

ADVANCES IN
CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

RESEARCH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONS

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- Volume 47: The Structuring of Work in Organizations
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- Volume 48B: How Institutions Matter!
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- Volume 50: Emergence
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- Volume 53: Structure, Content and Meaning of Organizational Networks: Extending Network Thinking
- Volume 54A: Multimodality, Meaning, and Institutions
- Volume 54B: Multimodality, Meaning, and Institutions
- Volume 55: Social Movements, Stakeholders and Non-market Strategy
- Volume 56: Social Movements, Stakeholders and Non-market Strategy
- Volume 57: Toward Permeable Boundaries of Organizations?
- Volume 58: Agents, Actors, Actorhood: Institutional Perspectives on the Nature of Agency, Action, and Authority
- Volume 59: The Production of Managerial Knowledge and Organizational Theory: New Approaches to Writing, Producing and Consuming Theory
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- Volume 65B: Microfoundations of Institutions
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- Volume 67: Tensions and Paradoxes in Temporary Organizing

- Volume 68: Macrofoundations: Exploring the Institutionally Situated Nature of Activity
- Volume 69: Organizational Hybridity: Perspectives, Processes, Promises
- Volume 70: On Practice and Institution: Theorizing the Interface
- Volume 71: On Practice and Institution: New Empirical Directions
- Volume 72: Organizational Imaginaries: Tempering Capitalism and Tending to Communities Through Cooperatives and Collectivist Democracy
- Volume 73A: Interdisciplinary Dialogues on Organizational Paradox: Learning from Belief and Science
- Volume 73B: Interdisciplinary Dialogues on Organizational Paradox: Investigating Social Structures and Human Expression
- Volume 74: Worlds of Rankings
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RESEARCH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF
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ADVANCES IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Foreword: Research in the Sociology of Organizations</i>	<i>xxi</i>

INTRODUCTION

Two Advances in Cultural Entrepreneurship Research <i>Christi Lockwood and Jean-François Soublière</i>	3
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A. PUTTING CULTURE IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Change-maker and Culture-bearer: Entrepreneurs as Evangelists and Shepherds of Culture <i>Felipe G. Massa</i>	17
Giving Voice to Persuasion: Embodiment, the Voice and Cultural Entrepreneurship <i>Jean Clarke and Mark P. Healey</i>	37
Giving Sense to <i>De Novo</i> Market Categories: Analogies and Metaphors in the Early Emergence of Quantum Computing <i>Oona Hilkamo and Nina Granqvist</i>	57
Toward a More Cultural Understanding of Entrepreneurship <i>Daniel Hjorth</i>	81
Cultural Entrepreneurship: Theorizing the Dark Sides <i>Joel Gehman and Tyler Wry</i>	97

B. TAKING CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEYOND *ENTREPRENEURSHIP*

The Perfume of Traditions: Cultural Entrepreneurship and the Resurrection of Extinct Societal Traditions <i>Francesca Bacco and Elena Dalpiaz</i>	113
From Surgeries to Startups: The Impact of Cultural Holes on Entrepreneurship in the Medical Profession <i>W. Chad Carlos and Shon R. Hiatt</i>	137
Too Much, Too Soon: A Framework for Understanding Unintended Consequences of Cultural Entrepreneurship on Market Emergence <i>Jade Y. Lo and Eunice Y. Rhee</i>	157
Shaping Cultural Meanings in Markets with Category Strategy and Optimal Distinctiveness: An Agency-based Perspective <i>J. Cameron Verhaal and Elizabeth G. Pontikes</i>	179
An Audience-based Theory of Firms' Purposefulness <i>Rodolphe Durand and Paul Gouvard</i>	193
Mapping the Multiverse: A Cultural Cartographic Approach to Realizing Entrepreneurial Possibilities <i>Timothy R. Hannigan, Yunjung Pak and P. Devereaux Jennings</i>	217
CONCLUSION	
Two Decades of the Theory of Cultural Entrepreneurship: Reflection, Elaboration, and Reflection <i>Mary Ann Glynn and Michael Lounsbury</i>	241

LIST OF FIGURES

A. PUTTING *CULTURE* IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Change-maker and Culture-bearer: Entrepreneurs as Evangelists and Shepherds of Culture

- Fig. 1. A Process of Culture-bearer Development 20
- Fig. 2. Strategic Approaches: Trade-offs between Evangelism and Shepherding 26

