

## Management Research that Makes a Difference: Broadening the Meaning of Impact

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**ABSTRACT** The world is undergoing dramatic transformations. Many of the grand societal challenges we currently face underscore the need for scholarly research – including management studies – that can help us best sort out and solve them. Yet, management scholars struggle to produce concrete solutions or to communicate how their research can help to tackle these grand societal challenges. With this editorial, we want to help scholars seeking to ‘make a difference’ by broadening our understanding of what constitutes impactful research. We examine five forms of impact – *scholarly*, *practical*, *societal*, *policy*, and *educational* – outlining how scholars can systematically extend or enlarge their research agenda or projects to amplify their impact on the challenges societies face. We suggest that each of these forms of impact has intrinsic value in advancing the scientific enterprise and, together, can help to address key societal problems that reach beyond the immediate and traditional context of business management. With concrete suggestions for getting started on these forms of impact, and possible outputs for each, we hope to stimulate management and organization scholars to think more broadly about the opportunities for making an impact with their research and to begin doing so more often.

**Keywords:** grand challenges, impact, managements studies, relevance, social impact, societal issues

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The world as we know it is undergoing dramatic transformations. For many years, we have been living in a period of constant turmoil – what some have termed non-ergodic change – with one grand challenge or crisis following and compounding the next. Among these are the global refugee crisis, the financial crisis, the climate crisis, the crisis of critical consciousness (e.g., #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements), and, most prominently at the time of this writing, the worldwide COVID-19 crisis. Particularly during crises, societies turn to science – including social science – for explanations, solutions, and a way forward. At the same time, the scientific enterprise itself has been called into question, with politicians, the media, and the broader public challenging the scientific community to demonstrate the impact of academic research beyond the proverbial ivory tower, and asking how it can help understand and influence how people and organizations think, behave, or perform. These developments are especially salient for universities characterized as servants of the public that should produce knowledge for the greater good.

For these reasons, the ability to valorise research findings has become an important assessment indicator, not only in requests for funding and in achieving accreditation but also in merit evaluations, promotion decisions, and other assessments. Most scholars in academic or popular conversations have been asked: ‘What is the impact of your research?’. In fact, management scholars have repeatedly been challenged to explain the impact of their research based on practical relevance and social usefulness (e.g., Aguinis et al., 2019; Bartunek and Rynes, 2010; Davis and Marquis, 2005). At the *Journal of Management Studies*, we take the view that for research to be impactful, it must first of all uncover and explain phenomena responsibly – that is, in a rigorous and reliable way. However, for a study to be published in *JMS*, we require that scholars produce research that is not only theoretically insightful, novel, original, and interesting, but also impactful to managers and society. One approach to conducting impactful research is to develop problem- or phenomenon- driven research directed towards vital and unresolved social, ecological, or ethical concerns, including what some have termed ‘grand challenges’ (Buckley et al., 2017; Davis and Marquis, 2005; George et al., 2016). However, despite a variety of intentions and public commitments such as from the Responsible Research in Business & Management Network (RRBM) and the Academy of Management’s Practice Theme Committee that business school research should be widely appraised for its contribution to societal wellbeing, management and organization studies continue to be criticized for failing to live up to the promise of delivering impactful research (e.g., Davis, 2015; Tourish, 2020; Tsui, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed how deeply organizational practices interact with societal and economic inequality, has intensified these discussions (e.g., Bapuji et al., 2020; Muzio and Doh, 2020).

In light of these growing expectations that management scholars produce research that society considers to be impactful, we discuss how researchers might meet these expectations. To that effect, in this editorial, we highlight five forms of impact: *scholarly*, *practical*, *societal*, *policy*, and *educational*. By presenting these five forms of impact, which we do not view as exhaustive, we hope to broaden management and organizational researchers’ interpretation of what constitutes impactful research, which we define as *that which influences through multifaceted forms and channels how organizations and individuals think, behave, or perform*. We also provide action steps that authors might find helpful as they think

about how to amplify the impact of their research. We challenge scholars to consider the forms of impact, which are central to achieving their research objectives when they design their research, rather than writing up a ‘managerial implications’ paragraph as an afterthought to their project.

As management and organization scholars, our training prepares us to meet academic publishing’s rigor requirements but we receive less guidance in understanding what constitutes impactful research and how to achieve it. Therefore, in this editorial, we elaborate on what we mean by ‘implications for management practice’. We propose that management practice should not be understood as narrowly constrained to managers in business firms (see critically e.g., Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Sharma and Bansal, 2020). Although Kieser et al. (2015, p. 144) propose that research findings are impactful when they ‘influence management practice; that is, if they lead to the change, modification, or confirmation of how managers think, talk, or act’, we argue that, as a social scientists, we have the ability – indeed an obligation – to widen the circle of stakeholders we seek to engage and influence (see critically e.g., Rynes et al., 2001).

In the *Journal of Management Studies* and other distinguished management and organization journals, scholars have contributed in a compelling fashion to the understanding of broader phenomena, including the grand challenges mentioned above, and considered a wide range of societal stakeholders, such as civil society groups, NGOs, social movements, educators, governmental agencies, and social workers. However, these audiences have different characteristics, expectations, and understandings of what is impactful; impact for one group might not have the same value as for another. We, as management scholars, need to appreciate the diverse forms of impact management scholarship can have and to broaden our understanding of how and for whom our research can make a real difference.

We use the remainder of this article to explicate five forms of impact that management researchers can aspire to achieve, suggesting ways of addressing each form of impact and inspired by illustrative publications. In each case, we answer the questions ‘what is impact’ in that particular realm, and ‘how can we achieve it’. Importantly, the forms of impact are not discrete or mutually exclusive. Indeed, we argue that impactful research contributes to both theory and practice, something that our field has sometimes been accused of forgetting or underappreciating. Our aim is to inspire authors to consider in a more systematic manner the many forms in which their research might make an impact and provide some ideas for how to extend and design their research for broader impact. Table I provides a summary of the five forms of impact management scholarship, how to achieve them, and potential outlets.

