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Toward a Theory of Arts Entrepreneurship

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The Society for Arts Entrepreneurship Education provides a national inventory of Arts Entrepreneurship programs and currently identifies at least ninety-six institutions offering courses and programs dedicated to the study of entrepreneurship in the context of the arts. Research suggests such courses are commonly associated with new venture creation across the arts and creative sector, as well as the teaching and learning of skills, competencies and behaviors necessary for self-employment in the arts and creative industries. However, despite the existence of such courses and programs, there currently exists no proposed theory or theories of arts entrepreneurship in nascent literature for guiding contextual entrepreneurship pedagogy and practice. In an effort to advance the concept of arts entrepreneurship, this paper identifies challenges to theory building, explores a theory of arts entrepreneurship, and proposes how a theory of arts entrepreneurship can inform program theory development.

According to a program inventory available on the *Society for Arts Entrepreneurship Education* (SAEE) website, there are currently at least ninety-six institutions of higher education offering courses and programs dedicated to the study of entrepreneurship in the context of the arts.¹ Comparisons of this inventory to an informal program inventory conducted by Beckman and Gangi in 2013 suggest an increase from 83 to 112 dedicated courses.² Research suggests such courses are commonly associated with new venture creation across the arts and creative sector, in addition to the teaching and learning of skills, competencies and behaviors necessary for self-employment in the arts and creative industries.³ Despite the existence of such courses and programs, both scholars and critics have argued that

¹ See <http://www.societyaee.org/resources.html>, accessed 6/23/15.

² On July 30th, 2013, an informal planning meeting/webinar concerning the development of an academic society for arts entrepreneurship educators was held at North Carolina State University. During this meeting, a national program inventory was distributed to those in attendance indicating sixty institutions and eighty-three dedicated courses to the study and/or practice of Arts Entrepreneurship. While the distributed inventory compiled by Gary Beckman and Jonathan Gangi was not intended to be inclusive of all associated Arts Entrepreneurship programs, it nevertheless served as an indicator of the demand for the topic as a specialized field of study in higher education.

³ Gary D. Beckman, " 'Adventuring' Arts Entrepreneurship Curricula in Higher Education: An Examination of Present Efforts, Obstacles, and Best Practices," *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 37, no. 2 (2007): 91.

entrepreneurship cannot be taught.⁴ Alternatively, authors Hagoort and Thiel contend that “... an enterprising attitude and skills for self-employment can be developed in any individual as a genuine discipline, provided that the appropriate knowledge is presented in the right place, in the right manner and at the right time.”⁵ Briga Hynes concurs, contending that entrepreneurship education can be taught in non-business disciplines, presents a case study and identifies distinctions between both entrepreneurship training and education.⁶

Although many entrepreneurship education programs and courses exist, scholars have been critical of the lack of theory guiding entrepreneurship education and practice.⁷ Distinguished entrepreneurship scholars Shane and Venkataraman soften this critique and suggest that entrepreneurship theory is underdeveloped.⁸ Entrepreneurship researchers Amit et al suggested that, “...the received literature offers neither a predictive theory of the behavior of entrepreneurs nor much in the way of guidance for practice.”⁹ In *The Theoretical Side of Teaching Entrepreneurship*, James O. Fiet states:

“The objective of entrepreneurship theory is to help entrepreneurs to understand the consequences of their decisions. Why else should students study entrepreneurship? If we do not move toward the development of a general theory of entrepreneurship, in the end, our courses will have little more than motivational value.”¹⁰

⁴ See Andrew Corbett, “You Can’t Teach Entrepreneurship,” *Forbes*, May 24, 2012, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/babson/2012/05/24/you-cant-teachentrepreneurship/>; Noam Wasserman and Victor W. Hwang, “Can Entrepreneurship Be Taught?” *Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2012, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970204603004577267271656000782>; Tim Askew, “Why Entrepreneurship Can’t (and shouldn’t) Be Taught in School,” *Inc*, May 1, 2012, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.inc.com/tim-askew/why-entrepreneurship-cant-be-taught.html>; Cathy Ashmore, “Why We’re So Bad At Teaching Entrepreneurship,” *Time*, May 23, 2012, accessed December 29, 2014, <http://business.time.com/2012/05/23/why-were-so-bad-atteaching-entrepreneurship>; John M. Ivancevich, “A Traditional Faculty Member’s Perspective on Entrepreneurship,” *Journal of Business Venturing* 6, no. 1 (1991): 1–7 and Robert Ronstadt, “The Educated Entrepreneurs: A New Era of Entrepreneurial Education is Beginning,” *American Journal of Small Business* 11, no. 4 (1987): 37–53.

