

Measuring Societal Impact in Business & Management Research: From Challenges to Change

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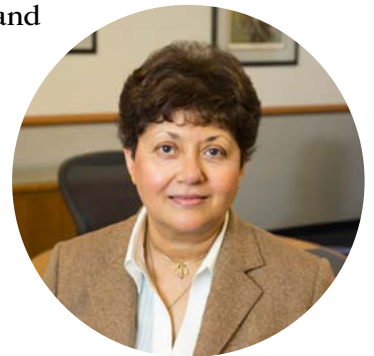
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WHITE PAPER

 **Sage**

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“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

— *Albert Einstein*

Introduction

This **Sage Business** White Paper focusses on issues relating to existing bibliometrics and institutional reward structures at play within business schools. We aim to move the dial towards ways in which societal impact could become central to the assessment of business and management research. Our paper follows lively discussion, encouraging feedback and fertile follow-up questions from a recent **webinar** of the same title featuring some of the above names. This webinar took place within the context of the *Financial Times*' (FT) "**slow hackathon**" and a recent **contribution** to the Sage-published **Business & Society** journal regarding the FT's business school rankings. The White Paper also follows a recent Sage-sponsored AACSB research report, 'Research That Matters: An Action Plan for Creating Business School Research That Positively Impacts Society' but focusses more specifically on the challenges relating to how we *measure* societal impact within business research and what a more responsible research environment might look like within the business school ecosystem. The White Paper includes contributions by two Sage journal editors, Renate Meyer of **Organization Studies**, and Maura Scott of **Journal of Public Policy & Marketing**; a sobering snapshot of research social metrics within business schools compared to other areas of the university by Altmetric; and, some suggestions for post-pandemic business and management research directions in relation to health and well-being from Sir Cary Cooper.

Usha Haley and Andrew Jack

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How Might Societal Impact be Recognized within an FT Top 50 Journal?



Renate E. Meyer

Academic journals are the fora where scholars present, dispute, validate or discard scientific knowledge. It is my strong belief that scientifically rigorous research is – and has to remain – academia’s core currency and that we cannot relax the criteria of what counts as scientific insight without undermining science’s credibility and the very foundation of our expertise. Is this in opposition to the demand that research ought to be societally impactful? Certainly not, but it sets clear limits to what academic journals and their editors can do.

Societal impact refers to the lasting effects that our research has on the achievement of societal goals, such as equality, sustainability, or less poverty. Impact is not equal to sitting on advisory boards, counseling politicians, or being present in the media. These may be means to bring our insights closer to decision-makers and raise the potential of being impactful, but they are not impact themselves. Why am I emphasizing this? First, with regard to recognizing and measuring impact, we are replacing citation counting with counting exactly such roles or mentions and this warrants caution. Second, we have a pro-impact bias and assume impact is per se beneficial. However, research may also have negative or undesirable societal impact, and we must not lose sight of counterproductive effects.

What can journal editors do to better recognize societal impact? We can encourage, develop, disseminate, and acknowledge research that has the potential to unfold positive impact.

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Make impact count in the entire research project

Top-tier academic journals can and should encourage researchers to have the societal impact their research may have in mind throughout the entire research process and not only after completion. In addition to impact awareness, this will have positive ethical implications more generally. It is essential that we do not merely emphasize impact in the ‘aims’ section on journal websites, but actually implement it in editorial decisions, and ask our reviewers to comment on potential societal impact in addition to scientific rigor and conceptual contribution. Obviously, a formulaic “societal implications” section at the end of an article will not do the trick. Journals can also steer towards societal impact with Special Issues, recognize and showcase articles, either through Editors’ choices, journal awards, but also by supporting broader initiatives like ***Responsible Research for Business and Management (RRBM)*** or ***The HIBAR Research Alliance*** (HRA).

Allow journal articles to be only one format among many

Journals need to professionalize their dissemination efforts. Top-quality journals with rigorous review processes are the

prerequisite infrastructure for solid academic knowledge, and it is up to peers to assess academic quality. However, publishing the good work in our journals is not enough. It is also our obligation to facilitate that this work reaches audiences beyond academia. Messages need to be customized and one article can obviously not serve all audiences. Here we need to learn and to improve. Journals currently experiment with novel formats within or outside their pages to publish insights faster than the standard review process allows and collaborate with practitioner-oriented outlets to translate insights for non-specialists.

This sounds simple, but there are several hurdles: It is yet to be seen if we actually reach other audiences and if they join the conversation; the incentive system at universities where societal impact has made it into missions statements, but not yet into tenure procedures; copyright issues together with our concerns with self-plagiarism and the request for novelty – what if core insights have already been published in a blog?; and, finally, the competition and short-termism among journals driven by the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) index and other rankings. Instead, journals need to team up and collaborate with long view thinking in mind.

Professionalize documentation of impact activities

Societal impact, especially in the social sciences, is extremely difficult to pin down. It unfolds in a non-linear way and causality can hardly ever be attributed to a specific publication. It often materializes long after the research. Societal impact is a collective achievement (researchers, lecturers, advisors, etc. contribute) and often requires the researchers to stay in the background. Decision-makers get inspired, but do not mention their sources unless they need them for legitimation purposes. Hence, focusing on individual publications or researchers necessarily falls short. To summarize, when assessing societal impact, we are faced with a non-linearity, a temporality and a visibility (or better: vanity) challenge.

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For journal editors, knowing the societal impact of the research they publish would be invaluable feedback. But even assessing the efforts undertaken requires documenting a variety of activities that editors have little intel on and authors and universities rarely systematically collect. Collectively (and journal editors are only one party in this), we need to agree on what is to count and how to document it, in the same way as we have learned to document data and analytical steps, and next institutionalize practices for impact assessment akin to the peer review process that assesses scientific quality. And most importantly, we need to make sure we remain

aware that what all these activities do is increase the potential of societal impact. If we mistake the proxy for the thing itself, we turn means into ends and eventually incentivize appearance rather than impact.

From a journal editor's perspective, top journals play a central role in recognizing societal impact of research. It is in their hands to ensure that scientific advancement and societal impact remain scholarly objectives that can be pursued without a trade-off. In all genuine modesty, a societal impact agenda will not be possible without us.

Renate E. Meyer is Professor and Chair of Organization Studies, Co-Director of the Research Institute for Urban Management & Governance, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, part-time Professor, Copenhagen Business School, and Joint Editor-in-Chief of the FT Top 50 journal, ***Organization Studies***.

Existing measurement metrics & concerns

Usba Haley and Andrew Jack

Recent surveys of business school academics by the **Academy of Management (AOM)**, Sage and *Times Higher Education (THE)* indicate the prevalent metrics that business schools use to evaluate research.

In a pioneering survey of its membership (Haley et al., 2017), the AOM asked its worldwide membership for their views on what constituted scholarly impact. With about 20,000 members worldwide, the AOM forms the preeminent scholarly association in management, publishing some of the most-reputed academic journals. For details on the survey, breakdowns as well as similarities across geographic regions, see Haley (2021). We began through open-ended, in-depth interviews with 30 members identified by the AOM's Board of Governors as highly impactful (e.g., journal editors, AOM Presidents, and Fellows). The subsequent membership survey had a response rate of 19% (700 respondents). Despite their ubiquity as measures of scholarly impact, the majority of respondents (60%) indicated that journal rankings and lists, including Impact Factors, probably or definitely did not or might or might not reflect scholarly impact. Conversely, the top five indicators of scholarly impact were: Scholarly articles in top-tier journals, scholarly citations to research, scholarly books, competitive research grants, and articles in practitioner-oriented/industry publications.



