world of not good enough and then I would do things to buy grace or buy appreciation. Even with my mom, and almost ruined my relationship because I put a standard on her of appreciation. I'd buy her house or you know buy extravagant gifts, and, and all she really wanted was my love and appreciation. But I felt offended. Because people didn't do this or didn't show up to my party or, I wasted so much energy”.

DM briefly touches on how the projections of his own insecurities negatively impacted his personal relationships as well as his own emotional state. It had a negative impact on his personal life and his energy levels, which is not optimal for performance. Therefore, maintaining and developing positive relationship is essential for personal fulfillments and it is useful for creating the optimal entrepreneurial network. There are moments when the entrepreneurs must rely on other people and so having a good relationship with those people can turn out to be advantageous for growing the business.

4.5 Process dimension

According to Cope (2005), the development of a dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship requires a theory about entrepreneurial learning that not only takes account of “what” entrepreneurs must learn about during the establishment and management of entrepreneurial ventures, but also the specific *process* of learning that stimulate the learning content outlined. The process dimension is about “how” entrepreneurs learn how to be entrepreneurial. This is part of the broader development of research on entrepreneurship as process and practice (Fletcher, 2006; Johannisson, 2011; Jones et al., 2014; Steyaert, 1997). From a process perspective, the entrepreneurial learning task is conceptualized through focusing on the importance of emerging critical learning events. Also, there is a common understanding that entrepreneurs are action-oriented and that much of their learning is based on experiences. Thereby emphasizing that entrepreneurs learn primarily through “learning by doing”, including such learning processes as trial and error, explicit problem solving, and discovery. Knowledge about “how to be entrepreneurial” needs to be acquired through learning by doing or direct observation, as there is no substitute for experience (Cope, 2005).

4.5.1 Critical learning events

The critical learning events that emerged are conceptualized by Cope (2005) as crucial to the process dimension of entrepreneurial learning. Critical learning events are “learning episodes” where entrepreneurs have shown these influential periods of learning to be instrumental to forming their approaches to life and work. These “critical episodes” are experiences that have a strong impact on the entrepreneur’s personal learning and development and can be transformational for their lives and careers (Cope, 2005). The results from the data have revealed that the entrepreneurs indeed have experienced plenty of critical learning events through which they have transformed their lives and careers. There were many references to this theme, and consequently this theme has shown to be important for the process of entrepreneurial learning. One entrepreneur mentioned that he changed his career path after getting caught in an avalanche. He realized that he really should live his life in service of himself. Another entrepreneur said that nothing is more expensive than losing your joy and your peace of mind. When he was successful and made money, he still felt like a completely empty person. So, he started working on himself and his mindset. Another entrepreneur said that a major theme throughout his life has been that one does not get to a place of success without having made mistakes. He felt like losing was a point of weak character, and for him it was critical to win and to always thrust forward. Another entrepreneur had to take accountability for going bankrupt. His whole identity was about being rich and successful, and he had to let go of that identity. Changing into being radically humble, confident, and faithful. Another entrepreneur stated that getting fired three different times had turned out to be the steppingstones for his further career. Every single job has taught him something about the industry he has companies in now. One taught him something about the beauty industry, and the other about the distribution industry and another about making products. This means, a conscious appreciation and reflection of the impact of important life events can help to develop meaningfully as an entrepreneur.

4.5.2 Opportunities and problems can be rich a rich source of learning

According to Cope (2005), learning activities of entrepreneurs emerge in response to meaningful opportunities and problems (Cope, 2005). A reoccurring theme throughout the interviews has been how these entrepreneurs have learned from facing adversities along the way and from the mistakes they have made. They also learned from identifying opportunities and executing on them. Seeing problems as chances to learn is critical for the

entrepreneurial learning process. Instead of getting stuck or giving up, it is necessary to find solutions to these problems and see them as events that can provide a rich learning experience.

“TB (SW): Your eyes were open enough to see the opportunities, which is incredible. That notion of, I'm going to put the word in your mouth, flow. You're almost moving through these business opportunities with the grace that you show when you're skating or snowboarding, which is pretty incredible. You also have the balls to pull the trigger, and that's where a lot of people fall down. They, maybe, see the opportunity, but they don't actually have the vision of what they want to do with it or the guts to do it. To actually buy in to it. If they buy in to it, they don't spend the five days locked in the warehouse painting on the jacket, though”.

TB talked about how he admired SW's ability to take opportunities and not let doubts get in the way of him executing on them. He said that a lot of people do not have the courage to do that. SW has learned how to not doubt himself and take the opportunities that he sees at hand. This has offered him a lot of critical events to learn from. On the contrary, when people let doubts and insecurities hold them back and they become passive, a lot of opportunities and learning moments could pass them by.

“DG: And when I looked out amongst all those people, it was a sense of pride... that I can't even, I can't even explain. It's the moments of three hell weeks, it's the moments of in that room by myself studying for hours, and hours, and hours trying to catch up with all the kids who are above me. It's just those moments. Like the real raw moments of life. That was like boom. Hit me. And were gone. But I was like I did that. Overcame that shit you know. It's like this is power behind all that shit. And that's the feeling I was looking for in my life. I found it. Wasn't money, wasn't fame, wasn't awards, and it was that feeling I have right now. I feel I'm about to break down - but it's not of like, 'oh my god I'm upset. It's like I worked myself so hard that I turned a person this fucked up into this motherfucker right here'. Not off of reading a fucking book, off a theorist. Off of going to work on myself, and saying I don't know how to do this. But I know that to get over there to that fucking side. I gotta grind myself into a fucking fine power, and I did it. I did it off of sure will. And very few people will know how that feels. Very few”.

This entrepreneur also talked about how it is necessary to conquer the insecurities, fears, and doubts. He had difficulty studying, but he worked hard for it to overcome those problems. He mentioned there is no better feeling of victory for himself than from overcoming his problems. Gaining more confidence will lead to tackling more problems and lead to the conviction that they can be solved. Seeing these adversities as learning opportunities and never giving up has made him more self-assured and resilient which are important qualities for self-development and entrepreneurial learning. This shows that the way of thinking of entrepreneurs needs to be different when faced with a challenge, they see it as an opportunity and have the necessity to progress, even if it takes intense effort.

4.5.3 *Learning by encounter, by direct experience*

According to Cope (2005), much of the learning of entrepreneur is based on experiences. The entrepreneurs are action-oriented, and they primarily learn through “learning by doing”. Examples of learning by doing and learning by direct experience include such learning processes as trial and error, problem solving, learning from making mistakes, and discovery (Cope, 2005).

“CJ: You get into it by doing it. That's the thing. It feels very unnatural at first, and then try things like morning pages, try things like creating something every day. Since we all have phones with this, it's very easy to do these things. Playing the guitar, taking pictures every day, writing in a journal. All those things will make you better brain surgeons, a better athlete, a better, like there's, the science is abundantly clear, that creativity creates creativity”.

What CJ described how there are creative skills that you learn by doing them such as playing the guitar or taking pictures. By learning various different skills, you get better at learning in general. And as CJ points out ‘creativity creates creativity’. Creativity is important for solving problems as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs in general are also learning by doing things.

“CJ: I had to take the swings myself, learn from experience. Why am I doing this and so many other people could benefit, so I started sharing that. That first inclination of access is in part. I believe, why I was sitting here today. Because I'm, I have

cultivated a world where that is normal. A world around me that's what Creative Live, obviously it's a core value there, but I started out as a photographer by sharing trade secrets. This is what it's like. This is my behind the scenes, with professional athlete, x, y or z or this famous snowboarder or whatever. This is what it's like to suck, this is what it's like to get a job and lose a job. Providing access to my life, it was totally incidental. I was trying to help my industry, because I figured if I could send a paradigm for sharing secrets about photography, that I could actually, someone else would reciprocate and I can learn something too”.

CJ became an entrepreneur through learning from experience. He started out as a beginner where he had to learn through trial and error how do create a business. His idea came from his own personal experience as a photographer and a director as well. He wanted to learn more about photography, but at that time there were not many options to learn besides doing it yourself, this was before the cyberspace platforms had matured. He decided he wanted to share his own skills with other people so they would have the possibility to learn what he needed to learn when he started out as a photographer. That is the reason why he started with his business, the platform Creative Life where people can learn skills for experts online. This shows that it is important for entrepreneurs to have a platform of sharing information. A platform where they can absorb and share information with each other and grow from this shared learning experience.

4.5.4 Learning by being immersed in experience

Learning by being immersed in experience is similar to learning by direct experience. However, according to Cope (2005), learning by being immersed in an experience is an emotional type of learning that finds expression through ‘being there’. The difference with learning by direct experience is the notion that of learning by doing, and learning by being there. Being somewhere and observing what other people are doing. Examples of learning by being immersed in experience are learning from peers, learning by copying, learning by experiment, and searching for opportunities (Cope, 2005). The analysis shows that the entrepreneurs feel how being in the flow state has led to work in bursts of intense productivity. Some of the entrepreneurs have been able to perform better when they were under pressure as when they were not. SW explained how he saw somebody else doing a snowboard trick and therefore he knew that it was possible, so he decided to try that trick too. Seeing somebody else do it first was a motivation for him to take that chance to try to

do something he had never done before. He has also mentioned that putting on music helps him to get into the right emotional state to get immersed into the experience and perform at his best.

4.5.5 *Critical success and critical failures*

Cope (2005) has stressed how valuable negative critical events can be for gaining confidence and knowledge, but also in terms of reflecting the consequences of one's actions. Actively trying to ensure that such events do not reoccur. Learning what works and what does not work. Accepting that mistakes, crises, and failures can have immediate impact on the business and in personal terms. However, in the long term these events can have a positive and productive learning outcome (Cope, 2005). For example, critical successes can be a valuable stimulus to continue that path, as it appears that what the entrepreneur was doing so far has worked out right. As such, critical failures can be a signal to change paths, since apparently there were some mistakes made that needed to be corrected. Results from the data analysis have shown that there are several instances in the lives of the entrepreneurs where they can remember that they had to endure a lot of failure before they succeeded. The entrepreneurs did not seem to think that this was a bad thing. They accepted that failing was part of the learning process and they gained knowledge through making those mistakes. The entrepreneurs decided to reassess the situation and refocus their objectives in order to transform those mistakes into valuable learning outcomes.

“JPD: Because if you're prepared for a lot of rejection and it comes, you don't get turned off, you don't get disappointed. Like, ‘Well I'm not going to do this anymore. No one thinks it's a good idea’. It's like I say selling encyclopedias, knock on a hundred doors, they slam them in your face. You must be just as enthusiastic on door number 101 as door number one. And that's one of the real secrets. And growing up as kids in downtown LA, we all knew that. We didn't have a lot. There's a lot of things are going to turn you down. At seven trying to sell a flowerpot on the street, most people said ‘no’. ‘But it's only 50 cents. No, no, no’. Soon, a waitress in a little restaurant said, ‘only 50 cents that's really great’, she bought it from us. We went and built another one”.

JPD realized at a very young age that he should not listen to negative projections and that he should not give up. Even if that means trying 100 times before it works out. He has learned

how to use rejections as something positive which only made him grow. And ultimately after numerous rejections he succeeded. It was based on will power to face difficulties and persistence to reach the objective in any way possible. The entrepreneur shared this attitude of determination with other upcoming entrepreneurs and recommends them to be prepared to face disappointments.

“DM: But the hardest thing was to walk through my mom's house and tell, ‘oh I get choked up. I had to tell her that not only did I fail her, but myself but I felt. I felt really really tough. *crying*. So that failure to me was the toughest part you know. And so for me all the other things were just learning experiences. But I had to get over the shame, of that you know here, they took my mom's house. My dream of getting rich was, it was only to buy my mom a house and a car. That's you know, I grew up with nothing. Six kids, single mom so for me, to make it back, I was already on that journey and I felt as if I could stay in a place of giving, and faith. And, and I mean faith in myself, and faith in the universe, faith in others of service, that everything would come back to me and it did”.

Even though DM has lost everything, he did not let this hinder him. He took this failure as a learning experience which allowed him to build everything back up and he come out stronger.

4.5.6 Confronting and overcoming challenges

Results from the data analysis have shown that confronting and overcoming challenges are valuable for the entrepreneurial learning process. Entrepreneurial learning is a continuous process, where the individual must encounter many different challenges along the way. Most valuable was how they approached the challenges, and how they set out to tackle them and not be frightened or stopped by them. Knowing that it is not easy to do so, but still aiming to overcoming the challenge anyway. This theme is similar to the notion that opportunities and problems can be rich source of learning (Cope, 2005).

“DG: A lot of us are going through a hard time in life. Some people have been bullied. Some people are just stressed out. Some people are insecure. Some people are fat and overweight. And the world puts a lot of this shit in your mind. It’s not just you, yeah you help it, and my whole thing is about I had to develop a mindset. A

mindset that was indestructible. I had to armor plate my mind. And it's about what you're saying to yourself but it also comes with work. So whenever I was getting beat down, physically, mentally, spiritually, whatever I was going through. Just saying you know, I would put you know, you can't hurt me. Can't hurt me just became a message. I you know I would say to myself”.

DG has decided to create a indestructible mindset. This helped him to confront and overcome his challenges.

“SW: Just do what's hard until it's not hard anymore. I remember playing guitar, and I couldn't up pick. I would sit on the airplane, and I would up stroke the seam of my pant and listen to the music that was playing and play along with it with the pick in my hand. Then, it became easy to do it. I slowly got past that hurdle”.

Here is another example of how SW overcame his challenge by confronting it and putting in the hours of practice that was needed to get past that hurdle. Together, these findings show the depth and richness of processual elements and content of entrepreneurial development. I will now connect these with my own developments and narrative reflections in autoethnographic manner.

4.6 Narrative description of reflective autoethnography results

The results of the autoethnography are presented in the form of stories where the ethnographer's experiences are incorporated into the ethnographic description and analysis of others (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). The researcher is reflecting and understanding their own experiences in relation to experiences of the members of the group being studied. The narrative often intersects with the analysis of entrepreneurial patterns and processes. Several patterns were discovered that where related to the processes addressed in the directed content analysis. Both methods of analysis have convincingly led to understanding that self-development is significant in the process of entrepreneurial learning.

