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# Emancipating the ‘Who am I?’ Question in Entrepreneurship

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## ABSTRACT

### Questions we care about

Entrepreneurship and thus entrepreneurship education need some fixing. In a time when entrepreneurship is infiltrating everyone and everywhere, we need to ask how this is done for better and not for worse. Many people in society do not find the stereotypic image of an entrepreneur fitting for them. How do we avoid them being alienated by a narrow version of entrepreneurship that simply is not for them? Could we offer tools and terminologies that can answer the question “Who am I?” in relation to entrepreneurship? This paper takes the stance that the stereotyped concepts of “entrepreneurship” and “entrepreneur” will not do the job. Therefore, faith is put into deepening our understanding of “being and becoming entrepreneurial”. Top-cited research using the term “entrepreneurial” is reviewed. An interpretivist “from within” perspective is applied when answering the main question: *How can the term “entrepreneurial” help in breaking away from narrow and stereotyped conceptions of entrepreneurship, without diluting an entrepreneurial identity into being almost anything for anyone?*

### Approach

Literature on stereotypes in entrepreneurship and on previous attempts to broaden entrepreneurship are reviewed, such as the concept “enterprise education” and a framework for entrepreneurial competencies. A systematic literature review on the use of the term “entrepreneurial” is conducted, reviewing 250 articles that use the term “entrepreneurial” in their title. The nine most common uses are reviewed more in-depth. 45 articles are reviewed in relation to what the authors mean when they use the term “entrepreneurial”. In the analysis, an interpretivist perspective is applied to the identified meanings of “entrepreneurial”, aiming to develop new answers to the question “Who am I?” in relation to entrepreneurship.

### Results

250 publications that have the word “entrepreneurial” in their title link the adjective to 99 nouns. Focus is simultaneously on many different aspects of being entrepreneurial. Unit of analysis varies considerably; individuals, teams, organizations, regions and nations. Also, most of the publications explore “entrepreneurial” phenomena as something happening to people or firms “out there” rather than as a more personalized entrepreneurial identity. The term “entrepreneurial” is found to be weakly claimed, making it more open for new understandings than “entrepreneur” or “entrepreneurship”. Analysis of findings leads the authors to propose four cornerstones for a more emancipatory understanding of being entrepreneurial, presented as a framework of value-for-others, agency, novelty and learning to guide entrepreneurial people.

### Implications

There is a strong potential in offering understandings and tools for being and becoming entrepreneurial that emancipates beyond a narrow view of entrepreneurship as economic value appropriation through new ventures. The proposed framework focuses on value creation and is societal (social, ecological and economic value creation in all kind of contexts).

### Value/Originality

This paper, to our knowledge, offers a first systematic review of literature focusing on “entrepreneurial”. It also presents a novel, easy to understand and useful framework for what it means to be “entrepreneurial”.

## 1. Introduction

Not long ago, entrepreneurship was only about something exotic done by a few. Today, entrepreneurship is infused into education and practice, basically everywhere. Teachers, managers and others need to figure out what entrepreneurship implies in their contexts, imposing on others and themselves the “Who am I?” in relation to entrepreneurship. Contemplating this vexing identity-related question, they need to deal with the exotic (mostly male) heroic entrepreneur stereotype being the predominant image of what entrepreneurs are and thus what entrepreneurship is about.

The main purpose of this paper is to explore how the term “entrepreneurial” rather than “entrepreneur” or “entrepreneurship” might work better for the “Who am I?” question as society becomes all-embracing of the “E-word”. The thesis is that “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” cannot be separated from their stereotyped and narrow origin. Both popular press and economic theory have made these terms inseparable from the creation of new economically successful firms. From this desired end-result of creating a successful firm follows that entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship is all about having an identity and displaying behaviors that help reach this goal. Stereotyping within entrepreneurship then occurs in three ways; 1) through stipulating a certain outcome (successful firm) in a certain (economic) context, 2) by specifying certain behaviors, such as staying in control and appropriating, to achieve this outcome, and 3) by imposing an identity and mindset suitable for being this firm-creating and firm-controlling entrepreneur.

If entrepreneurship and entrepreneur is all about creating economically successful new business, what about the “entrepreneurial”? A Google search of “entrepreneurial” gives the impression that this adjective is mainly about being in a way that results in the creation of a successful firm. However, along with this interpretation, there are also broader understandings present, pointing at a wider conceptualization including being innovative, creative, resourceful and adaptable, and being so in different contexts other than only in new firms. The broadening of entrepreneurship has, however, been met with critique that entrepreneurship then risks being diluted into meaning almost anything for anyone (Matthews, 2018, Lackéus, 2018, Neck and Corbett, 2018).

So, as society evolves into appreciating entrepreneurship well beyond creating new companies, so does also our need for a more appropriate language. The concepts of “entrepreneurship” and “entrepreneur” do not do the job. Arguably, “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” are too tainted by the narrow focus on founding and subsequent owning of new companies (see for example Reynolds, 2007). These concepts are also already heavily stereotyped (Hytti and Heinonen, 2013, Anderson and Warren, 2011, Warren, 2005), carrying a view of entrepreneurship where a few mostly white men symbolize high-achievement opportunity entrepreneurship, while the rest of us either are unentrepreneurial or forced into “necessity” or “minority” entrepreneurship (Hamilton, 2013, Farny et al., 2016). Therefore, faith is put into how to understand “being and becoming entrepreneurial” as a way to answer a vexing question: “If I cannot identify myself with being or becoming a heroic entrepreneur starting a new venture, then who am I as an entrepreneurial person?”. This paper attempts to help pave the path for a more emancipating understanding of “entrepreneurial” by analyzing current understandings of the term in research (Wieland et al., in press, Berglund and Holmgren, 2013).

The main thrust of the paper is a review of 250 top-cited research articles using the term “entrepreneurial” in their titles. Five top articles within nine identified main areas focusing on different aspects of “entrepreneurial” are analyzed in-depth in regard to how they reinforce stereotypical understandings of outcomes, behavior and identity, and to what extent they can contribute to a more emancipatory understanding of “entrepreneurial”. Top research publications that focus on entrepreneurial individuals link the adjective “entrepreneurial” to almost a hundred different nouns, including entrepreneurial mindsets, actions, behaviors, intentions, learning, orientation, competencies, spirit, potential and self-efficacy. Further, the adjective “entrepreneurial” attributes phenomena on all levels: individuals, teams, organizations, regions and nations. As a means to answer the “Who am I?” question, the review applies an interpretivist understanding, seeing the entrepreneurial “from within” the eyes of someone aspiring to be or become more entrepreneurial.