Though more difficult to publish, about 59% of the respondents viewed interdisciplinary research as probably more or definitely more impactful than research that draws on one discipline [...]
94% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that ultimately the goal of their research is to make a positive impact on society.

Indicating the historical focus on internal audiences for academic research, respondents to the AOM survey saw the top five research audiences as: Other academics in management, top management and decision-makers in companies, government and policymakers, other academics in the social sciences, and students. On the influence of the field, generally, the AOM's membership thought that management research had been somewhat influential, but the greatest influence had been on other management academics including what they currently research and will research and teach. Yet, about 54% of the survey's respondents considered impact on practice as either strongly or intensely important. Similarly, about 46% of survey respondents considered impact on government policy as either strongly or intensely important. Though more difficult to publish, about 59% of the respondents viewed interdisciplinary research as probably more or definitely more impactful than research that draws on one discipline. Respondents of the AOM survey overwhelmingly saw institutional support as very strong for publications in top-tier journals, with other activities receiving far less, if any, support. Only a minority (38%) noted that their own institutions supported research with external impact.

Similarly, a global survey undertaken by Sage in 2021 of social science academics (the first author was involved in drafting this survey and analyzing results), found that of the 373 global respondents in business and management (most from the USA, UK and India), 81% said that it was either important or highly important that their research have value outside academics, and 62.3% stated that their peers felt the same way about their own research. Ninety-four percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that ultimately the goal of their research is to make a positive impact on society. Yet, when asked if their institutions rewarded these efforts to apply research outside academia, only about a third thought they did so. Only 36% said that having external impact mattered for tenure, 34% said for awards, 32% said for funding further research, and, 30% for other research resources. Thirty-one percent of the respondents said their institutions provided no rewards or acknowledgements for having external impact through their research. Unsurprisingly, 63% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that ultimately the goal of their research is career advancement. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents stated that publishing their research in a highly cited journal with a high impact factor was either important or very important. See Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4.

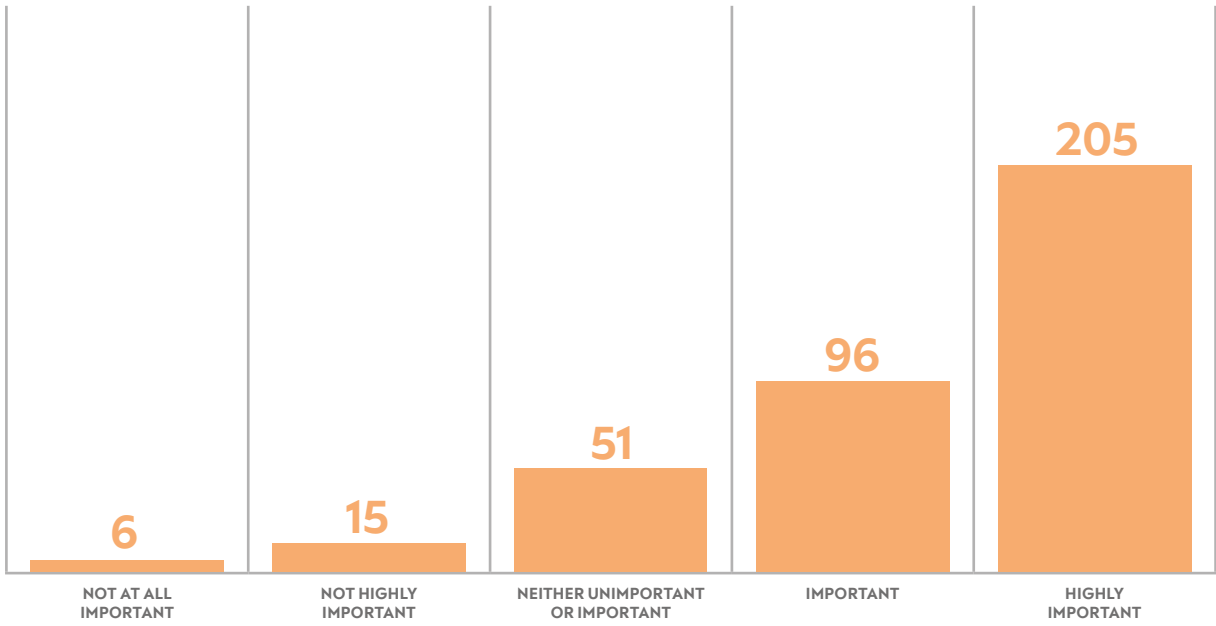


FIGURE 1. Importance to me of my research having an effect outside academics (n=373 business academics)

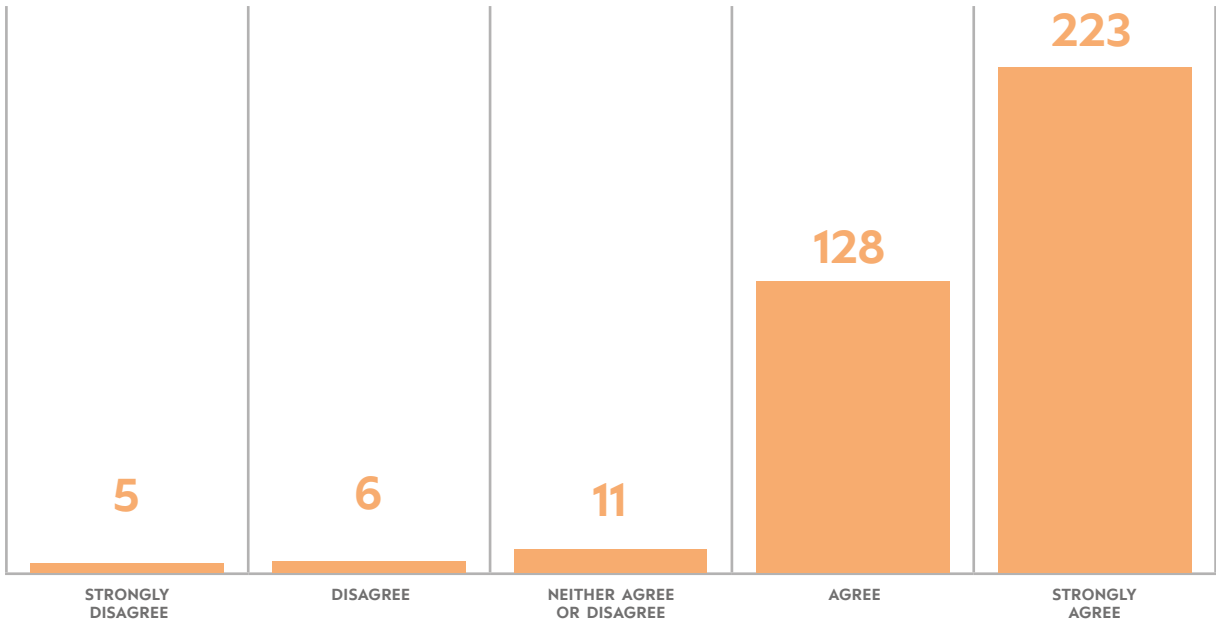


FIGURE 2. Ultimately the goal of my research is to make a positive impact on society (n=373 business academics)