## **SCHOLARLY IMPACT: THE NEED FOR PROBLEM-DRIVEN AND PHENOMENON-BASED RESEARCH**

Making scholarly impact is at the heart of academic research and refers to the ability to provide a clear, compelling, and meaningful theoretical contribution. A theoretical contribution is generally described as a contribution that gives meaning to data (which can also be drawn from the literature in the case of a conceptual paper) by explaining *why*

Table I. Five forms of impact management scholarship, how to achieve them, and where to disseminate them

	<i>Scholarly impact</i>	<i>Practical impact</i>	<i>Societal impact</i>	<i>Policy impact</i>	<i>Educational impact</i>
Research tactic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be new, interesting, and important</li> <li>• Problem-driven and phenomenon-oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to understand conventional management practices</li> <li>• Connect with existing practitioner frameworks</li> <li>• Frame work broadly rather than contributing to a marginal academic debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with attention to an important societal issue, debate, or question</li> <li>• Disaggregate broad issues into component parts to build theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for your policy position using a policy argument</li> <li>• Choose policy instruments to control thinking, behaviour, or performance</li> <li>• Assess policy paradoxes to reveal ethical concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write review articles</li> <li>• Involve students in undertaking research and inquiry (e.g., connected curriculum)</li> </ul>
Translate research findings to non-academic outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep original scholarly audience in mind and take publication as basis for later translation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a scientifically validated tool or measure</li> <li>• Explain how practitioners could apply the basic, underlying principles from your findings to one or two easily recognizable circumstances</li> <li>• Be responsible: Anticipate and be frank about the consequences of findings and recommendations for a multiplicity of stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an index or data repository such as the World Institutional Systems Repository (WISR) (<a href="https://facultymts.insead.edu/michael-witt/world-institutional-systems-repository">https://facultymts.insead.edu/michael-witt/world-institutional-systems-repository</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply the advocacy, control, ethics (ACE) framework to the formulation and implementation of organizational policy</li> <li>• Develop organizational policy-instrument scales to assess policy impact</li> <li>• Apply the ACE framework to how firms can enhance their social responsibility posture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop innovative curricula (e.g., special electives, live cases)</li> </ul>
Outlet and audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional scholarly article</li> <li>• Think of scholarly article as first steps toward achieving other forms of impact through other outlets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to a public knowledge repository (e.g., Harvard's gender action portal)</li> <li>• Write op-ed in a general interest outlet (your local, regional, or national news outlets)</li> <li>• Approach field-specific practitioner journals</li> <li>• Alternative non-journal formats (e.g., blogs, LinkedIn)</li> <li>• Work with your institution's public relations department to disseminate your work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternatives to classical scholarly article</li> <li>• Other non-journal formats</li> <li>• Bridge journal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated into traditional scholarly article</li> <li>• A companion article for practitioner or public policy outlets (e.g., <i>Public Administration Review</i>, <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, <i>The Hill</i>, <i>The Conversation</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write or contribute to a textbook</li> <li>• Write case studies (e.g., Harvard Business Cases, Ivey cases, etc.)</li> </ul>

something occurs or is related, rather than just showing and describing *that* it occurs or is related (e.g., Bacharach, 1989; Corley and Gioia, 2011; Patriotta, 2017). Good theory is important: ‘Without it, we would be left with a series of observations but lack explanations for how they relate to each other’ (Tourish, 2020, p. 100). Many argue that for a theoretical contribution to be impactful, it should be novel, interesting, and important (see e.g., Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011; Cornelissen and Durand, 2014; Davis, 2015; Patriotta, 2017).

### **Emphasize Theoretical Novelty**

Being *novel* means breaking new ground in how we think about a phenomenon.<sup>[1]</sup> As Patriotta (2017) explains with respect to navigating the tension between novelty and convention, what makes a contribution novel is not that no one in the field ever thought about a given idea but that the idea is articulated, organized, and connected in a way that suggests new directions for researchers who were already thinking about it. A theoretical contribution that would spark attention and thus be impactful is one that opens up more questions than it answers and in doing so invites further conversation, questioning and problematizing a phenomenon in a way that has not been done before.

Foundational readings for a particular literature exemplify what we mean by scholarly impact. These include papers named a *JMS Classic* article<sup>[2]</sup> such as Starbuck’s (1992) work on knowledge-intensive firms and Willmott’s (1993) work on the dark side of corporate culture in modern organizations. What these and other *JMS Classics* have in common is that they not only offered strong theoretical contributions in terms of providing a deep understanding of a previously poorly understood phenomenon, but they also broke new ground by redirecting an existing conversation, sparking productive scholarly debates, and informing subsequent research.

### **Study Interesting Phenomena**

A theoretical contribution is *interesting* when it challenges common assumptions or problematizes prevailing perspectives in a literature (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011). While such problematization is more of a theoretical exercise, it nevertheless often leads to stimulating and valuable scholarly conversations that challenge the existing knowledge base. Research that tackles a phenomenon relevant for a broader community is more likely to be viewed as interesting. Sometimes this is not obvious *ex ante*. That is, readers may not be aware of the phenomenon, but once made aware, they may be drawn in and captivated in an unexpected way. Daft (1995) reminds us that making the case that one’s research is interesting is easier if the topic is new, fresh, and poorly understood rather than mature and over studied.

Consider, for example, recent research that has inquired into topics that present pressing societal concerns and that also have some resonance in people’s private lives, like Chowdhury’s (2020) analysis of displacement of Rohingya refugees in camps in Bangladesh. His work is exemplary not only in tackling an urgent societal problem that affects the livelihoods of thousands, but also because it carries implications that are interesting from a theoretical point of view: the study challenges key assumptions in the mainstream entrepreneurship literature that individuals have the capability to change

their fate through entrepreneurial activities. Other examples of interesting research as we see it includes studies on the ecological foundations upon which companies manage corporate sustainability (Whiteman et al., 2013), how social inequality is underpinned by exploitative labour institutions (Hamann and Bertels, 2018), or how Uber drivers engage with novel forms of organizing to oppose constraining algorithms (Karanović et al., 2020).

### **Who Cares? Go for Disentangling Important Problems!**

Research is impactful when it provides a theoretically informed understanding of a response or solutions to an important problem (e.g., Hambrick, 2007; Patriotta, 2017). Certainly, there are important theoretical problems out there and solving them would amplify our capacity to devise better theoretical explanations. However, numerous examples demonstrate that solving important theoretical problems can go hand in hand with addressing important societal problems.