⁵ Giep Hagoort and Marijn van Thiel, “Education for Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurship: Dreaming, Creation, Exploration and Commercial Exploitation,” in *Hello Creative World: Entrepreneurship in Arts Education*, ed. Giep Hagoort, et al (Utrecht: Utrecht School of the Arts, 2008): 23, accessed 1/13/15, http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/5757/1/Hello_Creative_World.pdf.

⁶ See Briga Hynes, “Entrepreneurship Education and Training—Introducing Entrepreneurship into Non-business Disciplines,” *Journal of European Industrial Training* 20, no. 8 (1996).

⁷ See Gaylen N. Chandler and Douglas W. Lyon, “Issues of Research Design and Construct Management in Entrepreneurship Research: The Past Decade,” *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 25, no. 4 (2001): 101–13; Arnold C. Cooper, “Challenges in Predicting New Firm Performance,” *Journal of Business Venturing* 8, no. 3 (1993): 241–53; William J. Baumol, “Formal Entrepreneurship Theory in Economics: Existence and Bounds,” *Journal of Business Venturing* 8, no. 3 (1993):197–210; Ivan Bull and Gary E. Willard, “Towards a Theory of Entrepreneurship,” *Journal of Business Venturing* 8, no. 3 (1993):183–195 and William Bygrave and Charles Hofer, “Theorizing about Entrepreneurship,” *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 16, no. 2 (1991): 13–22.

⁸ Scott Shane and S. Venkataraman, “The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research,” *Academy of Management Review* 25, no. 1 (2000): 219.

⁹ Raphael Amit, Lawrence Glosten and Eitan Muller, “Entrepreneurial Ability, Venture Investments, and Risk Sharing,” *Management Science* 36, no. 10 (1990): 1232.

¹⁰ James O. Fiet, “The Theoretical Side of Teaching Entrepreneurship,” *Journal of Business Venturing* 16, no. 1 (2001): 11.

Similarly, there currently exists no proposed theory or theories of arts entrepreneurship within the field's premier journals.¹¹ Scholars suggest that a theory attempts to explain or provide a rationale for the way things work.¹² Theory is often developed via a systematic process of identifying and examining relationships among variables factors and cases of study.¹³ Such relationships are often mapped and expressed in the form of a theoretical framework; essentially a structure composed of formal theories and hard evidence in support of broader propositions and/or concepts.¹⁴ For example, entrepreneurship scholar Donald Kuratko states:

“A theory of entrepreneurship is a verifiable and logically coherent formulation of relationships, or underlying principles, that either explain entrepreneurship, predict entrepreneurial activity (for example, by characterizing conditions that are likely to lead to new profit opportunities or to the formation of new enterprises), or provide normative guidance (that is, prescribe the right action in particular circumstances).”¹⁵

Given these understandings—devoid of a theory of arts entrepreneurship—it is likely an exercise in futility to work towards consensus among educators on common learning outcomes for arts entrepreneurship education. Moreover, in the absence of a theory of arts entrepreneurship, distinct curriculum and learning outcomes will likely be based on personal assumptions.¹⁶ Such assumptions in arts entrepreneurship education have the potential to contribute to the exclusion and dissuasion of students with diverse interests from participating in arts entrepreneurship courses and programs.

For example, research suggests that there are two common approaches to arts entrepreneurship education in U.S. higher education institutions: (1) New Venture Creation (NVC); (2) Skills for Transitioning (SFT).¹⁷ Entrepreneurship scholar William Gartner refers to the process of NVC as, “the organizing of organizations.”¹⁸ Courses guided by the NVC approach tend to emulate business incubators and offer students experiential learning

¹¹ A search within *Artivate* (www.artivate.org) and *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Research* (www.jaer.ncsu.edu) was conducted on January 21, 2015.

¹² See Sharon M Ravitch and Matthew Riggan, *Reason & Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2012).

¹³ See Joseph Alex Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2005) and Anselm Strauss, “Notes on the Nature and Development of General Theories” *Qualitative Inquiry* 1, no. 1 (1995): 7-18.

¹⁴ Ravitch and Riggan, *Reason & Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research*, 12, 17 and Vincent A. Anfara and Norma T. Mertz, *Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, 2006).

¹⁵ Donald F. Kuratko, *Entrepreneurship: Theory, Process, and Practice* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2013), 8, Kindle edition.

¹⁶ Fiet, “The Theoretical Side of Teaching Entrepreneurship,” 8.

¹⁷ See Beckman, “‘Adventuring’ Arts Entrepreneurship Curricula in Higher Education: An Examination of Present Efforts, Obstacles, and Best Practices,” 91.