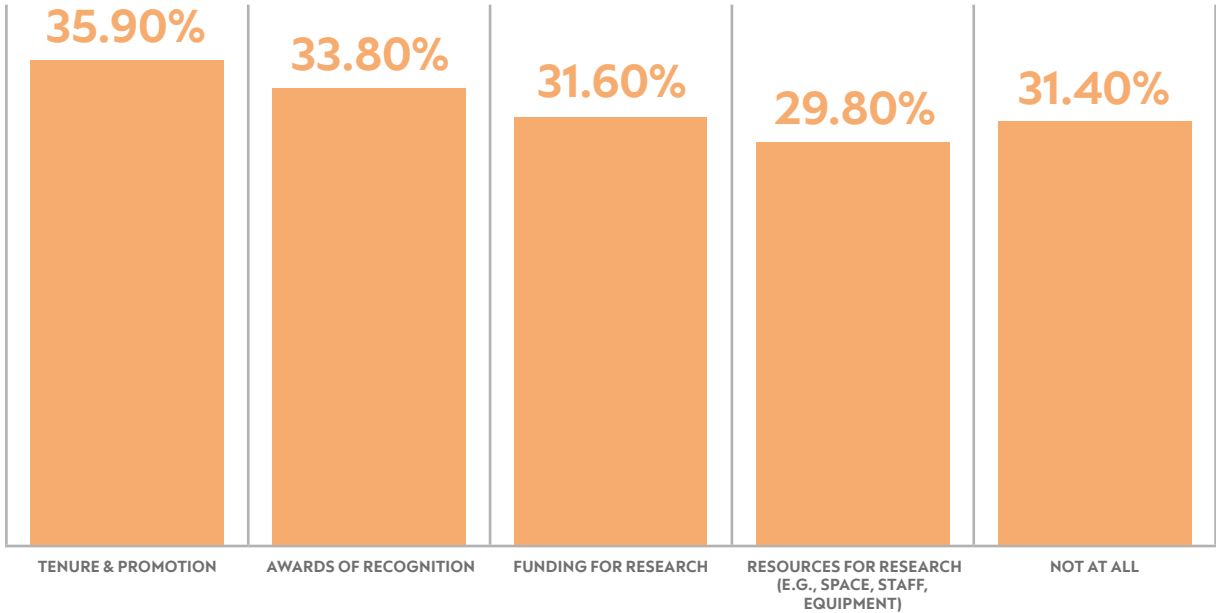


FIGURE 3. How my institution rewards efforts to apply research outside academia (n=373 business academics)

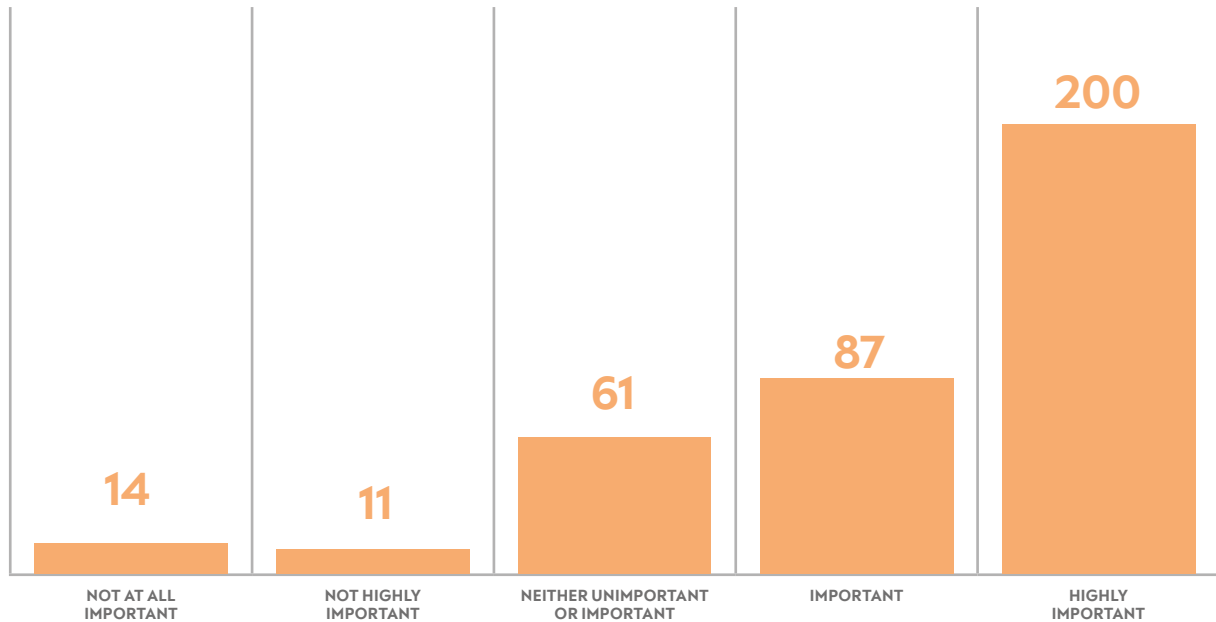


FIGURE 4. Importance of research getting published in highly cited journals/journals with high impact factors (as measured by Journal Citation Reports) (n=373 academics)

A *THE* survey of 9609 respondent (Grove, 2022) found similar results. Aside from personal interactions with the researchers, the perceived quality of the journals where the researchers published their findings constituted the most influential factor when forming opinions of academic standing according to 49% of the respondents. Citation metrics, though, had lower support. Only 24% said a scholar's h-index and other similar measures had importance, and only 5% said they constituted the most crucial factor. These findings regarding citations could arise because of increasing awareness of gaming the system through self-citations, citations that speak negatively of the articles, forced citations by journal editors and reviewers, and citations made by researchers who haven't even read the articles (see Haley, 2021). Additionally, citation counts vary by source – for instance, those in Google Scholar differ from those in Clarivate.

Few measures have exerted greater influence than the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). Initially developed to help librarians to purchase journals, Clarivate's JIF has transmogrified into an evaluation of the quality of individual publications and of individual researchers. The measure has come under extensive scrutiny and criticism: as an inaccurate estimate of citations of any article within a specific journal, as easy to manipulate, and with no associations to objective measures of quality. Begun over a decade ago, the San Francisco ***Declaration on Research Assessment*** (DORA), critiques the use of the Impact Factor as a surrogate measure of quality for individual articles and researchers. DORA currently has 20,000 individual signatories and 2,600 institutions worldwide that support this declaration, including ***Sage Publications***. For academic critiques of the Impact Factor, see Haley (2021), and Sugimoto & Larivière (2018).

The AOM survey and *FT* awards (see Jack, 2022) have identified interdisciplinary research as more impactful than single discipline research as it incorporates diverse perspectives and experiences. Yet, interdisciplinary research is also more difficult to publish. Fini et al. (2022) argued that interdisciplinary researchers and research may threaten disciplines' and evaluators' distinctiveness and knowledge domains, and hence, evaluators may penalize them. High-performing, interdisciplinary researchers appeared to suffer the greatest penalties in small and distinctive academic discipline where evaluators appeared as representative members of their disciplines. Fini et al. (2022) argued that attempts to maintain social boundaries contributed to the relative lack of interdisciplinary research.

