



## Journal of Business Venturing

Call for Papers for Special Issue and Developmental Symposium on

### **“Enterprise Before and Beyond Benefit: A Transdisciplinary Research Agenda for Prosocial Organizing”**

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The guest editors for this special issue in the *Journal of Business Venturing* invite papers for consideration for a linked developmental symposium and an issue on the theme of “Enterprise Before and Beyond Benefit: A Transdisciplinary Research Agenda for Prosocial Organizing”.

Entrepreneurship theories have disproportionately focused on new ventures as standalone entities, studying the internal elements, processes and dynamics that make some enterprises better – e.g. more profitable, more competitive, or more sustainable than their peers. This enterprise-focused perspective tells us a lot about the desirable outcomes of value creation, but much less about the possible downsides or even adverse consequences of entrepreneurship. When we move from an enterprise focused perspective to look more holistically at the expectations society has and holds for emerging categories of business (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015), we discern a broader but less clearly-defined picture: as a new generation of ventures, certifications, and endorsements promote forms of enterprise that are premised on doing good first and foremost, profitability may no longer be the ultimate goal (Rindova, Barry & Ketchen, 2009). Mechanisms ranging from care to compassion and prosocial organizing have recently been introduced to open up fresh windows for theorizing what enterprises can be and can do for society (Grimes, McMullen, Vogus & Miller, 2013; Shepherd, 2015). Shifting the viewpoint from the enterprise as an entity to the social (dis)functions of categories of

enterprises also reveals some hidden dynamics by which profit-seeking and rivalry may bring about undesirable social outcomes, from moral disengagement to deliberate wrongdoing in the name of private gain (Dean & McMullen, 2007).

The concept of benefit corporations and ensuing self-categorization of some enterprises as better and more responsible creates powerful contrast effects to the perceived harm and hurt that other entities or approaches may have caused. The new category of B-corps, and the legalization, legitimation and even institutionalization of ‘beyond profit’ for the next generation of enterprises also reveal a deeper theoretical cleavage between conceptualizations of entrepreneurship as socially-neutral and one-dimensional on one hand, to emerging alternatives that imbue entrepreneurship with a variety of meanings on the other. That may expose existing theories of entrepreneurship to the challenge of accommodating multiple, even conflicting, criteria within a single entity (McMullen & Warnick, forthcoming). Explicating how entrepreneurs recognize these tensions given their own values – and how they navigate the continually shifting line between good and bad in opportunity recognition and exploitation through new forms of organizing, new designs, new identity claims and new patterns of relationships (Battilana & Lee, 2014) – can further enrich opportunity-based views of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs who start from a premise of greater good instead of or along with private gain may experiment with different models of meaning creation for different audiences, with different models of engaging unusual stakeholders, and different metrics and motivations for the impact they seek to achieve. Understanding how underserved, even unprofitable, customers may fuel ingenuity, improvisation and innovation affords a richer interface between business and society where the notion of enterprise and the role of enterprises as agents of social change can become more fully specified (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Mair, Martí & Ventresca, 2012).

By asking how the emerging subgroup of for-benefit entrepreneurs organize against the status quo and pull away from the gravitational forces that have shaped our so-far value-neutral value creation theories and practices (Gehman, Trevino & Garud, 2013), we begin to reveal when, why and how ‘bad practices’ of traditional for-profit firms can become a wellspring for positive, radical and prosocial innovations and opportunities. This may involve important reversals in several disciplinary ‘holy grails’, for example:

- Accounting for the absolute and relative performance of for-benefit enterprises
- Investing in ways that accelerate and amplify positive social and environmental impact
- Thinking in novel ways about consumption and marketing
- Factoring in the mitigation of others’ negative impacts and/or the compensation of harm and hurt as new sources of value creation and differentiation
- Rethinking social needs as alternative origins of opportunity creation and discovery, whereas one’s ability to discern and respond to the grand challenges society faces catalyzes radical innovation and/or deliberately disrupts existing transactions and templates
- Taking into account how changes in laws and legislation create opportunities to prevent harm or promote good; and asking how entrepreneurs adopt and adapt to shifts in legal regimes

By asking how traditional entrepreneurs may re-categorize under the banner of different forms of social good, undergo new processes of prosocial legitimization, or add on multiple categories to signal positive intentions, we can begin to understand extraordinary forms of creativity, ingenuity and impact that move the frontiers of organizing far from the equilibrium of profitability and uncover new lenses of opportunity discovery, creation, and exploitation. In this special issue, we encourage papers that describe subtler forms of entrepreneurial organizing as part and parcel of value creation process

that are compatible with both traditional goals of growth and profitability and the greater good by inducing or deducing novel ways in which entrepreneurs:

- Integrate cognitive, behavioral, emotional and spiritual aspects to better align start-ups with society
- Question and update pre-existing categories, fold into emerging categories, or even invent brand new categories in ways that redefine the opportunity space and change the rules of the game
- Seek new ways to signal prosocial intentions and behaviors through a burgeoning array of voluntary external social audit (VESA) processes poised to differentiate, motivate and reduce search costs for a growing number of users ready to engage in a paradigmatic shift in consumption
- Overly challenge and complement forms of socially suboptimal organizing
- Orchestrate and regenerate bio-psycho-social resources within and beyond the enterprise

The study of the various means and ways that prosocial organizations come into existence is yet untapped and has the potential to provide answers to issues and questions that are transdisciplinary in nature. By inviting contributions on these questions, this special issue will develop new insights into subclasses of enterprises that are emerging and evolving in response to big issues and recognized shortcomings. Instead of simply asking what single enterprises can and should do, the special issue will inquire into what societal expectations and definitions of benefit mean for entrepreneurial organizing. To answer this question, we seek out perspectives from multiple disciplines, which will help systematically review new theories of accountability, consumption, and compassion, among others, and therefore contribute novel mechanisms that allow enterprises to lead the way in addressing some of the biggest societal challenges of our time.

Examples of research questions which would be suitable for the special issue include, but are not confined to, the following:

- What new theories of entrepreneurship emerge when we take the prosocial forms and functions of business more fully into account? How do existing theories of entrepreneurship change when we consider the full range of human needs as a wellspring of new models of value creation?
- When, why and how do prosocial forms of certification and/or categorization modify the processes of opportunity identification and exploitation? How do claims of benefit modify the dimensionality and evaluation of entrepreneurial opportunities? When and why might the explicit promotion of the greater good lead to opportunistic gains? How does accountability change when entrepreneurs make, and self-identify, with positive social claims and endorsements?
- How does the addition of prosocial motivations tilt or shift the impact trajectory of traditional entrepreneurs? How does the presence of benefit-motivated ventures alter and update one's reference group, and how do more pro-socially oriented peers entice incumbents to comparisons that may upgrade previous practices and models?
- How do entrepreneurs recognize and leverage the growing gap between profit-premised and purpose-premised models to respond to pressing issues? How may well-established theories such as entrepreneurial orientation and intentions be aligned or expanded by accounting for prosocial motivations and behaviors?

- What is the role of heroes and villains in stretching the opportunity space and stimulating new models and mechanisms of entrepreneurship? How do emerging enterprises learn from or emulate heroes and villains? When and what might heroes and villains learn from one another? How can the contrast effects become generative for new models of organizing?
- When and how might certification become a signal for third parties? What role do third parties play in capturing, conveying or converting social trends into signals that may help entrepreneurs discover new types of opportunities?
- How might changes in institutions driven by societal ills and needs call out new inhabitants and new forms of agency to redress harm? And how do these new types of inhabitants change existing institutions from the inside out?

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Gehman, J., Trevino, L., Garud, R. 2013. Values work: A process study of the emergence and performance of organizational values practices, *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1): 84-112.

Grimes, M., McMullen, J.S., Vogus, T., Miller, T. 2013. Studying the origins of social entrepreneurship: Compassion and the role of embedded agency, *Academy of Management Review*, Volume 38(3): 460-463.

Lawrence, T.B, Dover, G. 2015. Place and institutional work: Creating housing for the hard to house, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(3): 371-410.

Mair J., Martí I., Ventresca M. 2012. Building inclusive markets in rural Bangladesh: How intermediaries work institutional voids, *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(4): 819-850.

McMullen, J.S., Warnick, B. forthcoming. Should we require every new venture to be a hybrid organization? Exploring the limits of a world of blended value, *Journal of Management Studies*.

Rindova, V. Barry, D., Ketchen, D. Jr. 2009. Entrepreneurship as emancipation, *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3): 477-491.

Shepherd, D. 2015. Party on! A call for entrepreneurship research that is more interactive, activity based, cognitively hot, compassionate, and prosocial, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(4): 489-507.

## **Submission Guidelines**

The deadline for submissions to the special issue is December 1, 2016. The Guest Editors and a select panel of scholars will review each paper, selecting those to be presented at the Symposium, which will be held in spring 2017. Authors can expect a decision on their submission by January 2017. The symposium will provide developmental feedback to the selected papers which will help authors submit the version that will go to full peer review using the blind-review process of the JBV system, subject to the rigours and risks of any peer review process.

Further details about the Symposium will be made available to the authors of selected papers in December 2016.

Please follow the guidelines for authors of the *Journal of Business Venturing* at:

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