A recent study by Arslan and Tarakci (2020) illustrates this point. While the authors address the theoretical question of how exogenous shocks affect the innovation performance of cross-sectoral partnerships, they do so in the context of the drive to develop a vaccine in response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak. This context has gained added relevance in the current environment in which countries are battling COVID-19 outbreaks. The contribution underscores how ‘historical’ research that would appear divorced from contemporary problems often has the potential to provide further insight into – and even responses to – those current grand societal challenges.

Another notable and important study was conducted by Reinecke and Donaghey (2020), who examined the ‘coalface’ of Bangladeshi apparel factories where labour rights violations occur. Their work advances industrial democracy theory and political corporate social responsibility (CSR) scholarship, while showing how democratic processes may be enabled at the workplace. Many other exemplary studies advance important theoretical problems while keeping the societal implications of their work in mind. Porter et al. (2019), for instance, explain the micro-dynamics of scaling a crowdsourcing platform to ensure the impact of robust action for maritime sustainability, while Haack and Sieweke (2018) develop and test a theory of how structural inequality becomes legitimized.

### **Towards Problem-Driven and Phenomenon-Based Research**

While a wide range of research topics and approaches can lead to a theoretical contribution, we highlight here two related approaches that may be especially well-suited to make impactful contributions. One approach is *problem-driven research* (as opposed to theory-driven research) (Davis, 2015). Davis wondered what the ‘questions worth answering’ are for management theorists in light of pressing social and ecological concerns and the collapse of major institutions around the world. As he eloquently argues (2015, p. 7), ‘rather than starting from “I’m interested in institutional logics and how status and networks are influenced by conflicting logics” (or whatever), one would start with phenomena in the world that are worth explaining, for example, “What accounts for increasing income inequality around the world, how do countries vary in their trajectories of inequality, and how might this be linked to organizational practices?”’. Problem-driven

research is also in a good position to ask the ‘big questions’ that can reach beyond the often nitty-gritty reality of management practice.

A second approach is *phenomenon-based research*. According to Von Krogh et al. (2012, p. 278), phenomenon-based research aims to ‘capture, describe and document, as well as conceptualise, a phenomenon so that appropriate theorising and the development of research designs can proceed’. In that vein, Doh (2016) calls on management researchers to *begin* their research with a focus on a phenomenon first, and to select the theory and method that best inform that phenomenon second. He suggests that such a focus is less likely to result in the marginal, incremental contributions for which our field has repeatedly been criticized (e.g., Alvesson and Gabriel, 2013). Further, and relevant to the discussion below regarding practical impact, he suggests that the connection to real-world phenomena should be ‘baked in’ the research process rather than viewed as an afterthought.

What is critical in both of these debates is that a theoretical contribution should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to the end of solving or at least better understanding and raising awareness about an important real-world problem. Consistent with the emphasis on ‘grand challenges’ as a guiding framework for what constitutes important societal problems, management scholars have in fact begun to direct their attention to broad questions of social justice, climate change, migration, and more recently the social inequalities amplified by a global pandemic (e.g., Ansari et al., 2012; Gill, 2020; Whiteman and Yumashev, 2018).

Whether we refer to it as problem-driven or phenomenon-based, research that takes real-world problems, including those affecting broader communities and even society at large, would take the problem or phenomenon as a starting point. Then, it would generate theory around it to provide a better understanding thereof, rather than the reverse where the empirical case is not more than illustrative auxiliary that has no real meaning or societal importance in itself. Such an approach would then naturally lend itself to connecting the theoretical implications with an explanation of how the research contributes to a better understanding of the real-world problem itself, something that often falls short (or is included as an afterthought) in theory-heavy papers. Theoretical contributions based on important problems naturally are thus the necessary foundation for generating more meaningful practical impact. We will discuss how to rethink practical impact of management research next.

## **PRACTICAL IMPACT: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT**

Management practice has traditionally been understood as practices narrowly focused on improving the effectiveness of work systems with an eye towards the bottom line. With the advent of critical management studies (e.g., Contu and Willmott, 2005; Fournier and Grey, 2000; Wickert and Schaefer, 2015) and postcolonial studies (e.g., Banerjee, 2000; Prasad, 2003), the conception has broadened to include practices that consider collective welfare and social interests; present possibilities for social transformation; offer opportunities for self-management; and question power relationships. As such, opportunities to ‘make a difference’ may emerge when researchers take as a starting point a ‘big question’

worth explaining and the wide range of social actors affected in a multitude of ways by organizations – employees, customers, workers, NGOs, policy makers, social movement actors, non-profits, or government agencies – rather than limit themselves to the nuts and bolts of managerial behaviours (Davis, 2015; Kieser et al., 2015) and performance optimization. Some of these more specific forms of practical impact that focus on social issues and public policy are discussed in the following sections. However, while this broadened definition of management practice offers many more opportunities to do impactful research, it also comes with an increased responsibility to think much more broadly about the audience and stakeholders of our research recommendations.

### **What is a Practical Application?**

According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, practical is: ‘of, relating to, or manifested in practice or action: not theoretical or ideal’. It stands to reason that the practical impact of research would refer to research used for actually *doing* (rather than just theorizing or abstracting about) something. It is the ‘what now?’ and is informed by the study’s findings. Practical applications answer the question of ‘*what* do I need to do – that I haven’t done so far, or that I need to do more of, less of, or differently – and how do I do it?’. If ‘doing’ and ‘what do to’ are the main thrust of a practical application, it may be helpful, if not mandatory, to engage early in the research design with the practitioners for whom action items are developed and with the stakeholders affected by what may become the practical applications of a study. Below we offer some recommendations for how to do so.

### **Listen Before You Speak to Understand Conventional Management Practices**

Seeking to bridge the different spheres that managers and academicians sometimes seem to live on, Baldrige et al. (2004) recommended that ‘researchers should study questions that challenge both existing scientific theory and conventional management practice’. which requires researchers to thoroughly understand what theories practitioners use and view as legitimate. This advice is also captured in the Responsible Research in Business and Management’s 5<sup>th</sup> Principle: ‘Involving Stakeholders’.