## 2. Theory

The narrow stereotypes around “entrepreneurship” and “entrepreneur” will first be outlined. Then comes an outline of some previous attempts to broaden the view of what entrepreneurship is.

### 2.1 The stereotypical myth of the “entrepreneur”

The ‘self-made man’, a myth which purveys in the American culture, was made popular in particular by the work of Horatio Alger, Jr.<sup>1</sup> Most likely only Americans will be familiar with the Horatio Alger ‘myth’, that stems from a collection of over 100 stories printed in newspapers and small publications from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fundamental plot is a ‘rags to riches’ story of a young boy who must ‘go to the big city’ to provide for his mother/family, faces bullies, but through hard work, perseverance and a good deal of luck, becomes successful. The popularized myth was brought into studies of entrepreneurship through the work of Collins et al. (1964) investigating entrepreneurs of the time, and finding that many came from humble beginnings and faced childhood trauma, thus in a way supporting the mythology put forth by Alger’s stories. This work stimulated further study into the personality and characteristics of ‘the entrepreneur’ (see for example, Kets de Vries, 1977, Sarachek, 1978, Hornaday and Bunker, 1970), often excluding non-whites and females (see Sarachek, 1978, p. 442). Seeking the personality and characteristics of ‘the entrepreneur’ has since been term the search for the heffalump (Kilby, 1971, Kilby, 2003), with arguments for (Hull et al., 1980) and against (Gartner, 1988) pervading different streams of literature in the field of entrepreneurship. The Horatio Alger myth is still referenced in more recent entrepreneurship literature addressing self-employment and social mobility (Hundley, 2008).

Alger’s objective was to illustrate the challenges of the poor to the middle and upper classes, but also to give hope and ambition to the lower class that if they work hard and face up to bullies, they may too prosper. His central figure, the ‘self-made man’ was to inspire the less fortunate to pull themselves up by their bootstraps – enter the hero. Despite expansive research developments in the field of entrepreneurship and evidence to the contrary, the myth of the heroic entrepreneur prevails in popular literature (Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007, Ogbor, 2000), and reifies various gendered and ethnocentric biases. Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson (2007) call the heroic entrepreneur “an atomistic individual – sometimes maverick, often non-conforming, but single-

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horatio\\_Alger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horatio_Alger)

handedly relentlessly pursuing opportunity” who is used as “an ideological convenience” to “personalize entrepreneurship” as “the friendly face of capitalism” (p. 341). They explain that the pervasion of the hero myth may in part be due to the adolescence of the entrepreneurship field and preference for a comprehensive simplicity over a complex social interplay, but point out that even Schumpeter recognized that the entrepreneur is only that person when acting (creating new combinations).

Using the stereotypical ‘heroic’ entrepreneur has made the, ‘under the radar until successful’ figure recognized and intriguing through programs like ‘Shark Tank’ and ‘Dragons Den’, but also potentially off-putting and even hated (Drakopoulou Dodd et al., 2013). The entrepreneur is portrayed as white, male, middle-aged and often ‘western’, and the language and narrative associated to the role ‘entrepreneur’ is masculine (Ahl, 2002, Farny et al., 2016). The challenge with these tales and images of ‘the entrepreneur’ is that it is not remotely representative of the estimated 582 million entrepreneurs globally<sup>2</sup>, a broad diverse set of individuals; and significant literature has illustrated the disconnection many nascent entrepreneurs feel relative to these stereotypes when in a process of becoming (Würmseher, in press, Werthes et al., 2018). As explained by Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson (2007), the stereotype helps to personify an otherwise complex concept ‘entrepreneurship’, perhaps helping to explain why it thus remains, as myths have historically been used to embed values and guidelines for people to make sense of their everyday lives (Campbell and Moyers, 2011). However, as addressed in the following section, emphasizing the phenomenon rather than the figurehead has not necessarily helped.

## **2.2 Previous attempts to a broader view of entrepreneurship**

The most comprehensive attempts to broaden entrepreneurship have been done in the field of entrepreneurship education. One of the first comprehensive attempts to broaden entrepreneurship was initiated in the 1980s by Allan Gibb and his colleagues at Durham University’s Small Business Centre. Inspiration was taken from Margaret Thatcher’s initiative to spur an enterprise culture among British citizens (Gibb, 1987, Keat and Abercrombie, 1991). The corresponding educational innovation argued for by Gibb was a broader approach to entrepreneurship in education termed ‘enterprise education’. Enterprise education was claimed to have been liberated from a limiting business context, deemed to be the main problem behind numerous failed attempts to mainstream entrepreneurship in education (Gibb, 2002). Gibb’s broadening of entrepreneurial pedagogy towards entrepreneurial individuals creating value in all walks of life has inspired many other key contributions, primarily in Europe and Australia (Hytti and O’Gorman, 2004, Jones et al., 2012, Moberg, 2014), Hannon, 2006; Jones and Iredale, 2010; Rosendahl Huber, Sloof and Van Praag, 2012). Most U.S. based scholars have instead chosen to keep a narrower business-oriented focus on venture creation as the key defining characteristic of entrepreneurship in education. One argument put forward is that such a focus must remain in order for the field not to be diluted into progressive education in general (Neck and Corbett, 2018).

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<sup>2</sup> Kelley, D. (2017). The 582 million entrepreneurs in the world are not created equal. *The Hill*. Retrieved from <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/economy-budget/323586-the-worlds-582-million-entrepreneurs-are-not-created-equal>

Critics of enterprise education have claimed that it lacks a precise definition of what is unique with it (Hägg, 2016, Leffler, 2009). If entrepreneurship is not about starting a new venture, not about growing an innovation and not about traits of successful entrepreneurs, what is enterprise education then about? asks Lackéus (2018), claiming that entrepreneurship as a concept has been definitionally peeled to the bone out of sheer necessity to be accepted in education, resulting in enterprise education being a fuzzy, diluted and ineffective educational practice. Neck and Corbett (2004, p.29) express similar concerns about the risk of diluting entrepreneurship when broadening the concept. They state that “we need to create boundaries for EE so as not to dilute its impact while also working to establish its legitimacy”. Their recommendation is to keep a clear venture creation focus.