This section will include only three examples of the narrative autoethnography. The full report including the autoethnographic descriptions of the interviews 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 can be found in Appendix D.

4.6.1 Interview 1: Robin Sharma

The first thing I learned from this interview is that looking at entrepreneurship, I was under the assumption that entrepreneurship only had to do with business management. The things that I would consider of importance in entrepreneurship are other things than I would have expected. I would not have thought that having a morning routine or doing physical exercises would help you at becoming an entrepreneur. As Robin explained in the interview, in order to be a good entrepreneur, you need to be efficient. To be more efficient, it would help you if your neurochemistry were optimal and your hormones levels are good. You can do this by having a good start in the morning so that you are able to function well throughout the day. I think it is very thoughtful of him to refer to energy management instead of solely time management. If your energy levels are not aligned with your time management then you are not being efficient with your time management either.

I would have never thought that introspection like meditation or journaling would be of importance for an entrepreneur. It is also good to see that it's not always about literally physically working the most hours. It feels counter intuitive to me to focus on tranquillity and schedule in some time to rest instead of work and focus on taking it slow and becoming a better entrepreneur by using introspective tools like journaling and meditation.

“RS: And so, 5:20 to 5:40 the second pocket, you write in a journal, you meditate, you visualize, you do what I call in the book ‘a blueprint for a beautiful day’. Or you just sit around in solitude, and you think and you ponder, and you reflect.”

In a way it makes sense to do this before everyone else starts their day, because then there is time to be with yourself. Before the world wakes up and all the meetings start you are already one step ahead. I was under the assumption that it would not be useful to wake up before anyone else because then there would not be anybody to work with. It is good to find out that there is a way to be useful by yourself, by improving your own state of mind and therefore increasing your focus and efficiency as an entrepreneur. I think it will take time to change my morning routine, but I have tried mediation in the morning and it makes me feel like I have more clarity in my mind and I can handle my emotional state better. Waking up and starting the day with positive affirmations makes me feel great and confident throughout the rest of the day.

As he points out in his third pocket of the 20-20-20 rule, he says it is always important to focus on personal growth. If I would think about entrepreneurship, I would only

think about the company that I would have to improve, but now I can see that it is important to focus on personal growth as well. You are the underlying basis of the company, so if you grow you will improve the chances of improving the company. If the company would grow into something bigger, which would require more of you, but you did not grow accordingly, you would not be able to keep up with the performance of the growing company. Vice versa, if you have a focus on personal growth and personal capabilities, then you will increase the chances of you being able to improve the company that you are involved with as well. If you do not grow that could be a point where you reach the ceiling of your capabilities. It could be that your company is depending on the same ceiling, so if you elevate your capabilities, you can elevate the capacity of the company as well. I was hoping that he will further reflect on that because right now I am just assuming this would be the case.

“RS: And George Bernard Shaw said it better than I ever could, he said ‘the reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in adapting the world to himself, therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man’. So that's our nature. But our parents give us limitation based on their limited psychology and their emotional patterns that they learn from their parents. Then we go to school and we're taught to live in a box, think in a box, dress like everyone else, don't sing too loudly, don't dream too big, don't be too passionate, and then our peers do the same thing to us, and then society says ‘Oh genius is the realm of genetics not everyday people’, which has been dismissed by some very good science.”

Robin points out something that is recognisable for me, as I also used to grow up with big ideas - the sky was the limit. Nobody ever told me to doubt those beliefs. It was encouraged as a child to dream big and think big, and nobody ever taught me to question those beliefs. Until you get older, and you go to school, and you conform to society. More people seem to try to take the safer route and settle down their big dreams that they may have. If you aim for something riskier such as entrepreneurship, although it is risky, it has the potential of becoming something significant. If something like entrepreneurship is being thought of as some ‘big dream’ or ‘unrealistic’, it reflects the risk-averse thinking that is present in society. I can see the point Robin is making with that: if everybody is thinking in the same kind of limited way, it will be harder for you as an individual to step out of that and to limit yourself in the same way as your peers. And this may be why society is formed like that

because the more people think the same way, the more likely it will be that the rest will be thinking in that same way too. This creates a snowball effect. It seems like a relief to me to see somebody explain how irrational it would be to compare yourself to your peers who might be limiting themselves. Robin encourages you to step out of that and reflect on that as if it would open new opportunities for personal growth and therefore entrepreneurial growth. As I have mentioned before, personal growth is linked to entrepreneurial growth.

“RS: Self growth. You know we live in a world that suggests the doorway to successes swings outward. If you build the business, if you get the jet, if you get the money, if you get the cars, if you get the beautiful spouse, then you're gonna be happy. What I believe, and there's a model in the 5m club, that I think is a very disruptive model but it's a transformational model. And it's called the ‘four interior empires’. And it's not just mindset. It's mindset, heart-set, health-set, and soul-set.”

When Robin is describing the four interior empires “mindset, heart-set, health-set and soul-set ...” he made me realise that the importance of personal growth depends on so many more factors than I could have imagined. He explained how meditation and journaling are important for personal growth. He described working on the first empire, ‘mindset’, using journaling because this can have a positive impact on your psychology. I thought it would be sufficient for your growth just to focus on the mindset, until he started to describe the other three empires, and I learned that there are many more factors of importance for personal growth.

It is eye-opening for me to see that Robin has been focusing solely on personal growth and has not talked about the economic aspects of doing business yet. I did not expect the emphasis on personal growth. For example, in the soul-set, he also points out how you should be resilient and persistent, which are character traits that you should develop to overcome obstacles. Even though it may be difficult, you should continue to work on your entrepreneurial dream by developing a strong sense of character so you can withstand the problems and persist through any adversities that you may face. For example, being ridiculed by other people and their limited beliefs, and not becoming part of that snowball.

I was under the assumption, like many people, that you have to work hard all the time in order to be successful, but it is better to have short periods of intense productivity and then periods of rest to recover. This way, you can compensate your energy with your time management. Being fit and healthy, eating healthy e.g., the health-set is also important

in order to be able to have the energy needed to work the intense periods of high performance. Thus, being healthy, and being able to have high performance will lead to being a better entrepreneur. However, besides short periods of high performance being important, it is also important to focus on longevity and living a longer healthy life. The healthier you are and the longer you live, this will lead to better long-term performance and in the end will also lead to more success in business since you will have more time to work on the growth of the business.

Robin mentioned how he uses journaling as an effective method to reframe traumatic experiences. Journaling is a powerful tool that can be used across all the four empires. By writing about your experiences under the right interior empire you can get a better awareness and therefore make better decisions of what you want to achieve in your life. For example, heartbreak should be written about under heart-set, and not under mindset.

“RS: Knowing your core values, your top five core values, knowing those. Knowing your weaknesses, knowing your strengths, I mean a lot of leadership talk isn't about that. But starting with your character, and your self-identity, that is really important for a leader I'd say. The second thing for a leader, would be, well getting big things done. ... Like great leadership is less talk, and more do, you know. It doesn't really matter, what the chatter, I mean it's all about execution, implementation, and, and application. So they get things done. ... And the third thing I'd say, you know, be crazy. The great leaders are insane. And I say that they're insane to the majority, the great ones are all misfits, and they're all weird. I mean the very nature of being a disrupter, and a leader, means you're not a follower. And if you're not a follower, then you're not buying the kool-aid that society sells you”.

I think here he summarizes very well what he has been explaining before. This quote clearly shows to me why personal growth is so important for entrepreneurship. The three pillars of great leadership are important for entrepreneurship but then again, these three pillars are also very personal. Firstly, knowing yourself and your core values. Secondly, less talking and more doing. It is about execution and being disciplined and focused which also comes down to your personal behaviour. Thirdly, you have to be crazy, but in order to consistently be pushing the boundaries you should not be afraid of being judged and should not be scared to go against the grain. Robin describes going against the grain as something positive, but in order to do that you have to have a lot of self-confidence and not be pushed over by what

other people's opinions about you are. Yet, in society it usually has a negative connotation to go against the grain: here it is described as something that is valuable in becoming an entrepreneur. I used to feel afraid of what others what think of me, maybe they would think that I am strange because I sometimes feel different even though I would like to fit in with other people. Hearing Robin say that it is okay to be different takes away my fears and motivates me to be myself more around other people.

4.6.2 *Interview 2: John Paul DeJoria*

John Paul says that you need to learn how to cope with rejection. He says it is especially important for entrepreneurs because when you are going to get rejected, you should not react on it by giving up, otherwise you will not be able to stay in business. Entrepreneurs are becoming successful because they can rise back up from rejection. If I think about an entrepreneur and his success, the only thing I can think of is that he must do things right. But now I can see that even these successful people have had a lot of rejections.

“JP: A lot of doors are closed in your face, but what happens after a while, you start getting used to it. And you see what you can say or do that'll make it better. When you go back the next day with your other salespeople, what did you see, what did you do, what did I say? So let's say, knock on 100 doors get into one. Give 10 presentations to sell one book. But then when you get better and better at it, through your experiences and losses along the way, it sharpens you up”.

Their success actually lies in how they deal with those adversities. Without those setbacks they would have never been where they are now. They are very good at learning from making mistakes through reflection and improving on what went wrong. Instead of thinking that entrepreneurs always know what they are doing, they don't know everything, but they keep on going even when it gets hard. The most difficult encounters will be the ones you will learn the most from. You can learn from making those mistakes, and then you get to improve yourself.

“TB: I love that there's no secret formula to your success. That it's really been these basic building blocks convincing yourself to do it. In fact, walk people through, how do you go from... you show up one day and your wife is walking out the door, and

she hands you the keys and you know basically she leaves you. You're in your darkest hour, you've, you've explained pretty well like how you don't get stuck at level one. JPD: Right well. That was level minus one or two, okay. ... That check coming from them wasn't coming in for one week, and needless to say, she didn't pay the rent. I didn't know it. Didn't pay the electric bill. Within three days, we were out of there. I was kind of down. And I think at that time, coming from an environment where you run across a lot of things that are very disappointing, I just looked at, 'okay I have no money. I have a kid'. Okay."

Ironically, you could say that the worse the conditions are, the better they are. If everything would be perfect, you would not learn anything, and when difficulties arise, you would fail. If you do not have optimal conditions, you have more room for growth. The term 'optimal' therefore becomes relative to which time frame you contextualize it. In the short term, optimal conditions seem preferable, however you will learn little. Yet, in the long term the least optimal conditions are optimal because you will have more option for personal growth and therefore you will learn more in the long term. John Paul is actually grateful for having been fired in his other jobs because without going through those hard times he would not have been where he is now. He realizes that those adversities are part of his success. Having been fired three times, he had to work for three different companies and therefore he learned to have three different perspectives on the same industry. If he would not have been fired, he would not have learned all those perspectives that he ultimately combined into making his own company. So, you must embrace the things that go wrong, and do your best to learn the most out of it, and then take that to your advantage. If you are open to improving yourself, then you will be able to transform setbacks into advantageous positive learning moments.

"TB: You seem to have a really strong internal set of values. When did that begin to take shape in terms of policies that you could implement in the company? Was it right away? Did that take time? ... JPD: When I worked for other companies, some of them, not to mention any names, were so bad. They would treat people the old way, 'I'm the boss. Here's what you're going to do because I'm the boss'. Right. There were times, for example, when maybe you had a dollar for lunch. You can't get a lot for a dollar. So I just knew that that's how I was, and if I had a company that I had a control of, my gosh everyone's going to be treated the way I wanted to be treated. So the minute we could afford it, everyone had free lunch. Whether you had

money or not, you have free lunch. We pay for it for you. Our people will pay for that. So we started doing things for people that I wish happened to me”.

John Paul says that the quality and service of your product leads to people wanting to buy more. He says to make sure your product is the best quality you can make it. He also stays true to his values. His promise was to sell only in saloons, and he keeps that promise. Another value is that they did not want to test their hair products on animals, and they have also kept that promise. The point is that his company is consistent with his values, and his company can be seen as being in line with his personal values and sticking to that. Keeping to your core values was also something that Robin Sharma had stated previously. Having a strong internal set of values can be a way to effectively operate in business.

By being consistent with his value of treating people the way you want to be treated, he created a very supportive basis for his employees which lead to his employees being happy working at his company and not wanting to leave. This has a positive impact on his company, as he says: ‘My people are my company. If they leave, the company is gone’. This resulted in an unprecedented low turnover rate which is part of his company’s success. If people are happy, they function better. Moreover, the longer people stay within the same company environment, the more time they have to learn skills that are valuable for the job and thus the company. By creating this ‘supportive culture’, I can imagine his employees get a sense of belonging to that culture. This is advantageous for the efficiency of his employees since it will create greater team spirit. Also, he has used the four P’s: people, profit, be positive and help the planet as foundational building blocks to create his companies’ culture. This consistency with internal values has led to better venture performance. He has managed to stay in business longer and managed to meet the company’s goals and missions: to deliver quality products to consumers and give back to the community through philanthropy.

My intuition initially would say that if you want to run a company and make maximum profit you should cut costs as much as possible. To me, giving free lunch or dinner and a good pay for your employees did not seem beneficial for a company at first and so is philanthropy – however John Paul has shown that these things are actually crucial to his company’s success. That is because he is consistent with these core values. He is convinced that he is doing good for the people in his company and for the planet. He underlines that it is crucial to give without expecting anything in return. This is very eye-opening and inspirational to me because I can see what great of an effect that can have. I think it is interesting to conclude that it is not only about treating people well or doing

philanthropy as a company. The power mostly lies in being consistent with the underlying core values. Acting altruistically as a company to gain profit is not authentic. I do not think this is sustainable for the long-term. This explains why knowing and staying true to your core values is a key to success.

4.6.3 Interview 3: Michael Ovitz

I was quite surprised to hear from Michael Ovitz that he seems to give in order to get something from people. It seems insincere and seems contradictory to what John Paul said about giving without expectations. But what they have in common is that they both have a strong will to succeed, and a mindset to work hard, smart, and long hours. In this case the difference is actually that Michael was in a different position than JP was in, because JP was in a position to give as head of the company, whereas Michael didn't have any recognition to begin within the company. In order to disrupt he had to do what nobody else did within his own capabilities, so he had to get it from the little things, he had to be the one person who was always there, he had to befriend everyone in order to make the right connections and he did that by giving gifts and giving his best services.