A Decades Long Journey of Marketing and Public Policy Research to Support the Greater Good



Maura L. Scott

Impactful scholarly business research can support positive social, economic, policy, and scientific goals. Now more than ever, as business professors, we must generate and disseminate knowledge that can help inform and promote business, as well as society's greater good. Although marketing is sometimes characterized as encouraging over-consumption, poor health, and indebtedness by persuading people to buy and consume things they do not want or need, marketing's scholarly tradition has an active segment of researchers rigorously advancing topics that promote society's greater good. This research has been impactful in uncovering consumers' journeys toward well-being, such as better health and financial stability, by collaborating with firms, agencies, and nonprofits, and informing policy (e.g., Scott, Hassler, & Martin, 2022). This approach can be applicable for other research communities as well.

Viswanathan et al. (2021) developed a novel model to address climate change and sustainability education among Tanzanian youth. Their hybrid academic-social initiative focused on a region in which local farming and access to water was hindered due to climate change. The team trained influencers on sustainability-related decision making, and how to disseminate their knowledge in their community.

There are several initiatives in the marketing and public policy community that use scholarship to support the greater good. One such movement, "**Transformative Consumer Research**" (TCR), is aligned with the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals** (UN SDGs). It supports research that benefits the welfare of those affected by consumption and marketing activities. The TCR community brings together scholars, practitioners, and consumer advocates to address social problems. A TCR guiding principle is that organizations working toward the best interests of society can build stronger long-term relationships with customers; that is, consumers will be more loyal to firms acting in consumers' (and society's) best interests.

TCR projects address specific social problems and strive for field-based data collection, and concrete, actionable policy and managerial implications. A recent TCR conference resulted in several high-impact articles in the **Journal of Public Policy & Marketing** (*JPP&M*) (Mende & Scott, 2021). For example, Viswanathan et al. (2021) developed a novel model to address climate change and sustainability education among Tanzanian youth. Their hybrid academic-social initiative focused on a region in which local farming and access to water was hindered due to climate change. The team trained influencers on sustainability-related decision making, and how to disseminate their knowledge in their community.

Marketing journals are similarly engaged in seeking impact by approaching societal challenges. For example, *JPP&M* emphasizes new frontiers at the intersection of business and marketing, public policy, as well as consumer and societal well-being. Over the decades, theories and methods in *JPP&M* have evolved, though the topics have often been closely aligned with the UN SDGs (Mende & Scott, 2021). For instance, a collaboration between marketing scholars and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition led to a series of field studies with banks that uncovered biased treatment toward Black (versus White) customers seeking loans. Insights from this ongoing body of work help to inform Consumer Financial Protection Bureau policies such as the section 1071 of the Dodd Frank Act (Bone et al., 2019), and ultimately helps to reduce inequalities (UN SDG #10). Over the years, *JPP&M* has devoted issues to impactful research on pressing

topics such as sustainable consumption, marketplace diversity and inclusion, and consumer privacy, among others (for a complete listing of *JPP&M* special issue topics, see Mende & Scott, 2021).

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, *JPP&M* was one of the first business journals to publish a series of commentaries that reflected the implications of COVID-19 through the lens of public policy and marketing (published online in May 2020; Scott et al., 2020). The series provided implications for managers and policy makers, as well as a future research agenda on topics such as coping with supply chain challenges, the impact of the pandemic on communities of color, and the psychological underpinnings of marketplace scarcity. This type of research, which involves academics working with governmental agencies or nonprofits can be scaled wide and deep in its application to new settings (Nardini et al., 2022).

The *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* and the marketing discipline have made positive advances toward increasing impact by addressing real-world problems that can help to improve society. As we look to the future, there still is much more work to do.

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Efforts to turn the tide

Usha Haley and Andrew Jack

Despite the survey results above, a perceptible shift against the “publish or perish” research culture is building. Increasingly, government officials, business leaders, academics, associations such as **Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM)**, and regulatory bodies have questioned the value and impact of academic publications (see Haley, 2021; Haley et al., 2022). Regulators and grant-bestowing organizations have similarly emphasized a social need for research that engages with broader audiences beyond academic confines (e.g., National Science Foundation’s broader impacts, and the UK’s Research Excellence Framework

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the major accreditation body for business schools worldwide, has distinguished between outputs and outcomes in accreditation standards: Outputs focus on numbers of intellectual contributions, while outcomes deal with the impact of those contributions.

impact case studies). The **Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)**, the major accreditation body for business schools worldwide, has distinguished between outputs and outcomes in accreditation standards: Outputs focus on numbers of intellectual contributions, while outcomes deal with the impact of those contributions. The AACSB has urged moving from outputs to outcomes (Bryant, 2021). In July 2022, more than 350 organizations from more than 40 countries signed a new concordat based on the 2015 Leiden Manifesto, which proposes research evaluations mainly on qualitative measures and the

abandonments of journal-based metrics. That agreement came nearly 10 years after the signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which sought to phase out the use of journal-based metrics in appointment and promotion decisions.

Researchers, business schools, and ranking agencies are simultaneously using diverse, though convergent, means to hack the status quo on the external impact of research. For example, the Chartered Association of Business Schools (2021) (CABS) in the UK encourages “Business Schools for Good” to highlight positive

impacts on society. Similarly, DORA's efforts to refocus research evaluations continue to gather momentum (see Todd, 2022). The British Academy of Management (BAM) has also contributed significantly to this emerging debate on business schools through reexamining concepts of purpose and how these institutions teach, grow and develop for social impact (see Drakeford, Haley, Jack, & Morsing, 2022).

The *FT*, which publishes a series of annual business school rankings, has been consulting on ways to give greater weight to societal impact in schools' teaching, operations and research functions – including through possible revisions to its FT50 list of leading academic journals. While rankings are often criticized, they are also influential and therefore have the potential to incentivize reforms. The *FT* has hosted a “slow hackathon” seeking to explore new models with academics, journal publishers, and providers of impact metrics.

However, seeking to identify and to operationalize such measures is not simple (Jack, 2021a). Judgements of “societal impact” remain subjective, researchers can take many years to achieve societal impact, and evaluators may have difficulties both attributing and tracking societal impact. As a response, the *FT* has launched a series of qualitative “responsible business education” awards, which use judges within academic and public and private-sector practitioners to recognize rigorous research with evidence of uptake in policy and practice. The *FT*'s and judges' efforts have identified some very strong examples – ranging from health to agricultural insurance and sustainability, and seek to identify longer term, quantifiable trends.

Recognizing that teaching provides one of the greatest and most immediate societal impacts of research, a related *FT* award also specifically seeks to identify and to reward strong examples in the teaching of sustainability. It has also sought with OpenSyllabus to compile a “**teaching power index**” (Jack, 2021b) that tracks the use in different university courses of business-school textbooks, papers and other outputs, to map which institutions are contributing the most.

Despite such efforts to identify and to reward external impact, only a handful of business academics have influenced governmental policy through their research or have had their research covered in the media, major indicators of outreach and impact (see Haley, 2021). A Google normative search of top Management journals showed that external stakeholders' interest in these Management journals had slipped by about 90% over the last two decades (*ibid*). Indeed, Tourish (2020) points out that management scholars increasingly write for themselves: scholars appear to publish primarily to further their careers rather than knowledge, neglect critical issues for bite-sized chunks of easily publishable research, and resort to pretentious prose for illusory theory development. According to the *THE* survey, about half of the institutions used the quality of the journals in which research is published to judge the success of research collaborations. Only about a third said that tangible impact of the research beyond academia provided the yardstick for success.