There are several advantages of such an approach, of which we discuss three. First, listening to practitioners creates an opportunity to understand their familiarity with existing research findings on the issue they are experiencing and their openness to new knowledge. In some cases, popular theories tend to guide practitioners’ thinking long after they have been debunked by scholarly work (Rynes et al., 2002). In other cases, practitioners selectively retain elements of a theory that support their agendas and may be unwilling to engage with evidence that is less supportive of their goals (Eagly, 2016; Ely and Thomas, 2020). Working with practitioners at early stages of a research project creates opportunities not only to get input from the people that the study intends to help (Shapiro et al., 2007), but also to educate them about the benefits of ongoing scientific research.

Second, listening to practitioners and stakeholders can create opportunities for developing a mutual understanding of the value of the project for multiple audiences. Practitioners tend to be interested in understanding and solving local issues within their



organizations, while researchers seek to produce guidance that applies across firms, industries, and geographies. Engaging in conversation with the intended recipients of a study's practical relevance at the start of a research project creates opportunities for developing a mutual understanding not only of a study's potential practical relevance, but also of the actual problem and its possible root causes (Nicolai et al., 2011). Third, engaging with practitioners and stakeholders may generate opportunities for researchers to collaborate in collecting data. Securing social actors' participation in surveys, focus groups, and experiments has become increasingly difficult (Baruch and Holtom, 2008) and journals are requiring ever more high-quality data in empirical papers (Aguinis and Edwards, 2014). Involving practitioners and stakeholders in research projects can facilitate access to data and thereby greatly reduce the costs and efforts in doing so solo. Taken together, research-practice interactions at the inception of a research project likely 'strengthens the link between the producers and consumers of research' (Wright and Phan, 2017, p. 1).

### **Connect with Practitioners in Their Conversational Spaces**

Managers are unlikely to read every single academic study to extract practical implications and apply them in organizations. Therefore, scholarly articles that operate with an understanding of the knowledge-practice nexus stand to have wider reach among practitioners. In their analysis of the citations of top management journals' studies in practitioner media (e.g., *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Economist*, *Harvard Business Review*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, etc.), Birkinshaw et al. (2016) found that the articles most cited in practitioner media were those for which the underlying academic paper itself also cited more articles from practitioner media. This suggests that studies that connect with the research-practice interface have a higher likelihood of being deemed practically relevant.

Among the scholarly work most often cited in journals that communicate with practitioners, review papers stand out, perhaps because they synthesize and organize ideas around a particular phenomenon or issue, serving as a reference and source for further reading (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Since review articles also present unique opportunities for making a theoretical contribution, as *JMS*' recently published editorial explains (Post et al., 2020), they seem an ideal form of scholarly research for bridging the research-practice gap (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020; Elsbach and van Knippenberg, 2020).

### **Be Interesting – And Practical**

Scholarly work tends to elicit more practitioner interest when it is framed more broadly, versus framed as narrowly contributing to a field-specific academic debate (Birkinshaw et al., 2016), and when it connects with and informs multiple fields of research. Because *JMS* is a general management and organization studies journal, we typically request that scholars explain their work so that it can be appreciated by the various audiences the journal serves. An example of such work is Bothello and Roulet's (2019) *JMS* Imposter Syndrome article, which was mentioned extensively on Twitter, presumably because its discussion of the 'growing sense of anxiety and self-doubt about the legitimacy of our profession and our position within it' resonated widely with its stakeholders (2019,

p. 854) and contributed to a current and ongoing discussion prompted by other articles and books.

Research can be made more practical when it provides information on how the study's stakeholders can go about implementing its recommendations or heeding its implications. Studies that effectively do so communicate the basic, underlying principle from their findings and describe how it may be applied in one or two different and recognizable circumstances or to various groups of individuals. For example, Huettermann and Bruch (2019, p. 1055–65) communicate a big picture recommendation ('HHRM should incorporate HR practices that focus on both prevention of and recovery from psychological illnesses, that are targeted at both employees and leaders, that receive support from the organization's top management, and that are constantly evaluated') that is easy to comprehend conceptually. They then provide additional details (e.g., highlighting not only the role of leaders but specifically of transformational leadership, and supporting their recommendation with research showing such leadership style can be learned).

Studies can also develop theory by striving for more actionable knowledge when they recognize what already exists and develop new scales, interventions, or frameworks. For example, Nishii (2013) recognized that despite the growing corporate awareness of the potential benefits of inclusion for leveraging an organization's diversity, the field lacked a scientifically validated tool for measuring a firm's climate for inclusion. She went on to develop one in a study published in *Academy of Management Journal*. Further, research findings can be shared with freely accessible organizational platforms on a given theme or grand challenge (Eagly, 2016). For example, Harvard's gender action portal, 'a collection of research evaluating the impact of specific policies, strategies, and organizational practices to advance gender equity', highlights findings from field and laboratory experimental studies in a variety of disciplines that evaluate gender policies.

Finally, the dissemination of research findings need not be limited to the scientific journals in a field but can be further elaborated upon and made more broadly available as a publication in a practitioner journal. For example, Wickert and de Bakker (2018) take a two-step approach in making a practical impact. In their study of how CSR managers – framed as social-issue sellers – create momentum for CSR inside large organizations, they argue that issue selling is to be understood as a relational endeavour between buyers and sellers and in doing so first and foremost make a theoretical contribution to the issue-selling literature. Then, they condense the practical aspects of their findings into a short essay published in *Harvard Business Review* (Wickert and de Bakker, 2019), in which they describe four tactics that CSR managers can use to inspire other leaders to act on sustainability issues. What is important to note here is that a solid methodologically robust and theoretically sound base is important as a foundation upon which to then expand something more 'hands on'.

At *JMS*, we see this two-step approach to making a practical impact as a promising way forward. Because of this, we have launched [www.managementstudiesinsights.com](http://www.managementstudiesinsights.com), the official blog of the *Journal of Management Studies*. The blog provides *JMS* authors the unique opportunity to compose short essays that address the importance and impact of their research beyond the theoretical contributions that are at the core of their scholarly work. In doing so, scholars can not only demonstrate the practical impact of their research, but also address how findings may have other forms of societal, policy, or educational impact as we will discuss further down.