He also had a strong work ethic. In order to get more executive freedom, he had to move up the ladder first. If you already have the executive power, then it is easier to disrupt because you get to call the shots. He used the same tactics, work hard and disrupt, even though he was more limited in what he could do, he was very persistent and doing the best he could in order to get more power and privileges to get into a better position.

“MO: I had a really strong foundation and I decided there were two paths in life.

There was one path which was to just sort of float with it, and there was another path to be aggressive and try to make something of yourself, and do something that would put you in a position to be able to do something else. To be able to do something else, to do something else.”

Even though he was not an entrepreneur yet, he was bound to be because he had all of the entrepreneurial characteristics such as working hard and being growth-oriented. He also wanted to differentiate himself from his competition, and one of the ways to be one step ahead of his competition was by having more information. Knowledge is power is his industry and power gives more freedom of choice. Freedom of choice gives more potential

for growth. By taking many small steps and doing small acts of kindness he was able to get a better position in the company. These small steps seem minor at first, but in the end all of the minor things add up to something major.

“MO: So, I, first of all, I consider myself incredibly lucky to be here sitting with a fellow entrepreneur who founded a company from scratch, and went through all of the ups downs, trials and tribulations to get it to work. And what most people don't realize is for every success story there's probably ten thousand failures, maybe more. Frankly, so, it's really a pleasure to be here”.

“TB: I see you as somebody who's still energized, who's clearly still contributing in Silicon Valley in a pretty significant way. So how, how do you take that now, knowing where it tripped you up, knowing that it did work sometimes that there are times you have to be aggressive but there's also times where you have to back off. How do you play that now, or how do you advise others to play that? ... MO: So, that's a, it's a really good question. And it's a theme that's been laced through my life. One doesn't get to a place of success without having made mistakes”.

What these successful entrepreneurs have in common is that they have failed many times. Similarly, to what Robin and JP had said: the key to success lies in how you deal with those failures. The similarities I see with what Robin says is that you need to have the characteristics such as being resilient to overcome those repetitive failures. Another similarity can be found in what JP says about having the learning mindset and trying to learn from every failure and transforming them into beneficial cycles of new insight, new knowledge, and new experiences. As failures and learning by trial and error is a reoccurring theme in the interviews it makes sense that learning from failure is such a significant part of entrepreneurship. In this way, all of the small mistakes are also adding up to major progress in the end.

Another similarity I can draw between Michael Ovitz and JP is saying that there was no alternative to succeeding. They both didn't have anything to fall back on, so it seems like having the pressure from your financial situation makes you do the things that need to be done in order to succeed. Yet again, a less favourable position pushes people towards doing the hard work and becoming successful in the end.

What stands out to me is the importance that Michael Ovitz puts on having

knowledge. By having read so many books about such a wide variety of topics he can talk to almost anybody about anything. Since he is an entrepreneur, he has to make deals with people. At first, I thought business was mostly about being rational and hard crushed numbers. Here the entrepreneurs are talking about building relations with other businesspeople, focussing on the social dynamics of knowing how to behave and how not to behave. For example, Michael has studied martial arts, the Far East and Japan and he had found out when traveling there that he could manoeuvre his way through the social customs and manners of a foreign culture better than his western competitors. He had some extra knowledge about what to do, and what to say - and what not to do and say.

It is impressive to see how he has built his empire with aggressive strategies, but it is a relief for me to see that doing business nowadays is different from the type of business from the '50s and '60s. It is good to hear that Michael is taking back his words for having had such an aggressive strategy towards entrepreneurship. It seems contradictory to what the other entrepreneurs have said about giving without having expectations and focussing on leaving a positive impact on the world. Nowadays there is less of a necessity for implementing aggressive business strategies because right now, the social fabric of the world is different. Right now, we live in a world where leaders can show vulnerability because that is what makes them human which makes them more relatable for their peers. Whereas in the past you would be dominated by your competition if you showed any weaknesses.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown that I can autonomously develop entrepreneurial learning capabilities through studying, and that digital media platforms can support self-directed learning principles. By means of the autoethnography, this thesis deviates from the structure of a conventional thesis to accommodate the richness of learning and personal growth. It is a personal account that shows how my own story of entrepreneurial learning is connected with educational entrepreneurship videos from a remarkable YouTube channel. Essentially, it captures the depth of what I learned, and what I now describe all that entrepreneurial learning is about: a personal process of becoming an entrepreneur, in relation to ideas and challenges of forming a business.

The two theoretical frameworks from Rae (2006) and Cope (2005) that were used in this research overlap partially with each other. The findings from the data analysis were portrayed in the results chapter and they underline most of the theoretical ideas from the frameworks used. The research questions of this study were answered using the theoretical frameworks and the two methodologies (Figueiredo et al., 2017): directed content analysis and autoethnography. Both of these methodologies were leading towards similar patterns of findings which will be combined together in this conclusion. The main research question was: *“What is the value of entrepreneurship videos for online self-directed entrepreneurial learning?”*.

The answer to this main research question is that the value of entrepreneurship videos for online self-directed entrepreneurial learning is high. In fact, self-development can be considered as the crucial foundation for effective entrepreneurial learning. This notion is derived from the analysis where the entrepreneurs have consistently shown that self-development is the foundation to proceed further into the development of an entrepreneurial identity. The data suggests that concepts like self-awareness, building of character and mindset, identifying internal motivations, and having core values are decisive elements for the process of entrepreneurial learning. A company can be strategically built upon these core values (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Rode & Vallaster, 2005; van Nuenen, 2015). The direction of a company, its culture, and the way it communicates with its environment and networks are an extension of the entrepreneurial identity – which in turn is a reflection of the self-development of the entrepreneur. The entrepreneurs have frequently and accurately described their visions and ideas which emphasize that the journey of self-development counts as the most significant underlying basis for entrepreneurial learning, and

consequently for doing effective entrepreneurship.

The sub research question was: “*What can I learn by going through the process of online self-directed entrepreneurial learning?*”. The answer is that entrepreneurial learning is an inherently dynamic process which is shaped by actually being immersed in the process itself. Ultimately, one will learn to become an entrepreneur by actually doing entrepreneurship. However, by appreciating and harnessing the underlying mechanisms of self-development becomes the true basis for effectively navigating this process of entrepreneurial learning. Learning how to optimize the process of self-development including building your character, developing your mindset, setting up goals and learning how to deal with adversities can be retrieved from watching the videos about entrepreneurship. Therefore, the value of the entrepreneurship videos lies in the personal experiences that the entrepreneurs share on the YouTube channel. By sharing their stories, the entrepreneurs reveal their own personal processes of entrepreneurial learning. It is through the revelation of their personal knowledge and experiences that the audience can learn more about their own journey into entrepreneurial learning.

Furthermore, the concept of online self-directed learning is seen as positive and relevant by the entrepreneurs in the videos. My analysis suggests concurringly that there is a high value of alternative learning methods like analyzing entrepreneurship videos. The process of self-directed learning is a reflection of the self and a personal process of learning. This strongly resonates with earlier research that has highlighted the strong narrative, personal, and experiential character of entrepreneurial becoming (Cope, 2005; Downing, 2005; Johansson, 2004; Rae, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006). The underlying psychological mechanisms that enhance the process of self-development are reoccurring in the data set. The entrepreneurs provided tools to further optimize this process, as described in the results chapter.

Additionally, the entrepreneurs are self-directed in discovering and applying the concepts learned to guide the process of entrepreneurial learning. Tseng (2013) has stated the link between SDL and EL that becoming self-directed as an entrepreneur consists of acquiring knowledge from direct experiences, learning experiential skills, and learning how these skills can be applied in new venture performance (Tseng, 2013). Entrepreneurs develop knowledge and skills by being immersed in the experiential process of entrepreneurial learning. They learn as they act, through trial and error, problem solving, practicing their skill, and their work ethic. It is through experiencing and evaluating critical successes and failures that entrepreneurs guide their learning process.

The results sections describe, how the entrepreneurs reflected upon failures as valuable learning experiences which provide knowledge and future direction. Significantly, the entrepreneurs evaluated the outcomes of the failures with a positive mindset, instead of a negative one. This shows, the impact of the failure is dependent on the projection of the individual on the failure itself. A negative projection on failures results in hindrances because of the negative impact it carries out on the psychological fundamentals underlying the process of self-development. On the contrary, knowing how to identify learning opportunities in failures, using these to reassess and refocus, to change direction and prevent future mistakes has a positive effect on the process of entrepreneurial learning. One's ability to positively perceive failures finds basis in the self-developmental processes like building the right mindset and character, which can be learned. The same notion of the importance and decisiveness of being evaluative of the learning outcomes can be applied to recognizing opportunities and problems, learning from peers, learning by doing, and learning by experiment.

The theoretical frameworks created by Rae (2006) and Cope (2005) touched upon more business specific subtopics such as small business management, which unfortunately did not come out as a strong topic in my own findings. This is surprising and might be seen as a limitation of the current study, or otherwise as a contradictory finding. One reason could be the nature of the conversations that are used in the data sample. The aim of the YouTube channel steers the nature of the interviews, putting emphasis on the personal journey of the entrepreneurs. The conversations highlight mostly details from the personal aspects which define the entrepreneurial identity and not specific details of operating a business. Secondly, there is a general consensus among the entrepreneurs that self-development is more relevant for about entrepreneurship as a whole than business specific details. This could be due to the fact that every business is different and is operating a different niche within an industry. Consequently, the companies operate on different business processes, and every entrepreneur needs to understand business specific practical knowledge and objectives. Unexpected finding is that apparently this makes sharing business specific details less significant in the direction of the goal of this YouTube channel which is teaching the audience about insights into entrepreneurship. Therefore, business specific details are less frequently shared and count as secondary to sharing the personal journey of self-development as an entrepreneur. In turn, entrepreneurial learning is often guided by the journey of self-development - as described by the entrepreneurs. This might show that depending on the lens employed to understand entrepreneurship, it is seen as a highly

personal practice, in which the business content becomes secondary.

This thesis provided a basis for others to engage practically in entrepreneurial learning (*practical relevance*). As is shown, self-directed entrepreneurial learning can be done through learning by personal experience and through utilizing alternative sources of valuable information such as a YouTube channel. There are plenty of resources that can be found to guide one's study process. Therefore, it is important that the self-directed learner remains self-evaluative of the process, and uses personal experiences and self-awareness to reflect upon the processes, and remains critical of the sources he or she chooses to study. The learner needs to be capable of diagnosing and formulating learning needs and goals, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and resources, and afterwards evaluating the learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). This study can support others to learn more about the knowledge and understanding on how to develop a foundation in order to optimize the process of self-directed entrepreneurial learning. The conclusion is that the value of online self-directed entrepreneurial learning is derived predominantly from the knowledge that self-development is prioritized in the process of EL and SDL.

The *social relevance* of the thesis is high. Better knowledge about the personal and intense process of entrepreneurial learning and becoming can help others to give support to entrepreneurs and their struggles. Similarly, policy makers can appreciate the challenges and hardships and personal struggles that entrepreneurs face and tailor their policies and support mechanisms accordingly.

A *suggestion for future research* is to do a longitudinal study with a sample of people who undergo a personal development process as they are applying self-directed learning principles. Analyzing strengths and weakness of the people in the data sample, and how these strengths and weaknesses could be enhanced by setting up learning goals for studying different topics to accommodate the learning process of the data sample. Another suggestion for future research is to study entrepreneurship in practice, to study how actual business specific operations work. Reviewing the fields of business administration and business management, applying the knowledge from these disciplines to produce for example, a statistical analysis of business growth. Shifting away from a qualitative emphasis on personal experiences of the researcher towards an objective description of cause-and-effect relationship of applying entrepreneurship principles in real business situations.

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Appendix A

Data collection sample

Research sample - interviews dataset	
<p>#1 Impact Theory Episode: Robin Sharma Title on YouTube: I Got Chills When I Heard This Quote (First 60 Seconds) Robin Sharma on Impact Theory Date: 16 April 2019 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/robin-sharma/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “This week’s guest on Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu is Robin Sharma. Robin Sharma is considered to be one of the top 5 leadership experts in the world. He has worked with rock stars, royalty, billionaires and many celebrity CEOs. His books, <i>The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari</i>, <i>The 5am Club</i>, and <i>The Leader Who Had No Title</i> have topped numerous international bestseller lists. In this episode, he talks about why you should wake up early and how to get clarity around your life's mission”.</p>
<p>#2 Impact Theory Episode: John Paul DeJoria Title on YouTube: John Paul DeJoria on the Power of Rejection Date: May 2, 2017 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/john-paul-dejoria/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “John Paul DeJoria is a rare breed of entrepreneur: equal parts gritty resourcefulness and deep compassion, his early days of door to door sales in Los Angeles taught him to welcome rejection as a close friend. It was this mindset that ultimately helped him launch the hugely successful Paul Mitchell hair care line on just a hope and a prayer. Since building the Paul Mitchell empire, he’s since followed it with more hits, including the wildly popular Patron Tequila, all while enjoying extremely low employee turnover rates at his companies. In this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu, John Paul DeJoria talks about life lessons that have shaped him, from his hard knock early years to becoming one of the world’s biggest and most respected entrepreneurs”.</p>

<p>#3 Impact Theory Episode: Michael Ovitz Title on YouTube: The Best Advice Ever for Succeeding in Record Time Michael Ovitz on Impact Theory Date: 25 September 2018 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/michael-ovitz/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “Entrepreneur Michael Ovitz went from being a tour guide at Universal Studios in his teens to co-founding the mammoth talent agency CAA that he and his partners built from scratch. Taking bold risks to kick his foot in the door of the industry helped him outshine his peers to get noticed and get ahead. The author of the memoir “Who Is Michael Ovitz?” details his roadmap for success and life lessons learned along the way on this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu”.</p>
<p>#4 Impact Theory Episode: David Meltzer Title on YouTube: Why Giving Everything Away Will Make You Rich David Meltzer on Impact Theory Date: 24 July, 2018 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/david-meltzer/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “Entrepreneur David Meltzer had to lose millions and strain relationships to realize his definition of success wasn’t making him happy or the man he wanted to be. To put things back in perspective he made the shift from an ego-driven mentality, to a life of service that’s connected to his Sports 1 marketing firm and his role with the Unstoppable Foundation. The author of Connected to Goodness shares why giving is worth much more than receiving on this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu”.</p>
<p>#5 Impact Theory Episode: Aubrey Marcus Title on YouTube: Why Working Hard Isn’t The Answer Aubrey Marcus on Impact Theory Date: 2 October, 2018 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/aubrey-marcus/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “Modern-day philosopher and Onnit CEO Aubrey Marcus believes optimizing our lives comes down to our daily choices. He teaches that by taking the time to learn our fears and insecurities we can start making decisions to counteract them leading to healthier, more balanced lives. The author of Own The Day, Own Your Life discusses how to master your willpower on this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu”.</p>
<p>#6 Impact Theory Episode: Dean Kamen Title on YouTube: How to Be an Adaptation</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “With 400 patents to his name, Dean Kamen is an accomplished inventor that’s given the</p>