Why do Business Schools not Publish More Impactful Research?



Ben McLeish and Mike Taylor, Altmetric / Digital Science

Business schools publish their research in journals or books which are often paywalled, or deal with abstract-sounding subjects, and therefore struggle to gain traction within the news, social media or blogs. Their academic citations score lower than the “hot button” areas like climate, health or the more austere but exciting parts of high energy physics. The overall volume of research outputs for business schools is also lower and more niche, and less multi- or interdisciplinary than a large (or even medium-sized) multi-faculty academic institution.

And yet the important work that business schools do needs to be evaluated and quantified on equal terms with the juggernauts of academia. So, we have run some numbers on the collective research outputs of 50 business schools to compare them with the papers in related business and management categories from generalist or multidisciplinary universities.

We looked at publication volume and resulting academic citations, mentions within certain online platforms, such as news and blogs, social media and Wikipedia, and we looked at how mean citations behave within particular research categories such as banking, marketing or finance between specialized institutions and generalist ones. The results present a mixed picture, but with some takeaways for business schools, as well as some clear wins for the more focused institutions.

Firstly, let’s look at the raw numbers; as expected, smaller, specialized institutions have the lower footprint we would have expected. Figure 5 shown below compares the cumulative papers in the Field of Research category of Economics per year across the world, with generalist institutions publishing about one third more than the business schools. Note that the data have been categorized by Machine Learning, so we can find a paper in economics even if it was published in a megajournal (which by definition does not have overriding categories itself), or was published in the “wrong” journal (i.e. one where the main subjects would not represent the categories of the article). So this graph is not reliant on publications making an appearance in the “correct” journal – meaning our data have a better chance of being representative of the pool of items that are actually in the area of economics, rather than simply items solely from journals that self-identify as “economics”, which would accidentally exclude items from unexpected sources.

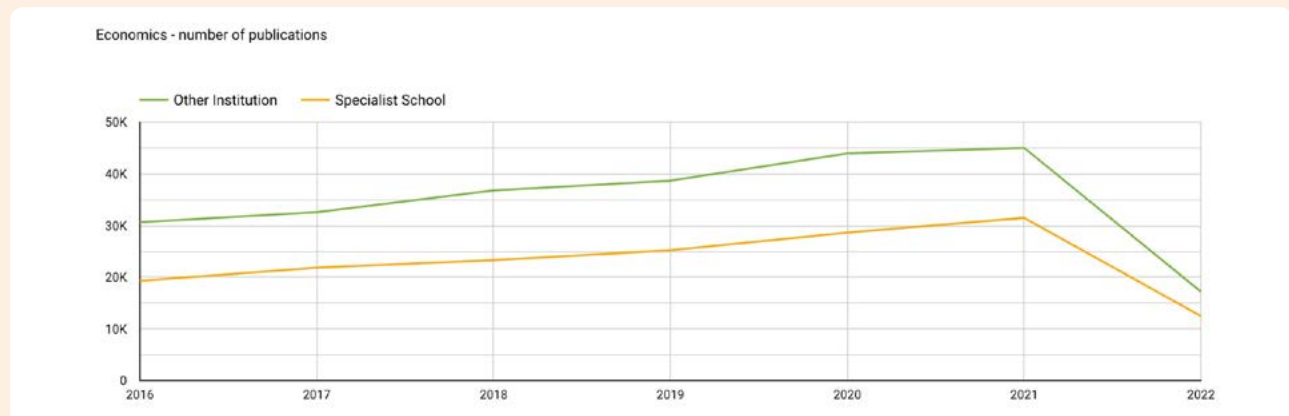


FIGURE 5: Number of papers in Economics, generalist institutions versus business schools.

The general trend is similar between these two pools of economics publications. The volume generally climbs, but the parallel remains roughly equal across the years. We repeated this with publications in “Business and Commerce” items as well, in Figure 6 below.

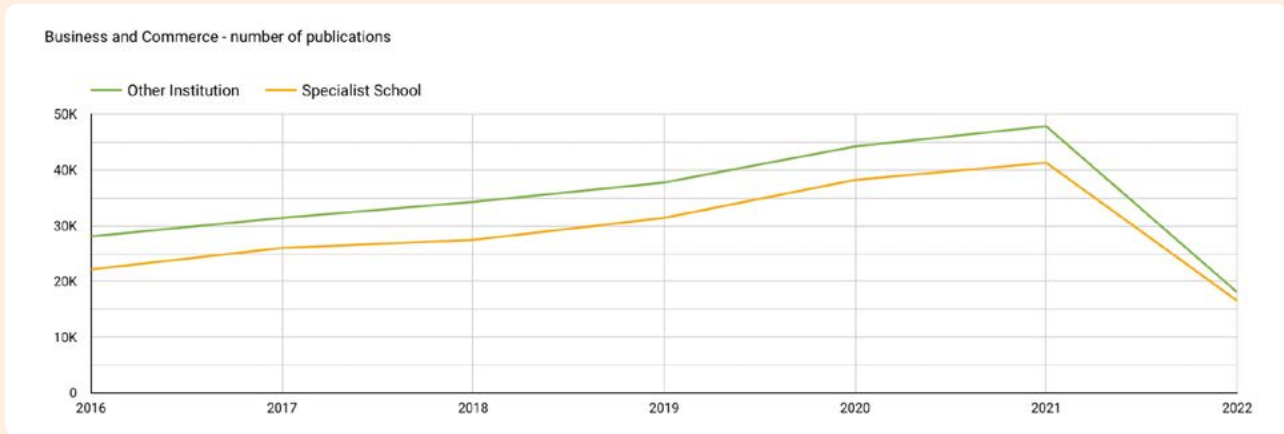


FIGURE 6: Business and Commerce publications in specialist institutions versus generalist institutions

The gap in outputs is notably smaller here and output trends are almost identical again - but with specialist institutions on the lower end of the spectrum. Interesting, but perhaps expected - from a sheer volume perspective, the 2020 pandemic had no noticeable effect, either positive or negative, on the volume of economics or business themed publications. The story is not so one-dimensional if we look first at mean citations to these two pools of items, and then at the way online attention aggregates around publications.

