Preface

In October of 2010, the *Academy of Management Review* published an article by Joep Cornelissen and Jean Clarke. In this article, Joep and Jean suggested a sensemaking-based process whereby ‘entrepreneurs rely on inductive (analogical or metaphorical) reasoning to create and justify a rationale for a novel venture’ (2010: 551). In doing so, however, they also highlighted the possibility that entrepreneurship research might over-emphasize ‘either the individual and his or her present cognitive state or the configuration of the social context and institutional outcomes, at the expense of a more integrative understanding that embeds individual entrepreneurs within their social contexts’ (2010: 539).

It was this statement from Joep and Jean that led us to begin envisioning the possibilities of seeing past, present and future entrepreneurial cognition research through a lens of socially situated cognition. This approach encompasses four broad themes, described in more depth in our introductory chapter, that explain ‘how social objects not only constitute the content of thought but also shape the process underlying thought and behavior’ (Mitchell, Randolph-Seng and Mitchell, 2011: 774). Building on Cornelissen and Clarke (2010), we suggested that, ‘when interpreted through the SSC [socially situated cognition] lens,’ existing entrepreneurial cognition research may thus serve as a scaffold on which future research in this stream can be comprehensibly and comprehensively built (Mitchell, Randolph-Seng and Mitchell, 2011: 775). This *Handbook* represents an early effort to begin building on this more comprehensive, socially situated cognition scaffold.

I am grateful to Joep and Jean for planting this seed and for the many others who have helped to make this *Handbook* possible. This list includes the Advisory Panel for the *Handbook*, my two co-editors, Dean Shepherd for his encouragement, those individuals who reviewed the manuscripts, Alan Sturmer of Edward Elgar Publishing, Robert Baron and Lowell Busenitz, who suggested to Alan that we produce a *Handbook* in the first place, Chris Ainge, Shawna Chen and Hamid Vahidnia for their work in support of this effort and, of course, the contributors.

Those who know me well know that I love music. I always have. Even as a child I was a frequent visitor to the symphony orchestra and there was much I loved about it. To an eight-year-old, the formality of it all (the dress of the performers and the audience, the magnificence of the

performance hall, the hush and respect of the crowd) was exciting. But what I loved most was the wonderful music. I thought it was especially exciting at the beginning of the symphony when each of the different players was warming up and tuning with a cacophony of instruments and sounds until the concert master signaled the principal oboist to play the note for tuning (an A above middle C). I always liked what followed. From the chaos, each musician then aligned his or her instrument with those of others until finally the conductor came to begin a rich and clear performance. So many sounds (individuals) coming together! Each musician came with their own reasons, but as an orchestra they would do something as a community.

Like members of a symphony orchestra, each of the contributors to this *Handbook* has their own reason for contributing. I again thank them for this. There are many purposes of this *Handbook*. Some are expressed in the introductory chapter, others in each of the subsequent chapters, and yet others in the Afterword. For me, though, one of the primary purposes of this *Handbook* is to enable the continued development of a rich research community in entrepreneurial cognition (cf. Grégoire, Corbett and McMullen, 2011). As I look at the list of top scholars who have contributed to this *Handbook*, I see important members of this research community. Their continued contribution is essential to making the entrepreneurial cognition research community accessible to others who wish to be part of it.

I recognize that there are many other members of this community who would have also contributed to this *Handbook* had circumstance, time and space allowed. To them, and to others with interest in this research community, I extend an invitation to join us in further integrating, embedding and situating the cognitions of entrepreneurs within their broader physical and social context (cf. Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010: 551; Mitchell et al., 2011: 774). With this *Handbook*, we have a vision of doing just this, and we invite you to join with us to engage in creating the cacophony of ideas that, when tuned, can result in rich and clear orchestrations (new directions, creative ideas, expansion of perspectives, cutting-edge methods etc.) for research and practice. Welcome to this *Handbook* and to the entrepreneurial cognition research community.

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