¹⁸ William B. Gartner, “A Conceptual Framework for Describing the Phenomenon of New Venture Creation,” *Academy of Management Review* 10, no. 4 (1985): 697.

opportunities in business entry, business planning and organizational development.¹⁹ Moreover, authentic learning outcomes in such graduate courses are commonly aligned with business planning and pitching activities.²⁰

Alternatively, the SFT approach seems to be focused on the development of certain skills, competencies and behaviors necessary for transitioning into the artistic workforce. Students in such courses may learn among other things how to construct artistic portfolios and resumes, how to create and manage a personal budget, how to network in social settings, how to manage themselves as a business. Generally, such SFT-based courses seem to share the goal of preparing visual, literary and performing arts students for the realities of freelancing and self-employment.²¹

While these two common approaches (NVC & SFT) provide educators with guidance for curricular planning, I posit that in the absence of a theory of arts entrepreneurship, both approaches contribute to assumptions in arts entrepreneurship education and practice. Consider the seminal article “*Is There an Elephant in Entrepreneurship? Blind Assumptions in Theory Development*,” where William Gartner states “The thesis of this article is that theory development in entrepreneurship research depends on whether we are conscious of the assumptions we make about this phenomenon.”²² With this understanding, it is possible that some educators guided by the NVC approach may embrace the assumption that arts entrepreneurship is a process that leads to the creation of new arts and cultural organizations. However, consider students who wish to learn how to develop unincorporated arts-based ventures such as: arts and non-arts partnerships/collaborations, arts festivals, cultural district plans, public art exhibitions, arts/cultural programs, artist housing, etc. Are these not our students as well? Similarly, it is possible that some educators guided by the SFT approach embrace the assumption that arts entrepreneurship is a process that leads to the development of necessary skills competencies and behaviors for self-employment in the arts. However, consider students who may wish to develop non-profit arts and cultural organizations and for-profit arts-centered businesses in the traditional sense.²³ Further, concerning the SFT approach, who gets to determine the necessary skills competencies and behaviors for self-employment in the arts? Does one size fit all students across artistic disciplines? Does a Dancer need the same skills for transitioning as an Actor? Additionally, how do proposed skills, competencies and behaviors for arts entrepreneurship differ from those learned by arts administrators?²⁴ While there is merit in the NVC, SFT and additional approaches to arts

¹⁹ Fernando Lourenco and Oswald Jones, “Developing Entrepreneurship Education: Comparing Traditional and Alternative Approaches,” *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Education* 4, (2006): 111-140.

²⁰ Zahra Arasti, Mansoreh K. Falavarjani, and Narges Imanipour, “A Study of Teaching Methods in Entrepreneurship Education for Graduate Students,” *Higher Education Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 4-5.

²¹ See Stephanie Taylor and Karen Littleton, *Contemporary Identities of Creativity and Creative Work* (Farnham, GBR: Ashgate, 2012), 133-134; Mirva Peltoniemi, “Cultural Industries: Product-Market Characteristics, Management Challenges and Industry Dynamics,” *International Journal of Management Reviews* 17, no.1 (2015): 48-51.

²² William B. Gartner, “Is There an Elephant in Entrepreneurship? Blind Assumptions in Theory Development,” *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 25 (2001): 27.

²³ See Americans for the Arts, “Creative Industries Reports,” accessed January 13, 2015, <http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/creative-industries>.

²⁴ See Joseph S. Roberts, “Infusing Entrepreneurship within Non-business Disciplines: Preparing Artists and Others for Self-employment and Entrepreneurship,” *Artivate* 1, no. 2 (2013): 53-63.

entrepreneurship education, I posit that a theory of arts entrepreneurship is needed for rationalizing and guiding curricular and pedagogical decisions in arts entrepreneurship education.

TOWARD A THEORY OF ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Theory development in entrepreneurship is a great challenge, perhaps for several overarching reasons. First, entrepreneurship is multidisciplinary. In the *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Entrepreneurship and Small Business* (2014), authors Carsrud et al point out that the field includes entrepreneurship, small-business management and family business.²⁵ Further, these authors point out that the field's leading scholars hail from a wide variety of disciplines outside of entrepreneurship; including but not limited to "... management, finance, strategy, sociology, organizational behavior, social psychology, economics, anthropology, demography, political science, clinical psychology, accounting, marketing and industrial engineering to name a few."²⁶ Second, entrepreneurship is contextual.²⁷ Practically speaking, context drives entrepreneurship planning, shapes the entrepreneurship process and influences outcomes of the entrepreneurship experience. For example, Friederike Welter argues that "...a contextualized view on entrepreneurship can add to our knowledge of when, how, and why entrepreneurship happens."²⁸ Welter goes on to say that "Conceptually, context is a multiplex phenomenon, which cuts across levels of analysis and influences entrepreneurship directly and indirectly, but which also is influenced by entrepreneurial activities."²⁹ This position suggests to me that context is what distinguishes arts entrepreneurship from other types of entrepreneurship. Arguably, the context of the arts and creative sector differs in many respects from the corporate context that business students are traditionally trained to inhabit.³⁰