<p>Machine Dean Kamen on Impact Theory Date: 10 April, 2018 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/dean-kamen/</p>	<p>world major contributions like the Segway and AutoSyringe. His company FIRST is on a mission to overhaul the education system by using engaging, cooperative games that tap into how current generations learn most effectively. Dean talks about how his struggle in the classroom pushed him to create more opportunities outside of it on this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu”.</p>
<p>#7 Impact Theory Episode: David Eagleman Title on YouTube: The New Structure of Infinite Possibility David Eagleman on Impact Theory Date: 25 April, 2017 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/david-eagleman/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “David Eagleman was always filled with wonder by the things he didn’t understand. The writer and the presenter of the amazing international PBS series The Brain, internationally best-selling author, and Vice Chair of the World Economic Forum in the area of Behavior and Neuroscience sits down with Tom Bilyeu to discuss the beautiful complexity of the brain in this episode of Impact Theory”.</p>
<p>#8 Impact Theory Episode: Chase Jarvis Title on YouTube: Chase Jarvis on the Dangers of Playing it Safe Date: 28 March, 2017 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/chase-jarvis/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “Award-winning photographer and founder of CreativeLive Chase Jarvis is one of the top 30 photographers of the past decade. In this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu, Chase dives deep into how to create a life that you love through the power of complex personal narrative and descriptive visualization”.</p>
<p>#9 Impact Theory Episode: Shaun White Title on YouTube: Shaun White on Always Winning, Even When You Lose Impact Theory Date: 14 February, 2017 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/shaun-white/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “Two-time Olympic Gold medalist and the youngest to ever win the US Open Shaun White learned the value of putting in work at an early age. Named number two on Business Week’s list of the 100 most powerful athletes, this accomplished musician, philanthropist, and top-shelf entrepreneur describes how he used pressure to his advantage in this episode of Impact Theory with Tom Bilyeu”.</p>

<p>#10 Impact Theory Episode: David Goggins 2 Title on YouTube: Become A Savage & Live On Your Own Terms David Goggins on Impact Theory Date: 11 December 2018 Published by: Tom Bilyeu Link: https://impacttheory.com/episode/david-goggins-2/</p>	<p>Description on YouTube: “David Goggins has earned himself the reputation of “toughest man alive” and it’s a reputation well deserved. He is the former world record holder for the most pull-ups done in 24 hours. He once ran 205 miles in 39 hours without stopping. And he’s completed more than 60 ultra-endurance events in his career. He started all this after telling himself that he was the weakest man alive”.</p>
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Appendix B

Matrix 1. Based on Rae's (2006) conceptual framework for analysing entrepreneurial learning for technology-based entrepreneurs.

CODING FRAME - Rae (2006) Entrepreneurial learning conceptual framework		
Theme		Meaning unit
Personal and social emergence of entrepreneurial identity		
1	Narrative construction of identity	
2	Identity as practice	
3	Entrepreneurs role in relation to family	
4	Tension between current and future identity	
5	Process of personal learning	
6	Individuals change how they see themselves and how others see them	
Contextual learning		
7	Social, environmental, and economic context	
8	What is learned?	
9	How does learning take place?	
10	How is learning used?	
11	Social participation in communities, the industry, and other networks...	
12	...Where individuals experience, share, compare and relate to meanings	
13	Situated experiences + social relationships = intuitive learning how to become an entrepreneur	
Negotiated enterprise		
14	Joint enterprise, participation in enterprise	
15	Negotiated meaning	
16	Structures and practices	
17	Changing roles over time	

18	Engaging in network of external relationships	
19	Exchanging ideas with customers, investors, and co-actors in enterprise	

Matrix 2. Based on Cope's (2005) dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship.

CODING FRAME – Cope (2005) Dynamic Learning of Entrepreneurship		
Content Dimension		Meaning unit
<i>Learning about:</i>		
A	Oneself	
B	Business	
C	Environment and entrepreneurial network	
D	Small business management	
E	The nature and management of relationships	
Process Dimension		
F	Critical learning events	
G	Positive and negative experiences	
H	Critical successes and failures	
I	Confronting and overcoming challenges	
J	Opportunities and problems can be a rich source of learning	
K	Learn by encounter, by direct experience	
L	Learn by being immersed in experience	

Appendix C

Operationalization of the directed content analysis (DCA)

1. In the first step, the authors mentioned that the qualitative researchers should develop the necessary skills to perform this method. Some of the necessary skills that are stated by the authors are: “self-critical thinking, analytical abilities, continuous self-reflection, sensitive interpretive skills, creative thinking, scientific writing, data gathering and self-scrutiny” (Assarroudi et al., 2018, p.48). Being able to think critically, analytically and creatively is essential in order to be able to perform this research method, as it is the basis of undertaking a lot of scientific work in general. The researcher should also continuously self-reflect and be able to be sensitive during the interpretation process. Furthermore, skills such a scientific writing and data gathering should have already been acquired by the researcher, probably during the undergraduate and graduate program offered by the university.

It may seem self-evident that a researcher should have these skills in their repertoire, however it is important to put emphasize on this step because without those skills the researcher process could get difficult. When the researcher is aware that first and foremost this data analysis process should be undertaken and written down in an academic manner, then the researcher could focus their attention onto the scientific execution of the methodology, instead of perhaps analyzing the data loosely and non-professionally. The academic rigor is needed to secure scientific validity and reliability.

In case the researcher is missing some of these skills, or is lacking in scientific mastery, then the researcher should allocate some extra study time during the research process to learn and practice these types of skills. This could happen for example when the researcher is working in a new research field. He or she should then allocate more time to study the material to learn the jargon and the content of the main authors work, to master the ins and outs of that specific topic. In the case of this study, the researcher had to familiarize herself with the works in the fields of business management, organization studies, education studies, and entrepreneurship. As her background is in Cultural Studies, she did not have much prior experience with studying business management or education.

2. In step two, the researcher needs to select the appropriate sampling strategy to study the phenomenon (Assarroudi et al., 2018). According to Assarroudi et al (2018) is it possible to use sampling methods such as purposive, snowball, and convenience methods if

maximum variations in terms of socio-demographic and phenomenal characteristics is considered (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The researcher used a non-probability sampling technique, as this is perceived useful in qualitative research, whereas probability sampling is common in quantitative research (Gill, 2020). The researcher decided to opt for a combination of intensity sampling and maximum variation sampling (Benoot, Hannes & Bilsen, 2016). Details of the data collection process are included in the previous section 3.3 on data collection method (related to Step 3).

3. In step three, the researcher decided on using manifest content of the interview data (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Focusing on what the entrepreneurs have learned about doing entrepreneurship (Puppis, 2019; Schreier, 2013).

4. In step four of the directed content analysis method the researcher should develop an interview guide (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Since this study is about online self-directed entrepreneurial learning, the data has been derived from interviews that were published online on the YouTube channel *Impact Theory*, and thus were conducted by the owner of this YouTube channel: Tom Bilyeu. Given the fact that the researcher was not the one conducting the interviews themselves, no interview guide was developed during this study. An interview guide usually is made in preparation of conducting the interview, the interviewee develops a list with open-ended questions for the participant. The open-ended questions should be based on the study's aims. In this case, it can be argued that the purpose of the YouTube-channel is guiding the open-ended questions. From reading the transcripts it has become clear that Tom Bilyeu indeed has been steering the open-ended questions into the direction of the channel's purpose which is: "how to learn the skills needed in order the execute on the entrepreneurial dream" (Impact Theory, 2019b). Ideally, some directed questions about the main categories extracted from the theoretical framework should be added. This type of questions can support the methodology used in the study. However, in this study it was not possible to ask any prepared questions. A pro of using this type of online data is that researcher can give a descriptive account of a cultural practice (without outsider's interference). In that sense it is useful to use this type of data for ethnographic purposes. A con of using online data is that researcher has no control of the questions that are being asked, and thus it might be that not all questions asked remain valuable for the study's aims.

5. The interviews are conducted and transcribed during step five of the DCA method (Assarroudi et al., 2018). As previously stated, the interviews were conducted and published online on the YouTube channel *Impact Theory* by Tom Bilyeu. Every interview was

transcribed entirely by the researcher. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Word with care, and then transcripts were placed in the NVivo software program to perform the directed content analysis procedure. The published videos are used as a data backup.

6. In the step six, the unit of analysis needs to be specified (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The unit of analysis is that part of the content that serves as the basis for the coding decisions made during the data analysis. The unit of analysis is that portion of the text that can be coded throughout the coding process. The unit of analysis can be specified around different levels of text analysis, such as: a paragraph, a sentence, a word, an article or chapter, an entire book, a complete response to an interview questions, or the entire diaries from research participants, or some other level of *text* (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). It is essential to decide on the right size of unit of analysis in order derive meaning from the qualitative data and ensure the reliability of the research outcomes. It is recommended to lean towards a broader level and contextually rich unit of analysis, rather than a narrowly focused unit of analysis, e.g. word level or sentence level. Obtaining reasonable and valid meanings from the text is necessary for the DCA. Too precise unit of analysis may lead to too much of micro-level analysis which may not be needed. Leading to a kind of analysis where important contextual information may be missed, and it may be less time and cost-effective. If the chosen unit of analysis is too imprecise, some important meanings and connections of the smaller textual units may be missed. Leading to a macro-level of analysis where inaccurate categorization or interpretation of the text is possible (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Therefore, in this study the unit of analysis the researcher decided on are the participants answers to an interview question. Hereby, preventing the word level precision, but adhering to the contextual meanings that can be found for each interview question.

7. In step seven of the 16-step method, is about immersion in the data. The researcher needs to get immersed in the data to extract the related meanings (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The researcher will read and review the transcribed interviews several times. During the reading the researcher can consider the following questions: “Who is telling, where is this happening, when did it happen, and why?” (Assarroudi et al., 2018, p.49). It is important to know what the texts are about before the coding process starts.

8. Then, in step eight, a formative categorisation matrix needs to be developed (Assarroudi et al., 2018). From previous research on existing theories a formative matrix can be created deductively. The matrix consists out of main categories and related subcategories derived from the existing theories or previous research. It is also possible that new main categories emerge based on an inductive approach (Assarroudi et al., 2018). For this study,

two matrixes were created based on two distinctive theories about entrepreneurial learning (Rae, 2006; Cope, 2005). The first matrix is based on Rae's (2006) conceptual framework for analysing entrepreneurial learning for technology-based entrepreneurs. The second matrix is based on Cope's (2005) dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship. The main categories and subcategories from both matrixes were placed into separate *nodes* into the software program NVivo to support the coding process. The transcripts are also put into NVivo. When applicable, the units of analysis of the text will be coded corresponding to the appropriate categories. For an overview of the matrixes see Appendix B.

9. In the ninth step, the theoretical definitions of the main categories and subcategories should be defined (Assarroudi et al., 2018). These definitions should be derived from the existing theory or previous research, and the theoretical definitions should be accurate and objective (Assarroudi et al., 2018). For the first matrix, the theoretical definitions are derived from Rae's (2006) conceptual framework for analysing entrepreneurial learning for technology-based entrepreneurs (Rae, 2006). For the second matrix, the theoretical definitions are derived from Cope's (2005) dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship (Cope, 2005). These are as follows:

Personal and Social Emergence:

The development of entrepreneurial identity is the outcome of a process of personal and social emergence. When becoming an enterprising individual, people renegotiate their personal and social identities that express who they are, who they want to be, and how they prefer to be recognised within their social context. Personal and social emergence includes the narrative construction of identity, identity as practice, the entrepreneur's role in relation to family, and tension between current and future identity (Rae, 2006).

Narrative Construction of Identity:

People construct their entrepreneurial identity through autobiographical stories in which they are the protagonist, as well as narrator and author. This identity is socially negotiated: as they develop an entrepreneurial identity they are renegotiating or 're-inventing' themselves in their self-perceptions and the eyes of others through their stories (Rae, 2006).

Identity as Practice:

Identity as practice is developed from the activities and roles that people develop in social interactions. People discover from experience their natural talents and abilities and learn

how these can be of value and be applied, finding out the interface between their abilities and negotiated applications within networks of social relationships (Rae, 2006).

Entrepreneurs Role in relation to Family:

The family environment shapes attitudes and expectations towards entrepreneurship and can encourage or constrain these by shaping identities and actions. Entrepreneurial stories are constructed with reference to personal relationships with spouses, parents, and children (Rae, 2006).

Tension between Current and Future Identity:

The cases show critical episodes during which each participant changed their existing social identity through entrepreneurial action. These episodes include unsatisfactory or unfulfilling employment, conflict with personal values, or more positively the recognition of opportunities or ambition to innovate. The dissatisfaction with existing reality is often connected with the initiation of a new venture and with it a changed identity (Rae, 2006).

Process of Personal Learning:

Becoming an entrepreneur requires personal and social emergence of their new identity, and it also involves social- and cognitive learning. Finding practical ways of learning entrepreneurial skills in early life, family, and education, through projects, personal interests, and work experience in formative years. As it is personal process of learning that the individual is going through, finding those interesting developmental opportunities can be influential and helpful when their identity is changing (Rae, 2006).

Individuals Change how they see Themselves and how Others See Them:

As people become entrepreneurs, their identity of how they see themselves and how others see them changes through a process of personal learning and emergence, including the sense of self and future aspirations. Simply acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge is not sufficient. The person who begins to act as an entrepreneur is assuming the identity of an entrepreneur (Rae, 2006).

