1. Introduction to the *Research Handbook on Entrepreneurial Behavior, Practice and Process*

William B. Gartner and Bruce T. Teague

This introduction offers an overview of the contents of the book and our vision of a logic for how scholars might make progress, broadly, when considering entrepreneurial behavior, practice and process. Our primary motivation for developing this book was derived from a simple question: What do entrepreneurs do? In outlining a theory of entrepreneurial behavior (Teague and Gartner, 2017) it became apparent that there was a need to weave together a number of disparate threads of perspectives, methods, and insights about this question “What do entrepreneurs do?” into a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. It just seemed as if there were many different scholarly communities with various theories and methods for addressing the “What do entrepreneurs do?” question. This book is the result of our attempt to corral this multitude. So, immediately, one would see from the title of the book, that there are a number of ways to approach “doing” in entrepreneurship, through such words as “behavior, practice, and process.” There are other words (labels) that come to mind that could also typify the broad interest of this book such as entrepreneurial action (McMullen and Shepherd, 2006). Be that as it may, this assemblage of chapters, then, represents the best available knowledge to address the question of “What do entrepreneurs do?” that we could coax from our network of entrepreneurship colleagues. Any omissions or oversights in the coverage of particular topics should be attributed to the limitations of our best efforts to identify scholars who were willing and able to contribute to this endeavor at this particular time. Please assume that we will remedy any gaps in this undertaking in the future through the active involvement of scholars we currently were either not aware of or couldn’t engage in this current endeavor. This means that we consider this book to be the beginning of a conversation that requires, you, the reader, to enter into a dialogue with us, as well as initiate efforts to contribute towards adding cloth to the fabric constructed here. Consider, then, that this book is not the end of the process of exploring the question “What do entrepreneurs do?” but the beginning of a more systematic and coordinated effort to build a larger

research community that might be headed in a similar direction. The tent is big – come join us!

WHY THE QUESTION “WHAT DO ENTREPRENEURS DO?” MATTERS

Entrepreneurship is fundamentally about the behavior of individuals (Gartner, 1988; Shaver and Scott, 1992). Whether these behaviors are defined as Say’s (1816) entrepreneurs who *unite* the means of production, Knight’s (1921) entrepreneurs who bear risk / uncertainty, Schumpeter’s (1934/2017) entrepreneurs involved in new combinations, or Penrose’s (1959) entrepreneurial services, there is, then, a sense that entrepreneurship involves: doing. This premise (entrepreneurship involves doing) spans the modern literature of entrepreneurship scholarship all the way from Vesper’s (1980) new venture strategies to Steyaert’s (2007) *entrepreneur-ing*, and McMullen and Dimov’s (2013) entrepreneurial journey. Yet, the amount of attention given to scholarship that focuses on the “doing” of entrepreneurship is rather sparse (Bird and Schjoedt, 2017; Bird et al., 2012; Bird et al., 2014). Why is this so?

The characteristic of entrepreneurship that presents a fundamental challenge to our understanding of the “doing of entrepreneurship” is entrepreneurship’s heterogeneity (Aldrich and Ruef, 2006). For example, if one were to limit one’s purview of the nature of entrepreneurship to the formation of new organizations (Gartner, 1985), then we are faced with recognizing a variety of: types of organizations (e.g., restaurants, manufacturing firms, distribution companies, retail outlets, service firms, etc.), ways in which these new organizations could be formed (e.g., by the resources gathered, the involvement of others, whether activities are consciously planned or not, etc.), and contexts in which these different types of organizations are developed (Welter, 2011). It is difficult, then, to come up with a set of “doings” (behaviors / processes / practices) that might be successfully applied across so many different situations. Yet, even across such a wide variety of entrepreneurial situations, it might be possible to consider that entrepreneurial situations are different than other types of “non-entrepreneurial” situations, and, as such, all entrepreneurial situations would have more similarities than others. This is a conundrum that is not easily solved. If, for example, entrepreneurship, as an activity, is thought of the way “sports” is considered as a type of activity, then, all of the ways that sports can be played, for example, the various rules for different sporting activities, the various tools used in each sport, the different situations in which a sport is performed, then, it might be dif-

