

Entrepreneurs' Prospective Sensemaking: Path of a Magical Realist

by

Maxim Ganzin

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore how entrepreneurs engage in prospective sensemaking and what role their arational beliefs play in it. I investigate the implications of prospective sensemaking on opportunity identification and risk management. While the current literature on entrepreneurship focuses on strategic approaches to understanding entrepreneurial behavior, I loosen the focus on strategy and also give attention to the role of spirituality, enchantment and magic that exist as an organizational phenomenon in counterpoint to the often over articulated economically rational views within modern organizations. I draw on the concept of magical realism as part of the research study and suggest that a magical realist perception of reality or magical realist cognitive orientation exists among entrepreneurs. I am looking into experiences of arational phenomena by entrepreneurs or their arational beliefs, and the way the arational and rational aspects of life are reconciled in the building and enacting of successful futures.

My focal research question asks: how do entrepreneurs use a magical realist perception in future oriented sensemaking? And more specifically, in Study 1, how do different temporal orientations in sensemaking affect entrepreneurs' perception of risk and uncertainty? And in Study 2, how does future-oriented sensemaking draw upon spirituality to mitigate risk, reduce uncertainty and inspire the confidence of external stakeholders in the absence of a rational historical context? In an attempt to answer these question I conduct a thematic analysis of 30 business biographies (Study 1) and of 40 semi-structured interviews collected from entrepreneurs located mainly in Edmonton, Alberta (Study 2). The findings reveal that entrepreneurs use their magical realist perception to project successful futures for their companies. A magical realist perception helps them to deal with risk and uncertainty within the volatile world of start-up

business. They are able to find inner peace, construct safe future, and most importantly, keep on going despite difficulties and setbacks.

This research makes three significant contributions to organizational theory. First, it shows that in the absence of past successes and proved organizational practices, entrepreneurs can use a magical realist perception and draw on arational beliefs and experiences to construct a triumphant future. Second, a magical realist perception helps entrepreneurs to cope with anxiety and insecurity associated with risk and uncertainty. Third, entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception create such perception through deep integration of their spirituality and religious belief into their work life. Thus, the rational and arational spheres of life become indistinguishable for them.

Preface

The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, under the Project “Organizational Magical Realism in Young Entrepreneurial Firms”, No. Pro00055734, approved March 17, 2015.

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Table of Contents

Chapter I Introduction.....	1
Theoretical Significance of the Research.....	7
Practical Significance of Research.....	10
Definitions.....	10
Structure of the Dissertation.....	12
Chapter II Theory.....	15
Literature Review.....	15
Theoretical Framework.....	30
The role of magical realism in prospective sensemaking.....	51
Research Questions.....	52
Chapter III Methods.....	54
Data Analysis.....	71
Chapter IV Findings (Study 1).....	80
Chapter V Findings (Study 2).....	104
Chapter VI Discussion and Conclusion.....	132
Discussion.....	132
Limitations.....	148
Implications for Future Research.....	151
Implications for Practitioners.....	157
Conclusion.....	159
References.....	161

List of Tables

Table 1: Tenets of Organizational Magical Realism

Table 2: List of Biographies

Table 3: Participant Description

Table 4: Summary of Sensemaking Tools by Temporal Orientation

Table 5: Summary of the Attributes of Magical Realist Entrepreneurial Cognition

List of Figures

Figure 1: Data Structure Study 1

Figure 2: Data Structure Study 2

Figure 3: Mechanism of Coping

Chapter I Introduction

To better understand the implications of spirituality in organizational settings researchers have employed the concept of sensemaking. McKee, Helms Mills and Driscoll (2008) used sensemaking to understand the process of institutionalizing workplace spirituality, Lips-Wiersma (2001) found that spirituality influences career behavior, Pratt (2000) studied how spirituality creates the context for organizational members' sensemaking, and Izak (2009) warned of the dangers of introducing spirituality to an organizational context. Sensemaking is often seen as a retrospective activity (Weick, 1995), however, organization scholars have been exploring the prospective or future-oriented sensemaking (Gioia & Mehra, 1996; Gephart, Topal, & Zhang, 2010). In this study I argue that entrepreneurs with perceptions of the world that are influenced by their spiritual beliefs, or, more broadly, arational (neither rational nor irrational; not within the domain of the rules of reason) beliefs, use these beliefs to project a positive, successful, and safe future. The very essence of entrepreneurial activity is based on a future-oriented outlook (Bird, 1988; Rosen, 2016). However, although sensemaking scholars recognize the importance of prospective sensemaking in entrepreneurial contexts (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010), we still know little of how entrepreneurs imagine and project the future during sensemaking activity. Studies of prospective sensemaking have inquired about organizational change (Gioia, Thomas, Clark & Chittipeddi, 1994), institutional legitimation (Gephart et al., 2010), material practices (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012), and strategy making (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). Yet, we lack understanding of the role of beliefs, especially those linked to spirituality, religious faith, and mythical and magical thinking, in future-oriented sensemaking. This is an

important question to explore, especially because all sensemaking is based on the beliefs that people have (Weick, 1995: 133ff; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015: 9).

In this study I explore how entrepreneurs use the perception of reality based on millennia old narratives and beliefs to construct and enact successful futures for contemporary businesses. I draw on literary criticism and label such a perception a magical realist perception. It is a perception, or cognitive orientation, that mixes different kinds of arational beliefs, i.e. those based on myths, religious faith, diverse forms of spirituality, and superstition, with rational thinking in a non-surprising, taken-for-granted way (Zamora & Faris, 1995; Faris, 2004). In other words, I suggest that spirituality (based on arational beliefs) plays a critical but largely unrecognized role in entrepreneurial cognition (Mauksch, 2017; Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Dana, 2009; Dodd & Gotsis, 2007). I outline a form of spiritually-charged sensemaking, a sensemaking supported by a magical realist perception, which describes an orientation to future decisions that combines realism with moments of spiritual resilience in the face of risk.

The overall phenomenon that I am interested in is arational thinking and how it is mixed with rational thinking. I argue that examining arational thinking, along with rational thinking, provides a fuller understanding of human action and activities in organizational settings. In this dissertation I examine the phenomenon of arational and rational thinking and their mixture in the context of entrepreneurship and future-oriented sensemaking. I use magical realism as a theoretical framework (I elaborate on this in Chapter II) to explore arational thinking and its connection to rational thinking. I use an abductive approach to bring into dialogue the theoretical framework and the empirical data gathered as a result of my study. I go into more detail on how I do so in Chapter III. An essential outcome of this abductive dialogue is the construct of magical

realist cognitive orientation and how it is implicated in entrepreneurs' future-oriented sensemaking.

Within this broader magical realist orientation, I identify and elaborate three distinct dimensions, which I term “affective-attitudinal”, “cognitive-epistemic” and “pragmatic-motivational”. Collectively, these three dimensions define an integrated entrepreneurial belief system based on spirituality. I invoke the term “magical realism” to circumscribe this tripartite constellation of orientations describing a specific form of entrepreneurial cognition that mixes rational and transcendent elements within a wider system of meaning and purpose. This term, originally derived from a literary and cultural movement (Zamora & Faris, 1995), characterizes a narrative style that juxtaposes a fundamentally realistic depiction of the world with the subjective perspectives of actors who see reality as pervaded by magical or spiritual forces. By introducing and elaborating the construct of magical realist thinking, I lay the groundwork for a more unified theory of spirituality in the context of entrepreneurial cognition.

Through their stories or biographical accounts entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception conveyed that they see reality as fluid and malleable. Because of this vision they believe that they can influence reality by the means of symbolic action. I show how in the prospective sensemaking process, entrepreneurs draw on the belief in symbolic action including living by the laws of life or karma, putting the social cause of business first, and helping people, as well as a belief in being watched over by a supernatural power. Such beliefs and arational experiences help them to project the future through imagining possible trajectories of action. The construction or projection of the future is based on the past and present experiences, actions, and mental frameworks, which are being reconfigured to create a coherent and plausible picture of the future. Entrepreneurs selectively evoke past experiences, routines, habits, and taken-for-

granted schemes of action, locate them within the appropriate contexts, and create future expectations that past patterns will continue into the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Gephart et al., 2010). Arational beliefs and experiences can be very powerful blocks of construction of positive futures. First, they give an ability and motivation to identify entrepreneurial opportunity. They are also often the last elements that remain to keep the future projection coherent. When all the rational elements are destroyed in the chaos of uncertain situations, such as being on the verge of bankruptcy, arational elements continue to project a good future and inspire entrepreneurs to keep going.

This research fits with the overall “re-enchantment” trend in society that is also reflected in social sciences. Most recently management scholars have emphasized the overall resurgence of religion and re-enchantment of science, discussing the importance of authenticity, reflexivity, mimesis and incantation in contemporary business world (Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017). The concept of re-enchantment stems from Max Weber’s idea of disenchantment. He observed that rationality and objectivity was rapidly displacing an inherent human tendency toward magic and mystery. For Weber, disenchantment meant “the knowledge or belief...that there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation” (1917/1918: 13). However, social scientists, seeing that disenchantment of the world did not materialize as expected, have been paying increasing attention to the social processes that are connected to disenchantment—enchantment and re-enchantment (Jenkins, 2000; Numerato, 2009). After all, Weber himself talked about charisma and magic which was “incongruent with his focus on rationality” (Lee, 2010: 180). We now understand that disenchantment is a much more complex process than a unidirectional and universal rationalization of the world, involving resistance in the form of enchantment and re-enchantment

(Jenkins, 2000), and transformation of disenchantment itself into a powerful mythology (Greisman, 1976). Researchers have shown the complexity of the problem of disenchantment on the examples of enchantment within such modern institutions as science (Griffin, 1988), bureaucracy (Casey, 2004), mass media (Silverstone, 1999), and consumerism (Ritzer, 1999; Langer, 2002).

The suppression of “enchantment” in modern organizations has produced a range of theories devoted to explaining the non-rational elements of organizational behavior. Foremost among these is neo-institutional theory and its interest in understanding how broader social norms become incorporated into economic organizations as “rational myths” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Others explore the apparent irrationality or “hypocrisy” of organizational behavior (Brunsson, 1985; 1989), the role of myths and storytelling (Boje et al, 1982; Gabriel, 1991a & b), the significance of emotions in the workplace (Hochschild, 2003) and, increasingly, the importance of spirituality and religion in corporations (Hicks, 2003; Chan-Serafin, 2012). Collectively, the vibrancy of these streams of research contradict Weber’s notion of increasing organizational disenchantment. Instead, they suggest that there remains a vast, but still unexplored realm of organizational life that is simply not amenable to calculation, rationality or scientific measurement.

To add to the research on re-enchantment of organizational spaces I suggest that noticing a magical realist orientation in organizational actors and its implications can help us to rethink the way organizations draw on religious systems of belief, spirituality, symbolic action, and mythical and magical thinking. This new view of organizations I call organizational magical realism. Organizational magical realism is a theoretical lens that helps us see and appreciate the complexity of organizational reality, which combines the arational and the mundane rational

materiality in a non-surprising, taken-for-granted way, revealing that there is more to organizational life than the material, the visible, or the explainable by the laws of reason (following Zamora & Faris, 1995; Bowers, 2004; and the definition of “enchantment” by Jenkins, 2000). Organizational magical realism raises the question of the relationship between rational and arational sides of organizational life and gives a more nuanced picture of organizations. I will discuss the definition of organizational magical realism more broadly in the theory chapter.

Organizational magical realism is a new theoretical lens through which we can look at life in organizations and analyze how the arational side of the organizational world coexists with the mundane reality. The most salient characteristic of organizational magical realism is the presentation of arational or magical as an integral and organic part of reality that is taken for granted and is not surprising. This allows us to ponder about the nature of reality and question the widely accepted assumptions about the rationality of human constructed social entities such as contemporary organizations. Organizational magical realism also presents a framework that can unite different thinking about arational in organizational settings. It encompasses different kinds of narratives about the transcendent: myths, religious systems of belief, diverse forms of spirituality, and superstition. Organizational magical realism is also a description of processes and practices in organizations. Most importantly, organizational magical realism uncovers and illustrates the practice of bricolaging in which skillful organizational actors engage, drawing on different symbolic resources, including narratives about arational side of life, market logics, and corporate social responsibility ideas, to construct vision and to promote their strategic goals. In this dissertation I uncover how skillful organizational actors—entrepreneurs—drawing on

arational beliefs and experiences as well as on rational strategies and plans construct visions and project successful futures.

Theoretical Significance of the Research

I started this research investigation with an interest in a paradox of the coexistence of rational and arational beliefs in organizations. How can these two realms of reality coexist in an economically driven entity? Within the context of entrepreneurial organizations, I am interested in how the arational side of an entrepreneur's life is reconciled with the rational work life of their companies and what happens because of it. I found that the fictional narrative of the magical realism genre describes this paradox of mixing ontologies in contemporary life in the best possible way. Thus, I formulated my research questions: how do entrepreneurs use a magical realist perception in future oriented sensemaking? For Study 1, how do different temporal orientations in sensemaking affect entrepreneurs' perception of risk and uncertainty? And for Study 2, how does future-oriented sensemaking draw upon spirituality to mitigate risk, reduce uncertainty and inspire the confidence of external stakeholders in the absence of a rational historical context? Answering these questions I found that many entrepreneurs whom I studied through their biographical accounts (Study 1) and interviewed (Study 2) have a very specific perception of reality that indeed can be best described as a magical realist perception or a magical realist cognitive orientation. Such cognitive orientation influences the way these people run their organizations, including day to day tasks and routines, but, most importantly, it influences the way they project the future for themselves and their organizations. The findings of this dissertation make several important contributions to organizational theory and the field of entrepreneurship.

This study contributes to the field of future oriented sensemaking. I show how belief as a part of a magical realist perception is used to construct the future of entrepreneurial ventures. I also argue that in the absence of past organizational successes, such as at the inception of a business, entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception can draw on arational beliefs and experiences (in addition to drawing on other mnemonic and symbolic resources). In other words, when entrepreneurs start their organizations, they don't have the luxury to rely and build on past successes (Gephart et al., 2010). But the projection of a successful future is extremely important during the initial stages of the business. Thus, the entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception can rely on their arational beliefs, such as a belief in doing God's will, doing what the Universe wants them to do, or a belief in malleability of reality. I also argue that entrepreneurs don't have to solely rely on universal rationality that entails technical competence, formal planning, and expertise (Clarke, 1999; Gephart et al., 2010). Instead, entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception can rely on alternative rationalities, which allow for spiritual beliefs to be mixed with economic and strategic goals.

Furthermore, I contribute to the field of entrepreneurship. My findings show that entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception rely on help from supernatural powers, such as inspiration, divinely given intuition, and a feeling of inner peace to help them cope with risk and uncertainty. As entrepreneurs start their journey into the harsh business world full of risk and insecurity, they employ certain mechanisms to overcome the risks. These mechanisms can stem from the economic rationality and involve elements of scientific management. However, such mechanisms are not always fully available, or effective. Thus, entrepreneurs can employ mechanisms of coping based on arational beliefs and experiences. I also add to the conversation

on the nature of opportunity identification, adding nuances to the view that claims opportunities are created by entrepreneurs.

Additionally, I contribute to the field of spirituality in organizations. Exploring magical realism in organizations offers a new look at the way spirituality and religion are used in organizational settings. It shows how spirituality and religious belief can be mixed with completely rational views and attitudes. The findings show that entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception do not separate religiosity or spirituality and everyday business. Spirituality and religion does not simply influence the ethics or morality of such entrepreneurs, but get integrated into the fabric of their lives to the point where the arational and rational become inseparable.

Lastly, the concept of organizational magical realism contributes to the nascent stream of literature that explains rationality construction in organizations (Townley, 2008; Quattrone, 2015). Organizational magical realism is capable of revealing the details of how rationality in the moment is constructed. People usually don't just follow one particular rationality. Organizational actors often mix different rationalities, which are based on different ontologies, to create a bricolage of meaning in an attempt to make and give sense. Organizational magical realism presents a mechanism of how this can be done. It shows how rational and arational beliefs are mixed together to create a rationality and a view of reality for the situation at hand. For example, in my study I show how entrepreneurs mix their rational strategic and financial goals with the arational beliefs of higher purposes of their business to construct a positive and successful future on the brink of bankruptcy or at the very start of the organization.

Practical Significance of Research

Practitioners can benefit from learning about the concept of organizational magical realism. The findings of this dissertation describe how leaders of organizations—entrepreneurs—draw upon both rational and arational beliefs and experiences to project successful and safe futures for themselves and their companies. This practice has very important practical implications because one of the key traits that entail success in entrepreneurial business is resilience. In other words, it is extremely important for the success of the entrepreneurs to continue on the path of business creation despite all the difficulties and setbacks. The projection of successful futures is what motivates entrepreneurs to keep going.

A magical realist perception and the behaviors shaped by it can affect organizational functioning. It can lead to vision formulation, aid in strategic planning, motivate active sensegiving, increase motivation, and commitment to the leader. It can help both leaders and employees to cope with uncertainty and facilitate decision-making. A magical realist perception can also boost creativity and help find non-standard solutions.

However, a magical realist perception can also incur damaging effects upon organizations. In extreme cases, a magical realist perception can lead to a creation of a dream-like reality that is removed from the real problems of a business. It may create an overly enthusiastic vision of the present and the future that can prevent organizational actors from promptly recognizing threats to the business. Such vision can also distract organizational actors from conscientiously fulfilling their job duties and draw away time and resources from organizational goals.

Definitions

Before I go into details about my study, I must explain the terms that I am using. First, when I use the word “magic”, I follow what magical realists and literary critics mean by it.

Although there is no generally accepted definition of magic among them, I find the following definition quite accurate: “in ... magical realism ‘magic’ refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science. The variety of magical occurrences in magic(al) realist writing includes ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents and strange atmospheres but does not include the magic as it is found in a magic show.” (Bowers, 2004: 19). This is different from the common use of the word “magic,” which usually pertains to the human power to control or influence events by using mysterious or supernatural forces as well as to illusion or trickery often for entertainment (following Davies, 2012:1; and Oxford Dictionary). The way I use the word “magic”, does not imply accusation, as in one religious group accusing the other in practicing magic, nor does it imply primitive thought (Davies, 2012), nor an act against God (Greenwood, 2009: 5). As can be seen from the definition given by Bowers, what magic in magical realism means can be quite broad. I embrace this and argue that magic in magical realism encompasses all arational. Arational, the second term I need to address, following the model of the distinction between “amoral” and “immoral” (Hursthouse, 1991: 57-58), describes the realm of life and things that cannot be described as either rational or irrational (Gebser, 1985; Bickel, 2005a: 12; and Tiehen, 2007: 72), and denotes things or actions that are not within the domain of the rules of reason (following Gebser, 1985; and Oxford Dictionary). Arational denotes behavior or thought that is based on intuition, inspiration, superstition, or on a belief in a transcendent being or forces. Arational is not the same as irrational which means simply not logical or not reasonable, but is partly synonymic with non-rational (Bickel 2005b; see Back, 1961; Simon, 1986; 1987; and 1993). However, arational is a more accurate term for our purposes than non-rational because non-rational has another meaning—which is simply “not rational.” The third term we need to address is “realism” in

magical realism. “Modern realism... begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through his [sic] sense: it has origins in Descartes and Locke” (Watt, 1992: 89). Much like scientific positivism, realism assumes that “the external world is real, and that our senses give us a true report of it” (Watt 1992: 89). Barbara Czarniawska traces the origins of the realist novel and the positivist social sciences to the same roots: “Both doctrines aimed at a representation *corresponding* to the world as it was—undistorted by any subjective or partial vision” (1999: 48). Thus, if “magical” in magical realism is arational and extraordinary (to the reader), “realism” is rational, familiar, and mundane.

Structure of the Dissertation

In the second chapter I outline my theoretical framework. I begin by situating my research within the relevant management literature: entrepreneurship, sensemaking, spirituality, and the use of fiction and literary criticism in organization studies. Because I draw inspiration from the genre of magical realism, I outline the main ideas and key points of the historical development of the genre to situate the reader. I then list the five tenets of magical realism, which provide the basis for the theoretical framework. In the end of the chapter I come back to the concept of future oriented sensemaking and its connection to organizational magical realism.

In Chapter III I present my methodological approach and outline the research context of the study. My investigation takes the form of a thematic analysis of 30 biographies (Study 1) and 40 semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs (Study 2). I describe the sampling strategy and analysis of the study. Study 1, which I conducted using business biographies of prominent entrepreneurs, gave me a solid orientation in terms of the methodological approach and analytic strategy to study magical realism in real life contemporary organizations.

In Chapter IV I present my findings of Study 1. Here I discuss different tools or approaches entrepreneurs base their sensemaking on. These approaches are correlated with a temporal orientation: present, future, and past. Entrepreneurs rely on different temporal perspectives as they are trying to make sense of the complex and uncertain world around them. They draw from the past patterns of actions (their own or exemplary), beliefs, and experiences; from the fantasies that help them to engage in future-oriented sensemaking; and from their optimistic view of reality in the present that allows them to trust that they can change reality. Each sensemaking tool/approach corresponds to a major theme revealed through the study of biographies: Fluid malleable reality (present), Fantasy (future), and Traditional narrative (past). Although the emphasis of this dissertation is future-oriented sensemaking, all temporal orientations are highly interconnected; and in order to understand the future orientation, we need to understand the link to the past and the present in the entrepreneurial sensemaking process. This position is in line with the current call to rethink how different temporalities affect sensemaking (Wiebe, 2010; Introna, 2018; Konlechner, Latzke, Guttel, & Hofferer, 2018). Although biographies are retrospective accounts, we can still see how entrepreneurial sensemaking is unraveling in all temporal orientations in the narratives. Retrospective, prospective, and present (ongoing) sensemaking are symbiotic processes, the understanding of which is needed to concentrate on one particular aspect.

In Chapter V I present my findings of Study 2. Here I tell a meta-story of a magical realist entrepreneur that I created based on the stories my interviewees told me. It is a story of finding your path despite all the difficulties and challenges. The magical realist orientation helps the entrepreneurs to project a successful future and keep on going despite losing contracts, having to pay their staff with a personal credit card, or being on the verge of bankruptcy. The findings

reveal three interconnected themes: Being at peace, Obtaining the answers, and Finding one's path. Each theme corresponds to a cognitive orientation: Affective-attitudinal, Cognitive-epistemological, and Pragmatic-motivational. Through the analysis of the themes we see how entrepreneurs are mixing arational beliefs with rational strategic planning and routine financial analysis to construct a future that can inspire.

In the final chapter I discuss the contributions to the organizational theory, and outline limitations of the study. Next, I suggest the directions for future inquiry, indicating how the concept of organizational magical realism could be helpful to scholars. I conclude the chapter with suggesting implications for practitioners and an overall summary.

Chapter II Theory

In this chapter I develop my theoretical framework and position my study in relevant existing literature by reviewing it. I begin by reviewing literature on entrepreneurship, sensemaking, spirituality, and the use of fictional literature and literary criticism in management studies. I then talk about the genre of magical realism, its origin and history. Next, I define and describe the five tenets of organizational magical realism. I base my theoretical framework on this foundation. Later I use this framework to aid myself in the analysis of my data, which is described in more detail in Chapter III on methods. I finish the chapter with the discussion of the role of magical realism in prospective sensemaking, as this is one of the key contributions of this dissertation. Lastly, I list the research questions.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship. To start a business and achieve success entrepreneurs, among other things, need to project a positive future in which they believe, disseminate that belief among stakeholders, and keep overcoming obstacles as they enact the projected future. Two of the most important things in this process are opportunity identification and a strategy to cope with risk. Scholars of entrepreneurship have devoted a lot of effort to understand how both of those things are done.

Risk. Among other topics, researchers paid attention to a propensity to risk among entrepreneurs (Miller, 1983; Carland et al., 1995), differences in risk perception (Simon, Houghton, & Aquino, 2000), and risk reduction strategies (Shepherd, Douglas, & Shanley, 2000). Any entrepreneurial venture is inherently risky and uncertain (Milliken, 1987). McMullen and Shepard (2006: 135) identify three key questions that contribute to the high degree of uncertainty that any entrepreneur must face: (1) what is happening out there? (2) how

will it affect me? and, (3) what am I going to do about it? These three questions parse entrepreneurial uncertainty into three constituent elements – uncertainty about the environment, uncertainty about its personal impact on the venture and uncertainty about how to respond.

Substantial research has shown that, while most individuals experience high degrees of ambiguity in life, entrepreneurs are distinguished by how they cognitively process that uncertainty (Milliken, 1987; McKelvie, Haynie & Gustavsson, 2011). While most individuals find environmental turbulence to be stressful and disorienting, entrepreneurs have cognitive biases (Busenitz & Barney, 1997) that allow them to filter information differently (von Gelderen, Frese & Thurik, 2000) and perceive environmental turbulence as opportunity rather than risk (Busenitz & Lau, 1996; Mitchell et al., 2000; Krueger, 2003). So, for example, successful entrepreneurs tend to exhibit levels of resilience to adversity that are significantly higher than that in the general population (Gatewood et al., 2002; Baron & Markman, 1999). Of course, there are many factors that can affect the resilience in entrepreneurs and their ability to handle risk. For example, experience (Hewerdine & Welch, 2008), networks and history of decision-making (Garud & Rappa, 1994), better preparation (Cooper et al., 1988), and even ignorance (Sarasvathy, 2001) can help entrepreneurs deal with risk and uncertainty. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I am concentrating only on the cognitive orientation and perception of risk and uncertainty in entrepreneurs. This focus is predicated upon two factors. First, risk perception and cognitive orientation, arguably, are the most prominent topics in contemporary risk in entrepreneurship scholarship, as I attempt to show below. Second, the choice is dictated by my data analysis. Because my research approach is analytic abduction, I went into the field paying particular attention to perceptions of reality that entrepreneurs exhibit. I explain the analytic abduction approach in greater detail in Chapter III. The process of the data collection

and analysis revealed that a very important part of what entrepreneurs are concerned about is how to handle risk. These two factors, taken together, determined my choice of focus.

The discussion above shows that entrepreneurs have worldviews that allow them to see risk, uncertainty and ambiguity somewhat optimistically and, arguably, less objectively than the general population. While this may, in some cases, be based on prior experience, the empirical evidence suggests that even novice entrepreneurs process perceived risk more optimistically than the general population, a phenomenon that Hayward, Shepherd & Griffin (2006) term “entrepreneurial hubris”. Hayward and colleagues (2006: 163) argue that the optimistic world-view of entrepreneurs is driven by their particular ways of seeing the world – that their high confidence in the face of adversity “is driven by actors’ interpretation or construal of their experiences (Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Griffin & Ross, 1991) and is largely unaffected by the features of others (Ball et al., 1991) or the features of the situation (Moore & Kim, 2003)”. At the same time, we know little about the basis of this optimistic world-view construction or the processes of interpretation involved. For instance, studies of entrepreneurial sensemaking note how interpretations of past failures depend on sensemaking processes (Cardon, Stevens & Potter, 2011), but little is known about future-oriented entrepreneurial sensemaking, where no prior data exists to ground such interpretations.

We have some understanding that entrepreneurship is a value-driven activity, in which entrepreneurs rely on their personal internal values (Balog et al., 2014). In connection with this logic, entrepreneurship scholars have studied topics of religion and spirituality. They try to understand how entrepreneurs’ values and beliefs can impact their business activities. Some scholarship highlights the religious roots of enterprise activity (e.g. Worden, 2003) and even goes as far as to link the figure of the entrepreneur with a contemporary “savior” (Sørensen,

2008). However, most treatments have involved historical links between spirituality and entrepreneurship in Western and non-Western societies (Dodd & Gotsis, 2009; Worden, 2003; Moore & Lewis, 2000). Some scholarship on entrepreneurial spirituality has been devoted to understanding the deeper motivations of entrepreneurs beside the well-known motivators such as financial gain, fame, and recognition. Researchers have found that entrepreneurs have the need to give back to their communities (Joyner et al., 2002), help others (Bakke, 2005), and discover their personal calling (Porras et al., 2007). We know that an entrepreneur's beliefs can have a strong influence on his or her decisions, goals, and vision (Balog et al., 2014). For example, Fernando and Jackson (2006) found that religion plays a significant role in influencing spiritual-based decision making for entrepreneurs by providing a frame of reference. Farouk (2011) found that the entrepreneur's religious values can be intertwined into business pursuits by doing work for the sake of God alone. Judge and Douglas (2013) found that an entrepreneur's faith orientation and identity may influence their startup process through individual motivation, creative decision making, and emotional coping. Although we have a sizable and growing body of literature that focuses on spirituality and religion in entrepreneurship, as well as some research on values, feelings, and emotions of entrepreneurs (Barron, 2008), we know little about the cognitive orientations or arational thinking that help entrepreneurs in optimistic world-view construction. In other words, little is known about the role spirituality plays in providing cosmological systems from which to construct optimistic interpretations of the world.

The questions posed above are important because the answers can give us the key to understanding entrepreneurial activity and decision making. In essence, to understand how entrepreneurs perceive risk and uncertainty, we need to understand how they make sense of the world. Particularly, because entrepreneurial activity is looking to the future, and uncertainty is,

by definition, a matter of the future, we need to understand entrepreneurial sensemaking about the future.

I argue that a magical realist perception helps entrepreneurs to reduce uncertainty and facilitate decision making. People resort to different beliefs in the arational in order to overcome anxiety and the feeling of insecurity as they take risks in the business world environment full of uncertainty and fear. A magical realist perception essentially functions as a coping mechanism against anxiety and insecurity associated with uncertainty and risk. In contemporary society “risks have changed character and have acquired greater impact in time and space” (Gephart, Van Maanen, & Oberlechner, 2009: 146). Risk is no longer seen as measurable and calculable or defined in statistical terms (Lupton, 1999); and the world has become much more uncertain and unpredictable. A magical realist perception helps to overcome anxiety and doubt that lead to paralysis or delay of action (Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997; Giddens, 1991).

Opportunity Identification. No less attention has been paid to opportunity identification, including posing the question of whether opportunities are recognized, discovered, or created (Miller, 2007; Suddaby, Bruton, & Si, 2015), the role of resources (Sarasvathy, 2001a, b), and the role of rationality in opportunity identification (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Hills et al., 1999; Lichtenstein, 2006; Miller, 2007).

This dissertation also adds to the long-standing debate on opportunity identification. A magical realist perception includes the belief that one can, through their actions, thoughts or attitudes, influence future events. It can also include a belief in the ability to receive inspiration from an external celestial, religious or supernatural entity. These beliefs influence the way entrepreneurs identify opportunity. When entrepreneurs feel like they receive inspiration, they may be driven to make certain decisions, most importantly, to start a business. Such belief can

make entrepreneurs more optimistic about the prospects of venture creation and increase motivation because they believe that they are doing the right thing and will receive help from the celestial powers. A magical realist perception may also increase entrepreneurs' ability for creative work, which in turn is very important for opportunity identification (Ardichvili, Carozo, & Ray, 2003).

