

Power as Practice: a Micro-Sociological Analysis of the Dynamics of Emancipatory Entrepreneurship

David Goss, Robert Jones, James Latham, Michela Betta

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Abstract

This paper contributes to a recent movement to reframe entrepreneurship theory into a more critical and reflexive mode. It builds on the processual notion of entrepreneuring-as-emancipation to theorise a balanced conception of agency and constraint rooted in the notion of power rituals. We develop a micro-sociological analysis of power rituals that conceives power reproduction and entrenchment as a 'practice-based' activity that focuses on what power holders and subordinates concretely do, think and feel. This makes emotion a key dimension of entrepreneurial agency and redefines constraining barriers to agency in terms of a social process of 'barring'. This novel approach is illustrated using an autobiographical account of a social entrepreneurship project. On the basis of this analysis, a number of insights are provided into the ways in which the power-as-practice approach can inform wider debates in organization studies where the notions of agency and constraint are linked to issues of power and resistance.

Keywords: power, rituals, entrepreneurship, barriers, emotions, agency

Introduction

This paper contributes to a recent movement to reframe entrepreneurship theory into a more critical and reflexive mode. One theme emerging from this debate is the notion of entrepreneurship as a form of emancipation (Rindova et al. 2009). This seeks to broaden the scope of entrepreneurship theorising, thereby bringing within its remit a wider range of organising processes that share a capacity for transformation and change. As such, this approach has the potential simultaneously to stimulate developments in the field of entrepreneurship itself and to make the latter more immediately relevant to the wider field of organization studies. To extend this debate we utilise the construct of 'power rituals' (Collins 2004; Summers-Effler 2002) to establish a 'practice-based' understanding of power that focuses on what actors *concretely do, think and feel*. Power rituals emphasise the dynamic nature of social

interactions, specifically, the fluctuating balance between order-givers and order-takers. This introduces, in a very specific way, the role that emotions play in maintaining the status quo and initiating resistance to it (Scheff 1990). Using autobiographical narrative to capture these emotionally-laden social processes, we provide an example of how, over time, power-as-practice can lead to emancipatory entrepreneurship. We utilise as our example a case study of a social enterprise venture aimed at changing established attitudes and amending the law to proscribe the practice of forced marriages in the UK. Our intention in the paper is to show that a detailed grasp of the complex dynamics of micro-situations is a vital contribution to debates about power and resistance which, frequently, have remained at a macro-structural level. In this respect, the focus on emancipatory entrepreneurship provides a vehicle to explore an approach to power-as-practice that has the potential to contribute to a deeper comprehension of what is involved in the concrete exercise of power relations.

Entrepreneuring as emancipation

There is a growing recognition that conventional entrepreneurship research has been constrained by a reliance on functionalist and positivist assumptions that define entrepreneurship as an economic activity involving market opportunity-spotting and new venture creation (Goss 2005a ; Hjorth and Steyaert 2004). Critical discourses on entrepreneurship have challenged the resulting narrow conception of the entrepreneur and exposed the diverse practices and outcomes that can usefully be comprehended as entrepreneurial (Steyaert and Katz 2004; Steyaert and Hjorth 2007; Goss 2010). Calás et al. (2009: 553), for example, maintain the need to reframe entrepreneurship from ‘an economic activity with possible social change outcomes to entrepreneurship as a social change activity with a variety of possible outcomes’. They use feminist theories to show that entrepreneurship is not a ‘common object’ but a ‘complex set of social activities and processes’ (2009: 564). This theme of entrepreneurship *as process* is also taken up by Rindova et al. (2009) who suggest a perspective that treats ‘entrepreneuring-as-emancipation’. We regard this approach as worthy of development as its emphasis on process moves entrepreneurship theory into a domain that has long been a concern for organization scholars (Weick 1979; Weick et al. 2005; Steyaert 2007), creating opportunities for the cross-fertilization of ideas. In addition, the focus on emancipation taps into broader concerns about the role of organizing processes in the (re)production of, and resistance to, inequalities of power

(Clegg et al. 2006; Fleming and Spicer 2007; Thomas et al. 2010). By analysing a particular dimension of gender relations we endeavour to show how entrepreneurial capacity – and hence its emancipatory potential – can be understood as an outcome of organized processes (interaction rituals) involving constraint and agency. However, this requires a conception of constraint – as a process – that is currently missing from the entrepreneuring-as-emancipation perspective.

Rindova et al. (2009) point to the tendency for conventional approaches to characterise entrepreneurship in terms of nouns and to focus on the investigation of entities. Thus, markets, institutions and forms of exchange are taken as given, such that conceptions of entrepreneurial behaviour are constrained within these parameters. In contrast, they note, limited attention has been given ‘to the *actions and processes* that constitute the domain of entrepreneurship’ (Rindova et al. 2009: 478; emphasis added). Following Weick (1979), they advocate framing enquiry in terms of verbs rather than nouns - *entrepreneuring* rather than entrepreneurship. This, they suggest, creates the possibility for a more thoroughgoing understanding of entrepreneurial agency, of ‘how wishes for autonomy, expression of personal values, and making a difference in the world can be accomplished’ (Rindova et al. 2009: 478). This concern with individual agency drives their notion of emancipation:

We choose the term emancipation because it refers to “the act of setting free from the power of another” . . . As such it makes the question of pursuit of freedom and autonomy relative to an existing status quo the focal point of inquiry. Viewing entrepreneurial projects as emancipatory efforts focuses on understanding the factors that cause individuals to seek to disrupt the status quo and change their position in the social order in which they are embedded - and, on occasion, the social order itself (2009: 478).

