# REGULAR PAPER
# Enterprising health
## Creating the conditions for entrepreneurial behaviour as a strategy for effective and sustainable change in health services

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper seeks to investigate conditions under which entrepreneurs emerge as agents of effective and sustainable change in UK National Health Service Trusts.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The research synthesises literature on changing regulatory structures ("post-bureaucracy") and entrepreneurial behaviour to understand how individual identity construction is informed both by context and by individual attributes. Thematic analysis of interview data involving managers from 11 NHS Trusts, including detailed analysis of six transcripts, focuses on regulatory processes, the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour and outcome variations in workplace innovation and improvement.

**Findings** – This study identifies co-existing modes of regulation, which interact with individual behaviour, generating strategies differentiated as entrepreneurial or conformist. Four ideal types are identified: organisational entrepreneurship, resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship, conformity, and symbolic entrepreneurship. Analysis reinforces those literature findings, which suggest that the interaction of regulatory structures and the identity work of individuals influence the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour and the effectiveness of change.

**Practical implications** – The ability to achieve effective and sustainable outcomes varies considerably even between NHS Trusts faced with comparable challenges in implementing nationally prescribed targets. This variance is explained in terms of the organisation's ability to generate the structures, processes, individual competence and motivation which enable employees at all levels to act entrepreneurially with the ability and legitimacy to achieve strategic goals by working creatively in the spaces between formal organisational structures.

**Originality/value** – The study identifies specific conditions, which stimulate the emergence of entrepreneurs as agents of effective and sustainable change in the NHS, identifying factors that policymakers should consider when implementing change.

**Keywords** Entrepreneurs, Sustainable development, Regulation, Health services, United Kingdom

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Entrepreneurial behaviour plays a key role in sustainable change. Recent UK government policy pronouncements advocate the need for health service staff at all levels to be entrepreneurial in finding ways to make change happen. Yet such policy rhetoric runs the risk of underestimating the complexity of the conditions within which entrepreneurial behaviour can thrive. The ability to achieve effective and sustainable outcomes varies considerably even between National Health Service (NHS) Trusts faced with comparable challenges such as the implementation of nationally prescribed targets. This variance can be explained in terms of the ability of the organisation to generate the

structures, processes, individual competence and motivation which enable employees at all levels to act as entrepreneurs with the ability and legitimacy to achieve strategic goals by working creatively in the spaces between formal organisational structures.

The UK Government's NHS Modernisation Agenda explicitly sought to move the UK NHS from a centrally regulated bureaucracy delivering mass-produced services to an innovative sector responsive to individual patient needs. The ambitious ten-year NHS Plan (Department of Health, 2000a) pursued fundamental changes in NHS organisational culture, challenging deeply embedded traditions and practices, introducing new values, transforming patient experience and improving the working lives of staff. To promote such changes government ministers and civil servants championed "entrepreneurial leaders" bringing "vision, leadership and passion" to the NHS, and who "generate new and alternative solutions that extend the boundaries of healthcare. . .challenge factors that are growth-limiting and refuse to accept the *status quo*" (Sir Nigel Crisp, 2005).

This study builds on the author's experience in implementing one of these NHS Plan initiatives as a County Programme Lead for the Improving Working Lives (IWL) programme (Department of Health, 2000b). IWL attempted a systemic review of HR practice and working life across the 1.3 million NHS staff, and was specifically designed to create attractive and rewarding workplaces to motivate, recruit and retain skilled employees. Working with the 11 NHS Trusts in an English County from 2004 to 2006, the author reflected on the different approaches to implementation and the stark variation in quality and sustainability of outcomes, even though each trust achieved accreditation within a uniform regulatory process. Recognising that implementation was heavily focused on the actions of these individual IWL Leads in each Trust a small pilot study explored the different factors contributing to this variance. Analysis of this data suggested that CEO and board support and, unexpectedly, the entrepreneurial behaviour of the lead were key factors affecting outcomes.

Seeking to examine the conditions under which some managers emerge as entrepreneurs and the consequences for the programme, thematic analysis of interview data from IWL leads in all 11 trusts was undertaken, and was repeated on data from interviews held 12 to 18 months later to analyse the sustainability of the programme.

To be sustainable, IWL principles needed to be embedded in all areas of hospital management and practice, and not treated as another set of short-term performance targets. However the author found notable variance in achievement and sustainability across the Trusts despite a national programme audit instrument, which ensured uniform targets, validation procedures and support between trusts. This variation illustrates the real difficulty of securing effective and sustainable change in an organisation as complex and intransigent as the NHS with its deeply engrained power structure. Other studies have found great variation in the extent to which similar NHS Trusts given comparable training, financial and expert resources have been able to achieve and sustain change (Bevan *et al.*, 2007, p. 137).

Addressing the limitations of organisational theory in explaining effective and sustainable change, the conceptual basis of this research is grounded in a rarely explored synthesis between emerging bodies of research on changing regulatory structures ("post-bureaucracy"), and on the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour in order to understand how individual identity construction is informed both by context and by factors unique to individuals.

*Sustainable organisational change*
Although regulatory measures continue to drive improvement in the target driven NHS, evidence suggests that sustainable organisational change is inherently "messy", reflecting combinations of internal strategies and external influences often beyond management control. While proactive management and leadership play an essential role, change can rarely be "managed" in a linear, planned way. Contemporary writers such as Senge emphasise the "dance of change", the continuous process of learning and innovation caused by the interplay between "growth processes" and limiting "forces and challenges that impede progress" (Senge *et al.*, 1999, p. 10). Sustainability in this perspective is regarded as one element in extended change involving implementation, diffusion and continuous improvement, creating "the capacity to sustain change that brings forth new realities" (Senge, 2002, p. 7). Forces behind organisational change have been described as driving and resisting (Senge *et al.*, 1999, pp. 26-9). They have been linked to both the external and internal environment including government policy, market forces, organisational design and culture.

