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Editorial

Party On! A call for entrepreneurship research that is more interactive, activity based, cognitively hot, compassionate, and prosocial[☆]

It is the *Journal of Business Venturing's* (*JBV*) 30th birthday. Although the community of entrepreneurship scholars deserves to celebrate *JBV's* achievements over the last 30 years (and congratulate the journal's parents—Ian Macmillan and S. Venkataraman), my focus is more on the future of entrepreneurship (and by extension *JBV*). A focus on entrepreneurship is both timeless and timely. On the one hand, entrepreneurship is timeless given the long-recognized importance of entrepreneurs to economies and societies (e.g., Jean Baptiste who supposedly coined the term in about 1800). On the other hand, a discussion of entrepreneurship is timely because now that the field of entrepreneurship has achieved legitimacy, it faces both opportunities and threats. It is thus timely to acknowledge the threats and think about opportunities to advance the field. A discussion of entrepreneurship is also timely because society faces a number of grand challenges (including the durability of poverty, environmental degradation [Dorado and Ventresca, 2013]), challenges well suited to entrepreneurial responses.

As a result, I firmly believe that the future of the field of entrepreneurship is bright but only if we continue to be entrepreneurial in our research. However, in many ways, remaining entrepreneurial in our research might be easier said than done. Our successes may be leading us to a competency trap (Levit and March, 1988) that rewards in the short run playing it safe by using “accepted” theories and approaches to address increasingly narrow research questions of interest to a smaller audience. This is not to say that this type of incremental research is not important to the field; it is a critical component. However, if incremental research begins to dominate and crowd out more transformational research, we run the very real risk that the field will stagnate and lose what is “special” about it—that is, lose that very real and widespread willingness to accept considerable novelty in questioning, theorizing, and testing to generate new and interesting insights.¹

As I think about the field of entrepreneurship's future, my purpose in this paper is not to replace Venkataraman's (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Venkataraman, 1997) or others' (e.g., Busenitz et al., 2003; Carlsson et al., 2013; Davidsson, 2003; Gartner, 1990; Wiklund et al., 2011) delineation of entrepreneurship's distinctive domain with my own but, rather, to highlight potential sources of vitality for its future. This vitality will likely continually change the boundaries of what is labeled as entrepreneurship.²

Although research opportunities remain somewhat uncertain and many potential avenues could be explored to fuel and maintain the vitality of the field of entrepreneurship, I propose that future contributions from entrepreneurial studies will come from viewing the entrepreneurial process as one of generating and refining potential opportunities through building, engaging, and transforming communities of inquiry; as one constituted by a pattern of activities that is dynamic, recursive, and immersed in entrepreneurial practice; as one in which the head engages the heart and the heart engages the head; and as one of motivations beyond solely those of financial goals. I believe that such an approach will increase our understanding of how entrepreneurial action will meet some of the grand challenges of our time and thereby make important contributions to the field of entrepreneurship.

First, there is an established body of research on entrepreneurial cognition that has focused on an individual's beliefs about whether a situation represents an opportunity (e.g., Autio et al., 2013; Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010; Gregoire, Barr and Shepherd, 2010;

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¹ I realize that some could make the case that we have too little incremental research (e.g., calls for more replication studies), but thinking about future entrepreneurship research, I am far more concerned with “exploitation” crowding out “exploration” (consistent with March [1991]) than I am of the reverse.

² Therefore, as researchers perhaps, we should be less concerned with whether our current entrepreneurial work fits within published domain statements of the field because the field of entrepreneurship has likely already “moved,” and our current research might have the opportunity to make a contribution by further shifting its boundaries (in retrospect).

Gregoire et al., 2010; Gruber et al., 2013; Keh et al., 2002; McMullen and Shepherd, 2006; Tang et al., 2012). Based on its cognitive psychology underpinnings, it is not surprising that most of this research focuses on individuals' attributes (Baron and Ensley, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2002; Shane, 2000; Shepherd and DeTienne, 2005) or their cognitive processes (Bryant, 2007; Busenitz and Barney, 1997; Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010; Gregoire et al., 2010) to explain how individuals notice, interpret, and/or evaluate potential opportunities. To complement this body of research and extend our understanding of entrepreneurial phenomena, future entrepreneurship can further explore a more interactive perspective of the entrepreneurial process: how a community of inquiry contributes to the refinement of a potential opportunity and changes in the entrepreneur's mind, how potential opportunities transform a community of inquiry, and the mutual adjustment between the entrepreneur's mind and the community through an evolving potential opportunity.