The findings also contribute to the question of whether opportunities are discovered or created (Suddaby, Bruton, & Si, 2015; Miller, 2007). Scholars who adhere to positivist epistemology argue that opportunities are discovered (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), while scholars who adhere to constructivist epistemology argue that opportunities are created (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). My discussion of the magical realist perception in entrepreneurs adds nuances to the later view. Entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception see reality as fluid and malleable, not as an objective world that exists out there with opportunities waiting to be discovered. Thus they see that their actions both symbolic and practical may bend the reality and create opportunities for them. The very nature of reality for them is far from objective and is full of serendipitous coincidences, inspirations from above, and influences from supernatural powers. These forces can change the very makeup of reality and aid entrepreneurs in creating opportunity.

Sensemaking. Sensemaking is the process through which individuals attempt to understand novel, ambiguous, or surprising events (Weick, 1995; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sensemaking as a theoretical perspective within organizational studies has been originally developed by Karl Weick and had a tremendous influence on the field. Sensemaking is a crucially important activity for organizing, and as such has attracted considerable research attention over the past decades (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). The concept of sensemaking

introduced by Weick has undergone significant development and transformation (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). At first, Weick was concentrating on cognition and cognitive maps: “organizations exist largely in the mind, and their existence takes the form of cognitive maps. Thus, what ties an organization together is what ties thoughts together” (Weick & Bougon, 1986: 102–103). Weick gradually developed the notion of sensemaking moving from a cognitivist orientation to a social constructivist perspective. Thus, sensemaking perspective has shifted to focus on language, rather than cognition (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). “Sensemaking is now seen as a constructive practice, which includes how ‘people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing events from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively while enacting more or less order into those ongoing events’” (Weick, 2001: 463, cited in Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015: 8).

Over time sensemaking perspective has branched out and now includes sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), sensebreaking (Pratt, 2000), sensehiding (Vaara & Monin, 2010), sensedemanding (Vlaar, van Fenema, & Tiwari, 2008), sense-exchanging (Ran & Golden, 2011), and sense specification (Monin et al., 2013). Researchers also distinguish different forms of sensemaking, including cultural sensemaking (Cardon, Stevens, & Potter, 2011), political sensemaking (Clark & Geppert, 2011), and prospective (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994) or future-oriented sensemaking (Gephart et al., 2010) among others.

There are several studies that are concerned with the role of spirituality in the sensemaking process. In an analysis of the important role of spirituality in the sensemaking processes of Amway workers, Pratt (2000) observes that successful sales workers managed to persevere in spite of an extremely high failure rate and the, often outright hostility of potential customers because of their spirituality and their ability to build an “ideological fortress” – a world view

impervious to attack. In her study of the effect of spirituality on career behavior, Lips-Wiersma (2001) shows that spirituality influences career purpose, sensemaking and coherence. She found that through spirituality individuals recognize worthwhile purposes, and these purposes impact career behavior. Applying the sensemaking lens McKee and colleagues (2010:191) describe how individuals “make sense of workplace spirituality, how they enact it, and what consequences differences in meaning can have on the individual and ultimately the culture of the organization.”

Understanding the way spirituality manifests itself in a sensemaking process, especially in organizational contexts, inevitably leads to questions of how scientific and magical cosmologies usefully co-exist. The relationship between these two seemingly contradictory worldviews is perhaps best illustrated by Weick’s (1995) often cited and somewhat controversial anecdote of sensemaking in which a group of soldiers got lost in a snowstorm in the Alps. For three days they deliberate and, just when they are about to give up hope, they find a map, which they use to find their way back to camp. It is only when they get home that they discover that they had a map for the Pyrenees not the Alps. “When you are lost,” Weick (1995: 54) notes, “any old map will do”. The anecdote, whose veracity is often challenged (Basboll, 2012), usefully describes the importance of faith to motivate action, even when the rational/empirical basis of that action is flawed. The story effectively captures the useful admixture of spirituality and empiricism that makes the construct of magical realism so apt for understanding entrepreneurial cognition.

Future oriented sensemaking. Understanding of sensemaking as primarily a retrospective activity (Weick, 1969, 1995) has influenced most research on sensemaking until relatively recently (Gioia et al., 1994). However, Weick (1969, 1995) made a provision that sensemaking can be directed towards the future, albeit only through thinking in the future perfect tense. A line of inquiry has departed from the future perfect orientation and has concentrated on prospective or

future-oriented sensemaking (Gioia & Mehra, 1996; Gephart et al., 2010). Future-oriented sensemaking “seeks to construct intersubjective meanings, images, and schemes in conversation where these meanings and interpretations create or project images of future objects and phenomena” (Gephart et al., 2010: 285). Researchers in this tradition studied the role of prospective sensemaking in strategic change at a university (Gioia et al., 1994), linkages between retrospective and prospective sensemaking in the context of an Air Force squadron (Lipshitz, Ron, & Popper, 2004), institutional legitimation through construction of a future in a public hearing (Gephart et al., 2010), intergroup cycles of sensemaking and sensegiving as a part of prospective sensemaking observed in a design consulting group (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012), and theorized meaning construction in entrepreneurial ventures (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010).

The most recent trend in the sensemaking literature continues to deemphasize the retrospective orientation of sensemaking and has called for a present and future oriented focus in sensemaking (Wiebe, 2010; Colville & Pye, 2010; Holt & Cornelissen, 2014; Colville, Pye, & Brown, 2015). Some research has even called for rethinking how we construe temporality in sensemaking, suggesting to consider the interplay of prospective and retrospective aspects of sensemaking (Introna, 2018; Konlechner, Latzke, Guttel, & Hofferer, 2018). Guette and Vandembemt (2015) argue that in times of dynamic complexity and uncertainty, “the temporal dimension of sensemaking becomes pivotal given that the past is a poor predictor of emerging futures” (p. 91). Holt and Cornelissen (2014) note that “sense [is] being governed by exposure to unknown possibility rather than retrospective assessment” (p. 525). This is especially true in contexts of high uncertainty (Moore & Koning, 2015; Guette & Vandembemt, 2015) such as entrepreneurial ventures (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010).

Future-oriented sensemaking involves an active process of reinterpreting past events in order to construct a coherent vision of the future (Gephart et al., 2010). So, for example, in their analysis of strategic change management at a US university, Gioia, Thomas, Clark and Chittipeddi (1994) observe that the process involved repeated efforts of participants to actively restructure the meaning and interpretation of past events in an effort to understand both the present situation of the organization and project those interpretations into the future. Similarly, Stigliani and Ravasi (2012), in their study of a design consulting group, demonstrate the process of future oriented sensemaking in groups, which comes through interrelated cycles of retrospective cognitive work, and collective envisioning in which a group constructs a future.

Hill and Levenhagen (1995) and Cornelissen and Clarke (2010) have theorized meaning construction as part of future oriented sensemaking in entrepreneurial ventures. Accordingly, entrepreneurship scholars have paid attention to the role of sensemaking in projecting optimistic futures. For example, Dorado (2005) argues that the sensemaking process is a crucial stepping-stone for (future oriented) strategic change in conditions of uncertainty. Rae (2000) explains that entrepreneurial learning is an intertwined process of knowing, acting, and sensemaking, and that through stories, people learn whom they can and want to be in a future-oriented process of creating prospective realities. Other studies of future oriented sensemaking reinforce an obvious similarity with entrepreneurial cognition in which individuals systematically reconstruct the past to create optimistic and actionable visions of the future (Gephart et al., 2010; Lipshitz, Ron & Popper, 2004; Cornellisen & Clarke, 2010). Both organizations and individuals use past and present temporal orientations to project images of a stable and successful future. In doing so, they create actionable plans by describing paths, however risky, that will lead to the desired outcome. However, prior research offers scant understanding of how future oriented

sensemaking might work in a context where there is no objective past experience to draw from. Novice entrepreneurs at the start-up stage experience extremely high degrees of risk, uncertainty and ambiguity but do not have the luxury of drawing on past victories. What cognitive schema, script or deeper world-view do novice entrepreneurs draw from to engage in future-oriented sensemaking when they have no objective past to assist them?

Spirituality. Spirituality offers one compelling possible answer to the above question. Researchers have paid attention to spirituality in established organizations (Hicks, 2003; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008; Karakas, 2010) as well as in entrepreneurial settings (Dodd & Seaman, 1998; Dana, 2009; Balog, Baker & Walker, 2014). We can trace the topic of spirituality to Weber ([1905] 1985), who asserted the significance of spiritual faith for the rise of modern capitalism. Arguably, entrepreneurial activity is a driving force for capitalism, and spirituality plays a significant role in entrepreneurial activity (e.g. Dana, 2009; Dodd & Gotsis, 2007). Management and entrepreneurship scholars are beginning to tap into the impact of spiritual beliefs on entrepreneurs. For example, in a large, US-based survey, Dougherty, Griebel, Neubert, and Park (2013) found a high preponderance of spiritual beliefs among entrepreneurs, with two-thirds having no doubts that a higher power exists. Entrepreneurs tend to describe themselves as close to a spiritual power (Neubert, 2013). Such beliefs may be explicable in environments of high uncertainty and limited information, requiring a “leap of faith” to start an entrepreneurial venture (Judge & Douglas, 2013). As Suddaby, Ganzin & Minkus (2017) theorize, entrepreneurs often work at the boundaries of established institutions, giving rise to magical thinking as a form of “reflexive” rationality.

To support such views of entrepreneurs, psychologists and anthropologists observe that magical thinking and spirituality proliferate in situations of high risk or unstable environments,

as a reaction to perceptions of diminished control (Keinan, 1994; Fisher, 1986). Entrepreneurship scholars note that spirituality provides a strong frame of reference for decision-making and influences responsible business behavior (La Pira & Gillin, 2006; Fernando and Jackson, 2006). Spiritual capital, “the set of personal, intangible, and transcendent resources,” supports business innovation and performance (Neubert, Bradley, Ardianti, & Simiyu, 2017: 622), while spiritually-oriented entrepreneurs approach their work and life with greater joy (Kauanui, Thomas, Rubens, & Sherman, 2010). Balog and colleagues (2014) observe that entrepreneurship is largely driven by internal values, such as religion and spirituality, while Dana (2009) observes that faith-promoted values encourage entrepreneurship. At the interpersonal level, Dodd and Gotsis (2007) propose that spirituality enhances cooperation and trust within entrepreneurial processes, while Godwin, Neck, and D’Intino (2016) argue that spirituality provides the foundation for shaping entrepreneurial values and cognitions. Because understanding entrepreneurial cognitions is extremely important (Krueger, 2003; Baron, 2004), the link with spirituality is useful because “spirituality can inform and influence the cognition and therefore the behaviors of entrepreneurs” (Godwin et al., 2016: 66). In short, emergent literature in entrepreneurship has built upon the intuition that spirituality has a role to play in entrepreneurial processes.

Despite all the important findings, we still know little about the role of spirituality in entrepreneurial sensemaking. Spiritual belief in particular and belief in general is important because any sensemaking process constructs events as meaningful on the basis of beliefs that people possess (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015: 9). Spirituality is a form of cognition that bears a high degree of overlap with sensemaking theory. A critical trigger for sensemaking, for example, is the experience of a “cosmology episode” or the sudden loss of meaning and coherence one

experiences in the face of a catastrophic event (Weick, 1993). Cosmology in this case involves adherence to a transcendent belief system involving often fatalistic assumptions of order and rationality in the universe that exists beyond the interests of the individual. As such, cosmology episodes involve instances of spirituality where an unusual or seemingly supernatural event can be seen to challenge one's fundamental understanding of the universe and one's place in it.

A cosmology episode occurs “when people suddenly and deeply feel that the universe is no longer a rational, orderly system” (Weick, 1993: 633). As Orton and O’Grady (2016: 227) observe, the questions that individuals are seen to ask in the face of a cosmology episode – what is the nature of the universe, what is my role in it, how am I to respond to this event – “directs explicit attention to the integral role of spirituality during catastrophic events” and bear a striking similarity to the fundamental questions faced by entrepreneurs. Although researchers have looked into the connection between spirituality and sensemaking (McKee, Mills & Driscoll, 2008; Lips-Wiersma, 2001; Pratt, 2000), we don’t know the mechanisms by which spirituality helps entrepreneurs to make sense of future-oriented uncertainty.

Considered together, the constructs of spirituality and magical thinking appear to offer a potentially fruitful theoretical direction in addressing our core question of how entrepreneurs are able to persist and succeed in the face of high risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity. We see value in emphasizing the importance of how spiritual faith and the magical thinking that emerges from such faith can constitute an “ideological fortress” by which entrepreneurs make sense of their unpredictable world and find both direction and motivation (Pratt, 2000). In the absence of past empirical experience or social support and in the face of future uncertainty and high risk, it seems reasonable to propose that entrepreneurs find the motivation to persevere through their acceptance of, and faith in, a larger cosmological belief system that allows them to interpret

reality in a way that deviates in important respects from traditional views of objective reality or rationally scientific notions of causality and human agency.

The construct of magical realism can serve as a stepping stone for a unified theory of faith orientation in entrepreneurship. There is a growing interest in spirituality in entrepreneurship research which has identified a range of constructs such as spiritual intelligence (La Pira & Gillin, 2006), spiritual capital (Neubert et al., 2017), spirituality informed values (Judge & Douglas, 2013), and cognition (Godwin et al., 2016), as well as the perception of work as a spiritual path (Neal, 1997). Additionally, management scholars have explored both superstition (Tsang, 2004, 2009; Lu et al., 2008; Poorsoltan, 2012), and myths (Gabriel, 1991; Munro & Huber, 2012) as part of faith orientation in organizational settings. In light of the efforts to clarify a very heterogeneous concept of spirituality (Karakas, 2010), magical realism can unify different perceptions of spirituality at work by emphasizing the hybridization of the magical and the real, showing the mixing of different ontologies that happens on an everyday basis in the lives of entrepreneurs.

Magical realism, as a concept drawn from cultural studies (e.g. Zamora & Faris, 1995), describes fiction involving narrative elements that integrate the transcendent within reality: myths, religious systems of belief, diverse forms of spirituality, and superstition. The construct of magical realism, conceived as an entrepreneurial orientation, raises important questions of how religious belief and spirituality are incorporated into the mundane perceptions of reality by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs with a magical realist orientation may integrate religious belief and spirituality into their work life on a very deep level to the point where the two spheres of life become indistinguishable or inseparable, because the transcendent is taken for granted and is not

surprising. Such an orientation may be one of the vehicles through which religious belief and spirituality effectively find their way into the life of entrepreneurial ventures.

The Role of Fictional Literature in Organization Studies. Prominent organization scholars Bennis and O'Toole (2005) lamenting about "How Business Schools Lost Their Way," offered a few solutions, one of which is to turn to literature and philosophy in organization research in an attempt to "illuminate the mysteries and ambiguities of today's business practices" (2005: 104). As one of their examples, they bring James March, who tried to untangle the organization mysteries and "exemplify and explain the behavior of people in business organizations in a way that was richer and more realistic than any journal article or textbook" (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005: 104) by teaching through "War and Peace" and other novels. There are a few important examples where this has been successfully done in recent scholarship. As far back as 1956 Whyte wrote about "The Organization Man in Fiction," Waldo (1968) suggested that managers can learn from fiction, in the 1990s quite a few papers were published that engaged with the literary fiction in diverse ways (see De Cock & Land, 2006). In 1999 *Organization* (vol. 6) published a special issue on scientific fiction and organization studies, De Cock (2000) theorizes about how Borges' fiction can help us understand organizational phenomena, Rhodes and Brown (2005) reflect on the use of fictional source material and fictional formats in organization studies, Munro and Huber (2012) use Kafka's writings to enrich our understanding of organizational mythologies, Sliwa, Spoelstra, Sørensen, and Land (2013) use a novel of magical realist Haruki Murakami to discuss the notions of sacrifice and the sacred in leadership thinking.

Theoretical Framework

In this subsection I discuss the theoretical framework. Theoretical framework is a theoretical perspective that is applied to study the phenomenon. Theoretical framework for this dissertation is based on the magical realism concept. And I use it to study arational thinking and how it is linked to rational thinking in organizations. I attempt to study and illuminate that phenomenon in the empirical context of entrepreneurship and future-oriented sensemaking. In this subsection I first talk about the concept of magical realism and provide a brief background on the topic, I then give a definition of organizational magical realism, after which I discuss the connection between magical realism and spirituality, I finish with the list of five tenets of magical realism.

Magic realist literature (as well as the literary criticism on the topic) can be helpful to all of us in learning about the world in which we live. Salman Rushdie theorizes about the things that literature can teach us and what “truth in literature” means: “And clearly what we mean is human truth, not photographic, journalistic, recorded truth, but the truth we recognize as human beings. About how we are with each other, how we deal with each other, what are our strengths and our weaknesses, how we interact and what is the meaning of our lives?” (Rushdie, 2010). Clearly, the literature does not document the reality in the way science does, but “We don’t need to know that Anna Karenina really existed. We need to know who she is, and what moves her, and what her story tells us about our own lives and about ourselves and that is the kind of truth that as readers we look for in literature” (Rushdie, 2010). And although Anna Karenina was written by the realist Tolstoy, we can learn in the very similar manner from magical realists such as Borges, Cortazar, Garcia Marquez, Rushdie, Allende, and many others.

The concept of organizational magical realism has the potential to help us understand important behaviors of organizational actors. For instance, behavior that might appear unusual, irrational, dysfunctional or, on the contrary, uncommonly effective might be explained by organizational magical realism. The concept can also help us understand why managers do not act in economically rational ways. In addition, it can help us understand the effectiveness of charismatic leaders in creating and persuasively communicating their vision.

Magical Realism. In this dissertation I draw inspiration from literary criticism of magical realism as well as from magical realist works of art and literature. The term “magical realism” was first coined in 1925 by Franz Roh, the German art historian and critic to denote one of the post-expressionist visual arts genres. He talked about “Magischer Realismus” in both his article and book theorizing on the topic of new objectivity (*neue Sachlichkeit*) visual arts genre. The new objectivity was a genre and movement in German art that was characterized by its “attention to accurate detail, a smooth photograph-like clarity of picture and the representation of the mystical non-material aspects of reality” (Bowers, 2004: 8). Artists of new objectivity, including Otto Dix, Max Beckman, and George Grosz, set themselves against expressionism (hence their art is also called post-expressionism), rejecting overly romanticized view of the world. The concept of magical realism championed by Roh influenced writers in Latin America. Roh’s writing was translated into Spanish in 1927. Early magical realists, or rather, pre-magical realist writers include Arturo Uslar Pietri, Jorge Luis Borges, and Italian Massimo Bontempelli.

The meaning behind the phrase “magical realism” has somewhat changed over the years. In 1949 in the preface to his “The Kingdom of this World” Cuban magical realist Alejo Carpentier introduced the notion of “lo real maravilloso Americano” (literally—marvelous American reality) which “has had a crucial influence on the subsequent theoretical understanding and

fictional practice of magical realism” (Moses, 2001: 107-108). Literary critic Angel Flores played a key role in putting the term “magical realism” into widespread and contemporary use with his 1955 essay, “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction.”

Now magical (or magic) realism is a term used in the fields of literary criticism and cultural studies to denote a literary genre as well as a genre of visual arts and film. “Magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them” (Faris, 2004: 1). In the magic realist novels the magical happens in the world that is described with many meticulous details so as to show that it is real; but the magic is accepted as part of the ordinary. Magical realism draws upon the many resources that attempt to show us that the transcendent reality exists beyond the physical world: legends, myths, superstitions, and religious texts. “Magic realism is a literary device or a way of seeing in which there is space for the invisible forces that move the world: dreams, legends, myths, emotion, passion, history. All these forces find a place in the absurd, unexplainable aspects of magic realism. ... Magic realism is all over the world. It is the capacity to see and to write about all the dimensions of reality” (Allende, 1991: 54). The most salient characteristic of organizational magical realism is the presentation of arational or magical as an integral and organic part of reality that is taken for granted and is not surprising (to the organizational actor).

Although magical realism in literature was first seen as an exclusively Latin American phenomenon, nowadays it is truly a global literature, with very diverse writers from different countries: India, Canada, USA, Ireland, South Africa, Germany, Morocco, Russia, France, Norway, etc. The different writers draw upon different cultural traditions from Islamic religious texts to Celtic legends to Buddhist myths, but similarly see the world as full of marvelous things, in depicting of which they try to show us the reality in all its complexity. Examples of prominent

works of magical realism include international bestsellers “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, “Midnight’s Children” by Salman Rushdie, “Tin Drum” by Gunter Grass, and critically acclaimed movies “Amélie” by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, “Midnight in Paris” by Woody Allen, and “Birdman” by Alejandro Iñárritu.

The name “magical realism” is somewhat of an oxymoron, combining the seemingly irreconcilable terms. Magic realism tells us that it is possible to mix the unmixable and see the different aspects of our complex world at the same time. “Magic realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems...” (Zamora & Faris, 1995: 5-6). Magical realism does a great job of illustrating the ambiguous manner in which humans see the world: the spiritual realities permeate the physical world; not many things are constant and straight forward, or such that one can be sure of. In the world of magical realism, people make sense of the world not only through scientific method and knowledge, but also through the acceptance of the transcendent into the mundane reality.

Magical realism conveys a specific way of seeing the world, or specific perception of individuals. I use the concept of organizational magical realism to explain the entrepreneurs’ perception of reality as malleable, infused with arational notions and beliefs, extraordinary occurrences, and events unaccountable by rational science, and to explain how such perception influences entrepreneurs in the way they construct and enact their futures, in their decision making, especially in the future-oriented decision to start a business, and in the way they manage risk.

Definition of organizational magical realism. Because of the important role organizations play in today’s world, because of the amount of time the majority of people all over the world spend inside organizations, and because of the wide-spread assumption that organizations are

rational entities, it is important to present a theoretical lens that can help us see all the dimensions of reality and that is specifically honed for analyzing organizations. Organizational magical realism is a theoretical lens that helps us see and appreciate the complexity of organizational reality, which combines the arational and the mundane rational materiality in a non-surprising, taken-for-granted way, revealing that there is more to organizational life than the material, the visible, or the explainable by the laws of reason (following Zamora & Faris, 1995; Bowers, 2004; and the definition of “enchantment” by Jenkins, 2000). Organizational magical realism raises the question of the relationship between rational and arational sides of organizational life and gives a more nuanced picture of organizations. It shows how a magical realist perception influences organizational life and behaviors of both leaders and followers. It can also pinpoint some of the problems that exist between humans and the cold world of organizations, and show how these problems are resolved, for example through humanization of the organizational space by inviting arational elements to everyday routines (Gabriel, 1991b). Organizational magical realism shows how people embrace the arational as a non-surprising and taken for granted part of their mundane organizational reality. This is what differentiates organizational magical realism from other theoretical lenses and gives it a unique perspective on the nature of reality and the role of magical and the mundane, the spiritual and the material, and their interaction. This is also, in part, how organizational magical realism can unite different perspectives and embrace different spiritual traditions—by showing that arational (irrespective of the tradition) is interwoven into the fabric of our everyday reality.

Organizational magical realism and spirituality. One important point to clarify with respect to the concept of organizational magical realism is its relationship with spirituality in organizations. This is a complex relationship because the two concepts are closely related but are

also distinct. In addition, researchers are still developing a consensus about the definition of the concept of spirituality. Karakas (2010) claims that there are at least 70 definitions of spirituality. However, the emerging consensus about what spirituality means provides us with two key dimensions of spirituality. The first one is interconnectedness with the transcendent, with others, and with the natural world (Dyck, 2015; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Liu & Robertson, 2011). The second one is the accent on virtues and values as “many studies essentially define or operationalize spirituality in terms of values and virtues, treating them essentially as synonymous with spirituality” (Dyck, 2015; see also Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002). These two domains determine how we understand spirituality in organizations, however, organizational magical realism is connected to spirituality through other important but non-central features of this concept. The connection between the two concepts is based on the similar concern with the employees’ search for meaning of their lives beyond the mere performance of physical or intellectual mundane tasks (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), as well as a concern with a belief in a transcendent power or reality, which is present in most cases of magical realist perception. Because of these similarities, organizational magical realism may provide valuable insights for our understanding of spirituality in organizations. It may, for example, help us explore the questions of how spirituality informs employees’ perceptions of organizational reality.

Organizational magical realism is not, however, a subset of spirituality in organizations. Organizational magical realism is foremost concerned with a certain perception of reality which is constructed out of many different building blocks, some of which have nothing to do with spirituality, for example, elements of positivistic epistemology, which correspond to the realism in magical realism. Also, a magical realist perception sees reality as malleable. Often such perception is based on certain rules that are not necessarily spiritual, i.e. do not pertain to virtues,

values, interconnectedness, Supreme Being, or heavenly power, such as rules of feng shui, chaos magic, or other philosophical systems. Similarly, spirituality can be manifested in organizations without involving the perception of reality as malleable and without the absence of surprise in the face of the arational. For example, an organizational actor can be highly spiritual and feel a strong connection to the transcendent, others, and nature, possess strong values and virtues and still completely lack a magical realist perception of reality. On the other hand, an organizational actor can possess a magical realist perception of reality and make business decisions based on the laws of feng shui, and at the same time feel no connection to the transcendent, others, or even nature, and lack benevolent values and virtues.

Thus, the concept of organizational magical realism can aid in the studies of spirituality in organizations. It can help us understand some forms of spirituality better and provide a different angle of looking at spirituality, while at the same time examining and explaining distinct phenomena. In this light, the concept of organizational magical realism can also be very helpful in understanding entrepreneurs' search for meaning, their perception of malleability of reality, and, most importantly, their cognitive orientation towards projection of the future. In the next part of the chapter I discuss the five tenets of organizational magical realism (See Table 1) and illustrate how each tenet can be useful in understanding organizational realities.

Insert Table 1 about here

Five Tenets of Magical Realism. Literary critics identified several ontological assumptions or tenets of magical realism (Zamora & Faris, 1995; Faris, 2004), many of which

express ideas that are useful for understanding organizational life and correspond to concepts explained by organization theory in the past. In this section I connect each tenet to the existing organizational theory literature and bring in examples from the world of business practice.

1. Objects contain essences: A core principle of magical realism in literature is that the objective world is not as it seems and that normally benign, everyday objects can, under certain circumstances, acquire significance and meaning that may confer a degree of agency. This notion has resonance in everyday practice inside organizations. We understand, for example, the symbolic significance and power that certain organizational artifacts such as corporate brands (Arvidson, 2005; Kornberger, 2010), business cards (Baruch, 2006) and office decorations (Elsbach, 2004) can have. Actor Network Theory has demonstrated that social dynamics inhere in material objects and that artifacts possess social agency (Latour, 1988, 1996). Such artifacts can act as boundary objects, which have a lot in common with magical objects. Just like magical objects, boundary objects can mobilize action (Bechky, 2003), and transform knowledge (Carlile, 2002). They have many faces and obtain special meanings at certain times and places (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Boundary objects often symbolize certain relations and serve as the expression of desired conditions just like magical objects do (Glucklich, 1997).

An excellent example of research on the symbolic significance of objects in organizations is the study of the role of office décor (Elsbach, 2004). Elsbach looked at how employees interpreted the office décor such as photos, furniture, and decorations, as indicators of their colleagues' workplace identities. Her findings suggest that objects possess meanings additional to their function and build a symbolic reality that is picked up or co-created by the observers. The symbolic meaning accounted for in the study is distinctiveness and status as elements of workplace identity of the displayer. This symbolic meaning that is given off by objects may not

always reflect the reality correctly. If an object got into the office by accident, without the intention of the owner, it can create a false idea about the owner's identity. Thus the objects have the life of their own.

Although office décor objects possess *symbolic* meaning, they have quite *real* implications for employee performance and as a result for the functioning of organizations. Organizations' strong stance against office personalization leads to conflict and apathy—all leading to decreased productivity (Donald, 1994, cited in Elsbach, 2004: 101). By contrast, "successful work groups (i.e., those with acceptable output, member satisfaction, and the ability to work together on subsequent tasks) are comprised of individual members who are allowed to display (vs. not display) self-identity and work roles through personal artifacts, equipment, furniture, and décor" (Elsbach, 2004: 101). Other implications include employee's ability to collaborate, development of professional identities and identifications with organization. Thus we see that objects in organizational settings in a sense have magical properties in that they seem benign in everyday situations, but can influence reality in ways that are hard to predict. Organizational scholars then are akin to magical realists in that they uncover the hidden life of things that people otherwise cannot clearly perceive.

Recognition that objects contain essences is an important part of organizational magical realism. And although there may be instances where symbolic significance of objects can be recognized without the magical realist perception of reality, people with a magical realist perception much more easily find the symbolic meaning of objects because the existence of such objects comprises a part of their mundane life, is taken for granted, and is not surprising. A magical realist perception makes it easier to use the symbolic meaning of objects within

communicational interaction in organizations increasing the ability to collaborate, mobilize action, transform knowledge, and create shared meaning.

An example from a management practice is the attitude of some business leaders towards the products that their companies produce. Some business leaders seem to be enamored with the products and everything that promotes them, such as branding, advertisement, and marketing campaigns. Such leaders often go to extreme lengths to produce and improve products that would make an impression on the consumers and other stakeholders. For example, business leaders use high-pressure persuasion to make their employees create and improve products, setting unrealistic goals and/or deadlines. Many reports from the business press, as well as popular biographies depict certain highly visible entrepreneurs such as Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, and Jeff Bezos as casting “reality distortion fields” to persuade people around them in their visions of reality. Often such visions include seemingly impossible tasks, such as commercial space shuttle launches, or development of aesthetically appealing computer products in extremely short periods of time.

2. The Law of Attraction. By the Law of Attraction I mean the idea or belief that like attracts like and that focused positive or negative thoughts can bring positive or negative results. In general, this means that symbolic actions have real consequences; this includes small symbolic actions and superstition. Magical realism pays a lot of attention to small things that turn to bear special meaning: the looks that strangers give to the protagonist, the strange sounds, photos taken on the streets, but most importantly the thoughts that change the reality.

Management researchers have also found the notion of the law of attraction to be fruitful, particularly in the context of human resource practices. For example, considerable research has been conducted on impression management in different contexts such as interviewing (Stevens &

Kristof, 1995; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002), employee integration (Ralston, 1985), performance appraisal (Wayne & Liden, 1995), and careers (Feldman & Klich, 1991). In essence, impression management functions on good faith in that small, often symbolic, actions will lead to certain perceptions of a person, which in turn will lead to tangible benefits. Upward influence strategies (Schilit & Locke, 1982; Higgins et al., 2003) function in a similar way. Mirroring behaviors (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998) and emotional contagion (Pugh, 2001; Barsade, 2002) have symbolical elements that are present in and integral for the law of attraction.

The role of superstition and feng shui in organizational decision making processes, especially in China and South-East Asia, is now being explored (Tsang, 2004, 2009; Lu et al., 2008; Poorsoltan, 2012). For businesses, superstitions can play a significant role as they are used by business people to reduce uncertainty and facilitate decision making (Tsang, 2004; Vyse, 1997). Understanding how superstition functions, can help explain certain phenomena associated with superstitious behavior, such as over- or undervaluation of property, unexpected growth or decline in the value of shares, or cancellation of contracts—that do not seem logical.