Crucially, Senge describes forces relating to individuals in change processes in terms of human motivation and human resistance (Senge, 1992, p. 88). The resurgence of interest in individual actor involvement in change began in the 1980s, when many large US companies faced severe challenges in managing innovation and culture change. New types of entrepreneurial change leaders were required to create flatter, faster and more flexible organisations, guided by a shared sense of strategic mission and values (Kanter, 1983, p. 183). Thus understanding the importance of the individual in organisational change became the focus of much of the literature.

Describing the "anchoring of change", Kotter demonstrates links between changes in behaviour and improvements in performance when successors continue to champion the changes of their predecessors (Kotter, 1995, p. 66). Similarly Jacobs (2002) defines change as "processual" and dependent on champions, internal support, monitoring and control mechanisms, and requiring "diffusion beyond first implementation" (Buchanan and Fitzgerald, 2007a, p. 28). Moreover, Child (1997, p. 73) and Giddens (1984) promote an understanding of effective organisational change based on interplay between structural and agency dynamics at multiple levels of analysis.

Many processual-contextual accounts of change and sustainability have been influenced by Pettigrew's research into the individual, social, organisational and political influences on the nature, process and outcomes of change. Acknowledging that successful and sustainable change is difficult to achieve, the review undertaken by Buchanan *et al.* (2005, p. 190) cites lack of strategic guidance from external stakeholders and senior management, and the absence of internal "champions" in explaining loss of momentum. Buchanan and Fitzgerald (2007b, p. 236) conclude from research in the NHS that the context-dependency of success, sustainability and spread of organisational change requires new ways of conceptualising change processes that are less rigid and linear.

While, as Fitzgerald and Buchanan suggest, organisational change literature identifies multiple internal and external factors relating to the sustainability of change, it fails to explain how the effectiveness of change is grounded in the interaction of the attributes of individual actors and their broader historical, cultural, institutional and political influences. Following Giddens' (1984) notion that the social structure represents rules and resources that both constrain and enable action (Llewellyn, 2004,

p. 966), this study explores how changes in regulatory structures affect achievement of sustainable and effective change especially in such complex settings as the NHS. It asks whether the emerging literature on entrepreneurship offers an understanding of the role of the individual agent in sustainable change, and examines the literature on identity to see whether it offers insight into the conditions under which entrepreneurial behaviours emerge in organisations such as the NHS.

### The effects of regulatory structures

In seeking to explore the effects of regulatory structures on individual actors in organisations, the classical Weberian view of bureaucracy is unavoidable. Weber's insight was that, in a social context such as that of an organisation, rationalisation results in a reduction of freedom, initiative and individual power. People would be expected to become machine-like, obedient objects trapped in an "iron cage" (Weber, 1978) of dominant authority within which bureaucracy appears as a system of legitimate power "over" its members (Courpasson and Clegg, 2006, p. 320). Bureaucracy either provides guidance, rules and clarifying responsibilities, thereby easing stress and helping individuals be and feel more effective, or it stifles creativity, fosters dissatisfaction, and demotivates employees (Courpasson, 2000, p. 157). In contrast "Post-bureaucracy" (Grey and Garsten, 2001, p. 230) captures organisational changes which erode or dismantle bureaucracy including flattened hierarchies, flexibility rather than rule-following, movement across organisational boundaries, and flexibility in employment, refocusing attention towards shared values, conscious purpose and motivation rather than hierarchically-bound compliance with given procedures (p. 236). It is suggested that self-created and self-governed roles, where the actor can adapt and evolve threaten the functionality, viability and retention of organisational hierarchies, management "silos" and roles imposed by bureaucratic divisions of labour skills (Sennett, 2003, p. 562).

While the actor in bureaucratic organisations is constrained and rule bound, the post-bureaucratic actor is an opportunist, motivated by desire for new experiences and challenges to develop and prove personal potential. Individuals can exploit the possibilities of tasks or projects in a series of fluid or temporary roles. No longer guaranteeing the security of a job for life, post-bureaucratic organisations make commitment to and identification with work and the organisation a norm respected by those who wish to keep their jobs. It may snare them in power relations even more efficiently than the iron caged bureaucracies (Maravelias and Hansson, 2005, p. 2). Moreover individuals may gain status and power through concordance and conformity with residual bureaucratic organisational norms and values; this can maintain the *status quo* and create paralysis (Bennis, 1998, p. 154).

While bureaucracy is inherent in the idea of a public NHS as a "type" of regulation, it co-exists with other "types" along side the deeply entrenched modes of professional regulation and accountability (Doolin, 2002, p. 374) to create a "hybrid" form. Categorised as "New Public Management" (NPM), a fusion of private and public sector management ideas was subsequently introduced in the name of "better NHS management" which have strengthened vertical lines of authority and reporting and have become embedded as "deep structures", through the advancement of managerialism, performance measurement, targets, and the ethos of regulation, control and coordination (Ferlie and McNulty, 2004, p. 1394). NHS performance targets, at one time in excess of 300, redirect managers' focus of attention, inducing reactive

cultures, stifling innovation and reducing capacity for sustainable change. Buchanan
*et al.* (2007, p. xxii) argue that meeting short-term targets has almost become the sole
preoccupation of politicians and health service managers with worrying consequences
for the reflexive and innovative capacity of the NHS.

Describing the NHS as a 1940s system operating in the twenty-first century
(Department of Health, 2000a), the NHS Plan recognised the need for involvement of
local employees as central to successful change, identifying problems, proposing
solutions and being given new opportunities to lead changes (NHS Modernisation
Agency, 2001, p. 1). Within the "modernisation agenda" the NHS added "new
enterprise" to the regulatory hybrid focusing on partnership, collaborative networking,
and the devolution of power and autonomy to managers to deliver on targets and
policy outcomes, though with renewed emphasis on central audit. Yet underlying
authoritarian mechanisms inherited from historically dominant forms of regulation
continue to shape hybrid regulation in the NHS as bureaucratic power systems
influence the nature of emergent flexibility (Courpasson and Clegg, 2006, p. 326).