Another attempt to broaden entrepreneurship has been done in European policy literature. In 2016, a framework for entrepreneurial competencies was released by European Commission (Bacigalupo et al., 2016b). It was claimed to build “upon a broad definition of entrepreneurship that hinges on the creation of cultural, social or economic value” (p.6). The purpose was to achieve a better bridging between education and worklife (Bacigalupo et al., 2016a). The initiative was inspired by a European reference framework of competencies from 2006, stating that ‘sense of initiative and entrepreneurship’ is one of eight key competencies relevant for all European citizens (see European Commission, 2007). This recent European development can be traced to streams of more societally oriented entrepreneurship (Lundqvist and Williams Middleton, 2010). For instance, social entrepreneurs target concrete social problems using and adapting traditional business venturing tools (Dees, 1998) while community and civic entrepreneurs engage in networking – collectively and outside the box – to rejuvenate the local or regional economy (Henton et al., 1997, Johannisson and Nilsson, 1989, Dupuis and de Bruin, 2003). A mainland-European public entrepreneur (Bjerke, 2005) engages in societally useful cultural or ecological activities, placing minor or no interest in economic motives. Except for the more Anglo-American social entrepreneur, these societally oriented sub-streams of entrepreneurship actually do not have a venture-focus.

Interpretivism has recently been offered as a perspective that potentially can avoid a dominant understanding of entrepreneurship where an outcome – a new economic venture – becomes stereotyping (Packard, 2017). Interpretivism accepts that there is some objective reality out there. However, the only way we can gain knowledge about this reality (epistemology) is through experience or imagination. As a consequence, “the source of entrepreneurship has to be in individuals rather than in abstract markets” [...] and can stem from “intentionality rather than causality, of ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being,’ and relationships and interactions rather than social entities” (Packard, 2017, p 536-535). The main intention proposed for being entrepreneurial then is the pursuit of new value, which can be done in other ways than only through new firms. However, arguably being entrepreneurial can include more than pursuing new value, something that will be investigated in the subsequent literature review.

### **3. Methodology**

In order to investigate the use of the adjective ‘entrepreneurial’, a search was conducted on Google Scholar for publications using this term. This database was opted for to yield a fair view of how

the term is used publicly in a multitude of academic sources, employing a weighted relevance based on Google’s algorithms.

**Table 1.** The nine most used “entrepreneurial” terms in titles of the 250 articles reviewed

	Articles having the term in title	Total citation count for articles having the term in title	Recurring scholars
Entrepreneurial orientation	26	37421	Lumpkin, Dess, Wiklund, Shepherd, Covin
Entrepreneurial intentions	21	23015	Krueger, Liñan, Autio, Chen, Carsrud, Lüthje
Entrepreneurial firms/ventures	17	21491	Covin
Entrepreneurial action/activity/agency	11	9898	McMullen
Entrepreneurial learning	9	6280	Rae, Cope
Entrepreneurial behavior	8	5271	Minniti
Entrepreneurial process	8	7833	-
Entrepreneurial university	8	16096	Etzkowitz
Entrepreneurial opportunity	6	10252	-
Total	114	137557	

**Table 2.** The 90 least used “entrepreneurial” terms in titles of the 250 articles reviewed

Terms used after “entrepreneurial”	No. of articles where term was used in title
Region/state/society	5
Personality, Risk	4
Career, Cognition, Economics, Motivation, Self-efficacy	3
Ability, Alertness, Characteristics, City, Competencies, Dynamics, Ecosystems, Finance, Leadership, Management, Mindset, Outcomes, Performance, Potential, Science, Strategies, Style, Success, Survival, Teams, Traits	2
Aspirations, Bricolage, Challenge, Choice, Competition, Considerations, Contingency, Creativity, Decisions, Development, Discourse, Discovery, Effort, Entrepreneurs, Entry, Environment (corporate), Event, Exit, Expectancy, Experience, Expertise, Exposure, Failure, Folklore, Founders, Growth, Human capital, Ideas, Impact, Incentives, Inclinations, Informations search, Innovation, Intensity, Interest, Investment, Marketing, Networks, Origins, Paradigm, Passion, Perceptions, Perspective, Phenomena, Power, Proclivity, Propensity, Research, Revolution, Selection, Settings, Stakeholder activism, Status, Students, Succession, Supply, Theory, Thinking, Transitions, Wealth loss	1

The first 250 hits from Google Scholar were extracted into Excel and analyzed further. The citation score for these articles ranged from 147 to 9532 citations. The collection of articles employed 98 different uses of the term ‘entrepreneurial’. The nine most common uses are shown in Table 1, representing 46% of the title usage and 52% of total number of citations. Some notable uses in the ‘long tail’ of concepts, used only in one single article title, were entrepreneurial bricolage, exit, experience, expertise, failure, folklore, growth, passion, proclivity, propensity, succession, theory and thinking. Some tautological terms used were entrepreneurial entrepreneurs, innovation and creativity. All terms are shown in Table 2.

In order to further analyze the different uses of the term ‘entrepreneurial’, the five most cited articles in each of the nine most used terms were thoroughly reviewed, amounting to a total of 45 articles reviewed. The remaining 64 articles from Table 1 were also review, but more superficially. The review of leading “entrepreneurial” literature is done while applying an interpretivistic perspective, asking not what is “entrepreneurial” out there, but instead how can it be manifested in a reflective and acting self – i.e. from within. Through this lens, we then analyze understandings of entrepreneurial in regard to how it can allow personalized entrepreneurial identity development while hopefully avoiding stereotyping.

## **4. Findings**

In this section, an overview is given for each of the nine most common literature strands using the term “entrepreneurial” in their article titles. Different meanings ascribed to the term “entrepreneurial” are also reviewed. This aims to inform the subsequent analysis of stereotyped as well as emancipatory concepts and meanings around the term “entrepreneurial”.