Giving Voice to Persuasion: Embodiment, the Voice and Cultural Entrepreneurship

- Fig. 1. Effects of Entrepreneurial Voice on Audience Judgements and Behaviors 41

Giving Sense to *De Novo* Market Categories: Analogies and Metaphors in the Early Emergence of Quantum Computing

- Fig. 1. A Scientist Working on a Quantum Processor 70
- Fig. 2. Quantum Computing as the Future 71
- Fig. 3. Explaining Spin to Those Who Do Not Understand It 72
- Fig. 4. Illustration for the Article Beyond the Quantum Horizon 74

B. TAKING CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEYOND *ENTREPRENEURSHIP*

The Perfume of Traditions: Cultural Entrepreneurship and the Resurrection of Extinct Societal Traditions

- Fig. 1. A Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship Through the Resurrection of Extinct Societal Traditions 129

From Surgeries to Startups: The Impact of Cultural Holes on Entrepreneurship in the Medical Profession

- Fig. 1. Number of ASCs in Operation in the United States from 1970 to 2008 140
- Fig. 2. Geographic Distribution of ASCs in the United States as of 2008 140

Too Much, Too Soon: A Framework for Understanding Unintended Consequences of Cultural Entrepreneurship on Market Emergence

- Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework 171

Shaping Cultural Meanings in Markets with Category Strategy and Optimal Distinctiveness: An Agency-based Perspective

Fig. 1. Schematic Depicting the Difference Between (a) Differentiated Positioning Within One Historical Market, and (b) Positioning Coupled with Category Strategy to Attempt to Define a Separate Market with Different Criteria for Evaluation. 186

An Audience-based Theory of Firms' Purposefulness

Fig. 1. Illustration of Different Configurations of Firms' Legitimacy and Purposefulness to Selected Audiences 200

Fig. 2. Model of the Antecedents of a Firm's Purposefulness to a Focal Audience 204

Fig. 3. Consequences of Purposefulness 205

Mapping the Multiverse: A Cultural Cartographic Approach to Realizing Entrepreneurial Possibilities

Fig. 1. A Cultural Approach to Entrepreneurial Field Mapping 222

Fig. 2. A Multiverse Map of Possibilities in Four ICO Fields 227

LIST OF TABLES

A. PUTTING *CULTURE* IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Giving Sense to *De Novo* Market Categories: Analogies and Metaphors in the Early Emergence of Quantum Computing

Table 1. Data and Materials	63
Table 2. Example of Textual Data Analysis	65
Table 3. Examples of Naturalizing Analogies	68
Table 4. Examples of Temporal Analogies and Metaphors	69
Table 5. Mystifying Analogies and Metaphors	71

Cultural Entrepreneurship: Theorizing the Dark Sides

Table 1. Cultural Entrepreneurship: Examples of Positive Outcomes and Spillovers	99
Table 2. A Framework for Exploring the Dark Sides of Cultural Entrepreneurship	101

B. TAKING CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEYOND *ENTREPRENEURSHIP*

The Perfume of Traditions: Cultural Entrepreneurship and the Resurrection of Extinct Societal Traditions

Table 1. Key Differences between Established, Declining, and Extinct Traditions as Resources for Cultural Entrepreneurship	116
Table 2. Overview of the Data Used in the Study	121
Table 3. Timeline of Key Events During TMV's Development (2012–2020)	122

From Surgeries to Startups: The Impact of Cultural Holes on Entrepreneurship in the Medical Profession

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for All Variables	150
Table 2. Negative Binomial Models of ASC Foundings (State Fixed-effects)	151

Too Much, Too Soon: A Framework for Understanding Unintended Consequences of Cultural Entrepreneurship on Market Emergence

Table 1. Entrepreneurial Frames and Framing Strategies	164
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Shaping Cultural Meanings in Markets with Category Strategy and Optimal Distinctiveness: An Agency-based Perspective	
Table 1. Emphasis on Key Theoretical Dimensions Across Research Streams	182
An Audience-based Theory of Firms' Purposefulness	
Table 1. Distinction between Legitimacy and Purposefulness	200
Table 2. Measurement Strategies for Common Issue Prioritization, Common Understanding of Issues and Purposefulness Using NLP Techniques	209

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FOREWORD: RESEARCH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONS

Research in the Sociology of Organizations (RSO) publishes cutting edge empirical research and theoretical papers that seek to enhance our understanding of organizations and organizing as pervasive and fundamental aspects of society and economy. We seek provocative papers that push the frontiers of current conversations, that help to revive old ones, or that incubate and develop new perspectives. Given its successes in this regard, *RSO* has become an impactful and indispensable fount of knowledge for scholars interested in organizational phenomena and theories. *RSO* is indexed and ranks highly in Scopus/SCImago as well as in the Academic Journal Guide published by the Chartered Association of Business schools.