## **Be Responsible**

Observing that ‘academics tend to ignore the details when they prescribe – prescribing being a consequence of describing and theorizing – and those details can be terribly consequential to ordinary citizens in their daily lives’, Wright and Phan (2017, p. 1) exhort researchers to exert care and tread responsibly in their recommendations, because they may have unintended consequences on a range of stakeholders, including research subjects or participating organizations (6<sup>th</sup> principle of response research), and especially on topics that are subject to advocacy. Perhaps the most widely cited research that has had perverse implications has been Milton Friedman’s shareholder primacy framework.

To summarize, listening to and conversing with practitioners offers many opportunities for developing impactful research and contributing actionable and responsible knowledge that together can help ‘make a difference’.

## **SOCIETAL IMPACT: TACKLING GRAND CHALLENGES LARGE AND SMALL**

As noted in the introduction, there have been increasing calls for business and management scholars to contribute more substantially to broader societal concerns. These include, *inter alia*, social, ecological, and ethical concerns within which there are myriad specific issues such as disruption from climate change, inequality, and employment security as well as more abstract but nonetheless important conditions such as wellbeing, happiness, and life quality based on intact ecological conditions. There is, therefore, natural overlap between societal impact and other types of impact, especially policy, in that governmental policies – and in some cases corporate actions – are often designed to address societal issues. Hence, societal impact may be as much about identification, edification, and information as it is about changed behaviour or practice.

One reason management scholars may not be more active in addressing these broad societal issues is that they are quite ‘messy’ to research. In particular, some of these issues – especially the ‘grand challenges’ that we referenced above – are phenomenon-driven; often require multi- or interdisciplinary approaches; unfold at multiple levels of analysis, and therefore require multi-level methods; and involve complex interdependencies among business, government, and society in the global environment (Buckley et al., 2017). It should be noted, however, that these rather abstract societal issues also materialize at many local and micro levels, such as public health disparities in a specific municipal district, hazardous waste disposal in a particular community, or racial discrimination in a housing complex. As we will argue below, tackling more specific manifestations of these broader issues is one effective way of restricting the scope of research such that it is more manageable and actionable.

## **Begin with Attention to an Important Societal Issue, Debate, or Question**

Because of the above-mentioned nature of societal impact, the most straightforward and immediate reflection of impact is the topical focus of the research itself. That is, scholars’ decision to focus on timely topics and subjects related to societal issues is an

initial important reflection as to their potential societal impact. The recent focus on societal grand challenges as an overarching framework has helped motivate how management scholars speak to broad social and ecological issues facing global societies. Among other implications, grand challenges may alter organizations' business models and how they create value, the way organizations are designed and organized, the manner in which employees are incentivized and managed, and the way strategies are formulated and implemented. Probably the most comprehensive and well-known framework that encapsulates those societal grand challenges comes from the United Nations. In 2015, the United Nations announced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 17 goals designed to help end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and address climate change (United Nations, 2020). While challenging, beginning with attention to societal issues that really matter and exploring a basic question about the phenomenon at stake is also a logical strategy for increasing the likelihood of societal impact.

### **Disaggregate Broad Issues into Component Parts by Building Specific Theories That Can Contribute to General Ones**

Another strategy to delimit the scope of research on a broad societal issue is to disaggregate those issues into component parts and focus on a subset of the broader one. This approach allows for the development of special or idiosyncratic theoretical perspectives that are 'nested' within a general theory. Buckley et al. (2017) describe this process as (1) identifying key empirical questions that require explanation; (2) constructing a general theory; (3) acknowledging that within the general theory reside nested special theories, where the general theory can be tested at a given time in a given arena ('context'); and (4) confronting the special theory with the empirical evidence.

Several articles in a *JMS* special issue on political CSR demonstrate how addressing specific manifestations of a broad issue can help delimit the scope of research and allow for examination of specific theories that can then be applied more broadly. One of these, which won the *JMS* Best Paper Award for 2016, focuses on a subcomponent of a broader issue (in this case a social movement around sustainable coffee standards) by exploring the interactions of specific civil society and corporate organizations and actors involved in that movement (Levy et al., 2016). The authors show how 'dynamics of moves and accommodations between challengers and corporate actors shape the practice and meaning of "sustainable" coffee' (Levy et al., 2016, p. 364).

Another article in that special issue explored fracking in the Canadian province of Quebec and the use of justification and forms of power by government, industry, and societal actors as tools to gain moral legitimacy in debates over the issue (Gond et al., 2016), while another explores the 'conflict minerals' movement and its implications for mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo, presenting a model of corporate political responsibility that tracks how the responsibility for a grand challenge shifts from governmental to private actors (Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). In each of these three contributions, scholars focus on a specific context (geographic or sector-specific) in which a global-scale issue plays out, use longitudinal methods to document the changing role and responsibilities of different actors in relation to the problem, and integrate and build new theory that can then be more broadly applied to the wider phenomenon or issue.

## Consider Alternate Article Formats

As noted in our discussion of practical impact, scholars might view their effort to contribute to societal impact as a multi-step process. Having a conceptually deep understanding of the societal problem is a necessary first step, and this step is typically encapsulated in a scholarly publication. A subsequent step is to translate the research findings into some more actionable format or encourage others to do so. As such, contributions to societal impact might be evidenced by translations into more accessible outlets, media mentions, and in some cases direct influence on stakeholder approaches and strategies.

In addition to the examples of alternative outlets we discussed in the practical impact section, many academic journals feature non-traditional article formats such as perspectives papers, point-counterpoint exchanges, essays, and commentaries that provide for a more flexible format than traditional theory-development and theory-testing contributions. As one illustration, *JMS* is publishing nearly three dozen short commentaries from scholars on COVID-19 and its implications for management and organization theory.<sup>[3]</sup>

Another illustrative case is represented by the 2005 point-counterpoint exchange focused on the then-growing attention to – and concern about – the social, economic, and political implications of offshore outsourcing. In that exchange, Farrell (2005), then the head of the McKinsey consulting firm's global institute, offers an assertive defence of offshoring as a legitimate and appropriate business strategy. Levy (2005), in contrast, presents an equally powerful counterpoint about the potential disruptions associated with the phenomenon and the implications for the global political economy, while Doh (2005) offers a third perspective that seeks to find some common ground while considering both ethical and strategic implications.