Third, given the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship, the broader field understandably lacks consensus on a definition.³¹ For example, entrepreneurship is frequently typified as small business, technology, social, cultural, educational, political, policy and/or

²⁵ Alan Carsrud, Malin Brännback and Richard T. Harrison, "Research in Entrepreneurship: An Introduction to the Research Challenges for the Twenty-first Century," in *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, ed. Alan Carsrud and Malin Brännback (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Press, 2014), 2-3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3

²⁷ For the purposes of this discussion, the term "context" is defined as the group of conditions that exist where and when something happens

²⁸ Friederike Welter, "Contextualizing Entrepreneurship—Conceptual Challenges and Ways Forward," *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice* 35, no. 1 (2011): 176.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 176

³⁰ For a proposed holistic model and discussion of the context of a defined U.S. Arts and Creative Sector, see Joni Maya Cherbo, Harold L. Vogel and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski, "Toward an Arts and Creative Sector," in *Understanding the Arts and Creative Sector in the United States*, ed. Joni Maya Cherbo et al (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 9-27.

³¹ Carsrud et al, "Research in Entrepreneurship: An Introduction to the Research Challenges for the Twenty-first Century," 2.

framed as new venture creation, innovation, ideation and/or change. Thus, in the absence of consensus, it is understandable how entrepreneurship can equate to “everything and anything” to some and “no-such-thing” to others.

Of all the proposed reasons given, I posit that the latter presents the most immediate challenge to the development of a theory (or theories) of arts entrepreneurship. As discussed, the definition of entrepreneurship is both subject to and influenced by the context in which it is situated. In the absence of definitional consensus, it appears that entrepreneurship researchers and scholars have referred to entrepreneurship more broadly as a phenomenon.³² Consider the volume *Entrepreneurship in Context*, where a gathering of entrepreneurship scholars both refer to and explore entrepreneurship as a context bound phenomenon.³³ Within the emerging literature on arts entrepreneurship, a similar idea has been suggested:

“We may find it more helpful to discuss art and entrepreneurship (both separate and together) as a phenomenon within a broader theory (or theories) of Arts Entrepreneurship. This way, the field can account for the observations of human actions and behavior without being drawn into arguments about constituent and contextual definitions.”³⁴

Based on these perspectives, one might consider that whatever arts entrepreneurship is, it is also a phenomenon both subject to and influenced by context. For example, research suggests visual, literary and performing artists commonly seek out and compete for opportunities to produce and distribute/exhibit art within a hyper-competitive winner take-all marketplace (e.g. context).³⁵ Competition for opportunities to do so can create a need for competitive advantage. Within this context, relationships can be just as valuable as financial compensation. As a result, artists may engage in entrepreneurship within the arts and creative industries for the purpose of developing valuable industry relationships (e.g. creation of an arts-based society, formation of arts/non-arts partnerships, development of artist co-operatives, development of artist housing, formation of artist unions, development of arts-oriented conferences).

³² See Joseph A. Schumpeter and Redvers Opie. *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934); Baumol, “Formal Entrepreneurship Theory in Economics: Existence and Bounds,” 1993, Gartner, “A Conceptual Framework for Describing the Phenomenon of New Venture Creation,” 1985 and Shane and Venkataraman, “The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research,” 2000.

³³ Marco van Gelderen, Karen Verduyn and Enno Masurel, “Introduction to Entrepreneurship in Context,” in *Entrepreneurship in Context*, ed. Marco van Gelderen and Enno Masurel (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 1-22.

³⁴ Gary D. Beckman, “What Arts Entrepreneurship Isn’t,” *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Research*, 1 (2014): 10, accessed 1/15/15, <http://www.jaer.ncsu.edu>. In an attempt to advance this perspective, it is helpful to first understand how the term “phenomenon” is generally defined. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2014) defines *phenomenon* as, “Something (such as an interesting fact or event) that can be observed and studied and that typically is unusual or difficult to understand or explain fully.” Alternative dictionary definitions include, “A remarkable person, thing, or event” (Oxford Dictionary 2014) and “...anything that is or can be experienced or felt, especially something that is noticed because it is unusual or new” (Cambridge Dictionary 2014).

³⁵ See David Throsby, *The Economics of Cultural Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), Kindle Edition).

In another example, research suggests that arts employment within the hyper competitive winner-take-all marketplace is commonly intermittent (e.g. context).³⁶ Beyond providing income to support the creation of art, arts employment serves as validation for artists' talents and abilities. Thus, many visual, literary and performing artists share the goal of not only obtaining arts and arts-related employment, but also of doing so consistently. As a result, artists may engage in entrepreneurship within the arts and creative industries in an effort to reduce their risk of intermittent arts and arts-related employment.