For example, the Bank of China Tower design created controversy among Hong Kongers and ultimately hurt the reputation of the organization that owned it (Chang, 2009). The problem with the design is that the skyscraper's structure is composed of interlocking triangles, which, according to Feng Shui, is a troublesome shape. If an angle of a triangle is pointing at you, it could cause economic or health problems. "Feng Shui theory sees triangles as resembling the edge of a knife, and potentially carrying destructive energy, leading to triangles being avoided in traditional Chinese architecture" (Chang, 2009: 48-49). The Bank of China Tower has triangles of its structure pointing in all directions, including inward of the building. Certain real events that happened were associated with bad luck brought by the Tower, such as the sudden death of

Governor Youde whose residence was pointed at by a triangle of the Tower (Tsang, 2004: 925), and the bankruptcy of an Australian businessman (Chang, 2009: 49). The architect of the Tower, I.M. Pei, said that he knew about the Feng Shui principles, but did not take them too seriously. Not taking into consideration the beliefs lead to bad publicity and quite real consequences for the Bank of China. Feng Shui belief and superstition are the elements of magical thinking. Their functioning is depicted in magical realist texts, that better allow organization scholars to get to the meanings of beliefs in supernatural things for the functioning of organizations.

The belief in the law of attraction essentially functions as a coping mechanism against anxiety and insecurity associated with uncertainty and risk in organizational contexts. In contemporary society “risks have changed character and have acquired greater impact in time and space” (Gephart, Van Maanen, & Oberlechner, 2009: 146). Risk is no longer seen as measurable and calculable or defined in statistical terms (Lupton, 1999); and the world has become much more uncertain and unpredictable. The belief in the law of attraction helps to overcome anxiety and doubt that lead to paralysis or delay of action (Lipshitz & Strauss 1997; Giddens, 1991). On the other hand, the belief in the law of attraction can have a negative effect on organizations. It can simply draw time and attention away from task performance, but it can also, in somewhat extreme cases, create a perception of reality that will detract from acting in ways congruent with economic rationality and profit maximization.

The law of attraction is often manifested in management practices. Some entrepreneurs and business people believe in one or the other form of the law of attraction. Many reports of the popular business press include discussions by business leaders on the importance of charity, helping other people, and being good in general. Often these topics lead to disclosures of Karma

or Karma-like beliefs in that good deeds eventually return. Sometimes such beliefs take a form of trust in symbolic actions.

3. Everyday routinized events all have ritualized and magic meanings. Magical realist fiction is often founded upon the traditional beliefs, myths, and legends. Rituals, as one of the important elements of traditional society's culture, migrate to magical realism as well. In some texts traditional rituals are interwoven directly into the story.

Different streams of literature noticed and discussed the importance of rituals in contemporary organizations. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) talked about the symbolic role of leadership and emphasized the integral part ritual plays in it. People want to and need to believe in the effectiveness of leadership; and rituals serve as the expression of its importance and greatness. "When administrators have only minor effects, it might be plausibly argued that ritual, mythology, and symbolism will be most necessary to keep the image of personal control alive" (p. 17). Developing his view of microfoundations of macrosociology, Collins (1981) incorporated a theory of interaction ritual chains. Conversations (interactions) act as rituals and collectively (as a chain) create a foundation for sociological macro structures, including organizations. This view emphasizes the ritualistic nature of human conversation and helps us understand what an important role core anthropological traits such as belief, cognitive symbols, and myths play in the formation of organizations. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that formal structures have ritual significance in maintaining appearances and validation of organizations. Friedland and Alford acknowledged the role of ritual within institutions: "routines of each institution are connected to rituals which define the order of the world and one's position within it" (1991: 250). Organizations adopt rituals of confidence and good faith through isomorphism

with an elaborated institutional environment. Also, institutional environments engender rituals of inspection and evaluation to support legitimacy (Suchman, 1995).

Organization scholars relying on the ideas of Burke (1945) and Goffman (1959) have been developing the dramaturgical perspective of organizations (e.g. Mangham and Overington, 1987; Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Harvey, 2001). The dramas that organization members stage and perform have ritualistic meaning. One of the vivid examples of performance that is also a ritual in organization studies literature is the study of formal dining at Cambridge colleges (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010). Dacin and colleagues found that the performance of the rituals of formal dining at the University of Cambridge contributed to institutional maintenance of British class system. They interviewed the participants of the dinners and uncovered how such an innocuous and routine event as dining can be a powerful ritual that has long term effects upon the participants and macro institutions: “organizational rituals not only affect the identity and image of actors while they are active participants, but also influence behavior and social interaction beyond the confines of their original context” (Dacin et al., 2010: 1414).

Organizational dramas, that possess ritualistic meaning, have magical elements to them. Often such rituals contain sacred aspects: “Cambridge college dining ... though is a secular event that is ostensibly about eating and sharing knowledge, also contains some sacred aspects” (Dacin et al., 2010: 1415). The sacredness of the rituals is transformed into magic when the reality is influenced and changed. The ritual of dining at Cambridge colleges besides socializing participants into particular roles, making them conform to a set of practices, and affecting their identity and image, influences how British class system institution is perpetuated.

Rituals is an extremely important part of the culture of any company. This is broadly recognized in organizations and society, including academic publications and popular business

press reports. Rituals are described as means for creating shared identities, reducing anxiety, and reinforcing desired behavior. For example, file hosting service company Dropbox uses an image of a smiling cupcake to represent one of its five core values. Dropbox's CEO Drew Houston explained that the picture of a smiling cupcake represents a commitment to keep a fun office culture, which he believes has contributed to the company's outstanding growth. When Dropbox makes an offer to a new employee, the employee receives a special delivery at home: a cupcake kit in a beautifully designed box. This ritual reflects Dropbox's fun nature, and brings delight to its employees—even before they've joined the company (West & Judson, 2016).

Rituals is one of the important ways through which a magical realist perception can be disseminated and become a collective phenomenon. Leaders especially are in the position to direct the performance of rituals and pass on their magical realist perception to organizational members. Through rituals, shared meanings are created and reiterated (Trice and Beyer, 1984; Bell, 2009). Rituals serve as a reminder and build a stronger belief in shared values over time, increasing commitment to the organization and its goals (Martin, 2001: 70). Thus, if a magical realist perception is instilled through the use of rituals, every ritual makes the magical realist perception stronger among the participants and influences the way they act.

4. Repair of the disruptions of reality. Magical realism presents us with two kinds of disruptions of reality and their subsequent repair. 1. Fictional reality is described as ordinary with, or sometimes without, the magical elements and is then disrupted, most often, by a non-magical event. This is because magic by itself is not taken as abnormal or surprising; it is described as part of the routine. So, the disruption, contrary to the expectation, is not necessarily magical, it is something that can happen in everyday life. Magic is the irreducible element of magical realism, but not of the disruptions. Often, when the disruption is non-magical, it can

emphasize the outrageousness and ridiculousness of reality. 2. Repair is done by the reader. Magical realist texts are often presented to the reader in a way that requires work from the reader in order to come to conclusions and take something out for oneself. First, the magic is presented as ordinary among the ordinary things or events, which, especially to the unprepared reader, comes as the first disruption that the reader must resolve, usually by accepting. Second, often a disruption or a series of disruptions happen in the text, sometimes clues are given, sometimes only at the end of the story, but often no complete explanation is presented. Thus the reader needs to put the pieces of the puzzle together. The reading of magical realism becomes an experience of disruption and repair for the reader. This is how the reader gets to the deeper message of magical realism: our life and our reality are not that simple and cannot be fully explained by the rational means.

The mechanism of disruption and repair of reality was discussed at length within the sensemaking literature (Sackman, 1991, Weick, 1995). Sensemaking starts with “incongruous events, events that violate perceptual frameworks” (Starbuck and Milliken, 1988: 52), in other words, surprise, disruption or interruption is a trigger for sensemaking (Mandler, 1984, Weick, 1993). The sensemaking process then retrospectively constructs events as meaningful. But it only does so on the basis of beliefs that people possess. “In matters of sensemaking, believing is seeing. To believe is to notice selectively. And to believe is to initiate actions capable of lending substance to the belief” (Weick, 1995: 133-134). Magical realism gives us great illustrations of sensemaking. Granted, a lot of fiction contains elements of sensemaking descriptions because any good literature mirrors our life. But magical realism goes beyond just the development of the plot, which is not simply added to the description of reality full of the magical to make it interesting. Magical realist fiction shows us how the different beliefs that people have, whether

in rituals or the law of attraction, or anything else, can construct realities (which may be by themselves magical) that function and contain meaning.

An important element of sensemaking is a good story that is constructed during the sensemaking process. Such stories contain “symbolic trappings of ... myths, metaphors, platitudes, fables, epics, and paradigms” (Weick, 1995: 61). Magical realist depictions of sensemaking process are built upon and really emphasize these elements of sensemaking. We read about the reality, elements of which are borrowed from Amerindian myth, biblical parable, Irish folk tale, or the legends of miracles performed by Catholic saints (Moses, 2001).

The meanings that are constructed through sensemaking process are not always, in fact seldom, completely rational or accurate even in organizational settings. Weick (1995) gives eight reasons why this is so, most important of which is that life is too complicated and meanings that are constructed don't have to be accurate, but have to be simply plausible and sufficient. Magical realism makes us ponder about the worlds of meaning that ordinary people create within or outside of organizations, by giving examples of sensemaking that results in a reality full of magical things. But such realities are constructed on an everyday basis in most contemporary organizations. One example would be Barley's (1988) analysis of how highly trained computed tomography scanner technologists after facing technical problems with the equipment resort to magical thinking such as anthropomorphic talk, ritual, and superstition in order to normalize the situation. The mechanism of sensemaking here starts with the interruption of a broken scanner that technologists cannot fix using the usual solutions for which they were trained. Thus under conditions of extreme technical complexity and uncertainty they construct the meanings that contain magical elements. These constructed meanings are plausible, memorable, and even

reasonable (as they actually sometimes helped to fix the scanners), but not rational (Sibley, 1953; Perelman, 1979).

Business leaders repair the disruptions of reality on an everyday basis in organizations through sensemaking and sensegiving work. Whenever there is a disruption of reality (however small), such as a disruption in the workflow, sales, communication, timelines, etc., sensemaking begins. Sensemaking entails gathering, analyzing and interpreting information, creating a map of reality, and acting based on the created map. Business leaders use sensemaking to create maps of reality and provide meaning to employees through sensegiving.

Repair of the disruptions of reality is an important characteristic of organizational magical realism. It shows us the processual view of magical realism in organizational settings. A magical realist perception is used to construct meaning during the sensemaking or sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007) processes. It is important because without such use, the magical realist perception loses its power and cannot take part in the construction of social reality. The construction of meaning using a magical realist perception of reality can motivate employees, increasing their self-efficacy, and increase creativity through the encouragement of non-standard, out of the box thinking. However, depending on the message that is being sent or created, it can also distract from fulfilling job duties, and create versions of reality that can hurt organizational performance.

5. Traditional belief underlies the narrative: myth, religion, folklore. Magical realism stands on the basis of belief systems of old, and local narrative and folklore. “In magical realism narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie the text” (Faris, 1995: 182). “The magic may be attributed to a mysterious sense of collective relatedness rather than to individual memories or dreams, or visions” (Faris, 1995: 183). Magical realism as a phenomenon

started in Latin American literature and at first borrowed from the belief systems of Latin American countries. As magical realism spread out, it started to incorporate the tradition, beliefs and folklore of many different cultures.

Organization scholars have paid close attention to the influence of religion, spirituality, myths, and folklore on organizational life. Organizational storytelling literature analyzes the meaning and importance of myth in contemporary organization (Gabriel, 1991b, 1995; Bowles, 1989; Hatch et al., 2005). Organizational folklore has also been explored (Gabriel, 1991a). A vast literature exists on the influence of religion on managerial decisions, ethical behavior, and functioning of organization (e.g. Fernando & Bradm, 2006; King 2008; Chan-Serafin et al., 2013). Spirituality in organizations is a separate although connected topic (Hicks, 2003; Chan-Serafin, 2012).

A good example of how folklore underlies the narrative in organizational settings is the study of a folkloristic story of “heroic defiance” of a catering worker (Gabriel, 1991a). Gabriel analyzed a story that was retold among catering workers about their co-worker, Gill, who had the courage to give a piece of her mind to visiting administrators, while the local managers sat in awe (p. 860). This folkloristic story presents a fearless worker who takes control of the situation while the local managers display fear, panic, or servility to their boss. The story became a part of organizational folklore and was retold enough times to become an organizational myth. This story played an important role for the workers in the organization. As a part of folklore and a myth it possessed magical qualities. The story allowed the workers to overcome their fear, humanize the cold space of the organization, and symbolically switch places with their bosses: “It is not we who are afraid of the bosses, but the bosses who are afraid of their bosses” (Gabriel, 1991a: 862).

Another example is a recent study of Steve Jobs's Stanford Commencement Speech that reveals the myth creation process that Jobs does for Apple (Ganzin, Gephart, & Suddaby, 2014). Jobs creates and promotes the myth of himself as a journeying hero going through the seventeen stages of the monomyth (Campbell, 1949). This story helps to create an image of himself as a charismatic and visionary business leader. He becomes "a kind of heroic figure" who can create "an almost larger-than-life vision for the workforce to follow" (Manz & Sims, 1991: 21). Employees and other stakeholders have faith in and "consistently exaggerate the effect the individual actions of heroic, charismatic leaders have on the success—or failure—of an organization" (Fletcher, 2004: 652). The myth creates a framework in which people think about the leader, the leader's role in organizing, the organization, and its products. In this case, the myth of Steve Jobs as a great leader is very successful and is broadly disseminated. Retelling and reenacting the myth assure people in their belief that Jobs is a very special person and a great visionary leader, and that under his leadership Apple became a great company that produces wonderful products with perfect design. This perception and the underlying myth contribute to the desire of an end consumer to buy Apple products and pay a premium price for them, which ultimately leads to the company's success. This is magic—a magic of organizational success. Of course, the myth also works for the employees of the organization, who often sacralize the business leader and think of him as of god (Gabriel, 1997; Hatch et al., 2005). This reinforces the positive relationships between the leader and employees and often makes the workers augment their loyalty to the leader and the organization.

Whatever forms the traditional belief takes, whether it is a myth, a folkloristic story, or a religious conviction, it has a powerful presence in contemporary organization. These forms offer simple frameworks that people can easily relate to and use to make sense of a complex social

world of industrial organization. These beliefs help the people to become more united. This is also reflected in magical realism fiction, as magical realist texts' "primary narrative investment may be in myths, legends, rituals—that is, in collective (sometimes oral and performative, as well as written) practices that bind communities together" (Zamora & Faris, 1995: 3). Through these beliefs leaders and managers can promote their rhetoric, strategic vision, and a magical realist perception because the forms in which the beliefs are presented are simple and effective vehicles to get the ideas across and persuade to accept them. Ultimately, a magical realist perception instilled through traditional belief has a great impact on the behavior of organization actors.

All the discussed tenets of organizational magical realism are inspired by and vividly reflected in magical realist fiction. For example, objects such as food in *Like Water for Chocolate*, if prepared with particular intentions, can hurt, cure, arouse or influence the eaters in other ways. Melquiades's manuscript in *Hundred Years of Solitude* is the marvelous key to understanding the past, present and future. Such magical things are often meticulously described in a realist manner. These magical details are given in order to instill the idea that the magical has no less of an ontological stance than the real. The law of attraction is represented in achieving certain outcomes through sheer concentration of thought. For example, a man turned into an axolotl by the power of thought. Often in magical realist texts the thought works like a sort of a spell. Such descriptions of reality-changing spells are sometimes connected with the notion of "cracks" or openings in reality that lead to the other reality; the thoughts can open the crack wider and create the magic.

Rituals and traditional narrative play an important role in magical realist fiction. For example in Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World* Voodoo rituals are integral for the

texture of the novella, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* is built around Native American rituals. Gabriel Garcia Marques draws upon biblical stories, Amerindian myths, stories about Catholic saints, family legends, etc. Salman Rushdie incorporates Hindu mythology and legends of the life of Buddha. In other magical realist texts we can also find Celtic narratives, epic tales, Yoruba folk narratives, customs, and oral traditions, legends of Sufi mystics, Berber folk motifs, the Kabbalah teachings, fairy tales, and folklore (Moses, 2001). Disruptions of reality are also often portrayed in magical realist fiction. For example, the disruption in *Perfume* is a ridiculous murder of Grenouille by the mad crowd, which alludes to the quite real mass hysteria; similar scenario plays out in *Las Ménades*; the disruption in *Footsteps in the Footprints* is the telling of truth in which no one wants to believe.

The role of magical realism in prospective sensemaking

Entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception engage in prospective sensemaking using their arational beliefs. However, any sensemaking process constructs events as meaningful on the basis of beliefs that people possess (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015: 9). "In matters of sensemaking, believing is seeing" (Weick, 1995: 133). As a result of sensemaking activity people construct their actions in a way that support their belief systems (Weick, 2001; 1995; 1993). As the present is disrupted and the need to make sense of the future arises, entrepreneurs re-enact their arational beliefs. Thus they reassure themselves in their beliefs and in the future that is based on these beliefs. Although their prospective sensemaking is based on arational beliefs, they project rational futures. The rational elements of such futures include calculable strategic advances, quantifiable financial goals, and measurable sales quota or production costs. Magical realism helps us to understand how entrepreneurs interweave the arational beliefs into the fabric of everyday reality.

A key element of magical realism is that magic is non-surprising and taken-for-granted. Magical realist fictional reality is described as ordinary with, or sometimes without, the magical elements and then is disrupted, most often, by a non-magical event. This is because magic by itself is not taken as abnormal or surprising (by the protagonist); it is described as part of the routine. So, the disruption, contrary to the expectation, is not necessarily magical, it is something that can happen in everyday life. Magic is the irreducible element of magical realism, but not of the disruptions. Entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception use the arational experiences and beliefs, which to an outsider may seem like disruptive elements, to make sense of real disruptions and overcome them by projecting safe and successful future.

In their study of consumer fetish Arnould and Cayla (2015) claim that organizational sensemaking is, in part, a magical process (p. 1379). My study illustrates how magical or arational elements constitute the beliefs on which entrepreneurs base their future oriented sensemaking. Building on Arnould and Cayla (2015) I contribute to the stream of literature that asserts that concepts useful for the analysis of pre-modern societies, such as magic, magical thinking, and arational belief, can help us understand contemporary organizations (Case & Phillipson, 2004; Endrissat, Islam, & Noppeney, 2015; Tsang, 2004).

Research Questions

Collectively my data provide insight into the ways in which stories about entrepreneurial success and failure, practices and routines, and fantasies and goals, of both companies and individuals, reflect the magical realist perception in entrepreneurial ventures, and, on the other hand, are informed by arational phenomena. In this dissertation I address the following key questions: How do entrepreneurs use a magical realist perception in future oriented sensemaking? And more specifically, for Study 1, how do different temporal orientations in

sensemaking affect entrepreneurs' perception of risk and uncertainty? And, for Study 2, how does future-oriented sensemaking draw upon spirituality to mitigate risk, reduce uncertainty and inspire the confidence of external stakeholders in the absence of a rational historical context? I am ultimately interested in how the two realms of reality—rational and arational exist together, how this coexistence is perceived by entrepreneurs and how this experience of arational instances unravels through sensemaking activity. What happens as a result of the arational experiences? How are these experiences reconciled in the projection of the future?

Chapter III Methods

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore and elaborate how entrepreneurs engage in prospective sensemaking. My review of the literature suggests that one mechanism by which entrepreneurs might do so involves a perceptual-interpretive orientation that I term “magical realist perception” or “magical realist cognitive orientation”. In order to elaborate this construct, I engaged in a review of the biographies of prominent entrepreneurs for Study 1 and collected and analyzed forty interviews with local entrepreneurs for Study 2. In this chapter I describe the research context of the dissertation and the research methods. I describe the methods I used for both the first and second study. I conducted the first study to gain a better understanding of a magical realist perception among entrepreneurs. The first study revealed the existence of a magical realist perception among entrepreneurs and served as a segue to the second study. I start this chapter by discussing my ontological stance and the choice of thematic analysis approach that I use for both studies. I conducted thematic analysis of stories of lives of entrepreneurs conveyed through biographies (Mathias & Smith, 2016) in Study 1 (not to confuse with biographical research (Rosenthal, 2004)). In Study 2 I conducted thematic analysis of stories contained in interviews with entrepreneurs that I collected. Next, I outline the data sources for Study 1 and Study 2, including sampling strategy, participant description, and recruitment strategy (for Study 2). I then describe data collection procedures for both studies, including the interview process and protocol (for Study 2), and the emergent analytic strategy for both studies. I finish the chapter with the visual figure of my data structure.

The focus of this dissertation was on entrepreneurs’ experience in and practice to construct positive futures in acts of future oriented sensemaking to overcome risk and uncertainty. My ontological stance here follows the constructivism-interpretivism paradigm. “Proponents of [this

paradigm] share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994: 221). Thus, I focus on the way entrepreneurs perceive their reality, as well as on how that perception shapes their behavior and influences the construction of their reality. Unlike the positivism-based paradigms, constructivism-interpretivism is not concerned with finding the “objective truth.” Following the constructivism-interpretivism paradigm, I try to understand the way respondents see and co-construct their world, without questioning how their perceptions correspond to the “objective reality.” “Informants’ stories do not mirror a world ‘out there.’ They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive” (Riessman, 1993: 4-5).

A qualitative research strategy was the most appropriate for the accomplishment of the goals of this study. Qualitative research is best used to attain “the goal of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context” (Myers, 2013: 6). Qualitative research can help us understand the perspective of the individuals that we study, their perception of the world, as well as the contexts in which they operate. Qualitative research pays attention to the variety of experience and the meaning ascribed to it by the participants and can generate or inform theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 2013).

Thematic Analysis. I use thematic analysis to analyze the data. “Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012). More specifically, I employ thematic analysis of life histories (Boyatzis, 1998) of entrepreneurs. Life histories involve reflective stories that express how individuals interpret, reconstruct, and make sense of their lives (Atkinson, 1998; McLean & Pasupathi, 2011). I focus on experiences as expressed in lived and

told stories of respondents (Creswell, 2013). For the purposes of this study, I interpret life history as a story about a significant aspect of the life of the informant (Myers, 2013: 209). A life history “is a narrative with selectively appropriated past events that are woven together to form a broader story” (McLean & Pasupathi, 2011:136).

Thematic analysis of life histories is well suited to study topics in relation to sensemaking. Polkinghorne (1988) suggested that stories are an important way through which human experience is made meaningful (cited in Myers, 2013: 209). Weick (1995) included the importance of narratives into his seven properties of sensemaking. One point is that people enact (or co-create) their reality through stories. People need to create a story to make sense of the world, of the events that are happening, of their experience, etc. Another point is that narratives are created for others, as sensemaking is a social activity, but also for the storyteller himself/herself. Because the stories that we create are “both individual and shared ... an evolving product of conversations with ourselves and with others” (Currie & Brown, 2003: 565).

“Management and organizational researchers have considered ... the role of story-telling in organizational sense-making” (Myers, 2013: 2010). Brown, Stacey, and Nandhakumar (2008: 1039-1040) argue that sensemaking is a narrative process, and, citing Giddens (1984) and Orbuch (1997), claim that researchers can focus on narratives to analyze the idiosyncratic, context-dependent and individual-specific nature of people’s sensemaking. Questions of temporal orientation in sensemaking activity can also be examined through thematic analysis of life histories. Stories are not only used to represent experience, but also to give meaning to, or make sense of, lives in the past, present and anticipated future (McKenna, 2007: 146; Myers, 2013). Thematic analysis of sensemaking activity is also well fitted to analyze topics of risk and uncertainty. Risk and uncertainty in general, and in entrepreneurial settings in particular, is first

and foremost a *perception* of risk and of uncertainty that people form. It is triggered by the lack of information about the future. Entrepreneurs are especially susceptible to the limited knowledge about the future because they are often doing something new, mapping the unknown territory to a smaller or larger extent, depending on the nature of the business, and because the environment is too complex to know exactly what will happen in all the important aspects for success people create narratives that generate and describe the perception of risk. To overcome fear, anxiety, and possible paralysis of action, they make sense of those narratives by creating new narratives. Such new, often optimistic, narratives are the bulk of future oriented sensemaking. Weick (1993) gave us a great example of sensemaking in the face of risk and danger. The firefighters who were able to make sense of the situation and create a new narrative survived, while those who were not able to create a new narrative, died.

Although there are other approaches to studying sensemaking, such as interpretive schemes (Bartunek, 1984), and cognitive mapping techniques (Bougon et al., 1977), thematic analysis of life histories is very appropriate for this study. Historically, sensemaking approach moved from the fascination with cognition to the focus on narrative (Weick, 1995; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2014). The importance of construction of stories for a sensemaking perspective is rooted in the understanding that through processes of sensemaking people enact, or co-create, the social world, constructing it through narrated descriptions (Brown et al., 2008: 1038; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967).

Polkinghorne (1988: 1) argued that stories are “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful.” To understand how meaning is created through stories we can turn to Ricoeur (1985), who focused on the creative act of emplotment, which is the linking of relations between events, materials, motives, desires, wishes, and hopes, etc., into meaningful

configurations. His idea is that meaning is created from the flow of input that meets human perception in the form of possible plots, or, in other words, from the creation of possible interpretations. Ricoeur argues that narrative emplotment is a central function in the creation of meaning. Ricoeur's ideas influenced how meaning and the creation of meaning, or sensemaking, are understood, mainly because he identifies meaning as relational rather than a stable entity for the individual (Josephsson, Asaba, Jonsson, & Alsaker, 2006: 88).

As we are socially constructing our reality, we establish what the connections are, were or might be among events, feelings, thoughts and actions (Gergen, 1999). This process of establishing connections or linking relations has a temporal dimension. We establish the connections between the events, feelings, etc. that surround us in the present and link them to those in the past, as well as project those connections into the future. This perpetual flow of sensemaking activity is the basic description of how we assign or create meaning and map our reality. However, what goes into the making of those connections, and what kind of rationalities are being used, is what distinguishes individuals, their behavior, and subsequently organizations they create. This poses an interesting question, and, in this study I make a focal point on the way those linkages are projected into the future. In other words, because "man is in his actions and practice, as well as his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal" (MacIntyre, 1981: 201; Bruner, 1990; Fisher, 1984), sensemaking is a narrative process (Brown et al., 2008: 1039); and the best way to understand how entrepreneurs project their future in the perpetual flow of sensemaking, is to study their stories.

Data Sources

Study 1

Because magical realism and a magical realist perception is a rare topic in organization and management studies, let alone in entrepreneurial contexts, I first conducted a study of biographies of prominent entrepreneurs to explore whether a magical realist perception can be found among business people. The preliminary study analysis was accomplished before I conducted any interviews to gain a better understanding of how a magical realist perception may manifest itself in an organizational context. I examined the concept of organizational magical realism in the empirical context of the business biography. Business biographies are an important, but understudied form of managerial narrative that is easily available as data for analysis. Business biographies are, at their core, stories about management, corporations and businessmen. Through repetition, embellishment and variation, biographies come to inform our views and beliefs about leadership, efficiency and organization. As such, they can be considered exemplars of managerial storytelling and critical vehicles for analyzing the instances of organizational magical realism.

Analysis of business biographies proved to be very useful in informing the second stage of the research process—thematic analysis of interviews with entrepreneurs. Analysis of biographies helped me to clarify the concept of magical realist thinking. Studying the biographies, I learned that it is important to understand the entrepreneurs' perception of reality. In other words, magical realism can be found in the way entrepreneurs see the world, which ultimately influences the way they act in society. Analysis of the biographies suggested that in the interview stage and the analysis stage of the second study I should attend to temporal orientation of entrepreneurs' thinking, especially the future orientation, and entrepreneurs' perception of reality, including their beliefs and the extent to which their beliefs affect their decision making.

Choosing business biographies, my goal was to find the most influential and popular books that impact the way managers or organizational actors in general think about business and organizing, in other words, books that impact popular business culture. Thus I used extreme case purposeful sampling. “This strategy involves selecting cases that are information rich because they are unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures” (Patton, 2002: 230-231). Data collected this way can enable us to find out the most; and findings from extreme cases will be relevant in understanding or explaining both unusual and typical cases (Saunders, 2012; Patton, 2002). The biographies represent extreme cases because of the tremendous success of the entrepreneurs described, but also because of the incredible popularity of the books. Because there is no single source that would contain a comprehensive list that would satisfy these criteria, I used the following several sources to identify biographies for analysis: Barnes & Noble best sellers, Amazon.com best sellers, The New York Times best sellers, and The New York Times Book Review. I started from an examination of The New York Times Book Review, which is long recognized as the most influential book review section in North America, and then supplemented the book review with the lists of best sellers. Barnes & Noble is both a brick and mortar and internet seller, Amazon.com is exclusively an internet seller, and The New York Times is one of the most influential media outlets without a direct interest in book sales. Because of the prominence and reputation of the sources that I used, the list of biographies I ended up with reflects book popularity and literary tastes in the general population. I examined The New York Times Book Review list from the period of 1932 to the present to identify the frequency and type of business biographies that have appeared in the list of bestsellers in order to get an overview of the emergence of the business biography for popular

consumption and to conduct a comparative analysis of how elements of magical realism in organizations inform these stories of management.

The final list contains 30 biographies; the heroes are iconic entrepreneurs that have shaped the business world: from Andrew Carnegie, and Henry Ford to Richard Branson, Steve Jobs, and Elon Musk (See Table 2). I limited the list with only biographies of entrepreneurs because of the similar aspirations, challenges, freedoms, and rewards they had, thus making the data more congruent, as well as because biographies of entrepreneurs are by far more popular than that of prominent managers. I also considered only biographies of people who mostly did business in the 20th and 21st centuries, with the exceptions of Andrew Carnegie, who worked in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, and Henry Ford, who started his first company (Detroit Automobile Company) in 1899.

Insert Table 2 about here

I included biographies, authorized biographies, and autobiographies of entrepreneurs. Of course there are differences between them. Biographies add a layer of interpretation of the biographer, but can be more comprehensive as they often include information obtained through interviews with employees, family members, and other stakeholders in addition to the interviews with the entrepreneur. A biographer can also take a step back and look at the life of the subject from a distance, which has its advantages and shortcomings. However, biographies and authorized biographies can sometimes be an outstanding informative resource. For example, Isaacson's account of Steve Jobs is "probably as close as anyone will ever get" to Jobs and

“seems to provide a literal and straight narrative of his life” (Cornelissen, 2013). Despite the differences, both biographies and autobiographies aim at describing the life of an outstanding person in detail.

In addition to business biographies I used supplementary materials to gain extra knowledge and different perspectives on the described events and people. I examined other books written by or about the entrepreneurs we study. For example, besides his main autobiography, Richard Branson has written six more books that are biographical in nature. I also read interviews, business cases, popular business press, news, and examined videos of interviews, presentations, and even movie cameos of our heroes.

