**Great Expectations – from Intent to Entrepreneur**

**The Co-evolution of Creative Graduates and their New Businesses.**

**Progression Report: Richard Hanage – May 2011**

***NOTE:*** *This report is based mainly on extracts from the first four draft chapters of my thesis (110 pages).*

**Abstract**

I am a self-employed small business trainer/adviser, working mainly in the University sector and I chose the scope of my PhD to be complementary to my work. It comprises a longitudinal study of nascent graduate entrepreneurs (NAGRENTs) from creative degree subjects, starting a creative business. In the literature there is very little longitudinal research into graduate business start-ups and even less for the creative sector, despite the perceived importance of both to the UK economy. This study should therefore fill gaps in knowledge and understanding of an under-researched and important area. As an objective of the research is to suggest practical ideas for practitioners, a theory-building approach is being taken based on Eisenhardt’s ([1989](#_ENREF_18)) work on building theories from case study research

The research will comprise multiple comparative case-studies ([Yin, 2009](#_ENREF_56)) over a period of up to four years per participant. At present seven NAGRENTs are being studied, of which three have already been involved for over 18 months, and have proved to be very valuable in shaping the research process and initial concepts. There are two stages to the investigation. The first is retrospective research into the factors which led to the NAGRENTs to declare an intent to start a business. The second stage is longitudinal research into the business start-up and progress over up to four years. A particular area of interest is the ‘co-evolution’ of the NAGRENTs’ personal, artistic and business lives.

Data collection is well on target and there is now enough material for the early stages of data analysis to commence. I expect the methodological approach to develop iteratively as data is analysed and new insights emerge ([Pettigrew, 1990](#_ENREF_40)). In order to extend the longitudinal data collection for as much time as possible the current concurrent processes of reading, data collection, data analysis, conceptualisation and writing will continue until early 2014 at which point the focus will shift to finalising the thesis by October 2014.

I presently see no reason to doubt that I will achieve these targets, particularly as I have scaled down my business activities to free up time for the research.

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# Foreword

I have lived for over 40 years in Teesside - the least enterprising part of the least enterprising region in the UK.

‘[Teesside] is an entrepreneurially moribund region. It is a deep pocket of economic deprivation located within the least entrepreneurial region in England. It has the lowest rate for business start-ups since VAT records began.’ ([Greene, Mole, & Storey, 2008](#_ENREF_22))

In the 1970s Teesside was at the forefront of UK economic development based on major investments in the manufacture of steel and chemicals, and a developing involvement in the North Sea oil sector. As each of these subsequently declined, attempts were made to help the local people, who were very highly regarded as corporate employees, to become more enterprising in order to develop a quite different form of economy. In the meantime the very many mainly male well-paid jobs that were lost in manufacturing were almost totally replaced by jobs in the service sector, but unfortunately these jobs were mainly at lower skill levels and easily transferrable elsewhere – eg call centres.

The huge investments in the enterprise support industry, despite observable effects on individuals, appears to have had little overall effect as Teesside, is still the least enterprising part of the UK. [Greene, *et al*., (2008](#_ENREF_4)) believe that the only clear effect of the public sector investment has been the growth of a large and varied enterprise support industry, of which I am part.

After working for the rapidly shrinking ICI for 22 years, I moved to Durham University Business School (DUBS) which was at the forefront of small business research and development, led by Professor Allan Gibb. I joined to help in using their academic outputs for enterprise development programmes aimed at both business start-ups and existing Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

I left DUBS in 2004 to run my own business doing business start-up training and support, mainly in universities, and working with students, graduates, staff, and the local population. As part of this work I am very involved with programs to help with the development of the digital economy in Teesside, based around DigitalCity and its objective to create a strong cluster of digital-based businesses in the Middlesbrough area. As a trainer and advisor I have always been interested in how businesses work, especially in the start-up and survival stages, and in helping people think through ways they can be more successful. This involvement in practical work with businesses over an extended period informs (and perhaps colours) my approach to this PhD project.

I enjoy working with academics and this PhD project takes my interest in the academic aspects still further. One of my supervisors said recently of a draft paper I had written – “this is Richard Hanage, the consultant, getting in the way of Richard Hanage, the academic”. She was right. So, I too have learning curves to climb. But that’s fine, I enjoy learning – which is why I am hammering away at my keyboard at this moment rather than tending the garden.

The main driving force for the research is a powerful desire to learn how NAscent GRaduate ENTrepreneurs (NAGRENTs) in the creative sector cope with the daunting business tasks ahead of them. The need to read a wide range of literature has been challenging, but very rewarding, and the process of interviewing, transcribing, analysing and writing-up the research has been much less of a trial than might have been expected. It has been equivalent to reading eight novels (one per participant) with no option to read the last few pages first. Every six months each novel has produced yet another page-turner. The ‘prequels’ were covered in the initial interviews with each participant, and the ‘sequels’ will hopefully be the subject of post-doctoral research.

# Introduction

The aim of this research project is to increase understanding of the ways that creative graduates develop new businesses on graduating from university. It will investigate the co-evolution of the graduates as individuals, as ‘creatives’, and as business owners during and after their business start-up, in order to identify the issues they face and how they deal with them.

The creative sector in the United Kingdom (UK) is regarded as an important part of the economy ([DCMS, 2006](#_ENREF_15)), and universities are producing large numbers of graduates with degrees in creative subjects([DCMS, 2006](#_ENREF_15)). As there are limited employment opportunities for such graduates , one option for them is to try to set up a business ([Ball, Pollard, & Stanley, 2010](#_ENREF_5)). However, this is a very crowded market so the graduates face daunting challenges in establishing a viable business ([Ball, Pollard, Stanley, & Oakley, 2010](#_ENREF_6)) at a time in their lives when they are also establishing themselves in the wider social world, making important career decisions, and deciding whether or not they wish to continue as creative practitioners.

The research will track a small number of recent graduates in detail, starting soon after their declaration of an intent to start a business and following their subsequent journey for up to four years.

## Scope and Definitions

The graduates, by declaring their intention to start a business, are ‘nascent entrepreneurs’, as defined by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM):

‘a person who is now trying to start a new business, who expects to be the owner or part owner of the new firm, who has been active in trying to start the new firm in the past 12 months, and whose start-up did not have a positive monthly cash flow that covers expenses and the owner-manager salaries for more than three month’ ([GEM, 2007](#_ENREF_21)).

The term ‘nascent graduate entrepreneur’ (NAGRENT) will be used in this research to describe graduates who meet the GEM definition and, since they have studied a creative subject at University and are setting up a business in the creative sector, they will be referred to as ‘creative NAGRENTs’. The research sample will be chosen to include only creative NAGRENTS who have taken their entrepreneurial intent to the point that they are already registered a business, or have firmly committed to do so.

The original research started out primarily as a study of the ‘entrepreneurial learning’ of creative NAGRENTS but soon shifted to focus on the relationship between their business, their ‘art’ and their personal development, as all three were seen, in the initial fieldwork, to be inextricably linked. The term ‘art’ is used in this research to refer to their creative specialism – eg computer games design or graphic art. The scope of the research is shown in the diagram below.



Figure : The scope of the research into 'Creative NAGRENTs’.

The term ‘co-evolution’ is used here to indicate interactions between the three areas of development. The research will provide insights into how this happens and how the business support agencies (training, advice, information etc) might take this into account. There is some evidence that business support has minimal effect on the regional economy as a whole ([Greene, *et al*., 2008](#_ENREF_22)), and this research may demonstrate that an approach based on a wider and more holistic understanding of business development issues for creative NAGRENTS might be more fruitful.

Although the participants receive a good deal of business-related support from a variety of agencies, they face daunting hurdles in establishing a viable business. Even individuals who have strong entrepreneurial characteristics, and a wealth of prior experience, find it very hard to make a decent living in what is an overcrowded sector. The creative NAGRENTS therefore can be expected to be facing three major learning curves:

* continuing to develop their creative skills
* developing business skills and learning to be entrepreneurial.
* becoming a ‘grown-up’, and establishing their personal lives.

Becoming a ‘grown-up’ involves finding their place in the world, and exploring new personal relationships. Indications from the initial field work were that this was a significant factor in their business development and the literature review showed that it was an area that was under-researched.

## Research Question

The overall research question is:

**What happens to creative NAGRENTS after they start implementing their intent to start a business?**

The research will be approached by focussing mainly on the business aspects of the NAGRENT journey within the creative sector, in order to gain information directly and indirectly to answer the core research question. The diagram below shows key questions that need to be answered:



Figure : The research questions

The research will take the form of longitudinal comparative case studies (Yin, 2000) of eight North-East graduates from a range of creative sub-sectors. The criteria for selection will be that the graduates have limited business experience and have not previously set up a formal business, thus ensuring that they have significant learning curves to climb.

## Research Scope

The scope of the NAGRENT journey, and the research, will match the GEM definition of ‘total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA)’, as shown in the diagram below.

 

Figure : The entrepreneurial process and GEM definitions ([GEM, 2007](#_ENREF_21))

Bosma *et al*. ([2008](#_ENREF_7)) in the Global Executive Monitor ([GEM, 2007](#_ENREF_21)) defined the stages as:

* **Nascent entrepreneurs:** The point at which they commit resources to starting a business. The individual ceases to be a ‘nascent entrepreneur’ when the ‘business birth’ has occurred.
* **Owner-manager of a new business:** Those whose business has been paying owner wages for more thanthree months but not more than forty-two months. (This is sometimes referred to as the ‘survival stage’).
* **Owner-manager of an established business:** Those who have been in operation for more than forty-two months. (The implication, often incorrect, is that the business is well-established at this point).