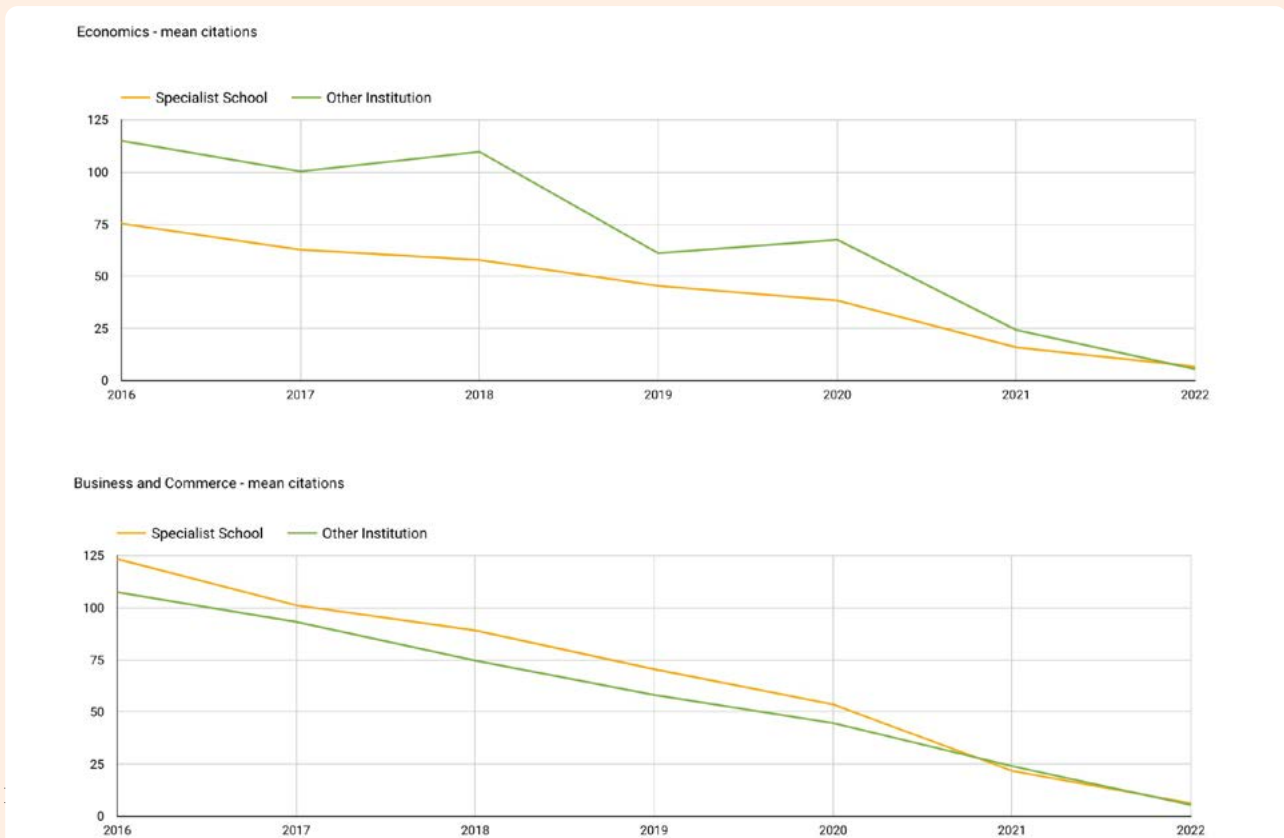


FIGURE 7: Mean citations for economics papers and business and commerce papers – generalist versus specialist institutions

For citations (mean or otherwise), a general downward trend as we approach the present is of course expected since citations take years to accrue, and new items will simply not have many (or any) citations to show for a good while – but interestingly, business schools are consistently outperforming generalist institutions even while general institutions publish more papers every year in this area. That the gap should be so much larger, and the roles reversed, for economics might be down to the fact that economics is likely the subject you’d find taught equally within business schools and in pure academic institutions – and the most impactful and revered researchers are publishing in these institutions rather than business schools. Indeed, huge outliers like Daniel Kahneman, who can claim 72,000 citations for his economics work alone, might be tipping the scales in favour of the generalist institutions (Kahneman’s dominant affiliation is Princeton University, not a business school, and in 2021 alone, a single one of his economics articles was raking in **2,300 citations** that year.) To a lesser extent, Paul Krugman, another name known in lay circles as much as in business and economics ones, claims over 362 citations from a single article in 2021 – and has the affiliation of City University of New York (CUNY) – another win for the generalist institutions.

But what of social metrics? It’s here that we see major diversions in patterns. 2020–2021, the pandemic years, saw a massive spike in news stories that linked to economics papers or business papers (to say nothing of the explosion of attention around medical papers of course.) But not if you’re publishing from a business school (Figure 8).

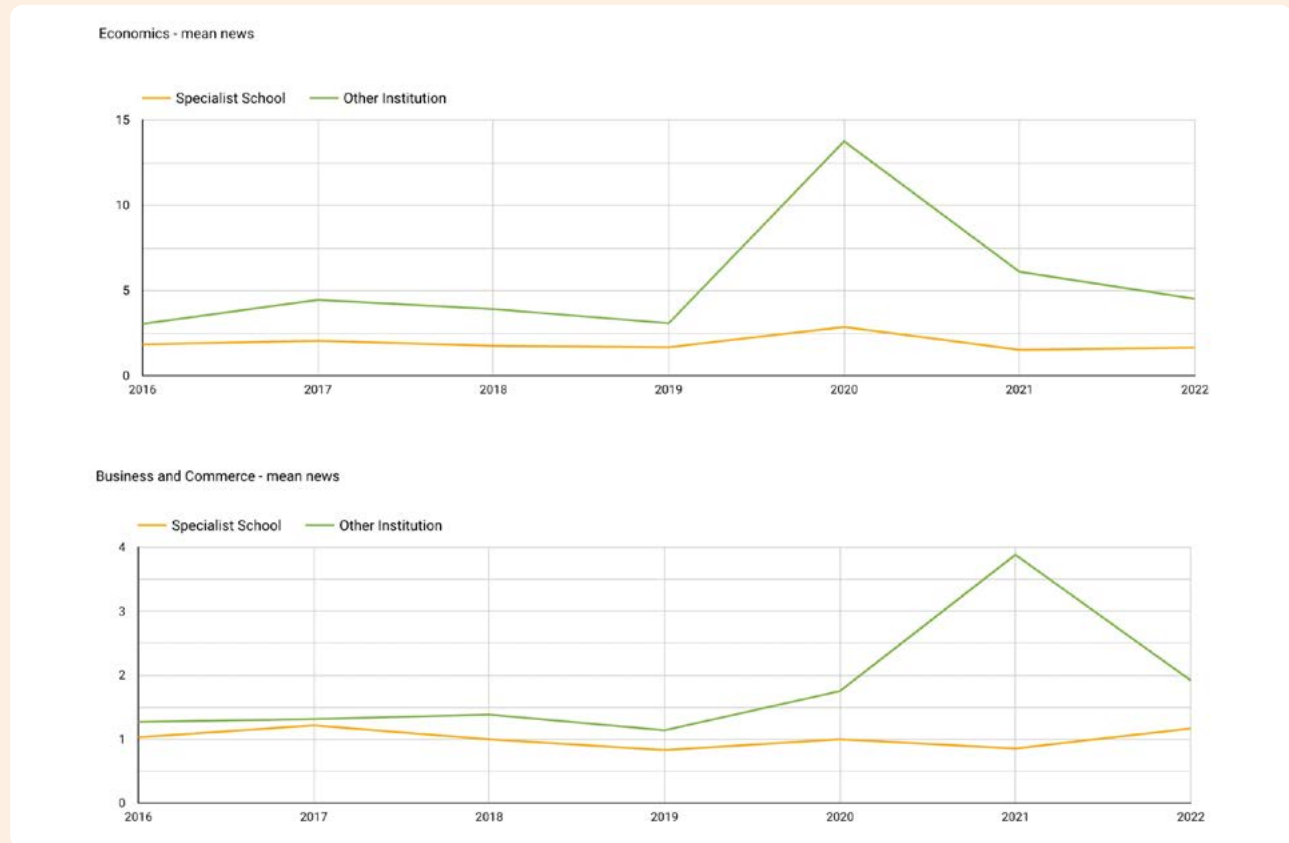
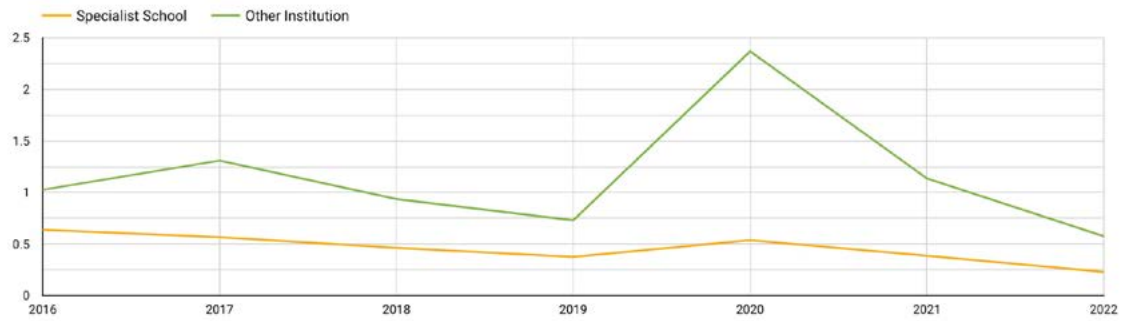