They recognise overcoming constraint as a formidable task (‘many [entrepreneurs] may have only a limited understanding of the solidity of the structures they seek to dislodge’). Indeed, because of this centrality they make it a defining principle of entrepreneuring: ‘change creation through removal of constraints’ (Rindova et al. 2009: 479; see also Schumpeter 1934; Betta et al. 2010). However, Rindova et al. elucidate neither the nature of constraint nor the process through which individuals strive to remove it. Constraints, it is claimed, can be ‘of an intellectual, psychological,

economic, social, institutional, or cultural nature' (Rindova et al. 2009: 479) – but, left unspecified, this listing seems uncomfortably close to the tendency to frame constructs as nouns rather than verbs. Implicitly it suggests a conception of constraint as a static barrier (a subjective or structural blockage) rather than as a dynamic social process (Barnes 2000). This is important because if we are to take seriously the notion of emancipation as a 'setting free from the power of another', then that other's power to constrain needs to be conceived in terms of 'doing' just as much as the entrepreneur's power to challenge. A listing of possible barriers fails to capture the variations in intensity of constraint that individuals experience, such that the act of setting free may require much greater effort from some than from others. Neither is this type of 'setting free' likely to be an all-or-nothing experience; as processes unfold over time, it may be better to think in terms of degrees of freedom and emancipation.

Establishing conceptual parity between agency and constraint will, we believe, focus attention on dynamic shifts in power and the organizing processes that underpin them. The idea of an interrelated conception of agency and constraint is not new to organizational sociology, being most explicit in approaches influenced by Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. However, it is difficult to escape the impression that the agency/structure distinction, despite structuration theory's claim of 'duality', retains an implication of active/passive and, more broadly, micro/macro (Collins 2004: 5). To avoid unintentionally reproducing these bifurcations, we look to the micro-sociological tradition for an alternative conceptual language with which to reframe the agency/constraint distinction and explore its constitution as an organizing process. We will show in our concluding discussion that this framing of agency and constraint can also offer a contribution to the understanding of the dynamic and emergent properties of power and resistance that have been the focus of recent debates in organization studies (e.g., Fleming and Spicer 2007; Fleming and Spicer 2008; Calás et al. 2009; Clegg and Haugaard 2009).

Power rituals

To offer a conception of constraint that meshes with the processual aspirations of entrepreneuring-as-emancipation, we draw on the microsociology of Collins (1990; 2004) and Summers-Effler (2002). The latter's problematic is essentially the same as that of the entrepreneuring-as-emancipation perspective: the disruption of the status quo. However, her framework treats agency and constraint as part of the unified

organizing process of interaction rituals and their emotional effects. Drawing on Collins' 'interaction ritual chain theory' (Collins 1990; see also Collins 2004), social order is postulated as the outcome of an ongoing stream of ritual interactions. Rituals involve four ingredients: the physical co-presence of two or more actors; barriers to outsiders (i.e., an awareness that participants are members of a specific activity); a common focus of attention on the activity in question; and a shared mood. When successful, these translate into the outcomes of collective solidarity, individual emotional energy, group symbols and standards of morality (see Collins 2004: 48; Goss 2008 for a summary). Not all rituals are successful for all participants and differing combinations of ingredients may translate into differential outcomes, as will be discussed further below. However, for Collins (2004: 107), 'emotional energy' is the crucial outcome as this, he claims, provides the basis for motivated action: it stimulates 'not just . . . physical activity . . . but above all, taking the initiative in social interaction, putting enthusiasm into it, taking the lead in setting the level of emotional entrainment'. Emotional energy, conceived as a long-term 'emotional tone' (ranging from an 'up' tone of excitement and happiness to a 'down' tone of depression and sadness) can be regarded as synonymous with motivation, its agentive 'direction' shaped by the purpose of its generative ritual:

The relative degree of emotional intensity that each [interaction ritual] reaches is implicitly compared with other [interaction rituals] within those persons' social horizons, drawing individuals to social situations where they feel more emotionally involved, and away from other interactions that have a lower emotional magnetism or an emotional repulsion' (Collins 2004: xiv).

As individuals move between situations, steered by this process of emotional attraction and repulsion, they carry the energies, symbols and discourses that allow the experience of a micro-situation to 'spill over' into networks of interactions across time and space. Put crudely, the emotional energy generated by successful interaction rituals allows them to expand and consolidate over time, providing the basis for what are usually referred to as macro-patterns. And, of course, as established rituals lose their coherence, they decay and disappear .

Successful expansive rituals generate and attract emotional, ideological and material resources which will usually concentrate around the more central participants (for a

case study, see Goss 2007). As such, they do not imply equality between participants; where ritual dominance extends to control over material resources, it can bring with it control over who can participate and on what terms (see Summers-Effler's 2002 account of gender relations). Such rituals Collins refers to as 'power rituals'. Actors engage on the basis of unequal resources (material, ideological and emotional) and these inequalities mean that 'some give orders and some take orders, or more generally dominate the immediate interaction' (2004: 112). This situational dominance, according to Collins, demonstrates the operation of power at the micro-level. In short, a power ritual is an encounter where (at least) two parties engage in order to secure or establish control over some resource and where, ultimately, one party emerges (or is confirmed) as an order-giver, the other(s) as an order-taker. Often the unequal parties will meet under constrained conditions, i.e., where order-givers can demand the participation of the order-takers. In such circumstances, 'the situation of taking orders, of being coerced, is in itself alienating' (2004: 112). Thus, order givers generally maintain or increase their levels of emotional energy at the expense of order takers' loss. This loss is especially acute when the power ritual 'does not bring about a solidarity ritual', i.e., when the subordinate party does not wish voluntarily to repeat the encounter, but knows they will be coerced into doing so (Collins 2004: 114).

Summers-Effler's (2002) treatment of power rituals extends these ideas by suggesting that individual agency, or the lack of it, is linked to the presence of 'deviant emotions'. Deviant emotions are the feelings experienced in response to a given situation but which diverge from the social norms governing that situation (e.g., anger at the rudeness of a customer having to be suppressed because 'the customer is always right' [Thoits 1990; Hochschild 1983]). Whether demanded by a dominant party on threat of sanction, or self-induced, such suppression is viewed as a response to the emotional dynamics of the situation rather than a facet of personality: 'feelings that result from subordinate positioning often conflict with the expectations for how they "should" feel, and failing to meet expectations can result in further loss of emotional energy' (Summers-Effler 2002: 46). But handling deviant emotions in this way 'creates discord between the different parts of the self . . . there is increased internal disharmony . . . this saps the system of [emotional] energy' (2002: 48). The capacity for agency and resistance to the status quo is diminished.