Interestingly, GEM does not carry the word ‘entrepreneur’ through to the post-birth definitions. Instead they use the less value-laden term ‘owner-manager’ once business birth has occurred. However, many authors use the word ‘entrepreneur’ for all stages. This research will also use the term ‘entrepreneur’ throughout the TEA period, mainly because the exact delineation of the stages is problematical, especially in the creative sector. For instance, the GEM criteria for business birth is that salaries are paid – but it does not specify how much – which is a problem in that creative businesses may never pay a full living salary. Some authors consider that business birth has occurred when the first sale has been made but many creative businesses make only a few small sales early on and have difficulty moving beyond that level of business. Registration of the business (eg as sole trader, partnership or limited company) could also be used, but is not a useful measure of ‘birth’ as it is only a small (but important) legal step, amongst many other steps.

In this research, the term NAGRENT will also be used for the whole TEA period even though, by some definitions, business birth may have occurred. The exact boundaries between stages do not seem to be important to this research – its scope will be the first few years of NAGRENTs setting up and managing new creative businesses, whatever they are called. The interest will be in what they do, and not what they were called, except to the extent that it would be easier to relate the research to the literature if consistent definitions were in use.

## Stages of the Research

The investigation will be in two stages – the first covering the initial development of entrepreneurial intent and the second covering the development of the business.

**Stage 1:** How and why do creative graduates develop the intention to set up in business (becoming creative NAGRENTs), and what is their personal, creative and business inventory at this point?

This stage will be researched by in-depth retrospective interviews covering their personal, creative and business life up to the time of the decision to start a business. The interviews will be supplemented by questionnaires and other triangulation data, for instance business plans and Facebook pages.

The findings will be mapped against models of the development of entrepreneurial intent, for instance Ajzen’s ([1991](#_ENREF_1))‘Theory of Planned Behaviour’ - and should provide a foundation for understanding the NAGRENTs’ on-going personal, business and creative development.

**Stage 2**: How do creative NAGRENTs start a business in the creative sector, and how does the businesses progress? How do their personal, creative and business lives co-evolve?

This longitudinal stage will last up to four years for each participant and involve regular 6-monthly in-depth interviews plus on-going triangulation using questionnaires, business documents and internet materials. The initial focus will be on how they manage their business, but the research will be designed in anticipation (from the early fieldwork) that personal, creative and career issues will have a big impact on the business, and the NAGRENTs’ commitment to it.

## Are Creative Business Start-ups Different?

The research will be of particular interest as the initial literature research suggests that creative business start-ups have important differences from many other types of start-up. Some of the main differences between creative business start-ups and general start-ups appear to be:

a) The creative business is partly a vehicle for generating income, but may also be a mechanism to enable the entrepreneur to continue with their personal and professional development as a ‘creative’, and to participate in creative sector communities. ([Spaeth & Kosmala, 2008](#_ENREF_48))

b) Due to the very over-crowded nature of the sector, the level of profit that can be expected from the business is lower than for many other types of businesses ([Ball, 2009](#_ENREF_4)), even for enterprising individuals with a strong creative reputation

c) Because of the low levels of profit, the business will often be part of a concurrent portfolio of income earning activities, rather than the single main source ([Ball, 2009](#_ENREF_4))

d) There is a community of other ‘creatives’ who are also in the same situation, which reduces the pressure on the entrepreneur to succeed in more conventional financial terms.

e) There may be grants available to help creative businesses in their early stages as part of support for cultural industries, but with a consequent danger of ‘grant dependency’.

The potential business opportunity for a creative NAGRENT with a strong entrepreneurial streak is that, if they focus strongly on the development of a viable business and make good use of the wide range of resources available to them, they may be able to create a successful business where others fail.

## The Unique Contribution of this Research

A great deal of the literature on nascent entrepreneurs, and the ways they start their businesses, is based on businesses in general rather than specific sectors. Also much of this research is quantitative and is based on large samples such as the US-based ‘Panel for Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics’ (PSED) and the UK-based ‘British Household Panel Survey’ (BHPS) materials ([Parker & Belghitar, 2006](#_ENREF_39); [Reynolds, Carter, Gartner, & Greene, 2004](#_ENREF_44)). This is useful background to build from, but the differences listed above limit its usefulness in learning about creative sector NAGRENTs and their businesses.

There is also a wealth of material on established SMEs, and the entreprenurial processes of those that run them, but little of this relates specifically to the creative sector with its unique features. A few authors have looked at new businesses in the creative sector and taken the more qualitative approach that is needed to really understand what goes on, but they each have covered only a part of the ground ([Carey, Martin, Matlay, & Jerrard, 2007](#_ENREF_9); [Matlay, 2000](#_ENREF_31); [Rae, 2004a](#_ENREF_42); [Spaeth & Kosmala, 2008](#_ENREF_48)).

This research project will help to fill an important gap by looking in detail at the lived-experience NAGRENTS over a long period of time as they actually try to start a creative business – in order to throw light on some of the processes they go through. In doing so, it will look into the co-evolvement of the business, the person and their art – an approach that appears to be unique.

# Literature Review

## Introduction

The main focus of the thesis will be on the personal, business and artistic development of a sample of creative sector NAGRENTs in order to better understand the processes they go through from the point that they commit to starting a business. This section reviews and critiques a small selection of the literature on the creative sector provide some context and then goes on to cover the definition, characteristics, and behaviours of nascent entrepreneurs in order to identify conceptual models to structure the investigation each of the ‘threads’ of the co-evolution (business, person, and art) as well as the interactions between them. Most of the literature reviewed in this section is not specific to the creative sector so an important issue will be to what extent these general approaches also apply to the creative sector. If, as some authors seem to believe, the creative sector has distinctive features ([Ball, 2003](#_ENREF_3)) then there may be some limits to the applicability of the general literature to the creative sector.

In contrast to the literature on the creative sector, which is sparse, nascent entrepreneurship has been covered in much greater depth and some of the underlying conceptual models, including, for instance, several variations on Ajzen’s ([1991](#_ENREF_1)) ‘Theory of Planned Behaviour’ have been refined over a number of years using quantitative methods. However, although there are also some excellent case studies ([Cope & Watts, 2000](#_ENREF_11); [Mills, 2008](#_ENREF_35)), there is little in terms of in-depth longitudinal case studies. This gap provides an opportunity for the current research to make a significant contribution.

The overall objective of this section is therefore to review the literature in order to understand the creative sector and to gain an understanding of the nascent entrepreneurial processes from initial intent through to successful business establishment, This process will identify some of the gaps in our understanding that will be examined in detail in the proposed study.

## Creative Sector

Three aspects of the creative sector literature are described in this section to throw light on the definition of the sector, the nature of creative entrepreneurs and how they develop and learn.

### The Creative Sector

In 2001 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) described the ‘creative industries’ as:

….those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.([DCMS, 2001](#_ENREF_14))

They have also divided the sector down into thirteen sub-sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio. ([DCMS, 2001](#_ENREF_14)). These definitions are still in current use.

The sub-sectors have own characteristics, challenges and subcultures ([Carey, et al., 2007](#_ENREF_9)). For instance, the crafts sub-sector, which has a strong micro-business ‘lifestyle’ orientation, is very different from architecture which is more like the ‘professions’ with large businesses and structured careers.

### Creative Entrepreneurs.

McElwee & Rae ([2008](#_ENREF_32)), working with rural businesses, classified creative entrepreneurs depending on their ‘business’ and ‘creative’ strategic growth orientations. The person who is low in both orientations is probably running a static lifestyle business whereas the person who is high on both is likely to be pushing the boundaries of business growth and creative development.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  High**Business growth strategic orientation**  Low | **B. Entrepreneurial manager**Active business growth with limited creative development | **D.** **Creative entrepreneur**Combines business growth with creative development |
| **A. Static**Replacement income business | **C. Creative practitioner**Primary goal of creative fulfilment and lifestyle  |
|  |  Low High **Creative growth strategic orientation** |

Figure : Typology of Creative Businesses (McElwee & Rae, 2008)

Entrepreneurial Learning.
Rae ([Rae, 1999](#_ENREF_41), [2004a](#_ENREF_42), [2004b](#_ENREF_43)) has explored the ways that creative entrepreneurs learn as their business develops. The research was based mainly on in-depth observation of three successful creative entrepreneurs over a period of time. Taking a grounded approach, Rae developed a ‘tripartite’ model comprising three main areas – personal and social emergence, contextual learning, and negotiated enterprise – which were broken down further into 13 factors. See **Error! Reference source not found.**



Figure : A Tripartite Model of Entrepreneurial Learning ([Rae, 2004a](#_ENREF_42))

The model greatly influenced my early thinking and will be explored further if learning emerges as a key area of the NAGRENTs’ development.

## Definitions of Nascent Entrepreneurs

The concept of ‘nascent entrepreneurs’ is relatively new and is the subject of literature starting in the early '90s; it can be traced to Reynolds *et al*, and has been led by the PSED([Parker, 2007](#_ENREF_38)).The term first appeared in the literature in a conference paper on 1992 by Reynolds and White ([Davidsson, 2006](#_ENREF_12)). During the last 15 years the field has attracted a rapid increase in research output so that there is now an extant literature on nascent entrepreneurs and their journey from attitudes to intents and eventual entrepreneurial behaviour. Much of the research is quantitative and provides some useful theoretical frameworks. A flaw with much of it is that it treats people who start businesses as if they are a uniform group whereas in fact they are hugely diverse, and creative NAGRENTs may be particularly atypical.