Jeffrey Pfeffer's provocative 2016 essay in a section *JMS* calls '*JMS Says*' is an illustration of the flexibility of the essay format. In it, he offers a biting indictment of the moral and ethical distortions that emanate from the celebrity status accorded to wealthy, successful executives who concurrently oversee 'hellish and toxic work arrangements' (Pfeffer, 2016, p. 663). He documents the psychological mechanisms through which individuals rationalize these arrangements, and skewers management and organizational scholarship as being complicit in the process. Clearly, such a contribution could be published only in one of these alternate formats.

In sum, we urge management and organizational scholars to continue and enhance their contributions to important societal issues and constituencies. They can do so by focusing on important topics with societal relevance; delimiting and disaggregating the scope of research to focus on a narrower set of organizations and actors and building theory around a specific case that can then be generalized to a broader context; and seeking alternate outlets and journal article formats and organizing or contributing to special issues.

## PUBLIC POLICY IMPACT: FOUNDATIONS, STRATEGIES, AND MECHANISMS

Firms headquartered in California must have at least two women on their boards by 2021 (Stewart, 2018). Washington state requires 25 per cent female board representation

by 2021 (Shukovsky, 2020). Similar legislation is underway or in discussion in other states in the USA (Green et al., 2019). In Europe, EU policies mandate that companies' female board representation exceed 40 per cent (Zillman, 2017). Governments justify such policies not just on social justice grounds, but also by invoking the potential financial value of adding women to boards (e.g., Comptroller, 2019). Without understanding the conditions required for diversity to improve or harm firm performance and the effects of quotas on their beneficiaries – topics that have generated a large body of research – governments may well increase female representation on corporate boards while also contributing to the problems women face in these circles (Post et al., forthcoming).

This is not a unique case where management scholarship could provide a deeper understanding of important policy issues among political decision-makers. However, for a variety of historical reasons, management studies scholars and policy makers rarely engage with each other. This is surprising, because the infusion of social science research into the public policy arena was made already in the 1960s (Coleman, 1966). Despite the centrality of social sciences – including 'social psychology, behavioural economics, decision theory, and organizational sociology' (p. 5) among others – in explaining 'when, why, how, [and] even whether science is used in [and impacts] public policy making' (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 5), management scholarship in particular has, unlike economics, largely ignored questions of public policy.

There are, however, positive signs of growing interest in impacting public policy among editors of business and management journals, such as the *Academy of Management Perspectives* (Gong et al., 2019) and *Business Horizons* (Fisher, 2020). Likewise, as noted in the previous section, the scholarly communities studying sustainability, corporate social responsibility, the changing nature of work, diversity, and most recently COVID-19 increasingly question if and how their research impacts not only business but also public policy. One might even be as bold to say that scholars in these and other areas implicitly, if not explicitly, advocate for public policy action particularly in their theoretical and management implications sections, as evidenced, for instance, in research about the return of government in private regulation of global governance issues (Kourula et al., 2019). As a point of departure, the purpose of this section is twofold. First, since many of us have not been trained in public policy, we provide an overview of two central themes in public policy science. Then, we propose a framework for how management studies scholars can systematically impact public policy.

## **Two Themes of Public Policy: Philosophical Foundations and Evidence-Influenced Politics**

Public policy focuses on crafting policy instruments (i.e., 'solutions') to matters of public concern to achieve specific goals (e.g., Cochran and Malone, 2014; Mackey and Shaxton, 2011; Stone, 2012). Much of public policy research is 'rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism' (Dunn, 2019, p. 2) characterized by epistemological subjectivity, abductive reasoning, instrumentalism, and problem focus (Dunn, 2019). However, consistent with the section above in which we discuss scholarly impact, since its foundation, policy makers and scholars have drawn from a variety of problem-oriented theoretical and epistemological lenses including elite, conflict, rational choice, incrementalism, and political systems

theories for understanding, shaping, and implementing policy (Anyebe, 2018; Cochran and Malone, 2014). Regardless of one's problem-oriented perspective, the social sciences contribute to public policy inquiry by 'understanding conditions and consequences of concern to policy makers' (Prewitt, et al., 2012, p. 11).

Motivating public policy discourse are value-laden problems and their accompanying multidisciplinary and multi-level policy instrument solutions. Adding to this complexity are contextual differences within and across countries resulting in divergent problem framing and associated policy-instrument implementation characterized by equifinality (where the implementation of the same policy instrument results in different outcomes) and multifinality (where the implementation of different policy instruments results in similar outcomes [e.g., COVID-19 responses]), reflecting our discussion above regarding the complexity and multidimensionality of grand challenges.

Given the above backdrop and a growing demand in the public sector for legitimacy in decision-making and accountability for resource allocation, scholars and public policy makers alike turned their attention to assessing the 'use' of social science knowledge in public policy, 'presented as evidence to support reasons used in policy argument' (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 7–8). Use is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of impact: 'Social scientists tend to start out with the question: how can we increase the use of research in decision-making? They assume that greater use leads to improvement in decision-making. Decision makers might phrase it differently: how can we make wiser decisions, and to what extent, in what ways, and under what conditions, can social research help?' (Weiss, 1978, p. 26).

To assess the use of science, the theory of democratic accountability (Schumpeter, 1942) has been a driving force behind evidence-based policy and practice. To obtain, retain, and realize political ambitions, politicians 'count the votes', which can lead to 'ignoring the evidence' about policy consequences in favour of voter preferences. 'Follow the science' is a rallying cry to counter intuition, informed guessing, influence peddling, and self-interest (e.g., Stone, 2012) based on the assumption that the scientific method produces superior evidence of 'what works' for a proposed policy.