Power rituals, however, seldom dominate all of an individual's life. Even when there is a high level of constraint from order-givers, there may still be opportunities for subordinates to interact beyond the former's gaze. This has the potential to confirm their own (at least partial) autonomy, albeit within tight constraints (e.g., the disparaging whispers or jokes behind the boss's back, the backstage lampooning of superiors common to most organizations [Collins 2004: 114]). These small acts of local solidarity can also assume the status of rituals and can be an alternative source of emotional energy for those participating in them. One part of this may be the acknowledgement of deviant emotions and the sharing of 'true' feelings about the dominant order-givers. However, because these rituals are often transitory and not subject to regular repetition or consolidation, their ability to focus mutual attention and generate sustained solidarity and emotional energy for subordinates is likely to be limited. They are more likely to be *compensatory* – restoring some of the emotional energy lost in the dominant power ritual – rather than representing a serious challenge to it. Deviant emotions are shared but remain covert, experienced as 'personal troubles' that are, at best, alleviated by the empathy of others. Such compensatory rituals may help to sustain an awareness of the negative experiences of subordination and, depending on the extent to which they tap into alternative meaning systems, maintain a sense of hope that change may be possible (even if not stimulating action to enact the change).

But, suggests Summers-Effler (2002), when subordinates can interact together under less constricted conditions (with scope for repetition and sufficient time for open exploration of feelings), there can be opportunities for the generation of what we would call a *counter-ritual* that overrides the partial solidarity of a backstage compensatory ritual:

If deviant emotions are handled within the self, there is little opportunity to realize that one's experiences are not necessarily a personal problem or inadequacy. When one experiences solidarity in ritual, one's identity expands, and larger social dynamics can be revealed in the process. The development of a collective identity among those participating in a ritual can allow members of the group to see the social dynamics of subordinate positioning that produce deviant emotions. In intense interactions there is a build-up of both emotional energy and a shared mood. During such an experience the "we" of the group

becomes more central to one's identity than one's individual experiences. . . . This process allows the immediate experience of solidarity within the group to overwhelm individual concerns for a lack of solidarity with the larger community. The emotional energy from intense solidarity with similarly positioned people can create collective identity. (Summers-Effler 2002: 49)

It is through this form of ritual interaction that individuals can generate the emotional energy and solidarity necessary to embark upon a challenge to a dominant authority. Such resistance can either be a collective undertaking or an individual challenge, the latter fuelled by the knowledge that the counter ritual group will provide ongoing support. Our interpretation of this process is presented in Figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE

In Figure 1 the flow dynamics hinge on the tension between order-givers' capacity to construct barriers to subordinates' resistant agency and order-takers' ability to carve out the interaction spaces necessary to generate the emotional energy and solidarity required to challenge their subordinate role. Order-givers' barriers to subordinate agency can rest on their ability to demand subordinates' participation in the power ritual and/or their capacity to constrain subordinates' interactions beyond it. There will be some extreme situations where almost all aspects of a subordinate's life are part of a forced power ritual, as in Goffman's (1961) classic analysis of total institutions (see also Coser 1974); in others, participation may involve greater or lesser degrees of choice. High levels of coerced participation are likely to be associated with restrictions on the social spaces necessary for subordinates to engage in the compensatory and counter rituals that build rather than dissipate their emotional energy and solidarity.

In short, the more constrained and coerced is power ritual participation, the more subordinates are likely to try to conserve what little emotional energy is available to them through inertia and a restriction of their agency. Importantly,

framing this as an active response to the situational dominance of order-givers requires recognition of the latter's active role in creating these barriers to resistant agency. As such we suggest a shift in terminology: we should consider talking about processes of *'barring'* rather than just barriers. Barring can encompass processes ranging from the discursive (propagating legitimacy discourses) to the brutally physical, with practices such as shaming and humiliation in between (Scheff 1990; Scheff 1997; Katz 1999; Czarniawska 2008). By translating the noun 'barrier' into the verb form – the processes of barring – we move away from the notion of a 'neutral' impediment to action and towards recognition of constraint as an active process that can dissipate or engender agentive capacity.

In this respect, the road to resistance will reflect a fluctuating balance between order-givers' constricting barring processes, and order-taker's capacity to engage in interaction rituals beyond the former's scope. As such, we have a model where resistance and constraint are both conceived as active processes that unfold through the ongoing organization of social situations. In Figure 1 (above) the movement from passive power ritual subordination, through compensatory ritual to counter-ritual resistance is not inevitable. Where subordinates have no alternative beyond coerced participation they are likely to remain locked in a situation where they either lose emotional energy or, at best, conserve what little they have through passive compliance. Even where opportunities to create compensatory rituals do arise, they may be insufficiently intense to generate the solidarity and energy to mount a serious challenge and remain a fragmented 'backstage' escape. In some cases this capacity to escape by participation in a compensatory ritual may become a substitute rather than a spur for resistance (Calás et al. 2009: 561). The transformation of such a compensatory ritual into a challenging counter-ritual may be highly contingent – a change in the behaviour of order-givers (or the resources underpinning this), the arrival of a new member, the fracturing of a legitimating discourse – any of which could initiate a move to resolve deviant emotions through challenge. The scope of such a counter-ritual challenge will also be influenced by the ability of order-givers to reassert their ritual dominance, mobilising their own material and discursive resources to re-establish dominant solidarity and emotional energy to regain authority. The following section outlines how we intend to use autobiographical narrative as a vehicle to illustrate the playing out of power rituals and the unfolding of resistance-

constraint within the process of an entrepreneurial venture. It is this unfolding that we refer to as ‘power-as-practice’.

Methodology

In this section we provide a rationale for our use of autobiographical narrative as data. We are concerned to show how individual entrepreneurial agency unfolds over time through the organization of social situations. To do this we have selected a case where the issue of subordination is readily apparent. We take the somewhat unusual step of using an autobiographical narrative, *Shame*, to illustrate this process (Sanghera 2007). This case recounts the emergence of a social enterprise project seeking to proscribe the practice of forced marriage in the UK and captures the essence of ‘entrepreneurial agency as emancipation and social change’ (Rindova et al. 2009; Calás et al. 2009). Specifically, it illustrates the organizing processes through which entrepreneurial agency (breaking free from the power of another) is created and sustained in the face of active constraint.

