***Journal of Business Venturing***

Call for Papers for a Special Issue on

**“Applying Experimental Methods to Advance Entrepreneurship Research”**

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The guest editors for this special issue in the *Journal of Business Venturing* invite papers for consideration for a special issue on the topic of “Applying Experimental Methods to Advance Entrepreneurship Research.”

Methodologists consider experimental designs as the “most rigorous of all research designs” and the “gold standard against which all other designs are judged” (Trochim, 2001: 191). The reasons for this are simple. Experiments provide a powerful lens for determining causality, thus allowing for rigorous tests of theory that specify cause-effect relationships (Colquitt, 2008). Experiments also allow insight into phenomena that are inherently noisy and thus difficult to study in the field. Yet, by using experimental research designs, entrepreneurship scholars have uncovered important insights thereby helping to disentangle complex relationships that cannot be easily teased out with other methods (e.g., Chan & Park, 2015; Lerner, 2016; Vandor & Franke, 2016).

Despite the significant benefits of experimental methodologies for developing and testing important theory for the field of entrepreneurship, however, there remains a relative paucity of entrepreneurship research published in premier journals using experimental methods. Aguinis and Lawal (2012), for instance, report experimental methods are the most infrequently used methodology in published articles in the *Journal of Business Venturing*.[[1]](#footnote-1) While there has been an increase in the number of articles in *JBV* utilizing experimental methods since Aguinis and Lawal’s (2012) review, compared to other methodologies employed, experimental research remains astonishingly rare.

The comparative rarity of experimental methods in entrepreneurship research suggests that researchers are either not using experimental methods, or their experimental studies are not surviving the review process to publication. In both cases, the potential barriers to realize the promise of experimental methods remain the same: discerning effective ways of dealing with the challenges and drawbacks of experimental methods. Researchers either shy away from the sometimes daunting task of conducting and publishing experiments, or reviewers are not convinced that the experiments meet the standard of rigor required to appear in these journals.

Designing and implementing high quality experiments is not an easy task. Experiments tend to trade external validity for internal validity, thus raising questions about the generalizability of their findings to the broader population and circumstances of interest (Cook, Campbell, & Day, 1979). Moreover, experiments may create artificial situations that raise concerns about their realism (Colquitt, 2008). Finally, without careful attention to many details during the design phase, experimental results can be biased by demand characteristics (Orne, 1962), order effects, social desirability biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), and unsuccessful randomization (Bruhn & Mckenzie, 2009). Although solutions exist for all of these challenges, the required efforts may make experimental research appear “a mountain too high to climb” for scholars that have not previously used such methods. Moreover, the same concerns noted above will task authors to mitigate and balance the drawbacks inherent in experimental research.

In that vein, the spirit of this special issue is to advance entrepreneurship research by applying experimental methods. Doing so, we aim to offer insights on best practices in experimental research and highlight exemplars at the intersection of entrepreneurship and experimental research. Following *JBV’*s general mission as a multi-disciplinary, multi-functional, and multi-contextual journal, we aim at presenting exemplary research from a diversity of experimental research traditions, which include among others marketing, psychology, and experimental economics. Independent of the methodological tradition, we expect a tight and well-argued link to the entrepreneurial phenomenon. To guide future research, we expect that accepted manuscripts develop a very reflective stance towards the employed methods’ strengths and weaknesses, either as part of their method or discussion sections.

We also note that the experimental method should be central to both the empirical and the related theoretical contribution. That is, we encourage authors considering a submission to evaluate if the experimental method serves the identification of a theoretically-relevant causal effect. Furthermore, we do not explicitly discourage quasi-experiments including natural field experiments, but we will put a high emphasis on how such studies approach the confounding variable problem to enable a causal interpretation of findings.

In sum and within the mentioned limitations, we purposefully cast a wide net. Examples of research topics that would be suitable for the special issue include, but are not limited to, the following:

* manuscripts across a diversity of types of experiments (e.g., eliciting beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors)
* manuscripts using a wide array of manipulations (e.g., vignettes, videos, or web-sites)
* manuscripts employing experimental manipulation at different levels (e.g., individual- or group-level variables or institutions)
* manuscripts employing different designs (e.g., laboratory, conjoint, choice, or field experiments)
* manuscripts making methodological contributions (e.g., novel approaches that resolve relevant challenges to conducting experiments in entrepreneurship)
* manuscripts reviewing the state-of-the-art in experimental research in entrepreneurship

**Submission Guidelines**

Manuscripts will be expected to make important theoretical contributions in addition to any methodological or practical contributions.

Full manuscripts must be submitted by **May 1, 2017**.

Please submit papers online at <https://www.evise.com/profile/#/JBV/login> and follow the submission guidelines for the *Journal of Business Venturing* at: <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/journal-of-business-venturing/0883-9026/guide-for-authors>

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1. Aguinis and Lawal (2012) coded 175 articles published in *JBV* from January 2005 through November 2010. Only 1.7% used experimental designs. An additional 4.6% of articles used quasi-experimental designs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)