Contextual Learning:

The recognition and enaction of opportunities in specialized situations is an outcome of a process of contextual learning. Contextual learning includes learning through immersion

within an industry, opportunity recognition and innovation through participation, and the formation of practical theories of entrepreneurial action. Through situated experience and social relationships people learn intuitively and may develop the ability to recognize opportunities (Rae, 2006).

Social, environmental, and economic context:

Entrepreneurial learning is formed through the social, environmental, and economic context in which it takes place, and that context governs what is learned as people become entrepreneurs, how this learning takes place and how it is used (Rae, 2006).

What is learned? How does learning take place? How is learning used:

The knowledge, gained from experience, intuition, and sense-making of 'what works', why, how and with whom, constitute practical theories. These practical theories enable people to reduce risk through using prior experience because they 'know what they are doing' (Rae, 2006).

Social participation in Communities, the Industry, and other Networks:

By being active within industry and social networks, people can recognise future possibilities, identify and act on an opportunity to create a new venture by drawing on their deep knowledge of an industry context. This is a creative process of associative learning and innovation, of putting ideas, opportunities, technologies, and resources together in new ways, and acting at a time when the market opportunity and the other extrinsic factors such as regulation and the absence of competition provide advantage (Rae, 2006).

Where individuals experience, share, compare and relate to Meanings:

Contextual learning includes social participation in community, industry, and other networks through which individual experiences are related, compared, and shared meaning is constructed (Rae, 2006).

Situated experiences + Social relationship = Intuitive Learning how to become an entrepreneur:

Contextual learning includes the development of skills, expert knowledge and social contacts from employment, experience, and know-how in industry. This learning is social and relational, gained from interpersonal participation. Much of the learning is functional,

technical and problem-solving, finding out by discovery and experiential learning how things are done and establishing routines and practices that work in given situations. It occurs through intuitive practice, often providing the skills and insights people use in creating their own businesses (Rae, 2006).

The Negotiated Enterprise:

The enaction and growth of a business venture is an outcome of negotiated enterprise. The negotiated enterprise includes processes of participation and joint enterprise, negotiated meaning, structures and practices, changing roles over time, and engagement in networks of external relationship. The notion of the negotiated enterprise is that a business venture is not enacted by one person alone but is dependent on the outcome of negotiated relationships with other parties. The ideas and aspirations of individuals are realized through interactive processes of exchange with other within and around the enterprise, including customers, investors, and co-acters such as employees or partners (Rae, 2006).

Joint Enterprise and Participation in Enterprise

A vital aspect of the learning process of entrepreneurship is the ability to engage others constructively towards creating the venture. It is necessary for the entrepreneur to convey a shared belief in the new reality of the venture, and for this to become a means of realising personal dreams and aspirations through collective action. There is a sublimation of individual identity to the collective identity of the enterprise as a project of shared significance. This is accompanied by a social learning process in which people learn to work together (Rae, 2006).

Negotiated Meaning

This sub-theme considers the emergence of a distinctive culture within the business. In a successful enterprise, there is an emotional, affective engagement between the people and the business, in which its distinctive culture is expressed through the style, language, behaviours, and feeling between people (Rae, 2006).

Structures and Practices

As described, people develop practical theories. In the joint enterprise, these theories, practices and routines become a shared repertoire of what works within the business; as in a community of practice, what is learned does not belong to any single person, but rather is

dispersed among the community (Rae, 2006).

Changing Roles over Time

There is a transition or series of transitions from informal to formal roles of the founder(s) and management team, their relationships and structures that accompany this process, as in 'staged' theories of business growth. Significant changes in the founder's and other roles are inevitable over time for the business to develop. Growth can be seen in terms of human and social behaviour and as the outcome of productive interpersonal negotiations around the enterprise, rather than simply as an economic process (Rae, 2006).

Engagement in Networks of External Relationships

The identity of the enterprise is formed and enacted through the interactions between it and these external groups. The enterprise depends on its identity, practices and the credibility of its message being accepted and understood within its chosen networks. The skills of listening, understanding the other party's position, negotiating and storytelling are essential in maintaining effective relationships (Rae, 2006).

Exchanging ideas with customers, investors, and co-actors in enterprise

The enterprise exists reflexively within its environment, and relationships must be developed and maintained with networks of people through whom resources can be accessed, including customers, suppliers, investors, lenders, and others such as technology experts and opinion formers (Rae, 2006).

Content Dimension:

The content dimension of the entrepreneurial learning task consists of "what" entrepreneurs must learn about. Much of this learning remains context-specific but can also be discovered through identifying the learning needs of growth-oriented entrepreneurs. Some of the proposed topics include learning about management succession and the problems and pitfalls of growth. It is also indicated that learning priorities of entrepreneurs may vary according to their industry sector (Cope, 2005). The content dimension was theorized by Cope (2005) into five broad areas of significance that require further exploration: learning about oneself, learning about the business, learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks, learning about small business management, and learning about the nature and management

of relationships.

Learning about oneself

Learning issues include understanding one's strengths and weaknesses; one's changing role within the business; personal and family needs and objectives; areas for personal development; personal interests and motivations (Cope, 2005).

Learning about business

Including strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; internal business needs; requirements for growth; areas for development; understanding and facilitating one's staff; future direction (Cope, 2005).

Learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks

Learning about how to manage relationships with existing and potential customers, suppliers, and competitors. Also about appreciating and maximizing the relationship with advisory agencies and support services such as the bank, the accountant (Cope, 2005).

Learning about small business management

Learning about how to run and control the business effectively, including important procedures and systems such as recruiting, salary and rewards structures, and financial monitoring (Cope, 2005).

Learning about the nature and management of relationships

This regards both internal (to the firm) and external relationships. This final element of the learning task forms and integral part of the other four elements outlined above (Cope, 2005).

Process Dimension:

According to Cope (2005), the development of a dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship requires a theory about entrepreneurial learning that not only takes account of "what" entrepreneurs must learn about during the establishment and management of entrepreneurial ventures, but also the specific *process* of learning that stimulate the learning content outlined. The process dimension is about "how" entrepreneurs learn how to be entrepreneurial. From a process perspective, the entrepreneurial learning task is conceptualized through focusing on the importance of emerging critical learning events.

Also, there is a common understanding that entrepreneurs are action-oriented and that much of their learning is based on experiences. Thereby emphasising that entrepreneurs learn primarily through “learning by doing”, including such learning processes as trial and error, explicit problem solving, and discovery. Knowledge about “how to be entrepreneurial” needs to be acquired through learning by doing or direct observation, as there is no substitute for experience (Cope, 2005).

Critical learning events

“Learning episodes” where entrepreneurs have described seminal periods of learning that have been instrumental in forming their approaches to life and work. The impact of “critical episodes” on the entrepreneur’s personal learning and development. Learning from critical events can be “metamorphic” in the sense that more fundamental higher-level entrepreneurial learning is often followed by a period of more adaptive incremental learning. This more gradual learning can either positively or negatively reinforce the more radical, transformational change in awareness created by a discontinuous event. Yet, in this sense, the subsequent adaptive learning does not necessarily reinforce transformational learning (Cope, 2005).

Positive and negative experiences

Many significant experiences during the entrepreneurial process, can be called “emotionally charged events”, particularly the more negative events can or crises. Learning from critical events can often be traumatic and painful for the entrepreneur to endure. Emotional “fallout” associated with learning that challenges the individual’s perceptions of him or herself. Discontinuous experiences not only have the capacity to create fundamental changes in the entrepreneur’s awareness regarding the effective management of their business. But also, in terms of the entrepreneur’s personal identity – learning that impacts directly on their self-understanding, perceptions, and behaviour at a much deeper level (Cope, 2005).

Critical successes and failures

Accepting that mistakes, crises, and failures can have a negative immediate impact in both business and personal terms, it is useful to highlight here the positive and productive learning outcomes that can result from these events in the longer-term (Cope, 2005). Stressing how valuable negative critical events can be not only in gaining both confidence and knowledge, but also in terms of reflecting on the consequences of one’s actions and

actively trying to ensure that such events do not reoccur. Learning from what works, and what does not work (Cope, 2005).

Confronting and overcoming challenges

Although learning is a continuous process, it appears that confronting and overcoming challenges and problems can be a rich source of learning (Cope, 2005).

Problems can be a rich source of learning

Learning activities of entrepreneurs emerge in response to meaningful opportunities and problems (Cope, 2005).

Learn by encounter, by direct experience

Entrepreneurs are action-oriented and much of their learning is experientially based. Entrepreneurs learn primarily through “learning by doing”, including such learning processes as trial and error, explicit problem solving, and discovery. The “affective” mode of learning, which “refers to learning by encounter, by direct experience” (Cope, 2005).

Learn by being immersed in experience

The “affective” mode of learning finds expression through ‘being there’, through “immersion in an experience”. The notion that “we begin where we are and learn as we act”. Learning from peers; learning by doing; learning by copying; learning by experiment; learning by problem solving and opportunity raking; and learning from making mistakes (Cope, 2005).

10. Step ten of the 16-step method requires the determination of the coding rules for main categories (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The coding rules are a description of the properties of the main categories. These coding rules are based on the theoretical definitions but contribute to a clearer distinction between the main categories of the matrix. By this means the trustworthiness of the study can be improved (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

Personal and Social emergence of Entrepreneurial Identity (Rae, 2006).

- The outcome of a process of personal and social emergence is the development of an entrepreneurial identity.

- The development of entrepreneurial identity can be expressed through the narrative life story, including early life and family experiences, education and career formation, and social relationships.
- The individual renegotiates their personal-, social-, and entrepreneurial identities during the process of personal and social emergence.
- The individual expresses who they are, who they want to be and how they prefer to be seen by others within the social context.

Contextual Learning (Rae, 2006).

- The outcome of a process of contextual learning is the recognition and enaction of opportunities.
- Contextual learning includes social participation in community, industry, and other networks through which the individual gains experiences.
- The contextual learning process can take place by learning through immersion within an industry, learning through participation, and learning through the formation of practical theories of entrepreneurial action.
- The individual can learn intuitively how to become an entrepreneur through situated experiences and social relationships.
- The individual develops the ability to innovate and/or recognize opportunities.

Negotiated Enterprise (Rae, 2006).

- The outcome of negotiated enterprise is the enaction and growth of a business venture.
- Negotiated enterprise includes processes of participation and joint enterprise, negotiated meaning, structures and practices, changing roles over time, and engagement in networks of external relationship.
- A business venture is dependent on the outcome of negotiated relationships with other parties.
- The ideas and aspirations of individuals are realized through interactive processes of exchange with other within and around the enterprise, including customers, investors, and co-actors such as employees or partners.

Content Dimension (Cope, 2005).

- The content dimension of the entrepreneurial learning task consists of “what” entrepreneurs must learn about.
- Much of this learning is context-specific and learning priorities may vary according to the industry sector.
- The entrepreneur can learn through identifying their learning needs.
- The content dimension includes learning about oneself, learning about the business, learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks, learning about small business management, and learning about the nature and management of relationships.

Process Dimension (Cope, 2005).

- The process dimension is about “how” entrepreneurs learn how to be entrepreneurial.
- The development of a dynamic learning perspective of entrepreneurship requires a theory about entrepreneurial learning that not only takes account of “what” entrepreneurs must learn about during the establishment and management of entrepreneurial ventures, but also the specific *process* of learning that stimulate the learning content outlined.
- The process dimension includes critical learning events, positive and negative experiences, critical successes, and failures, confronting and overcoming challenges, problems that can be a rich source of learning, learning by encounter; by direct experience, and learning by being immersed in experience.
- From a process perspective, the entrepreneurial learning task is conceptualized through focusing on the importance of emerging critical learning events.
- Entrepreneurs are action-oriented and that much of their learning is based on experiences. Thereby emphasising that entrepreneurs learn primarily through “learning by doing”, including such learning processes as trial and error, explicit problem solving, and discovery.
- Knowledge about “how to be entrepreneurial” needs to be acquired through learning by doing or direct observation, as there is no substitute for experience.

11. The eleventh step of the 16-step method consists of the pre-testing of the

categorisation matrix (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The categorisation matrix should be tested using a pilot study. If there is more than one researcher involved in the coding process, then this is an essential step. By taking this step the inter-coder reliability and the trustworthiness of the study can be increased. In this step, the qualitative researchers should independently and tentatively encode the text and discuss the difficulties in the use of the categorisation matrix and differences in the interpretations of the unit of analysis. The categorisation matrix may be further modified as a result of such discussions (Assarroudi et al., 2018). In this study, only one researcher is present to perform the coding process. After testing the categorisation matrix on three interviews, the following categories were found to be the least helpful by the researcher due to their ambiguity: *Where individuals experience, share, compare and relate to Meanings* (in Contextual Learning), and *Negotiated meaning* (in Negotiated Enterprise). However, the researcher decided to keep these subcategories as NVivo Nodes because they are part of the theoretical framework of the study.

12. During step twelve of the directed content analysis methodology some anchor samples for the main categories need to be chosen and specified (Assarroudi et al., 2018). For each main category, an example will be selected from the meaning units. An anchor sample is an explicit and concise exemplification, or the identifier of a main category (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Several important anchor examples are:

Personal and Social emergence of Entrepreneurial Identity (Rae, 2006).

Chase Jarvis: “But philosophy, to get back to your original question. It was an escape from that world. I was like, wait a minute, you mean I can get college credits for reading Nietzsche and Heidegger and thinking about creativity. It was actually the philosophy of art, that got me most interested in art. I had always been creative as a kid, but fundamentally stuffed that own, because where I grew up, suburbs outside of Seattle. Being creative, you know, oh he's the creative kid, that wasn't a good thing. That was like, wait a minute, you're saying I'm creative? That means I'm weird? I didn't want to be weird, I wanted to fit in like most young kids. I was like, what fits in? Oh, the captain of a football team, great, I'll do that. It was really, I was chasing that dream which was someone else's dream, I happened to be a decent athlete and that ended up guiding me to college, but I had always repressed the creative side. When I started taking philosophy classes, specifically the philosophy of photography, the philosophy of aesthetics and this was just part of the normal course of study. I was like, oh yeah, it's a part of me. Started leaning more and more into that” (Interview #8 - Chase Jarvis, 28 March 2017).