Thus "entrepreneurial principles and personalised action" become more prominent
within residually bureaucratic structures which, as a result, evolve into "soft"
bureaucracy (Woods, 2007, p. 301). While this creates potential spaces for more
entrepreneurial styles of management, in the NHS context this is constrained by tight
performance indicators. Moreover it is argued that the appearance of entrepreneurial
cultures may rely on bureaucratic rationality to provide the practical organisational
arrangements, which sustain their operation (Woods, 2007, p. 304). However the resilience
of the "deep structures" have been found to limit reform strategies for transformational
change in health service organisations (Ferlie and McNulty, 2004, p. 1394).

### Defining the public sector entrepreneur

Numerous studies have drawn attention to the ways in which individuals are far from
passive in the face of organisational discourses, which reinforce conformity. Yet the
distribution of entrepreneurial behaviour is not evenly distributed throughout the
workforce with some individuals continuing to be more susceptible to the constraining
influences of bureaucracy and new managerialism. Managers are described as actively
drawing on various organisational discourses as resources "in creating a sense of self"
(Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1164). Likewise Thomas and Linstead (2002, p. 79)
examine how "middle managers attempt to secure an identity". Organisations are also
seen to accomplish control "through the self positioning of employees within
managerially inspired discourses" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p. 628). Similarly,
pressures and organisational changes influence how managers periodically restructure
and reconstruct their identities (Pullen, 2006, p. 25; Sennett, 1998, p. 26). Moreover
"identity regulation" is recognised as a central feature of organisational control in
contemporary "post-bureaucratic" organisations (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p. 627).
Illustrating how power and discipline actively construct conformist selves, they show
how forms of power, governance, and regulation exert control over people, by shaping
their identities and relationships (Collinson, 2003, p. 528).

It is the interactions of entrepreneurs and their stakeholders which sustain and
transform the nature of entrepreneurship, however we need "practical knowledge" to
better understand "the concrete ways in which entrepreneurs locate and exploit
opportunities" (Swedberg, 2000, p. 10).). Entrepreneurs forge creative and

unpredictable solutions, often in the spaces between formal organisational structures and protocols, interpreting the "discourse of enterprise in ways that make sense in terms of their particular circumstances and experiences" (Cohen and Musson, 2000, p. 34). Inconsistency and ambiguity of objectives and goals are important factors in stimulating new forms of entrepreneurship in the public sector, encouraging flexibility and opening opportunities, which may otherwise not have emerged (Saddler, 2000, p. 36). Goss has proposed a hypothetical model of how innovative forms of entrepreneurial behaviour could be explicable in terms of an outcome of the dynamics of social situations, which Goss argues, is a precondition for sustainable innovation (Goss, 2005, p. 632). However, why, when, and how, some people, and not others, demonstrate entrepreneurial behaviour, pose persistent questions.

Mainstream literature centres on personality traits of entrepreneurs, as innovative and creative, striving for achievement and autonomy and exhibiting risk-taking behaviour (Benschop and Essers, 2007, p. 52). Even though contested, these traits feature prominently in various discourses on entrepreneurship whereas the literature hardly elaborates on entrepreneurial identities. However social constructionist and/or discursive approaches to entrepreneurship, define entrepreneurial identities as discursively produced through dialogues with clients, suppliers, employees and family (Steyaert and Hjorth, 2003). Entrepreneurial identities thus "become", instead of "are"; their becoming is negotiated with various constituencies (Benschop and Essers, 2007, p. 52) in which dialogic, emergent and relational thinking replaces the traditional and dominant notion of the entrepreneurial "self" (Fletcher and Watson, 2007, p. 12). Thus entrepreneurial identities are viewed as expressions of relationship, seeing the individual as a social self that is always in interaction with others and has a continually emergent identity.

Entrepreneurial identities are as much established through face-to-face interaction in work-related situations as they are reproduced by an "external" discourse in which the values of entrepreneurship are promoted (Down and Reveley, 2004, p. 236). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) conceptualise identity processes as an interplay between self-identity (the individual's image of him/herself); identity work (the active construction of self identity); and identity regulation (the regulative effects of organisational and social processes). Therefore in the organisational context, identity is in process of being constructed as the relations, practices and discourses which surround individuals change (Hallford and Leonard, 1999, p. 658) framing their sense of who they are (Mumby and Chair, 1997, p. 181). Thus identity processes offer insight into why some managers emerge as entrepreneurs within a climate of change in complex organisations such as the NHS.

This review of the literature has shown how changes in regulatory structures impact on the achievement of sustainable and effective change, especially in complex settings such as the NHS, and offers an understanding of the role of the individual agent in change processes. It has highlighted that the complex co-existence of different modes of regulation is important both in restraining and in stimulating a new form of entrepreneurship in NHS organisations, on the one hand because of the persistence of repressive organisational practices and on the other by facilitating flexibility and opportunities which may otherwise not have emerged. However to address why, when and how some people and not others engage in entrepreneurial conduct, this study will explore workplace construction of identity, and examine the way that organisational

relations are reproduced, rationalised, resisted and even transformed at times of imposed change. It therefore offers insight into the emergence of entrepreneurs within a climate of change.

## Designing the study

Building on the author's experience of supporting and validating IWL accreditation with the 11 NHS trusts, each IWL lead was interviewed on two occasions after the end of the programme (with a period of 12 months between each individual's interviews). All 11 trusts within this Strategic Health Authority (SHA) are representative of those found in other SHAs, including mental health, acute, and primary care trusts. Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4) of the interview data was undertaken sequentially at two levels: first a broad brush analysis of two sets of interview data from each of the ten leads, and second an in depth analysis of six sets of transcripts from three trusts/leads (first and second round interviews) which revealed detailed coded narrative for interpretation.

Drawing on theories arising from the pilot study and the literature, three "themes" were identified for thematic analysis across each "case" (trust):

(1) organisational regulation, structure and support;

(2) Individual identity/behaviour; and

(3) effectiveness and sustainability of change.