As one of the most vibrant areas in the social sciences, the sociology of organizations engages a plurality of empirical and theoretical approaches to enhance our understanding of the varied imperatives and challenges that these organizations and their organizers face. Of course, there is a diversity of formal and informal organizations – from for-profit entities to non-profits, state and public agencies, social enterprises, communal forms of organizing, non-governmental associations, trade associations, publicly traded, family owned and managed, private firms – the list goes on! Organizations, moreover, can vary dramatically in size from small entrepreneurial ventures to large multi-national conglomerates to international governing bodies such as the United Nations.

Empirical topics addressed by *RSO* include: the formation, survival, and growth of organizations; collaboration and competition between organizations; the accumulation and management of resources and legitimacy; and how organizations or organizing efforts cope with a multitude of internal and external challenges and pressures. Particular interest is growing in the complexities of contemporary organizations as they cope with changing social expectations and as they seek to address societal problems related to corporate social responsibility, inequality, corruption and wrongdoing, and the challenge of new technologies. As a result, levels of analysis reach from the individual, to the organization, industry, community and field, and even the nation-state or world society. Much research is multi-level and embraces both qualitative and quantitative forms of data.

Diverse theory is employed or constructed to enhance our understanding of these topics. While anchored in the discipline of sociology and the field of management, *RSO* also welcomes theoretical engagement that draws on other disciplinary conversations – such as those in political science or economics, as well as work from diverse philosophical traditions. *RSO* scholarship has helped

push forward a plethora theoretical conversations on institutions and institutional change, networks, practice, culture, power, inequality, social movements, categories, routines, organization design and change, configurational dynamics, and many other topics.

Each volume of *RSO* tends to be thematically focused on a particular empirical phenomenon (e.g., creative industries, multinational corporations, and entrepreneurship) or theoretical conversation (e.g., institutional logics, actors and agency, and microfoundations). The series publishes papers by junior as well as leading international scholars, and embraces diversity on all dimensions. If you are scholar interested in organizations or organizing, I hope you find *RSO* to be an invaluable resource as you develop your work.

Professor Michael Lounsbury
Series Editor, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*
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INTRODUCTION

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TWO ADVANCES IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

Christi Lockwood and Jean-François Soublière

ABSTRACT

Cultural entrepreneurship research is on the rise, with a growing community of scholars paying attention to the cultural processes and outcomes involved in entrepreneurship, strategic innovation, and change. To further develop this community, in this volume we assemble a collection of contributions showcasing two promising advances. In Section A, a first set of papers puts culture in cultural entrepreneurship by highlighting a multi-faceted view of culture and exposing new ways by which culture shapes and is shaped by entrepreneurial action. In Section B, another set of papers takes cultural entrepreneurship beyond entrepreneurship – that is, the prevalent yet narrow focus on new venture legitimation and resource acquisition – by broadening the scope of what cultural entrepreneurship entails and explains. In this introductory paper, we discuss how contributions within each section move the conversation forward and identify cross-cutting themes that can be found in both sections of this volume.

Keywords: Cultural entrepreneurship; culture; entrepreneurship; strategic innovation; legitimacy; meaning-making

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship, strategic innovation, and organizational change are fundamentally cultural undertakings. Although commercial and technological concerns clearly matter (Bower & Christensen, 1995; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), research emphasizing such aspects tends to either narrowly view actors as rational,