 Nascent entrepreneurs are many and varied in type and in motivation ([Davidsson & Honig, 2003](#_ENREF_13)).

Davidsson & Honig ([2003](#_ENREF_13)) defined them as “ …. those who alone, or with others, are now trying to start a new independent business, and have carried out at least one gestation activity”. This is consistent with that quoted in the introductory section of this report from Bosma *et al*. ([2008](#_ENREF_7))

 [They become a nascent entrepreneur at] the point at which they commit resources to starting a business. The individual ceases to be a ‘nascent entrepreneur’ when the ‘business birth’ has occurred. ([Bosma, *et al*., 2008](#_ENREF_7))

The definition by Davidsson & Honig ([2003](#_ENREF_13)) encompasses many people who are unlikely to go through to actually starting a business, as their list of gestation activities includes some tasks that do not represent much of a commitment – eg attending a business start-up workshop. The research sample for this project will be nascent entrepreneurs, by either definition, as they will have at least attended one of the author’s business start-up workshops, and will have carried out more of the listed activities by the time of the first research interviews.

The 2007 GEM report definition is even more specific and includes an explanation of the end point:

A nascent entrepreneur is defined as a person who is now trying to start a new business, who expects to be the owner or part-owner of the new firm, who has been active in trying to start the new firm in the past 12 months, and whose start-up did not have a positive monthly cash flow that covers expenses and the owner-manager salaries for more than three months. ([GEM, 2007](#_ENREF_21)).

The evidence from the creative sector of the necessity for multiple sources of income through portfolio careers ([Ball, Pollard, & Stanley, 2010](#_ENREF_5)) suggests that, with this as the end-point definition, the creative NAGRENTs may never actually transform from being nascent entrepreneurs to ‘new business owners’. The definition excludes the very real possibility of a creative NAGRENT running a stable, well-established micro-business alongside other activities – such as part-time teaching. From GEM’s macro-economic viewpoint that may be a valid approach, if they are mainly interested in businesses that have the potential to make a significant contribution to the national economy.

Davidsson (2006) queries the usefulness of any of the definitions:

 Nascent entrepreneurs are in a temporary state, and are so varied you might as well compare them with holiday-makers (ibid).

He seems justified in this concern in that the definition can include an unskilled person setting up a gardening business, a semi-retired engineer becoming a consultant, the Bill Gates of the future, and a creative graduate going self-employed because there are no jobs.

### Implications for this Research

The lack of definitional clarity does mean that finding and selecting appropriate literature is not entirely straightforward and care is needed to ensure that apples are not being compared with pears. The creative NAGRENTs do, at least initially, fall fully within the common definitions of ‘nascent entrepreneur’ and in this research the term ‘NAGRENT’ will be used throughout the period under study – ie embracing the whole of ‘Total early-stage entrepreneurial activity’ (TEA) as defined in the GEM ([2007](#_ENREF_21)). The sample will be a small but important subset of nascent entrepreneurs and will be defined in this research, as:

“Recent graduates, from creative degree subjects, who have committed to starting a creative sector business”.

## **Entrepreneurial Intent**

This section explores the literature on the development of entrepreneurial intent in individuals and the subsequent section covers the closely related issue of opportunity recognition. Some individuals develop their entrepreneurial intent and then look for appropriate opportunities, whereas others see an opportunity, or a personal need, and recognise that setting up a business is a way to move forward.

Shane([2003](#_ENREF_47)) describes a general model of the entrepreneurial process comprising a strategically planned sequence of opportunity, discovery, exploitation and execution.



Figure : A Model of the Entrepreneurial Process (Shane, 2003)

This model is commendably simple, but the use of arrows that link opportunities to every other process does little to increase understanding of the key relationships and the uniform direction of the arrows hides (or ignores) the complex realities of the business start-up process.

Reynolds *et al*. ([2004](#_ENREF_44)) also examined the process of business start-up and identified two key transition points. The first is ‘conception’ which is the start of the ‘gestation’ stage (nascent entrepreneurship) (ibid), and seems to relate to a point in Shane’s model immediately after identifying an opportunity that will be investigated further. The second is ‘firm birth’ which is the actual start-up and relates approximately to the end point of Shane’s model, depending on how ‘birth’ is defined. Their (ibid) diagram is also consistent with the GEM diagram of the ‘total early stage entrepreneurial activities’ ([GEM, 2007](#_ENREF_21)) discussed in the introductory section.

Mullins and Kosimar ([2009](#_ENREF_36)) found that only 30% of start-ups implement ‘Plan A’, and some, especially in innovative areas, shift much more, as exemplified by PayPal which finally implemented ‘Plan G’. In PayPal’s case they were still focussing on their core technology (encrypted data transfer) but the final product was very different from the one they originally envisaged (ibid). This finding suggests that even when the nascent entrepreneur starts with a clear idea of their target business the process they follow will normally involve far more exploration, back-tracking, re-thinking and re-orientation than the neat diagrams in text-books and academic papers indicate.

Nascent entrepreneurship therefore starts with a preferred opportunity, but it may well not be the one eventually used. Davidsson ([2006](#_ENREF_12)) writes that the exploitation process needs to be split into entering, persisting at, and succeeding in, starting a new venture. Along similar lines McGee *et al*. ([2009](#_ENREF_33)) refer to a sequence of inspiration, then perspiration, in setting up a new venture

There are a number of quantitative models of the development of entrepreneurial intent and it is hoped that these models, and the more descriptive ones in the next sections, will provide a basis for identifying the factors that may have influenced the NAGRENTs’ business decisions. If Ajzen ([1991](#_ENREF_1)) is correct in writing that *‘exogenous influences usually affect intentions and behaviour only indirectly through attitude changes’* then the opportunity to track how these influencing factors are perceived to change over time may shed new light on how business support processes can help to improve the participants’ initial and on-going decisions.

#### Ajzen’s ‘Theory of Planned Behaviour’

The intention to start a business, and therefore to initially become a nascent entrepreneur, has been widely explored, for instance using Ajzen’s ([1991](#_ENREF_1)) ‘Theory of Planned Behaviour’ (TPB) as a basis.



Figure : Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Ajzen ([1991](#_ENREF_1)) noted that behavioural dispositions, such as social attitude and personality trait, had played an important role in attempts to predict and explain human behaviour but had proved to be poor predictors of specific behaviours. A number of variations on this model, specific to nascent entrepreneurship, have been developed by Shapero-Krueger ([2000](#_ENREF_29)), Luthje & Franke ([2003](#_ENREF_30)), Segal et al ([2005](#_ENREF_46)) and Kolvereid & Isaksen ([2006](#_ENREF_28)) and have good correlations with entrepreneurial intentions and/or behaviours.

#### How Useful are the Quantitative Models?

The quantitative models have an air of validity because of the statistical approaches taken, but have a range of possible weaknesses around sampling, data collection and the formation of meaningful constructs. On the positive side Parker ([2007](#_ENREF_38)) writes that:

The PSED combines a grand ambitious sweep of chronological process relating to new venture creation with a remarkably comprehensive and meticulously detailed compendium of information about numerous issues bound up in the process. This is an irresistible combination, providing versatility, breadth, and depth in a fundamentally relevant and practically useful single entity ([Parker, 2007](#_ENREF_38))

Despite their limitations, it is possible that the findings may help in understanding the progress of the creative NAGRENT. However, it seems that the quantitative models of entrepreneurial intent provide a very useful skeleton of rather dry bones that are a necessary part of the entrepreneurial body of theory, but are by no means the whole story. Hopefully the next section will put flesh on the bones.

### Reasons for Becoming a Nascent Entrepreneur

This section deals with a range of research that looks more broadly at why people embark on nascent entrepreneurship than do the models of entrepreneurial intent described above. Although some still use quantitative methods, others take a more descriptive approach and hence may be able to give *‘more insights into the human stories behind the statistics’* - as was said to be Seebohm Rowntree’s objective when he sent researchers into the slums of York to collect information for his campaigns for the poor.

Carter, *et al.* (2003) used participants from the PSED database to explore the reasons that nascent entrepreneurs gave for their career choices and compared these to the reasons given by non-entrepreneurs. They chose this approach because they could find no prospective studies of reasons for choosing to start a business and doubted the validity of retrospective surveys of successful entrepreneurs because of the bias introduced by excluding the larger number who were unsuccessful (ibid).

The reasons nascent entrepreneurs offered for getting into business were mainly no different from non-entrepreneurs suggesting that nascent entrepreneurs were not markedly different from the general population - a different result from prior studies, and perhaps a result of the improved sample selection method used (ibid). There were no differences in reasons relating to self-realisation, financial success, independence, and innovation (ibid). Small differences in factors that related to roles and recognition suggested that nascent entrepreneurs were somewhat more internally driven than non-entrepreneurs and also that those seeking employment preferred the structured roles and the recognition it gave them (ibid).

Given the wide range of types of nascent entrepreneur in the PSED, and their equally wide range of motivations, it is perhaps not surprising that the results were little different from ‘non-entrepreneurs’. This reflects again Davidsson’s ([2006](#_ENREF_12)) remark about *‘holiday makers’.*

Surprisingly, from the point of view of the current research, the eighteen reasons that Carter *et al.* ([2003](#_ENREF_10)) used in the survey did not include anything relating directly to ‘reluctant entrepreneurs’, nor were the survey respondents classified by business sector, which might have shown some inter-sector differences.