The broad brush analysis showed that all leads acknowledged the role played by the CEO, board and senior managers in supporting them or otherwise, and the necessity of involving staff side representatives and middle managers. Engaging staff side and employee representative together with a broad cross section of staff was both essential and difficult due to service pressures and resistance by some middle managers. Designated as "leaders of change" all leads across the 11 organisations demonstrated varying attributes of either "champion" or "entrepreneur". However, the distribution of entrepreneurial behaviour was not evenly distributed throughout the sample, with some more susceptible to the constraining influences of bureaucracy and new managerialism. There was notable variance in quality of outcomes from the first interviews and stark differences in the sustainability of change were observed at the second interview 12 months later.

The broad brush analysis revealed key patterns of variance in terms of four potential ideal typical responses, grounded in the interaction between individual behaviour and organisation structure. These four ideal typical responses are classified for the purposes of this research as: conformity, seen in 70 per cent of the organisations, resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship (20 per cent), organisational entrepreneurship (10 per cent), and symbolic entrepreneurship (see Figure 1):

(1) *Organisational entrepreneurship* is sanctioned and supported at board level; actors have autonomy and opportunities for creativity in working between organisation structures and across organisational boundaries and networks, leading to wider staff engagement, sustained change, improvement and innovation.

(2) *Resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship* is where the key actor possesses a real understanding of the need to embed change within the deep structures of an organisation, but is constrained by those same structural forces. In such cases entrepreneurial behaviour may be interpreted as subversive in that although it is
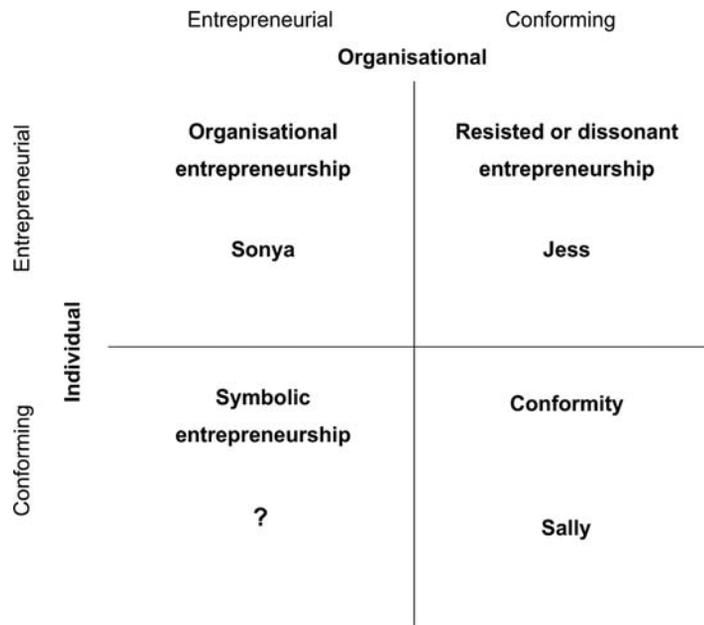
Figure 1.
A two-by-two matrix showing "ideal type" outcomes from the interaction between individual behaviour and organisational structure

focused on achieving shared goals it does so in ways, which involve bypassing established practices or mobilising resources to which the actor has partial access.

(3) *Conformity* is characterised by compliance in which hierarchical management "deep structures" produce dependence on performance targets and conformity to working within given roles.

(4) *Symbolic entrepreneurship* exists where the language of entrepreneurship is adopted at corporate level but without evidence of entrepreneurial behaviour in practice.

Only three of these ideal types are represented within the data generated by the broad analysis of the 11 trusts. Although several trusts within the sample demonstrated some characteristics of entrepreneurial practice, only one appeared to have made a significant break from a traditional culture of compliance.

*Selecting the trusts for in-depth analysis*
Identification of these four ideal types provided a basis for the second, in depth stage of the analysis. Three trusts were selected as exemplars of the three corresponding ideal types represented in the sample. However, there is no perfect match between the ideal types and the evidence from the actual trusts. Real-life organisations display a varied mix of characteristics and regulatory processes, some of which are in opposition to each other, whereas the essence of ideal types is that their features demonstrate consistency; indeed all three trusts show at least some characteristics of all three ideal types. Nonetheless the matching of each trust with a particular ideal type reflects the dominance of a particular set of characteristics (see Figure 1). In Figure 1, the names are those of the three IWL lead interviewees who contributed core data for the second

stage of analysis (real names of IWL leads and other persons have been changed to preserve anonymity).

The setting where Sally worked is described as one of conformity where the IWL programme became a 'tick box' process focused on meeting audit requirements. Sonya's success emerged within a context categorised as organisational entrepreneurship. Her role was sanctioned and supported by the organisation at board level, enabling her to deploy creativity and skill as an entrepreneur working in spaces between organisational structures, leading to wider staff engagement and generating evidence of sustained change and innovation. Exemplifying resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship, Jess demonstrated capacity for entrepreneurial behaviour despite dissonance within the wider organisation, including resistance from middle management and minimal, inconsistent support from the board and strategic managers.

## The leads in their organisational context

### Sally

Trust One, a small community-based organisation covering a large area, was formed two years previously. Embedding hierarchical management within its "deep structures", the organisation's focus on achieving performance targets through tightly structured roles reveals bureaucracy as a system of legitimate power "over" its members (Courpasson and Clegg, 2006, p. 320). This setting where Sally worked is described as one of conformity (see Figure 1) where the IWL programme became a "tick box" process focused on meeting audit requirements. Characteristic of a bureaucratic organisation where individuals are assigned to "work roles" which they fulfil according to restrictive rules and criteria (Kallinikos, 2004, p. 21), Sally's conformity regulated by her managerial identity and workplace regimes, kept her within the constraints of her bureaucratic role. Sally admitted an instrumental orientation towards meeting IWL requirements:

> I think somebody had to play the role that I played . . . the managers in this PCT, I believe, did not take any responsibility for improving working lives and didn't have um as much involvement if any.