In part, our choice of this case is dictated by the nature of the theory: interaction rituals operate as ‘chains’ that constitute individuals biographically across the life-course and cross-situationally (Collins 2004). The text we use is an evocative and introspective memoir that charts the emotions and actions of an individual caught within a subordinate context. Sanghera’s cathartic text offers an insight into the socio-emotional dynamics of micro-situations that would be hard to capture in a conventional interview where emotions are often moderated by the interaction between researcher and respondent (Patient et al. 2003). An added advantage of autobiographical data is that it allows us to plot affective and behavioural changes within their social context and over time, crucial to an understanding of the dynamic and shifting nature of power rituals. There are very few alternative sources of data that capture variation over time in sufficient qualitative detail to give access to thoughts, feelings and relationships of individuals. According to Ford et al. (2005)

Autobiographies as self-exemplifying exercises, offer a unique means for gaining behind-the-scenes insights that are especially valuable in understanding the personal experiences of their authors as well as the connection between their life experiences and the development of their interests and ideas autobiographers are the “ultimate participants in a dual

participant-observer role,” having privileged access to their own inner thoughts. (p.26)

Ford et al. (2005) provide research evidence to suggest that autobiographical accounts of ‘personally salient and specific episodes or events are typically more accurate than recollections of more general and emotionally neutral experiences’ (p. 26). This does not mean that autobiographies will not suffer from problems of accuracy, selective focus, or self-serving promotion – although such problems are common to all attempts to capture ‘a life in writing’. Some researchers regard such material sceptically but, as a source of insight, it is not without precedent in organization studies, e.g., Weick’s (1993) well known paper based on Norman Maclean’s dramatic reconstruction of the Mann Gulch fire (1972; see also Courpasson and Dany 2009). We would therefore argue that any such problems are outweighed by the advantages that this material offers in terms of depth and duration.

Sanghera’s story can also be regarded as an attempt to organize her life into a coherent narrative, undertaken from her current position as an escapee from forced marriage. As a work of identity construction, it tells about how she has ‘made herself’ from the meaning she takes from past experiences (in this paper our concern is with the nature of these experiences and their implications for action rather than with identity construction). As this is a story of emancipation, these experiences make her an ‘eligible candidate’ to ‘epitomize the analytic criteria’ in which we are interested (Essers 2009: 165). One objection to this might be that, as this narrative’s movement from subordination to emancipation mirrors the movement of the theoretical model developed above, its use as an illustration of the theory is tautological (Gillespie 2005). We would reject this charge because the theory does not *demand* such a movement; rather, it is one possible outcome. In using this story we have had to select instances from Sanghera’s account to inform our conception of the processes of agency-constraint. Whilst they represent only fragments of her story, a further advantage of an autobiographical source is that it is fully available to scrutiny. Unlike many studies based on extracts from interview transcripts, the interested reader can view the whole of Sanghera’s text and assess the validity of the meaning we attach to these extracts within the context of the complete work.

Karma Nirvana: an illustration of power-as-practice

In this section we utilise the framework shown in Figure 1 to structure an account of the operation of power-as-practice. Our case concerns Jasvinder Sanghera, the founder of the Karma Nirvana organisation in the UK (Sanghera 2007). Jasvinder established Karma Nirvana in 1993 as a pioneering community-based organisation to offer support, advocacy and advice to women experiencing abuse (forced marriage, domestic violence) within ethnic minority communities. This act of social entrepreneurship is the culmination of a story that charts her involvement in the power rituals of forced marriage that operate in some parts of UK minority communities strongly committed to the concept of family honour.

Although traditional women's refuges have long existed in the UK, Jasvinder's initiative is regarded as entrepreneurial because of its novelty within community settings where the notion of honour bears strongly upon the subordinate position of women – a clear case of change creation through the removal of constraint (Rindova et al. 2009). As we show below, the concepts of honour and shame provide the focus of attention for power rituals that seek to define women as order-takers in relation to marriage. Jasvinder's entrepreneurial project originates within these micro situations and develops, through the interplay of agency and constraint, into a more macro pattern, culminating in changes to social policy and family law within the UK (according to its website - www.karmanirvana.org.uk - Karma Nirvana has been instrumental in developing the Forced Marriage Act 2007).

Jasvinder's (2007) account of her community in the 1980s and 90s is permeated by the discourse of honour (Stewart 1994). Girls, she claims, are only supposed to obey; a girl derives her identity only with respect to some male member of her family; she can only be known as somebody's daughter, sister, wife or mother; males carry honour whilst females only add to or subtract from this in terms of their meek and respectful behaviour. Inappropriate female behaviour is not only shameful for the offending individual but also for her immediate and extended family. In such an event it is legitimate for a woman to be disowned by her family or community – even, in some circumstances, assaulted or killed (see Brandon and Hafez [2008] for contemporary manifestations). The rituals associated with this strongly gendered conception of honour and shame provide the backdrop against which the micro-processes of power are played out. The following account is divided into three

sections reflecting the ritual configurations identified in Figure 1 above: power ritual subordination; compensatory ritual; and counter-ritual.

i) Subordination and the power rituals of forced marriage. Jasvinder's early years show all the characteristics of participation in a power ritual where girls and women are explicitly defined as order-takers, specifically in relation to the choice of marriage partner (which was intended to enhance family honour and status within the community). The encounters she describes would meet Collins' (2004) criteria for an interaction ritual: physical co-presence (Jasvinder as order taker and her adult family members and, frequently, a community 'elder' as order givers); mutual focus (female independence as a source of shame); shared mood (fearful anger associated with transgression of norms); and barriers to outsiders (invoking of minority community norms against 'pollution' by host the culture). As a minor she had little choice but to participate, although her account provides clear evidence of deviant emotions. These arise from her exposure to alternative norms of femininity within her school and the wider community, creating a tension with the standards of female behaviour expected by her family:

My [non-community] friends had started talking about going to college or University . . . Sometimes I used to fantasize about telling a teacher [about my planned forced marriage] and asking them to help, but it would have flown in the face of everything Mum ever taught me. My fear of being judged was deeply ingrained by then (Sanghera 2007: 42)

She charts how her initial reluctance to accept the forced marriage intensified the power rituals ranged against her, moving from an initial focus on persuasion, followed by exorcism to remove demons ('this is your fate and if you ignore it your family will suffer' [2007: 46]), and finally to incarceration in her own home. During this time she recalls the feelings of disempowerment associated with the intra-psychic struggle to resolve the deviant emotions – 'I felt I was screaming my lungs out trapped in a soundproof box' (2007: 47). This emotional repression culminated in her taking an overdose of paracetamol. Her accounts of this period reflect the internalisation of her feeling of anger and her sense of being emotionally drained, a state of depressed inertia. Within the family, the forced marriage power ritual was also maintained by

her older married sisters who used their own submission as a principle of right conduct: 'Why are you different? Have you got flowers attached to you? . . . Just do it. It's what we've all done' (2007: 43). Their responses suggest the strategy that it is better to restrict the loss of emotional energy by passive compliance than face the worse consequences of resistance: 'Nothing is going to change . . . Grow up and face facts' (2007: 49). The coerced participation and internalisation of deviant emotions that Jasvinder describes appear to dissipate emotional energy. She describes this as a period of feeling 'abandoned' (2007: 47).

ii) The limits of barring and the opportunities of compensatory ritual. As we have argued previously, one advantage of biographical data is that we can plot changes in behaviour and context over time. Because we are dealing with power that is produced and reproduced within its here-and-now context, we can document its dynamic and shifting nature. For instance, although Jasvinder's individual agency (to change her life through continued education) was initially restricted by the repressive barring of her local forced marriage power ritual, she does not remain trapped by constraint. Unlike her sisters, her depressed compliance did not lead to enduring behavioural consequences. Her account of resistance to repressive barring points to the significance of social situations: a chance friendship with the daughter of another family from within her community and her subsequent secret romantic attachment to her friend's brother. These friendships appear to have created the 'backstage' space through which she could rebuild the emotional energy lost during the repressive barring of her immediate family. She describes how she and her friend turned the issue of forced marriage into a joke – acknowledging their deviant emotions but apparently resigned to the outcome: 'I'm going to enjoy my life until I'm shipped off to [their home country]' (2007: 51). During this time Jasvinder was able to participate in a compensatory ritual of romantic love with her boyfriend and the active support of her friend (providing 'alibis' to her parents) that helped to resolve her deviant emotions – legitimating the notion of marriage for love rather than honour.

This pocket of backstage solidarity with the other family appeared to provide Jasvinder with enough emotional energy to escape from her planned forced marriage by eloping with her boyfriend. This act of running away precipitated further barring manoeuvres in the form of ritual shaming and exclusion by her immediate family: 'you've shamed us, you are dead in our eyes' (2007: 4); 'you disgraced your family,

you're no better than a prostitute' (2007: 273). However, Jasvinder's compensatory ritual seemed to ameliorate the tensions of emotional deviance rather than turn them into a focus for resistance. She did not completely sever her connections with her community and her account demonstrates how concerns about 'not fitting in' could still drain emotional energy and agency:

Everywhere I went in my new surroundings it was the same: questions from strangers who wanted to place me and possess me and suck me into the vortex that swirls around any place where [minority community members] congregate . . . I became uncertain who I was (2007: 100).

This was a period of fluctuating emotions that both created and limited her ambitions. Following divorce and remarriage (again, for love), she still found herself again facing an expectation of subordination – now as a 'dutiful wife trapped in her in-law's house' (2007: 195). Although she also helped to run her first husband's business, started a career of her own and re-entered education, her compensatory ritual encounters alleviated rather than challenged her subordinate position and involved few others interested in sharing or working through the tensions of the deviant emotions associated with subordination. The sense of agency she describes during this period is fluctuating – tempered by periods of uncertainty and inertia. During this time her conflict over deviant emotions was sharply reawakened by the suicide of one of her sisters in an attempt to escape her abusive forced marriage, an event that she attributes to creating within her a desire to 'do something' about women in such situations:

I could feel the sorrow and anger fermenting inside me, building an energy that propelled me towards action. I felt I owed it to [my sister] to do something constructive with my life, and more than that, I wanted to do something to change the world that had failed my family. A small part of me, fuelled by bitterness, also wanted to show [my family] that I didn't need them. I felt so totally alone...If they didn't want me I would prove to them that I could tread my own path and still make something of myself (2007: 183).

However, desire and action were not united until later in her story and her account of these compensatory rituals conveys, at best, a sense of recuperation rather than emancipation. Her attempts to be 'set free from the power of others' are only partial: 'Looking back I can't believe I was so passive' (2007: 197).

iii) Counter ritual and the challenge to barring. The compensatory rituals do, however, provide an insight into Jasvinder's subsequent development of a counter-ritual: the formation of an organization (Karma Nirvana) capable of sustaining a deliberate challenge to the status quo of forced marriage. She associates one source of emotional energy with her part-time social science education. She describes how, despite her husband's belittling comments, he 'couldn't kill the pleasure I found in reading. Books opened up a whole new world for me . . . [they] made me feel strong. . . . For the first time in my life I had a sense of purpose' (2007: 190). The study of social science (later transferred to university level) provided interaction rituals where norms of female subordination, forced marriage and domestic abuse were exposed to critical scrutiny (rather than 'conveniently ignored'). However, of greater significance was her parallel participation in a women's self-help and listening skills course. Here, for the first time, she gives a graphic account of confronting her deviant emotions in a manner that turned them from an internal struggle to a focus for action:

I'd exposed some of my deepest, ugliest feelings and they'd been accepted. I wasn't judged or criticized, made to feel ashamed or scorned. I was believed and – more important – I was valued. Those women's empathy showed me that my experience wasn't shameful or disgraceful. It was part of me and it made me who I was. I sat there that evening and it was as if my eyes had been opened (2007: 200).