self-interested maximizers (Lounsbury, Gehman, & Glynn, 2019), or to overlook the context in which entrepreneurial action takes place and its broader potential for social, institutional, and cultural change (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009). In contrast, a growing community of scholars emphasizes the centrality of cultural dynamics to entrepreneurial processes and outcomes (for reviews, see David, Sine, & Kaehr Serra, 2017; Fisher, 2020; Gehman & Soublière, 2017; Jennings, Greenwood, Lounsbury, & Suddaby, 2013; Lounsbury, Cornelissen, Granqvist, & Grodal, 2018; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019; Überbacher, 2014). United under the “cultural entrepreneurship” label, research in this vein has revealed how entrepreneurial actors harness elements from their cultural milieu to curry the favor of valued audiences and secure their support (Fisher, Kotha, & Lahiri, 2016; Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007; Tracey, Dalpiaz, & Phillips, 2018; Zhao, Ishihara, & Lounsbury, 2013; Zott & Huy, 2007), or undertake broader changes to foster a cultural environment supportive of their endeavors (Grodal, 2018; Hedberg & Lounsbury, 2021; Khaire & Wadhwani, 2010; Navis & Glynn, 2010; Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003; Wry, Lounsbury, & Glynn, 2011).

To nurture and develop this community, this volume aims to expand the agenda of cultural entrepreneurship research by celebrating (and advocating for) two promising advances. Section A aims to squarely put *culture* in cultural entrepreneurship research. In their landmark paper, Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) identified storytelling as a first mechanism by which actors could mobilize culture to make their endeavors amenable to critical audiences, such as resource providers. Although their argument implied a broader set of possible mechanisms, they remained relatively silent on the other modes by which culture operates, and cultural entrepreneurship research became closely associated with the act of telling stories (e.g., Garud, Schildt, & Lant, 2014; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009). More recently, however, scholars have grown interested in understanding additional manifestations of culture and modes of meaning-making, including emotional resonance, materiality, and temporality. Scholars have also made strides toward leveraging a plurality of methodological approaches, such as historical, set-theoretic, and experimental studies, and novel data sources including images and objects, rituals, online interactions, and big data. Recognizing that culture is a “code of many colors” (Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch, 1983, p. 331; see also Giorgi, Lockwood, & Glynn, 2015), we have compiled conceptual and methodological manuscripts that explore the multiple views on culture, and ways by which culture shapes and is shaped by entrepreneurial action.

Section B seeks to take cultural entrepreneurship beyond *entrepreneurship* or its more traditional outcomes. Although early research has made great strides toward enriching our understanding of the cultural and meaning-making processes that pervade entrepreneurial action, the “cultural entrepreneurship” label has been predominantly confined to – and sometimes equated with – the study of new venture legitimation and resource acquisition (Gehman & Soublière, 2017; Überbacher, 2014). Illustrating an appetite for broadening the scope of what cultural entrepreneurship entails and can explain, more recent work has begun to apply a cultural lens to entrepreneurial action in a wide variety of empirical

settings, ranging from cool-climate winemaking (Massa, Helms, Voronov, & Wang, 2017) to multi-centenary Japanese *shinise* (Sasaki, Ravasi, & Micelotta, 2019) to the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter (Soublière & Gehman, 2020). Scholars have also recently illuminated how entrepreneurial actors effect a swath of meaningful outcomes, such as status attainment (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016; Giorgi & Weber, 2015), reputation (Deephouse, 2000; Rao, 1994), celebrity (Rindova, Pollock, & Hayward, 2006), and authenticity (Demetry, 2019; Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005). Thus, we bring together theoretical and empirical investigations that move research in new directions, looking beyond early-stage legitimation and toward additional outcomes of consequence.

This volume assembles 12 contributions from 23 leading and emerging scholars across the globe. We have organized these contributions along the two sections comprising this volume, which we used to both harness the diversity of perspectives and facilitate exchanges that promise to advance cultural entrepreneurship research. As an epilogue, Glynn and Lounsbury (2022), whose landmark ideas propelled this stream of research, reflect on the impact of their work and on future directions that this volume opens. Below, we provide an overview of the individual contributions within each section, and discuss cross-cutting themes that emerged in both sections.

SECTION A: PUTTING CULTURE IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The first aim for this volume is to advocate for a more nuanced understanding of culture in cultural entrepreneurship, while recognizing the variety of theoretical perspectives and research traditions on the matter. The papers compiled in this section acknowledge but also look beyond linguistic manifestations of culture; they account for a fuller cultural “repertoire” (e.g., Swidler, 1986, 2001) that entrepreneurial actors put to work, and for the range of means by which they skillfully mobilize and enrich their repertoires. This section begins with two papers theorizing how culture is emotionally and physically experienced, then proceeds with a qualitative study that highlights the many ways by which culture enables organizations to construct and chart new entrepreneurial possibilities, and concludes with two provocative essays aiming to expand our understanding of culture and its effects.