Sally was conscientious in her role as human resources (HR) manager in Trust One, having worked in the NHS for a few years. Young, and popular with her colleagues, she was perceived by the author as a "reluctant participant" within the IWL programme. Hardworking but solitary, she was reluctant to seek support and had an essentially managerialist orientation including conformity with organisation rules combined with an unwillingness or inability to inspire the wholehearted commitment of others. Appointed from within HR Sally was seen as "IWL Champion". Here language is significant, symbolising a heroic leader championing a change project in a linear way within a given set of parameters. Working within HR management parameters, Sally toed the corporate line and was instrumental in implementing "tick box" changes.

Initially IWL and Sally's role were acknowledged by the CEO and a director, but concrete support was lacking in the structure and practices of the organisation: "Most of the level of support was no doubt from my director and chief Executive". However in bureaucracies personal support, even at senior levels, is not necessarily sufficient to overcome structural resistance and workplace regimes.

Here in the organisational context, identity is constructed as the relations, practices and discourses, which surround individuals, change (Hallford and Leonard, 1999, p. 658). This is witnessed in the predictable conditions of the more bureaucratic Trust One, "conforming" identity work constructed by Sally is maintained and authenticated, externally approved by her peers and her director. In such conforming environments individuals tend to be preoccupied with themselves as valued objects in the eyes of those in authority, subordinating their own subjectivity in the process.

Throughout the programme IWL remained within the HR domain. Interview evidence suggests that this reflected Sally's willingness to work solely within her HR role and the organisation's rigid organisational structures (Webb, 2004, p. 721) thus maintaining the *status quo* and creating paralysis (Bennis, 1998, p. 154):

> ... at the end of the day you had somebody in HR that did in the end, you know, pull it all together ... the process was farcical.

Her narrative reveals her frustrations. Relatively new and not so conditioned to the NHS bureaucratic mode of regulation and hierarchy, Sally experienced discrepancies between expected ideals and experienced practice, which leads to frustration among many managers (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1184):

> I often felt quite frustrated with the work that I was doing, but a lot of the work that I was doing, no say something like 80 percent of the work that I was doing wasn't for the good of the staff, it was about putting the words down on paper to prove to you know the Department of Health that we have done the right thing by our organisation.

Moreover, Sally's reliance on bureaucratic systems failed to help her overcome resistance and mobilise senior and middle management support throughout the IWL process, resulting in minimal staff engagement and little evidence of trade union partnership. She blamed the system:

> I did feel as though I was kind of running the show a lot of the time.

Throughout the programme Sally championed IWL from within Trust One's HR domain, just achieving accreditation but with little evidence of wider dissemination, organisational learning, innovation or change. Illustrating how power and discipline actively construct conformist selves, Sally demonstrates how forms of bureaucratic power, governance, and regulation exert control over people, by shaping their identities and relationships (Collinson, 2003, p. 528). In short, structure and identity construction can be complicit in preventing the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour.

A second interview with Sally a year later found that:

> following accreditation IWL came to a screeching halt ... following reconfiguration, in the new organisation there is no talk of either IWL or how we continue that work to happen.

*Sonya*

In Trust Two, Sonya was perceived by the author, as enthusiastic, entrepreneurial, competent, and capable, of inspiring commitment, among others. Trained as a nurse, she worked her way through the ranks to become a general manager within this large trust, but had recently become a victim of a reorganisation alongside nine others. Sonya was popular with colleagues and peers. Practical and extremely knowledgeable, particularly about staff members, management, and the history of this trust, she

related well with all levels of employees including CEO and board, staff side and frontline workers. Sonya's success emerged within a context categorised as organisational entrepreneurship. Her role was sanctioned and supported by the organisation at board level, enabling her to deploy creativity and skill as an entrepreneur working in spaces between organisational structures, leading to wider staff engagement and generating evidence of sustained change and innovation.

Trust Two, a large, dispersed, regional, multi-site organisation, was continuing to adapt and embed the effects of a merger two years previously. A proactive, visible CEO and board embraced IWL as a tool to engage employees and achieve real improvements in working lives. While operating within a given "NHS hierarchy", middle managers were granted autonomy to develop ideas, work across boundaries and create internal and external networks. Sonya's entrepreneurial behaviour revealed her clearly sanctioned autonomy but this was dependent on support and leadership from the CEO and board who influenced the dynamic and participative culture of the organisation. Referring to her links with senior management, Sonya reflected:

> I had loads of support for it which was I think instrumental in making it a positive experience for the organisation.

Here modernisation is played out in different ways according to local contexts and the responses of those "on the ground". Sonya achieved influence by making the case for "entrepreneurial principles and personalised action" within an emerging, modified form of "soft" bureaucracy. While this mode of regulation creates spaces for a more entrepreneurial style of project management, it is realised in the context of the obligatory IWL framework. Here we see entrepreneurial culture relying on the bureaucratic rationality embedded in IWL to provide the practical support required to sustain Sonya's project (Woods, 2007, p. 309). Sonya's entrepreneurial identity emerged as a process of "becoming" rather than "being", through forming, strengthening and revising her personal constructions or narratives towards achieving "a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" over time (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1164).

Recognised as an effective communicator across organisational boundaries, Sonya worked in partnership with the board, management, staff and trade unions, and co-opted leaders as "IWL Champions" from across all sectors of the organisation. Her creativity and networking skills flourished in the culture of "soft" bureaucracy (Woods, 2007, p. 301) giving her a structure within which to engage the organisation and the freedom to act with a degree of independence:

> the only way that I was able to function like that was because I had support from (HR director) and from (CEO), if I hadn't got support from you know, senior managers, and I was struggling on my own in the same way I know other organisations were, then I wouldn't have been able to achieve that . . . I mean I was doing all the work on the ground, but they were you know, projecting it for me and saying this is what must happen.

