Call for Papers for a Special Issue

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Leadership and the Creation of CSR

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Special Issue Journal of Business Ethics (JOBE)

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Deadlines

Submission Deadline for Papers: April 30, 2016

Topic of the Special Issue

Over the past decades the main topic of scholarly research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) focused upon the empirical relationships between corporate social performance and corporate financial performance and the theories deployed to explain them (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Morgeson, Aguinis, Waldman and Siegel, 2013). Despite the merits created by this line of research, we think it ignores important insights in the dynamics underlying value creation based on CSR. This special issue focuses on how leaders create CSR and why leadership is essential to the theory practice of CSR.

CSR is based on taking responsibility for systemic problems in society like global warming, the depletion of natural resources, tensions due to social inequality and the limits of gaining access to sufficient levels of food, water and energy for a growing world population (Matten and Crane, 2005). Upfront, there is no guarantee that these collective interests are nicely backed up by benefits on a corporate level. Even more so, we often tend to forget that traditional economic reasoning can result in what Gareth Hardin called the Tragedy of the Commons. The tragedy of the commons stands for the dilemma in which multiple individuals acting independently in their own self-interest can ultimately destroy a shared limited resource even when it is clear that it is not in anyone's long term
interest for this to happen (Hardin, 1968). CSR is about addressing social dilemmas, that is to say “situations in which a non-cooperative course of action is (at times) tempting for each individual in that it yields superior (often short-term) outcomes for self, and if all pursue this non-cooperative course of action, all are (often in the longer-term) worse off than if all had cooperated” (Van Lange et al, 2013). The fact that public goods can be distinguished in continuous and step-level public goods might affect the effectiveness of particular solutions (Van Lange et al, 2014, p. 126). Besides that public good dilemmas can be distinguished from commons dilemmas. Public goods dilemmas require individuals to make an active contribution to establish or maintain a collective good. Commons dilemmas require individuals to make sacrifices to preserve a common resource. They often run together, but there are psychological differences (Van Dijk and Wilke, 1995).

Which factors influence cooperation in social dilemmas as CSR? Many studies have attempted to identify means of solving social dilemmas. The structural solutions, representing collective action aimed at altering for example the decision-making authority (e.g., by electing a leader) are generally viewed as more promising (Parks, Joireman and Van Lange, 2013). In this special issue we will focus on leadership. The starting point for this special issue is that the business case of Corporate Social Responsibility is often not there, but can be created (Nijhof and Jeurissen, 2010). This requires leadership of individual and collective actors in order to overcome obstacles and develop shared value together with stakeholders involved. Therefore the role of leadership needs to be integrated in any theory explaining how CSR can contribute to creating value.

This focus on linking CSR to leadership is supported by two systematic reviews of the CSR literature. First, the study of Aguinis and Glavas (2012) on what we do and don’t know about CSR, states that there seems to be a lack of understanding of the underlying mechanisms linking CSR with outcomes—namely, mediation effects (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). Leadership seems to be an essential answer if we want to explore these mediation effects and include them in theories on CSR. Second, the study of Christensen, Mackey and Whetten (2014) combines scholarship on individual traits, behaviors and shared leadership as antecedents to corporate social (ir)responsibility activities. They argue that ‘existing organizational and economics-based theories do not readily explain why firms continue to engage in CSR activities’ (Christensen et al., 2014, p. 165). We need to include the concept of leadership in theories on CSR by exploring leader impacts on all stakeholders involved. Although some studies have examined the role of leadership in CSR (e.g., Pless, Maak and Waldman, 2012; Waldman, Siegel, and Javidan, 2006), these studies have generally not considered the role of leadership in CSR beyond that of the CEO. In fact, Waldman et al. (2006) specifically call for more research on the role of leadership in setting and implementing CSR policies at different levels within an organization. We agree with Waldman and colleagues (2006) that such a multilevel focus “could help provide a richer understanding of linkages between leadership and CSR across levels of an organization” (p. 1721).

Hence, the editors of this special issue believe that research on the interlinkages between leadership and CSR has the potential to make an important contribution to the literature both in appraising the current state of research on leadership and CSR and in providing a platform for the future development of the field.

Papers
We therefore invite contributions to a special issue of the Journal of Business Ethics (JOBE) comprising original papers on the interlinkages between leadership and CSR. Our interest is first of all in empirical papers that explore and test the theoretical assumptions provided in the multi-disciplinary articles of Aguinis and Glavas (2012) and Christensen et al. (2014). Additionally, we also welcome articles that address the calls for research on leadership and CSR highlighted by Morgeson et al. (2013, p. 820). We encourage submissions that include multiple theoretical perspectives, new methodologies and data sources (including case study analysis). Furthermore, we welcome conceptual papers that extend well beyond literature reviews by offering interpretation, evaluation, and challenges to existing areas of research on the interlinkages between CSR and leadership. For both type of papers we are looking for good theory as described by Sutton and Staw (1995, p. 374): “data describe which empirical patterns were observed and theory explains why empirical patterns were observed or are expected to be observed”.

Based on recent calls for research on the linkages between leadership and CSR (e.g., Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Christensen et al., 2014; Morgeson et al., 2013), we encourage submissions that focus on the following topics (please note that this list of topics is not exhaustive):

- The characteristics (e.g., personality, attitudes, higher order skills) of responsible leaders
- Leader motivation for engaging in CSR activities
- Role of top management team leadership in setting up and implementing CSR practices
- Role of lower level leadership (e.g., division or work unit level) in CSR implementation
- Influence of employee perceptions of supervisory attitudes and behaviors (e.g., commitment to ethics) on CSR outcomes
- Influence of employee perceptions of corporate leadership on CSR outcomes
- The circumstances under which leadership is related to corporate social irresponsibility
- The influence of (group) contexts on ‘CSR-leadership’.

**Details of Paper Content, Length, and Due Date**

The deadline for full paper submissions is April 30, 2016.

Submission to the special issue is required through Editorial Manager at http://www.editorialmanager.com/busi/

Please follow JOBE guideline for manuscript presentation: http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/applied+ethics/journal/10551

**Further Information**

For questions regarding the content of this special issue, please contact the guest editors:

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References