Through this course she became a key participant in a women's community support organization, recounting how her increasing involvement with a group of committed female participants moved her from growing depression to emotionally energised enthusiasm. Driven by a 'whirlwind of ideas' (2007: 203) she embarked upon the formation of Karma Nirvana which, according to its website, has grown into a charity organization with national scope and 18 volunteer workers dealing with 200 calls a

month, mostly relating to forced marriage and honour-based violence

(www.karmanirvana.org.uk/).

Jasvinder's story documents how this initiative provoked attempts to bar her actions in the form of counter-attacks from some members of her local community, ranging from disapproval and denial to demonization and threats against her and her children: 'that bitch that helps girls run away from home' (2007: 272); 'you'll be chopped up into little pieces' (2007: 282). Her response has been one of outright defiance, articulated through an assertion of solidarity amongst members:

We recognise that many in the community do not support what we do and are often accused of many things but this does not deter us, the commitment and dedication of those who work within Karma Nirvana and support us is self-evident (www.karmanirvana.org.uk/).

The formation of Karma Nirvana as a constraint-breaking organization appears to follow the pattern identified by Summers-Effler (2002) of a counter-ritual involving those with similar experiences of subordination using collective solidarity to maintain resistance that would not be possible individually:

The greater the frequency of the interactions that produce solidarity and emotional energy, the greater the potential for creating enduring relationships that one is willing to take risks to preserve Frequency ensures that increasingly substantial proportions of one's interactions are represented by group membership. As members in the group they come to count on group membership and group interaction as a source for emotional energy (2002: 50).

Karma Nirvana sustained a full frontal assault on local power rituals and barring practices directed against women, providing physical support for victims and a discursive challenge to the legitimating premises of family honour – '[h]ow could anyone turn their back on their own child for the sake of a concept? How could that be considered honourable? To me it seemed a cause of shame' (Sanghera 2007: 261). Jasvinder's account of this period conveys a sense of exceptional individual agency ranging from the everyday running of refuges, to fund-raising, and engagement in

local and national political lobbying to change the UK law on forced marriage. This does indeed, seem to capture what is intended by the notion of entrepreneuring-as-emancipation: the ‘pursuit of freedom and autonomy relative to an existing status quo . . . [seeking] to disrupt the status quo and change her position in the social order . . . and . . . the social order itself.’ (Rindova et al. 2009: 478). But as we have sought to show, this makes sense only within the context of active constraint – the social sanctioning associated with power ritual barring. Both her direct experience of such barring practices and, later, her reaction to her sister’s death within this ritual context, appear crucial to the generation of Jasvinder’s entrepreneurial agency.

Concluding discussion

The conception of entrepreneuring-as-emancipation shifts the ground of entrepreneurship research towards issues of change and transformation. We suggest that if the notion of emancipation is to be other than a synonym for ‘doing something different’ (Fleming and Spicer 2008: 303), it needs a more explicit understanding of what is involved in ‘the act of setting free from the power of another’ (Rindova et al. 2009: 478). We have offered one possible solution through the development of a power-as-practice perspective. By analysing a particular configuration of gender relations we have endeavoured to show how the emancipatory potential of entrepreneurial capacity can be understood as an outcome of organized processes (interaction rituals) of constraint and agency. Our approach establishes conceptual parity between an active notion of constraint – barring – and change-seeking agency, and roots both in the dynamics of social interaction. Jasvinder’s case has been used to illustrate the ways in which ritual interactions evolve over time to enable and shape a social entrepreneurship project with a focus on emancipatory change. In concluding this paper we focus our discussion on three areas of contribution: i) the role of emotion in relation to emancipatory action; ii) the understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour; iii) a multi-level understanding of resistance.

i) Emotion and emancipation. The conception of agency-constraint that we have developed through the notion of power-as-practice adds a recognition of emotional dynamics to the understanding of emancipatory potential. By drawing on Collins’s (2004) micro-sociological conception of emotional energy as a socially generated affective process, we can take account of (variable) individual motivation to resist

subordination without resorting to excessive individualism. Thus, we have shown how shifting patterns of relationships can lead to changes in levels of emotional energy that, in turn, shape individual motivation to challenge or accept subordinate positioning. In this way we are setting out specific forms of practice that will influence the extent to which one can be 'set free from the power of another'. This has relevance to the field of entrepreneurship where the significance of emotion has been largely neglected (for exceptions see Goss 2005a; 2005b; Baron 2008), helping to bring the field into closer alignment with concerns long established in organization studies. However, in the latter area the recognition of an emotional dimension has been strongly influenced by psychological perspectives that take the individual as the basic unit of analysis (see e.g., Lord et al. 2002; Ashkanasy and Cooper 2008: 13), focusing on the consequences of emotion for cognitive processes and actions. We maintain that a social-situational focus on emotional dynamics can encourage processual understanding. Hence, a conception of emancipation as 'setting free from the power of another' requires us to examine the *interactions* that, over time, give rise to the agentive capacities of both the freedom-seeker and the constrainer: shifting levels of emotional energy can help to explain under what conditions emancipatory actions will arise and how robustly they are likely to be maintained.

Consider Courpasson's (2000) discussion of domination which centres on a conception of domination as rooted 'not so much in power as in the belief of the legitimacy of power . . . all dominations seek to awaken and maintain the belief in their legitimacy' (2000: 143). Domination here involves both power-holders' ongoing 'projects' to maintain claims to legitimacy and subordinates' conscious capacity to decide whether such claims merit obedience. This implies that domination rests upon active rather than passive obedience, from judgements of validity rooted in the reflexive capacity of individuals. We see the power-as-practice approach as compatible with this type of analysis but also extending it by adding an emotional dynamic. This, we suggest, helps to ground the abstract notions of domination-legitimacy-subjectivity that underpin Courpasson's model in specific (but highly dynamic) organizational processes. The power-as-practice perspective would add that such judgements are informed not only by cognitive faculties but by the interplay between cognition and the emotional energy generated through interaction. Under coerced and highly differentiated conditions, passive behaviour could be explained not by recourse to a recognition of legitimate authority but by individuals' attempts to

minimise the loss of emotional energy – passivity under such conditions remains (paradoxically) an active and pragmatic response (although only contingently so) but does not necessarily imply an acknowledgement of legitimacy.