### **4.1 Entrepreneurial orientation (used in 26 article titles)**

Literature on what it means for firms to have an entrepreneurial orientation gives numerous clues as to what it could mean for individuals to be and become entrepreneurial. The literature reviewed here gives a relatively consistent definition of the entrepreneurial orientation construct. It is conceptualized as a firm level construct, describing firms that exhibit a posture or behavior characterized by innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003). Two additional concepts are often added; autonomy and competitive aggressiveness (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

Lumpkin and Dess (1996) offer one of the most detailed descriptions of the five concepts. Innovativeness is described as a “tendency to engage in and support new ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new products, services, or technological processes” (p.142). Proactiveness is described as the opposite to passiveness, in being about “taking the initiative in an effort to shape the environment to one's own advantage” (p.147) and displaying a “tendency to lead rather than follow” (p.148). Risk-taking is described as a disparate and largely individually focused concept. Applied to firms, risk-taking is conceptualized as a “proclivity to engage in risky projects and managers' preferences for bold versus cautious acts to achieve firm objectives.” (p.146). Also, autonomy is described in largely individualistic terms, described as “the independent action of an individual or a team in bringing forth an idea or a vision and carrying it through to completion” (p.140). Firms that display an entrepreneurial orientation are then described as firms “free of stifling organizational constraints” (p.140), where autonomous leaders or

champions are “scavenging for resources, going outside the usual lines of authority, and promoting risk taking on behalf of new ideas and promising breakthroughs” (p.142). Competitive aggressiveness mainly relates to firms’ “efforts to outperform industry rivals” (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001, p. 433). In contrast to proactiveness which is about being first, competitive aggressiveness is rather about aggressively entering an existing market or meeting an existing need on the market.

#### **4.2 Entrepreneurial firms/ventures (used in 21 article titles)**

The literature on entrepreneurial firms or ventures examined here is not very consistent around meanings of the adjective ‘entrepreneurial’. The articles reviewed were all from before the turn of the millennium, indicating that labeling a firm as entrepreneurial could perhaps be a precursor to the more precise and contemporary literature on firms’ entrepreneurial orientation. Supporting this claim is the fact that the most cited article on entrepreneurial firms is co-authored by Danny Miller (Miller and Friesen, 1982). Miller wrote another article around the same time (Miller, 1983), frequently cited as the key starting point for the research on entrepreneurial orientation (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005, Rauch et al., 2009).

An entrepreneurial firm is here described as being innovative and risk-taking (Miller and Friesen, 1982, Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1996), based on pioneering technologies (Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1996, Stuart et al., 1999, Coviello and Munro, 1995), small and newly established (Coviello and Munro, 1995, Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1996), and venture-capital-backed (Stuart et al., 1999).

#### **4.3 Entrepreneurial intentions (used in 17 article titles)**

17 papers in total having a strong individual perspective on entrepreneurial, where entrepreneurship is mainly defined as venture creation/self-employment. The majority of papers utilize quantitative analysis of large populations, often students, with some additional papers testing conceptual models, and two using a meta-analysis method of compiled previous quantitative studies from literature. Two of the top five cited works are strongly linked, as the Krueger et al, 2000 is essentially an empirical investigation of the Krueger & Carsrud 1993 developed conceptual model. Given this, and that the sixth most cited (1545 citations) publication is of comparable stature to the fifth (1563 citations), Liñán and Chen (2009) is also included. All six publications establish entrepreneurship as venture creation, with Souitaris et al. (2007) taking a more particular individual stance of self-employment.

Intention models are argued as important to entrepreneurship research as they are positioned as the best means to predict entrepreneurial behavior, and this predictive quality as important towards understanding entrepreneurial activity (Krueger et al., 2000, Krueger and Carsrud, 1993). In many of the models, intention is a result of sets of influencing factors, such as self-efficacy (Zhao et al., 2005, Boyd and Vozikis, 1994) and behavioral control (Liñán and Chen, 2009), or use these as mediating additional terms. For example, models of intentionality often further link self-efficacy to concepts seen as contributing to venture creation: career development, observational learning, social support, goal setting (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994); to perceived learning, previous entrepreneurial experience, and risk propensity (Zhao et al., 2005). Investigation of entrepreneurial intention is often situated in education, where entrepreneurship education is seen to raise attitudes and overall intent, with inspiration (a construct with an emotional element) as the most influential element (Souitaris et al., 2007).

Work on entrepreneurial intentions mainly builds upon Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), combined with other models, such as Shapero's entrepreneurial event model and Bird's entrepreneurial intentionality model. Most studies look to both personal and contextual factors, with greater or lesser conceptual distinction and correlation to entrepreneurial intention. But most importantly, while building upon TPB and stressing that intentionality is the best predictor of future behavior, all the studies are clear that intention does not confirm future action. Autio et al. (1997) and Krueger et al. (2000) both state that intention can only, at best, predict behavior 30% of the time, and Souitaris et al. (2007) state that longitudinal studies are the only true way to test the intention-action link. Arguments of the predictability of behavior through intention also stems from previous research addressing career preferences, but also weight loss, seat-belt use and coupon use. While it is intuitive to draw association between intention towards entrepreneurial activity and intention addressing career preferences, the association and/or relevance of intended seat-belt or coupon use to entrepreneurial activity seems far-fetched.

#### **4.4 Entrepreneurial action and activity (used in 11 article titles)**

Two of five top-cited works within entrepreneurial action and activity connect with each other in emphasizing issues on the individual level, such as dealing with uncertainty and decision-making to act (McMullen and Shepherd, 2006) as well as creating vs. discovering opportunity (Alvarez and Barney, 2007). One article positions entrepreneurial action on the national level (Van Stel et al., 2005). Another is on the level of the economy focusing on entrepreneurship for sustainability (Dean and McMullen, 2007) and one is using entrepreneurial action in contrast to organizational routines in strategic management (Teece, 2012).

Entrepreneurial action and activity is thus a relatively scattered area. However, the contributions focusing on the individual level have strong resemblance with literature into entrepreneurial opportunity (see below). It connects being entrepreneurial to decision-making related to action and identifies uncertainty as a key factor. Also, entrepreneurial action is linked to opportunities and whether they are created or discovered.

#### **4.5 Entrepreneurial learning (used in 9 article titles)**

The literature reviewed here gives a relatively unified view of what entrepreneurial learning is about. It is the learning that people experience when they are running a real-life venture, in the role as entrepreneur (Politis, 2005, Cope and Watts, 2000). In the most widely cited published article on entrepreneurial learning, Politis (2005, p.401) defines entrepreneurial learning as "a continuous process that facilitates the development of necessary knowledge for being effective in starting up and managing new ventures". Entrepreneurial learning thus results both in entrepreneurial knowledge and in entrepreneurial opportunity identification ability, posited to be crucial to the performance of the entrepreneur's venture. Key antecedents to entrepreneurial learning are critical incidents (Cope and Watts, 2000), staged experiments (Deakins and Freel, 1998), key decisions (Deakins and Freel, 1998) and more or less detrimental failures (Cope, 2010).