Study 2

Participant Sampling. It is important to understand the function of a magical realist perception, and its connection to the way entrepreneurs project the future. The key source of information is 40 semi-structured interviews with different entrepreneurs. To insure that entrepreneurs have enough experience as business leaders and can share their deep knowledge of functioning in entrepreneurial organizations I only interviewed those who’s organizations are past the liability of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965; Filatotchev, 2010). Based on the findings of the previous research (Aldrich & Auster, 1986; Brüderl, Preisendörfer & Ziegler, 1992) I assigned the cutoff threshold at five years of business operation. In addition to that, I only included entrepreneurs who lead organizations with potential for future growth, thus excluding self-employed individuals, consultants, and other small organizations based on professional services of one individual (e.g. lawyers, dentists).

Additional sources include media reports, web-site information, and other online information about the entrepreneurs and their organizations such as LinkedIn pages.

Participants Description. Generally, the entrepreneurs I interviewed are the leaders of relatively young organizations that are past the liability of newness, or serial entrepreneurs with experience of more than five years. They have different religious backgrounds—from atheists or agnostics to devout followers of major religions. They have had a business success that they self-identify, because there are many different criteria of business success that may not always be internally consistent (Walker & Brown, 2004). Business success is important here because I explore instances of arational experiences in connection with it, as well as in connection with major failures, plans and fantasies. Of course arational experiences can happen in connection with other aspects of organizational life, but business success and failure are vivid events that entrepreneurs remember and, trying to explain it to themselves, entrepreneurs are often sensitive to central and peripheral details of what was happening at the time. Also, business success is an important topic both for academics and for practitioners and one that is not understood in depth. I was also looking at fantasies and plans in connection with the start of a business (which sometimes coincided with the first success) as well as looking forward.

The respondents represent different industries, from construction, oil and gas to software and internet information technology (see Table 3). Most of the respondents were men (N=37) with only three women participants. I tried to include more women in the study, however because of the nature of the snowball sampling, most entrepreneurs that responded were men. The average number of years in business among the participants is 14.4, ranging from 5 to 40. The average number of employees is 50, ranging from 2 to 300. Interviewing participants with different demographic characteristics, different level of experience, and from various industries adds to the breadth of this study.

Insert Table 3 about here

Recruitment Strategy. In my search for appropriate entrepreneurs to interview at the initial stage of the project, I received assistance from a local business incubator that offers expertise, resources, and connections to entrepreneurs in Edmonton, Alberta. I met with a key employee of the incubator, and received permission to connect with entrepreneurs through their organization. The website of the business incubator listed the “graduates” of their program. Contacting them yielded the most fruitful results. However, after the first few interviews and after I had exhausted the pool of “graduates”, I moved, using LinkedIn, to social media or virtual snowball sampling (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) which is useful in reaching hard-to-involve populations and increases the level of confidence of participants, especially when a researcher is connected to a large shared network. To elaborate, it is difficult to convince entrepreneurs, who usually are very busy individuals, to participate in a research study; moreover, it is difficult to even obtain their contact information. However, it is possible to find entrepreneurs through LinkedIn, especially if the researcher is connected with other entrepreneurs, business people, and business educators. When a researcher sends an invitation to get connected on LinkedIn, an entrepreneur, seeing that they have mutual connections, especially among well-known entrepreneurs in the community, is more likely, in comparison with cold calling, to connect and communicate. In my experience, about 30% of sent invitations to connect were accepted, and 40% of accepted invitations ended with an interview.

My experience using virtual snowball sampling via LinkedIn can be helpful in my future research projects as well as to other management researchers because LinkedIn is a social network aimed at connecting professionals and business people for work-related purposes. LinkedIn can be helpful in data collection because a researcher can easily find the information about business people that is of interest. For example, I used information about the founding date of enterprises listed in the profiles of entrepreneurs to determine whether their firms are past the liability of newness. This was a convenient way to quickly conclude on whether the entrepreneur at hand is suitable for an interview. This is a simple tool to create a list of desirable entrepreneurs to interview. However, I always verified the information provided on LinkedIn with the entrepreneurs during the interview. I also obtained other important information about interviewees such as basic demographic information, information about their businesses, approximate number of employees etc.

It was necessary to get information from a population with a particular experience, i.e. capable entrepreneurs who have the ability to project their future in a meaningful way as well as reflect on their past because the two are connected (Wiebe, 2010), but also those who are open to arational thought. In this light, purposeful sampling strategy was appropriate. Purposeful sampling “is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005: 88). For this project, I concentrated on choosing the particular persons with certain experience. Patton (2002) explains the appropriateness of purposeful sampling,

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful

sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (p. 230).

I started with purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013; Coyne, 1997), looking for religious entrepreneurs, who, I thought, would have the highest chance of displaying a magical realist perception. However, I found that not all religious entrepreneurs displayed a magical realist perception. Some did not even display elements of it. This was somewhat surprising, and I turned to sampling deviant cases (Patton, 2005; Creswell, 2013) — non-religious entrepreneurs. I found that some non-religious entrepreneurs displayed a magical realist perception, and some displayed elements of it. In the final sample I ended up with a spectrum of entrepreneurs based on their perception of reality: from entrepreneurs without a magical realist perception (15%) through entrepreneurs with elements of it (57.5%) to entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception (27.5%). To clarify my sampling strategy, I should mention that entrepreneurs themselves were very helpful in the (virtual) snowball sampling technique. Often during or after the interview they would suggest people they knew whom I should talk to. They would also often identify the religious affiliation of the people they recommend (“we go to the same church,” or “he is not religious, but is interested in the kinds of things we talked about”). This is not surprising, because entrepreneurs are generally interested in topics of spirituality, religion, luck, and intuition. We know that entrepreneurs talk about these topics a lot online (Levine, 2014), and that nine out of ten entrepreneurs in the United States are affiliated with a religious tradition and two thirds have no doubts that God exists (Dougherty et al., 2013). After I got the recommendation, I went to LinkedIn and connected with those people (if I was not already connected to them and if they were on LinkedIn). The recommendation, of course, did not negate the requirement that the entrepreneurs had to be past the five-year liability of newness.

I interviewed entrepreneurs in different industries, of different ages, with different religious and cultural backgrounds, and of different genders. The size of the organizations that they lead varies: the sales figures range from hundreds of thousands to hundreds of millions of dollars a year. This is an estimation, because I did not specifically ask for the amount of business revenue generated as such information is sensitive and is not directly related to the topic of the interview and the study. However, the profits of the businesses emerged in several of the interviews. Another estimation of the size of organizations is the number of employees, which can be found in Table 3.

Entrepreneurs create an excellent context to study future oriented sensemaking because they are continuously looking forward. Future orientation is one of the most important qualities of entrepreneurial thinking (Rosen, 2016; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Future orientation is very important for entrepreneurs not only because they take responsibility for themselves, but also, as primary decision makers, they are responsible for their employees, as well as other stakeholders, and for the future they will build for them all.

Data Collection Procedures

Study 1

I obtained both digital and paper copies of the biographies. I tried to explore if I could use computer programs to help with the data analysis. However, I decided that none of the computer programs could significantly improve the analysis process. Because, for this study, I did not use any computer program to aid in the data analysis, I ended up not using the digital copies of the biographies. Paper copies that I, for the most part, obtained through the University of Alberta library network proved to be most useful.

Study 2

Interview process.

Once I received communication from a prospective subject with an agreement to participate in the study, I contacted them via email or LinkedIn message to arrange the date, time, and location for the interview. Whenever possible I tried to arrange face-to-face meetings. I tried to meet at the offices of the interviewees so that I could observe their work environment. If that was not possible or offered, I met with the subjects in locations comfortable to them, usually in restaurants or cafes. If, for reasons of remote location or time constraint, participants could not meet me in person, I arranged Skype interviews in order to best simulate a face-to-face experience.

Before the meeting with a subject I sent an email with the first four questions of the questionnaire (See Appendix 2) so that the respondents could reflect and prepare for the interview. In this email, I also sent participants a copy of the informed consent form (See Appendix 1). Most participants looked through the documents and were prepared for the interview with a consent form signed. If the consent form was not signed beforehand, I had a physical copy of the form ready and after a brief explanation and a review and after participants read through it, they signed the form before the start of the interview.

At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself, my educational and research background, and reiterated the topic and purpose of the study. I also described the measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality of the data and anonymity of participants. I explained that participant names and names of their companies would not appear in the dissertation or any other scholarly texts. Also, any identifiable information, such as other people's names and names of other organizations that could be mentioned, would be replaced with pseudonyms in the text.

Once I reviewed the information included in the consent form, I asked participants if they had any questions or if they needed me to clarify anything. At the end of each meeting, I let participants know that they could contact me either by phone or email. The contact information and an invitation to contact me, my supervisor, or the University of Alberta ethics board was included in the consent form. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed to ensure accuracy of the collected data. Interviews lasted from about 30 to 90 minutes. I ended up with 1961 minutes of recorded interviews, which yielded 570 single spaced pages of transcribed documents. I also took notes during interviews, but only to remind me about certain details to bring up later in the interview. Because I was not focused on detailed note taking, it allowed me to be an active listener and to be sensitive to the information provided. This helped me to better construct the interviews through asking additional questions and leading the conversation in the right direction. After each interview I made quick notes in my research diary. It gave me an opportunity for preliminary reflection on the data (Vinas, 2017).

Interview protocol.

In order to understand the way entrepreneurs construct futures for themselves and their companies, I conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews. Semi-structured interviews are usually comprised of a mixture of structured and unstructured questions allowing the researcher to follow up on important topics. Semi-structured interviews employ open-ended questions, are flexible and create an environment for conversations rather than dry question-answer sessions. I utilized a semi-structured approach, which contained enough outlined questions to explore the topics of the focus of the study, but still allowed for a conversational-style interaction that gave me the flexibility to ask probe questions (Riessman, 1993; Patton, 2002). This strategy is closely aligned with the thematic analysis methodology, as it allows collecting focused data on a specific

topic, while offering the freedom to the participant to create a story. I formulated the questions in a way that helped to construct the conversation within set topics, which allowed for consistency across participants, but yet allowed each respondent to talk about their stories in ways that were meaningful to them (Riessman, 1993).

In the process of conducting semi-structured interviews I asked the participants questions about their first major success in the business. This usually led to a conversation about the inception of their business and decisions that led to it. I then asked about the biggest challenge or the most difficult time they experienced as leaders of their companies. Without exception, every entrepreneur had a story of overcoming trials. These two big stories and several small stories that usually accompanied them gave a very good overview of the business and its leader, thus constructing a story of successes and trials of the business unfolded in time. I then asked about the reasons for both successes and difficulties. I paid very close attention to the way they talked about the reasons, trying to find any traces of arational thinking. Some entrepreneurs very quickly revealed their proclivity to arational thought; for others I had to probe and lead the conversation in a way that would unveil such proclivity. Of course, some respondents never showed any traces of arational thinking. I then asked about fantasies in regards of their business. Focusing on their plans for the future, I asked about their dreams and plans regarding their businesses and where they would take their activities in the future. I also asked them to compare their current explanations for success and failure to how they understood these during the time when the events took place. I was particularly attentive to aspects of their responses that spoke to questions of magical, superstitious or transcendental themes, which appeared in the discourses of both religious and non-religious entrepreneurs, as detailed below. By combining the prospective account of the future plans and the retrospective account of how the respondents deemed their

future success as they started the business, I try to capture a cosmological orientation of entrepreneurs that helps them to make sense of the future on an ongoing basis. To apprehend the use of spirituality in sensemaking, I am not limiting my inquiry to only one instance of future-oriented sensemaking, or one sensemaking technique, but rather try to see how future-orientation is ingrained in the cosmology of entrepreneurs. Because of their spirituality entrepreneurs do not always see time as linear. In some sense, for them, the future is now, and the past is always present. My inquiry is in line with the current calls to consider all dimensions of temporality (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Holt & Cornelissen, 2014; Colville et al., 2015) and to question the division of duration into past, present, and future (Introna, 2018; Bergson, 2002), remembering that “human way of being ... is to be always ahead of ourselves” (Heidegger, 1962, cited in Introna, 2018: 7).

Through the process of the interview, participants reflect on their experience; and both the interviewer and the respondent interact to co-create the stories told (Riessman, 1993; Clandinin, 2013). Several entrepreneurs told me that they valued our interview session because it allowed them to rethink their experience and what it meant to them. They also thanked me for asking great questions that helped them to reflect upon their careers and lives. Some of the sessions were quite profound and almost therapeutic because the respondents shared with me very personal stories and emotions that they rarely share with others.

Data Analysis

The approach I used is analytic abduction (Peirce, 1955). I iterated between empirical data and emerging as well as preexisting theoretical constructs (Weber, Heinze, & DeSoucey, 2008; Zundel, Holt, & Cornelissen, 2013). As the first step I created a framework of categories of arational behavior based on critical literature on magical realism (Zamora & Faris, 1995, Faris,

2004). With the second step I moved to the analysis of the data, which essentially is a collection of stories that reflect work and life of entrepreneurs. To make sense of these data, I used thematic analysis of life histories, which examines the informant's story about an important part of their life as well as the cultural resources it draws upon (Riessman, 1993: 2). In this study I concentrate on a thematic analysis of multiple narratives (Maitlis, 2012). This type of analysis focuses on the substance of stories, and explores central elements of the narratives.

Narrative is a discursive account of events. It is a whole telling of something. It has a plot composing a linear sequence of events with a beginning, middle, and end (Boje, 2001) and coherence that allows for closure (Ganzin, Gephart, & Suddaby, 2014). In other words, it involves temporal sequences of events and actions (Maitlis, 2012: 492). Maitlis (2012) claims that narrative is not just a description of reality, but a way of socially constructing reality. Studying stories that people tell about their lives and work has grown to be an important approach to studying organizations (Patton, 2005). In organization studies understanding stories has been used to study a variety of wide range topics, such as identity (Maitlis, 2009), interpretation and dissemination of ideas (Cassell & Lee, 2016), corporate social responsibility (Haack, Schoeneborn, & Wickert, 2012), and creation and contestation of meaning (Boje, 1991). This type of research starts with collecting stories from individuals about their lived and told experiences (Creswell, 2013). Historically researchers mainly concentrated on examining stories or life experiences of a single person to create, for example, a biography, autoethnography, or a complete life history of a person. Over time researchers, especially in organization studies, have shifted to analysis of stories of multiple people. For this dissertation I used the stories of different people that they told me (or described in autobiographies and biographies) about their life, business, and the way they perceive (and co-construct) reality to create an overarching story

about the path of an entrepreneur with a magical realist perception, and, most importantly, to show how the story of being on this path helps entrepreneurs to construct their future and make sense of their reality. There were many little stories that entrepreneurs told me (and biographical books contain), that, taken in aggregate, often create an overarching story of an entrepreneur and their business (whether in a book or in an interview).

My approach was a thematic analysis, which explores the content of the story, focusing on what was said, with the aim to identify key themes that are common to all stories told by participants (Maitlis, 2012: 494). “The thematic approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases – finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report” (Riessman, 2005: 3). Thematic analysis is relevant when a researcher aims to understand, convey, and highlight the key elements of the story that give the narrative its power. Thematic analysis is used to explore core dimensions around which meanings are constructed (Maitlis, 2012: 496). Thematic analysis is in line with the analytic abduction approach because it can be theory-led and can draw on existing theoretical concepts and even themes (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Maitlis, 2012).

To start identifying themes in my thematic analysis I used pattern analysis (Patton, 2014) to uncover commonalities in experiencing of arational incidents as it is conveyed in the stories told by the entrepreneurs. Pattern analysis is a process of searching for patterns in a narrative or set of narratives. Pattern refers to a descriptive finding; and the interpretation of meaning of such findings leads to the identification of themes (Patton, 2014: 541). Thematic analysis involves constant comparison, an approach that is also used in other types of qualitative research (Straus & Corbin, 1998; Maitlis, 2012). “Here the researcher moves repeatedly through and across the data, creating categories that allow one set of narratives to be distinguished from another on the

basis of the themes these contain. This enables valuable comparisons across stories” (Maitlis, 2012: 496).

Study 1

Analysis Process. 30 books is a large amount of data. I started the coding and analysis process of the data as I read the biographies. I started coding each book as I was reading, utilizing structural coding. Structural coding is a type of coding technique that applies a conceptual phrase or idea that is related to the research question and topic of inquiry to a segment of data (Saldana, 2013; MacQueen et al., 2008). In this particular case, I was looking for arational beliefs, behavior, and worldviews. Structural coding is used to examine comparable segments’ commonalities, differences, and relationships. It is suitable for analyzing data from multiple participants (in this case, different biographical accounts of different people), and for exploratory investigations (Saldana, 2013: 84). Structural coding prepares the data for further analysis, such as thematic analysis or pattern analysis.

Next, I applied pattern coding to the data. “Pattern Coding develops the ‘meta-code’ – the category label that identifies similarly coded data. Pattern Codes not only organize the corpus but attempt to attribute meaning to that organization” (Saldana, 2013: 209). To start the pattern coding I typed up all of the codes in MS Word. I used a separate document for each biography. This cutting up and reordering of data allowed me to focus on certain aspects of the data and of the stories because there is a lot of secondary information in the 30 books of data. I started to notice emerging themes at this point.

I then analyzed the structural codes and assessed their commonality to assign pattern codes. I eliminated the redundant codes and collapsed the similar categories of codes together to develop overarching themes. Some themes were too rare or did not add to the analysis (Miles &

Huberman, 1994: 61). I used pattern coding to develop major themes from the data (Saldana, 2013). I clustered the identified themes into broader overarching categories. I then performed a comparison analysis for the themes that I found among all the biographies to notice any commonalities. In this step I uncovered commonalities in experiencing of arational incidents and of social construction of a magical realist perception as it is conveyed in the biographical stories. These commonalities formed three main recurring themes and illustrate the systematicity in perception of the arational side of organizational reality. With each step of the analysis, I was going to higher levels of abstraction. Figure 1 presents my coding structure, showing the subsequent levels of abstraction, from first-order codes to aggregate categories (themes).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Study 2

Analysis Process. I started with creating and organizing files for data (Creswell, 2013). I organized the audio files and transcriptions of the interviews; I later transferred the transcriptions to NVivo for better management and analysis. I performed the analysis in two stages: first, I read and analyzed each interview transcript, trying to understand the story, its content and the themes within each interview. It was important to understand and interpret each story on its own. Chase (2005) explains the importance of this stage:

When it comes to interpreting narratives heard during interviews, narrative researchers begin with narrators' voices and stories, thereby extending the narrator-listener relationship and the active work of listening into the interpretive process. ... Rather than locating

distinct themes across interviews, narrative researchers listen first to the stories within each narrative (p. 663).

Second, I analyzed the entire set of interviews, looking for emerging themes and patterns in my data in aggregate. It is also important to mention that I performed the analysis incrementally as I was collecting data, without waiting for the data collection stage to be finished (Milles & Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2005). The first big milestone in this project was the analysis of the first ten interviews. I conducted the analysis and wrote up the findings. This milestone prepared the ground for further analysis, theorization, and contribution.

Before I could start the analysis of the text, the interviews had to be transcribed. I transcribed three interviews myself. I used InqScribe, software package for transcription, which allows to listen and type in the same program, without having to switch between windows. I also used the Dragon Naturally Speaking software program to help with typing up the interviews. I outsourced the rest of the transcribing work to a transcription service. I obtained a confidentiality agreement from the provider to ensure participants' privacy and anonymity.

I started coding the entire set of interviews utilizing structural coding. I repeat the definition here: structural coding is a type of coding technique that applies a conceptual phrase or idea that is related to the research question and topic of inquiry to a segment of data (Saldana, 2013; MacQueen et al., 2008). In this case of the analysis of interviews, I was once more looking for arational beliefs, behavior, and worldviews. Structural coding is used to examine comparable segments' commonalities, differences, and relationships. It is most suitable for analyzing interview transcripts, data from multiple respondents, gathered using semi-structured interview protocols (Saldana, 2013: 84). Structural coding prepares the data for further analysis, such as thematic analysis or pattern analysis.

Here I will give a brief example to clarify the coding procedure. During the analysis in one of the interviews I read a story that an entrepreneur told me about finding a business decision through a dream of his employee. They were facing a particular problem, and without a solution they could not secure an important order. An employee of the company, who is not particularly religious or spiritual (based on the entrepreneur's assessment), at first could not find the solution and was getting frustrated. However, the business owner told him that he believed that the employee could find the solution. The next morning the employee called the boss and told him that he saw the solution in his dream: "He called me the next morning. He had a dream that night. This big, three-hundred pound Harley guy had a dream. ...and told me all about it with almost tears in his eyes." As a part of structural coding, as I mentioned previously, I was looking for arational beliefs, behavior, and worldviews. I assessed that the story does contain the elements mentioned above. It is arational to believe (or to go through the experience) that one can find a specific solution to a very technical problem in a dream. Moreover, the entrepreneur believed that the solution in the dream came from God. I initially coded the story as "dream," and later, through aggregation (see below), I coded the story "divine intervention." "Divine intervention" as a code works here because the entrepreneur believed that it was through the divine intervention the employee saw the dream and as a result they were able to implement the solution and secure the order.

Next, I applied pattern coding to the data. Pattern coding is apt for developing 'meta-code' and for organizing data and attributing meaning to the organization (Saldana, 2013: 209). To start the pattern coding I organized my data by clustering the coded text under each code in separate windows in NVivo. I printed each window on paper, so that I could further my analysis by working with the printed material alongside the full text on the screen. Thus the data were cut

up and reordered. This allowed me to see the bigger picture of my data. At the same time it was easier to see the nuances of the data. Certain themes started to emerge at this stage. This process was also useful to think about what role each code played in the stories of the participants. Then, I reviewed my structural codes and assessed their commonality to assign pattern codes. I eliminated the redundant codes and collapsed the similar categories of codes together to develop overarching themes. I followed Miles & Huberman (1994) for this stage of the research, who maintain that “some codes do not work; others decay. No field material fits them, or the way they slice up the phenomenon is not the way the phenomenon appears empirically. This issue called for doing away with the code or changing its level” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 61). I used pattern coding to develop major themes from the data (Saldana, 2013). I clustered the identified themes into broader overarching categories. I then compared the themes that I found among all the texts to notice any commonalities.

As the emerging themes and the overall analysis of the stories were hinting at the importance of temporal dimension in the narratives of the entrepreneurs, I reanalyzed the data. In this last phase of coding and analysis I explored the temporal orientations and the projective dimension of sensemaking, adding another layer of codes. I also consulted the literature to make sense of the themes and locate them within theory on the topic. With each step of the analysis, I was going to higher levels of abstraction.

Figure 2 presents my coding structure, showing the subsequent levels of abstraction, from first-order codes to aggregate categories (themes).

Insert Figure 2 about here

To conclude, in this chapter I have presented a discussion of the ontological and epistemological stance that informs the research and supports the methodology. I adopt a constructivism-interpretivism paradigm in order to learn more about the way entrepreneurs engage in prospective sensemaking. Interpretivism-based methods including semi-structured interviewing and thematic analysis are the vehicles for capturing and analyzing participants' perceptions. In addition to a detailed description of methods used to conduct my thematic analysis, I also described details of my data collection and analysis for both Study 1 and Study 2. The following chapters discuss the results of the analysis based on the research questions posed in chapter one.

Chapter IV Findings (Study 1)

The findings of my analysis indicate three eminent themes: fluid malleable reality, fantasy, and traditional narrative. These themes roughly correspond to a temporal orientation of the narrative: the present, the future, and the past. Fluid malleable reality roughly corresponds to the present; it is the perception of the present that matters most to a person who sees the reality as fluid. A notion of being present in the moment can be cherished more if one sees the malleability of reality. Of course, there is an understanding that present actions can influence the future, but the emphasis is more on the symbolic and not causal influence. And because the symbolic action needs to be genuine and believed in, there is little space for instrumental use of such influence. Seeing the reality in this way allows a person to concentrate on being present in the moment. Fantasy corresponds to the future orientation. Fantasizing can be oriented to both the past and the future, but in the case of business biographies, it usually has a future orientation. Entrepreneurs fantasize about their future businesses, expansions, contracts, relationships, etc. Traditional narrative is past oriented. It is a resource that can be drawn upon to make sense of the current events and is a link to powerful persuasive stories that deeply resonate with the listeners.

Fluid Malleable Reality. One theme that is very prominent in the entrepreneurs' narratives is the notion of reality as fluid or malleable. By this I mean that reality is not fixed and does not just exist "out there" but is in the state of constant flux. This notion recognizes that individuals can heavily influence or even bend the reality. At the same time there is a realization that we don't quite understand how these laws of fluid reality work, giving space for guesses, belief, and all sorts of arational behavior. The meaning of the term fluid or malleable reality overlaps with the meaning of the term the law of attraction. The law of attraction is the idea or belief that like attracts like and that focused positive or negative thoughts can bring positive or negative results.

In general, this means that symbolic actions have real consequences; this includes symbolic ritual and superstition. Symbolic actions and superstition can be a part of the view of reality as malleable. Fluid malleable reality is reflected in at least three ways in the biographies: reality distortion fields, coincidences/luck, and dialog with the Universe. These subthemes reflect the way sensemaking processes unravel. These notions aid in sensemaking and sensegiving, helping to create visions and bring them to reality, allowing entrepreneurs to remain positive and optimistic, and overcome risk and uncertainty.

Reality Distortion Fields. Reality distortion field is a term that was used by the Apple employees starting in the early years of the company to refer to the ability of Steve Jobs to bend the reality and persuade people of his vision. A member of the original Apple Macintosh team, Bud Tribble, described Jobs's reality distortion field: "In his presence, reality is malleable. He can convince anyone of practically anything" (Isaacson, 2011:117-118). Jobs used this skill to motivate and push people beyond their ability to bring his vision to reality. Another description of the phenomenon is given by another Apple employee, Prasad Kaipa: "Small wonder that many people who were in a meeting with Steve Jobs said that being in the meeting was like going on a magical mystery tour. The brilliant Apple leader was indeed magical, with his ability to entrance, enthrall and simply bring others around to his way of thinking" (Kaipa, 2012). Reality distortion field stemmed from Jobs's spiritual search and his "faith in the power of the will to bend reality" (Isaacson, 2011: 43) as well his "belief that the rules didn't apply to him" (Isaacson, 2011: 119), that he was special and enlightened. Although the term reality distortion field originated at Apple, it is now widely used in connection with other business people and leaders in general. Reality distortion field has been noted around Bill Clinton, Bobby Fischer, Robert Friedland, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk, among others.

Jeff Bezos's biography mentions reality distortion field (Stone, 2013: 8) and likens Bezos to Jobs in his ability to persuade stakeholders. Part of his reality distortion field is what Amazon's employees called "fever dreams"—Bezos's outlandish ideas on how to grow Amazon to the point where they could sell anything online. The examples of this is the acquisition of companies (some acquisitions more successful, some less), and integration of these companies into Amazon; as well as the introduction of ambitious projects, like the Alexandria Project which set a goal of obtaining two copies of every book ever printed and storing them in the Amazon's distribution center. However bizarre some of the fever dreams ideas may sound, Bezos was persuasive enough to turn the fever dreams into reality, although with mixed results. Reality distortion field is a sensemaking and a sensegiving mechanism that Bezos uses to create, sustain and disseminate his vision of fluid malleable reality. He created a retail empire that has changed the way retail business works by pushing his view of how things should be. He imagined and then created a reality through active sensemaking and sensegiving for himself, his employees, customers and other stakeholders, and, later, for a broader audience, changing the way people shop and perceive shopping, reading, watching movies, etc. His vision was so different that his way of sensemaking and sensegiving had to take the form of reality distortion field.

SpaceX employees and popular business press are discussing the ability of Elon Musk to create reality distortion fields. *Business Insider* calls Musk the next Jobs and discusses their similarities, one of which is to push people to their limits and persuade them to accomplish impossible tasks within very short time limits, as a part of the reality distortion field construction. Musk's high ambitions to change the world, to change the way we drive, accumulate and use solar energy, as well as a goal to build a self sustaining colony on Mars requires him to use reality distortion fields. Even the tagline on SpaceX job postings reads:

“SpaceX is like Special Forces, we take on missions that others have deemed impossible” (Baer, 2014).

Similarly to Jobs, Musk created time distortions as part of the distortion field. Musk is known for his approach “to set overly optimistic deadlines and then try to get engineers to work nonstop for days on end to meet the goals. ‘If you asked Elon how long it would take to do something, there was never anything in his mind that would take more than an hour’ [Zip2 vice president of engineering Jim] Ambras said” (Vance, 2015: 68). The time distortion works to a large extent, as at SpaceX it often takes months to accomplish something that takes years for the space programs of such powerful nations as the USA or Russia. SpaceX employees at any level are known for the incredibly long work hours and high productivity.

Musk’s biographer Ashlee Vance (2015) gives an account of reality distortion field at work at SpaceX. The third launch of Falcon 1 rocket on August 2, 2008 ended in a disaster at the moment when the first stage and the second stage of the rocket were to separate. The atmosphere in the SpaceX control room was charged with emotion. The employees had high hopes in the third launch since the first two rockets exploded at the early stages of lift off. At first they were extremely enthusiastic as they watched the third rocket soar into the sky without any indications of a problem. But as soon as the problem was apparent, SpaceX employees were shattered, and some even started crying. “It was so profound seeing the energy shift over the room in the course of thirty seconds,” Vance (2015: 199) relays the experience of Dolly Singh, a recruiter at SpaceX. However, Musk addressed the group right away: “Look. We are going to do this. It’s going to be okay. Don’t freak out.” Singh recalls the immediate change in the room: “It was like magic. Everyone chilled out immediately and started to focus on figuring out what just happened and how to fix it. It went from despair to hope and focus.” (Vance, 2015: 199). Musk addressed

the public shortly after and stated that they had already planned to launch the fourth and fifth rockets as well as a bigger rocket, Falcon 9, development was to continue unabated.

The reality distortion field worked perfectly well in these direst of circumstances at SpaceX, forcing the employees to focus and work productively instead of dwelling on failure and despair. Musk was able to make sense of the situation in the moment and to immediately offer sensegiving to his employees and the public. Such ability for sensemaking in extremely difficult situations in a short period of time is crucial for the success of entrepreneurs. And the ability to change the emotional atmosphere surrounding employees through powerful sensegiving to allow them to concentrate on the tasks at hand (but for the sake of the future) is also very important for successful operation.

Coincidences/Luck. In the biographies we can get a feeling for a fluid malleable reality through the notion of serendipitous coincidences, instances of luck, or acknowledgement of fate. Reading the autobiography of Richard Branson, we get a strong impression that his life is permeated with coincidences, some of which are very lucky, and some are plainly bizarre. Branson gives a diligent report of the coincidences in his life, but does not theorize much of their nature or origin. For example, Branson tells a story of his mother finding a necklace and selling it for £100 and then giving the money to her son in exactly the right time of the early days of Branson's *Student* magazine. "Her £100 paid off our telephone and postage bills and kept us going for months. Without it we could have collapsed" (Branson, 2009: 51). Another story happens during Branson's balloon flight that almost ended up in a catastrophe. His second pilot, Rory, was supposed to go with the crew on the flight, but got sick, which allegedly never happens to him, instead, one of the engineers, named Alex, had to take the vacant place. At one point of the journey they started to descend rapidly because of a fuel tank locks malfunction, and

the engineer who became a part of the crew was the only person in the world who could save them. “Since Alex practically built the capsule, he knew exactly how to undo the locks. In the panic I realised that, if Rory had been on board instead, we’d have been stuck” (Branson, 2009: 9). Throughout the book we find similar stories of coincidences that sometimes were detrimental to Virgin’s success or to Branson’s personal accomplishments.