Continuing, research has evidenced a dual system of U.S public funding that has historically prioritized economic support for the cultural expressions of the dominant cultural majority of U.S society (e.g. context).³⁷ As a result, both minority artists and minority arts organizations may engage in entrepreneurship across the broader arts and creative sector in an effort to develop economic and socio-political resources necessary for the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of minority art forms.

Further, the market is oversaturated with those who self-identify as visual, literary and performing artists (e.g. context).³⁸ Since there is a high supply of such individuals, market demand is low and often there are not enough employment opportunities to accommodate the supply. As a result, visual, literary and performing artists may engage in entrepreneurship across the arts and creative sector for the purpose of employing not only themselves, but also each other.

To summarize, in cases where such contexts are present, I posit that entrepreneurship is a probable intervention for overcoming common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art. Further, both scholars and practitioners have long acknowledged the role of emergent learning in the process of entrepreneurship; often referred to within entrepreneurship literature as *entrepreneurial learning*.³⁹ For example, in discussing a theory of entrepreneurship, Minniti and Bygrave state "Entrepreneurship is a process of learning, and a theory of entrepreneurship requires a theory

³⁶ See Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Outlook Handbooks 2012-13," accessed November, 23, 2013, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/entertainment-and-sports/dancers-andchoreographers.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/entertainment-and-sports/musicians-and-singers.htm>, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/entertainmentand-sports/actors.htm> and <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/craft-and-fine-artists.htm>.

³⁷ See Sonia B. Mañjon and Marta Moreno Vega, *A Snapshot: Landmarking Community Cultural Arts Organizations Nationally* (New York, NY: Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, 2012); James Bau Graves, *Cultural Democracy: The Arts, Community and the Public Purpose* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Americans for the Arts, "Research Reports - Arts & Funding," accessed July 21, 2014, <http://www.americansforthearts.org/byprogram/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/americans-for-the-arts-publications/research-reports#funding> and Americans for the Arts, "Research Reports - Arts & Funding," accessed July 21, 2014, <http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/americans-for-the-arts-publications/research-reports#funding>.

³⁸ See Ruth Towse, "Human Capital and Artists' Labour Markets" in *Handbook of the Economics of the Arts and Culture*, ed. Victor Ginsburgh and David Throsby (Amsterdam, North Holland: Elsevier, 2006), 865-894 and Ruth Towse, *A Textbook of Cultural Economics* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 296-305. Kindle edition.

³⁹ See, for example, Richard T. Harrison and Claire Leitch, *Entrepreneurial Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Applications* (London: Routledge, 2008).

of learning.⁴⁰ Diamanto Politis refers to entrepreneurial learning as “a continuous process that facilitates the development of necessary knowledge for being effective in starting up and managing new ventures.”⁴¹ Likewise, entrepreneurship researcher Robert Chia suggests entrepreneurial learning is about learning along the way, referring to the concept as a process characterized by creative search and incessant experimentation.⁴² Given common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art, entrepreneurial learning is likely for individuals groups and organizations that engage in the process of entrepreneurship across the arts and creative sector.⁴³ Where this is evidenced, researchers might consider cases whereby individual artists, groups of artists and/or arts and cultural organizations are learning/have learned to overcome such common challenges and historical barriers as case studies in arts entrepreneurship; arguably a phenomenon both subject to and influenced by context.

Additionally, perhaps in an effort to overcome common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution/exhibition and/or preservation of art, some individual artists are developing portfolio careers.⁴⁴ Whereas the artist who adopts a more traditional career approach might support his/her art-making with an unrelated part-time job (e.g. actor-waiter); the artist who adopts the portfolio career approach might advance the development of multiple arts and arts-related skill sets to be contracted across the arts and creative industries on a project basis (e.g. actress/speech coach/screenwriter, musician/voice teacher/songwriter, dancer/choreographer/yoga instructor, mural artist/K-12 art educator/sculptor, etc). In contrast to traditional full-time and part-time work, research suggests that portfolio careers afford individuals key benefits such as: increased autonomy, multiple and simultaneous self-employment opportunities, increased opportunities for multiple revenue streams and control of one’s work schedule.⁴⁵ However, it is important to note that even given the potential benefits, portfolio careers may not be the best option for all, as they are often sustained by a range of safety nets such as: savings, the support of a working partner and personal contacts.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in an effort to address common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution/exhibition and/or preservation of art, there is evidence that many individual artists have adopted entrepreneurial career approaches.

⁴⁰ Maria Minniti and William Bygrave, “A Dynamic Model of Entrepreneurial Learning,” *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 25, no. 3 (2001): 7.