Contextual Learning (Rae, 2006).

Michael Ovitz: “So the customer is always right. We've, I've figured that out really early. It didn't make a lot of sense to go against the grain, particularly starting out at a low level in the entertainment business. And also in dealing with the people there, I learned very early that it was easier to deal with them in a very specific way which was just giving. Since you were trying to take you had to give a lot. And a lot of times you'd run into people that were just stressed out of their minds, as you can well imagine with your having been in your own business, and also in the entertainment business people get very very stressed very easily. Everything's personal, everything. So one had to learn at 17 when to back off when to try to get more information. For me information and knowledge were the key to everything” (Interview #3 – Michael Ovtiz, 25 September 2018).

Negotiated Enterprise (Rae, 2006).

Dean Kamen: “So think about this. In that first year, I convinced I think 23 companies. Now that's a small number but they were some of the biggest companies in the world, to lend me these people, and I connected them to 23 schools. I could really use a boost in their perspective on tech. So the second year, we had about 50 teams. The third year a hundred teams. The fourth year 200 teams, by about the fifth year some of these whole high schools that had played year after year had been transformed by this thing. They had more kids on their FIRST team then their football team. This year we have 55,000 schools. We have over a million kids. We have 200 universities, little ones, like you know MIT and WPI and RPI that gave us 50 million dollars in scholarships for these kids” (Interview #6 - Dean Kamen, 10 April 2018).

Content Dimension (Cope, 2005).

Michael Ovitz: “And that was the beginning. And then I got the break of breaks, his assistant, his secretary, and admin got sick, and she had the flu and he made a request for me to sit on his desk. And within 90 days after that I became his full-time assistant. So at 22 I was the assistant of the president of the most important theatrical agency in the business, and it gave me a... I was sitting on Mount Olympus. I read every piece of his mail. I had already read all the files. I knew what was going on with every client. I knew what was going on administrative leave. I was like a trusted member of the inside team and I worked, I don't, I

didn't sleep much in those days. I worked seven days a week every hour that I could work, I was available to this guy. 24/7, it didn't matter what time he called me, I didn't care” (Interview #3 – Michael Ovitz, 25 September 2018).

Process Dimension (Cope, 2005).

John Paul DeJoria: “We also knew that if we produce something, we produced it. If we want to go somewhere, you got to do it. If there's problems along the way... and I'd love to say this, especially to entrepreneurs, one of the great secrets in life to becoming successful, whether it's in a business, whether it's working with someone or for someone, or in your personal life... I learned this selling encyclopedias door-to-door early 20s... is be prepared in life for a lot of rejection. Because if you're prepared for a lot of rejection and it comes, you don't get turned off, you don't get disappointed. Like, ‘Well I'm not going to do this anymore. No one thinks it's a good idea’. It's like I say selling encyclopedias, knock on a hundred doors, they slam them in your face. You must be just as enthusiastic on door number 101 as door number one. And that's one of the real secrets” (Interview #2 – John Paul DeJoria, 2 May 2017).

13. In the thirteenth step the main data analysis will be performed (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The researcher selects meanings units from the reviewed content that are related to the study's aims and categorization matrix. Next, they are summarized and given preliminary codes (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

14. During step fourteen, new main categories can be inductively abstracted from the preliminary codes (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The preliminary codes are grouped and categorised according to their meanings, similarities, and differences. The products of this categorisation process are known as ‘generic categories’ (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

15. In step fifteen, links will be established between generic categories and main categories (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The constant comparison of generic categories and main categories results in the development of a conceptual and logical link between generic and main categories, nesting generic categories into the pre-existing main categories and creating new main categories. The constant comparison technique is applied to the data analysis throughout the study (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

16. The final step of the directed content analysis is the reporting phase. Reporting all the steps the DCA and findings (Assarroudi et al., 2018). This includes a detailed description of the sampling process, data collection, analysis methods, and participants characteristics.

Findings should be presented systematically, in such a way that the association between the data and the categorisation matrix is clearly shown. Criteria of trustworthiness should also be outlines along with the steps taken to fulfil them (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

Table 2 show an example of how the main data analysis process of steps 13, 14 and 15 was conducted. In this way the preliminary codes, the group of codes, the subcategories and the generic categories were developed. The entire data set was analysed in this way, and later summarized into a shorter table which summarizes the findings of the directed content analysis which is presented in Appendix C.

Table 2. Example of the data analysis process and the development of codes

<i>Summarized meaning unit</i>	<i>Preliminary code</i>	<i>Group of codes</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>Generic category</i>	<i>Main category</i>
RS: On a mission to be of service people and contribute or bring value to them. Having patience with human beings.	On a mission to be of service to people	Being of service to other people is motivating	Entrepreneurs role in relation to family	Entrepreneurs need to offer service to other people	Personal and Social Emergence of Entrepreneurial Identity
RS: Trying to be a good family member. Motivation to become an amazing human being.	Being a good family member				
JPD: Memories of him, his mother and brother together giving a dime to Santa. Remember to always do something in your life, either with your time or money to help somebody else out.	Always do something to help somebody out				
MO: Dad who was a liquor salesman and used to give away broken cases of liquor to the local police and fire and service people, so we got great service, even as a lower-middle-class family. And I brought a little gift for the head of the file room, and worked until she gave him access the file room.	Offer great service and get things in return				
DE: Key to being a parent is loving something in your child's presence.	Love something in your	Setting a good example	Entrepreneurs role in	Having to take responsibility	Personal and Social Emergence

	child's presence	for the kids	relation to family	ity for your children	e of Entrepreneurial Identity
JPD: Had a little kid he had to take care of so he knew he had to work. He had to go out and have a job to be able to take care of himself, his son and to one day get an apartment to move on.	Has to get a job to take care of his son	Taking care of the children			
JPD: We don't spoil our kids. They work and they know the value of a dollar.	Don't spoil your kids	Kids need to learn the value of working hard	Entrepreneurs role in relation to family	Children can learn about business by having a job	Personal and Social Emergence of Entrepreneurial Identity
JPD: If the kids could study, great. If they couldn't, I would take them to work with me or something like that. Right. Some of my kids just did something on their own, starting their own little business with no money.	Kids are studying, working, or starting a business				
JPD: Daughter wanted to have every job in the company to learn about the business.	Learning about the business by having every job in the company				

Appendix D

Narrative description of reflective autoethnography results

Continuation of the section reflective autoethnography results including the reflections on interviews 4 until 10.

Interview 4: David Meltzer

David has had to go through the failure of losing his business and multiple houses for him to find out that he had lost track of his own core values, which the other entrepreneurs Robin and JP have mentioned are critical for success. Hitting rock bottom and telling the story about it on the show still made him emotional. Facing these difficulties, David had to look in the mirror to see that he was not in touch with himself anymore and that he had needed to adjust his attitude. David used to be ego-driven but he had gotten out of that ego-state to recalibrate and discover his core values, like gratitude, empathy, accountability and effective communication.

“DM: The wrong ideas were mostly about the value. My values. The, the idea were based on two things that I had lost control of, one was my ego. I all of a sudden had to need to be right, a need to be offended, need to be separate, superior, a need to be inferior, a need for guilt, all of these different needs of the ego. That as I was rising up that I was completely humbled, and all of these needs of the egos turned me into a self-entitled, you know a-hole. Who, you know literally was only concerned on what I could get. And when I went back and took stock in myself, and saw that there was these four values, mostly taught by my mom, that were missing. That lost the radical humility that made me successful”.

The example above shows different kinds of core values than the other entrepreneurs, so it does not seem to be one specific set of values that is the most effective. Rather, it is about knowing what your values are and what works for you as a person. One of the keys to success is having a set of core values and sticking to them.

Another reoccurring theme in all the interviews is working hard and being consistent. I am really starting to see patterns here which makes me more convinced of the relevance and importance of the information provided on the YouTube channel for my own entrepreneurial learning and development. It is especially interesting to learn more about

doing business in this way. It shows different people with different life stories describing what they had learned from doing business - but if you look at it and analyse it, you can discover similarities among them. I can analyse and discover reoccurring patterns in the manifest content of the interviews.

First of all, the pattern of gaining knowledge from failure and learning from making mistakes. Second of all, the pattern about not giving up, working hard, being consistent and persistent. Thirdly, they all have talked about having a set of core values and sticking to them and building the businesses around those sets of values. Additionally, not letting ego get in the way of doing business.

Lastly, the patterns of being of service and providing value without expecting anything in return. That still puzzles me a little bit because the first time I heard it, it sounded so counterintuitive to me. I had doubts about it actually being an effective way of doing business. Giving and not wanting anything in return suggests that you will create higher costs, but do not necessarily get any revenue in return for it – which sounds financially unsustainable. But after hearing several successful people confirming the effectiveness of this theme, I started to recognize the validity of it. They have not really explained why this is effective for business. I suspect this is because of the connections you can fuel, and the relationship you hold with other people. Therefore, it allows you to create a stable network of associates around you whom you can work with and who can be supportive of your goal.

“TB: It's really really interesting. And as I think through that, and I think through the steps, and how meticulous you have to be, why are you such a good negotiator?

What, what is it that you do? Is there a process like that, like, what is it really? ...

DM: I think it's part of being more interested than interesting. So what I do, is I explore the reasons that you want what you want. I want to explore the impact that it has. And the capabilities that you currently have, that you want to have, and that you actually need. And then I align those with the reasons that I want to do the deal, the impact that it has for me, and the capabilities that I have, want or need. And when I figure that all out, in negotiation, I actually can make a bigger whole than other people. I'm dealing, 'hey I could give you this? You could give me that. And we both really win”.

Furthermore, the good thing about being of service is that you have a clear goal in mind –

which is relatable to your fellow entrepreneurs, stakeholders and employees. It is not only relatable to them but also to your customers because you will know the mission that your company stands for and can choose to be a part of that by buying your products. The beautiful thing about it that you do not expect from anybody to buy your product or support you. The only thing you are having a clear goal and working towards that goal which is within your control. What you cannot control is the behaviour of other people, i.e. your customers deeds. You cannot force or expect them to buy your products just because you have done altruistic acts. Expecting things from other people is not only an unfair way of looking at things, but you are also wasting your time and energy because it is outside of your control. Therefore, you would better off putting that time and energy elsewhere and focus more on what matters most such as providing value and executing on that goal.

I also believe that if you try to implement giving as a strategy for making more profit, the disingenuity of it will show. One way or another the people you work with and your customers will see through that and will turn against you by not being driven towards achieving that ‘philanthropical’ goal or by not buying your products or services. Ultimately you have to believe that what you’re doing is actually providing value to the world. This is the only sustainable way of going through the process of providing value.

David has mentioned the power of doing things right away as it is an efficient use of your time. He always thinks: “Can I do something now?” If the answer is ‘yes’, then he does it right way. Alternatively, he would lose time having to reschedule it, potentially forgetting about it or having to get back to it. In the amount of time that you procrastinate you could have done it already. So, by doing something immediately, he saves time. David saves time, in addition to working in a well-organised and structured manner. He is good at planning and a maintaining a time schedule - including goal. It is important to stick to that schedule until the end of the month.

“DM: After one month, gosh why did I get incremental results or no results at all? I said because you zeroed yourself out. The kids that showed up during spring break to the event that I had, that the ones that were there, and they had a lot of other distractions. They're the ones that don't zero out. They're the ones that get the exponential power of the universe. Meaning if I do something every day. Day one I get X to the first, day twos to second, third for third fourth fifth. Most people when it comes to nutrition, they're always, day six, ahh they zero themselves out. Then they start over for a second and during a month it means zero themselves out three or four

times. At the end of the month, they didn't get the exponential results. If you stick to something every day, this idea of being more interested, really asking the extra questions, going the extra mile, which is completely empty in my opinion. If you want no competition in your life, go the extra mile. 99.9% of the people are zeroing themselves out. They're doing 28 days a month not 31”.

David is not the first one to mention that ego can get in the way of you and your goals. He explains that ego is this little voice in your head that projects all your fears, doubts or other destructive mechanisms onto yourself. What this does is that it makes you steer away from who you truly are and therefore disrupts your ability to communicate properly with yourself and others around you. Most of the time this will result in negative habits which are ineffective. Effective communication has to be authentic and ego is an obstacle for that. It does not only affect your personal or business relationships, but it can also restrict your own productivity as emotions like fear or doubt can have a paralysing effect on you. These are just a couple of examples, in the end ego is such a broad term and can take so many different forms. The point is that Robin, JP and David all have experienced the negative side effects of ego and have learned how to deal with it in a healthy way. David and Robin are using meditation as a tool for getting mental clarity and emotional stability. I think it is so relatable to see the humanity of being an entrepreneur, instead of my previous assumption of it mostly having rational and financial aspects to it.

“DM: If you get what you want but the key is if you could rapidly get everything that you want, learn from it, keep what keeps you happy, dump what doesn't, and then keep moving on. You're gonna live a happy existence or fulfilled existence. So, the ego is the only thing that stands between you and what you want. And when we can identify it which is the first step we can start working through why do we feel this way. That's one of the biggest questions that I ask. I still get scared you know I still fight certain things I, I don't know what percentage of the time anymore, but I just try to get better I tried to pursue my potential of living at the highest vibration of the truth without my ego, you know”.

After being asked by Tom: “How do you find a balance between dreaming and doing?”, David replies by stating that he thinks there is a general misconception around dreaming and that it is standing in the way of action. For example, you can dream about getting a Ferrari

but if you are not actually putting in the work to earn the money, you won't get it.

“DM: okay how are we gonna do it? Now it takes action. It takes alignment, action, adjustment, but it does, it takes a, I'd have to create a plan. I'm not just gonna dream about it. But I believe that it's very important to still think about it, focus in on it, dream about it, that all these things, the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious all work together. But without conscious action it probably won't take place”.

However, one does not contradict the other. In essence he says that you can actually work and dream at the same time. They can complement each other because if you are focussing on your goals and dreaming about it while you are doing the work - you probably are more likely to achieve that goal, as opposed to when you would not be thinking about your goal. Therefore, setting up goals for yourself is one of the most important things you can do for yourself, because you will know where you are going, and you start to figure out a way on how to get there. But you will have to put in the hard work and take action. Just sitting and dreaming is not going to do the job, but it can be complimentary to working hard. I find it motivating to hear David confirm yet again that every little failure is a step that brings you closer to success.