However, there are at least three caveats of applying the 'knowledge use' literature to understanding if and how science impacts public policy. First, in novel or wicked problem situations exhibiting high ambiguity and uncertainty, scientific endeavours take off in a variety of directions, many of which fail. Knowledge of what works evolves as evidence accumulates, often reducing but possibly exacerbating policy disputes. Second, in the use of scientific evidence, three forces are in play – 'political considerations, value preferences and scientific knowledge' – the relative weights of which change depending on contextual factors (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 15). 'It follows that use of science as evidence can never be a purely "scientific" matter' and is always political (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 15). This is because politics often ends up defining what is considered 'good' science, as the ongoing disputes about climate change and fake news in the so-called 'post-truth' era show. Third, claims that public policy should be grounded in evidence 'is itself based on surprisingly weak evidence' (Sutherland et al., 2012, p. 4) because an evidence-based approach 'assumes that there is an agreement among policy makers and researchers on what the desired ends of policy should be' (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 50). As a result, '*evidence-influenced politics* is a more informative metaphor, descriptively and prescriptively,

than evidence-based policy' (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 4). Drawing on this metaphor and the philosophical foundations of public policy, we develop a framework for how scholars can impact public policy. Two key takeaways from this overview are that pragmatist epistemology underlies public policy (i.e., politicians tend to focus on what works), and that the evidence-based approach as advocated in management studies needs to appreciate that values influence the creation, interpretation, and use of evidence for matters of public concern when applied to public policy, that is, evidence-influenced politics.

### **Impacting Public Policy: The Advocacy, Control, and Ethics (ACE) Framework**

If 'the primary goal of policy makers is a practical response to a particular public policy issue' (Prewitt et al., 2012, p. 42), then management scholars would benefit from a framework for how to impact public policy issues congruent with the philosophical foundations of public policy and with awareness of the challenges of evidence-influenced politics. We propose an advocacy, control, ethics (ACE) framework as a guide for how management scholars can impact public policy. The ACE framework can also be applied to organizational policy. We encourage scholars to either bake the framework into their research question and study design or develop a public policy subsection in the Discussion Section of their paper. Impacting public policy based on the ACE framework includes adopting three stances.

#### **Advocate for Your Policy Position**

Advocacy is 'the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal' (Merriam-Webster Online, 2020) with the goal of impacting public-policy decisions. While advocacy has a role in predicting and explaining outcomes and consequences, it is fundamentally normative as advocacy and its policy argument mechanism puts values in motion. Therefore, paradoxically, while policy arguments 'should be based on evidence-based discourse' (Gong et al., 2019, p. 133), they are infused with values and thus better characterized as evidence-influenced politics.

Advocacy encourages scholars to engage 'in personally relevant research, defined as research that addresses questions in which scholars are personally invested or involves a population to which they belong or in which they hold a personal interest' (Jones and Bartunek, 2020, p. 2). Personally relevant research challenges the assumption that a lack of professional distance undermines research 'quality'. Rather, it helps address the two-communities metaphor (Caplan, 1979) characterizing differences between public-policy makers and scientists. Personally relevant research enables 'scholars to ask more relevant questions, access otherwise hard-to-reach populations, and make important connections, leading to theories that reflect the breadth of organizational phenomena present in an increasingly diverse world' (Jones and Bartunek, 2020, p. 4). One of the major benefits of reducing the distance between the two communities is that when advocating for their policy argument, social scientists can use the language and trade craft of policy makers, a key success factor for impacting public policy. For example, many scholars partner with activist organizations who rally for causes that they also personally consider important. This can be one fruitful way to bridge scholarship and



advocacy, because such organizations typically possess a closer linkage to policy makers than many researchers (Holmes, 2019). The study by Reinecke and Donaghey (2020), alluded to earlier, of working conditions in textile factories in Bangladesh is a case in point. The authors aim to advocate for policy changes in an indirect way, as their work yields implications for NGOs and labour unions who seek to collaborate with governments to improve labour rights of affected workers in the context under study.

### **Choose Policy Instruments to Control Thinking, Behaviour, or Performance**

Control is the ‘power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behaviour’ (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Applied to public policy, scholars advocate not only for a specific policy (e.g., living wage), changes to an existing policy (e.g., family leave policy), or the public policy process (e.g., transparency in the policy cycle), but for its implementation. A mechanism of public-policy control is the policy instrument, covering the spectrum from wait-and-see to information-based, expenditure-based, regulation, and finally direct government action (Mackey and Shaxton, 2011). Policy instruments are courses of action available to the government to implement policy objectives (Mackey and Shaxton, 2011). For scholars seeking to impact public policy, two control-related questions are particularly relevant: which policy instrument(s) to select to achieve a policy goal, and to what extent should the policy instruments be applied universally or dependent on context.

Policy instruments cover the spectrum from wait-and-see to coercion. The least coercive instruments are information-based with the objective of influencing organizations and people through knowledge transfer, communications, or moral persuasion (e.g., washing hands prevents the spread of disease). Expenditure-based instruments provide money or other monetary-related incentives (e.g., grants, loans, opportunity-zone tax incentives to encourage investment in low income communities, vouchers) to achieve policy objectives. Regulation is considered to be the most commonly used instrument to define norms (the range of acceptable behaviour) or prohibit activities. Finally, governments can act directly, often via taxation, to provide services to achieve a policy objective (e.g., National Parks, infrastructure, education) (Mackey and Shaxton, 2011).

The work of Porter and colleagues (2019, p. 277) is a notable example of how management research can address issues relevant for policy makers. The authors argue that ‘policymakers observe that global climate policy misses the crucial consideration of specific local, social and environmental conditions’. In consequence, their study suggests crowd-sourcing as an effective policy instrument that politicians can leverage when addressing climate change at the local level. Furthermore, their work underscores the importance of co-creation of knowledge among multiple stakeholders including governments in order to effectively tackle global environmental problems.

### **Assess Policy Paradoxes to Reveal Ethical Concerns**

Public policy has a consequence orientation. Thus, whether there should be a policy for a societal or economic problem and ‘if so, what the policy ought to be are fundamentally ethical questions’ (Cochran and Malone, 2014, p. 17). Surfacing ethical concerns inherent in all policy recommendations and their associated policy instruments is part of our

responsibility. One mechanism for surfacing ethical concerns is the assessment of policy paradoxes.