Sonya was popular with colleagues and peers, and respected by senior colleagues in Trust Two; her emerging entrepreneurial identity was acknowledged and supported. Sonya related well to employees at all levels including CEO and board, staff side and frontline workers: "I make it my business to know everything". However, Sonya avoided the "management control" discourse. The identity she initially assumed in her role was that of "interaction facilitator":

> Think about it, the whole workforce are in the business of talking to people, it's all about talking and about personal interaction.

Part of Sonya's identity work as an organisational entrepreneur demonstrated sensitivity, understanding and clearly empathetic behaviour towards a wide cross-section of staff. "People need to see the change or feel the change and not just being told it's happened". The positive impact of her IWL work internally and externally to the organisation was evident both through her engagement with staff side representatives and a broad cross section of staff, and the development of networking across the trust and region.

In creating innovative means of distributing leadership among staff across all departments from the start of the initiative Sonya ensured that changes became embedded and sustained throughout the organisation. She used her knowledge and experience to involve management and engage a wide cross section of staff to champion change:

> IWL didn't get your staff-side only or you know your real vocal individuals, what you did get, you get loads of people … people that will help us make change, they will be decision makers then within the organisation.

A networker, innovator and skilled communicator with all staff grades Sonya enlisted both board and wide staff engagement at every stage. It is these interactions of entrepreneurs and stakeholders, which sustain and transform change (Downing, 2005, p. 196). Innovation, risk taking, and creativity are found in most definitions of entrepreneurship, and Sonya exemplifies how entrepreneurs apply these concepts to the social process of "new world making" (Downing, 2005, p. 196). As an entrepreneur she developed innovative ways of overcoming challenges in engaging staff and managers through non-conformist methods over a wide geographical area. She created an IWL advisory group network across organisational divisions:

> I felt that IWL wasn't just something you did in isolation, it incorporated all the workforce planning and everything else that came out of it.

Sonya was keen to share learning, experiences and knowledge with other organisations through active participation in IWL regional network meetings. She was an advocate of partnership working and consistently encouraged staff side engagement. In short, Sonya's continually emergent entrepreneurial identity is revealed through her use of leadership, communication and support for driving changes in non-conforming ways, demonstrating a personal and social self always in interaction with others (Fletcher and Watson, 2007, p. 12).

Sonya was well supported by her HR line manager who officially headed the IWL initiative for Trust Two but on recognising Sonya's ability and drive, handed over all operational work and co ordination at an early stage:

> Sonya had credibility at a managerial and organisation board exec board level, but she had credibility with the work-force as well and I think that was one of our big successes and (pause) … Because Sonya quite easily talks to the board but also with the grassroots staff and that was actually one of the key elements to me of how IWL went forward, because had it been me, I couldn't have got the access that Sonya gets to the workforce. And it's having that knowledge of the organisation and I know Sonya does have the credibility with the workforce and err and I suppose what the CEO and HR director gave was the autonomy (Sonya's line manager).

Changes became embedded due to her persistence in devolving work from HR through the network of IWL representatives she had initiated across all workplace areas. Indeed it was apparent at interview a year later that the success of her entrepreneurial approach had meant that IWL principles provided the template for the design and implementation of organisational development strategy over future years:

> So my new role as OD facilitator is really based on all the work that we did in IWL ... the organisation has made an ongoing commitment (to IWL) really and given me the structure to be able to deliver on.

In creating new means of engaging the board and distributing leadership to staff across all departments at the outset, Sonya ensured that innovations to improve the working lives of staff became embedded and sustained throughout Trust Two.

*Jess*

Exemplifying resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship, Jess demonstrated capacity for entrepreneurial behaviour despite dissonance within the wider organisation, including resistance from middle management and minimal, inconsistent support from the board and strategic managers. There was evidence of real changes leading to workforce benefits, however these proved to be unsustainable after the completion of the programme.

Jess was committed, hard working, enthusiastic and popular with colleagues. Practical, knowledgeable and able to draw on her nursing background, she had broad insight into all areas and departments within Trust Three. She underestimated her ability to perform, and talked shopfloor rather than management language. Jess nonetheless developed an entrepreneurial approach in the face of organisational apathy and resistance

Eighteen months after its creation following the merger of two community organisations, Trust Three was struggling to integrate two hierarchical management structures, service portfolios, and workforces. The reconfiguration created tensions, and uncertainty, for all levels of employees. Enduring bureaucratic forms of hierarchy led to the persistence of roles based on power and technical skills (Sennett, 2003, p. 562) leading to management "silos". The CEO and board were disengaged from IWL and demonstrated lack of commitment to do more than meet the programme's audit requirements. Consequently Jess experienced conflict between her perception of the need to realise IWL values by embedding change, and the organisation's lack of strategic commitment to change. Jess demonstrates the potential power of the IWL lead to introduce the programme's principles, overcome management resistance and address obstacles to embedded change.

Jess's constructions of self and her "resistance", when faced with the subjectivising elements of hierarchy and new managerialism cannot be viewed simply as "oppositional". Her narrative illustrates the multidirectional nature of resistance, which is not only oppositional but also generative, driven by the paradox and contradiction within organisational structures and her identity work:

> ... if we weren't there it (IWL) wouldn't have happened ... I hijacked meetings to get to staff.

It is argued that resistance can represent a challenge to dominant interests and values and may even become a catalyst for social and organisational change (Collinson, 2003,

p. 541). Resistance is therefore stimulated by the contradictions, weaknesses and gaps between alternative subject positions (Thomas and Davies, 2005, p. 684). Where there is a space between the position of subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced (Weedon, 1987, p. 112). The effects of such resistance are low levels of disturbance, leading to the destabilising, weakening and greater incoherence of dominant discourses, and in turn creating greater looseness and opportunity to exploit spaces. It is these spaces that enable the construction of alternative identities and meanings within forms of domination in social structures (Thomas and Davies, 2005, p. 685).