“DM: Let me give you one of the coolest things that I've learned. And this is about anything in life. If somebody could tell you, give me your dream and your twenty five no's from your dream. Twenty-five of failures, losses, from your dream. How excited would you be when you got the first no? Wait, wait how about when you get your twenty-fifth one.”

Essentially, I think what keeps most people from being an entrepreneur, is the fear of failure. I have struggled with the fear of failure because I am not always confident in myself, my thinking and my capacities. Even though I want belief that I am good enough. I want to do things right. It is wonderful to learn that it is okay to experience failure, and that are part of the process leading to success. This gives me faith and confidence for the future because I realize that there is a way grow by making mistakes and learning from those. It is enlightening to think that failures are a path to success instead of it keeping you away from success. There still might be obstacles and problems along the way but solving these problems and learning how to overcome the obstacles is improving your skills - if you have

the right mindset. Interestingly, the only failure that keeps you from achieving your goals is to give up because of the things you would initially perceive as failures. Just do not quit.

Interview 5: Aubrey Marcus

I think these quotes by Aubrey summarize neatly the most important things I have learned throughout listening to the interviews. It really connects with what the previous interviewees have said as well. Ultimately, it comes down to working hard, believing in yourself, not letting ego get in the way of you and not dwelling on failures.

“AM: Fear is a belief that something negative is going to happen rather than something positive is going to happen. So it's like that's on the other side you're almost believing in your failure. Right, rather than believing in your success. So you have to go attack and collapse these different fears. And part of that is going to be sucking out the the penalty, if if you fail. So you got to realize like there is no such thing as failure, there's just learning.”

“AM: You just got to understand the only thing that you're responsible for is your best. Like you can't do better than your best. You just do your best and if you try to obsess too much you're not doing your best, you're gonna be paralyzed right. So you have to get as much information as you can, make the most educated choice, make sure that you're not choosing based on ego or emotion or, you know, greed or these other forces that delude you and prevent you from thinking clearly. But if you do your best and you fail like what are you gonna do beat yourself up for that? Like that doesn't make any sense. If you're doing your best, if you're really laying it out there, there's nothing nothing more you can do. And, and that's I think that that's really the key is just to constantly rest and rely on that fact. That I'm just, I'm doing my best and there's nothing, nothing more than that”.

Before watching these interviews, I tried to have an open mindset and not have too many expectations of the content of the interviews. But I noticed that in the back of my mind I expected more technical/financial business strategies and tips. But I am starting to connect the dots between what these successful entrepreneurs all have in common. I am becoming convinced of the idea that entrepreneurship in its basis boils down to personal development

and if you focus on that and have the will to improve yourself as much as possible, the business results will follow. What I have come to learn is that entrepreneurship requires a lot of emotional and mental strength and that you can learn these skills. For example, if I am working through my fears, insecurities and doubts I can stop and take a step back and really reflect on myself (by journaling for example) and find out what it really is that I need to work on a personal level. Finding that and adjusting the narrative that I tell myself and becoming convinced of the transformative power behind changing negative beliefs into positive ones. This type of self-reflection is a useful tool that can help me improve in life and in business. Focussing on making progress in my path to my entrepreneurial endeavours, instead of blocking myself as soon as I encounter a problem.

“AM: There's gonna be random chaotic incidences that are going to be unfortunate in your life but we're responsible for our action and reaction to those things always. And the strongest reactions are typically coming from places of wound or fear insecurity. So it's just the practice of really looking at those things. And you know that's that kind of deep introspection that requires getting really still. And clearing out you know your identity as the ego and your identity as the body, and then accepting your identity as consciousness as the observer of things”.

“AM: And so the Warrior Ethos is a commitment to do that. It's a commitment to say as soon as you see an area where you realize you're out of balance, or see an area where there's things that are scary or you're insecure, that you go towards those things. You know, that you don't allow those things to rule you. You know and I think it's that willingness to go into the cave and go into the shadow that defines a warrior. And you know I think that's really key. And ultimately using the desire to be fit for service, so that you can be of service is also - as the secondary part of the Warrior Ethos - it's this idea that I have to take care of me so that I can take care of anybody else. Because if you're not taking care of yourself, you're not gonna be able to take care of anybody”.

As Aubrey mentioned, it is vital to work on yourself first, in order to be of service to others. That is why personal development is such a foundational aspect to entrepreneurial learning. It is critical to have a strong character and that you believe in yourself. You have to move forward in the journey - based on what you have learned from re-orientating yourself

through introspective techniques. The power of making progress lies in knowing what you should do, and actually doing it. That is the decision you can make, and that is what will make the difference between somebody that is successful and somebody who is not there yet. To become the best version of yourself you will have to go through these challenges, and that's okay, but you always have to strive for it. Striving to become a better version of you, than the version of you that you were yesterday, whilst accepting that it is okay to be where you are in the process of it. This is being process oriented instead of goal oriented.

Interestingly, you have to do both types of learning. Most of the entrepreneurs so far, have mentioned the importance of setting goals. Yet, there is a deep process you will have to go through as well in order to reach those goals. Remarkably, having a goal is crucial to process oriented learning and it is not contradictive. Having a goal is inherent to a process, it is what allows there to be a process in the first place. This does not mean that you should be focusing on that goal – you can indirectly focus on the goal - by focusing on the process that leads to that goal. Ironically, focusing solely on the outcome and not on the process only holds you back from achieving that goal.

Interview 6: Dean Kamen

I have noticed that I have been getting the idea that being able to adapt properly to the constantly changing world is crucial as an entrepreneur. Robin Sharma even stated that you do not have to adapt to the world, but you have to adapt the world to you. I have not seen a notion similar to this come by since, so I am happy that Dean provides an extension on that notion for me.

“DK: When you think of how we look at evolution, Charles Darwin. Everybody's heard Charles Darwin but they don't know what he said. Charles Darwin did not say it's the strong that survive, he did not say it's the smart that survive, what Charles Darwin said - which is so brilliant about evolution - what Charles Darwin said it is those that are most capable of adaptation.”

Being an expert at something can seem like the most valuable thing, however as Dean has explained, experts can get stuck because they are holding on to what they know and believe is the truth. Yet, it is important to be adaptable. The experts need to know that they have to

be able to change their thinking as well, because the situations around them are different, or because the methods and techniques they have used before are outdated now. For example, as a researcher you can know a lot about one field, but then you encounter a different type of problem outside of your field and you find yourself not knowing how to deal with that problem. You will have to admit that you do not know something, in order to learn. This also relates to what Robin Sharma has said about keeping a white-belt-mentality. If you place yourself into the beginner mindset and admit that you do not know how to do something, you will find that you will be able to learn more about it. Then, you open your mind to a multitude of possibilities that you would not have considered before. Furthermore, what is known as truth can be changed as well, and therefore we have to be able to learn new ways of thinking and learn new methods in order to improve yourself and improve the world. You have to have an adaptive mindset in order to change, grow and reach the full potential of yourself and your business.

You can implement certain strategies that are effective for the time being, but that does not mean that they are necessarily the most effective, or that they remain effective for the future. If the situation or industry changes and you do not have the ability to adapt to it and you stick to what you have always been doing, there is a chance that that will hinder your growth. Logically it makes sense, because when you have only one strategy that is not able to change, you lose the potential of it taking other forms. The statistical chance of succeeding with only one strategy is lower than that of being able to implement a multitude of strategies. With the ever-changing world, especially with the exponential growth of technology it makes sense to try to change and adapt along with the progression of the industry in which your business is situated.

Dean is telling about how he looks at the current educational system. He explains how he thinks that to effectively learn, you need to really must try and understand something. He thinks that in the regular educational system you get too many concepts explained to you in relatively short periods of time. For example, he explains that to truly understand Newton's first law he had to read Newton's book about it instead of just learning the formula and the basis of it in school. He had the curiosity to go and find out about it himself by going to the library and reading about it. Dean thinks that in school you only learn how to be familiar with a lot of concepts, but never really get to understand them.

“DK: I think what he meant when he said it, and it's even way more true now, because while imagination is more valuable than ever, knowledge is a commodity. I

mean you know, a hundred years ago, if you wanted some fact you might have to traipse to some library. If they had it, and if you know where to find it. Today a few billion people are walking around with a thing in their pocket that has access to all the knowledge that's ever been documented. So, knowledge is virtually free and accessible instantly. Imagination is what allows us to do the next great thing. Imagination allows us to say, 'well I can take all this knowledge that's what we have today, how do I make a better tomorrow?'. Well, what do you add to knowledge? To create the future you have to innovate. What's innovation? Innovation is taking all the same facts that everybody else has, looking at the same problems that everybody else is looking at, but see them differently, and say, 'aha, this is what we can do to fix this problem'. That's imagination."

The lesson I get out of that and why I think it is especially important today is that it is possible to learn almost anything if you have the curiosity and will to learn it. Since we have an almost limitless amount of information at hand with the easy access to the internet with our mobile devices, we can teach ourselves almost anything with the right amount of dedication. I think this neatly complements the subject of my thesis which is about self-directed learning. I am trying to study the effectiveness of self-directed learning for entrepreneurship by studying interviews on a YouTube channel. If I can experience the effectiveness of it myself, I would be able to back that argument up with the experiences of self-directed learning that Dean describes as well. I think Tom's outro is directing towards gaining the skills you need to become a self-directed learner. Tom's YouTube channel is motivating and encouraging you to take a look at who you want to become, and decide what sources of information you will need to study - in order to learn the skills you want to learn.

"TB: So to everybody watching I hope that this story inspires you to look at yourself that way. To look at yourself and say what can I do? What skillset can I gain? Go out execute against, and become whatever I want to become?"

Interview 7: David Eagleman

From the interview with David Eagleman I have learned slightly different things than from what I have learned from the other interviewees. David Eagleman is a neuroscientist

and explains a lot of things from his field. Although it does not have to do directly with business and entrepreneurship, I can still make some connections to the things I have learned from the entrepreneurs. David Eagleman is an entrepreneur as well, but he talks less about the entrepreneurial sides of things and focuses more on neuroscience in this interview.

“DE: Yeah, that's where that comes from, is not pretending that we've got the answer. It's funny because, I see that there are two fronts in science that are going on, in terms of public communication of science, and one of them is, sort of. this front that the neo atheists have taken. Which is trying to tell people the ways in which they're wrong, in the way they're thinking, and there's some importance to that because there are lots of ideas that we can address scientifically, and actually rule things out of the possibility space. So, that's really important. Sort of on the other front though which is, to me, I'm just not that interested in telling people all the ways the wrong. I'm just interested in figuring out the new structure of the possibility space. So, where new folds are opening up, and this is all, to my mind, this is all predicated on science. This is the scientific mindset, is saying, ‘All right, we've got a wide table we can fit a lot of hypotheses on here. Let's try to figure out the next step, and the next step’. Instead of imagining that we've got it all figured out. So, that's the part of the attracts for me. The gravitational pull for me of doing science”.

What I can see here is that he also acknowledges the importance of having an open mindset and being eager to find out new things of which you can learn. It is good to assume that you do not know everything, because that would mean that you would not be open for change and thus cannot improve.

In the interview, David describes the human brain in as a really powerful operating system and that literally everything that you experience is filtered through the brain. That makes me think that if you break it down, every skill, every piece of knowledge and even your personal characteristics are ultimately being formed in your brain. So, if you want to take learning seriously, you will have to take into account that your potential for learning is depending on how well your brain is able to function.

Through the interviews that I have analysed I have come across many arguments that showed the importance of dealing with emotions, the ego, and other psychological phenomena in a healthy way – which all manifest in your brain. To hear a neuroscientist explain that your brain is really the basis of that all, supports my belief that it is indeed

useful to take my mental health seriously and try to do my best to take steps that allow my mind to function as effectively as possible. There are many ways to train the brain and to make sure that it stays healthy. For example, as previously pointed out in the interviews, having a healthy diet, meditating regularly, doing physical exercise to have the right hormone balances etc. There must be so many ways to create the right conditions for you (your brain) to perform, that I think it is worth looking into it and implementing the right habits in your daily routine.

Interview 8: Chase Jarvis

Chase is a person who had the potential to do well academically, but he also had a creative and athletic side to him. Through introspection Chase found out that he had made a lot of career choices based on the expectations of others, rather than doing things because he wanted to do them. Eventually, he decided to change his career, after he had reflected on what it is that he was doing and why he did that. He decided to follow his own dreams and to create his own path.

“CJ: I had wild imagination, that I had sort of been repressing for my whole life. As soon you talked about intuition, ultimately, I think this is intuition at work. Fighting against a lot of cultural forces. I talk a lot about this today. I bet if I surveyed everyone here in the room, that a good bit of them had been shown a path, shown the door, this is actually, this is what you should do. I'm trying to get with Creative Live and with being on your show here. Trying to get people to think, like wait a minute, am I doing the thing that I want to do or is it cultural pressure, pressure from my parents, pressure from the [inaudible 00:14:18], the family to do some other thing. I just lo and behold, there's a lot of people for whom that has been a bigger shaper of what they're on their path to do, as opposed to the thing that they actually want to do, which is governed by intuition. In a long roundabout way, through a bunch of experience, I learned the hard way, but ultimately found my path”.

This reminded me of having to be critical about everything, even your own thoughts and the origin of them. If you make decisions that are based on external influences like the expectations of others or society, you will be leading yourself into a direction which might

be unsustainable. I think that ultimately you will face yourself and find out that you have been building on a foundation that doesn't originate from yourself. If I can refer to what I have learned from Robin, JP and David Meltzer you have to stay true to your own values – living up to other people's expectations goes against that. And I think Chase has learned that same lesson along his career.

“CJ: Ultimately, the philosophy part of that extension or the bullshit that I was feeding myself was critical thinking. I was like wow, these people, I might not feel like the graduate student who's over there, with the beret and the cigarette, smoking and talking about Nietzsche, but I was learning and I was reading and being informed by everybody from Playdough to Seneca to Nietzsche to just these big old philosopher names. I realized only now, that that was a foundation for A, critical thinking but also it opened me up to, when you apply critical thinking to yourself. Like, wait a minute, what am I doing? I'm actually living everybody else's dream, for me. Rather than writing my own script. That element of self-reflection that I gained from studying philosophy, helped me shake up the whole scene. Like, wait a minute, this is not who I am, this is not what I'm supposed to be”.