Gatewood *et al*. (1995) is one of very few studies that, like Carter *et al*.([2003](#_ENREF_10)), looked at the motivations of nascent entrepreneurs prospectively, rather than retrospectively. The reasons given were:

* Identification of a market need (29%)
* Autonomy and independence (18%)
* Desire to make more money (18%)
* Desire to use knowledge and experience (16%)
* Enjoyment of self-employment (7%)
* Desire to show that it could be done (5%).

This is very different from the ‘career motivators’ found by Ball, Pollard & Stanley ([2010, pp. 196-197](#_ENREF_5)) specifically for creative graduates, and emphasises the potential difference between ‘creatives’ and the general population of nascent entrepreneurs. These motivators were:

* Making full use of my knowledge and skills
* Continuing to improve my knowledge and skills
* Having a stable source of income
* Being able to pursue my creative practice
* Having time with my family and friends

The differences, albeit from questions asked in a slightly different context, suggests that business support and advice for creative NAGRENTs should be based on different assumptions from that provided to general start-ups, for instance recognising their strong commitment to their ‘art’.

Jayawarna *et al.* ([2007](#_ENREF_25)) used the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) to look at factors in the ‘life-journey’ of nascent entrepreneurs. They found evidence of ‘tipping points’ caused, for instance, by constrained household income or job dissatisfaction, which led to individuals deciding to try starting a business. These tipping points may be analogous to those which persuade creative NAGRENTs that getting employment is not a current option.

In addition they (ibid) suggest that longitudinal studies are required to understand the factors that create the ‘tip over’ into entrepreneurial action. *“We also need to know whether factors that motivate business start-up impede or enable success in entrepreneurship”.*

### Implications for this Research

A selection of the factors identified in the sections above will be used in the research to inform both the data-gathering data-analysis processes. From the quantitative models the following factors have been identified as possibly relevant:

* **Attitude-related**: salient beliefs about reasons for self-employment, attitude to self-employment, perceived net desirability of self-employment, internal locus of control and risk-taking propensity.
* **Norms-related:** subjective norms based on family and friends.
* **Feasibility-related:** perceived self-efficacy, perceived barriers and perceived support,
* **Others:** propensity to act

The wide range of types of individuals in the samples used in the published research gives an opportunity for the current research to distinctively test the conceptual frameworks in the closely defined ‘creative NAGRENT’ context, though the sample size and methods will not enable statistical verification. Instead a qualitative approach will be used to gain insights into how the attitudes and intents that led to NAGRENTs becoming nascent entrepreneurs change in response to events over the subsequent years, perhaps leading to changed behaviour and commitment to the business.. The insights gained should be valuable for working with creative graduates though, if the creative sector is significantly different from other sectors, it may not be possible to generalise the results.

## The Characteristics of Nascent Entrepreneurs

This section reviews some of the literature on the characteristics of potential nascent entrepreneurs and the effect of those characteristics on their likelihood on actually succeeding in setting up a business. A great deal has been written about these characteristics and, despite some contradictory evidence, a picture of nascent entrepreneurs is emerging. A selection of the material is reviewed below. The first issue addressed is whether nascent entrepreneurs do actually start businesses, and then a number of characteristics that relate to becoming and succeeding as a nascent entrepreneur are discussed.

### Do Nascent Entrepreneurs Actually Start a Business?

Wagner ([2005](#_ENREF_52)) found that, in Germany, between 33% to 50% of nascent entrepreneurs become ‘infant entrepreneurs’ (ie actually started a business), and that individual characteristics tended to play a minor role in differentiating who start and those who give up - with the exception of a positive effect of former experience as an employee in the industry of the new venture. He also found that both nascent entrepreneurship and start-up are more likely if the person has wide work experience, has a role model in the family, is male, and has prior experience in the same industry (ibid). Krueger *et al*. ([2000](#_ENREF_29)) recognised an issue (which is very relevant to the creative NAGRENTs) that nascent entrepreneurs who have valuable alternative options, are geographically mobile, and have low opportunity cost of quitting being a nascent entrepreneur are likely to give up before business start-up. There is also a possibility that some NAGRENTs are really ‘graduates in non-graduate occupations (GINGOs) in disguise – ie operating a business at a level lower than might be expected from a graduate. Davidsson & Honig ([2003](#_ENREF_13))referred to this issue in a slightly different context*: ‘They may be dormant, dilettantes, dreamers and never start a new venture’.*

Those who actually go on to found a business are most prevalent in the age range 25-44 (Reynolds, 1997). Jayawarna *et al*. ([2007](#_ENREF_25)), who was also working mainly with that age range, found that Individuals with a clearly stated entrepreneurial intention were more likely to start a business but that the intention did not guarantee business success. This finding links to the research into entrepreneurial intentions, which was reviewed earlier in this section.

The findings of other authors suggest that the effect on creative NAGRENTs may be that high social and human capital ([Davidsson & Honig, 2003](#_ENREF_13)) will be positive factors in becoming a nascent entrepreneur and risk aversion a negative ([Kihlstrom & Laffont, 1979](#_ENREF_26)) . Past work experience in the sector, especially in an SME, may be positive ([Wagner, 2004a](#_ENREF_51)) but learning from prior start-up experience may be of little value ([Westhead & Wright, 1998](#_ENREF_55)). The effect of financial capital will depend on the financial needs of the business ([Davidsson, 2006](#_ENREF_12)) ([Jayawarna, et al., 2007](#_ENREF_25)). To minimise the confounding effect of some of these variables the research sample in this project will exclude those with start-up experience and extensive employment experience. The characteristics of nascent entrepreneurs suggest that analysis of the data should include looking for the effects of human capital, social capital, employment experience, attitude to risk, and financial capital.

It is possible that, since some of the participants in this will be research are ‘reluctant entrepreneurs’, few of the factors will be relevant to their initial choice to become a NAGRENT, but as they gain experience and keep reviewing their career options there may be more evidence of which factors affect their decision stay in business or to quit.

## Opportunity Recognition

The interaction between the entrepreneur and opportunities appears to be a crucial part of the nascent entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurs need to find one or more opportunities to convert a generalised entrepreneurial intent into the seeds of an actual business. They cannot move far along the nascent entrepreneurial journey without having a specific idea to work on. However, the literature also shows that it is a two-way process in that the opportunities can potentially change the way that the nascent entrepreneur thinks and learns.

There is in implication in some of the literature and models that opportunity discovery occurs mainly at the start of a business. In a sense that is automatically true if one defines a ‘business’ as the exploitation of a discovered idea, in which case most real-world businesses consist of many such sub-businesses occurring at irregular intervals in response to Dimov’s ([2011](#_ENREF_16)) ‘happenstances’. Some are still-born, some are temporary, and some become part of the long-term core of the business. This suggests a structure for analysing the business thread of the current longitudinal study: to track the birth, life, and death of opportunities within the NAGRENTs’ businesses. Of great interest will be how these opportunity ‘life-cycles’ are affected by internal and external factors impacting on the business and the NAGRENT, and how the opportunities themselves shape the NAGRENT.

If the grounded approach being proposed is successful a number new insights into this messy process of groping towards a stable and viable business should emerge.

## Overall Implications for Research and Methods

As creative NAGRENTs embark on their journey towards starting a business they have great expectations of a successful career running a creative sector business. The overall purpose of this research is to find out how this works out in practice over an extended period of time after the start of nascent entrepreneurship. The guiding model being used is based on the co-evolution of the person, their art, and their business. The literature suggests that their businesses will undergo many changes during that period as they seek a viable business opportunity to pursue. It also suggests that they will remain strongly committed to their art, but may actually earn their main income from other activities in order to support their continued artistic development, though in most cases the other activities will be art-related, for instance retailing, teaching, or freelance employment. The literature is much less informative about the effects of events in their personal lives on their artistic and business development, yet the pilot interviews suggest this is a very important factor for young graduates as they carve out their own place in the ‘grown-up’ world.

The main focus of the research is on the NAGRENTs as business people, so the core part of the investigation will be how and why the business develops during the period under study. However it is clear from the literature that portfolio careers are the norm in the creative sector so the research will need to look at all income-generating activities rather than just the core business. It is also apparent from the literature that although most creative graduates want to stay working in the creative sector they may not be so determined to continue developing as expert practitioners of the art. The research will therefore observe their overall involvement in the creative sector rather than just their personal creative skill development. Finally, the literature identifies a number of personal issues that affect young graduates in the creative sector, including insecurity of work and income, shifting perceptions of personal identity, learning by trial and error, and the importance of various types of social networks

It is therefore proposed to study the co-evolution of the three threads, the person, the business, and their art, by looking for significant turning points in each of these three threads, researching how and why these occurred, and what impact they have on the other threads. The longitudinal research will map each thread in real-time and the investigation of the participants’ lives prior to graduation will be used to identify antecedents to their nascent entrepreneurial behaviour.

### Business Thread

This project is primarily about the development of the NAGRENT’s business and this will be investigated through focussing on the ‘life-cycle’ of opportunities, building on concepts from Shane ([2003](#_ENREF_47)) and other authors. Questions might include:

* How and why is each new opportunity conceived, implemented and exploited?
* How does each one interact with the NAGRENT’s personal and artistic ‘threads’?
* How and why are some potential opportunities rejected?
* How does each one interact with other concurrent opportunities in the business?
* How does each one affect the longer-term survival and growth of the business?
* Is there evidence changing quality/quantity of opportunities discovered over time?