As we have shown through our use of autobiographical narrative, this is an approach that requires a methodological commitment to the analysis of concrete situations: what people do, feel and think as they engage in the face-to-face encounters through which they organize their lives. Examining the emotional dynamics of these encounters could reveal which are likely to promote inertia and which are likely to generate the motivation necessary for challenge. As such, we are suggesting a conception of power reproduction and entrenchment from a ‘practice based’ perspective rather than from the more conventional structural position. It is in these emotionally infused micro-level interactions – what power holders and subordinates *concretely do* – that macro-manifestations of power are founded and either reproduced or challenged.

ii) *Entrepreneurial behaviour*. This approach offers conceptual tools that could help to broaden (social) entrepreneurship theory. Nicholls (2010: 1) argues that social entrepreneurship is still in a ‘pre-paradigmatic state of development [with] little consensus as yet over the key research questions, appropriate methodologies, available data sets, or theoretical perspectives’ (see also Dacin et al. 2010). Nicholls’ argument that the literature displays little ‘rigorous theoretical development’ (2010: 1) mirrors the conclusion of Jones et al. (2008: 330) who observed that ‘the field remains under-theorised, extremely broad, and bedevilled by a plethora of varying definitions’. With these deficiencies in mind we contend that our research contributes to the extant literature in three distinct areas: the role of social entrepreneurship; the contribution of autobiographical narrative as data; and theoretical development using a power-as-practice approach.

First, we note that social entrepreneurship has traditionally been regarded as different from business entrepreneurship by stressing the generation of social value, rather than private or shareholder profit (Austin et al. 2006). By focusing on the mechanisms that underpin the entrepreneuring-as-emancipation argument, we show that social entrepreneurs’ role in driving social change (Leadbeater 1997; Thompson 2002) is inherently linked to their ongoing social relationships. In this sense, social entrepreneurship is not just about an individual’s moral commitment to helping people

or performing good deeds (valuable and noble as such activities may be) but is rooted in particular patterns of relationships – those that constitute an individual’s biography and those that are unfolding on a minute-by-minute basis. The nature of the vision and the extent of the energy that makes a social entrepreneurship project successful, or a failure, need to be located within the situational configurations (of the sort we have illustrated above) within which the key actors move. The interplay of active constraint and agency helps to explain why, most of the time, the change that aspirant social entrepreneurs pursue is so difficult to achieve and, occasionally, so spectacularly successful. The power rituals and variants we have outlined above suggest that whilst a discomfort with the status quo (Bornstein 2004) may be a necessary condition for social entrepreneurship, it is unlikely to be sufficient to secure long-term social transformation (Perrini 2006).

Second, we contend that our use of evocative and detailed autobiographical data is well suited to the power-as-practice approach, the extended time scale capturing the contextual nuances of shifting actions, beliefs, and feelings that define the agency-constraint relationship. The case we have made for a processual understanding of entrepreneurship-as-emancipation has shown how the disruption of settled practices (in this case, forced marriage) can be understood through the chains of interactions (and their accompanying symbols and discourses) that constitute our biographies. This biographical perspective also demonstrates very clearly how emotionally saturated such entrepreneurial projects are. Recently Baron (2008; 329) has suggested there exists ‘very little direct evidence’ related to the role of emotion in the entrepreneurial process. However, we argue that introspective and reflective personal memoirs of the sort used here, are well suited to capturing such affective considerations – and relating them to social (as well as psychological) context (Collins 2004: 345-351).

Third, and following from the previous points, we contend that a more fruitful approach towards theorising the process of entrepreneuring lies within the social dynamics of situations - rather than the conventional emphasis on individual personality types and normative characteristics (the social entrepreneur as ‘saint’; the business entrepreneur as ‘frontier hero’) still prevalent in much entrepreneurship thinking (Nicholls 2010: 1). A power-as-practice approach lays emphasis on the contexts and processes through which individuals construct their projects – the

fluctuating balance between agency and constraint – rather than on the essential properties of an individuals or deterministic structural forces.

This, we believe, allows our approach to mesh with the questions raised by the feminist theories of entrepreneurship that Calás et al. (2009) outline. It addresses liberal feminist concerns about the barriers that produce discrimination against women, framing these in terms of power ritual chains where women are defined as order-takers. It could, for example, focus on the provision of start-up credit which has been well documented as significantly more favourable to men (Marlow and Patton 2005), evidenced by Godwin et al's (2006) finding that women who partner with men tend to be more successful. By focusing on the interactions within such 'credit rituals' it may be possible to show precisely how the behaviour of order-givers appears systematically to bar women from access to funding and, in the process, also reduce their motivation to challenge this status quo. Such an analysis could be extended to examine the conditions under which women-only entrepreneurial support groups produce either compensatory rituals or counter rituals that fundamentally challenge the male-dominated credit rituals (Bradley and Boles 2003; Marlow and Patton 2005). We commend this topic for further research.

The power-as-practice approach also complements the more complex gendered understanding associated with socialist/poststructuralist feminism (Calás 2009: 559). It is compatible with the idea of subordination (of women and others) as contingent and changeable, emerging from 'power-laden contested, and ever-changing social terrains where diverse interests play out' (2009: 555). The focus on barring as an active counterpart to agency moves the analysis away from essentialist conceptions of power as a fixed property of individuals or structures and towards one where power is an outcome of situations. For example, Bruni et al. (2004) point to the ways in which gender and entrepreneurship are mutually constituted through day-to-day practices: doing entrepreneurship is also doing gender (see also Essers and Benschop 2007; Essers and Benschop 2009; Essers et al. 2008). Our account of Jasvinder's social entrepreneurship certainly demonstrates her 'doing gender' through simultaneously redefining her own gender identity and minority women's roles in relation to forced marriage. But it also highlights that resistance to constraint is not an inevitable reaction to subordination; collusion with a power ritual's dominant parties may, for many in dependent positions, provide greater emotional energy benefits than does challenge (Summers-Effler 2002). In Jasvinder's story, this was additionally

complicated by the focus of the forced marriage ritual on honour and shame, which, for many participants (both male and female), seemed to obscure the inherent gendering of the domination (not least because this was *felt* at the emotional level as well as being *understood* discursively; Scheff 1990). We believe that the encouragement to trace interaction ritual chains and their emotional consequences across time and space helps to expose such contingent emergence in processes of individual identity-formation and collective endeavour.