Isolation from senior management and lack of HR input or support acted as both motivator and constraint:

> The senior management didn't do anything, to be very honest. Basically I was told that the director for operations said that she was the lead for IWL and I was just doing the work, and to me that just says it all, so she was just there in name but didn't do anything and neither did her deputy.

As a result Jess cultivated an ability to work "outside the box". Over 12 months she co-opted board support through a non-executive director and successfully drove the initiative with a management colleague. She challenged enduring bureaucratic forms of organisational hierarchy and the demarcation of roles with new networks. At times of traumatic, stigmatising or confrontational experiences, identity work becomes acutely conscious and even painful. As Jess emerged as an entrepreneur she experienced self-doubt about fighting the system and yet openness about wanting IWL to succeed for the workforce. She experienced dissonance in encounters with others, particularly through her unfulfilled expectations of corporate and middle management (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). Handy (1993, p. 382) cites dissonance theory to explain situations where actors possess real understanding of the need to embed change within the deep structures of an organisation but are constrained by those same structural forces.

Jess's situation shows that the determining influence of organisational control should not be seen as absolute. Jess worked in the spaces between formal organisational structures and protocols, often "outside the box" and challenged the *status quo* (Crisp, 2005). It is through the interplay of diverse organisational discourses in which self and social identities of actors are negotiated, created, threatened or reproduced though ongoing interaction (Watson, 2008, p. 126) that Jess identified herself as an entrepreneur.

For Jess, inconsistent strategic objectives and ambiguous goals within Trust Three drove the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour (Saddler, 2000, p. 36). She forged creative and unpredictable solutions, often in the spaces between formal organisational structures and protocols (Cohen and Musson, 2000, p. 34). Needing to bypass role-dependency on management support, Jess learned to overcome resistance by harnessing unconventional resources and mobilising people to champion innovation and improvement across the organisation. She chose key leads who she could work with, bypassing obstructive management, in order to engage with staff at all levels:

> Middle management were a major obstacle, because they didn't understand the process, that it wasn't a blaming thing, it was to improve. Managers' focus groups were needed so much and if we couldn't get to the managers we did a questionnaire for them.

Jess co-opted necessary board support in Trust Three through a non-executive director and successfully drove the initiative, identifying both issues and areas of good practice through staff focus groups. One of her many achievements was improving awareness of policy, opening channels to encourage free flow of information. However in raising staff awareness of updated HR policies such as flexible working, she discovered that "staff did not know about them" or their entitlement to use them:

> what we have done as an organisation is we have got those polices on the web so staff can access them (pause) and they (managers) have gone mental because staff have now got access to them, and therefore they have got to be seen to be doing it (long pause) and that's wrong (pause) two area managers saying how come staff have got hold of this policy.

Trust Three reveals dissonant entrepreneurship where entrepreneurial behaviour may be interpreted as subversive in the sense that although Jess is focused on achieving shared goals she does so in unorthodox ways which may appear threatening to managerial authority. Moreover it highlights entrepreneurial conduct as an outcome of challenging or resisting dynamics of social situations; this, Goss (2005, p. 632) argues, is a precondition for sustainable innovation.

Jess received no acknowledgement for successfully leading Trust Three to Accreditation despite the validation team noting improvements reflected in staff feedback. Owing to the volatility of the changing NHS agenda Jess was removed from post to return to her previous role once accreditation was achieved. Work was ended just when change began, at which point Jess reported that all activity stopped. She was cynical and angry that work was not allowed to continue when it was most needed. Arbitrary implementation of policies continued, with change on hold until reconfiguration:

> They've taken me out (of IWL) (pause) the focus is again agenda for change and the focus again now is this reconfiguration (long pause) which is bad because I think slowly we were starting to bridge that gap and I don't know whether its going to continue.

Similarly, Ferlie and McNulty (2004, p. 1408) found in their study of change, that senior NHS management at specialty and directorate levels used their position and power resources to blunt the influence and aspirations of change agents who, at least initially, aspired to more radical, transformational ambitions.

Trust Three achieved accreditation with no sustainable change or innovation. Indicative of the persistence of deep bureaucratic structures and resulting management "silos", the IWL initiative based on HR policy and practice had not even engaged the HR function:

> I think IWL sits with HR, to be perfectly honest and I think they are the right people to move this forward because they should be there for the interest of the staff, but it hasn't even hit that door.

A second interview with Jess a year later found:

> There is no follow on so basically it's (IWL) shelved, it's in a box on a shelf and that is such a shame, for that amount of work.

Yet the determining influence of organisational control should not be seen as absolute. It is within the interplay of diverse organisational discourses that self and social identities of actors are negotiated, created, threatened or reproduced through ongoing

interaction (Watson, 2008, p. 126). Moreover self identities draw on available social discourses or narratives about who one can be and how one should act, some of which, it is argued, have stronger organisational support than others (Thomas and Davies, 2005, p. 685). Arguably, organisational control can never be completely determining of behaviour when identity work is subject to such ambiguous and contradictory forces.

*Comparison*
This study suggests that having an organisational structure conducive to entrepreneurship is a critical condition for achieving sustainable change. All cases show that the support of the CEO and board are necessary but not sufficient conditions for achieving such change. Sally's case demonstrates that even where high levels of corporate support were found, the persistence of bureaucratic modes of regulation in Trust One, meant that subjective choices of senior actors do not automatically translate into processes or resources that animate and sustain entrepreneurial behaviour, or encourage the IWL leads to define themselves as entrepreneurs. Yet Jess's case shows that in an organisational context such as Trust Three, which is not conducive to entrepreneurial behaviour, the individual can still find creative ways of exploiting contradictions and weaknesses in the system of control to achieve shared goals. Unlike Sally, whose experience led her towards a more conformist identity, Jess constructed an entrepreneurial identity for herself despite working in an equally unpromising organisational context.