While entrepreneurial learning is primarily treated as an individual level construct, its connection to the entrepreneur's firm is important. Cope and Watts (2000, p.110) state that "there exists a complex, interactive and mutual relationship between the individual and the organization, where entrepreneurs actively share their learning with their business, both shaping its growth and direction and passively adapting to the changing demands of the enterprise".

#### **4.6 Entrepreneurial behavior (used in 8 article titles)**

Entrepreneurial behavior literature takes a more process-oriented perspective on defining what is 'entrepreneurial', with main emphasis on a decision-making process towards either new firm creation or organizational emergence. The concept is premised in the earliest reviewed article from 1969, grounded in an economic perspective (Treadway, 1969), with the first more 'pure' entrepreneurship field (i.e. recognized entrepreneurship journals) reviewed article published in 1992, with the remaining six ranging from 2000 to 2011. Entrepreneurial behavior is explored both conceptually and empirically, and from both an individual, but also a firm level.

Gartner et al. (1992) build from organizational behavior literature to determine what can be translated to the field of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are seen to 'act as if' in a way that presumes the existence of an organization providing a product/service. In this sense, the individual(s) could be seen as being entrepreneurial by being the ones representing the organization and associated product/service. Koellinger et al. (2007) investigate decision making processes, presenting potential entrepreneurs as overconfident in their own skills and abilities, such that their perceived ability is greater than actual ability. Collins et al. (2004) want to understand the motivational characteristics spurring people to become entrepreneurs, emphasizing that this is dependent upon which definition of entrepreneurship the individual is operating with, from their own perspective. Lévesque et al. (2009) take a temporal perspective on entrepreneurial behavior – investigating at what point in their careers are individuals more likely to act entrepreneurially – finding that individuals' decisions with respect to new firm creation are mainly the result of social norms and economic constraints (which are in turn strongly dependent on a country's contextual conditions). Similar to the intentionality literature, there is association to additional concepts presented in entrepreneurship literature, such as entrepreneurial characteristics.

Kuratko et al. (2005) way of addressing of entrepreneurial behavior provides a refreshing discussion to the current purpose as 'entrepreneurial behavior' is behavior accounting to mid-level managers embedded in corporations, i.e. differentiating from the more common emphasis of 'entrepreneurial' attributed to the 'entrepreneur', and thus not solely dependent upon firm creation. In their paper, to be entrepreneurial is to endorse, refine, and shepherd entrepreneurial opportunities and to identify, acquire, and deploy resources needed to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities towards intended outcomes such as increased profitability, strategic renewal and competitive advantage.

#### **4.7 Entrepreneurial process (used in 8 article titles)**

The literature on entrepreneurial process is broad and inconsistent in its use of the adjective 'entrepreneurial', spanning from entrepreneurial defined as opportunity recognition in line with Shane and Venkataraman (2000) to firm creation, to generation of economic and social value. Most publications rest between 2002 to 2010.

Four of the top five cited publications take a relatively broad definition of entrepreneurship, positioned as development of value, both economic but also social, with multiple actors and organization collaborating in a complex system. Jones and Coviello (2005) presents three stages in a process, where entrepreneurship is a combination of innovative, proactive and risk-seeking behavior intended to create value in organizations. The paper clearly positions the entrepreneurial process at a firm or institutional level. Chell (2007) argues to expand beyond economic to include social value perceptions of entrepreneurship, and thus social value-based enterprise. This would

allow definitions of entrepreneurship (and therefore ‘entrepreneurial’) to be applied to not only private, entrepreneurial ventures, but social enterprises as well. This definitional shift is proposed as it would attract individuals with pro-social and community-spirited motives.

Birley (1985) compares formal and informal networks of individuals starting new and small firms, operating within economically strained conditions, to analyze the (lack of) connectivity between an entrepreneurial community and formal organizations established to help them. The relationship between structure and agency is also drawn out by Jack and Anderson (2002) as they develop the conception of entrepreneurship as an embedded socio-economic process. Venture creation is positioned as a complex, contextual event and the outcome of many influences, and individual embeddedness plays a key role in shaping and sustaining business, as it creates opportunity and improves performance. Agency is illustrated through the entrepreneurs’ role in the social structure as conditioning opportunity.

Baron (2008) is a conceptual paper aiming to establish a theoretical framework for understanding the role of affect in key aspects of entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurship is defined as opportunity recognition and resource acquisition. The feelings/moods that individuals experience (their affect) are seen to influence several aspects of entrepreneurial cognition (the perception of an external world, creativity and heuristics). Baron (2008) addresses the entrepreneurial process from the point of view of the individual, arguing for ways in which affect can motivate behavior (and reflection). The only other paper from the comprehensive list focused at the individual level is a lesser cited piece by Brockner et al. (2004). Brockner et al. (2004) argues that regulatory focus theory delineates how people engage in self-regulation, the process of bringing oneself into alignment with one’s own standards and goals. Promotion-focused, people’s growth and advancement needs motivate them to try to bring themselves into alignment with their ideal selves, thereby heightening the salience of potential gains to be attained (felt presence of positive outcomes). Prevention-focused, people’s security and safety needs prompt them to attempt to bring themselves into alignment with their ought selves, thereby increasing the salience of potential losses to be avoided (felt absence of negative outcomes). Perhaps looking into how individuals theorize about their own process of promoting or preventing action relative to their own standards – such that agency is including some key self-governing principles.

#### **4.8 Entrepreneurial university (used in 8 article titles)**

The entrepreneurial university literature originates from 1983 and Etzkowitz’ Minerva article (Etzkowitz, 1983) basically introducing the academic entrepreneur as someone capable of both doing leading basic science as well as commercializing some of the findings. This has remained a subcurrent pointing out how being entrepreneurial in the university setting is about novelty and how that novelty can be brought both into the public domain through publishing but also into the commercial domain through patenting, venture creation, etc. (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). Academic entrepreneurs also often work in teams, creating quasi-firms (Etzkowitz, 2003) within the university. This literature also holds a more institutional sub-stream originating from two heavily cited books. One is more critical pointing at academics having to sell themselves while potentially losing out on their civil servant role in society (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). The other investigates six cases of entrepreneurial universities, building an institutional framework around factors such as university management, the academic core and peripheral functions (e.g. incubators) (Clark, 1998).