The biography of Jeff Bezos presents a story of serendipitous coincidence or fate. In 1998 Bezos acquired a Silicon Valley company, Junglee, which created the first shopping-comparison web site on the Web. Although the integration of Junglee into Amazon proved to be a failure, “the deal nevertheless produced an extraordinarily bounteous outcome—for Bezos” (Stone, 2013: 83) because through Junglee’s president, Ram Shriram, Bezos met Larry Page and Sergey Brin, the founders of Google. Amazon’s boss subsequently became one of the original investors in Google.

Nike co-founder, Phil Knight towards the end of his biography is puzzled by all the success, by the path that he took to achieve it, and by all the coincidences and instances of luck he has encountered:

Can this all be a coincidence?

I think of the countless Nike offices around the world. At each one, no matter the country, the phone number ends in 6453, which spells out Nike on the keypad. But, by pure chance, from right to left it also spells out Pre’s best time in the mile, to the tenth of a second: 3:54.6.

I say by pure chance, but is it really? Am I allowed to think that some coincidences are more than coincidental? Can I be forgiven for thinking, or hoping, that the universe, or some guiding daemon, has been nudging me, whispering to me? Or else just playing with

me? Can it really be nothing but a fluke of geography that the oldest shoes ever discovered are a pair of nine-thousand-year-old sandals . . . salvaged from a cave in Oregon?

Is there nothing to the fact that the sandals were discovered in 1938, the year I was born? (Knight, 2016: 907)

Although the entrepreneurs themselves do not directly theorize about the nature of luck and serendipitous coincidences in the biographies, the fact that these topics are prominent is telling. Entrepreneurs (and especially very successful entrepreneurs) often believe that they are special, and that the things that they do are also special. Instances of luck, and the way they interpret them (as luck) gives an assurance that what they are doing is right, or that they will succeed. They may associate luck with higher forces, in which case they think that they are being led by them. Or, if they do not associate luck with higher forces, instances of luck still give them an assurance that things will work out. The interpretation of events as luck, or serendipity, or fate helps entrepreneurs to make sense of the situation in both the present and the past, and even project ideas and images into the future. A “lucky event” is clearly a trigger for sensemaking, because it stands out and disrupts the routine flow of things. Often there is no strictly rational explanation for such an event, and therefore it gets labeled as “luck.” Nevertheless, it is not a failure of sensemaking, and such events bear meaning on their own. Such sensemaking, where luck is an entity, contributes to the perception of reality as fluid and malleable, which means that entrepreneurs can ultimately change the reality and succeed with their plans and visions.

Dialog with the Universe. When people see reality as fluid and malleable, they try to influence the reality by engaging in symbolic action that is often represented as a sort of a dialog with the Universe. A dialog with the Universe follows the law of attraction, in that positive or negative thoughts bring positive or negative results. The Universe, of course, can represent

different entities, including God. The interaction with the Universe usually follows two patterns: asking and thanking. A person can ask the Universe by creating positive images in their head and concentrating positive thought on a certain outcome. To thank the Universe one would do good for their community, country, or simply a person in need. In companies it is sometimes connected to the corporate social responsibility efforts. The notion of the dialog with the Universe is becoming fairly popular in the entrepreneurial community as evidenced by the social media trends, and articles in outlets such as *Entrepreneur, Inc.*, and *Medium*.

Maxine Clark, the founder and Chief Executive Bear of Build-A-Bear Workshop, in her autobiography is giving an account of how she and her company are involved in philanthropy and gives a rationale for that: “I think it’s important for companies to have a heart and to contribute. In a sense, it’s a way of paying back the universe for our own good fortune” (Clark, 2006: 298). Sophia Amoruso, the founder of Nasty Gal, shares how to ask the Universe in order to reach success: “You get back what you put out, so you might as well think positively, focus on visualizing what you want instead of getting distracted by what you don’t want, and send the universe your good intentions so that it can send them right back” (Amoruso, 2014: 120). Spanx founder Sara Blakely tells the story of how she was looking for a business idea with the help of the Universe. As she was feeling unsatisfied with her life and job as a door-to-door fax machines salesperson, she started contemplating her life purpose:

And so I went home that night and I wrote down in my journal ‘I want to invent a product that I can sell to millions of people that will make them feel good.’ This was something that I set intention for. I had really asked the universe to give me an idea that I could bring to the world. (Hoffman, 2018)

The idea that the Universe, or some other higher power is looking out for you, or even leading you, can be very reassuring and help to continue on a chosen path. Entrepreneurs use this idea to help them make sense of the current situation, even if the present is challenging or disappointing. If the dialog with the Universe is possible, then you need to keep sending the positive vibe to the Universe. Such notion is helpful in the sensemaking process because entrepreneurs can maintain a positive, optimistic outlook and continue with their tasks at hand. This contributes to the resilience and helps to overcome risk and uncertainty of the entrepreneurial business environment.

Fantasy. The theme of fantasy and fantasizing about one's business and organization comes up frequently in business biographies. Entrepreneurs have a lot to say on the topic because a business usually starts with a fantasy. People fantasize about a new world they are going to create in the form of their organization (they create organizational cosmogony). At the same time, business creation is a very realistic enterprise: people use their time, energy, and money to build something new and hope for a real outcome: revenues, influence, and social position. Fantasies possess strong arational elements, and both rational business building processes and arational fantasizing are needed in order to create any kind of business. People combine these two things at the same time and are not surprised by either, in other words take both for granted. Approached this way, business creation is a process of magical realism. At the same time fantasies are a part of projecting the future in prospective sensemaking. Fantasies can turn into future oriented sensemaking and become part of the action plan. As part of future oriented sensemaking they can help with decision making in the present based on the projected images of the future and aid in entrepreneurial perseverance and risk coping.

Richard Branson attributes his way of doing business and of life to fantasy and imagination: “when someone sends me a written proposal, rather than dwelling on detailed facts and figures I find that my imagination grasps and expands on what I read” (Branson, 2009: 31). This is how he describes the meeting in which he tried to sell Student magazine: “Fantasising about the future is one of my favourite pastimes, and I told the meeting that I had all sorts of other plans for Student” (Branson, 2009: 78). Maxine Clark has a whole chapter devoted to fantasy in her biography; in fact, she starts her book and the chapter with the following passage: “People often ask how I was able to take the rough idea for Build-A-Bear Workshop and turn it into such a successful business. Above all, it started when I simply allowed myself to dream. And I’m a true believer in dreaming big” (Clark, 2006: 9). She continues to tell us that it is important to dream and fantasize not only in the very beginning of the business, but to continue to do so always. Clark tells a story of dreaming about opening a flagman store in New York:

From the time we first opened our doors in 1997, I knew I wanted to have the largest Build-A-Bear Workshop store in the world right in the heart of New York City. ... I waited eight years to act on this vision. All the while, my associates, Guests, and I kept thinking up ways to make the New York store even more spectacular. We continued to dream the dream supreme, and now that dream has come true. (Clark, 2006: 13)

Fantasy of Glory

Entrepreneurs often fantasize of glory of their businesses. The dreams and fantasies often revolve around what a great company they could build that would change lives, most importantly their own, to let them express themselves, get recognition, and obtain power and money.

Dreaming is at the core of business creation. Entrepreneurs are those people who take action to make their dreams and fantasies come true.

Sophia Amoruso tells us a story of how she was trying to find herself through different activities, and not just business creation. It is a story of a teenager who tries to develop in different directions and express herself, and finds success through building an eBay store and, later, a large retail company. Fantasizing and dreaming shape her way to success. She is one of the people who cannot sit still and feels like she is destined for something great. The dreams of achieving greatness take different forms, but eventually everything comes together as she explores the art of sale:

All I knew was that I wanted to do something awesome, and was open to whatever shape or form this awesomeness took. I wanted to be a photographer; I wanted to go to art school; I wanted to play in a band; and when I started the eBay store, all of this came in handy even though I would never have associated these things. (Amoruso, 2014: 76)

The dream of wanting to do “something awesome” propels Amoruso ahead and channels her energy into worthwhile pursuits. Perhaps some of those pursuits were illusory to some extent. But those different activities gave her important experience, which she was able to draw upon when real opportunities came. She takes a few paragraphs of her book to explain how the skills that she acquired through photography, music, and other pursuits helped her to gain a competitive advantage in clothing retail. Projecting a future where she is doing something meaningful (and “awesome”), helped her to continue with her pursuits and learning, and, most importantly, helped her continue with her business. It also allowed for a vision that retail business can be an “awesome” and fulfilling activity.

Fantasy and dreaming have always been very important for Jeff Bezos. In the early 1990s Bezos was working on Wall Street. Although he had a lot of success and a very comfortable position, Bezos was thinking about starting his own business. As the internet boom started, Bezos was captivated by the incredible growth in the use of the internet and the endless possibilities it offered. At one point he came up with an idea to open an online bookstore. He could open it for D. E. Shaw, an investment management group he was working for, or he could leave and open the store on his own. This was the pivotal decision he had to make. And this is where dreaming and fantasizing come to help him take this leap of faith:

I knew when I was eighty that I would never, for example, think about why I walked away from my 1994 Wall Street bonus right in the middle of the year at the worst possible time. That kind of thing just isn't something you worry about when you're eighty years old. At the same time, I knew that I might sincerely regret not having participated in this thing called the Internet that I thought was going to be a revolutionizing event. When I thought about it that way... it was incredibly easy to make the decision. (Stone, 2013: 64)

Bezos imagines himself in a very distant future, when he is eighty years old, which lets him see a bigger picture, and fantasize even bolder. This projection into the future helps him to make sense of the current situation. The fantasy helps him to assign value to certain decisions and, based on this value, to discriminate against other decisions. The value assignment can be a difficult task that requires going down to the base ontological beliefs. Given the time pressure and complexity of the decision at hand, such a task requires a serious sensemaking effort. Bezos uses the fantasy as part of the future-oriented sensemaking. He projects two different images of the future, compares them, and based on this comparison, assigns a higher value to the preferred future. This mental exercise allows him to make a life changing decision.

Space Travel Fantasies. One peculiar subset of fantasies that prominent superrich entrepreneurs have and continue to pursue is space travel fantasy. The realization of these dreams has an important and lasting effect on the aerospace industry and on contemporary culture as a whole (e.g. introduction of space tourism). There are at least six famous entrepreneurs who achieved success elsewhere made substantial impact on aerospace industry. Elon Musk founded SpaceX, Richard Branson opened Virgin Galactic, Jeff Bezos founded private company Blue Origin, Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin are planning a trip to Mars, called project Virgile, and Paul Allen was the sole investor of SpaceShipOne suborbital spacecraft, which won the Ansari X Prize competition for launching the first reusable manned commercial spacecraft into space.

In his biography, Jeff Bezos shares how he was inspired by NASA to get interested in space when he was five years old. Leading Blue Origin is not just a hobby for Bezos, according to Nick Hanauer, an early Amazon investor, “[Bezos] absolutely thinks he’s going to space. It’s always been one of his goals. It’s why he started working out every morning. He’s been ridiculously disciplined about it” (Stone, 2013: 154). Such dedication is coming from his fantasies: “Bezos was turning imagination into reality, the fancies of his youth into actual physical things” and according to Danny Hillis, personal Bezos’s friend, “Space for Jeff is not a year 2000 or a year 2010 opportunity. It’s been a dream of humanity’s for centuries and it will continue to be one for centuries. Jeff sees himself and Blue Origin as part of that bigger story. It’s the next step in what Jules Verne was writing about and what the Apollo missions accomplished” (Stone, 2013: 158-59). The future oriented sensemaking that is behind the founding and operations of Blue Origin determines the decisions that Bezos makes in the present. In this example, it is not just business decisions; it is also very personal decisions, such

as a very disciplined workout routine, and a determination to travel to space. This amalgamation of fantasy and reality affects quite practical and mundane routines.

Richard Branson registered a company called Virgin Galactic Airways ten years prior to actually starting any activity within the aerospace industry. His managers were skeptical: “‘you must be joking,’ people said to me. ‘OK,’ I responded, ‘Virgin Intergalactic Airways!’... The Virgin Galactic joke became a very serious reality in September of [2004]” (Branson, 2009: 467-68). Branson is now working towards making space tourism a reality: “I do believe that in the near future we will be taking the world’s first private astronauts regularly into space both safely and for \$200,000 or less each. ... This means that the vision of millions of people – that they may one day be able to visit the stars – can finally be realised” (Branson, 2009: 469-70).

Elon Musk, probably the most successful space entrepreneur so far, has been dreaming about space travel since he was a child. As a boy Musk was taking his fantasies seriously.

By the middle of his teenage years, Musk had blended fantasy and reality to the point that they were hard to separate in his mind. Musk came to see man’s fate in the universe as a personal obligation. If that meant pursuing cleaner energy technology or building spaceships to extend the human species’s reach, then so be it. Musk would find a way to make these things happen. (Vance, 2015:24).

However, it was a conversation during a car trip with a longtime friend Adeo Ressi that started Musk on turning the fantasy into reality:

"It was almost a joke at first," Ressi says. "We were both interested in space, but we dismissed it as soon as it came up. 'Oh, that's too expensive and complicated.' Then two miles would go by. 'Well, how expensive and complicated could it be?' Two more miles. 'It can't be *that* expensive and complicated.' It kept going on like this, and by the time we

made it through the Midtown Tunnel into New York City, we'd basically decided to travel the world to see if something could be done in space." (Junod, 2012)

Musk then proceeded to founding SpaceX, a company that now launches rockets to the International Space Station. Despite the huge success, Musk continues on to fantasize about going to Mars and founding a self-sustainable colony there:

When a man tells you about the time he planned to put a vegetable garden on Mars, you worry about his mental state. But if that same man has since launched multiple rockets that are actually capable of reaching Mars—sending them into orbit, Bond-style, from a tiny island in the Pacific—you need to find another diagnosis. (Anderson, 2012)

Pastime fantasies are the roots of future oriented sensemaking. People fantasize about impossible things and create the images of the future in their heads. However, such fantasies have the ability to turn into future oriented sensemaking. And when they do, especially in the organizational contexts, is when they can turn into reality. Musk and SpaceX is the ultimate example of this process. A crazy fantasy about space travel of a young boy from South Africa is turning into reality in front of our eyes as we watch the first private company space launch, the launch of a reusable rocket, and the most serious preparation for a Mars mission.

Turning humans into space colonizers is his stated life's purpose. "I would like to die thinking that humanity has a bright future," he said. "If we can solve sustainable energy and be well on our way to becoming a multiplanetary species with a self-sustaining civilization on another planet—to cope with a worst-case scenario happening and extinguishing human consciousness—then," and here he paused for a moment, "I think that would be really good." (Vance, 2015: 5)

Traditional Narrative. In magical realism traditional belief underlies the narrative incorporating myth, religious discourse, and folklore. Traditional narrative theme is quite prominent in the business biographies. Steve Jobs was shown to be a skillful myth creator (Ganzin, Gephart, & Suddaby, 2014). His biography contains many mythical elements that describe how myth was integrated into his life. Even the fact that Jobs went a long way to persuade Walter Isaacson, a master biographer, who created life accounts of Benjamin Franklin and Albert Einstein, to write his biography tells us that he was very careful in creating an overall story of his life. Jobs strives to present his life as a life of a journeying hero, akin to that of Ulysses or any other great hero going through the stages of monomyth (Campbell, 1949).

Jeff Bezos's biography contains many elements of traditional narrative, especially biblical language. Writing about the very early days of Amazon, the biographer tells the story of working out of a garage on a tight budget: "Bezos built the first two desks out of sixty-dollar blond-wood doors from Home Depot, an endeavor that later carried almost biblical significance at Amazon, like Noah building the ark" (Stone, 2013: 32-33). Throughout the book we see mentions of the gospel, referring to the persuasive narrative of Bezos, the cult, referring to work culture at Amazon, or the missionary, referring to culture of Amazon, being a missionary company. There is also a mention of prophetic qualities of Bezos; in connection with Bezos's serendipitous investment in Google, Ram Shriram says: "He's so prescient. It's like he can peer into the future" (Stone, 2013: 84).

Folklore also plays a big role in business biographies. Stone mentions a catalog of Jeffisms, a collection of anecdotes or sayings by Bezos that are well known and often repeated among Amazon's employees. An example of that is a saying: "Every time we hire someone, he or she should raise the bar for the next hire, so that the overall talent pool is always improving" (Stone,

2013: 44). Maxine Clark includes a whole section of folkloric sayings, titled “Bearisms to Live and Work By.” Almost three pages of bearisms contain “truths”, such as “Beauty is in the eye of a bearholder” (Clark & Joyner, 2006: 312).

Richard Branson also uses traditional narrative describing his dealings. Branson and his friend musician Peter Gabriel were instrumental in founding and sponsoring The Elders, an independent group of global leaders who work together for peace and human rights. The name of the group and the vision of what The Elders should do are rooted in traditional narrative:

We believe that men and women who have shown moral integrity and leadership have a great deal of wisdom to offer. It is the kind of wisdom that has always been historically passed down by tribal or village elders. Ancient, intuitive wisdom is what our frantic, high-tech, global village needs. (Branson, 2009: 519)

Peter Gabriel, explaining the origins of the idea for The Elders, said: “I see it based on African tribes, who look up to the elders in their village. But now we’re way beyond the little village. Now there’s Google and Wikipedia and all the other links to connect people” (Branson, 2009: 519).

Traditional narrative and beliefs connected to it provide a grounding for sensemaking and sensegiving. This sensemaking is connected to the past and vividly illustrates the idea that all sensemaking is based on the beliefs that people possess (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). This sensemaking can manifest itself in the interpretation of tradition and tailoring it to the contemporary world, and in the motivation of entrepreneurial action. Traditional narrative and belief can also become a sensemaking tool in that it can help to simplify decision-making matrixes.

Connection to tradition through journey. In biographies we can see the connection to tradition and traditional narrative through journey, as well the elements of the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 1949; Ganzin, Gephart, & Suddaby, 2014). This connection can help entrepreneurs to find grounding for their sensemaking through connection of their actions to the actions of the great people, or heroes, or even gods in the past. Entrepreneurs find patterns of action (Eliade, 1963) for their activities and decisions in the traditional narrative that describes great victories or transformations.

The co-founder of Nike, Phil Knight starts his autobiography with the description of a feeling of lack of accomplishment. He states that at the age of twenty-four, he felt like a shy pale kid despite his service in the army and the attainment of a bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon and an MBA from Stanford. To overcome this feeling Knight embarks on a journey around the world. Part of this journey would be a meeting with the executives of Onitsuka Tiger in Japan, which would lead him to starting an import company that would later become Nike. But the larger part of the journey would be the quest for the spiritual enlightenment and the discovery of self:

I wanted to visit the planet's most beautiful and wondrous places. And its most sacred. Of course I wanted to taste other foods, hear other languages, dive into other cultures, but what I really craved was connection with a capital C. I wanted to experience what the Chinese call Tao, the Greeks call Logos, the Hindus call Jñāna, the Buddhists call Dharma. What the Christians call Spirit. Before setting out on my own personal life voyage, I thought, let me first understand the greater voyage of humankind. Let me explore the grandest temples and churches and shrines, the holiest rivers and mountaintops. Let me feel the presence of . . . God? Yes, I told myself, yes. For want of a better word, God. (Knight, 2016: 10)

Wherever Knight goes, he visits the most sacred sights and studies the spiritual traditions of the place. Among other places, he finds himself in the Varanasi Temple, the Meiji Garden, and the Temple of Nike, the goddess of victory, after which his company will be named. However, as he looks for the spiritual, and goes through the formative experiences, during one of which he almost dies, Knight discovers himself on this journey: “You cannot travel the path until you have become the path yourself, said the Buddha.” (Knight, 2016: 24). Knight is trying really hard to make a connection of his life and his business to the sacred. This gives him a basis from which to start his own journey and transformation. Because he perceives that he has an experience of touching the sacred, and has found himself, Knight feels like he is in the position to explore and build something. This position of superior knowledge and experience allows him to make sense of the world in a different manner than most people. The great *past* of the great traditions and accomplishments of heroes and gods is, in a sense, connected through Knight and his experience and action, to a great *future*. That future Knight builds over the course of his career, creating a multi-billion-dollar company and a brand that is one of the most valuable in the world.

Steve Jobs goes through a similar transformation on his journey to India. He spent seven months studying spiritual traditions of India, traveling extensively in the country. He also had near death experiences as he almost died from dysentery. After his trip he kept his innate interest in Buddhism and Eastern philosophy, continuing to meditate and study from a Buddhist priest. In addition to his physical journey to India, Jobs saw his life as a spiritual journey of a hero (Ganzin, Gephart, & Suddaby, 2014). In his popular Stanford commencement speech Jobs presents his life as a journey through all 17 stages of monomyth (Campbell, 1949), going from rejection and call to the journey, through the road of trials, to the glorious come back to bestow the boons of spiritual knowledge upon those who waited for him.

Interestingly, Howard Schultz gets the idea of starting a coffee shop company on a (less dramatic) trip to Italy. “I didn’t truly discover coffee’s magic, however, until one year later [after starting working for the original Starbucks owners] on a business trip to Italy. That visit was the seed of what blossomed into today’s Starbucks Coffee Company” (Schultz & Gordon, 2011: 9). Schultz tapped into the tradition of coffee making and consumption in Milan. He describes the experience with much detail. For him, going to a coffee shop was not just a coffee break, it was a participation in a ritual, in a centuries old tradition that connects humans through craftsmanship and theater: “being handed a tiny white porcelain demitasse filled with dark coffee crafted just for me by a gracious Italian gentleman called a barista was nothing less than transcendent. This was so much more than a coffee break; this was theater. An experience in and of itself” (Schultz & Gordon, 2011: 10). This experience inspired him for a business idea: “My mind raced. It was as if I envisioned my own future and the future of Starbucks, which at the time sold only whole-bean and ground coffee in bags for home consumption. No beverages” (Schultz & Gordon, 2011: 10).

Schultz’s mission has become to bring that magic to the people. This is, according to his autobiography, what drives him. “By no stretch of the imagination did Starbucks introduce the world to coffee or espresso-based drinks, but I do think it’s fair to say that Starbucks exposed many people to coffee’s magic” (Schultz & Gordon, 2011: 12). In a chapter, titled “Magic,” Schultz describes how, as a boy, he was enamored by an Automat, an automated self-serve restaurant. “Since then, I have always looked for the magic” (Schultz & Gordon, 2011: 34). And for him, this is what good merchants do: “We take something ordinary and infuse it with emotion and meaning, and then we tell its story over and over and over again, often without saying a word” (Schultz & Gordon, 2011: 12).

Schultz finds grounding for his business activities in centuries old traditions to which he is able to connect. He is mesmerized by the tradition and theater of coffee preparation and consumption. As, since he was a child, Schultz had his eyes open for magic, he embraces the magic of coffee, and makes it his mission to share it with the world. The grounding in the tradition, and the mission that he takes upon himself provide for a solid foundation for the sensemaking and sensegiving he is doing in building (and re-building) his company. His own interpretation of the good merchant's work is sensegiving through storytelling ("we tell its story") that is connected to and interprets tradition.

The founder of TOMS, Blake Mycoskie found his business idea on a trip to Argentina. He immersed himself in the local culture and tradition, including learning the national dance (the tango), playing the national sport (polo), and drinking the national wine (Malbec) (Mycoskie, 2012: 4). This is when he came across the national shoe, the alpargata. At the same time Mycoskie discovered that the poor population of Argentina, especially children, was in great need of shoes. He travelled to several villages and witnessed the afflictions caused by the absence of shoes: blisters, sores, and infections. The local charity organizations had little success in alleviating the suffering because they solely depended on donations. And even when they had enough donated shoes, they were often not in the correct sizes. This is when Mycoskie came up with the idea to modify the alpargata, produce the modified shoe in Argentina, and sell it in the United States to raise money for charity. He would then use the money to produce more shoes in the correct sizes and donate them to the children in need. He utilized the "one for one" model, meaning, TOMS promised to donate one pair of shoes for each pair sold, which makes TOMS' customers participate in charity and feel good about themselves.

As Mycoskie undertakes his journey and learns about the traditions of Argentina, he is doing the sensemaking work and interprets the Argentinian traditions of shoemaking to fit the US (and, later, global) market. At the same time, he is able to connect the business idea to sell the alpargata in the US with the social cause to alleviate poverty. As the corporate social responsibility and non-profit work was gaining massive popularity at the time, especially as a marketing technique, the two ideas struck accord. His ability to make sense of the situation was grounded to some extent in the traditions that he learned on the trip, but most importantly, in the tradition of compassion and service that is manifested in many traditional texts and belief systems.

Code of belief.

Part of the influence of traditional narrative on the way entrepreneurs think and make sense of their environment comes through adhering to a certain code of belief or the universal principles of life and behavior. The code of belief or the principles often come from the traditional texts that inform what ethical conduct should be like. Such texts include the Bible, the Sutras, and the Koran, as well as other religious texts and doctrines. Entrepreneurs often rely on their code of belief or principles to guide their decision-making.

Richard Branson believes that helping others is extremely important and should go hand in hand with entrepreneurship. Branson thinks that entrepreneurs should focus on how their business ideas will help others. Branson has been involved with different philanthropic causes since he started his first company as a young man. His passion for philanthropy has resulted in founding Virgin Unite, a non-profit foundation that tackles social and environmental problems in an entrepreneurial way. Helping people is so important for Branson that he encourages entrepreneurs to incorporate the desire to help people into their business model (as early as the

business plan stage) because it may be their greatest asset. For Branson, helping people is one of the most important beliefs. This belief can help motivate entrepreneurial action and aid in the sensemaking process of business decision-making. This is why the desire to help people can become a crucial asset for nascent entrepreneurs even at the very early stages of business activity.

Blake Mycoskie started his company with the purpose to help people. He had the belief that this motivation would change the concept of business and philanthropy. According to Mycoskie, his credo of helping people was the core of his company from the very start. He shares that whenever he faced challenges, he remembered to live his story to overcome the fear of failure.

I went back to my core question: Why am I doing this? When you go back to your core motivations, you affirm the authenticity of your project, which takes away one of the biggest fears: that you are a fraud. When you live your story, you don't have to pretend you're someone you're not. You can just be yourself. It's been said that there's nothing more dangerous than someone who has nothing to lose—and it's true in business too.

When you are living your story, it means your actions and your mission are the same, which eliminates any room for shame or disappointment, the two emotions that underlie our greatest fears. That's when you have nothing to lose. (Mycoskie, 2012: 45)

Helping people is the motivation for him and a part of his core belief, so coming back to this conviction gives him the strength and determination to continue and perform. Whenever Mycoskie faces challenges, he goes back to his core belief, which supports his sensemaking in whatever decision he has to make. The cited passage illustrates how the actions, identity, sensemaking, and risk coping are intertwined. For Mycoskie, his identity (“You can just be yourself.”) is connected to his core beliefs and motivations (“Why am I doing this?”), both of

which support his sensemaking (“your actions and your mission are the same”). In the sensemaking process he relies on his beliefs, mission, and identity to make decisions and act. This process shows how he is able to overcome fear and deal with risk and uncertainty (nothing to lose; no fear of being a fraud; no room for shame or disappointment).

Mary Kay Ash structured her biography around one principle and belief, the Golden Rule. Here is how she starts the book:

The Golden Rule teaches us to “Do unto others as we would have others do unto us.” The Bible tells us this in the Book of Matthew (7:12), and this message is just as meaningful today as ever. Of course, it was meant for everyone, but what a perfect rule of conduct for leadership! (Ash, 2008: 1).

The theme of the Golden Rule runs like a thread through all the chapters of the biography. A lot of topics that Ash raises have to do with how to be good to people and with people. She often talks about how being good to people is connected to certain aspects of leadership. For example, she talks extensively about the importance of helping other people to get what they want, so that, in return, you could get what you want. She also discusses the importance of sticking to your principles and never compromising them. Her narrative is filled with anchoring the leadership principles in core beliefs that stem from millennia old principles found in the Bible and Christian doctrine. The Golden Rule and Ash’s other beliefs help her to navigate all aspects of leadership and business operation. Her beliefs become a sensemaking tool in that she can always fall back to her credo of the Golden Rule in the decision-making and in the leadership techniques.

Chapter V Findings (Study 2)

The analysis revealed three distinct cognitive orientations in the sample of entrepreneurs, each of which I detail in this chapter. Uncovering these orientations we can see how entrepreneurs construct their futures drawing on arational beliefs and vision, as well as on mundane management practices and rational planning. Conducting interviews and observing the entrepreneurs I was noticing a magical realist perception in them, their cognitive orientations, how they were shaping their reality on everyday basis, and the way they were influencing their stories. I was drawing parallels between the stories I heard and the stories of magical realist fiction. The stories of entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception have all the elements of magical realist fiction. Most importantly, magical, arational events run like a thread through their narratives, but are never surprising to them. The three orientations effectively provide answers to the three questions originally posed by McMullen and Shepherd (2006) to capture the unique existential issues faced by all entrepreneurs.

The first, which I term an affective-attitudinal orientation, answers the question “what is happening out there?” by suggesting that entrepreneurs creatively reinterpret the risk and uncertainty of their external environment with an affective orientation of calm acceptance of the chaotic mystery of the universe paired with a confident conviction of the correctness of their worldview. This orientation requires a somewhat paradoxical combination of ceding authority, somewhat fatalistically to a higher power beyond individual control while retaining the agentic assumption that by “doing the right thing” all will be well.

The second, which I call a cognitive-epistemic orientation, addresses the question “how will it affect me” through the entrepreneurs trusting assumption that ultimately a plan for action will be revealed to them and, by unlocking that knowledge, they will aspire to even greater

success. This orientation combines both fatalism, in the form of supernatural guidance, and agency, in the inspiration and motivation that receiving that guidance will provide. By “obtaining the answers” the secrets of the universe will be revealed and provide inspiration to action. The third, termed pragmatic-motivational, addresses the question “what am I to do”, relies on the entrepreneur’s intuition and higher purpose to motivate successful action in pursuit of goals. This orientation emphasizes agency, but agency inspired by both a sense of calling and an intuitive belief that the entrepreneur has finally “found his or her true path”.

I elaborate each of these orientations in this chapter based on detailed empirical support. Collectively, these orientations combine to capture a magical-realist worldview as they each integrate somewhat paradoxical themes of belief in fatalism and agency, past and future, and science and magic. The respondents echoed themes that appear in magical realist writing (Faris, 2004).