Massa (2022) offers a conceptual paper that presents culture as an engine for both stability and change. Accounting for this duality, Massa theorizes how cultural entrepreneurs may simultaneously act as change-makers and culture-bearers, that is, as the advocates of new ways of doing things as well as guardians of established meanings and practices. He investigates the inherent tensions that actors face when they seek to promote new endeavors, while also safeguarding endeavors from undesired external influences. He argues that identity and emotion explain the “visceral commitment” that actors may develop for certain meanings and practices, and considers the various strategies by which actors manage this tension. Rather than viewing cultural “toolkits” as a set of resources that

actors instrumentally deploy, Massa offers a more humanistic take by considering how actors experience their culture and what it means to them.

In their conceptual paper, [Clarke and Healey \(2022\)](#) highlight the embodied dimensions of culture by considering cultural entrepreneurs' voice, focusing not on what actors say but on how they say it. The authors consider how important yet understudied aspects, such as the tone, volume, and rhythm of speech, also affect audiences' assessments, especially in entrepreneurial pitch settings. They zoom in on how the voice conveys gender and emotion, and how these signals tend to be filtered through stereotypes and other cultural expectations. They cast voice as both a malleable cultural resource and a limiting constraint that interacts with other resources to persuade (or dissuade) audiences of the merits of entrepreneurial endeavors. Distilling the vast literature on voice, which often takes a socio-psychological angle, Clarke and Healey sketch out a research program tailored for cultural entrepreneurship scholars.

In a qualitative study, [Hilkamo and Granqvist \(2022\)](#) attend to the visual dimension of culture, examining how actors use visual discourse as a resource for constructing meaning in the emerging category of quantum computing. They show how cultural entrepreneurs use analogies and metaphors, both linguistically and visually, to convey highly technical and complex ideas to a generalist audience. Hilkamo and Granqvist show how the multi-modality of culture enables actors to convey the future potential of a complex and poorly understood emergent technological category. Counterintuitively, they reveal how these efforts not only naturalize but also "mystify" quantum computing, enabling cultural entrepreneurs to gain acceptance and arouse curiosity and wonder among audiences while also preserving their power as the technical authority in their domain.

Returning to early work on culture, and particularly its linguistic foundations, [Hjorth \(2022\)](#) turns the lens on researchers, critiquing our quest for cumulative knowledge building and highlighting instead the merits of heterogeneity and incompleteness. Advocating for more cultural studies of cultural entrepreneurship, Hjorth encourages scholars to do greater justice to the rich and varied contexts in which entrepreneurial action is embedded. Advocating for more entrepreneurial studies, Hjorth encourages scholars to emulate entrepreneurs in their theorizing, and to challenge established conventions. He asks, if cultural entrepreneurship scholars recognize that culture is rich and varied, shouldn't these variations also be found in their ideas and concepts?

Finally, in their essay, [Gehman and Wry \(2022\)](#) unpack the potential "dark sides" of cultural entrepreneurship by drawing on many colorful illustrations. The authors examine how organizations, as they carve out space for their innovations and new products, may create false promises or enable harmful practices. In turn, such false promises and harmful practices may have pernicious effects on the organization and its direct stakeholders, or indirectly spill over to others. The authors open new avenues for future research by linking work on cultural entrepreneurship with work on corruption and wrongdoing and on authenticity. Their paper offers a provocative counterpoint to scholarship that tends to emphasize its merits and positive outcomes.

In sum, the papers in Section A of this volume put *culture* at the forefront of cultural entrepreneurship research by considering the multi-faceted nature of culture – that is, the material, visual, physical, emotional, and temporal, as well as linguistic modes of meaning making – and by taking seriously the idea that culture both shapes and results from entrepreneurial action (Gehman & Soublière, 2017; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). They highlight how entrepreneurs, broadly defined, must (and do) become “skilled cultural operators” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001, p. 549) to realize desired outcomes, whether they aim for commercial success, challenge the status quo, or seek to safeguard meaningful practices. Thus, the papers in Section A also anticipate some of the themes reflected in Section B, discussed next, in which authors look beyond entrepreneurship to expand the scope of what cultural entrepreneurship explains.