### Artistic Thread

If the project were not located in the creative sector it could be a study of NAGRENTs in general and this thread would relate to other core skills as developed at University – engineering, chemistry, history or whatever. However, the literature, for instance Ball *et al.* ([Ball, Pollard, & Stanley, 2010](#_ENREF_5)) suggests that creative graduates are especially committed to their degree subject so this thread, for them, is potentially a very important influence on their business and personal development. Taking a lead from McElwee & Rae([2008](#_ENREF_32)) and Mills ([2008](#_ENREF_35)) the following types of questions will be investigated:

* Does the NAGRENT continue as an active practitioner? If so, do they seek to enhance their practitioner skills?
* Do they run their business in the area of their artistic specialism? If not, do they run it elsewhere in the creative sector?
* Do they seek to take a lead role in the sector, regionally or nationally?
* Does their identity as a ‘creative’ change? If so, how and why does it change?

### Personal Thread

The personal thread will be based on observing how the factors that affected the NAGRENTs’ original entrepreneurial intent and motivation to start a business evolve over time and perhaps lead to changed behaviour – for instance a reduced commitment to running a business. Based on the literature, the factors to be investigated will be selected from the following:

* Perceptions of business desirability
* Human and social capital
* Perceptions of business support and barriers to start-up
* Self-efficacy and perceptions of business feasibility
* Locus of control and propensity to act
* Attitude to risk
* Social norms (family and peers)

### Co-evolution of the Three Threads

No literature has been identified that is directly applicable to the three-way co-evolution of the NAGRENTs’ personal, business and artistic activities. This is the area that will be researched using a grounded approach – with no pre-conceptions of the issues that will emerge. As has been mentioned earlier, additional literature will be reviewed as these issues become clear.

# Research Methodology

This section describes and justifies the research methodology that will be used in the study of creative NAGRENTs. The research specifically focuses on graduates who have very limited business experience as they are expected to experience difficulties in establishing themselves in a very crowded and competitive creative sector. Consequently they can be expected to go through much development during their initial few years in business which will of great interest to investigate as a large number of NAGRENTs find themselves in this situation. Exploratory pilot research on such graduates has suggested that a key theme of the research will be the co-evolution of their artistic development, their business development, and their personal development.

The exploratory research has enabled the research methods to be refined in order to be more effective and also more practical from the point of view of the researcher. The depth of the proposed interviews, the repetitive contact with the participants, the use of supplementary documentary material, and application of proven assessment questionnaires, should enable a rich and consistent picture of each person to emerge

Following Rouse ([2004](#_ENREF_45)) in which she describes a longitudinal study of participants in a youth enterprise programme, this section describes the methods used in some detail in order to enable the reader to assess the quality of the findings. Rouse also emphasised that such a description can be over-simplistic and that her research had developed inductively through an iterative process of reading, critical thinking, observation, questioning, listening and analysis. A ‘grounded’ approach means approaching initial reading and fieldwork with only ‘sensitising’ questions about subject being studied ([Rouse, 2004](#_ENREF_45))

## Ontology & Epistemology

### Ontological Assumptions

Failure to think through philosophical issues can affect the quality of research and must be taken into account in research design in order to clarify the design and ensure that it will work effectively, ([Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2008](#_ENREF_17)). In this research project neither the pure positivist approach nor the pure social constructionist approach seem to be appropriate, though if a choice had to be made the latter would be more appropriate as it focuses on the ways that people make sense of the world and especially through sharing their experiences with others. However, an objective of the research is to provide practical outputs, for instance for the business support sector, which requires that the insights that are achieved need to lead to proposed interventions that can be expected to have a beneficial result for the majority of creative NAGRENTs. This implies a more positivist approach.

The most appropriate research paradigm is based on the ‘realist’ approach in that the assumption is that there are constructs and objects that have an independent reality even though it is not possible to fully know them. The purpose of the research is to get a better understanding of this reality ([Wengraf, 2001](#_ENREF_54)) and, because the research is based on realities, albeit only unclearly understood ones, it is believed that the findings will be at least partly generalisable to other creative NAGRENTs operating in a similar business environment to that in the north-east of England, where the current research is based. The participants in the study are expected to undergo real changes to their personal, business, and artistic lives and the objective is to identify causal agents influence that these changes. This is a reality that may prove to be replicated, to a significant extent, amongst creative NAGRENTs across the UK, if not more widely.

The methodology resulting from this ontological starting point contains a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, though there is a preponderance of the latter, and will be conducted in a way that very clearly exposes the context and the settings of the behaviours identified, recognising that the context is a very important part of the description of the current reality. The research processes will also be designed to understand issues from the point of view of the participant, whilst recognising also that the ways that this is expressed may be affected by their perceived relationship with the researcher. Finally, the research design will allow for flexibility in the acquisition and interpretation of data as the research progresses and new understandings by the participant and the researcher emerge. A great benefit of the longitudinal approach is that both parties will be in a learning process about the ways to identify, describe and understand what is going on in the on-going lived experience of the creative NAGRENTs.

### Epistemological Assumptions

Within the framework of the realist ontology a social constructionist epistemology is the most appropriate for this research. Easterby-Smith *et al.* ([2008](#_ENREF_17)) describe it as flexible and good for theory generation about processes though it can be difficult and time-consuming to apply. A weakness, in the context of his research, is that it does not normally produce outputs that have credibility with policy-makers (ibid). However, that could be provided at a later date by a more positivist investigation of specific theory proposals.

Van de Ven & Engleman ([2004](#_ENREF_50)) distinguishes between the ‘variance’ approach (which is outcome driven and uses variances to correlate events with outcomes) and the ‘process’ approach (which is event driven and uses narratives and other methods to find sequences and causation). This research is process oriented and will therefore use a range of qualitative methods to increase understanding of the realities of NAGRENT life.

The research will set boundaries on the scope of the findings in that in the interpretation stage of the thesis the causal effects that are identified will be classified into those that are believed to be generalisable, and those that are believed to be specific to the context of the creative NAGRENTs under study.

## Initial Selection of Research Approach

#### Retrospective Approach

A purely retrospective approach was rejected as there are a number of problems, of which the most fundamental is that the participants would, by definition, be successful entrepreneurs, unless a significant amount of effort was extended on trying to find people who had started initially as nascent entrepreneurs and dropped out. Retrospective interviewing also has inherent biases which are very difficult to compensate for, including memory loss, attribution error and retrospective sense-making.

#### Real-time Longitudinal Approach

The alternative approach, which was feasible because I was prepared to spend an extended period doing the research, was to follow the participants in real time longitudinally. Davidsson ([2006](#_ENREF_12)) noted that the start-up process is a phenomenon for which concurrent, longitudinal research on nascent entrepreneurs can truly make unique contributions, and that this puts the researcher in a much better position to infer causality than cross-sectional designs do. This was the chosen route.

#### Unit of Research

The unit of research is the NAGRENT. Although the main focus of the research will be the NAGRENTs’ business activities, the prime interest is in how they develop as a ‘business-person’ recognising, from the literature, that it is normal for them to engage in a portfolio of career activities. To focus on their original business idea as the unit of research could turn into a very short term study in some cases, and to try to follow a succession of business involvements, each as a unit of study could be very confusing.

#### Multiple Case Studies

The intended use of several individual independent NAGRENTs pointed to a case study approach. Yin is of the opinion that "… case studies are the preferred method when (a) ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomena within a real life context.” ([Yin, 2009](#_ENREF_56)). The present study fully meets these criteria. Further, he warns against using single case studies and advises the use of multiple cases.

Like a series of related laboratory experiments, multiple case studies are discreet experiments that serve as replications, contrast, and extensions to emerging theory ([Yin, 2009](#_ENREF_56)).

The chosen research method was multiple case studies. Eight case studies should provide sufficient range of NAGRENTs to have some degree of generalisability, without causing excessive workload.

### Data gathering Strategies

The inductive approach can be based on one or more data-gathering strategies. Gartner ([2010](#_ENREF_20)) believes that entrepreneurship is complicated that a ‘critical mess’ approach is a necessary and that scholars are more likely to find key nuggets if they have an omnivorous willingness to collect facts and ideas, both good/bad, micro/macro, individual/ firm/environment, esoteric/conventional, pedantic/amateur, and policy/personal. I would feel overwhelmed by such an immensity of information and seek to find a data-gathering strategy that is a bit more focussed without losing the opportunity for exciting surprises.

#### Interviews

After reviewing the alternatives it became evident that the best approach to data-gathering would be in-depth interviews with the participants. Interviews are well tried and tested procedures which match well the inclinations of the participants and the motivations of the researcher. Semi-structured interviews enable exploration of a range of topics in a way that can ensure that there is good coverage, but also allows for diversions into unexpected areas. The researcher benefits from new insights, and the participant benefits from being able to talk about a wide range of aspects of themselves and their businesses without feeling constrained by the process.

#### Stage 1 (Restrospective)Design

Following the investigation of data-gathering strategies it was decided that the stage one research, gathering data about the NAGRENTs life prior to becoming a nascent entrepreneur, would be collected by extended interviews looking retrospectively at that period. As with any retrospective interview, there are issues, which are addressed later in this section. In practice, it proved necessary to have two interviews of about two hours each in order to get a sufficiently rich picture of the participants personal life, their creative life and their business life to date.

#### Stage 2 (Longitudinal) Design

The second stage of the research, the longitudinal real-time stage, will be implemented by carrying out by 6-monthly in-depth interviews of the participants. Each one of these would be retrospective, but over a relatively short timescale, and also the on-going repetition of interviews would allow events to be looked at from different perspectives and timescales. The researcher was keen to avoid being too involved with the participants and felt that three monthly interviews, which some researchers favour, would be to frequent and would be too much of a time commitment for the participants. At the other extreme, annual interviews would be too far apart and some of the rich picture would be lost.