For instance, the entrepreneurs would often mention spiritual, magical or cosmic events or forces, often with little sense of surprise. Such events would often be directed at the future, in an amalgam of rational projected future outcomes and a somewhat mystical sense that they and their companies would be successful, financially sound, and safe, despite sometimes overwhelming indications or data to the contrary. These were stories of struggles and overcoming them, while receiving (supernatural) help on the way. This taken-for-granted mixture of magical and real is a salient characteristic of magical realism (Zamora & Faris, 1995). Together these stories that I heard create a meta-story of a magical realist entrepreneur, which, to a certain degree, is reminiscent of a magical realist narrative. I empirically elaborate the specific components of magical realist orientation, after which I theorize their interrelations, as described below.

Affective-Attitudinal Orientation: Being at Peace

I used the term “Being at Peace” to describe how entrepreneurs find peace and calmness in a volatile world of startup enterprises. It reflects a general attitude to going about often very risky business endeavors, maintaining an affectively calm demeanor and often treating the sense of peace with supernatural reverence. Some described being led by higher forces to achieve higher purposes, meaning that they will be ensured of success. Some described following the laws of life or karma, and thus they will be blessed and have nothing to fear. The two subthemes I saw as composing this affective-attitudinal orientation were, on the one hand, a cosmological assumption that life involves certain laws that must be followed to ensure success, and on the other, a faith that one is engaged in doing the right thing.

The Laws of Life. A recurring theme invoked by respondents when describing the sense of being at peace involved the importance of living by certain laws of life or laws of karma. Following such laws was symbolically important because it brought about good luck or signaled appreciation for good fortune in the past. The presumption is that one is kind and does good for others, one may rest calm that good will return and bless both one’s life and business. Respondents often noted that because they are continually engaged in business with a higher purpose, they feel a strong sense of peace. Often the entrepreneurs who follow the laws of life believe that the future will be blessed for them, as they are being continually worthy to be engaged in building a business that has a higher purpose. Following the laws of life theme corresponds to the magical realist tenet of traditional belief that underlies the narrative. The traditional belief, in a way, underlies the lives of entrepreneurs. The stories of following the laws of life were prominent both among religious and non-religious entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs told me about their conviction that being kind and good is very important for their business. They shared that this understanding influenced the way they treated their

employees and other stakeholders on a daily basis, and noted the blessings that come to other business people because of obedience to such laws.

For example, Mark, a very successful entrepreneur, who founded an extremely popular website and owns a few businesses, expounds on the importance of doing good for other people:

I'm just gonna say, I'm... I am a firm believer in Karma. And, you know, whether it's volunteering, donating, whatever, I just... I do... I do believe that good things happen to good people and so, you know, we do a lot of fund raising, we do a lot of, you know, volunteer[ing] how much we can, ahm, you know, doing favors for people, that's sort of... I do believe in the end it comes back to you.

This belief is so strong and guides Mark's actions to such an extent, that he tries to respond to every single request he receives. As a successful entrepreneur he gets a lot of requests, and tries to help in every single situation with at least a small donation.

Richard, a long-time owner of a successful translation agency, who identified as non-religious, was in favor of following the Creator's laws:

I think [the Creator] set up laws and principles for us. If we follow them, then good will happen as a natural result of our actions. So, yeah, hard work, treating people fairly, doing what you said you are going to do, trying to put things right if you got them wrong, you know, coz people do make mistakes, be honest and straight forward with your clients.

Richard told me that he used to go to church in the past, but at one point was disillusioned with religion. Although Richard identified as a non-religious person, clearly, spirituality plays a

big role in the way he sees the world. A spiritual belief in a Creator influences how he is following the laws of life in the day to day operations of his business.

A very successful owner of an import-export business, Brandon, who said that he goes to church, but emphasized that his religion is in no way influencing his business life, reiterated that “being good is very important” and that influenced how he treated his employees and other stakeholders. A deeply religious entrepreneur, Adam, shared how following the laws of life or God’s laws influences his daily business life:

I have opportunity to charge [my clients] too much. And obviously, not only in my religious convictions, but in life, discovered that you don’t win doing that, ever. It all comes back to haunt you and take away from you. In other words, you can’t win by doing those things. And to me it is all spiritual. Anything to do with God’s laws. That’s how he loves us, right. He gives us His laws. He gives us those laws to express his love for us. And so when we live them, we feel that. And we are blessed by it. Those are daily experiences, every single one of them. How many times a day do you have an opportunity to be honest? Countless sometimes.

Over the years Adam built a small business empire that includes construction, landscape services, and tree-farming. He explains how he understands the laws of life, or God’s laws in his own terms. Following these laws influence Adam’s daily activities, and at the same time contributes to constructing good business practices, which, over time, build a good reputation for his companies. Adam believes that following God’s laws sets his business on the right track, therefore he can project successful future and worry less about the risks he encounters along the way.

Another religious entrepreneur, Fred, recognized the consequences of following the laws of life or the laws of God not only in his life and the life of his business, but also in the lives and businesses of other people. He pondered about the reputation of his former competitor of being instrumental in helping his own employees: “I see that more as a blessing to [my competitor] for something [he] is doing and less because of the spirituality of his individual employees.”

Hugh, an owner of an internet video game company, shared his beliefs in the laws of Karma, and how they impacted his business over the years. In the following story he described how he dealt with a client who had difficulties paying:

I have to believe in Karma in some way. Because we didn't... The minute he couldn't pay, we could've just said, you know, screw you. You call us when you can pay, but we didn't do that. I have very good personal relationships with a lot of my clients and I just always tried to be nice, I just believe in Karma. I don't burn any bridges and I'm always good to everyone that I do business with. Because it saved the business a few times now. So, a customer complains about time entries. And you know also I don't care about the money that much. It's not that to me. It's more about making sure they're happy because they may end up in a situation where they end up meeting someone who ends up becoming like a multimillion dollar customer for us, right? I always have that in the back of my mind.

Following the laws of Karma, being good to people and paying it forward, led Hugh to believe that the good Karma will come back to him. Such a belief contributes to the sense of peace and an overall optimistic outlook on the business endeavor (someone will “end up becoming a multimillion dollar customer”), which allows Hugh to overcome difficulties and deal with risks.

Entrepreneurs also talked about following a particular law of life and receiving blessings for that. Such laws include being honest, donating money or law of tithing, and keeping the

Sabbath. An excellent example of being blessed for following the law of Sabbath is a story that Fred told about how he and his team decided not to be open on the Boxing Day which fell on Sunday, which Fred holds as a Sabbath. Boxing Day in that particular retail business is the most important day of the year. However, because of drawing on religious rationality, Fred was able to persuade his team to remain closed on Sunday. But it was not just the religious dogma that drove that decision; it was also the perception of reality as malleable, in the spirit of magical realism. The reality (or the Universe, or God) responded by giving that business the best sales day on record on the Monday following that Boxing Day. The sales on that day significantly surpassed any other day since the beginning of the business: “And Monday was the biggest day we have ever had by almost double.” And that week surpassed any other week, and that month surpassed any other month. “And for me immediately that was just... you know, I attributed that to a spiritual blessing for doing what I believed I should have done.”

Doing the Right Thing. Many respondents indicated a feeling that they were doing the right thing in building their businesses, linking this feeling with a higher purpose or will. The abstract idea of doing the right thing went beyond achieving success or efficiency, but imagined the business as moving in the direction willed by God or the Universe. Often such business had stated objectives of helping people, and layered more traditional, rational business process onto a bedrock sense of spirituality in the endeavor as a whole. Engaging in future oriented sensemaking often involved the spiritual belief that they are (now) and have been (in the past) doing the right thing, but the projected future is rational, stable and assured of success.

Nick, an owner of a complex business that encompasses internet services and consulting, talked about finding peace through knowing that he is engaged in an enterprise with a higher meaning: “But secondly, with the business may be less of a transcendent experience, but more of

the sense of peace, and knowing that okay, I feel I'm doing the right thing. Like I feel, that when I'm building [the company], it has purpose beyond just enriching me or, you know, that there is a higher purpose to my life in doing this.”

Because Nick believes that he has been doing the right thing and building a company that has a higher purpose, he feels at peace in the present, but also projects that peace to the future, which will go on as long as he continues to do the right thing.

Talking about what impact his vision of reality, which is shaped by a belief in higher purpose of his business and in a caring God who constantly provides help in any endeavor, has upon his organization, Yves, an owner of two car repair shops, answered: “It’s total peace, it’s total peace, and no fear.”

Vincent, who is working in the agricultural and healthcare industry, shared his thoughts on how he found peace to overcome risks because he felt he was doing the right thing:

I think, without those experiences in the past [divine interventions] to kind of motivate us to continue pushing this forward and these gentle prompting or nudging from time to time saying, “You're working on something good. Keep moving forward.” I'm not sure that we would have been able to overcome ... kind of ... the financial risk.

Entrepreneurs often talked about finding peace through their engagement in an enterprise with a higher meaning. Feeling at peace in the present, they projected that peace into the future given that they continue to do the right thing. Another vivid example of this is entrepreneur Zach, who told me about how he found peace during a difficult time that almost destroyed his business. Zach is the owner of a landscape design and construction company, a business that is highly susceptible to the seasonal volatility. His story illustrates how peace can be found not only during calm periods, but when it is needed most—in the times of turmoil and uncertainty:

Even to the point when I was going almost having to go through bankruptcy as a business. [...] I still had the faith that if that was what the outcome of the business was going to be, I was... It would've been hard. It would've been blast to my ego. [...] But at the end of the day I knew that if that's what would have..., if that's what God's will would have been then I could have come to terms with it, right? That I would have been okay. And I knew that, at that deep down inside, I really knew that. [...] It's about—do you really have the faith to put your trust in somebody you never seen that He is totally going to take care of you? Even if taking care of you is the failure quote unquote of your business. And I came to the realization, that yeah, I did have that faith, if that what it was, I knew that, to be honest, I knew that I was living my life the way I should be. And if that is what it came to, then I was okay. And that brings a huge sense of comfort.

In the above statement, Zack applies his magical realist orientation, and despite the looming devastating changes, is able to construe the future as good and peaceful. This sense of peace allowed Zack to make calm decisions, and to continue operations until the lucrative orders came to save the business (an influence of God's blessings according to Zack). This story illustrates magical realist sensemaking at work repairing disruptions in reality. The disruption (the looming bankruptcy) is real, and triggers the sensemaking mechanism, including the need to project a future. The repair, however, is magical, as the entrepreneur draws upon the affective calm from knowing he is living as he should. Most entrepreneurs told us stories of overcoming difficulties, often involving overcoming challenges through the attitude of one having done the right thing, and often backing up that attitude with a spiritual or supernatural claim.

Entrepreneur Fred also told me how he is able to construct a peaceful and victorious future during the turmoil. He shared how he had been finding peace in the midst of overcoming

difficulties and challenges in his business through the belief that he was doing what he was supposed to and that it was God's will: "As long as I'm willing to push forward and fight, I will get the resistance. It's going to come, and whatever form it is and it's because I believe that's what my Heavenly Father wants. It's for me to be under constant pressure to become the best that I can."

Jason, who started and grew a highly regulated air-ambulance business, shared with me his speculations that he has in times of difficulty in business. If he experiences any kind of hardship in running his enterprise, he reminds himself that money and business is not the most important thing in life:

If I lose the whole thing, I can handle it because I know ..., I know in the end, this isn't my ultimate goal in life. My ultimate goal in life is to prove to God or to prove myself that I am worthy to return and live in heavens. So, that faith gave me peace. I mean, it gave me assurance that all is well. It just doesn't matter. It's going to be okay.

Through realization that business is not that important in the grand scheme of things, Jason is able to find peace and remain calm even in the face of a threat that he could lose his business. This kind of tranquility allows entrepreneurs like Jason to overcome anxieties and to project optimistic futures.

The theme of continually being at peace reflects the affective-attitudinal mechanism of coping with risk and anxiety by bringing such spirits to bear in an otherwise chaotic world. The mingling of magic and realism provides an emotional resource for coping with challenges. Continually being at peace through believing that they are doing the right thing and following the laws of life, entrepreneurs build affective robustness to risk, and keep their anxiety at bay.

Cognitive-Epistemic Orientation/Obtaining the Answers

While I described being at peace as an attitude of tranquility and an affective tendency to feel well in one's actions, I termed "obtaining the answers" as an orientation to knowledge and decisions which were more "cognitive" in nature. In the highly volatile environment of entrepreneurial business, entrepreneurs face complex situations requiring appropriate decisions. Magical realism regarding these decisions involved a continuous seek of orientation, in which they view inspiration as an, often instantaneous, insight that formed the foundation of their problem solving and executive decisions. The belief in the ability to obtain answers allows the entrepreneurs to construct the future as knowable and actionable. Such ability is often tied to the belief that the entrepreneurs are being led by higher forces to accomplish higher purposes.

Inspiration. The respondents mentioned having strong impressions of needing to do something at a given moment, or receiving information directing them, sometimes attributed to supernatural forces guiding them at the right moment. For instance, the entrepreneurs mentioned inspiration during the hiring process, choices of orders to fulfill, and other strategic activities, all of which were future-oriented. They cited past inspirations to deal with future situations, including interactions with customers or employees. Entrepreneurs may refuse, for example, to hire a seemingly suitable candidate or decline an offer to take a big order based on intuition. While such actions seemed irrational or counter-intuitive, the entrepreneurs made sense of such actions by projecting a future in which they had identified the right candidates, avoided real losses, or found more lucrative contracts that would better suit their businesses.

Zach told me how he uses inspiration during a hiring process:

I'll have a thought to ask a specific question in the interview, and the answer that comes up, will be like OK, what if we hire you, we need to be aware of this, or it is like ... good thing

you asked that question, coz it's not the right person. One hundred percent of the time my foreman, he is like, "how do you know to ask these questions all the time?" And I say to him, like ... I will have a thought come into my head. ... I've learned that when I have those thoughts, I take a moment to think about it, and I can feel by what we call the Holy Ghost, is that, it's a learning process all the time, coz that is something you can ask, and I believe that that is a blessing as well, a discernment as well, I ask the question and it turns out.

The hiring process, of course, looks to the future. The active construction of that future starts during the interview. This passage shows how the entrepreneur relies on the past experiences with inspirations ("I've learned that...") to continue using them in the present to construct futures with the perspective employees as well as current managers.

Another example shows how Zach chooses which orders to accept using inspiration, at times going against the economic rationality and secular common sense:

...I believe it's divine guidance... where it's been like, you don't want to take this job. ... But I always wanna help people, right. So I'm like, I'm just gonna take the job and I'll work through it. One hundred percent of the time, those jobs come back to bite me, all the time. And one hundred percent of the time too, when I listened to that, what I call a prompting, the ones I have walked away from, I know the contractor that is on it, all the thoughts that I had of why should I walk away, have happened. I have walked away from jobs that would have been \$150,000 jobs and I thought that was really weird, why did I? ... Hundred percent of the time when I have not taken the job, there has been something better that has come, and then I was like okay, this would be why I had this feeling to walk or not put in the bid, and a better job comes around that is more suitable for the business. And that

happens all the time. I can't even count on my hands how many times that has happened.

And I have done it when we could really use the work. My foreman was like, "we need the work." ... You need to trust the feeling that you are having.

Arational inspirations for Zach are a basis for projecting the future with quite real outcomes of avoiding real losses and finding more lucrative contracts that suit the business better. It is the magical realist perception that allows for the mixing of arational inspiration with tangible results in the future oriented sensemaking.

Citing celestial inspiration, Fred told me about how, all of a sudden, he received a strong impression that it was necessary to collect the phone numbers and postal codes of their customers. "I didn't really know why, just felt like that was what I absolutely needed to do starting right now. So I did." This decision turned out to be very important because, not long after, the decision was taken to close one of the stores. The collected information revealed that the majority of the customers lived in an area that could be served by their other store. As Fred noted:

Right away I could see by looking at the postal codes that more than a half of my South store customers were coming from the North side of town or from the outskirts of town. I was pretty much guaranteed that at least half of the sales [of the South store] would go to the other store.

Making sense of this situation, Fred invoked past, present and future.

In this case, when the entrepreneur is trying to make sense of the situation triggered by the necessity to close one of the stores, he draws on all three temporal dimensions. Sensemaking in the present, he retrospectively explains why he received the inspiration to record the postal

codes, and constructs a future in which more sales go to the other store. This future sense, however, is assured because of the epistemic sureness gathered from the inspiration he received. Believing that such inspirations are likely to continue into the future, his decision to base actions on these assessments is given additional certainty. Thus Fred can more easily make the executive decision to close the South store not only because the inspiration that helped was given in the past, but also because such inspirations will probably be given in the future. This is an excellent example of how entrepreneurs' magical realist perception works in future oriented sensemaking. A supernatural experience such as inspiration from above is not surprising to the entrepreneur and leads to the very mundane management practices such as collecting and analyzing information from the customers to make market analysis based decisions and planning, which constructs the future for the enterprise. A magical realist cognition in the present supports future-oriented sensemaking.

Entrepreneurs also actively seek inspiration in their daily business activities through prayer and meditation. Adam shared his search for answers:

I kept thinking why am I putting myself through this, when I could go down the street and maybe buy something that, you know, less pain or less headache? But every time I would ask that question, I just kept being driven towards this, and then, long story short, I ended up buying 30-acre piece right here.

Another entrepreneur told me how he searches for answers to particularly tough questions he encounters in his business:

I stand in the shower in the morning, and I'm having my shower and I pray. And I pray to give me the guidance to sort this out, show me what I've missed, and by the time I have done my shower, I have three more avenues to go look for. But when I got in it, I had none.

So the water is not that smart. It's not the water. And that's what happens. It happens every single time.

The epistemic certainty of the “shower method” (“it happens every time”) belies a magical realist orientation, which Yves himself tacitly admits (“the water is not that smart”). Actively seeking inspiration allows the entrepreneurs to obtain the answers they need and construct the future they want. Because the complexity of their world offers multiple and often dangerous possibilities, they count on inspiration as a reference to help engage in future oriented sensemaking. Sometimes the inspiration is taken so seriously as to become a guiding principle for the business as a whole. Xavier, a successful online software business owner, shares:

I just woke up and I have this solution in my mind and I have a specific feeling of what it was and I always go back to that feeling of what was sort of your original inspiration. And it was so many things at once as well. [...] it emerged as a feeling and it's that feeling I always chase; and I still chase it. [...] Then, it becomes part of a decision framework so if we want to add a new feature, or if people want to do some type of advertising with us, or they want to do some type of a business relationship, I always come back to what's the feeling that I want from this thing from the start.

The inspiration that Xavier had in the past became the reference point that helps to construct the future for this business. It does not only involve the entrepreneur but also his employees and business partners as together they project and realize the future.

Supernatural Help. Entrepreneurs often noted being led or helped by a supernatural being or entity, sometimes mixing this idea with the notion of fate. For instance, they discussed how they were repetitively driven towards a certain decision, for example in the development of their business, or how they were assured in the appropriateness of their decision to bring results. They

noted being selected or chosen to have certain successes, or about how certain events or business decisions responded to their prayers or were due to “star alignment.”

Many entrepreneurs told us that God or the Universe helps them whenever they are looking to obtain answers to decisions or going through rough times. Their sense that this would happen in the future was based on past experiences where they had felt such aid. The belief that God supports their business is projected forward, with the expectation that their business will be blessed with success.

Here is a powerful description Vincent, who started a large farm and a line of cosmetics production, gives to how he sees God helps him to make decisions:

I very much view, and I felt this multiple times, that the hand of God is in this business, and that, if the business is going to be successful, it's going to be successful not because of my own... certainly not only because of my own efforts. I believe that I do need to play a part in that but it will be successful because God has quite a very active role in it, and so, whenever we have to make big decisions about the business or we're struggling, I would very much view God as kind of my business partner in this. And feel like, from time to time as needed, that he does play a very active role in how we kind of move forward the business.

This statement constructs the future as successful for the business because, as Vincent feels, God helps him whenever he is looking to obtain the needed answers when making important decisions or when he is going through a rough time. The future orientation is rooted in the past experiences in which the entrepreneur felt the hand of God. The belief that God cares for this business learned from the past is projected forward, which means that God will bless the business with success.

Adam told a story about a business decision based on a dream of his employee. They were faced with the need for a solution to secure an important order, an order important to the business but also personally to the entrepreneur because of an emotional connection to that particular job. An employee of the company, not particularly religious or spiritual, had been frustrated at the lack of a solution, despite Adam's statement that he believed the employee could find the answer. The next morning the employee called the boss and told him that he saw the solution in his dream:

He called me the next morning. He had a dream that night. This big, three-hundred-pound Harley guy had a dream. ...and told me all about it with almost tears in his eyes.

After that the employee executed the solution in exactly the way he saw it in the dream, and, as a result, the company was able to secure and fulfill the order.

Yves told me how he is getting help with his business through divine intervention:

One time we were standing up front, talking about opening our tire shop, and we were talking about that we may need staff, and that maybe we should start looking for a mechanic, and just to finish my sentence, I had a guy walk into the door to drop a résumé off for me to be a mechanic. That happens all the time. Just when you think you need a new accountant, someone will recommend another accountant to you. When you need something, it's put in place for you.

As Yves is planning for the opening of a future tire shop, and feels like he is being helped through blessings from above, he is engaged in future oriented sensemaking and constructs a future of a tire shop with the right employee sent by God. And because of his belief that "that happens all the time," he is basing his prospective sensemaking on past experiences and on the assurance that God will continue to put things in place for him.

When asked about what can raise her odds for success, Claire, the young founder and CEO of a booming trendy company told us about her beliefs in the help of the Universe:

[I have] this reminder ... periodically, which is ‘tell the Universe what you want’. ... You have to actually know what you want, then you have to put it out into the world. ... what I'm saying and what I'm telling the Universe, except I'm telling the Universe that I'm “too this” to succeed at that, than I probably am. I'm telling the universe that I intend to succeed at something, or I intend to accomplish something, then, there is a positive effect there. ... That idea of putting ideas out there to the Universe, and being prolific about it, and creating as many connection points around that, to me that is increasing my statistical odds.

Claire saw the Universe as helping in mysterious ways, as for example, in meeting the right people at the right time. Strangers that Claire serendipitously met were instrumental in her winning a prestigious business case competition, and in securing the first and crucially important contract without which the company would not have started. Claire believes in having had supernatural help, and bases her future-oriented sensemaking on assurance that supernatural help will continue to appear and put things in place for her.

As a cognitive-epistemic dimension, obtaining the answers is an important part of entrepreneurs’ magical realist orientations. Entrepreneurs operate in an uncertain environment full of novelty, information overload, and stress. In a world of decisions under time pressure, and susceptibility to cognitive errors and biases, a magical realist orientation allows entrepreneurs to overcome paralysis of action in the face of risk and uncertainty and find the solutions despite all the challenges, or at least keep looking in the faith that the answer will be given to them.

Pragmatic-Motivational Orientation/Finding One's Path

One theme that is very prominent in the entrepreneurs' narratives is the ways that lead them to finding their own path. Finding your own path is one of the most fundamental things entrepreneurs (and any person, really) are trying to resolve. The question of finding a path has a lot in common with other essential questions such as finding a place in society, and even understanding your purpose in life. Two subthemes are included in this theme: intuition and helping people. Many entrepreneurs talked about receiving intuition, mostly through some external source (although some mentioned instinct), to start their businesses. This, in a sense, gives a higher meaning to what they are doing and a confirmation that they are taking the right path. Most entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception also talked about their businesses as having a higher meaning to just the mundane operations and achievements. Predominantly the higher meaning resided in the idea of helping people in one way or the other, materially or spiritually, today or in the future. These subthemes together paint a picture of an entrepreneur who is guided to start and continue the business through an inspiration from above in order to help people and become an instrument in the hands of God. Also, finding your path is not covered in one step. Rather, it is an ongoing continuous process that even the most experienced and successful entrepreneurs continue to engage in. For example, one very wealthy entrepreneur who built a large business operation over the course of his life shared:

While being at peace described a sense of alignment with the Universe and the feeling of wellness associated with attunement to a larger order, and obtaining the answers relied on magical means to gain knowledge of decisions and inspiration, I term "finding one's path" the action component of magical realism, a practice-oriented tendency to engage in action or to see oneself as a vehicle for larger forces.

The respondents commonly expressed the need to find their own path in their narratives. The question of finding a path has a lot in common with other essential questions such as finding a place in society, and even understanding your purpose in life. Two subthemes are included in this theme: intuition and helping people. Many entrepreneurs talked about receiving intuition, mostly through some external source, to start their businesses. This, in a sense, gives a higher meaning to what they are doing and a confirmation that they are taking the right path. Most entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception also talked about their businesses as having a higher meaning to just the mundane operations and achievements. Predominantly the higher meaning resided in the idea of helping people in one way or the other, materially or spiritually, today or in the future. These subthemes together paint a picture of an entrepreneur who is guided to start and continue the business through an inspiration from above in order to help people and become an instrument in the hands of God. In other words, entrepreneurs see themselves as being guided to start and continue a business as an instrument or a vehicle for a higher force. Rather than a single step, it is an ongoing process involving projecting oneself into the future. For example, very wealthy entrepreneur, Adam, who built a large business operation over the course of his life, noted:

I really believe the Lord has selected this family to have this wealth for a reason and that my goal over the next 20 years in my life, if I'm fortunate to stay here in another twenty, is to discover what that is.

Because it is an ongoing process, a big element of finding your path has to do with the creation of a vision and construction of a positive future for yourself and for others. Both intuition and helping people continue to play a role in this process.

Intuition. The respondents often spoke about starting their businesses based on intuition, often fueled by a prompting or a divine guidance to take up a particular business activity or commercial property. Such intuition triggered the determination to begin and continue a business, and respondents attributed more importance to this than to market research or supply and demand analysis. Many of the entrepreneurs began without a business plan, using intuition to construct their future and view themselves as successful business people. Future oriented sensemaking was based on the intuition at the moment or in the past, but very tangible results, such as possession of a successful business, or financial freedom, were projected to the future. A mixture of spiritual elements such as externally driven intuition with real matters is symptomatic of a magical realist perception.

The intuition that entrepreneurs talked about was usually externally driven in the form of prompting or guidance. For example, Nick, an entrepreneur working in the online professional services industry said: “I have had transcendent experiences. Where I feel very strongly [...] I did have a very strong premonition or even an admonition to start a business.”

Gavin, a very successful video games company founder, shares how he used intuition to start his business, part of which was the decision to pay a large sum of money to a key partner:

But I had no doubt at that moment that it was the right thing. Even though, I'm paranoid about, "Oh, God. I'm going to be spending a lot of money in sending it to a bad partner." Historically, it's a bad company to deal with. This is the right thing to do. But I'm just ... calm inside because instinctually, I knew, it was the right move to make. And I think the biggest thing there is just being calm about it. ... I just intuitively felt like it is the right thing. ... I never felt conflicted about it.

Yves reflecting back on his experiences shared:

When I started [this business], I wasn't Christian. But I look back and I still believe it was God's guidance. I've always believed in God, but not a Christian, but believed in Him. But if you look at all the facts, how everything played out, there is no way I could have done all that myself.

Adam, who has been in business for 35 years, recalls what prompted him to start his business:

But it was that same year... so six months after I was accepted in the business [program at the university] is when I formed this corporation – [...] - and during that six-month period, from when I was accepted into business school, and decided to do this, you know, I had some very sure answers from, you know, my Heavenly Father that this is what I should do, that I should be in business and then I should start with own business.

Through this divine communication Adam is prompted to start a business. At that point the entrepreneur was just a young man going through college without prior experience in business. Because he could not draw on past successes or any kind of experiences with building and running a business, he drew on the premonition from above to engage in prospective sensemaking and construct a future in which he is a successful business owner.

Vincent shares how he decided to start a business and what role divine intervention played in it:

I felt like that I was trying to decide on this business to start and make a determination about where I was going to spend my time or effort. Making it a matter of prayer felt like that there was a lot of divine inspiration that kept, kind of drawing me back into this [type of] farm.

And later he explains:

But I have felt like very strongly that there has been kind of hand of God in what I've done. Initially, as I kind of made a concerted decision as to whether I was going to move forward on this business, and invest a lot of time and energy into it, felt like that, call it divine providence or guidance or the Holy Ghost or however you want to account for it in your report, but there was some kind of divine intervention that, number one, was propelling me to move forward on this idea. [...] There have been multiple times where because of lack of discouragement [sic] or lack of progress or lack of fund or what have you, where I wanted to basically kinda to throw in the towel, I felt there [was] a divine motivation to keep moving forward on it.

This passage explains how Vincent is able to construct a positive future and start a business, and what is equally important to continue to work on building his business despite all the challenges. Because he started the business based on divinely guided intuition, he felt like the future he had constructed was correct, which gave him strength and determination to continue.

Zach explains how his intuition let him know what kind of business to start and to convince a partner to commit to it:

We both wanted to start a business. And I'm like, "let's do landscape business." And he is like, "I'm not doing that again; I tried that once with another buddy and it didn't work out." And I'm like, "[Partner]!" I felt like it was the right thing to do. It was really weird.

The belief in his inspiration not only allows Zach to construct a future for himself, but also to engage in a sensegiving activity which projects the future for his partner and other employees.

Starting a business through a divine communication is an important part of the story that the entrepreneurs told me. Often such communications appeared with little or no prior

experience. Unable to draw on past successes with building and running a business, they draw on premonitions to engage in future-oriented sensemaking and construct a future vision of success.

Basing their actions on supernatural inspirations allowed entrepreneurs to imagine positive futures and to continue working to build their business in the face of challenges. They felt determination, bolstered by a sense of divine guidance, enabling them to leap into an unknown future. This allowed them to engage in confident sensegiving to project the future for their employees, business partners, and other stakeholders.

Helping People. Specifically within the action orientation linked to magical realism, I noted an emphasis on helping people. Either through charity or CSR initiatives, or simply helping those in proximity, the entrepreneurs described a spiritual connection to helping others, and saw their business activities as a means to help others. In contrast to the ostensive economic rationality of their businesses, respondents reported that helping was central to their operations' success, and a path to prosperity. They mentioned helping, specifically, as a source of good luck, or other blessings. This is consistent with the magical realist tenet of the law of attraction: helping people is a symbolic action that invites good luck. As a source for future-oriented sensemaking, this link between helping and success was a constant feature of respondents' narratives.

Some entrepreneurs felt very strongly that the purpose of their businesses is to help or bless the lives of other people. In a sense they see themselves as instruments in the hands of God or the Universe. And as they are looking into the future and contemplating their path in life and in business, they have the perspective of helping people in mind. This perspective may heavily influence their planning and decision making. For example, Vincent discussed his choice of a particular business activity:

I believe, that my purpose is to use the talents that God has given me to build businesses that have some type of a social impact. To be quite candid between you and I, if what I was doing was solely about the money, there's a lot of other things that I'd be focusing my time on. While [...] that's one of the motivations for going into business for yourself for becoming an entrepreneur, I would say, an even bigger motivation for me that goes back to my spiritual belief is I want to be able to kind of help people have better lives. I want to feel like that the world is a better place because I did my part.

