

Call for Papers

Thematic Symposium of the *Journal of Business Ethics*

THE PROMISE OF THE NEW SOCIOLOGY OF MORALITY

FOR BUSINESS ETHICS RESEARCH

Submission Deadline: September 1st, 2019

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Introduction to the Thematic Symposium

While morality was once at the heart of the writings of the “founding fathers” of sociology (Durkheim 1973, 1982; Weber 2002), it was largely abandoned by the subsequent generations of sociologists. The last few years, however, have witnessed a renaissance in the sociology of morality (Abend, 2010; Bykov, in press; Shadnam, 2015). During this period, scholars across the wide spectrum of the discipline of sociology revisited the question of morality. The renewed interest in the sociology of morality—and in moral phenomena, more broadly—has gained momentum, in part, following the publication of the first anthology devoted to the topic, *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality* (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2010), and the establishment of a section in the American Sociological Association (ASA) labeled, Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity. The scholarship emanating from the new sociology of morality has brought forth unique perspectives through which to conceptualize the complex dynamics of moral phenomena; in the process, they have identified, documented, and theorized the variation of morality under different conditions, its dynamics over time, and its politics in relation to the material and the social (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013; Lukes, 2010; McCaffree, 2016).

Since its very inception, the new sociology of morality has contributed to studies of morality in various contexts, including business organizations. Accordingly, sociological writings have investigated corporate morals (Anteby, 2013; Anteby & Anderson, 2017; Brophy, 2014) and examined the interplay between moral rules of conduct and the authority structures and bureaucratic ethos of organizations (Jackall, 1988, 2010; Shadnam, 2014; Shadnam and Lawrence, 2011; Shamir, 2008). There are also several sociological studies that have shown markets are inherently moral projects (Fourcade and Healy, 2007, 2017; Zelizer, 1979, 1985) and examined the moral order underlying market valuations and evaluations (Anteby, 2010; Lamont, 2012; Quinn, 2008; Wherry, 2010). In the same vein, sociologists have uncovered the moral meanings and vocabularies that underpin our understanding of several business-related notions such as money (Harrington and Kemple, 2012; Wilkis, 2018; Zelizer, 1989), work (Blair-Loy, 2010; Sayer, 2011; Watson, 2012), consumption (Grauel, 2016; Pellandini-Simányi, 2016; Warde, 2015), advertising (Cohen and Dromi, 2018), and risk (Roth, 2010).

We believe that future business ethics research can be meaningfully enriched by many of the developments that have transpired within the new sociology of morality. To be sure, a small and disparate body of work in business ethics have, either explicitly or tacitly, benefited from insights of

the new sociology of morality. For instance, the new sociology of morality has illuminated how even our theorizing of moral questions pertaining to organizations and organizing is substantively informed by embodied experiences (Prasad, 2014; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014; Segarra and Prasad, in press). Likewise, recent studies published in this journal have engaged with timely questions that are at the crux of the new sociology of morality—such studies have, for example, accounted for the role of religion in either propagating or negating economic inequality (Bapuji and Chrispal, in press; Rauf and Prasad, in press). As researchers who are interested in moral phenomena in the context of organizational and professional life, we believe that business ethics can benefit from (and contribute to) this context-sensitive approach that is at the heart of the new sociology of morality. Considering the vast areas of common interests between sociologists and business ethics scholars (see the list of possible themes and topics below), there are numerous ways by which to bridge research on the new sociology of morality with myriad extant research agendas within the purview of business ethics.

In sum, business ethics research has always been a pluralistic domain where insights from multiple disciplines enrich one another (Brenkert and Beauchamp, 2010; Prasad and Mills, 2010). At this juncture, it seems timely for researchers of business ethics to take note of recent developments in the new sociology of morality. We suggest that making more explicit connections between the sociology of morality and business ethics would significantly advance both fields, as well as facilitate the ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue about the role of morality in organizational and social life.

Possible Themes and Topics

We welcome both theoretical and empirical papers that contribute to the further integration of the new sociology of morality into business ethics research. The list of possible themes and topics includes, though is not limited to, the following:

- Which theoretical models can be developed in order to advance our understanding of the moral and normative aspects of business organizations, especially given the contradiction between ethical norms and the logic of efficiency and profit maximization? What is the relation of business ethics studies to larger social theory? (Heckscher, 2009)
- Why some people are more inclined than others to make sense of business situations in moral terms? Why some organizational members are more inclined than others to act morally? Which factors explain this variability of individuals in organizations and markets? Where does the moral self/identity of individuals come from? (Stets and Carter, 2011, 2012)
- What distinguishes the morality of those who are required to do emotional labor and those who are not? How do the emotional experiences of people in different organizations or societies inform their moral understandings (Hitlin and Harkness, 2018)? What is the relationship between emotions and moral meanings and rules? (Harkness and Hitlin, 2014; Turner, 2010)
- When do processes of thinking, articulating, analyzing, and deliberating lead professionals toward making moral decisions and when do they drive them away from morality? How is organizational morality influenced by our discursive and practical consciousness (Vaisey, 2009, 2014)? What is the relationship between cognitive schemas and moral choices? (Boudon, 2010; Firat and MacPherson, 2010)
- How do business people maintain their morals and integrity in organizations or fields that push them in the opposite direction? How do workers resist the managerial pressures to act immorally? What strategies do people use to maintain their morals in an immoral social environment? (Barnard, 2016)
- What aspects of business ethics have remained out of sight because they have not been easy to investigate using our current research methods? Which aspects of morality in organizations, professions, and markets do not lend themselves to quantification and experiments? (Abend, 2011, 2013)
- How do morals in business workspaces appear, disappear, and change over time? How do the moral boundaries and definitions of trade and exchange change over time? (Alexander, 2002; Alexander and Smith, 2001; Shadnam, 2014)
- What explains corporate giving and philanthropy? Why some business owners or managers decide

- to give away their resources with expectations of little or uncertain return? (Bykov, 2017)
- What is the role of moral motivation in considering wide ecological consequences of organizational and business decision-making? (Bebbington and Gray, 1993; Lambert, 2000)

Submission Process and Deadline

Authors should refer to the Journal of Business Ethics website and follow the author instructions when submitting a paper. For more information see: <http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/applied+ethics/journal/10551>. Manuscripts should be submitted through the Editorial Manager at: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/busi/>. Upon submission, please indicate that your submission is to this Special Issue.

The submission deadline is September 1st, 2019.

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