FIGURE 8: Mean news mentions of research from economics or business and commerce between either specialist or non-specialist institutions

Exactly the same pattern is seen if one looks at mean mentions within the blogosphere for the same period (Figure 9).

Economics - mean blog



Business and Commerce - mean blog

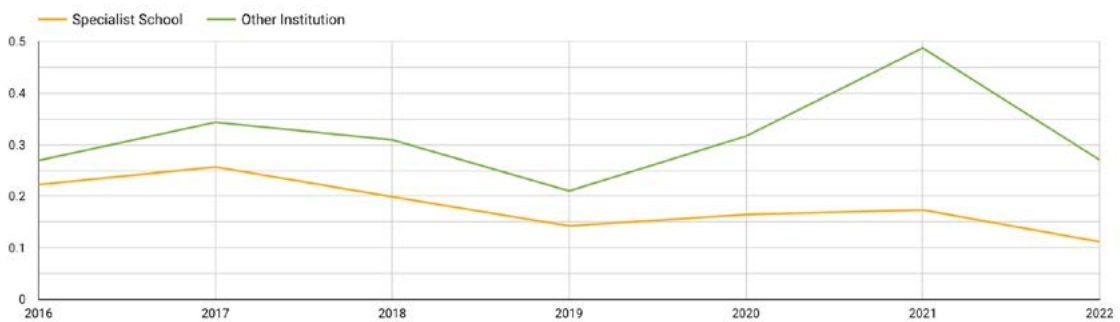


FIGURE 9: Mean blog mentions of either economics papers or business and commerce papers, specialist institutions vs generalist institutions

The apparent immunity to viral attention during major events should be, if not cause for alarm, then certainly a cause for further examination and explanation by the business school community.

We are left with some preliminary further questions: Why, based on the above, have business schools not been publishing more impactful research? Are the most prominent, cited, and viral voices that publish in areas of business and economics employed outside of business schools? What other factors could be contributing here?

Altmetric is part of the **Digital Science** portfolio of companies that tracks and analyzes the online activity around scholarly research outputs. For further information on the above data and analysis, please contact ben@altmetric.com.

Medium & short-term recommendations to move forward

Usha Haley and Andrew Jack

Many observers have accused our universities, and especially our business schools, of behaving more like corporations – focusing on ROIs that benefit us and ignoring the ecosystems in which we operate. The UK’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) stands out as one of the most influential governmental efforts to provide accountability for public investment in research and to establish reputational yardsticks. In the REF 2021, 25% of a university’s evaluation depended on the impact, socioeconomic effects, and benefits of the research beyond academia. For the most part, such demands for external accountability do not exist for universities in other parts of the world. Yet the REF has also been criticised for subjectivity as well as the heavy demands it places on faculty to identify and to describe examples of impact.

In the aforementioned AOM study, senior scholars showed persistent themes of high concern regarding

Business schools’ administrators could use promotions, tenure or research support to reward researchers who identify how their projects have generated community outreach or benefited certain audiences.

the measures that institutions use to gauge scholarly impact, effects on career development, management research’s value, and societal benefits. Most of the scholars stated that the present system of faculty evaluation and business school rankings led to overreliance on more traditional techniques and methodologies, and what journal editors find acceptable. Some scholars identified that these developments had led to “junk science”, journals as

“incestuous outlets for career-aspiring management academics”, under-reliance on ideas, community and society, and excessive “balkanization” as management scholars became “angels dancing on a pin head”. Some raised concerns about the universal applicability and acceptance abroad of US faculty evaluation standards and research approaches that diminish scholarly impact. One scholar categorized the spread of US research standards globally as amounting to “imperialism” and a form of “colonialism”, with disregard for context.


In the major academic journals for the field of management, we have seen an exponential rise in discussions and mentions of impact. Simultaneously, we have seen an exponential decrease in the influence our research has on regulation and on our ability to catch the attention of external constituencies (see Haley, 2021). Ironically, business schools have incentivized discussing scholarly impact, especially in the major journals; yet, simultaneously, administrators and evaluators have at best ignored, almost never rewarded, and sometimes punished, actually having external impact. In the medium term, we need to ask: Who does this system of research benefit, and how do we throw a wider net? As the surveys we have identified previously indicate, most scholars in business schools appear to conduct rigorous research that speaks to just a few people as such research advances their careers. Yet, business schools' administrators could use promotions, tenure or research support to reward researchers who identify how their projects have generated community outreach or benefited certain audiences.

Second, journal publications could also ask for broader impact statements, rather than an “implications” section that few read except as afterthoughts. In the US, researchers who have applied for National Science Foundation (NSF) grants know that they have to identify the broader impacts of their research or show that it has the potential to benefit society and to contribute to the achievement of desired societal outcomes. The impact statement assumes such importance that a poor one can sink a proposal, even if it displays good science.

Third, as so many scholars (see Aguinis et al., 2014) and the AACSB (2020/2022) have suggested, we may also expand measures of scholarly impact to correspond with universities' and academic associations' missions. Simultaneously, we may increase awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of alternate metrics (Haley et al., 2022).

Fourth, researchers could partner with outside technical specialists in academic fields, as well as people working in businesses and government for broader and interdisciplinary views. As Altmetric point out in this White Paper, currently, the business fields display excessive balkanization and specialization (also see Haley, 2021).

Fifth, many experienced scholars have proposed investing resources in disseminating the knowledge we



When academic vocabularies change to include external stakeholders, when we acknowledge their aspirations and needs, we extend the reach of our ideas.

create to make it less abstruse and more accessible. When academic vocabularies change to include external stakeholders, when we acknowledge their aspirations and needs, we extend the reach of our ideas.

Finally, the AOM experts recommended that business schools pursue alliances with other academic associations to create interdisciplinary collaborations and achieve wider impact. Many other disciplines, including political science and psychology, have echoed similar concerns of silos erupting in academia. Business schools are part of communities and ecosystems, and we cannot go it alone. To solve the issue of social and external impact, we need to rise above the level of individual academic disciplines.