⁴¹ Diamanto Politis, “The Process of Entrepreneurial Learning” in *Entrepreneurial Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Applications*, ed. Richard T. Harrison and Claire Leitch, (London: Routledge, 2008), 46.

⁴² Robert Chia, “Enhancing Entrepreneurial Learning Through Peripheral Vision,” in *Entrepreneurial Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Applications*, ed. Richard T. Harrison and Claire Leitch, (London: Routledge, 2008), 28.

⁴³ Additionally I posit that respective research studies on entrepreneurial learning within context will be useful for theory development. Understandings from such studies can help specify the oft-used terms “entrepreneurship activities,” “entrepreneurial mindset” and “entrepreneurial actions.”

⁴⁴ Brydie-Leigh Bartleet et al, “Preparing for Portfolio Careers in Australian Music: Setting a Research Agenda,” *Australian Journal of Music Education* 1 (2012): 32-41.

⁴⁵ Andrew J. Templer and Tupper F. Cawsey, “Rethinking Career Development in an Era of Portfolio Careers,” *Career Development International* 4, no. 2 (1999): 70-76.

⁴⁶ Michael Gold and Jane Fraser, “Managing Self-Management: Successful Transitions to Portfolio Careers,” *Work, Employment and Society* 16, no. 4 (2002): 579-597.

For example, in a comprehensive research study, Gilmore et al explore how artists across artistic disciplines build careers across commercial, non-profit and community sectors.⁴⁷ The study includes forty-one case studies. Arguably, general definitions not only helped the researchers to create criteria for selecting the participants to be studied, but also helped the researchers identify and describe the context in which various entrepreneurial activities took place.⁴⁸ The authors define a working artist as "...anyone who self-identifies as an artist, spends ten or more hours a week at his/her artwork (whether for income or not), and shares his/her work with others beyond family and close friends."⁴⁹ On the same page, the authors define the commercial sector as a sector that "...encompasses for-profit firms that employ artists, contracts with them for services, buys their work or process, and packages and markets their work for distribution." The authors define the non-profit sector as a sector that "...encompasses work done for or with the support of the public sector or legally incorporated nonprofit organizations, such as museums, orchestras, opera houses, nonprofit presses, religious and social service organizations." They define the community sector as a sector that "...encompasses forums and organizations often called informal, traditional, or unincorporated, where artists create and share their work unmediated by either markets or non-for-profit organizations, whether paid or not." Later, the authors reference a fourth sector closely related to the non-profit sector, "...government, or the public sector," in which artists work in the public art domain.⁵⁰ In summary, although participants encountered common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution/exhibition and preservation of art, many of these participants overcame such challenges and barriers by adopting entrepreneurial career approaches across the referenced sector(s).

ALIGNING A THEORY TO PROGRAM THEORY

The discussion thus far argues for the development of a theory that rationalizes the process of entrepreneurship as it occurs within the context of the arts and creative industries and across the broader arts and creative sector. Explicitly, I attempted to advance the notion of arts entrepreneurship as a phenomenon both subject to and influenced by context. The discussion now turns towards an exploration of how a proposed theory of arts entrepreneurship might inform program theory development in arts entrepreneurship education.

To begin this conversation, I would like to point out what I believe to be a re-occurring theme in the nascent arts entrepreneurship education focused literature: the framing of arts

⁴⁷ See Sam Gilmore et al, *Crossover: How Artists Build Careers Across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2006), accessed 1/13/15, <http://www.issueLab.org/permalink/resource/8903>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

entrepreneurship education as an intervention.⁵¹ For example, in the article *The “Entrepreneurial Mindset” in Creative and Performing Arts Higher Education in Australia*, authors Pollard and Wilson discuss the role that arts entrepreneurship education plays in many creative and performing arts higher education programs. Notably, the authors call attention to the increasing pressure on higher education institutions to improve graduate employment outcomes:

“Arts entrepreneurship is a relatively new discipline in creative and performing arts higher education and is currently attracting attention due to the possibilities it affords to address graduate employability issues.”⁵²

Practically speaking, prior to developing any educational intervention, it’s helpful to first consider the situation(s) the intervention is trying to address. Concerning the calls for increased employability of arts students, several studies support Pollard and Wilson’s analysis.⁵³ Additionally, there is increasing acknowledgement within higher education arts focused literature that the employability of arts students is an issue worth prioritizing.⁵⁴ Given these understandings, I posit that educators will have an easier time developing program theory for arts entrepreneurship education if they frame the education as an intervention. Moreover, I posit that program theory development in arts entrepreneurship education can be greatly informed by a theory of arts entrepreneurship. Prior to expounding on this position, I encourage educators to first consider the following questions:

⁵¹ See Beckman, “‘Adventuring’ Arts Entrepreneurship Curricula in Higher Education: An Examination of Present Efforts, Obstacles, and Best Practices,” 87-112; Linda Essig, “Suffusing Entrepreneurship Education throughout the Theatre Curriculum,” *Theatre Topics* 19, no. 2 (2009): 117-124; Ralph Brown, “Promoting Entrepreneurship in Arts Education,” in *Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries: An International Perspective*, ed. Colette Henry (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Press, 2007), 126-141; Roberts, “Infusing Entrepreneurship within Non-business Disciplines: Preparing Artists and Others for Self-employment and Entrepreneurship,” 53-63 and Jason C. White, “Barriers to Recognizing Arts Entrepreneurship Education as Essential to Professional Arts Training,” *Artivate* 2, no. 3 (2013): 28-39. Note: For the purposes of this discussion, the term “intervention” is defined as an action taken to improve a situation.

⁵² Vikki Pollard and Emily Wilson, “The ‘Entrepreneurial Mindset’ in Creative and Performing Arts Higher Education in Australia,” *Artivate* 3, no. 1 (2014): 3, accessed 1/13/15, <http://artivate.org>.

⁵³ See Danielle J Lindemann et al, *Painting With Broader Strokes: Reassessing the Value of an Arts Education*, (Indiana University, Vanderbilt University. Bloomington: Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2012): 22, accessed 1/13/15, http://snaap.indiana.edu/pdf/SNAAP_Special%20Report_1.pdf and Mark Olssen and Michael A. Peters, “Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism,” *Journal of Education Policy* 20, no. 3 (2005): 313-345.

⁵⁴ See Ernesto Pujol, “On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education,” in *Art School: Propositions for the 21st Century*, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009), 1-14; Beckman, “What Arts Entrepreneurship Isn’t,” 3-18; Douglas Dempster, “Some Immodest Proposals (and Hunches) for Conservatory Education” in *Disciplining the Arts: Teaching Entrepreneurship in Context*, ed. Gary D. Beckman (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011) and Ruth Bridgstock, “Not a Dirty Word: Arts Entrepreneurship and Higher Education,” *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* 12, nos.2-3 (2013): 122-137.

What is the problem that arts entrepreneurship education proposes to address?

Where is the evidenced problem taking place?

Who is being affected by the problem?

What actions are needed in order to address the evidenced problem?

Now consider the following program theory (e.g. rationale for intervention), which is greatly informed by a proposed theory of arts entrepreneurship:

Theory

Because there are common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution/exhibition and preservation of art, artistic, administrative and technical creative workers engage in a process of innovation and new venture creation across the arts and creative sector.

Program Theory

By offering students an education associated with the phenomenon of arts entrepreneurship, students will be more prepared to overcome common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art across the arts and creative sector.

Although this is just one example of a program theory informed by a theory of arts entrepreneurship, educators may find this immediately useful not only for addressing stakeholder inquiries (students, parent, deans, etc), but also for guiding curricular and assessment planning. From various perspectives within higher education, let us consider each section of the proposed theory and program theory separately:

- (1) Because there are common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art
- (2) artistic, administrative and technical creative workers engage in a process of innovation and new venture creation
- (3) across the arts and creative sector.

The theory above identifies a causal hypothesis whereby (1) the cause of the problem, (2) those affected by the problem and (3) the context in which the problem is situated is clearly identified. For an arts student, the above theory may communicate a relevant problem, a relevant context and a process being undertaken to address the evidenced problem. To diverse arts faculty, the theory may communicate the relevance of entrepreneurship practice to the broader field of arts education—an understanding that may lead to collaborative efforts between arts faculty and entrepreneurship educators. For deans, the theory may suggest an opportunity to take preventative action for improved student outcomes.

(4) By offering students

(5) an education associated with the phenomenon of arts entrepreneurship

The program theory offers an intervention hypothesis: a statement that clearly identifies (4) who the intervention will serve, and (5) what the intervention will consist of.

(6) students will be more prepared to overcome common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art across the arts and creative sector.

Note that the program theory also offers an action hypothesis: a statement that clearly (6) identifies the proposed outcome of the intervention. Although this is only one example for the purposes of this discussion, the referenced program theory is clearly informed by a proposed theory of arts entrepreneurship. As can be seen, a proposed theory of arts entrepreneurship can help educators more clearly communicate the rationale for arts entrepreneurship education programs and courses. Furthermore, educators can use the causal hypothesis in such a theory to guide pedagogical questions. For example, considering (1), I am left wondering, “Are common challenges and historical barriers the same across artistic disciplines?” “What strategies have specific groups of artistic, administrative and technical creative workers utilized in order to overcome common challenges and/or historical barriers they have faced?” Certainly these are but two important research questions for the field. In another example, consider the program theory (6), which left me wondering, “How will I assess the degree to which *my students* are more prepared to overcome common challenges and historical barriers to production, distribution, exhibition and/or preservation of art ?”⁵⁵ “What will be the direct and indirect indicators of student learning?”