In Vincent's statement, the future is constructed through referring to the past, in which he has been given talents, and the present, which is the outcome of these talents. He considers himself as having received a divine gift, with the purpose of helping people, which requires him to find the right path. The entrepreneur, an MBA alumnus from a prestigious school, had started a social business in Africa rather than following a more lucrative career elsewhere. As the entrepreneur engages in the future oriented sensemaking activity, it makes him to go back to his core beliefs. Part of those beliefs is faith in God, receiving talents from God, and a belief that one needs to help other people. In aggregate, those beliefs guide the future oriented sensemaking and vision construction work by suggesting certain paths and limiting the choice of others.

Here is Adam's statement about the importance of helping people:

I firmly believe that we are given wealth to be instruments in God's hands, and if we don't, I really believe that I would be subject to judgment if I were to neglect that. ... And every time I say goodbye to another [employee I have helped], I think, "Wow, why me?"

Through this statement we can see that Adam's beliefs play a big role in his future oriented sensemaking activity. Because he thinks that he must be an instrument in God's hands because of the wealth he had accumulated through his business activity over the years, he chooses to help

people in the present and in the future. Adam further described how he sees his role in helping his employees not only monetarily, but also spiritually:

But for sure the Lord has blessed countless people through me. Without question.

Countless. ... That's a big responsibility on a daily basis. ... And, you know, to be, sort of at the beginning of all that has been very exciting. And that excitement on a regular basis is what drives me. Now obviously, I could walk away from this place tomorrow and not have to work anymore.

And later on, Adam says that seeing how other people have been blessed and seeing the results of his work is "very fulfilling. And so that fulfillment really drives me through the pain, you know, the long days. ... You know that there is a light at the end of this tunnel." These passages construct the future through the references to the past. Because the entrepreneur sees how he was an instrument in God's hands in the past in helping people both in material and spiritual ways, he projects that he will be helping people in the future, which gives him a reason to continue his business and not retire to selfishly enjoy accumulated wealth.

Fred shared his vision of his role in helping people. Here is how he talks about his belief: My path will be blessed career wise in order ... to be able to help people spiritually more. And that's always kind of been in my head. ... I have felt ... in interaction with the Spirit, where this success is for me to use in a spiritual sense, whether it is framing time so that I could serve or help people, or to guide people. I definitely have felt like the last ten years has given me insight into how other people feel and think in experiences they go through and to give me a greater portion of empathy and understanding so that I could help those people. ... I believe that a lot of my business experience and trials that I have experienced with this business are for that purpose, not necessarily to advance me as a business person.

And also that the success that I had as a business person, is also so that I can, in a better way, help other people as well. I do believe that those things are very connected.

Fred believes that he will find his successful business path in order to help people spiritually while running a mundane retail business. The blessing of business success is given to him in order to make a positive impact on lives of people. As he constructs the future, he recollects both the blessings and the trials and affirms that both are given so that he could better help people. The belief that his business path will be blessed in order to help people became a sensemaking tool which he uses to both make sense of the present and of the future.

The respondents sometimes used supernatural intervention to explain their position and/or wealth, leading to a sense that they should help people in the present and in the future. They described their actions toward others as blessings and took joy in seeing the results of their work. Feeling that their past was blessed, they felt motivated to project a feeling of giving back in the future, motivating them to continue the business and not give up or retire early.

Being supernaturally inspired, and feeling oneself to be a vehicle for wider powers, are themes common in magical realist fiction, which abounds with instances of finding a magical path. The importance of intuition in the novels of Allende (1991) or Esquivel, for example, see protagonists acting on intuition with scientific accuracy despite the seeming impossibility, based on the spirit of a dead relative. Magical realism often deals in the law of attraction, relevant to the theme of helping people, and engaging in symbolic actions that have real consequences. Gestures with special meanings, that invoke spirits, are common fare in this kind of storytelling.

The theme of finding your path reflects a pragmatic-motivational mechanism of entrepreneurial activity. Finding one's path for entrepreneurs means starting a business, often taking a step into the unknown. This pragmatic-motivational impulse goes beyond the rational

maximization of personal utility and material rewards, emphasizing the symbolic nature of traveler images. As travelers who obey the higher powers that unlock possibilities, entrepreneurial actions take on meaning beyond wealth creation. Such narratives allow entrepreneurs to feel that they have become who God or the Universe wants them to be. Providing continuity in their identity, the pragmatic-motivational impulse draws on blessings in the past and present to define a future. Feeling that their journey occurs as a junction of the past and the future enables entrepreneurs to face risk and uncertainty.

Chapter VI Discussion and Conclusion

This final chapter summarizes and discusses the findings. I started this investigation with a general interest in the way rational and arational thinking co-exist in organizational settings, an environment that is often associated with strict economic rationality. I chose to study young entrepreneurial organizations (through biographical accounts in Study 1, and through interviews in Study 2), and more specifically, their leaders—entrepreneurs, because such entities epitomize the inception of most existing organizations. I found that magical realism in organizations and particularly a magical realist perception of business people is a perfect manifestation of the mixing of rational and arational that has a purpose and value in the lives of many people and organizations. This chapter starts with the discussion of contributions to organizational theory and the field of entrepreneurship. Specifically, I list contributions to future oriented sensemaking, to the topic of risk management by entrepreneurs, and to the spirituality in organizations. I also mention the contribution of the concept of organizational magical realism to the problem of rationality construction. Next, I outline limitations of the study, and implications for future research. I conclude with suggesting implications for practitioners, and offering some general observations.

Discussion

Study 1 was fueled by an interest of how different temporal orientations in sensemaking affect entrepreneurs' perception of risk and uncertainty. Magical realism orientation in entrepreneurial cognition helps to pull the strings of different temporal orientations in sensemaking together and explain the mechanisms of leaning on past, present, and future orientations in making sense of the uncertain business world full of risks. Through magical realist orientation entrepreneurs see themselves as changing agents; however, they need to align

themselves with higher forces and follow the inspiration (present), beliefs rooted in traditional narratives (past), and fantasize (future) to change the world.

Through the analysis of biographies and autobiographies I uncovered three interconnected themes. The first theme – fluid malleable reality – represents the present. It describes a particular view of reality in which entrepreneurs see reality as susceptible to change through both real and symbolic actions. Because entrepreneurs see reality as malleable, they believe that they can actively influence it through (often symbolic) actions in the present. The present may be seen as full of possibilities, but it also may be seen as unstable and erratic; and in order to protect themselves from the chaos, business leaders engage in the dialog with the Universe, create reality distortion fields to mend the reality and influence the future. They also marvel the coincidences that happen and often interpret them as instances of luck and expressions of favor from gods or the Universe. And although the notion of fluid malleable reality can be used with an intention to influence the future, it is still, for the most part, a present oriented outlook. Reality distortion fields are created in the moment and for the moment, although they influence the future.

I correspond the theme of fluid malleable reality that reflects the present temporal orientation to a sensemaking tool or approach which I term the eminent possibility of changing reality. Entrepreneurs who see reality as fluid and malleable sense the ever-present possibility to change or mend reality. In other words, this ever-present possibility to change reality affects the way entrepreneurs make sense of the world.

The second theme – fantasy – represents the future orientation. It describes fantasies, the process of fantasizing, and the role they play for entrepreneurs. Fantasies shape how organizations form and develop, finding their ways into organizational strategy, plans, and policies. However, fantasies are not formal planning and strategizing, lacking the purely rational

approach. Entrepreneurs fantasize about the great futures they can build for themselves and their organizations. But often they also fantasize about how they can change the world; fantasies about space travel and landing on other planets are the extreme versions of such fantasies.

I correspond the theme of fantasy to the future-oriented sensemaking building blocks. Fantasies are raw material for future-oriented sensemaking. Future-oriented sensemaking is often preceded by fantasizing. Or, rather, without an element of fantasy, future-oriented sensemaking would be impossible. Fantasies about possible or impossible futures prepare the soil for future-oriented sensemaking. Fantasies create images of the future, which, through sorting and choice, can be singled out to form images used in future-oriented sensemaking.

The third theme – traditional narrative – represents the past temporal orientation. It describes how entrepreneurs connect to and find inspiration in the great stories of the past that comprise sacred texts or folklore. Traditional narrative elements are reflected in ascribing the prophetic qualities to Bezos at Amazon, or in longing for the simplicity of African tribes and their trust to their elders as revealed in Branson’s biography in connection to the forming of The Elders. Looking to the past and using traditional narrative is also a powerful tool to make sense of the present and set common goals for the future through the creation of connections to the great narratives of the marvelous past deeds by heroes of the old times and drawing parallels to the present business heroes as well as to the relatively recent history of organizations.

I correspond the theme of traditional narrative to sensemaking, grounding through past patterns of action and belief. Entrepreneurs base their sensemaking on the past patterns set by the heroes of traditional narratives and folklore (old or contemporary), and their traditional-narrative-based beliefs. They become inspired by the stories and tradition, interpret and adapt them for the contemporary world and their particular situations. These stories often deal with

victories, transformations, or contain ethical code of conduct. In their sensemaking, entrepreneurs utilize analogical reasoning and draw parallels between their problems and the scenarios or codes of conduct described in traditional narratives.

Each theme describes a sensemaking mechanism that helps entrepreneurs deal with risk and uncertainty. If an entrepreneur sees reality as fluid and malleable, he or she can trust that one can ultimately change the reality and succeed with plans and visions. This perception helps to maintain an optimistic outlook and aid in entrepreneurial resilience. Optimism and a desire to press forward diminishes the perception of risk and uncertainty. Fantasies are an important element of future-oriented sensemaking. Fantasies help entrepreneurs to remain openminded and to spur their creativity. Through fantasizing (the perceptions of) risk can be pushed aside. Through grounding sensemaking in the traditional narrative, entrepreneurs can gain determination to continue and perform. They believe in their connection to the heroic deeds of the past and that victories are possible. Such grounding of sensemaking can also simplify the decision-making process because entrepreneurs already have patterns to follow and ethical guidelines to observe. This can eliminate fear in the face of risk. The discussion of temporal orientations connection to sensemaking tools is depicted schematically in Table 4

Insert Table 4 about here

All temporal orientations are important for the sensemaking process and entrepreneurs draw on all of them using their imagination, belief systems, and interpretations of historical narratives. If the present contains the eminent possibility of changing the reality, then

entrepreneurs do not see the disruptions of reality (that, by Weick, trigger sensemaking) as threats, but rather as possibilities. Therefore, they are less likely to be stopped by perceptions of risk or uncertainty. The present for them contains future possibilities. At the same time, the present (and the belief in eminent possibility of changing the reality) is rooted in the past. The beliefs that shape the present come from the beliefs formed in the past, and the chain of the belief bestowing goes back to the traditional narratives. The fantasies are both connected to the present and the future. The present allows for a possibility to fantasize because a changed reality is possible, and the past supplies with patterns, stories, and imagery to reshuffle. Therefore, all temporal orientations converge in the sensemaking process, in that, for entrepreneurs, the past is present, and the future is now.

Study 2 develops the idea of magical realism to explain the critical role that spirituality plays in entrepreneurial cognition (evidenced through entrepreneurs' perception of reality). My interest was in understanding the unique view of reality that enables entrepreneurs to persist in the face of high uncertainty and risk, and in the relative absence of strong social support. This world-view, described by the multi-dimensional concept of magical realism, is demonstrated by the answers that the respondents offer to the three essential questions of entrepreneurship – 'what is happening out there?', 'how will it affect me?' and 'what am I to do about it?'

The respondents treated such questions, beyond the specific acts of entrepreneurship, as existential questions about the meaning of life, and responded with spiritually oriented answers, whether deriving from a specific religion or not. As I demonstrate in Table 5, the first question was understood as referring to each respondent's cosmology – i.e. 'what is your understanding of the nature of the universe?' or more philosophically 'what is the nature of reality?' The second question was interpreted as referring to the role of the individual in that cosmology – i.e. 'given

the nature of the universe, what is my role in it to be?’ And the last question was processed as a fundamental question of agency – i.e. ‘given the nature of the universe and my assumed role in it, how should I act?’

Insert Table 5 about here

Through the analysis of the narratives of the entrepreneurs, I uncovered thematic answers to the three existential questions. The first theme – being at peace – describes a shared cognitive assumption amongst our entrepreneurs of a cosmology of individual transcendence, in which the respondent sees a universe that is both larger and more mysterious than individual cognition can comprehend. Critically, the respondents not only accept their lack of agency in this cosmology, they find solace in the size and complexity of the universe that opens the opportunity of equifinality, or multiple paths to success.

I use the term *affective-attitudinal* to describe this cognitive orientation, which grants the entrepreneur a degree of calm reflexivity and peace in the attitude that, despite the inherent risk in a turbulent world, their ultimate success or failure is beyond the agency of a single individual. Our entrepreneurs manage risk and uncertainty, thus, through a form of acceptance that willfully acknowledges that the universe is a large and mysterious environment with multiple means of both failure and success.

The second theme – obtaining the answers – pertains to understanding one’s role or place in the universe, giving a sense of self-certainty despite the uncertainty of the universe. The

critical existential question here is premised on identity – ‘who am I’ – and belonging – ‘how do I fit’, ‘what is my role or purpose in the cosmology I know’. I use the term *cognitive-epistemological* here to capture the thematic understanding, shared by the respondents, that despite the complex mystery and apparent ambiguity of the universe, with faith and reflection, the transcendent individual can gain insight into the order of the world and the role prescribed for their success. This insight is perhaps best illustrated by Weber’s (1985) observation of Protestant belief in certainty of salvation through hard work and prosperity, a formula that articulates both a cosmology and the transcendent role of the individual in it.

The third theme – finding one’s path – offers a *pragmatic-motivational* dimension that secures individual agency through a magical realist belief in action in the face of a complex world. Despite an underlying attitude of fatalism, as described above, the individual entrepreneur locates him/herself in the cosmology and follows the “path” to success with perseverance. The pragmatic-motivational aspect of magical realism provides both the motivation to act and the willpower to continue – it is the ideological fortress used to overcome naysayers, and the risk and high probability of failure.

Each of the themes evokes notions central to the magical realist genre. To draw parallels with magical realist art, for instance, the peace and tranquility of characters who have faith in their actions while caught in circumstances characterize the magical realist novels of Haruki Murakami. Similarly, the attitude of acceptance, as protagonists follow a supernatural force that is manifested in supernatural signs, runs throughout the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marques. Magical realism’s entwinement of concrete and spiritual seems reminiscent of our entrepreneurs: “In magical realism narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie the text” (Zamora & Faris, 1995: 182). Magical realism moves beyond sectarian boundaries to draw upon

multiple traditions ranging from biblical stories to Yoruba folk narratives. Themes of receiving knowledge and answers through miracles run through magical realism, as do the practical uses of such discoveries. In the works of Isabel Allende (1991) and Carlos Fuentes, answers are mystically given to protagonists via other people or mundane objects. In the fiction of Salman Rushdie and Ana Castillo, protagonists receive supernatural help through dreams that have predictive or prophetic qualities. The spiritual realm penetrates mundane reality, providing moments of truth that support agency.

The three themes each contribute to a type of entrepreneurial cognition that gives nascent entrepreneurs a sense of confidence, motivation and agency in the absence of prior experience. Each cognitive orientation describes a degree of individual agency that is, somewhat paradoxically, embedded in a cosmology of fatalism. The entrepreneur accepts a universe replete with transcendent forces, but gains focus and direction by envisioning a path that can be realized by individual faith and effort. The collective cognitive orientation is magical inasmuch as it involves a cluster of beliefs that maintain individual focus and motivation by transmuting human agency from an instrumental-rational focus to one of alignment with a wider cosmological belief system. The model of entrepreneurial coping that emerges from this study is presented schematically in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

I describe *magical realism* as the complex of these three cognitive orientations whose interrelation offers a spiritual engagement with the world that supports entrepreneurial cognition. This concept builds on related terms used to describe the role of spirituality in commerce, for instance, Ashforth and Pratt's (2003) "institutionalized spirituality", which describe how organizations such as Amway or Disney adopt secularized forms of spirituality to develop strong organizational cultures. Similarly, Ashforth and Vaidyanath (2002) term "secular religion" as the phenomenon of infusing profit-oriented rational organizations with meaning and value far beyond their technical purpose.

Both "institutionalized spirituality" and "secular religion" describe the counter-intuitive combination of empirical realism with spirituality that is of interest here. Magical realism contributes to this conceptualization because it effectively captures the balanced hybridization of empirical reality and wishful fantasizing that appears to define the unique cognition of entrepreneurs, particularly with reference to future oriented sensemaking. Magical realism, in the context of entrepreneurial cognition, involves a category of sensemaking in which scientific and magical cosmologies usefully co-exist.

Contributions. This study offers contributions to the fields of future oriented sensemaking, entrepreneurship, and spirituality in organizations. The concept of organizational magical realism also contributes to the rationality construction in organizations literature. First, I contribute to the field of future oriented sensemaking. Most of the extant investigations into prospective sensemaking concentrated on established organizations and emphasize that companies build on past practices and successes to construct the future (Gephart et al., 2010; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). To illustrate that prospective sensemaking uses past and present temporal orientations, researchers have shown how, in face of an uncertain future, organizations project a successful

future based on the experiences and successes in the past. However, this model is not suitable for all organizational contexts. In the context of entrepreneurship, business people who stand at the inception of their organizations cannot draw on past organizational practices and successes. This study shows that through magical realism, entrepreneurs generate confidence in their actions and perceive themselves as playing a significant role in wider cosmological systems. Entrepreneurs adopt a magical realist orientation, not as a rejection of economic rationality, but because their lack of prior history and experience does not provide them with the information or resources to justify their behaviour. A spiritual orientation, by contrast, offers a supporting belief system – an ideological fortress (Pratt, 2000) – within which they can justify their behaviour, a distinct identity or role within that system to motivate their behaviour, and a roadmap that offers a route to success. To construct a positive future, nascent entrepreneurs can thus draw on a powerful cognitive and spiritual orientation in lieu of past practices and successes or rhetorical uses of established technical competence and expertise (Gephart et al., 2010).

Past research accentuated that organizational actors rely on a universal rationality (Townley, 2008) with the emphasis on formal plans, technical competence, and expertise (Clarke, 1999; Gephart et al., 2010) in their prospective sensemaking activity. This can be clearly seen in established organizations where members have to adhere to the widely accepted norms of the use of rhetoric, rationality construction, and thought elaboration. However, the past research overlooks the possibility of the use of alternative, more subjective, rationalities in prospective sensemaking. My study shows that entrepreneurs do not only rely on universal rationality in prospective sensemaking, but also on spiritual beliefs, especially when their spirituality is interwoven into a fabric of reality to form a magical realist orientation.

Past investigations concentrated on illustrating the collective nature of prospective sensemaking emphasizing iterative cycles of sensemaking and sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). But it is also important to understand how individuals engage in prospective sensemaking. I show how entrepreneurs project their futures. At the start-up stage, even before talking to investors and other prospective stakeholders, an entrepreneur is limited in his or her sensegiving activity as an organization exists primarily in the imagination. However, the most important sensegiving at this stage is self-sensegiving. As entrepreneurs respond to triggers for future oriented sensemaking, and feel the need to create a future, they project their beliefs forward in a self-sensegiving activity. These beliefs can be based on conclusions of their rational thinking and analysis, or on arational experiences such as intuition.

Scholars have contested the notion of thinking in a future perfect tense (Weick, 1995), arguing that such thinking is problematic in ambiguous and unclear contexts (MacKay, 2009). The world of start-up enterprises is extremely ambiguous. My findings illustrate that, in the context of entrepreneurial business, the constructed futures are sometimes unclear, far from concrete, and allow for multiple possibilities, especially in highly uncertain situations. However, despite of the lack of clarity in such pictures, constructed futures can still bring the sense of peace and its concomitant benefits.

Second, I contribute to the field of entrepreneurship. My findings show that entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception rely on continually being at inner peace, seeing reality as fluid and malleable, and obtaining the answers from inspiration and supernatural powers to help them cope with risk and uncertainty. People resort to different beliefs in the arational in order to overcome anxiety and the feeling of insecurity as they take risks in the business world environment that is full of uncertainty and fear. A magical realist perception essentially functions

as a coping mechanism against anxiety and insecurity associated with uncertainty and risk. In particular, the ability to create a safe and positive future using arational experiences and beliefs is the strongest element of this mechanism. A magical realist perception helps to overcome anxiety and doubt that lead to paralysis or delay of action (Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997; Giddens, 1991).

Focusing on how spirituality supports future-oriented sensemaking in entrepreneurial contexts informs the “cosmological” aspect of sensemaking famously invoked by Weick (1993), but which has received scant development. The magical realism of entrepreneurs supports an “enchanted” worldview (Suddaby et al., 2017), in which structural constraints take back stage and possibilities remain open. Consistent with my characterization of magical realism, however, entrepreneurs’ magical views do not fully abandon engagement in the ‘real’ world. Rather, pragmatic decisions are grounded on these views, which lead to concrete action plans. The construct of magical realism, thus, usefully bridges the tension between two somewhat incompatible value systems in which the sovereignty of interpretation is often contested (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2006).

The mechanism of coping with risk described in the dissertation (especially in Study 2) and set out in Figure 3 effectively illustrates a model of reflexivity in which the entrepreneurs have devised a system of reflection through which they strive to capture the cosmological system that they inhabit, their role in it and their opportunities for expressing agency. The cognitive-epistemic aspect of magical realism supports a belief system in which the horizon for success remains open, while the affective-attitudinal aspects supports optimism and a sense of peace in the face of uncertainty. Finally, the pragmatic-motivational aspect marks a willingness to commit to the unknown while trusting one’s intuition, and to feel that one’s entrepreneurship constitutes a form of service to a higher cause.

Insert Figure 3 about here

This research also adds to the long-standing debate on opportunity identification. A magical realist perception includes the belief that through symbolic action people can bend the reality as well as a belief in the ability to receive intuition from above. These beliefs influence the way entrepreneurs identify opportunity. When entrepreneurs feel like they receive inspiration or intuition from above, they may be driven to make certain decisions, most importantly, to start a business. Such belief can make entrepreneurs more optimistic about the prospects of venture creation and increase motivation because they believe that they are doing the right thing and will receive help from the celestial powers. A magical realist perception may also increase entrepreneurs' ability for creative work which in turn is very important for opportunity identification (Ardichvili, Carozo, & Ray, 2003).

The findings also contribute to the question of whether opportunities are discovered or created (Suddaby, Bruton, & Si, 2015; Miller, 2007). Scholars who adhere to positivist epistemology argue that opportunities are discovered (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), while scholars who adhere to constructivist epistemology argue that opportunities are created (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). My discussion of the magical realist perception in entrepreneurs adds nuances to the later view. I observe that the answer to this question may be found in the phenomenological position of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception see reality as fluid and malleable, not as an objective world that exists out there with opportunities waiting to be discovered. Thus they see that their actions, both symbolic and practical, may bend

the reality and create opportunities for them. The very nature of reality for them is far from objective and is full of serendipitous coincidences, inspirations from above, and influences from supernatural powers. These forces can change the very makeup of reality and aid entrepreneurs in creating opportunity. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs without a magical realist perception whom I interviewed were much more prone to see the reality as objective and to try to discover opportunities that exist “out there.” They often talked about being more knowledgeable about industries and markets, innovative, experienced, and alert to possible opportunities. These personal traits of entrepreneurs are very much in line with what we know about entrepreneurial orientation from the literature on opportunity discovery (Shane, 2000, 2012; Miller, 1983; Ardichvili et al., 2003).

Third, I contribute to the field of spirituality in organizations. The findings show how religious belief and spirituality are incorporated into the everyday functioning of entrepreneurs and their organizations through the entrepreneurs’ magical realist perception of reality. Entrepreneurs with a magical realist perception may integrate religious belief and spirituality into their work life on a very deep level to the point where the two spheres of life become indistinguishable or inseparable, because the arational is taken for granted and is not surprising. A magical realist perception of reality may be one of the vehicles through which religious belief and spirituality effectively find their way into the life of entrepreneurial organizations. It also gives a different perspective on how spiritual and religious narratives are used, for example as a part of constructing and disseminating magical realist perceptions in order to construct successful futures, persuade stakeholders to believe and enact these futures, and ultimately promote strategic goals.

The findings point at the complexity of organizational reality, which combines the arational and the mundane rational materiality in a non-surprising, taken-for-granted way, revealing that there is more to organizational life than the material, the visible, or the explainable by the laws of reason (following Zamora & Faris, 1995; Bowers, 2004; Jenkins, 2000). Entrepreneurs reveal this complexity as they tell about the importance of reality perception and the role it plays in managing organizational processes, the reduction of uncertainty, opportunity identification, inspiration from above and how it shapes organizational practices, and helping people and seeing organizations as a means of doing that, which ultimately shapes organizational cultures and instills meaning to the work that people do. The findings show the relationship between rational and arational sides of organizational life and give a more nuanced picture of organizations. The different themes of the arational uncovered in the stories that entrepreneurs tell give a perspective on the nature of reality and the role of magical and the mundane, the spiritual and the material, and their interaction. Rules of economic rationality do not dominate this dimension. Economic rationality does not apply, or at least not directly, to supernatural help, inspirations from above, serendipitous coincidences, or other manifestations of arational behavior.

Rationality Construction. Researchers have recently indicated an increased interest in the way rationalities are constructed and contested (e.g. Townley, 2002, 2008; Healy et al., 2010; Quattrone, 2015). Organizational magical realism contributes to the scholarship on this topic by presenting a nuanced view of rationality creation. Townley (2008) mentions that people create their rationality for every situation. Magical realism shows how, because of co-existence of different ontologies, rationality is created. People mix different ontologies, but it does not surprise them; in the end it makes sense and constructs a rationality in the moment. Organizational actors perform the work of rationality construction by drawing on many different

resources: disembodied (universal/ economic), embedded (contextualized), and embodied rationalities (involving the way subjects understand themselves/ subjective, emotional etc.) (Townley, 2008). Organizational magical realism illustrates that the arational sphere of life is also a resource on which people draw to create rationality “here and now.” It may be a part of embodied rationality as the arational includes imagination and intuition, but it is also more than that, pertaining to the way subjects understand themselves. It involves intersubjective elements, such as superstition, religious beliefs, etc. Organizational magical realism shows that the process of rationality construction shapes the concrete reality of the moment while organizing. Every time a unique form of rationality is constructed from both rational and arational spheres of organizational life.

This dissertation also clarifies terms such as arational, non-rational, and irrational. This terminology is important for understanding the process of organizing and the way people construct social entities; and it has been used in academic management literature (e.g. Wagner, 1978; Budros, 1999; Simon, 1986, 1987, & 1993). However, management literature did not contain clear definitions of these terms. Clarification of these terms is important because researchers can use them to theorize on a variety of topics other than organizational magical realism.

Organizational magical realism presents a unifying framework for the constructs that theorize the arational side of the organizational world, such as organizational mythmaking, superstition, and spirituality and religion in organizations. Organizational magical realism encompasses mythical, legends, storytelling (especially with magical and/or mystical elements) as well as religious, folkloristic, ritualistic and traditional aspects of organization. However, it can unite other theoretical constructs only under certain conditions. Most important is the mixing

of different ontologies, or mixing the rational and arational modes of reasoning in a way that is not surprising and taken for granted. For example, organizational actors can apply their religious beliefs, such as a belief in the power of prayer, to their work life. When they do, it is very likely that such people will have a magical realist perception, given that other aforementioned conditions are met. However, when people separate their religious practices, superstitions, and other beliefs in the transcendent from their work, it is unlikely that they possess a magical realist perception. In which case, they can be religious, spiritual, and even superstitious, but this will have nothing to do with magical realism, especially with magical realism in organizational contexts. Thus, when different beliefs in the arational are present in organizational contexts in a way that is not surprising and taken for granted, they can be united under the organizational magical realism concept. For instance, when people think that their spiritual, superstitious, or religious belief influences their work life, task performance, or business outcomes, they most likely possess a magical realist perception. Regardless of their beliefs, as a part of a magical realist perception, they will have similar outcomes—they will perceive reality as malleable and assume that symbolic actions will have real consequences.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this research. First, geographical scope of the research of Study 1 is limited mostly to North America. There are only a couple of exceptions to this: most notably, Richard Branson, who is British, but has vast interests in North America. The geographical scope of the research in Study 2 is limited to mostly one city in Canada. Although I interviewed a few entrepreneurs based in other Canadian and US cities, entrepreneurs with international commercial interests, as well as entrepreneurs with different cultural backgrounds (including national cultures), the majority of interviewees function in and are a part of Canadian,

and, more broadly, North American business culture. Geographical limitations are important here especially in light of the significance of cultural origin of magical realism as a genre. As previously mentioned, magical realism originated in Latin America. Alejo Carpentier (1949), one of the first magical realist writers, noticed that people in Latin America had a perception of reality that was different from that of Europeans and North Americans. Carpentier (1949) was, to a certain extent, an outside observer of Caribbean and Latin American life due to his Russian-French cultural background and extended periods of time he spent in France. Carpentier (1949) held that Latin Americans could only make a blurred distinction between the magical and the real to the extent that even some Latin American history seems to be fictional to an outside observer. Gabriel Garcia Marquez modeled his description of reality in part after the way Colombians perceived the world. He later reported that some Latin American readers of his novels such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* took the magical realist fiction to be a true description of historical events.

After the successful start during the so-called Latin American Boom magical realism has spread to many other countries. This signifies the huge interest to the topic of alternative rationalities people have around the globe. It is also important to mention that management researchers have also noted the use of arational thinking in certain parts of the world. For example, it is widely known that many Chinese managers pay attention to superstitions, which affects stock market fluctuations, real estate price dynamics, and other aspects of the economy (Tsang, 2004, 2009). Researchers have also studied the uses of superstitions and “business magic” in the context of the Russian retail industry (Lindquist, 2000). Thus, it is safe to speculate that a higher percentage of people outside of North America possess a magical realist perception. However, it would be very interesting to see if this speculation is correct and to investigate how

national culture affects the magical realist perception. Magical realism borrows from national and local culture and folklore. Latin American magical realists borrow from Catholic legends and Amerindian myths, whereas African writers borrow from local myths and folktales. What I found is that Canadian entrepreneurs' magical realist perception is often based on Protestant Christian beliefs and New Age-like spirituality, such a belief in a responsive Universe. What are the cultural and spiritual influences that form a magical realist perception of business people in China, Russia, Norway, or Uganda?

Another important limitation of this study is that I studied and interviewed only entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are often seen as different from the majority of the population, possessing certain psychological traits, and perceiving risk and opportunity differently. Sometimes entrepreneurs are seen as lonely wolves and mavericks. It would be interesting to see whether other members of organizations also possess a magical realist perception and what function it fulfills in their lives and work-related tasks. For example, do middle managers of Fortune 500 corporations possess a magical realist perception? How does their magical realist perception help or hinder their performance at work?

The third limitation derives from the implications of a magical realist perception on the functioning of organizations. I discuss how a magical realist perception helps entrepreneurs to construct successful futures. However, researchers may find many more implications for organizations members of which possess a magical realist perception. These implications may be both positive and negative. For example, it may be interesting to learn what impact a magical realist perception makes on organizational routines, organizational culture, decision making, strategic change, and other aspects of organizational life. The limitations of this study offer promising direction for future research.