The interviews would also be supplemented by some documentary material, for instance LinkedIn and Facebook pages, websites and business plans, but these would be a relatively minor part of the data.

#### Interview Plans

For both the stage one and stage two interviews a semi-structured interview plan was prepared and used for all participants. In the exploratory research the interview plan has been used in a very flexible way to allow the participants to talk about the aspects of their business that they felt were most important. Interviews were recorded using both audio recorder and video camera. The participants had no problem with either of these, and they seem to make no constraints on their openness. The video camera was used partly because it was thought that there may be some value in analysing the participants’ body-language and also to provide a backup to the audio recording. The audio recordings were transcribed and prepared for data analysis. The participants will not be asked to check the transcripts, either to make corrections, or to re-state some the things they say, partly because this would be very time-consuming for them and would probably be done inconsistently by different participants. It also significantly alters the dynamic between the researcher and the participant.

## Development of Theory

### Insights or Theory?

A possible output for qualitative research is "insights" which increase understanding of the area and may possibly lead on to further more detailed research and/or practical application of the insights. However, it seems desirable to go further than insights and try to develop them into theories, even if they are at this stage in a fairly emergent form, as part of a process of ‘fumbling towards the truth’ (Runkel & Runkel, 1984)

Development of theory is the central activity in organisational research. ([Eisenhardt, 1989](#_ENREF_18)).

However, Eisenhardt ([1989](#_ENREF_18)) notes that there is often, in many publications, a tenuous link between the theory and the data, and that it is the close connection with data that leads to a theory being valid, relevant, and testable. She believes that there is also a lack of clarity about the process of building theory from cases, “especially regarding the central inductive processes and the role of literature”. Sound empirical research begins with a strong grounding in related literature, identifies the research gap, and proposes research questions that address the gap….. the researchers also must take the added step of justifying why the research question is better addressed by theory building rather than theory testing.([Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007](#_ENREF_19))

The methods that have been chosen for this research are designed with the objective of getting as close as possible to the production of new theory, and follow closely the process described by Eisenhardt ([1989](#_ENREF_18)).

### What is a Theory?

In 1995 the journal ‘Administrative Science Quarterly’ printed two articles about the development of theory in its ‘ASQ Forum’. The first, by Sutton & Staw ([1995](#_ENREF_49)), who were experienced editors and reviewers, explained ‘what theory is not’:

* References alone are not theory.
* Data alone are not theory
* Lists of variables are not theory
* Diagrams are not theory
* Isolated hypotheses are not themselves theory,

They (ibid) were concerned that, without stronger development of theory, the field might turn into a ‘dust-bowl of empiricism’. They saw a contradiction between the editorial demands for both strong theory and strong method and believed that this resulted in interesting but weakly supported theories being side-lined and interesting data which did not directly support a proposed theory being ignored. They were not arguing with the rejection of papers that were weak on both theory and method, but were concerned with how those with strong method and weak theory, or *vice versa,* were dealt with. Reviewers tended to favour the former, seemingly encouraging empiricism above theory-building. They therefore proposed that reviewers should be more inclined to accept papers with interesting theories, even if the data was this more illustrative than definitive. They wondered whether the data provided by Darwin, Marx, or Freud would have been enough to satisfy the reviewers of today’s top journal papers.

It is not the intention of this research to produce an exciting but weakly substantiated theory in order to test the examiner’s ability to recognise a new Darwin. However, the preferred research design, by its breadth and scope, and through the novelty of the area being studied, will hopefully hint at new theories although the sample size will preclude strong empirical evidence to support them. The output of the research may therefore fall into the danger area for rejection and, in recognition of this, the data analysis and interpretation will be carried out as rigorously as possible.

In the second ASQ Forum article Weick ([1995](#_ENREF_53)) focused more on the process of theorising, rather than the theory itself, which is the product of the process. He agreed with Sutton & Shaw’s overall message but suggested that all five ‘sins’ listed above may be part of a valid process of ‘interim struggles’ along the route from weak theory to strong theory and that so long as this is spelled out by the author, may be acceptable. He believed that nearly all theories in his field (organisation theory) were no more than approximations, of varying degrees of certainty. His comments on each will be taken into account as this research is pulled together into a thesis.

### Implications for the Research Design

In social science it has to be recognised that "any particular model is a simplified version of a more complex social reality. Just as no map can include everything above the territory….So no model can include everything about the reality it represents" ([Wengraf, 2001](#_ENREF_54)). Quite apart from wishing to advance knowledge about creative NAGRENTs by producing new insights this research aspires also to produce a map of the territory that is sufficiently detailed to enable practical prescriptions to be produced. Care will therefore need to be taken to ensure that proposed theories are supported by the evidence available, are not seriously contradicted, and are potentially generalisable to at least creative NAGRENTs, and hopefully graduate entrepreneurs more widely.

## Interviewing

As the majority of the data collection for this research will be through in-depth one-to-one semi-structured interviews this section deals with some of the issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the data that is collected is valid. Semi-structured interviews can be used for theory-building and for theory-testing and often both are done in the same interview ([Wengraf, 2001](#_ENREF_54)). In longitudinal research this is especially likely to occur as theories that emerge in earlier interviews (or interviews with other participants) can be explored refined and tested later on in the process.

### The Interview

Yin([2009](#_ENREF_56)) identifies a number of characteristics that the investigator must have, and these seem entirely applicable to the interview process itself.

* be able to ask good questions, and interpret the answers
* be a good listener, and not affected by preconceptions
* be adaptable and flexible to take on board new opportunities
* have a firm grasp of the issues being studied to ensure that relevant information is collected
* being unbiased by preconceived notions including those derived from the theory, and being sensitive to contrary evidence is important.

The difficulty of being entirely subjective, which Yin attempts to address above, is echoed by Wengraf ([2001](#_ENREF_54)). “The interviews that you do… are not asocial, ahistorical, events. You do not leave behind your anxieties, your hopes, your blind spots… nor does your interviewee… Nor do you when you sit down to analyse the material you have produced”. Having been involved in business for many years, and more recently in business support activities, I have the disadvantage of bringing a large collection of preconceptions, prior knowledge, and expectations to the research process, and will need to work hard to recognise these and ensure that they do not bias the research outcomes.

Reflecting on the exploratory investigation I believe that in the interviews to date I have displayed sufficient levels of all the criteria suggested by the Yin, and that the interview transcripts reflect this. The one area that may need attention is a tendency to allow the interview to go on interesting diversions so that the transcripts are probably 30% longer than they would be if the interview was more tightly controlled. However, some of the diversions have led into interesting directions and it is therefore hard to decide a good balance between control and exploration.

### Implications for the Research Design

Semi-structured interviews, of the type planned for this research, and not easy to carry out, and require careful planning, discipline and creativity in the interview, and much more time for analysis and interpretation ([Wengraf, 2001](#_ENREF_54)). In this research there will be little opportunity for effective triangulation by data from other sources, so the interviews will need to carefully planned and carried out, and incorporate triangulation backwards and forwards in time, rather than from other sources.

As insights and theories emerge, it may be possible to structure the interviews rather more and shift slightly towards a theory testing mode in later years, and with participants who come on-board later.

## A Plan for Theory-building.

As an objective of the thesis is to approach as closely as possible to theory-building the next part of this section is structured around Kathleen Eisenhardt’s seminal paper on building theories from case study research ([Eisenhardt, 1989](#_ENREF_18)).

Eisenhardt’s paper included a table explaining the steps in theory-building, the activities associated with each, and the main reasons for each activity.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Step*** | ***Activity*** | ***Reason*** |
| Getting Started | * Definition of research question
* Possibly a priori constructs
* Neither [prior] theory nor hypotheses
 | * Focuses efforts
* Provides better grounding of construct measures
* Retains theoretical flexibility
 |
| Selecting Cases | * Specified population
* Theoretical, not random, sampling
 | * Constrains extraneous variation and sharpens external validity
* Focuses efforts on theoretically useful cases—i.e., those that replicate or extend theory by filling conceptual categories
 |
| Crafting Instruments and Protocols | * Multiple data collection methods
* Qualitative and quantitative data combined
* Multiple investigators
 | * Strengthens grounding of theory by triangulation of evidence
* Synergistic view of evidence
* Fosters divergent perspectives and strengthens grounding
 |
| Entering the Field | * Overlap data collection and analysis, including field notes
* Flexible and opportunistic data collection methods
 | * Speeds analyses and reveals helpful adjustments to data collection
* Allows investigators to take advantage of emergent themes and unique case
 |
| Analyzing Data | * Within-case analysis
* Cross-case pattern search using divergent techniques
 | * Gains familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation
* Forces investigators to look beyond initial impressions; see evidence thru multiple lenses
 |
| Shaping Hypotheses | * Iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct
* Replication, not sampling, logic across cases
* Search for "why" behind relationships
 | * Sharpens construct definition, validity, and measurability
* Confirms, extends, and sharpens theory
* Builds internal validity
 |
| Enfolding Literature | * Comparison with conflicting literature
* Comparison with similar literature
 | * Builds internal validity, raises theoretical level, and sharpens construct definitions
* Sharpens generalizability, improves constructdefinition, raises theoretical level
 |
| Reaching Closure | * Theoretical saturation when possible
 | * Ends process when marginal improvement
 |

Figure : Process of building theory from case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989)

### Getting Started - Constructs

The research is based on the number of *a priori* constructs that shape the data collection process. These include the definition of the three threads which has emerged from the initial research.