Sonya's case clearly shows the beneficial effects of convergence between an organisational structure that supports innovation and the entrepreneurial behaviour of key actors. Trust Two was in the process of transforming itself into a post-bureaucratic organisation (Grey and Garsten, 2001, p. 230) in the sense that among other changes, it actively facilitated networking across demarcations in a wide range of managerial and clinical domains. Sonya perceived the transformational potential of IWL in an organisation that was strategically focused on change. She also understood that it would be necessary to work in unconventional ways in order to overcome the structural obstacles to such change. Yet at the same time she understood that unconventional ways of working would be sanctioned, at least at senior levels. It is this context that supported and informed Sonya's emerging identity as an entrepreneur.

In summary, comparison between these three cases demonstrates the dual role of structure in influencing sustainable and effective change. First, structural factors provided the necessary context in which entrepreneurial behaviour emerged and it is this combination, which secured the robustness of change. Second, the structural context provides positive messages that gave individuals strength and reassurance to assume identities in which they were creative and entrepreneurial. Comparison between Trusts One and Two showed that structural factors alone did not determine successful outcomes. Jess showed that even when working within similar structural contexts, the particular qualities that individual identities brought to a change process had a major effect in differentiating outcomes.

**Conclusions**
The government's NHS modernisation agenda has led to rapid-paced reforms, driven by the need for new responses to social, technological and economic trends. However

despite the accompanying political rhetoric of entrepreneurialism, change in the vast, hierarchical, labour intensive NHS is principally driven by government policy. While IWL represented a significant innovation, the really hard task lies not in designing policy measures but in securing their even and sustainable implementation. Evidence from NHS organisations in this study and elsewhere demonstrates that IWL was capable of generating sustainable change, but that it did not do so evenly or inclusively. Pilot study evidence prompted exploration of potential syntheses between theories of regulatory change, entrepreneurship and identity construction, providing a structure for the analysis of the empirical data.

By focusing on the lived experiences of individual health service managers engaged in a national change programme, this study offers an empirically grounded understanding of how co-existing modes of regulation interact with individual behaviour to generate strategies differentiated by entrepreneurship or conformity. These can be represented, by four ideal types, namely: organisational entrepreneurship, resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship, conformity, and symbolic entrepreneurship (see Figure 1). As this paper demonstrates, trusts represented in this study correspond strongly with the characteristics of three of these ideal types.

Organisational change literature pays insufficient attention to entrepreneurship, the factors inciting entrepreneurial behaviour and how entrepreneurs affect the sustainability of change. All three trusts studied in depth demonstrated the persistence of "deep structures" (Ferlie and McNulty, 2004, p. 1394) reflected in bureaucratic demarcations, regulation and control. However, two leads emerged as entrepreneurs from the ambiguity and complexity of co-existing modes of regulation. Trust Two, an organisation strategically focused on change, appeared to break significantly from a traditional culture of compliance. IWL's transformational potential in this culture of organisational entrepreneurship supported and informed Sonya's emerging identity as a self-motivated entrepreneur pursuing trust interests, leading to sustained practice, change and innovation. Conversely Sally's self perception as a bureaucrat was reinforced within Trust One's culture of conformity characterised by compliance and dependence on residual "deep structures" of hierarchical management. Working within HRM parameters as an "IWL Champion", Sally toed the corporate line and restricted change to a "tick box" exercise. Consequently Trust One marginally achieved IWL accreditation but generated little evidence of sustained improvement in working lives.

Jess and Sonya's experience validates literature findings that inconsistency and ambiguity in regulatory objectives and goals are important factors in stimulating new forms of entrepreneurship (Saddler, 2000, p. 36). Yet Jess's resisted or dissonant entrepreneurship within Trust Three shows that opposition will be met in an organisational context not conducive to entrepreneurial behaviour. However, she learned to exploit the deep structures of bureaucratic hierarchy in order to achieve shared goals. Jess possessed real understanding of the need to embed change within Trust Three but experienced dissonance in the face of structural inertia. Although she secured real workforce benefits, these were not sustained when Jess was redeployed on completion of the programme. Confirming Downing's (2005, p. 196) findings, Jess and Sonya's interactions with senior management, and the support they received from the staff, sustained and transformed the nature of their entrepreneurship.

Existing literature does not explain the uneven distribution of entrepreneurial behaviour throughout the workforce, where some individuals continue to be more susceptible to the constraining influences of bureaucracy and new managerialism. Jess constructed an entrepreneurial identity despite working in an organisational context as unpromising as that of Sally. Jess shows that even when working within similar structural contexts, the particular qualities that individual identities bring to change have a major effect in differentiating outcomes. Identity research suggests that individuals secure their sense of meaning and reality from participation in discursive and disciplinary practices that constitute them as subjects. Participation confirms an individualised sense of identity, which is continuously being constructed, as the surrounding relations, practices and discourses change (Hallford and Leonard, 1999, p. 658). However for Sally, whose experience led her towards a more conformist identity, new managerial discourses were incorporated into narratives of self-identity as a form of social domination. Thus corporate regulation of self may constitute an invisible identity cage (Courpasson and Clegg, 2006, p. 320). In short, regulatory structure and identity construction can be complicit in preventing the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour.

In symbolic entrepreneurship the language of entrepreneurship is adopted at corporate level but with little to support entrepreneurial behaviour in practice. Although not evident from the current study, this may reflect a common reality hidden behind government rhetoric about "a new breed of entrepreneurial leaders" (Sir Nigel Crisp, 2005). The language of entrepreneurship has been adopted by policy makers within the modernisation agenda, obscuring the real difficulty of securing effective and sustainable change in an organisation as complex as the health service.

In conclusion, a synthesis constructed from emerging bodies of research on changing regulatory structures ("post-bureaucracy") and on the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour builds understanding of how individual identity construction is informed both by organisational context and by factors unique to individuals. This suggests that the interaction of regulatory structures and the identity work of individuals influence the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour and thus the effectiveness of change. This study has therefore identified specific conditions for stimulating the emergence of entrepreneurs as agents of effective and sustainable change in the NHS, and has identified policy considerations for planning future change programmes.

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