SECTION B: TAKING CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEYOND *ENTREPRENEURSHIP*

The second aim for this volume is to take cultural entrepreneurship beyond a relatively narrow focus on acts of *entrepreneurship* per se. The authors we convened in this section consider how cultural entrepreneurship extends past organizational nascence to play a role in other phases of evolution, in contexts outside of the traditional entrepreneurial realm, and in the service of novel outcomes. This section begins with two empirical studies taking place in unconventional settings and showcasing the recursive relationship between individual market outcomes and broader cultural dynamics. The section proceeds with two conceptual papers that highlight the collective dimension of cultural entrepreneurship and that the success (and failure) of any new idea or product should be considered in relation to what others are doing. It concludes with two other conceptual papers that each advances a new construct and expands our methodological toolset.

In their qualitative study of a cultural revival, Bacco and Dalpiaz (2022) show how commercial success is closely intertwined with the realization of community-level outcomes. The authors investigate how The Merchant of Venice, a new venture founded in 2012, leveraged the long-forgotten Venetian perfume-making tradition of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries to create new entrepreneurial opportunities. The authors show how the extinct tradition of perfume-making was revived and used in new product development, tying those products to a collective identification with a shared past and to a potent sense of place and community pride that favorably positioned the new venture to audiences. This also enhanced place identity in Venice and created positive value for the city, where those traditions were initially developed.

Carlos and Hiatt (2022) consider how “cultural holes,” that is, the space between institutional fields, enable the discovery and adoption of alternative values, practices, and understandings, which may then fuel entrepreneurial action. They highlight how cultural entrepreneurship is concerned not only with gaining audience acceptance and support, but also with adhering to, and sometimes challenging, professional and geographical norms. Using an empirical study of

physician entrepreneurship in establishing ambulatory surgery centers – that is, freestanding centers owned and operated by physicians that offer outpatient surgeries independent of a hospital – the authors offer evidence that cultural holes shape doctors’ propensities to become entrepreneurs. Their findings help to shed light on why, in some cases, entrepreneurial opportunities with considerable financial promise may fail to gain acceptance among entrepreneurs themselves and ultimately may be left on the table.

In a conceptual paper, [Lo and Rhee \(2022\)](#) focus on the “boom and bust” trajectory of many innovations and nascent industries and consider some of the unintended consequences of cultural entrepreneurship on market emergence. They theorize how entrepreneurial framing activities that can initially help to legitimate an innovation, attracting a diverse set of stakeholders with high expectations of a new venture, can later inhibit further market development by making it challenging to maintain resonance with them. The dynamic conceptual framework the authors advance directs attention to some of the downsides of cultural entrepreneurship processes and challenges a view of legitimation as a positive and stable outcome of such efforts.

In another conceptual paper, [Verhaal and Pontikes \(2022\)](#) consider how cultural entrepreneurship enables wide-reaching market transformation, whereby novel cultural schemas become the default in market categories. The authors theorize how market actors not only adopt a position within an established market category but also contribute to shaping the category they enter to their own advantage. By drawing new links between work on optimal distinctiveness and category strategy, Verhaal and Pontikes offer insights into how cultural entrepreneurs simultaneously fit in their category and stand out from other category members, and, in so doing, shape the underlying meaning of the classification system in which they are embedded.

[Durand and Gouvard \(2022\)](#) link cultural entrepreneurship with purposefulness, that is, the extent to which an audience perceives a firm as addressing issues that are both important and impactful. The authors propose that perceptions of positive purposefulness increase audiences’ likelihood of devoting resources to support the firm, implying how cultural entrepreneurship processes can influence such perceptions, and not just those related to legitimacy, and they offer methodological suggestions for further inquiry to this end. In so doing, the authors lay the groundwork for examining additional outcomes of cultural entrepreneurship and for linking work in this vein with research on topics such as corporate social responsibility, meaningful work, stakeholder theory, and more.

[Hannigan, Pak, and Jennings \(2022\)](#) round out Section B with a methodologically oriented paper that supports a view of entrepreneurship that extends beyond new venture creation to encompass the creation of a range of opportunities and possibilities. The authors advance a “cultural cartographic” approach to identifying and following lines of possibility that entrepreneurs pursue in real time. Their approach relies on rendering map-like artifacts which make visible the cultural world and the possible courses of action one might follow, revealing several field events that could evolve from a single entrepreneurial moment. In this way, Hannigan, Pak, and Jennings’ approach accounts for the multiplicity of