difficult to generalize across all sports for what the successful performance of engaging in sporting activities would involve. So, while there are successful ways to engage in specific sporting activities (e.g., playing tennis, football, skiing), successful behaviors in one sporting activity would not necessarily transfer over into another type of sporting activity. The study of what entrepreneurs do must recognize that specific situations and contexts matter for whether a specific entrepreneurial activity will be effective. This makes the consideration of the generalizability of the effectiveness of specific entrepreneurial behaviors / processes / practices to be rather limited, and, therefore, blunts any hope that the study of what entrepreneurs do might result in a common set of successful activities that are applicable to all specific situations. Heterogeneity limits generalizability (of a sort).

Yet, it appears that some entrepreneurs are able to navigate through certain situations better than others. It is not all luck (though luck plays a part). So, we assume that what entrepreneurs do matters, and that there are likely, in some (or many) situations, more effective and efficient ways for entrepreneurs to “do” certain activities, than others. It is in this spirit that this book seeks to both frame the value of “what entrepreneurs do” as an important aspect of entrepreneurship studies, as well as ascertain how and why such research might be carried out and insights from this research applied to improving practice.

So, if you believe that an essential aspect of entrepreneurship involves “doing,” then, this book will offer you entrance into this scholarship as well as pathways for moving forward for engaging in research on this topic. And, if you are not convinced, yet, that the central focus of scholarship in entrepreneurship should focus on “doing,” then, we believe this book will beckon you to see the myriad ways in which exploring entrepreneurship behavior / practice / process is at the core of entrepreneurship as a phenomenon.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into three broad parts: (1) Perspectives, (2) Methods, and (3) Insights. The *Perspectives* part of the book provides the reader with a sense of how and why the broad labels of behavior, practice, and process approach this question of “What do entrepreneurs do?” Teague and Gartner (Chapter 2) review and move beyond previous scholarship on entrepreneurial behavior (Bird and Schjoedt, 2017; Bird et al., 2012; Bird et al., 2014) and suggest that the most fruitful way to continue this line of inquiry is to focus on expert skill development (Ericsson, 1985, 1998, 2006,

Ericsson and Pool, 2016). By doing so, explorations of entrepreneurial expertise would encompass scholarship in effectuation (e.g., Dew et al., 2009, 2015; Read and Sarasvathy, 2005; Sarasvathy, 2008), as well as a portion of the cognitive perspective on entrepreneurial behavior (e.g., Mitchell, 1996; Mitchell and Chesteen, 1995; Mitchell et al., 2017; Toft-Kehler et al., 2014). Based on practice approaches and theories (Miettinen et al., 2010; Schatzki et al., 2001; Whittington, 2006) Thompson and Byrne (Chapter 3) describe the nature of “entrepreneurship as practice” in terms of its theoretical foundations and methodology, to champion a perspective that puts “practices,” which are characterized as the “doings and sayings” of individuals in a specific context, as central to understanding the nature of entrepreneurship. As such, practices are not tied, specifically, to individuals, but are socially and materially embedded. The authors use the practice of obtaining a business license to illustrate many of the nuances of entrepreneurship-as-practice theory and methods. They end with suggestions for how entrepreneurship as practice research should be conducted and point out ways that an understanding of entrepreneurship will be enhanced through a practice lens. Dimov (Chapter 4) takes the idea of process, which focuses on the “how” of entrepreneurship and shows that focusing on “how” is more complicated and multifaceted than commonly perceived. He offers two frameworks, one that explores academic stances towards the nature of the entrepreneurial process (by research goal, nature of the phenomenon, and social ontology), and, the other that maps aspects of the entrepreneurial process (by entrepreneurial task, context, and time stance) as offering 96 distinct possible conversations that could occur regarding entrepreneurial process. By identifying so many different conversations, Dimov challenges entrepreneurship scholars to be more rigorous in their approaches to studying entrepreneurial processes as well as highlighting how scholars can better build research communities with clearer perspectives on what, why and how they are doing research from this perspective.