Chase does explain how he has learned a lot from studying Philosophy, and how he has applied those lessons to his career, and his journey towards personal development. One of the reasons why I loved studying Cultural Studies is because you get offered a wide variety of topics and perspectives on the world from which you learn how to think, how to develop critical thinking skills, how to frame your ideas, and how to connect those ideas to the ideas of other thinkers. Chase has explained that learning how to think critically is something that made studying interesting and worthwhile. He has found that learning how to critically think about thinking has been useful for the rest of his life.

“TB: One of the things you said, this is gonna be close to a direct quote. The most important thing that you could cultivate is the ability to listen to your intuition.
Chase: Yes. TB: How do you cultivate that? Chase: Self-awareness is huge. That monologue that I just went on about. All of the steps that I took to be able to self-reflect. TB: Does it start from a feeling? Chase: It certainly, there's always a feeling, and that's the thing that we are told, we are taught to ignore feelings. We've done a terrible job culturally, not just in the US, but in the west, we have done a very bad job

of cultivating ones desire, expectation, ability to listen to our intuition. It was, you know, we all have different paths. Some through grief, some through achievement, some through struggle, to start to listen, we all have that compass”.

This is an example of how Chase has used his intuition to learn what he wants to do and where he needs to go. Furthermore, he explains how self-reflection has guided him during the process of becoming an entrepreneur. The entrepreneurs that have been interviewed all had lessons they learned along their lives, but they all learned them from different experiences. Almost all of them have figured out those lessons through introspection. Applying those lessons arrived from that self-analysis to their lives and careers has greatly improved their ability to deal with the hurdles of entrepreneurship. Figuring out those lessons and finding the right tools and methods to learn how to self-reflect has improved their entrepreneurial learning outcomes. They have come to the realisation that they had to change something in their personal lives, careers, or businesses. The things that I can learn from doing self-analysis and listening to them, is kind of a short-cut to learning since they have already experienced those mistakes and learned those lessons. By sharing these lessons with the audience, I do not have to make the same mistakes that they made, and I know which methods can be useful in guiding me in the process of becoming self-aware and therefore a better entrepreneur.

“CJ: The flip side of that then, is if we can increase our self-awareness. If we can program people through non-traditional channels and ultimately I would like to see the school system change. I don't have a lot of optimism for that, just based on the [inaudible 00:18:54], which is one of the reasons we created Creative Live. But if we can create a longstanding, something that has durability, a vein in culture, which helps people understand that you have to write your own script. If you don't, someone else will surely write it for you. If we can change that mindset, that's one of the things that I'm chasing”.

Chase describes the bigger picture of what it means to do your own learning in a non-conventional way. He proposes the idea that you can increase your self-awareness through media platforms which is why he created Creative Live (which offers online classes). He explains when more people have different channels available to them through which they can learn to improve their self-awareness - such as Creative Live - this would have a positive

impact on numerous individuals. He makes an argument in favour of the effectiveness of online self-directed learning for self-awareness through media platforms. I have learned that self-awareness, which is developed through introspective methods, is one of the key assets to entrepreneurial success. So, in this case, he indirectly makes an argument in favour of the effectiveness of online self-directed entrepreneurial learning, which is what I am studying.

“CJ: I think Tony Robbins talks about, I might get this wrong, but you have to have the right state, before you can tell yourself the right story, before you can get the right strategy in place. Anytime you try and go right to one of the other things, like if you try and go right to the right strategy, but you're in a shitty head space. You're not gonna get the strategy right. He calls his daily routine priming. Whatever the activities that we all do every day or morning or in this case visualization. If I realize that those things are true for me too. If I first and foremost and control my state, my emotional state. I can be in a positive head space, and know that the world's out there, looking out for me and that I am in part, in control of my destiny. That helps me create a great narrative, whether this is a narrative of self-empowerment or supporting others or just creating the world that I'm hoping to create”.

Here, Chase describes the foundational idea to entrepreneurial learning which is self-development and your state of mind. This idea has been put forward by the other entrepreneurs as well. The idea that first you have to have the right state of mind, in order to be become the person that you want to be, so that you can achieve the things that you want to achieve. One of the tools you can use to work on your state of mind is meditation. During meditation you will have to pay attention to mental stillness, but also to the narrative that you tell yourself. It is through self-reflection that you get to change the narrative, which ultimately is forming the framework through which you are acting in your life.

“CJ: I have put these techniques to work for me. I don't preach them, but I can't think of what my life would be like, you know, you talked about how would your stress level be, what your health would be without some of the practices that you've made use of. I'm in the same boat. I can't even imagine, I wouldn't be on the show, if it wasn't for some of these techniques and tools”.

Another technique Chase proposed is visualization which has not been talked about before.

By visualising the actual goals that you want to achieve you create the narrative in your brain around achieving that goal. This makes your own goals more tangible and relatable for yourself. In turn, this will improve your confidence in achieving those goals, and increases the likelihood of achieving them.

“Chase: If you can add enough value to them, I'm clearly gonna get value from being on your show, and I'm hoping that, you know, tell me, is that one of the reasons that you started the show? Tom: A 100%. It's close to the only reason. Just wanting to learn, you know. Wanting to encounter people and so, at the time that we started, it was originally a show called inside quest. We have 1,400 employees. And we had, in fact, this is something I want to talk to you about. We had this list of our core values and I didn't want them to memorize it and not live them. I wanted to bring people in, just because I was utterly convinced, that some, there were 25 bullet points. That every guest that came on, would relate to and just naturally [inaudible 00:35:04] one, two, three, four, five of the different bullet points and people would see. Like, hey, these are, because it wasn't like this is what you need to do to successful at quest. This we needed to do to be successful at anything. Hearing these high level people come in and talk about it naturally and then be able to go, okay, yeah, that really is exactly what is on this list. That was real big driver for me as well”.

Tom's experience whilst building up this channel is relatable to me, because when I started this research, I tried to have an open mind to seeing what I could learn from analysing this channel. The further I got in my research, the more similarities I was able to draw between what all these successful people had to share. They all had set of core values. Even though their core values were different – because they are all personal in the end – they all said how important it was to act according to those values. That is also the reason why introspection is a reoccurring theme in most of the interviews, because great introspection allows you to know your core values so you can build upon those. To me it has been an eye-opener to see that working on personal development is the foundational work for success, not only in entrepreneurship, but most likely in almost all aspects of life. I was heading towards that conclusion and then hearing Tom stating a similar conclusion adds a lot of value to me, as he is a professional with so much knowledge and experience. He is a successful businessman himself and has built up this channel where he has learned so much from other successful people. I am glad he has created this platform so I can learn from other people's expertise.

“CJ: I'm sure you've also received a ton of value of the folks, who are liking and sharing, and helping support your vision and mission here. Same is true for Creative Live. We have 10,000,000 students, we serve every country on the planet. This is crazy, global community of creators, who are all trying to figure it out. Who are all told that, you know, only some of us are creative, we're all told that in order to be a greater artist you shouldn't touch business, and in order to be a business person, then you just have to be cutthroat and you know, I just don't believe in those paradigms and if we can learn and leverage one another's skills and share information, then how much better would the world be? That's sort of three of the core values, three out of seven. These are how we make decisions in the company”.

Interview 9: Shaun White

“Tom: I really hope, dear listeners, that you paid attention to that, because here's what's powerful in that and here's why I think you're going to have unprecedented success for an athlete in your after career as an entrepreneur. Because all the mental tricks that you're using in sport are exactly what you're going to have to do in business. In business, you're going to get your ass handed to you. I'm sure you already have. It's only going to keep continuing. It's a natural part of it. Shaun: But you learn. Exactly. Tom: Exactly. Shaun: Well, that didn't work. Tom: 100%. When you're saying that, you know, "I went to the X Games. I didn't win, but I feel like I did win, because I know how to frame that in my mind. I know how to look at that as, okay, now I'm going to assess." If you had said, and I was actually really afraid you were going to say, "If I had won it wouldn't have been as good." You didn't. You said, "If I had won that I would know okay cool. I'm on the right path." You're going to make a win out of it either way, right? Shaun: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Tom: There's a great book called Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn. If that's your mentality - Shaun: That's great. Tom: Right. Then, you can never really lose, because you're playing a much longer game than everybody else. Shaun: Yeah.”

Shaun White has been very successful not only as an athlete but also as an entrepreneur. That is because he has the right mentality for growth – as Tom pointed out. I think it is especially valuable to see that certain strategies are applicable for different domains as they

are the basis for success. The similarity between being an athlete and doing business is that they both require the right mentality because of all the hardships you must overcome. Some people would call it being tough, which I understand, but now I have heard the same kind of principles from several successful people. I am starting to think that it is only as hard as you make it in your head. If you can see the losses or failures as a win, then you won't experience them as negatively as you would have had with a different mentality. I think it is quite fascinating to see that you can create your own mindset this way, by just changing your perception on things. Most of all learning how to be positive, confident, and seeing the fun in making progress. It is really motivating to understand these mechanics of changing your mindset. Getting in the right framework so that I do not have to doubt myself all the time. I want to try to acquire the skills needed for business and knowing that I can apply mental tricks from sports to business give me a positive outlook on the future. I want to learn how to apply these techniques to my own life and goals.

“SW: Just because I know getting to that pressure scenario when I was younger, I didn't think as much. I would just throw my tricks and that was it. Nowadays, I need that extra motivation. That coaxing into it. To get rid of that seed of doubt, I show up at contests now. It's kind of like knowing yourself as well as knowing your strengths and your weaknesses, and sticking to that. What are you really good at, and what are you not? Being real and honest with yourself about it. There's a difference between working hard at something that you're not good at and forcing it. That's the inner question that you have to ask. I've always found that to be a truth for me.”

I think that what he says here about being honest to yourself about where your strengths and weaknesses lie works the same way for business as well. I think that if you are an entrepreneur you would have to be honest about what you are not good at especially - that is the hard part. Executing on your strengths is the easy part, you can simply execute on it. If you have a weakness, you can try to work on it, but sometimes it is better to give that part out of hands and outsource it to somebody else who is better at it.

“SW: That's been a real tough one for me, because I guess going to traditional school setting you learn to manage your time from this class, and "Oh, I want to go to the mall tonight." I never really had that. I was always just in a van with my parents going to the next competition and doing whatnot. As I got older, that was something

that took a lot of time and I'm still pretty terrible at it. I have a really great assistant. That's when you realize to any great person you see, there are people around helping, because you can't do it all. It's just too much. You've got to know your strengths and weaknesses. I'm terrible at scheduling, and I can't accomplish all these things I want to do without somebody coming in to help. That's where you've got to rely on people around you in that sense”.

Interview 10: David Goggins

“DG: I believe that most human beings are only living at about 40 percent of their capability. So the mind has a governor. Like a car. If you're driving a car, and the car has a governor on it. The car may say 130 miles an hour but the governor is set for 91. Once that governor sets in you get the 91 that car starts doing this *moving hands and body*. The car wants to go. The car wants to go but that fucking factory said: uh-uh, we're not going past 91. We have a factory, a nice governor in our brain, and it's the survival mechanism. It protects us from pain and suffering. The second we feel that shit, our mind says ‘no, no this isn't fun, we should back off. We should sit down, find something more comfortable’. And there's something about the mind. The mind has the tactical advantage over you, at all times. At all times of your life, the mind has a tactical advantage over you. Why is that? It knows what you're afraid of. It knows your insecurities and knows your deep dark lies. And it starts to push you away from that shit. It pushes you in a direction that is comfortable. The mind controls everything”.

David Goggins is confirming to me what I have found earlier in the interview with David Eagleman. Everything takes place in the mind. He describes the limiting beliefs your mind projects onto you, as it tries to protect you from pain and suffering. I think to really excel you have to push through the uncomfortable things. I think this is a valuable lesson for an entrepreneur because as an entrepreneur you will have to overcome many adversities that will come on your path. How you react mentally to these adversities is what will dictate your success. If you become unmotivated or scared by these hardships, you will have to honestly look at yourself in the mirror and find out what it really is that makes you react that way and find your insecurities. Those insecurities are your weakness and by identifying them you will know what to work on: these insecurities. You will have to face them and overcome

them. It is possible that somebody can have a business and stay in business without overcoming certain limiting beliefs – but I think that you are lucky at that point. If you break it down, not being limited by your mind opens up new possibilities, so logically you can perform better if you fix certain beliefs. I think a lot of people will stay in their comfort zone and not confront themselves with their fears because they function well enough to keep their heads above the water, so what they do seems to work. But what happens when an economic crisis will happen, and you truly will be tested? Will you then be able to do what needs to be done in order to stay in business, when the pressure is there and hard decisions will have to be made? I think as an entrepreneur you will always have to be prepared for the worst-case scenarios. If you happen to stay in business without really having to test yourself, in my opinion you are just lucky then, it does not mean that you are actually a good entrepreneur.

“DG: I had to look at my insecurities, and in my fear, and find driving that. We're all looking for passion. Passions all around you. You have a whole a whole fuckin stack of it all around you see. Your insecurities, all that shit, you got to dive deep in that shit. Oh it's all in there. All the energy and fuel you need is right in yourself. It's all there. You got a lot of stuff to do to overcome. And you know that's where I found it. I found it right there in my own insecurities. I found drive in my own insecurities. And that's that's the most powerful thing in the world. When you can find drive in your own doubt, fear, insecurities. You become very unstoppable”.

“Tom: But the things that I hope that you take away from him be honest with yourself, be raw, but understand that you can fix it. Stop tolerating mediocrity. You have to detest mediocrity in your life. And you have to understand the only way you're going to meet yourself is through pain and suffering. And if you can become a master of suffering, the things that you can do with your life are truly unlimited. You can truly break free of all of the limiting beliefs that you've put on yourself, your circumstances put on you, your family has put on you, experts have put on you, whoever it is. You can get rid of all of that and completely blow your own mind with what you're capable of”.

I think this last quote coincidentally summarises what I learned from analysing his channel. I think that as an entrepreneur you will have to really know yourself so you can reach your full potential and weapon yourself against all the things you do not have control over - by

taking control of what you can control.