The power-as-practice approach, therefore, contributes to the project of reframing entrepreneurship theory through ‘informed pluralism’ (Willmott 2008), supplementing the insights that Calás et al. (2009) draw from feminist analysis. In particular, we share the latter’s view that there is a need to question ‘the notion of “levels of analysis” in traditional entrepreneurship theoretical arguments, which, by trying to contain economic outcomes within discrete nested levels, may be missing the more messy nature and continued traffic from micro- to macrophenomena constituting the social dynamics of entrepreneurship’ (2009: 564). Hence our final contribution.

iii) Multi-level conception of resistance

We believe that the power-as-practice perspective, at the metatheoretical level, is singularly well equipped to offer conceptual bridges between levels, a characteristic that extends its usefulness into the analysis of a broader range of organizing processes concerned with power and resistance. To illustrate this we consider recent debates that have focused on the power-discourse relationship. For example, Spicer and Bohm (2007) have pointed to the need to understand the multiple and complex ways in which the contemporary discourse of management is subject to challenge. Their notion of ‘resistance as hegemonic struggle’ draws on social movement theory to posit a conception of resistance as collective agency, based on their rejection of a micro-politics approach. However, we would regard this as creating an unnecessarily sharp distinction between micro and macro. As we have shown in Jasvinder’s case, the power-as-practice model allows us to chart a course from individual constraint/resistance, through compensatory rituals, to a counter-ritual that provides the basis for a collective social movement. Collective action is not considered an alternative to individual agency but, rather, an emergent outcome of the latter, premised on the development of successful interaction rituals. As Collins (2004) points out, a given micro situation (‘the local here-and-now’) will always interconnect

with other local situations into a larger swath of time and space: ‘action of one locality can spill over into another...one situation can be carried over into other situations elsewhere. The extent of that spillover is what we mean by macro-patterns’ (2004: 5). By the same token, by focusing on situational dominance and subordination, the power-as-practice perspective demands that we pay attention to the agentive capacity of all the parties, rather than characterising challengers as agents and defenders as barriers – Spicer and Bohm’s (2007) targeting of management *discourse* as the object of resistance effectively removes managers *qua* human actors from investigation. As we have shown through the notion of barring, this tendency to empower challengers and objectify defenders risks concealing the dynamic processes through which active constraint and agency interact. The recognition of active constraint is necessary to explain episodes of inertia and the failure of resistance. This interplay is recognised more explicitly in Fleming and Spicer’s (2008: 306) conception of ‘struggle’:

We treat struggle as a multidimensional dynamic that animates the interface between power and resistance. This is a process of ongoing, multiple, and unpredictable calls (power) and responses (resistance) in which power and resistance are often indistinguishable. The interface is one of mutual constitution in which power is never without resistance and vice versa.

Although broadly sympathetic to such a view, we believe an explicit focus on power-as-practice allows greater conceptual precision in plotting the contours of struggle (not least through time) without jeopardising dynamic emergence. As we have sought to show through Jasvinder’s story, the temporal unfolding of ritual engagement is especially important and leads us to qualify Fleming and Spicer’s contention (above) that ‘power is never without resistance’ in favour of ‘power is never without the *potential for* resistance’. One outcome of effective power rituals may be prolonged periods of inertia and stability – either as a result of subordinates’ attempts to conserve emotional energy or where ‘softer’ forms of barring generate sufficient emotional energy and solidarity to forestall active resistance. ‘Noise, deviance and discord’ can indeed be constitutive of organizations (Fleming and Spicer 2008: 301), but so too can stability and order. The analysis of power-as-practice resists casting these as opposing epistemologies and regards them, instead, as contingent manifestations of the movement of interacting individuals across time and social

space. Within any given (ritual) situation, each individual's biographical experiences, the intensity of the emotional energy generated by their role within the encounter, and their access to alternative rituals will shape interactions in the here-and-now, with implications for whether the situation reproduces itself or is transformed. Power rituals are organizing processes, but the degree of organization is always in the balance.

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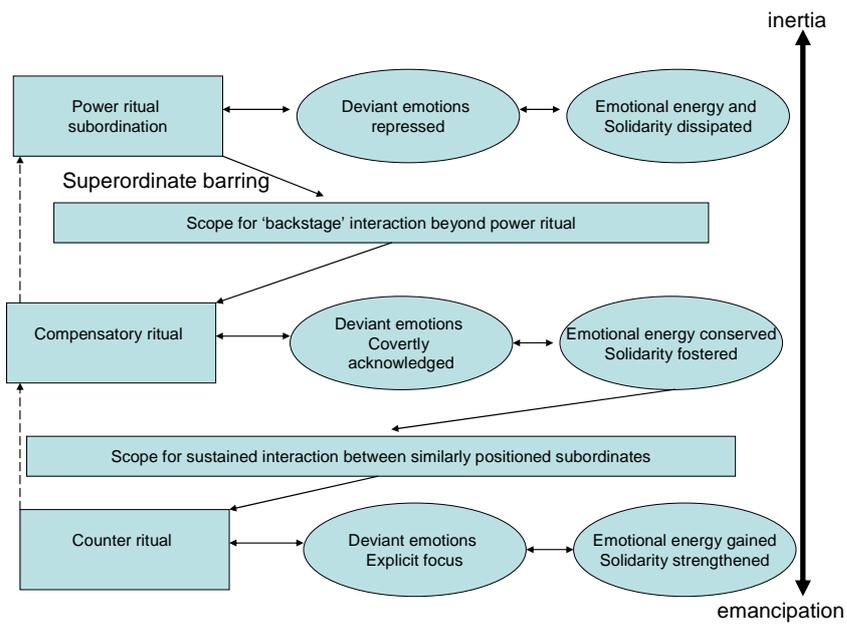


Figure 1 Power rituals in action