Given the invitation to explore the question of “What do entrepreneurs do?” from these three perspectives of behavior, practice and process, the heart of the book is devoted to a variety of *Methods* that scholars can use for studying these phenomena. Pelly and Fayolle (Chapter 5) provide a bridge between the three broad perspectives to everyday entrepreneurial practice by championing the “plus zone challenge” (Hindle, 2007) where the goal of the scholar-educator involves an active engagement in capturing the real world that can be used in stimulating the entrepreneurial imagination for future possibilities. This active engagement in the real world occurs through a variety of ethnographic practices that are identified and discussed and applied to issues involving narrative and identity

in entrepreneurship scholarship. In Chapter 6, Poldner describes both the concept and operationalization of activist autoethnography in which researchers are also entrepreneurs engaged in worldmaking (Goodall, 2016). Using over 20 years of her experiences in the fashion industry in various entrepreneurial roles and contexts, Poldner shows how the personal can be linked to the societal, and she reflects, through an exploration of the nature of affirmative entrepreneurship, on how purposeful choice both influences and is influenced by the possibilities of situational forces. In the process of affirmative entrepreneurship, individuals not only change the world, but also recognize the process changes themselves. So, in many respects, only through an autoethnographic process can researchers account for these internal and external inter-dynamics. Johannisson (Chapter 7) approaches autoethnography in entrepreneurship scholarship as the process of enactive research, whereby the scholar becomes an “entresearcher” who is in dialogue between these roles of entrepreneur and researcher. He suggests five phases of enactive research in which the scholar engages in entrepreneurship as well as reflects on these experiences, and, he illustrates this process by describing two ventures he enacted. Finally, he champions the importance of reflexivity in the enactive research process and provides a number of insights into how and why the entresearcher can gain unique insights in the nature of entrepreneurship.

In Chapter 8, Tillmar offers a comprehensive overview of the varieties of participant observation techniques and methodologies that would engage scholars in various roles from participant-as-observer to observer-as-participant to observer. These varieties of participant observation are illustrated and explored by using her own experiences as a researcher in many different field settings. She offers a number of insights into issues that confront researchers as they conduct field work regarding the process of conducting participant observations in entrepreneurial settings. Van Burg and Karlsson (Chapter 9) explore the use of diaries, which, in the past, have been a very underutilized method for exploring entrepreneurial activities, yet diaries offer a way to collect concurrent information about past actions, intentions about the future, emotions, relationships, reflections, and decisions. They illustrate the richness of the kinds of information that diaries contain by discussing a study they undertook (Kaandorp et al., 2019) that analyzed the networks that nascent entrepreneurs generated over time that provides many insights into how and why networks are developed. In Chapter 10, Lackéus presents the advantages of using “scientific social media,” and, more specifically, an app for use on cell phones, “LoopMe,” that was designed for entrepreneurship and education research purposes. Broadly, cell phone apps can query users in real time to ask all manner of behavioral, cognitive and emotional questions. This

ability to access and interact with subjects at any particular time about all manner of subjects has implications for those interested in socially situated learning, where tasks can be assigned and monitored in real time. This ability to engage in experience sampling (Hektner et al., 2007) offers a powerful way to collect information on entrepreneurial activity and holds great promise as a research method. Santos and Caetano (Chapter 11) conclude the *Methods* part of the book by reminding scholars that entrepreneurship is inherently a multi-level phenomenon occurring over time. So, while researchers may focus on a specific aspect of entrepreneurship, it is necessary to account for its multi-level nature (e.g., individual, group, organizational, contextual) as it is theorized, measured, and analyzed.