Further, the intervention hypothesis within the program theory (4) (5) can help stakeholders identify who the program serves and what the program/curricular activities will contain. Likewise, the action hypothesis within the program theory (6) can be used to communicate the intended outcome(s) of the program. In summary, I posit that guided by proposed theories of arts entrepreneurship, educators will be more prepared to develop program theory for arts entrepreneurship education.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that a field is defined by its concepts, theories and research methods.⁵⁶ To date, the nascent field of arts entrepreneurship has no generally accepted conceptual or theoretical frameworks, no distinct theories of learning and no proposed research methods for analyzing (what might be called) the phenomenon of arts entrepreneurship. As this emerging field works to develop theories, concepts, research

⁵⁵ This question suggests a need for emerging educators to develop competence in assessment practice.

⁵⁶ See Amanda Moore McBride, et al, "Civic Service Worldwide: Defining a Field, Building a Knowledge Base," *Human Resources Abstracts* 40, no. 2 (2004): 8S-21S.

methods and models, let us not forget to take adequate time to check our assumptions along the way, specifically those that guide research pedagogy and practice. Fiet reminds us that "...atheoretical teaching has limited usefulness as a guide for instructing aspiring entrepreneurs about their prospects for future success."⁵⁷ As evidenced in this discussion, one of the greatest challenges to theoretical development in arts entrepreneurship is the lack of definitional consensus. To date, I remain optimistic on this matter, holding the belief that by working across artistic disciplines, the field can define key terms generally enough so that we can get on with the acquisition of knowledge. Given the need for a general definition of arts entrepreneurship—and given the new understandings that can emerge by framing arts entrepreneurship as a phenomenon both subject to and influenced by context—I suggest that when attempting to communicate what arts entrepreneurship is, educators consider the following as a proposed general definition:

Arts Entrepreneurship refers to the process of overcoming common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art.

For the purpose of theory development, criticism of this proposed definition is encouraged. To that end, I contribute several assertions to help facilitate criticism. First, I assert that the proposed definition is general; although it does admittedly frame entrepreneurship within a specific context, it does not assume that common challenges and historical barriers are homogenous across all proposed dimensions (e.g. production, distribution, exhibition, preservation)

Also, I maintain that the definition is general because it intentionally omits who the arts entrepreneur "is." The definition thereby follows practical guidance provided by Gartner, who once famously argued that research identifying what an entrepreneur does (e.g. behavioral approach) will tell one more about the process of entrepreneurship than research focused on describing whom an entrepreneur is (e.g. trait approach).⁵⁸ Gartner's article reminds me of the assumptions that can arise by utilizing prescriptive traits to identify people as "arts entrepreneurs." Arguably under the proposed definition, the process of arts entrepreneurship refers to a context-bound phenomenon that anyone can experience or undertake.

I also contend that the proposed general definition is process-focused, art-centered and action-oriented, as it is important to note that rather than an emphasis on creating an organization, business or company, the proposed general definition refers to "a process of overcoming." Arguably, the process of overcoming common challenges and historical barriers to the production, distribution, exhibition and preservation of art is a discipline worthy of study. Further, I argue that this particular emphasis distinguishes arts entrepreneurship from that of small business entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and arts administration; the latter of which is arguably primarily concerned with the management and sustainability of

⁵⁷ Fiet, "The Theoretical Side of Teaching Entrepreneurship," 10.

⁵⁸ William B. Gartner, " 'Who is an Entrepreneur?' is the Wrong Question," *American Journal of Small Business* 12, no. 4 (1988).

arts and cultural-centered organizations.⁵⁹ Additionally, I assert that such a definition is broad enough to encompass both the current NVC and SFT educational approaches: two approaches that in the absence of a theory (or theories) of arts entrepreneurship, may lead to the exclusion and/or dissuasion of diverse students from participating in arts entrepreneurship courses and programs.

Nevertheless, regardless of the approach one currently subscribes to (NVC, SFT, etc.), this discussion proposes that a theory of arts entrepreneurship can help educators avoid the “laundry list thinking” that is so often associated with the teaching of entrepreneurship skills, competencies and behaviors. For example, I think many educators in this nascent field would like nothing more than for their students to develop entrepreneurial skills, competencies and behaviors prior to graduation. What we don’t know is what would best serve the needs of students desiring to engage in arts entrepreneurship. Instead of being guided by personal assumptions, I consider it more advantageous for students engaging in the process of arts entrepreneurship (as defined) to be guided by a theory or theories of arts entrepreneurship.

⁵⁹ See *Standards for Arts Administration Graduate Program Curricula*, www.artsadministration.org/standards-graduate.

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