 **a) The creative thread** includes the development of the participants’ creative skills and interests, and their involvement in the creative sector. The starting point initially is their degree subject, for instance fine art, website design, or computer graphics. However, the thread is not restricted to the degree subject and includes any prior creative domains, and any further creative subjects the participant decides to pursue. It reflects the NAGRENT’ activities and identity as a member of the creative sector. The creative thread will be characterised by observing, for instance:

* Their creative activities at school and college
* Their continuation as a creative practitioner after graduation
* The on-going development of their practitioner skills
* Their participation in the creative community, in whatever role.
* Their monitoring of, and interest in, developments in the creative sector

 **b) The business thread** includes not just the business that the participant intends to initially set up but also any other income earning activities, including part-time work, or other business activities. This is an important broadening of the definition in recognition of the portfolio career that most creative people follow. The business thread will be characterised by observing, for instance:

* Enterprising activities and income earned before graduation
* The development of the initial business idea into a viable business.
* Their adoption of other business ideas.
* Other income earning activities, whether related to their main business idea or not.
* The development of their business skills
* The development of their entrepreneurial skills
* Their participation in the business community as a whole.

 **c) The personal thread** will be only partially covered, in that it is not the intention of the research to investigate all aspects of their personal life, but only to understand those aspects that have a potential bearing on the business thread or the creative thread. However, because the personal thread has proved, in the exploratory research, to be very important it may be investigated in more depth than was originally expected. The personal thread will be characterised by observing, for instance:

* Their personal development at school, college and university.
* Changes in their relationships with family, friends, and partners.
* Their interest in topics and activities that might impact on the business thread.
* Changes to their personal resources might influence their business development.

These listed measures will be tested and adapted during the data analysis stage.

Changes in the measures will be displayed and analysed in a variety of ways including identifying significant texts in interview transcripts, tabulating status over time, and graphing of measurable factors. As this is a longitudinal study, the ways that the measures change over time, and why they change, is the key information from which it is hoped that tentative theories will be developed.

### Selecting Cases

The population being studied in this research is a narrow slice of the much larger population of graduate entrepreneurs. The sample will be initially very tightly defined in order to maximise the likelihood of achieving insight and theories that are seen to be valid and potentially generalisable to all creative NAGRENTs. Heterogeneity is a major problem in researching nascent entrepreneurs ([Davidsson, 2006](#_ENREF_12)) so the selection criteria for the creative NAGRENTs have been set very tightly:

* They have studied a creative subject degree (at Bachelors level, and optionally at Masters level).
* They are initially setting up a business in the creative sector (as defined in the literature review section) and in the North-East,
* They have no prior experience of setting up a business. However they may have done some informal trading at school or university, and may have some work experience as an employee, but not in an entrepreneurial role.
* They are under 27 years old at the initial interview, and were educated mainly in the UK.
* There are no restrictions on gender, ethnicity, family background, or university attended.

The criteria have been set in order to ensure that they will all, at least initially, be firmly embedded in the creative sector and will have significant learning curves to climb in setting up a viable business. The limitation on setting up a business in the north-east is primarily to ensure that they are all in a similar business support environment.

Ogbor ([2000](#_ENREF_37)) is concerned about the generation of myths about the entrepreneurs, such as reflecting the archetype of white male hero. The actual sample for this research already includes two non-white males and two white females so may go some way towards avoiding adding to the myths, especially if some turn out to be non-heroic as well.

The selected NAGRENTs will remain part of the research it even if they subsequently move out of the selection criteria listed above. For instance, if they move away from the north-east, or set up a non-creative business, or go on to do a non-creative Masters degree, they will continue to be studied, as these are all regarded as normal variations in the graduate route into business, and may be only temporary diversions. They will only leave the sample if they choose to do so, or it becomes too difficult to carry out the interview processes as defined in the methodology, for instance if they move abroad and it is judged that face-to-face meetings, or in-depth telephone interviews are impractical.

The sample size of eight participants is considered to be sufficiently large to provide potentially generalisable outputs, but not so large as to be impractical with the research resources available. Some very significant case studies have been carried out with only one case, but some authors suggest that at least four are needed for theory building purposes ([Yin, 2009](#_ENREF_56)). It was also recognised that there may be dropouts from the sample so it was made sufficiently large that even with a 50% dropout over the three years it would still meet the requirement for a sample of at least four.

The participants are not being chosen on a random basis. As the purpose of the research is to develop theory, and not test it, theoretical (not random or stratified) sampling is appropriate ([Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007](#_ENREF_19)). The graduates will have attended some of the researcher’s business start-up workshops - that is how they were first identified. In attending the workshops they will have met the criteria of being a nascent entrepreneurial by carrying out at least one step towards setting up the business. They will be chosen to represent a broad range of subjects within the creative sector.

As participant retention may be an issue the individuals will be warned from the outset that interview process is very thorough and therefore time-consuming and extends over a prolonged period. Those individuals who are with the project for the full four years will be subjected to over 20 hours of face-to-face interviewing plus filling in questionnaires about a twenty times. Once the two initial interviews (totalling five hours) are completed, the participants will be informed that they will be able to invoice me for £100 per year to cover travel expenses and a modest reward for the time they put in. This will deliberately not mentioned prior to this time in order to ensure that they are participating for the right reasons. However, it will hopefully then act as a slight incentive for them to stay with the research.

The timescale of the research does allow the possibility of theoretical sampling by bringing further participants on board if particular areas need to be investigated further. However these participants will be only be involved with the research short period so it will only be fruitful to do this if it is believed that the first year or so of nascent entrepreneurship are important to the research findings. A separate decision to do this for postdoctoral purposes may be taken.

### Crafting Instruments and Protocols

The plans for initial retrospective and longitudinal progress interviews are displayed in Appendices A and B respectively. The assessments used are listed in Appendix C.

### Entering the Field

The exploratory research has been used to help define the research question, test data-gathering strategies and identify initial concepts. The data-gathering processes now appear to be stable, but the flexible and over-lapping process will continue during the analysis stage and may lead to modifications to the interview plans.

### Analysing Data and Shaping Hypotheses

it is intended that the interviews will enable insights and theories to be identified and then provide evidence for their validity. However “the evidence is problematic because the relation between theoretical concepts and their empirical indicators is always across the gap which one has to be prepared to argue over"([Wengraf, 2001](#_ENREF_54)).

#### Within-case and across-case analysis

The exploratory research using the first three participants has suggested that, despite the tight sampling criteria, the eight participants may each be very different in their personal backgrounds and their approach to their business. For that reason each case will be thoroughly analysed on its own to identify key themes, issues, and cause-and-effect relationships, prior to looking across the cases in detail. However, this is an iterative process in which contemplating the cases as a whole at an early stage has already led to some insights that may prove to be supported by the cases as a whole, and may indicate a need to do more detailed within-case analysis. It is anticipated that this iterative process will continue throughout the analysis phase.

Each case will be coded within NVivo software using a variety of strategies. Initially the text will be coded using the topics listed in the interview plans, and codes obtained from prior research such as the theory of planned behaviour. Further codes will be developed from observation of the data and especially those relating to developing an understanding of why the participants took particular actions, and how they responded to particular events. Codes developed from one case will be used in other cases to try and identify patterns that apply to the whole group. It is expected that the codes will be refined extensively by addition, deletion, combination and redefinition as described by King ([2004](#_ENREF_27)). As part of this process each of the three threads will be investigated, as well as the interaction between them.

#### Cross-case pattern search using divergent techniques

A number of other techniques will be used to identify and or visualise patterns. Miles & Huberman (1994) list a number of techniques. Data tabulation will enable an overview of the data from which patterns may emerge, the outcomes of questionnaires will be matched against the participants descriptions of their behaviours, and qualitative data will be tabulated or graph. Other approaches to working with the textual data may include behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS) and the development of mini case histories to feed back to the participants for their comments.

Yin ([2009](#_ENREF_56)) describes five approaches that will be considered in the analysis stage of the research:

1. Pattern-matching across the eight cases
2. Building causal explanations within and across cases
3. Time-series analysis within cases.
4. Logic models showing sequential stages
5. Cross-case synthesis including quantitative data.

### Enfolding Literature and Closure

 During the latter stages of the research the emerging results and draft conclusions will be shared with other staff in the University, and will be the subject of papers submitted to conferences, and possibly publications, in order to obtain feedback from others researching in the field. Early comments in conversations about the exploratory research suggests that there is considerable interest in the research and that there will therefore be lively, and hopefully challenging, feedback.

## Methodological Conclusions

Meyer ([2009](#_ENREF_34)) seems pessimistic about entrepreneurship research, believing that the normal-science, logical positivist paradigm will prevail and the research will continue to be peripheral to actual entrepreneurs and SME owners. He feels that few entrepreneurship scholars will escape the straitjacket of academic egoism and logical positivism to pursue research that is meaningful to society. The methodology described above is intended to steer clear of these pitfalls and hopefully really be meaningful. It follows well proven approaches used by non-positivist academics in the field and is therefore believe to be appropriate for this research project. If there are new insights to be gained, and emerging theories to be identified, the flexible application of the methods described should be able to bring them to light. Equally, if little of note emerges from the data analysis then it should be possible to say with some degree of certainty that there is nothing useful to be found. Although the latter is not a preferred outcome, it is still a contribution to the field, but one that will not lead to any practical improvements to the ways that NAGRENTs are supported in their new ventures.