Second, research has substantially increased our understanding of the outcomes (Bornstein, 2004; Dean and McMullen, 2007; Foss et al., 2007; Roberts and Woods, 2005) and the antecedents of entrepreneurial action (Krueger, 2007; McMullen and Shepherd, 2006; Meek et al., 2010; Mitchell and Shepherd, 2010). Complementing this research on entrepreneurial action, scholars will make important contributions by investigating the many activities underlying a single entrepreneurial action. Specifically, following the lead of research on nascent entrepreneurship that focuses less on *the single act* of exploiting an opportunity and more on the *series of activities* involved in the emergence of a new firm (Delmar and Shane, 2004; Gartner, 1985; Lichtenstein et al., 2007), future research can focus on *activity* as the key unit of analysis. This research will help break down entrepreneurial action into its constituent activities and explore the inter-relationships between activities, the inter-relationship between an activity (or sequence of activities) and the motivation to form an opportunity belief, and the inter-relationship between an activity (or sequence of activities) and the knowledge to form an opportunity belief. In doing so, such research will begin to build a theory of the micro-foundations of entrepreneurial action.

Third, we have a good understanding of the role of cognition in performing tasks central to the entrepreneurial process, such as identifying (e.g., Ardichvili et al., 2003; Corbett, 2005; Gregoire et al., 2010), evaluating (e.g., Haynie et al., 2009; Keh et al., 2002), and acting (e.g., Autio et al., 2013; Hmieleski and Baron, 2008; McMullen and Shepherd, 2006) on potential opportunities. Furthermore, we are beginning to gain a deeper understanding of the role of emotion in an entrepreneur's cognitive processing of information for important tasks (e.g., Baron, 2008; Foo et al., 2009; Shepherd, 2003; Welpe et al., 2012). By building on the notion of hot cognition—for example, that emotions influence cognitive processing in the entrepreneurial context (Cardon et al., 2012)—future research has the opportunity to make an important contribution by exploring the opposite relationship—namely, investigating the role of entrepreneurial activity in generating emotions (both positive and negative) primarily through engaging in challenging entrepreneurial tasks. Based on (or in conjunction with) such research, future research will begin to explore the reciprocal relationship between cognitions and emotions as individuals engage in challenging entrepreneurial tasks over time.

Finally, recent developments in the field of entrepreneurship have come from scholars exploring outcomes of entrepreneurial actions that benefit others—for example, research on social entrepreneurship (e.g., Dacin et al., 2011; Dees, 1998; Mair and Marti, 2006; McMullen, 2011; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006), environmental entrepreneurship (e.g., Dean and McMullen, 2007; Meek et al., 2010; York and Venkataraman, 2010), and sustainable development (e.g., Hall et al., 2010; Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011). Substantial contributions to these streams of research are likely to come from research that builds on and extends the compassion organizing (e.g., Dutton, 2003; Dutton et al., 2006; George, 2013; Kanov et al., 2004; Lilius et al., 2008) and prosocial motivation (e.g., Batson, 1998; De Dreu, 2006; Grant, 2007, 2008; Grant and Berry, 2011; Grant and Sumanth, 2009) literatures by exploring the unique role of entrepreneurial actions and their underlying activities. That is, entrepreneurship scholars are well positioned to explore how suffering can be alleviated when individuals go beyond relying on the normal routines of well-established organizations by creating new routines within established organizations or by creating new organizations, how suffering can be alleviated in non-organizational members, and how actors in resource devastated environments can still create new ventures to alleviate others' suffering. Over and above (or in conjunction with) exploring individuals' capabilities to act entrepreneurially to alleviate others' suffering, future research will likely make important contributions by building on and extending the notion of prosocial motivation to entrepreneurs' compassionate venturing and the enhancement of the entrepreneur's well-being.

In the sections that follow, I develop each of these sources of continued vitality in more detail. However, it is important to note that they are not the only potential sources of vitality going forward. I focus on these four sources as a basis for future research for four main reasons. (1) These four potential sources are *not inconsistent* with the extant literature, which allows us to build on what has gone before but, at the same time, helps us overcome (or sidestep) current and future obstacles to existing streams of research. (2) Regardless of the definition of the field, the notions of opportunity and the actions of individuals are invariably central in entrepreneurship research discussions. The focus of this paper is consistent with these fundamentals. (3) Each perspective is grounded in rich scholarship from another field (e.g., theories, methods, statistical techniques, and so on), which enables us—through combination, recombination, and creativity—to (hopefully) extend both the entrepreneurship field and the “other” fields. (4) We know that the nature of potential opportunities is related to an individual's (or an organization's) prior knowledge, and the same principle applies to me when I think about future research opportunities. Although these themes required me to step outside my comfort zone, they are still very much related to my idiosyncratic knowledge of the psychology of entrepreneurship. There are many great research opportunities within and outside these topics.

A more interactive perspective of entrepreneurial opportunity

The dominant cognitive psychology perspective

Although there is an ongoing debate about the nature and definition of opportunities (e.g., Davidsson, 2003; Dimov, 2011; Gartner et al., 2003; McMullen et al., 2007; Short et al., 2010), it is commonly acknowledged that opportunities are uncertain *ex ante* (Knight, 1921) and can only be determined *post hoc*. Accordingly, recent research on entrepreneurial opportunities has largely focused on an

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