Implications for Future Research

Researchers can use, test, and expand the organizational magical realism concept presented in this dissertation. Because organizational magical realism is a new concept, it would be beneficial to continue with descriptive studies that would examine the phenomenon of organizational actors' magical realist perception and further answer the questions about its nature, causes, and consequences. We also need to understand the individual differences in propensity to magical realist perception, and its range of intensity. It would be interesting to see how age, gender, ethnicity, social status, and personality traits influence the acquirement of a magical realist perception.

Another research direction is the examination of organizational magical realism at different levels of analysis. Although a magical realist perception can be more easily observed at the individual level, I believe that studying organizational magical realism at a group and organizational level of analysis can give us a better understanding of the phenomenon. At times formal or informal leaders in organizations can disseminate a magical realist perception to the groups in which they work. This can have a relatively small impact on organizations and their strategic goals. However, organizational leaders at the top, and especially those with charisma, can disseminate a magical realist perception on the employees of the whole organization. This will most likely have a substantial effect upon the organization, and influence how this organization behaves in the competitive environment, and the types of messages it sends to the broader public. It would be interesting to know how this process of dissemination works. By which means is a magical realist perception diffused? Which of those are more effective and when?

It is important to understand the role a magical realist perception plays in the ability to lead. It is especially interesting to examine a magical realist perception in connection with the charisma and aura of leaders. One of the possible directions is exploring how leaders in organizations use the arational in creating and pursuing strategic organizational goals and do so in a manner that integrates both the magical and the real. Another question that can be posed is what skills and traits do leaders need in order to be able to successfully incorporate the arational into the organizational life? Also, how a magical realist perception influences the establishing of organizational rules and practices? Related questions can be posed about the role of a magical realist perception in formation and change of organizational identity. It would also be interesting to see how a magical realist perception changes over time. For example, individuals may exhibit a magical realist perception and the beliefs associated with it more strongly at times of greater uncertainty. Thus, during the early years of the firm, when the market position is unstable, organizational actors may be more prone to a magical realist perception, whereas after the firm establishes itself, people may abandon magical realist perceptions. Finally, organizational magical realism can serve as a simple reminder to organization scholars to draw ideas from literature, including magical realism. A wonderful example of such inspiration is a recent study by Sliwa and colleagues (2013) who used a magical realist novel by Haruki Murakami to study leadership.

The organizational magical realism concept has the potential to contribute to the organizational storytelling literature, especially to those parts of it that deal with the use of traditional narrative, such as mythmaking in organizations (Gabriel, 1991a; Bowles, 1989; Hatch, Kostera, & Kozminski, 2005), and organizational folklore (Gabriel, 1991b).

Organizational magical realism provides a perspective on how traditional narratives are used as a

part of ordinary life for contemporary organizations, and how and why they exist alongside with rational orientation of organizational functioning. A magical realist perception allows for and calls for the coexistence of traditional narrative as well as actions connected with it, such as rituals (Martin, 2001), ceremonies (Trice & Beyer, 1984), reenactments of myths (Eliade, 1963), and economic rationality in organizations. The concept also shows the importance of the use of storytelling to persuade employees and other stakeholders, to make sense of complex organizational realities, and to create a common vision based on the mixing of different rationalities.

I suggest that a variety of research methods can be used to explore organizational actors' magical realist perception and its implication for organizational performance, including surveys and qualitative methods. Interviews and observations of organizational actors can be especially useful during the first stages of exploration of the phenomenon. Ethnographical studies seem promising because prolonged observations of people in organizations may provide researchers with rich data on the integration of rational and arational behavior and reasoning in a taken for granted manner. In other words, members of the organizational culture may not be aware of their arational behavior and reasoning because to them it is a non-surprising part of ordinary life. Hence, participants may fail to self-report important information that may only stand out for the external observer. Other qualitative methods such as case studies (Yin, 2003) and phenomenology (Moran, 2000; Gill, 2014) can possibly bring important results. One point to clarify is that although I list five tenets of organizational magical realism, it is not necessary to find the manifestations of all of them to confirm a magical realist perception or non-surprising instances of arational behavior in organizations. It is enough to find indications of behavior or reasoning congruent with one of the tenets, given that other conditions of organizational magical

realism are met, namely, mixing of ontologies and co-existence of rational and arational modes of thinking in a taken for granted way, and perception of reality as malleable and a belief that reality can be influenced through symbolic means.

Organization scholars can also use the ideas expressed in this dissertation to make use of literary fiction to explore enigmas of organizational life. Fiction provides a depiction of reality which resonates with readers. Through the narrative readers ponder about their own life and through understanding the fictitious universes they learn about the real world. Good literature contains the seeds of truth. Organization scholars have argued that we can learn about the world of organizations through fiction (Philips, 1995; Czarniawska, 1997; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). To inform organization theory we need to take the depictions of reality that we see in fiction as well as the deeper message sent by the authors and explore whether something like it exists in real world organizations. Organization scholars can be inspired by fiction stories, and, because of the inspiration, can pinpoint the described elements of social and organizational dynamics and phenomena in real organizations. This has been done in both teaching (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005) and research (e.g. Munro & Huber, 2012; Sliwa, Spoelstra, Sørensen, & Land, 2013).

Methodologically it essentially means capturing the description of reality in fictional narrative (and, as we know, good literature contains truth) and exploring whether the described exists in society and organizations. The first step is, of course, to read and deeply understand the fiction and then to dissect it, often with the help of literary criticism. This stage of a research project evokes questioning of social reality and leads to formulation of research questions. The second step is to construct a theoretical framework based on the understanding of the fiction and literary criticism on the topic. The framework needs to be plausible for explaining the real world. In constructing the framework such tools as typology, taxonomy, conceptual map, process

model, etc. can be very helpful. The third step is to apply the framework to the real world empirically or conceptually. Empirical application would entail collecting and analyzing raw data; and conceptual application would entail analyzing existing academic literature. In either case, the analysis is an iterative process in which the researcher goes back and forth between the framework and the data (or the academic literature) and subsequently improves the framework.

For this project I used the genre of magical realism as an inspiration. Magical realism is an amalgamation of realism, or an expression of realistic view of the world, and magical elements. Realism in fiction is an attempt to describe the world we live in via written narrative. It is connected to the positivistic project in science and culture in general (Czarniawska, 1999). Realism in fiction and positivism in science started at the same time with a similar outlook and goal. Using realism or one of its branches to help study organizational life is somewhat easier or less removed than using other genres such as fantasy or science fiction (but see Parker, Higgins, Lightfoot & Smith, 1999). In magical realism, the magical elements that are interwoven into the realistic depictions are there to incite thinking about the role that arational perceptions or beliefs play in the everyday life of people. Magical realism is not the only branch of realism that can elicit interesting and important ideas about organizational phenomena. Using other types of fiction and, in particular, different realism literary styles such as psychological realism, intellectual realism, social realism, naturalism, socialist realism, and even peasant realism (village prose), can inform us about life in organizations. Each of these genres present a different flavor of reality. Organization scholars can in the future use these genres and examine if the descriptions in fictional narratives of these genres can help us to understand organizational reality better.

Because organizational magical realism highlights the presence of a magical realist perception that influences the lives of organizations, and uncovers hidden dimensions of organizational life, other perspectives or topics of organizational analysis may incorporate this knowledge to more fully understand organizational phenomena. For example, how a certain perception of reality and mixing of arational and rational elements of reasoning influences sensegiving in organizations? What a magical realist perception and a belief in significant outcomes of symbolic actions do to impression management? The overall contribution to organizational theory is a presentation of a new theoretical lens or a new angle of looking at organizations and processes that happen in organizational settings. The application is to use the lens to further our knowledge about different aspects of organizational life. Organizational magical realism can add to the growing body of research which suggests that organizational functioning is influenced by factors other than economic rationality, such as emotions (Hochschild, 2003; Seo & Barrett, 2007), spirituality (Hicks, 2003; Chan-Serafin, 2012), heuristics and biases (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982), and mythmaking (Boje et al., 1982; Gabriel, 1991a).

Lastly, organizational magical realism has the potential to consolidate different views on the arational side of organizational life; and as an umbrella term it delivers conceptual value over the sum of more specific constructs (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Besides presenting arational as not surprising, magical realism conveys a specific way of seeing the world, or specific perception of individuals. I introduce the concept of organizational magical realism to explain the organizational actors' perception of reality as malleable, infused with arational notions and beliefs, extraordinary occurrences, and events unaccountable by rational science, and to explain how such a perception influences organizations in general, and entrepreneurial organizations in

particular. A magical realist perception of reality is the key feature of the organizational magical realism concept. Through such perception, organizational magical realism may be connected to other concepts such as religious beliefs, spirituality, superstition, myth creation in organizations, etc. And to the extent that organizational magical realism is connected to them, it may serve as a uniting concept. However, it is not necessary that a person with, for example, a religious belief will have a magical realist perception as is apparent from the results of this study. Nevertheless, it is more likely that people with strong religious beliefs or highly spiritual people will possess such perception, because they have to mix different ontologies (McHale, 1987) as they live in a modern secular society, thus mixing the magical and the real. By mixing ontologies people create rationality in the moment (Townley, 2008), at the same time discrediting the grand narratives. In other words, people don't function in the world as ontological purists. "If people have multiple identities and deal with multiple realities, why should we expect them to be ontological purists? To do so is to limit their capability for sensemaking" (Weick, 1995: 35). In this dissertation I showed that a magical realist perception drives behaviors that play a big role in organizations, and that the concept of organizational magical realism can expose aspects of organizational life that otherwise remain invisible.

Implications for Practitioners

Practitioners can also find the concept of organizational magical realism useful. Besides providing a theoretical lens, organizational magical realism also describes a practice. It is a practice of seeing and drawing upon both the real and the magical in organizational settings. Skillful organizational actors can draw upon both the arational side of life and the mundane in order to achieve strategic organizational goals. As different authors of magical realist texts use different cultural traditions to describe the magical in the real, so do the organizational skillful

actors. The source of the magical in the organizations, or rather the explanations or co-construction through narrative, can belong to different spiritual traditions. These traditions can be Christian, as in the Huntsman Corporation, where the founder and a large portion of employees are Mormons, or in the Amana Corporation, where the employees and managers are radical Pietists. Traditions can also be Buddhist, Muslim, or that of the New Age. For example, Steve Jobs incorporates the New Age-like spiritual elements into his narrative and his myth-creation. Whatever the traditions are, organizational magical realism, in one form or another, exists in most organizations. It depends on the leader and his or her skill to uncover the hidden, arational side of social structure of an organization in order to be able to incorporate the elements of the magical into the organizational strategy, persuasive narrative construction, and vision for the future development.

Perception of reality described by organizational magical realism, and behaviors shaped by such perception have a significant effect on the performance of organizations and organizational actors. If, for example, such perception helps the leader to formulate a vision and persuade the followers, it can lead to increased motivation, increased commitment to the leader and the organization, and increased performance. A magical realist perception helps to reduce uncertainty and facilitate decision making. People resort to different beliefs in the arational in order to overcome anxiety and the feeling of insecurity as they take risks in the organizational environment full of uncertainty and fear. A magical realist perception of reality gives a higher meaning and a purpose to members of organizations. Such perception lets people elevate above the mundane tasks of everyday business operation and instills the cold organizational functioning with higher purpose. This in turn lets the organizational actors to more easily accept the often harsh realities of organizational worlds, and adapt to the demands of efficient task performance.

A magical realist perception of reality may also encourage creativity in organizations by allowing for non-standard thinking and imaginative approaches to problem solving.

A magical realist perception of reality may, however, also have damaging effects on organizations and their members. It may encourage organizational members to ignore economic rationality and act in ways that potentially can go against maximization of profitability or are otherwise harmful to organizations. Such perception of reality can also draw time, resources, and attention away from organizational goals and diminish focus on task performance. Taking magical realist perceptions of reality too far may make people overly enthusiastic, creating destructive illusions which may sidetrack them from seeing dangers. Ironically, Steve Jobs, who was a master of employing a magical realist perception of reality for the good of his organizations, distorted his own reality to the point where he refused to have surgery to remove the cancerous tumor for nine whole months, trying to cure himself by the use of traditional medicine instead (Isaacson, 2011: 454). “All Jobs achieved was a delay in pursuing an actual treatment, thereby endangering his health and contributing to his premature death. Reality is unforgiving” (White, 2015: 132).

Conclusion

According to Gilkey (1970), the most prominent modern myth is the anthropocentric myth; it is the myth of man and their powers. “Each form of modern anthropocentric myth—asserting that man becomes man and can control his life and destiny if he is educated, liberal, analyzed, scientific, an “expert,” etc.—assume that for man at last to understand, to know about, to be aware of something—for him to have a sacral gnosis—is for him to be able in a quite new way to control that object of knowledge, to direct it, and to use it teleologically” (Gilkey, 1970: 77). This myth that tells us that man is in control, contested and questioned by magical realism.

Magical realism plants the thought that man is not in control over their routine reality and their destiny. Control is lost and it scares the modern man as this is one of the deepest fears of our society. (In fiction, though, magical realism is harmless and thus amusing for the reader with surprising moments of magic interwoven into the real). In organizations control is everything: all the aspects of human life are regulated in the bureaucratic world of organizations in order to achieve the ultimate efficiency. Organizational magical realism shows that control is lost in organizations, not because of governmental faulty policy, not because of the stock market fluctuations, and not because of anything that can be explained rationally. The control is lost because it was never achievable in the first place because of the doubts that people have that are instilled by the experiences of the transcendent reality.

To conclude, this dissertation demonstrated that arational elements are recognized by entrepreneurs, and that instances of organizational magical realism are reflected in their accounts. The emerged themes show the complexity of reality in which entrepreneurs function by illustrating how the rational and arational sides of life coexist. Organizational magical realism allows us to take a step aside to discover how entrepreneurs using alternative rationalities construct safe and successful futures, identify opportunity and manage associated risks.

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Appendix

Figure 1

Data Structure Study 1

Influence reality	Reality distortion	
Persuasion		
<hr/>		
Serendipity	Coincidence/Luck	Fluid malleable reality
Fate		
<hr/>		
Thanking higher forces	Dialog with the Universe	
Asking higher forces		
<hr/>		
Desire to achieve	Fantasy of glory	
Pastime fantasizing		
<hr/>		
Childhood fantasies	Space travel fantasies	Fantasy
Saving the world fantasies		
<hr/>		
Hero's journey	Connection to tradition though journey	
Idea during a journey		
<hr/>		
Helping others	Code of belief	Traditional narrative
Golden rule		

Figure 2

Data Structure Study 2

Obeying particular laws of life (karma)

Laws of life (karma)

Living as you should

Being at peace

God's Care

Doing the right thing

Succumbing to God's (Universe's) will

Right thing to do

Inspiration

Revelation through thoughts

Obtaining the answers

Hand of God or the Universe

Supernatural help

Divine intervention

Divine guidance

Intuition

Driven to start a business

Finding one's path

Instrument in the hands of God

Helping people

Blessings are for social impact

Table 1

Tenets of Organizational Magical Realism

Tenet	Meaning	Example from Management Literature	Implications for organizations	
			<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Objects contain essences	Objects can acquire significance and meaning that may confer a degree of agency	Symbolic significance of office décor (Elsbach, 2004)	Increases the ability to collaborate; Increases identification with the organization	Possible creation of distracting or harmful illusions
The Law of Attraction	The idea or belief that like attracts like and that focused positive or negative thoughts can bring positive or negative results	Improper, according to feng shui, design of the Bank of China Tower hurt the reputation of the organization that owned it (Chang, 2009; Tsang, 2004)	Increases performance through reduction of uncertainty and facilitation of decision making	Decreases performance through abolition of economic rationality which impairs profit maximization
Everyday routinized events all have ritualized and magic meanings	Rituals play an important role in building and disseminating of a magical realist perception	Formal dining at University of Cambridge is a ritual that contains sacred aspects and influences behavior and social interaction of participants (Dacin et al., 2010)	Increases commitment to the organization and the leader. Helps leaders to communicate their strategic goals and compel followers to action.	Draws time, resources and attention from organizational goals, and diminishes focus on task performance
Repair of the disruptions of reality	Disruptions of reality trigger the sensemaking mechanism and reality is repaired through arational means	Tomography scanner technologists resorted to magical thinking in order to normalize the situation (Barley, 1988)	Increases performance of organizational actors through increased	Decreases performance of organizational actors through decreased focus on task performance, creation of destructive illusions, and

<p>Traditional belief underlies the narrative</p>	<p>Traditional belief and narrative play an important role in building and disseminating of a magical realist perception</p>	<p>A folkloristic story of “heroic defiance” of a catering worker allowed the listeners to overcome fear, and humanize the cold space of the organization (Gabriel, 1991a)</p>	<p>motivation, increased self-efficacy, and increased creativity Increases commitment to the organization and the leader. Helps leaders to communicate their strategic goals and compel followers to action.</p>	<p>abolition of economic rationality Draws time, resources and attention from organizational goals, and diminishes focus on task performance</p>
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Table 2

List of Biographies

#	Entrepreneur	Years of life	Biography	Author	Pub year	Pages	NYT Best Seller	B&N Best Seller	Amazon Best Seller
1	Sofia Amoruso	1984-	#Girlboss	Sofia Amoruso	2014	256	X	X	X
2	Henry Ford	1863-1947	The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century	Steven Watts	2006	656			X
3	Blake Mycoskie	1976-	Start Something That Matters	Blake Mycoskie	2012	224	X	X	X
4	Howard Schultz	1953-	Onward: How Starbucks Fought for Its Life without Losing Its Soul	Howard Schultz	2012	392	X	X	X
5	Bill Gates	1955-	Bill Gates: The Life and Business Lessons of Bill Gates	George Ilian	2015	37			X
6	Jeff Bezos	1964-	The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon	Brad Stone	2013	361		X	X
7	T. Boone Pickens	1928-	The First Billion Is the Hardest: Reflections on a Life of Comebacks and America's Energy Future	T. Boone Pickens	2009	288	X	X	
8	Henry Ford	1863-1947	My Life and Work	Henry Ford	2015	210		X	
9	Howard Hughes	1905-1976	Howard Hughes: His Life and Madness	Donald L. Barlett, James B. Steele	2004	687		X	
10	Mary Kay Ash	1918-2001	The Mary Kay Way: Timeless Principles from America's Greatest Woman Entrepreneur	Mary Kay Ash	2008	272	X	X	X
11	Donald J. Trump	1946-	Trump: The Art of the Deal	Donald J. Trump	2004	384	X	X	X
12	Jim Clark	1944-	The New New Thing: A Silicon Valley Story	Michael Lewis	2014	272	X	X	X
13	Maxine Clark	1949-	The Bear Necessities of Business: Building a Company with Heart	Maxine Clark, Amy Joyner	2006	326			X

14	Steve Jobs	1955-2011	Steve Jobs	Walter Isaacson	2011	656		X	X
15	Andrew Carnegie	1835-1919	Andrew Carnegie	David Nasaw	2006	896			X
16	Sam Walton	1918-1992	Sam Walton: Made In America	Sam Walton, John Huey	1993	346		X	X
17	Akio Morita	1921-1999	Made in Japan: Akio Morita and Sony	Akio Morita, Edwin M. Reingold, Mitsuko Shimomura	1986	535			X
18	Bill Gates	1955-	Bill Gates: The Path to the Future	Jonathan Gatlin	1999	224		X	
19	Richard Branson	1950-	Losing My Virginity: The Autobiography	Richard Branson	1998	624	X	X	X
20	Ross Perot	1930-	Ross Perot: The Man Behind the Myth	Ken Gross	1992	85		X	
21	Michael R. Bloomberg	1942-	Bloomberg by Bloomberg	Michael R. Bloomberg	2001	280		X	
22	Samuel Zemurray	1877-1961	The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King	Rich Cohen	2012	292			X
23	William Rosenberg	1916-2002	Time to Make the Donuts	William Rosenberg	2010	208			X
24	Phil Knight	1938-	Shoe Dog: A Memoir by the Creator of Nike	Phil Knight	2016	383		X	X
25	Jack Ma	1964-	Alibaba: The House That Jack Ma Built	Duncan Clark	2016	309			X
26	Elon Musk	1971-	Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future	Ashlee Vance	2015	374	X	X	X
27	Larry Ellison	1944-	Everyone Else Must Fail: The Unvarnished Truth About Oracle and Larry Ellison	Karen Southwick	2003	288		X	
28	Rupert Murdoch	1931-	Rupert Murdoch: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Media Wizard	Neil Chenoweth	2002	352		X	
29	Larry Page and Sergey Brin	1973-	The Google Guys: Inside the Brilliant Minds of Google Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin	Richard L. Brandt	2011	272			X
30	Richard Branson	1950-	Screw It, Let's Do It	Richard Branson	2006	111			X

Table 3: Participant Description

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Religious adherence	Years in business	Industry	# of employees
Adam	55-59	M	Protestant	35	Construction	280
Brandon	55-59	M	Protestant	29	Retailing	36
Charles	40-44	M	Non-religious	16	Retailing	>50
David	25-29	M	Non-religious	5	Software	6
Eric	30-34	M	Non-religious	6	IT	12
Frank	50-54	M	Non-religious	15	Professional Services	5
Anna	30-34	F	Buddhist	5	Consumer Services	6
George	40-44	M	Protestant	9	Software	6
Harry	55-59	M	Protestant	23	Health Care Equipment & Supplies	150
Ian	70-74	M	Protestant	40	Construction Materials	>200
James	40-44	M	Protestant	14	Capital Markets	>130
Kevin	35-39	M	Non-religious	13	Software	21
Luke	50-54	M	Protestant	30	Internet Software	5
Mark	35-39	M	Non-religious	17	Internet Software	7
Nick	45-49	M	Protestant	8	Professional Services	12
Oliver	35-39	M	Protestant	12	Specialty Retail	300
Beth	45-49	F	Non-religious	16	Media	14
Paul	55-59	M	Protestant	26	Professional Services	250
Quentin	30-34	M	Muslim	5	Media	14
Richard	55-59	M	Non-religious	12	Consumer Services	>100
Scott	40-44	M	Non-religious	21	Media	22

Tyler	40-44	M	Non-religious	15	Commercial Services & Supplies	9
Umberto	40-44	M	Catholic	6	Media	10
Vincent	35-39	M	Protestant	6	Agriculture + Personal Products	18
Winston	35-39	M	Non-religious	14	Software	35
Xavier	30-34	M	Protestant	5	Media	4
Yves	50-54	M	Protestant	22	Consumer Services	8
Claire	35-39	F	Non-religious	5	Media	28
Zach	35-39	M	Protestant	14	Construction	40
Arthur	30-34	M	Non-religious	5	Commercial Services & Supplies	11
Blake	30-34	M	Non-religious	7	Health Care Services	8
Calvin	30-34	M	Non-religious	5	Software	30
Daniel	30-34	M	Non-religious	5	IT	2
Edmund	50-54	M	Protestant	20	IT	45
Fred	35-39	M	Protestant	15	Specialty Retail + Oil & Gas	25
Gavin	40-44	M	Non-religious	6	Software	38
Hugh	45-49	M	Protestant	11	Software	17
Ingmar	30-34	M	Catholic	6	IT	12
Jason	70-74	M	Protestant	40	Medical Services	32
Karl	35-39	M	Non-religious	13	Internet Software	3

Table 4

Summary of Sensemaking Tools by Temporal Orientation

Temporal Orientation	Sensemaking Tool	Entrepreneurial Outcome
Present	Eminent possibility of changing the reality	Resilience through assurance of ability to change the reality; optimistic outlook
Future	Fantasies are the building blocks for future-oriented sensemaking	Promotes creativity and open-mindedness; pushes the perception of risk aside
Past	Grounding for sensemaking is provided through past patterns of action and beliefs	Provides strength and determination to continue and perform. Decision making process simplification. Elimination of fear in the face of uncertainty.

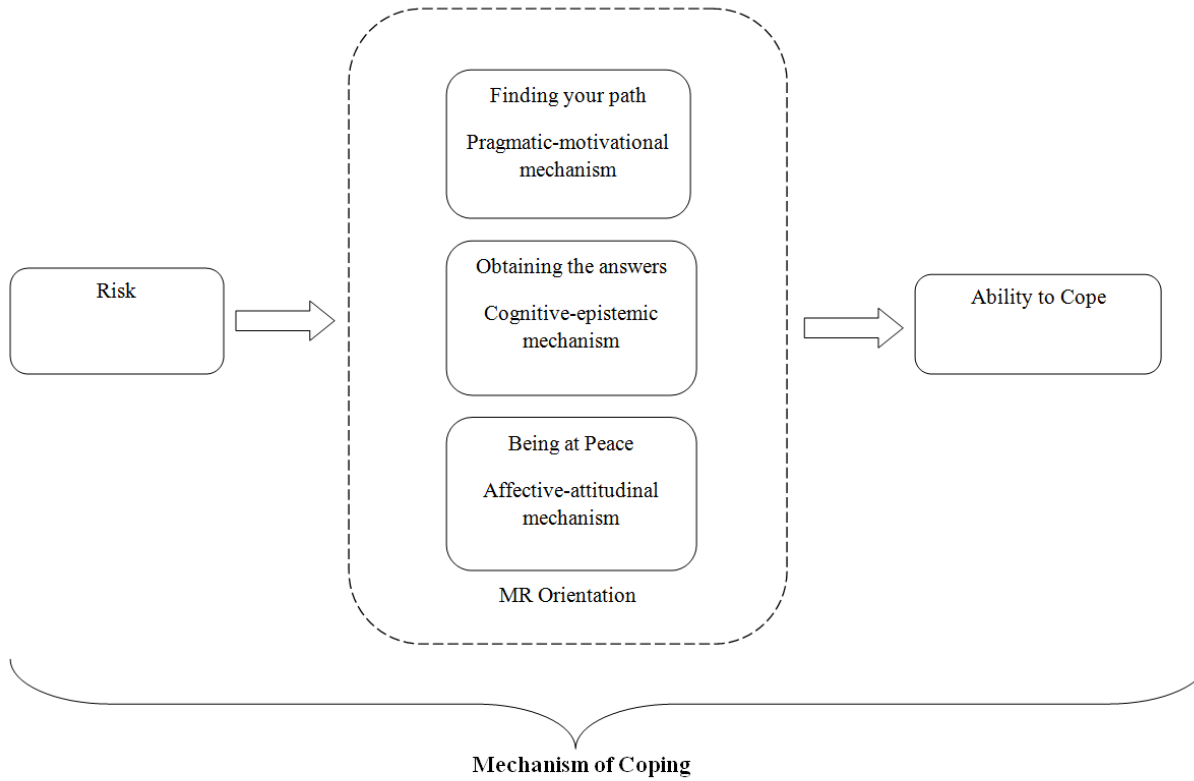
Table 5

Summary of the Attributes of Magical Realist Entrepreneurial Cognition

Critical Questions of Entrepreneurship	Existential Questions of Entrepreneurship	Cognitive Orientation	Component Elements of Cognitive Orientation	Entrepreneurial Outcome
What is happening out there?	What is the nature of the universe?	Affective-Attitudinal	a. The laws of life b. Being at peace	Ideological Fortress: - ability to overlook risk, uncertainty and lack of support
How will it affect me?	What is my place/role in the universe?	Cognitive-Epistemological	a. Obtaining the answers b. Inspiration	Speculative Spirituality: - confidence about one's role independent of outcome
What am I going to do about it?	How should I live/what is my path?	Pragmatic-Motivational	a. Supernatural help b. Finding one's path	Motivation to Act: - willingness to act in the absence of perfect information

Figure 3

Mechanism of Coping



Appendix 1

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Organizational Magical Realism in Young Entrepreneurial Firms

Research Investigator:

Max Ganzin

School of Business

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R6

ganzin@ualberta.ca

780-200-9329

Supervisor:

Professor Trish Reay

School of Business

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R6

preay@ualberta.ca

780-492-4246

Background

- You are being asked to participate in this study because you are the owner of an entrepreneurial firm
- The results of this study will be used in support of my dissertation

Purpose

- I aim to study how entrepreneurs perceive arational (those that are not within the domain of the rules of reason, e.g. Steve Jobs's "reality distortion fields," or making decisions based on inspiration) experiences and reconcile those with the mundane business practices. I also want to understand how entrepreneurs change their business practices as a result of the perception of arational experiences.
- The study will help us better understand how business practices and organizational rules and routines are established and changed, as well as examine how arational and rational sides of organizational life co-exist.

Study Procedures

- I ask that you participate in an interview that will take approximately 20 minutes to an hour
- I would like to record the interview or I will take notes

Benefits

- You will not directly benefit from being in this study.
- I hope that the information I get from doing this study will help us better understand the nature of entrepreneurial activity

Risk

- The probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research

Voluntary Participation

- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary
- Even if you agree to be in the study you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. If you withdraw I will destroy the data collected if requested. You will have up to two weeks after the interview when you can withdraw the data from the study by notifying me through email or telephone.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- I intend to use this research to support my PhD dissertation as well as for publication and scientific conferences presentation. You will not be personally identified in any documents produced.
- Data will be kept confidential. Only I will have access to the raw data.
- Anonymity is guaranteed through replacing of identifiers with codes during transcription of the interviews. You will not be identified in the dissemination of the research.
- Data will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of 10 years following completion of research project. Electronic data will be password protected. After that time all data will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.
- You can receive a copy of my research report if you request via e-mail or phone.

- I may use the data I get from this study in future research, but if I do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Further Information

- If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Max Ganzin (ganzin@ualberta.ca; 780-200-9329) or my supervisor, Dr. Trish Reay, through the contact information above.
- The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Check this box if you agree to be audio-recorded

Signature of the participant _____

Date:

Appendix 2
Preliminary Interview Guide

Demographics questions:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your business?
 - a. When did you start it?
 - b. What is the nature of the business?
2. How many people are employed by your business?
3. Has your business grown since you started it?

Based on some research, one could say that a firm has attained some level of success if it has passed the liability of newness, in other words if it has been in existence for at least five years. Your firm existed for longer than five years; it could be said that it is a successful firm.

What success means to you, what led to it and:

Q1: How well do you remember the time of your first major success in this business?

- a. Can you briefly describe your first major success?
- b. What preceded your success and which events were surrounding your success?

Q2: Would you be able to call (do you see) any events preceding or surrounding your success out of the ordinary/ transcendent/ magical/ spiritual/ or pertaining to luck?

- a. Can you please describe this event(s) in detail?

Q2A: (If the respondent is experiencing difficulties, bring one or two examples: reality distortion field of Steve Jobs; religious experiences of business leaders like Jon Huntsman).

Was anything like this happening around the time of your success?

Q3: What was it like being there/ experiencing it?

a. What did you think at that time?

Q4: How did you feel about this event(s) then?

Q5: How do you feel about this event(s) now?

a. Has anything changed about how you feel about this event(s)?

Q6: Why do you think this event(s) happened?

Q7: What did you do as a result of this event(s)?

a. Did this event(s) influence the way you do business?

b. Did this event(s) influence you do things?

Q8: Would you like to add anything else?