# Future Plans

## Data Gathering

The present status of the data-gathering with each candidate, is shown in the table below. A typical interview transcript is 30 pages and 15,000 words and presents a very rich picture of the participants.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Participant*** | ***Gender*** | ***Initial interviews*** | ***6-month*** | ***12-month*** | ***18-month*** | ***24-month*** |
| A | Web designer | M | Jul 09 | Jan 10 | Aug 10 | Mar 11 |  |
| B | Graphic artist | F | Jul 09 | Feb 10 | Oct 10 | ***Delayed\**** |  |
| C | Music Design | M | Oct 09 | Mar 10 | Sept 10 | Mar 11 |  |
| D | Animator | M | Apr 10 | Aug 10 | May 11 |  |  |
| E | Animator | M | Nov 10 | Apr 11 |  |  |  |
| F | Illustrator | F | Jan 11 |  |  |  |  |
| G | Fine Artist | *M* | Mar 11 |  |  |  |  |
| H | tba |  |  |  |  |  |  |

\* Delayed due to maternity leave

Figure : Time-table of Interviews Acheived

Data-gathering will continue or up to 48 months per participant or until saturation is reached.

## Literature and Writing

I will continue to systematically explore the literature on the creative sector, nascent entrepreneurship and graduate entrepreneurship in order to keep up with trends and identify new work relevant to the thesis. I will also review the literature on specific areas if they become relevant, for instance entrepreneurial learning and identity.

By early 2012 I should be ready to try submitting academic papers to conferences and to start the process of developing papers for journals.

## Thesis Completion

The plans for the other aspects of the remainder of the PhD research follow closely Eisenhardt’s ([1989](#_ENREF_18)) process as described and discussed earlier: analyzing data, shaping hypotheses, enfolding literature, closure.

 The timetable is displayed below, including activities achieved.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Task*** | ***2009*** | ***2010*** | ***2011*** | ***2012*** | ***2013*** | ***2014*** |
| Literature research |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Research: initial 3 participants |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Further research: 5 participants |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data analysis: exploratory |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data analysis; theory building |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft initial chapters |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Enfold literature; closure |  |  |  |  |  |  |

NB: Black squares indicate main periods of activity for each task

Figure : Timetable of Completion of the Thesis

## What might go wrong?

At this stage I am almost half way through the process. I have an interesting research question, a reasonable grasp of the literature, a plan and justification for the research methods and seven participants being researched. It, at last, feels as if this whole thing is achievable. However, there are some possible areas of weakness.

**Academic writing:** although I am steadily improving at this I still have some distance to go and will need to continue learning from colleagues, courses and reading academic materials

**Loss of participants:** So far the participants seem to enjoy being involved in the research, and indeed the questioning helps them reflect on their businesses. However, even if I lose some of them I believe that I will have enough data to develop my thesis.

**Lack of insights/theories**: Because the sample is small I will not be able to produce robust theories for practical action. However, as I am researching a novel area and also have some interesting and novel insights already, it looks likely that I will at least have enough for a good thesis.

**Duplication with other research**: I have searched the literature and can find no-one else doing a similar piece of research. However, it is possible that there are hard-to-find conference papers in the same area. However, there are many angles to explore in the same data-set so this should not be a problem.

## Will it go right?

Overall I am pretty confident that there is nothing, apart from a serious personal calamity, that will prevent me submitting a thesis more or less on time. I have excellent tutors, a strong interest in the subject matter, and a very supportive wife. The rest is up to me.

Perhaps I will be able to help, in some small way, to build more academic understanding of creative NAGRENTs and assist Teesside (and beyond) to be a little more enterprising.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A:

## Stage 1: Retrospective Interview Plan

**First Session (2.5 hrs)**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Purpose of research. Interview process, confidentiality, research consentExpenses |
| 2. Brief overview of business progress to date |
| 3. Durham Enterprising Tendency (GET) test. |
| 4. CV-type background material  |
| 5. Timeline and prior ‘enterprising’ activities up to graduation. |

**Second session (2.5 hrs)**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Reflections on first interview |
| 2. Timeline since graduation |
| 3. Career plans |
| 4. The business. Progress and plans  |
| 5. H&M Learning Styles questionnaire |
| 6. Zig & Zags. Turning points. Critical issues or incidents.  |
| 7. Current networks and influences  |
| 8. Learning processes  |
| 9. Reflection on both interviews |
| 10. Next steps |

|  |
| --- |
| **Detailed Retrospective Interview Topics** |
| **1. While at School (Primary, Secondary, 6th Form/College)*** Key subjects (eg A level
* Friends
* Final qualifications
* Part-time work
* Voluntary work
* Enterprising activities
* Other qualifications
 |
| **2. Family*** Parents business involvement employment.
* Siblings business involvement/ employment
* Your involvement in family business related activities
 |
| **3. While at University*** Courses
* Final qualifications
* Part-time work
* Voluntary work
* Enterprising activities
* Post-grad
* Other qualifications etc
 |
| **4. After University*** Courses
* Part-time work
* Voluntary work
* Enterprising activities
* Other qualifications etc
 |
| **5. Your career plans*** What careers did you have in mind
* At school
* At University
* Now
* How do you think of yourself (professionally)?
 |
| **6. The business*** What is the business?
* Why are you in business?
* Where did the idea come from?
* What has happened to date?
* Direct partners/associates
* Trading history. Products/Turnover/Employees
* Business plan
* Website
* Formal memberships
 |
| **7. Business plans*** 4 year target
* 12 month plans
 |
| **8. Zigs and Zags*** Turning points. What were they? Talk me through them.
* Big achievement? What were they. How did it feel?
* Significant setbacks? What were they? How did you deal with them
* Big influences in the past
 |
| **9. Networking and Influences*** Biggest influences now (people)
* Who in business do you admire?
* What drives you forward - personally
* Who do you send the most time with?
* What do you do with them?
* Who gives you business feedback?
* Who helps you generate ideas?
* Who checks that you are on the right track?
 |
| **10. Your Learning*** How do you learn?
* How do you learn technical things
* How do you learn business things
* How do you learn social things?
* What have you learned in the past few months
* About yourself
* About your business
* What do you need to learn soon?
 |

## Appendix B

## Stage 2: Six-monthly Longitudinal Interview Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YOUR BUSINESS** |  |
| 1. What has happened over the last period? (Events, products, processes)
 |  |
| 1. What are your current products?
 |  |
| 1. How satisfied are you with the current state of the business?
 |  |
| 1. What zigs/zags have occurred?
* How have you dealt with them?
* What have you learned from them?
 |  |
| 1. How are your relationships with:
	* + Market (suppliers and customers)
		+ Other stakeholders (including partners)
		+ Advice/support services
 |  |
| 1. How much turnover in last 6 months?
 |  |
| 1. Networks
* New key contacts
* Lapsed contacts
* Most useful contacts
 |  |
| 1. How many days of external support have you received?
 |  |
| 1. How are your expectations for the next 12 months?
 |  |
| 1. Progress against planned actions
 |  |
| 1. What specific actions over next 12 months?
 |  |
| **YOU**  |  |
| 1. How satisfied are you with your personal development? |  |
| 2. What has happened to you over the last period?* + Home/family
	+ Relationships
	+ Wealth/health
 |  |
| 3. How do you rate yourself against contemporaries?  |  |
| 4. What new learning?* Content
* Process
* Satisfaction
 |  |
| 5. What specific actions over next 12 months? |  |
| **YOUR CAREER** |  |
| 1. What has happened over the last period? |  |
| 2. How does your current career compare with contemporaries?  |  |
| 3. How satisfied are you with your career? |  |
| 4. How are your career expectations for the next 12 months? |  |
| 5. What specific actions over next 12 months? |  |
| **YOUR ART** |  |
| 1. Are you still active as a practitioner? If so, in what ways? |  |
| **2**. Are you still involved with the ‘art’ community? |  |
| **3**. Are you learning new artistic skills? |  |
| 4. How is your art affecting your business? |  |
| 5. What specific actions over next 12 months? |  |

## Appendix C: Assessments and Questionnaires

The assessments are not being used in a quantitative way as the sample is too small. However, they do provide triangulation information about the NAGRENTs either from the assessment results themselves, or else from the discussion of the results in the interviews.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Assessment*** | ***Source/Reference*** | ***Rationale*** |
| General Enterprising Tendency (GET) | University of Durham([Caird, 1991](#_ENREF_8)) | Useful indicator of the enterprising tendencies of the NAGRENTs. Good basis for discussion |
| Learning Styles (LSQ) | Honey & Mumford([Honey & Mumford, 2000](#_ENREF_24)) | Learning [working] styles may throw light on the way the NAGRENTs operates in the business |
| Holland-Hexagon Model of Interests | Holland([Holland, 1997](#_ENREF_23)) | Mainly as a basis for discussion of interests, and ‘un-interests’. |
| Cognitive Style Index | Allison & Hayes([Allinson & Hayes, 1996](#_ENREF_2)) | Cognitive style may throw light on the NAGRENTs’ ways of thinking and learning. |
| Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) | Various([McGee, *et al*., 2009](#_ENREF_33)) | ESE may correlate with business success.Good basis for discussion |
| Networks/Influences | Richard HanageNo reference | Good basis for discussion |
| Career Reasons of Nascent Entrepreneurs | Carter & Gartner([Carter, et al., 2003](#_ENREF_10)) | Good basis for discussion |
| Career preferences | Richard HanageNo reference | Good basis for discussion |