The final part of the book offers a variety of *Insights* into how entrepreneurial behavior / practice / process is conceptualized, related to thought, actualized across others, and learned. Selden and Fletcher (Chapter 12) offer what might be considered as, a philosophical exploration of the nature of entrepreneurship over time (as it is construed as a behavior / practice / process), whereby they point out the temporality of embodied practice in entrepreneurship. They propose a retentionist conception of temporality that recognizes past, present, and future in embodied practice, and, they connect many different philosophical strands of ideas regarding the contextualization of action and agency. In Chapter 13, Vahidnia, Mitchell, Mitchell, and Chen demonstrate a number of similarities between socially situated cognition theories and practice theories in terms of how both theories regard thinking and doing. They offer four stylized commonalities regarding how both theories address: (1) the everyday mundaneness of entrepreneurial action, (2) the embodied nature of thought and action, (3) the situated context of cognition and action and (4) how cognitions and actions are interconnected and distributed across others. Given the synergies between these two theoretical perspectives, the authors offer a number of directions for future scholarship. Brattström, Delmar, Johnson, and Wennberg (Chapter 14) explore behaviors / processes / practices at the level of the team. As the majority of high growth ventures are started by teams, it is surprising that few studies have looked at what teams actually do, over time. This chapter describes an ongoing longitudinal study of venture teams that collects both quantitative and qualitative data at frequent intervals, so that the dynamic processes of team activities are identified, measured, and captured in a multitude of ways. The importance of this study cannot be overestimated, in that it takes into account all of the teams' activities, which is critical for understanding the entirety of the venture creation process, as entrepreneurship is never just the activity of an individual working alone. In the final chapter of the book (Chapter 15), Warhuus, Neergaard, and Thrane describe their efforts to

integrate their knowledge of entrepreneurial behavior into an experiential entrepreneurship education course. This effort encompassed a multi-year, multi-country (Denmark, Finland, and the United States), theoretically based program that engaged students across six broad categories of entrepreneurial activities: (1) identity work, (2) opportunity identification and evaluation, (3) opportunity development, (4) construction of innovative solutions, (5) building solutions / prototyping, (6) testing hypotheses and constructing a business model. The authors point out that while “doing matters” in enabling individuals to become entrepreneurs, learning to become an entrepreneur requires individuals to reflect on their activities. Reflecting on the various aspects of “why, what, how, and when” in the process of entrepreneurship requires entrepreneurs to become entrepreneurship researchers themselves.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Implicit in identifying the three labels (behavior / practice / process) for addressing the question of “What do entrepreneurs do?” is our belief that answering this question does not require convergence among these perspectives. Indeed, we hope that the book champions the value of having multiple ways of theorizing, multiple ways of researching, and, multiple ways of gaining insights into the phenomenon of “entrepreneurial doing.” We believe that multi-theoretical and multi-method explorations of “entrepreneurial doing” is critical for gathering information and gaining insights only if scholars are willing to advance a dialogue that can be both critical and supportive of differing ideas and views. Therefore, we hope that the book offers “room for insight,” – “the bigger tent” mentioned earlier – that welcomes scholars who are willing to address the “What do entrepreneurs do?” question with a multitude of new ideas, methods, and approaches.

In addition, we believe that better theory and insights into behavior / practice / process will occur through field work, that is, through observation and experience, over time. The critical foundation of scholarship in entrepreneurship must rely on the critical mess (Gartner, 2004) of facts, observations, and events that scholars must immerse themselves in to gain the kinds of insights that a comprehensive and deep experience of the phenomenon provides.

Finally, we champion a view that puts “behavior / practice / process” first in line for delving into the nature of entrepreneurship. We begin with Weick’s (1979) dictum “How can I know what I think until I see what I say:”

In the recipe, *How can I know what I think until I see what I say*, saying equates to variation, seeing equates to selection of meaning in what was said, and thinking equates to retention of an interpretation. The retained interpretation may then be imposed subsequently to interpret similar saying (retention is credited) in order to construct cumulative understanding, test past labels for their validity, or generalize older labels to newer events. (Weick, 1995: 25)

The process of entrepreneurship begins with doing as the way to make sense of situations. Meaning-making requires action in order to generate understanding. So, from this perspective, action (behavior / practice / process) is the necessary and initial genesis that drives any subsequent understanding. So, in our logic, issues of entrepreneurial identity (Navis and Glynn, 2011; Powell and Baker, 2014) are the product of “I am what I do.” Going full circle, back to Gartner’s dictum (1988) “Who is an entrepreneur? Is the wrong question,” the focus of scholarship in entrepreneurship, again, returns to entrepreneurial (behavior / practice / process) rather than to a focus on the entrepreneur. What entrepreneurs “do” matters more than “who” they are. We begin with behavior / practice / process rather than end there.

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