Despite these medium-term recommendations, lengthy time scales, difficulties in attribution, subjectivity in judgment, complexity in the variety of potential impacts and the intensity of resources for evaluating impact may endanger the generation of truly universal societal-impact measures.

Consequently, short-term, less-complex metrics can move the needle on acquiring more complete data to measure scholarly impact. We suggest that such metrics may include:

- Standardized, more broadly adopted, open-access classification systems for individual journal articles (DOI), other forms of academic outputs (books, chapters, patents, grants), authors (Orcid), and business-school level institutions (RoR) that would permit greater analysis including through platforms such as OpenAlex;
- Refinement of citation data to differentiate positive and negative citations to research, self-citations, and if possible, coerced citations from editors and journals;
- Greater emphasis by academics, institutions and publications on non-scholarly outputs such as blogs, video summaries, contributions to HBR/SMR/SSIR and similar, op-eds in the general media, and articles in ***The Conversation*** with links to the underpinning peer-reviewed research;
- Greater recognition and reward by administrators to incentivize impactful activities;
- Greater involvement of practitioners alongside academics from the conception of research projects to ensure design for maximum relevance;
- More exploration of scaled up crowd sourcing of practitioner networks to signal the most useful and powerful publications produced;
- Greater investment in ecosystems of citations by encouraging practitioners (and the academics they contact privately) to signal more openly when they draw on academic research to foster audit trails of attribution;

- Greater documentation by faculties and publishers of visits to and downloads from websites detailing their research to measure the types of organizations that are seeking and using these data;
- Greater focus on intermediate outputs such as Altmetrics and Overton which identify uptake of rigorous outputs by credible disseminators/influencers bridging academia with the world of practice; and,
- Exploration of text-mining tools to interpret full-text content and impact in articles mapped to relevant societal goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2022).

Some Opportunities for Future Business & Management Research: Employee Health and Well-Being



Sir Cary L. Cooper

The pandemic of the last two years has accelerated the trends that were beginning to emerge pre-pandemic: the move toward flexible or hybrid working (Norgate & Cooper, 2020), the role of the line manager in enhancing employee health and well-being (Cooper & Hesketh, 2022), the length of the working week (e.g., the social experiments in Sweden,

There are now so many research opportunities for business school researchers to make a difference in these and other emerging trends and issues.

Iceland etc., and at organizations like Microsoft in Japan and the supermarket chain, Iceland), how communication technologies are transforming the way we work, and the link between healthy employees and productivity. There are now so many research opportunities for business school researchers to make a difference in these and other emerging trends and issues, to answer the many questions coming from employers about the impact of these

changes on employee behaviour, on productivity, on labour turnover and talent retention, on the economic and other bottom-line outputs, and, ultimately, on the health and well-being of employees as well as on the organization itself.

As most organizations move toward the hybrid model of working where employees work between their homes and offices, this will have a profound impact on the role of the line manager, who will have to manage staff, some of whom will be ‘in the office’ whilst others will be ‘working from home’ (O’Meara & Cooper, 2022). We will need line managers who have well-developed social and interpersonal skills to manage a flexible workforce, managers who can team-build in this hybrid model but also who can ensure that their direct reports have manageable workloads, realistic deadlines and are coping with the increased demands during the pressured business recovery period post-pandemic. The year before the pandemic started, the UK Government’s Health & Safety Executive reported that 57% of long-term sickness absence was for stress, anxiety and depression. During the pandemic, the Office of National Statistics reported even higher levels of anxiety and depression (roughly 63%) in their large national well-being survey (these UK figures are roughly the same in many developed countries as well).

Research, therefore, is needed to evaluate systematically how effective the training and recruiting of managers with high levels of social and interpersonal skills (e.g., emotional intelligence, empathy, etc.) are in terms of positively enhancing bottom-line indicators (e.g., labour turnover, productivity, sickness absence, etc.). Secondly, but linked to this, is research that highlights both the positive and negative aspects of hybrid working by sector, the impact on the potential loss of creativity and innovation as a result of the loss of regular face-to-face contacts in the office (e.g., the water-cooler effect), and the impact of the four-day working week and other variants of the working week (e.g., the short compressed week) on employee health and productivity. And although some studies have been carried out on these issues, they have been done on public sector workers and few on private sector employees. Thirdly, in exploring the important ‘productivity puzzle’ that many countries have been grappling with for over a decade, how significant is the human factor (e.g., the line manager, hours of work, effective teams, etc.) in enhancing productivity in contrast to better equipment and machinery, enhanced IT (e.g., broadband) and the other physical infrastructure factors? At the moment, most research has concentrated on the ‘infrastructure factors’ and not the ‘people factors’ (Bevan & Cooper, 2022). We must also consider what the evidence on the impact of a well-being culture is based on i.e., not just the health and well-being of employees but also on bottom-line factors like labour turnover/job

retention, performance, shareholder value, sickness absence, presenteeism and the mental well-being of employees.

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, John Ruskin wrote in 1851, “In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: they must be fit for it, they must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it.” One hundred and twenty years later, Studs Terkel wrote about the stresses and strains of the thousands of American workers in his acclaimed book, *Working*. Summarizing the state of play in the 1970s, he wrote, “work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying”. Meanwhile, occupational psychologists, HR academics and other social scientists have a long way to go to enhance employee health and well-being and help solve the proverbial productivity puzzle!

Professor Sir Cary Cooper CBE is the 50th Anniversary Professor of Organizational Psychology & Health at the Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester.

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Conclusion

In summary, this White Paper outlines commonly used measures of scholarly impact, addresses various issues of concern regarding these metrics, and provides recommendations for medium- and short-term ways forward. One big concern regarding achieving scholarly impact relates to academic journals' policies and practices. Other major concerns deal with the scope and timeliness of the issues that we can and do study for scholarly impact. For example, data gathered by the first author showed that the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institutes of Health in the US have identified pandemics as grave national and global threats since 2015 (see World Health Organization, 2017); yet, only about seven articles in the major journals listed in the influential FT50 journal list from the start of 2015 to the end of 2020 dealt even peripherally with any of the associated civilization-altering consequences of potential pandemics such as Covid-19. Indeed, pre-Covid coverage in the top-ranked business journals, that academics so highly value as contributing to their professional advancement (see Figures 1–4), seemed largely oblivious to broader societal trends and concerns as regards pandemics. The authors searched for use of the key terms in the FT50 journals associated with COVID including SARS, pandemic, hybrid, vaccine, unemployment, mental health, and flexible work. The FT50 journals overwhelmingly emphasized what Kuhn (1962) labeled as normal science. The “intel” to which Renate Meyer alluded in her well-reasoned editorial perspective in this White Paper had existed for over a decade (including some of the issues on health and well-being as Sir Cary Cooper pointed out); consequently, one can assume that journal editors as conservative gate keepers, blocked the broader dissemination of this intel through their prestigious outlets. Journal articles in these prestigious outlets therefore appeared to lack predictive validity, easily translatable rubrics for relevance and insights, or ready plans for actions, when the shock hit. Yet, the shock had been entirely predictable for at least a decade prior, and, as demonstrated in Maura Scott's editorial perspective, had been predicted elsewhere. So, as well as tackling all of the professional hurdles explored in this White Paper, we must also closely consider the topics we study and their value in the years to come, championing future mindsets, as we move from challenges to change.

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