This stream of literature can at least offer two original contributions to the notion of entrepreneurial. First, academic entrepreneurs obviously care about other values than pure economic and commercial. Otherwise they would not remain in the university. This broadening of the entrepreneurial beyond the mere economic has since then been captured also in literature around social entrepreneurship and social innovation. Secondly, the university is different than “the entrepreneurial firm” having “entrepreneurial orientation” (see above). Universities are basically entities that support bottom-up initiated action. As an academic entrepreneur you probably do not belong to the upper echelon of the university. However, in most other literature, the more you are the lead person (the CEO, main owner, etc.) defines how entrepreneurial you are. This separation between individual (academic entrepreneur) and the organization, thus enables us to appreciate the individual being entrepreneurial per se.

#### **4.9 Entrepreneurial opportunity (used in 6 article titles)**

The five most cited references around entrepreneurial opportunity are basically all pointing in different directions, while more or less criticizing each other. “Opportunity” has thus been a central but contested term within entrepreneurship and still is (Davidsson, 2015). One of the reasons behind the dispute is captured in one of the top articles around entrepreneurial actions: are opportunities discovered or created (Alvarez and Barney, 2007)? Depending upon your view here, the consequences on what it means to become entrepreneurial differs. The top cited article within entrepreneurial opportunity takes a discovery-stand (Shane, 2000). With that comes the view that only certain individuals are situated and capable of doing the discovery. All the other top articles are more or less drawing from this discovery-view while modifying it by also emphasizing environmental factors (Ardichvili et al., 2003, De Carolis and Saporito, 2006) or factors related to learning (Corbett, 2007) and decision-making, aspiration and imagination (Sarasvathy et al., 2003).

Entrepreneurial opportunity remains a central and yet problematic concept within entrepreneurship. The main problem is meta-theoretical: are opportunities ontologically “out there” to be discovered or are they created and imagined “from within” (Davidsson, 2015). Apart from this debate, there are more stable contributions from this research pointing away from entrepreneurial being about “the firm” or “venture creation” and instead pointing at individuals, their ideas, their creativity, decision-making and aspirations. In short, these aspects could be called entrepreneurial agency, although such a labelling is not yet common in literature (Sarason et al., 2006).

### **5. Analysis**

The analysis first investigates stereotypical and emancipating concepts within the above nine research areas. In accordance with the research questions, stereotyping is identified in relation to entrepreneurial outcomes, behavior and identity (Table 3). Also, emancipatory contributions from the areas are identified. However, since basically all the analyzed articles do not apply a from-within interpretivistic perspective, there is then a need to introduce new language. Four concepts – value for others, agency, novelty, and learning – are therefore proposed and evaluated (Table 4). Each concept is qualified as a possible entrance point for someone wanting to become more entrepreneurial, but with the understanding that all concepts are needed and should be combined for a full entrepreneurial experience (see Figure 1).

### 5.1 Stereotyping and emancipatory contributions of main research areas

In Table 3, the nine main research perspectives are listed and analyzed in relation to three stereotypes: 1) outcomes, 2) behaviors or 3) identity. The last column indicates any identified contributions that can be judged as emancipatory, including then how it related to one of the four proposed concepts, with further analysis in section 5.2.

**Table 3.** Stereotyped and emancipatory features of the reviewed entrepreneurial research areas.

Entrepreneurial research area	Outcomes stereotyped?	Behaviors stereotyped?	Identity stereotyped?	Emancipatory contribution
<i>Entrepreneurial orientation</i>	Firm-centered: firms are innovative, proactive, risk-taking	Partly, for example “competitive aggressiveness”	-	Innovation ( <i>novelty</i> ), proactiveness and autonomy ( <i>agency</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial intentions</i>	Venture creation/self-employment	No, focus is on “pre-behavior”	Venture-intentions necessary for behaving (TPB)	Inspiration to act ( <i>agency</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial firms/ventures</i>	Entrepreneurial firms are innovative, risk-taking, VC-financed	-	-	Innovation ( <i>novelty</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial action/activity</i>	Firm-centered and/or economic understanding	No, disparate views		Decision-making action ( <i>agency</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial learning</i>	Firm-centered	The lead entrepreneur is the learner	If no firm to run, then no entrepreneurial learning	People can learn how to succeed and/or persevere ( <i>learning</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial behavior</i>	Acting as if there is a firm		Overconfidence control needs, tolerance for risk/ambiguity	Acting as if ( <i>agency</i> ), uncertain future ( <i>novelty</i> ), risk for useless outcomes ( <i>value for others</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial process</i>	No, value-creation in many settings			Both economic and social value ( <i>value for others</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial university</i>	No, individual (academic entrepreneurs) and university outcomes	No, entrepreneurial academics seen as both opportunity and a problem (having to sell themselves)		Supporting bottom-up action-taking ( <i>agency</i> ), commercializing research findings ( <i>novelty</i> ), multiple kinds of value creation ( <i>value for others</i> )
<i>Entrepreneurial opportunity</i>	No	No – are opportunities discovered, created or learned...?	Main view says some are more capable than others (contested view)	Individuals can learn how to work with opportunities ( <i>learning</i> )

As regard entrepreneurial outcomes, the six first listed perspectives all focus on new firm creation. Exceptions from this single outcome include research within entrepreneurial process, universities and opportunities. Entrepreneurial process literature appreciates value creation resulting in outcomes in many forms and settings. Entrepreneurial university research also emphasizes

innovative results of various kinds. Leading entrepreneurial opportunity research is allowing for different outcomes, although new venture creation often is more or less assumed.

With two exceptions, the nine research areas do not stipulate stereotypical implications regarding entrepreneurial behavior. The first exception, entrepreneurial orientation research, pinpoints “competitive aggressiveness” as a central behavior which can be seen as problematic for persons believing more in collaborative interaction. The second exception, entrepreneurial learning research, is essentially explicitly centered on the lead entrepreneur as the learner, and thus not opening for others to be learners in the same way.

In regard to entrepreneurial identity, the research streams vary. Entrepreneurial learning literature assumes the identity of the lead entrepreneur for entrepreneurial learning to fully occur. The main discovery perspective within entrepreneurial opportunity research points at certain individuals having prior knowledge and skills to identify opportunities and thus stating that, in comparison, most others do not hold this capability. Entrepreneurial intentions research has measured intentions mostly as intent to start and run a commercial firm. Hence intentions need to be expressed towards such a role and identity, and this identity is positioned as prospective and in the future. Finally, leading entrepreneurial behavior research points to certain traits as important, such as overconfidence, stronger control needs, and more tolerance for risk/ambiguity, thus being only partly descriptive of an identity type.

All nine research areas offer emancipatory contributions, as indicated in the last column of Table 3. However, most only do so in one direction, such as only novelty or only learning. Exceptions are research about entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial university. Here contributions span a wider view of what is entrepreneurial. However, these areas are more concerned with the noun – orientation, behavior and university – than with the adjective entrepreneurial. We thus need to be careful when drawing from these contributions when answering “who am I” as regards to being and becoming entrepreneurial. Instead concepts need to be proposed and justified in different ways, including how they resonate with the analyzed research areas.

## **5.2 Qualifying value for others, agency, novelty and learning**

We propose four concepts that can help us be and become more entrepreneurial: value for others, agency, novelty and learning. They are defined in Table 4 and then related to entrepreneurial outcomes, behavior and identity. In Table 3 the proposed concepts are illustrated in the last column in *italics* where they are judged as applicable.

“Value for others” captures the perhaps most salient feature of being entrepreneurial: the never-ending interest in understanding needs, contexts, and how needs can be satisfied in a way appreciated by others. Value for others then involves empathizing, understanding contexts then offering and testing new solutions to identified needs. Although, perhaps surprisingly, value for others is only recognized in three of the nine research areas in Table 3, it is still an outcome, behavior, and identity that is easily associated to being and becoming entrepreneurial.

“Agency” can simply be defined as caring, daring and engaging. Agency is arguably fundamental for being entrepreneurial. One can care about a lot of issues but to act upon them is something different. This is something personal, something you choose to do, rather than a job someone asks

to be done. There are contexts where agency is a necessity to survive. However, for most of us, agency is a deliberate choice that one does, including also choosing when to disengage.

Novelty is perhaps not as intuitive entrepreneurial concept as the first two. However, we argue that working with new solutions and claiming them are at the core of being entrepreneurial. It is at the core of any successful startup, but it is also what makes most entrepreneurial journeys special and different from other types of professions. Asking how we can do things differently drives developments forward, and figuring out how to pioneer new solutions requires much attention. Most likely no one has then done things the way you do, and not only do you have to deal with uncertainty, but also the doubts of others. You therefore need to figure out how creative work should be claimed and spend time legitimizing claims towards different stakeholders.

Last but not least, learning needs to be key part of being entrepreneurial. To manage uncertainty and persevere through the ups and downs of an entrepreneurial journey, learning is critical. This includes reflecting upon personal experiences, searching through facts to then imagine new solutions, and sometimes even pivoting into totally new directions. Take away this learning and you can easily not only get stuck but make the same mistakes over and over again. Furthermore, success can easily breed failure and thus learning might be the only tool available for those who experience triumph at first to persevere through future stages and new engagements.

**Table 4.** Proposed comprehensive concepts emancipating the entrepreneurial within us

<b>Entrepreneurial concept</b>	<b>Main features</b>	<b>Outcomes – when enabling the entrepreneurial</b>	<b>Behavior: Becoming entrepreneurial</b>	<b>Identity: Being entrepreneurial - Who am I?</b>
<i>Value for others</i>	I continuously empathize, contextualize and offer valuable solutions	I care about how a solution is satisfying needs	Understanding and satisfying needs is a never-ending mission	I fill the space between needs and solutions
<i>Agency</i>	I care, dare and engage	A starting point as well as a source for perseverance	Agency propels behavior (no agency no process)	This is personal, not just professional or a job
<i>Novelty</i>	I work with new solutions and how they are claimed	Finding new ways is central in solving a problem	How can we do differently?	I need to pioneer and stand behind the new
<i>Learning</i>	I reflect upon experience, imagine based upon facts and I sometimes pivot	Allows for effectuating new outcomes when stuck	Always relevant: success breeds failure. Failure requires rethink.	Knowing why is important

Figure 1 represents how the four proposed concepts span the space of being and becoming entrepreneurial. Every concept then represents one entry-point into this space. You might care about a new solution (novelty) that better can satisfy needs (value for others) but then realize that no one else will have the courage or time to engage (agency). Thus, asking why me and how can I start engaging (agency) becomes central along with improving the solution (novelty) and really understanding how it satisfies needs (value for others). However, you might also be driven by curiosity and a desire to learn (learning) and start looking for new ideas and solutions (novelty) or engage with a new context asking people what they care about (value for others). From that you

might grow the confidence and engagement (agency) to really try to make a difference (value for others).

Eventually, you grow confidence not only around all four concepts but how they almost seamlessly interact as you develop and learn from implementing (learning) new solutions (novelty) in continuous interplay with users (value for others). You might by then have chosen to have an entrepreneurial career (agency) in which you operate in the space between need and solution (value for others).

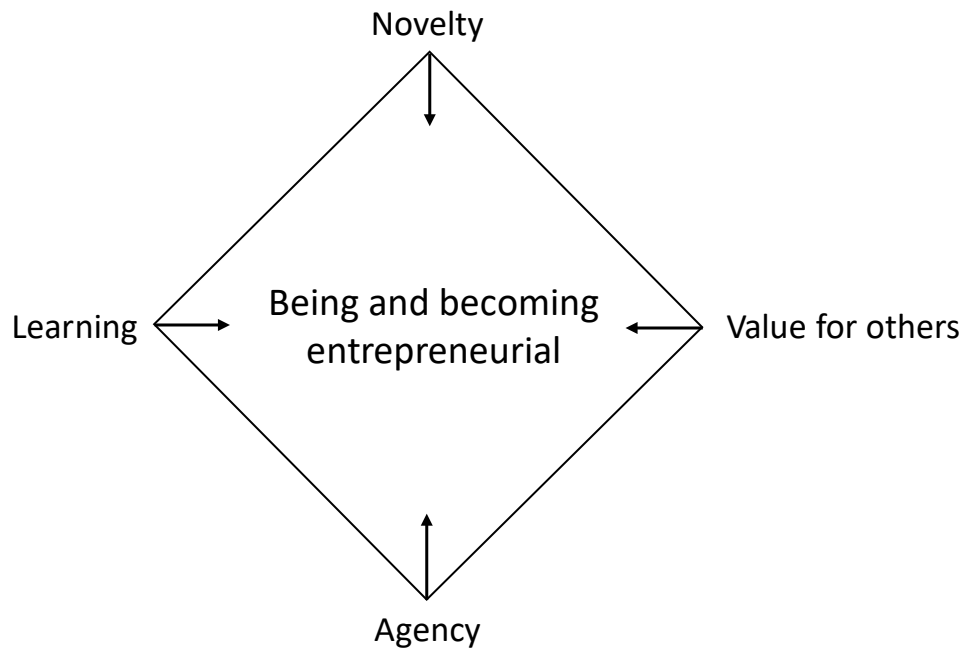


Figure 1. A proposed framework for being and becoming entrepreneurial including four main concepts and entrance points.

## 6. Discussion

The main question asked is: *How can the term “entrepreneurial” help in breaking away from narrow and stereotyped conceptions of entrepreneurship, without diluting an entrepreneurial identity into being almost anything for anyone?* The subsequent discussion will first focus on what the breaking away has implied and after that discuss what promises we see in conceptualizing being and becoming entrepreneurial.

As regard stereotyping, the main finding from the literature review around “entrepreneurial” pointed at also this term being heavily associated to starting and owning a firm. If entrepreneurship and being entrepreneurial only is seen as new venture creation, then what we end up seeing it mostly the appropriation of economic value. What we miss out on is not only many persons being alienated to entrepreneurship (“this is not who I am”). Perhaps as problematic, basically all value creation in society except the economic value captured through a venture is disguised. Hence, when we choose to create new ecological value, social value, cultural value, esthetic value or even economic value (but not necessarily for oneself and one’s venture) then this is not regarded as entrepreneurship.

Given our literature analysis of “entrepreneurial” one could stop there and say: the E-word is simply too tainted by its association with economic value-capture through new ventures. Consequently, we should then use other terms to describe the type of personal engagement and value-creation that seem so important for societal development. In fact, this path was taken already in the Eighties: then coined and still called enterprise education. Since then, alternative voices behind what is “entrepreneurial” have been raised to the extent that discourse within the European Union as well as in many countries’ educational policies echo a much wider view of entrepreneurship.

However, the wider definitions of entrepreneurship have yet not been able to stabilize into an alternative understanding of entrepreneurship guiding individuals beyond being creative, resourceful, adaptive, etc. The wider understanding has become too diluted and there is need for a sharpened definition that captures something distinctively entrepreneurial while avoids the pitfalls (disengagement and missing out on value-creation beyond the venture) that the narrow definition has implied.

After scrutinizing entrepreneurial research, we propose four concepts – value for others, agency, novelty and learning – that together can cover an understanding of being and becoming entrepreneurial that answers our main question. The concepts are based upon interpretivism, i.e. that they should work from within the persons being entrepreneurial. Most research about the entrepreneurial has looked upon the phenomenon from the outside, so even when this research brings about understandings that are not stereotyping, it still then needs translation into a more “from within” interpretivistic perspective.

The exploration undertaken here has resulted in a new and hopefully useful conceptualization of what it means for people to be, become and enable “entrepreneurial”. This arguably represents a viable answer to the question “Who am I?” in relation to entrepreneurship, and also emancipates the individual from having to be positioned into the existing stereotypical descriptions prevalent in the field. At the same time, it does not preclude individuals from creating a new firm and being in the role ‘entrepreneur’.

Table 4 and Figure 1 are used as a comprehensive framework for presenting and defining what it means to be entrepreneurial, illustrating entry points as well as connection and consistency across the four concepts, when viewed in regard to being, becoming and enabling.

### **6.1 Being entrepreneurial**

From an interpretivistic perspective, “being entrepreneurial” relates to identity and “who am I”. We suggest four answers to what being entrepreneurial means:

1. I fill the space between needs and solutions (Value for Others)
2. This is personal, not just professional or a job (Agency)
3. I need to pioneer and stand behind the new (Novelty)
4. Knowing why is important (Learning)

All these answers can be brought together and help an entrepreneurial identity to emerge. While every corner of Figure 1 can be an entry-point into being (perhaps through a process of becoming, as outlined in the next section), just staying in one corner will not satisfy the different aspects of ‘entrepreneurial’, thus making it necessary to dynamically address the other corners.

## **6.2 Becoming entrepreneurial**

From an interpretivistic perspective entrepreneurial behavior is not something described from the outside. It is rather how you experience becoming entrepreneurial. Once again, the four proposed concepts help answer questions about how to behave and thus become entrepreneurial:

1. Understanding and satisfying needs is a never-ending mission (Value for others)
2. Agency propels behavior... no agency no process (Agency)
3. How can we do differently? (Novelty)
4. Learning is always relevant since success breeds failure and failure requires rethink. (Learning)

There is clear direction in the above answers but arguably this direction is not stereotyping. You can create value for others and make it into a never-ending mission, but no one is telling you what the value is and how it should be appropriated (if at all). Doing differently is arguably a main tool for entrepreneurial development, but there are no pointing fingers around what the search for novelty should result in, nor how it should be claimed or shared. What is stipulated is only that novelty, and the other three concepts, should be continuously considered when becoming entrepreneurial. This can of course be questioned and should be criticized, but at least this is an honest attempt to find the balance between stereotyping and dilution.

## **6.3 Enabling the entrepreneurial**

As educators, the questions we care about address how to support, facilitate, empower and enable the ‘entrepreneurial’ in our students (and our colleagues and ourselves). We are continually challenged with meeting the stereotypical perspectives of ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘the entrepreneur’ as these are brought into our classrooms and learning spaces by not only our students, but also community stakeholders and practitioners – which is not surprising as they are simply representing the populist view prevalent in society. We even fall back on stereotypical examples, like Steve Jobs or emphasis on new firm creation, because we aim to meet the expectations of students and stakeholders, and have them recognize our subject area.

With this paper and its four proposed concepts, we seek to emancipate ourselves from these stereotypes and propose an understanding of the ‘entrepreneurial’. We allow and enable a much more diverse array of entrepreneurial outcomes than only new ventures and we thereby also shed light on value creation as a societal force and not just as an economic self-interest.

## **7. Conclusions**

This paper, to our knowledge, offers a first systematic review of literature focusing on “entrepreneurial”. Our review takes an interpretivist stance in investigating how understandings of “entrepreneurial” can help emancipate the “Who am I?” question in entrepreneurship. This offers a more personalized identity while avoiding the stereotyping associated to entrepreneurship, and thus to entrepreneurship education. This perspective along with outlining some cornerstones for a more emancipating definition of what it means to be “entrepreneurial” arguably offers a valuable and original contribution.

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