Stone coined the term ‘policy paradox’ to recognize that it is possible to define the same policy problem and the criteria for success in contradictory ways, noting that ‘paradoxes are nothing but trouble... and political life is full of them’ (Stone, 2012, p. 2). For example, during the coronavirus pandemic, in-class schooling is both safe and unsafe (depending on how the problem and criteria for success are defined). The policy paradox is not limited to dynamics between rival policy camps. Because politicians have policy goals as well as political goals, they are motivated to frame policy problems in multiple ways and shuffle outcome criteria allowing them to claim policy success and failure. We suggest that scholars and policy makers that craft a policy argument and its instruments in ways that accommodate and acknowledge its public-policy paradoxes are more likely to impact public policy (good and bad).

We are optimistic that management studies scholars have or can develop toolkits to wade into policy debates. Public policy is a contiguous field of study (Dubin, 1978) to management studies. While there are important differences, the theories and methods of public policy based in the social sciences are accessible to management study scholars. In this respect, we agree with Gong and colleagues (2019) that ‘the most vexing, and interesting, questions occupy the boundaries between disciplines, and they usually remain unasked’ (p. 133). By moving into the public-policy lane, management studies can ‘ask the unasked’.

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPACT: EXPLORING AND PRACTICING THE RESEARCH–TEACHING NEXUS**

### **The Humboldtian Model: Shape Educational Learning Paths Through Your Research**

Humboldt’s ideas on academic education – that research and teaching are to be intimately related, with the former leading the latter – offer a powerful background for discussing the educational impact of research. The starting point of the discussion is the *research–teaching nexus*, which rests on the notion that students – and therefore graduates – are the first conduits whereby universities make impact on society at large, and that good education is fundamentally based on state-of-the-art research.

### **In the Classroom, Apply Your Research to Lead Students Towards the Knowledge Frontiers**

To explain how research might impact education, Healey and Jenkins (2009) developed a model that captures the complexity of the research–teaching nexus. Their model builds on two dimensions: (i) the extent of students’ involvement in the classroom environment, that is, as audience or as participants; (ii) the extent to which in-class teaching emphasizes research content or research processes and problems. Based on these dimensions, the model identifies four opportunities to make research more educationally impactful:

- *research-led*: research is used to shape the teaching material;
- *research-oriented*: developing research skills and techniques;
- *research-tutored*: engaging in research discussions;
- *research-based*: undertaking research and inquiry.

Junior scholars may wish to try out initiatives across the four approaches to balance students' engagement, bearing in mind that different disciplines may lend themselves differently to such approaches. Ideally, the appropriate balance should be seen across the four approaches as well as within and along the entire students' curriculum: scholars' initiatives ought to be, therefore, coordinated with the programme's director.

The *research-led* approach sees students as audience and emphasises research as content. Initiatives informed by this approach are useful starting points for junior scholars to make their research more impactful on students' education. Translating qualitative research into case studies and involving the case's actors in class discussion constitutes an example to generate educational impact based on one's own research. Additionally, designing and teaching elective courses based on new research material such as a collection of journal articles published around one of the societal grand challenges we highlighted above or consolidating them into a new textbook may represent another way to bring research into the classroom.

The *research-oriented* approach is archetypical for PhD classrooms that may also be used in undergraduate teaching to broaden the perimeter of the educational impact of research. Whereas students are seen as audience, in the research-oriented approach the emphasis is on 'research as a process' with the aim to equip students with research tools and methods. Understanding and acquiring such tools and methods enable students to move closer to academic research: especially in the so-called post-truth era, students armed with such tools are able to recognize and appreciate academic research, and therefore gain an advantageous stance to tease out and distinguish information from disinformation, news from fake news. Additionally, acquiring research tools and methods offers students and future graduates innovative interpretative lenses of the real world.

### **Aim Towards a Research-Based Approach in Your Research-Teaching Nexus**

Within the *research-tutored* approach, students' engagement evolves from audience to participant. Review articles are a powerful tool for bringing research into the classroom: they make it easy for someone not knowledgeable about a topic to quickly get up to speed (see e.g., Post et al., 2020).

The *research-based* approach switches the emphasis from 'research as a product', i.e., the research results, to 'research as a process', i.e., the methods and routes that lead to the generation of new knowledge. The research-based approach focuses on how research is done. Here, students learn through an enquiry-based, research-like process: this is a challenging approach as it requires the design and implementation of laboratories, courses, and modules that contemplate the involvement of students in the process of knowledge production. In a research-based setting, students become actor in the process of generating knowledge. According to Fung (2017), involving students in the generation and shaping of new knowledge enables them to learn to experiment and challenge received

concepts, to promote curiosity, and to develop and demonstrate real independence of thought. This latter aim is akin to the idea of Von Humboldt that students should become autonomous world citizens by developing their own reasoning powers and intellectual aptitude. Clearly, research – its content and process of inquiry – holds promise for making an impact on education.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this editorial was to outline and discuss how management and organization scholars might meet the intensifying pressures to produce societally useful and impactful research. To that effect, we highlighted five forms of impact – *scholarly*, *practical*, *policy*, *societal*, and *educational* – and suggested steps for achieving each form of impact. Although we have discussed these five areas somewhat discretely, we believe that it is not only possible but appropriate for scholars to seek to achieve impact across several of these areas. Indeed, we have illustrated how impact in one domain can be extended to others and how writing for one audience can stimulate thinking and reflection that results in contributions to others.

The academic enterprise is and should be one of combination, connection, integration, and ultimately, unification. While we have described several distinct pathways through which management scholars can achieve impact in a way that is perhaps broader and more expansive than traditionally thought, it is important to acknowledge the interdependence of these channels and here we wish to underscore those interconnections and complementarities. For example, it is not uncommon for scholars to begin with theoretical intuitions or anecdotal phenomenological observations that then generate research questions answered through a formal empirical model. That model, in turn, might be informed by additional practical observations and insights, some of which may have policy or societal implications. A research article derived from these insights may be summarized in a practitioner or policy outlet, or be incorporated into a textbook or other pedagogical product. It is through this iterative, reflexive, and combinative process that scholarship can generate impact across multiple realms and speak to a diverse set of stakeholders.

By providing concrete suggestions for how to reflect on, formulate, and contribute to these various forms of impact, we hope to have motivated management and organization scholars to think more broadly about the opportunities for making an impact with their research. While *JMS* still primarily publishes scholarly impactful research, we encourage contributions that have the potential for reaching broader audiences and making a real difference to the range of relevant stakeholders. Producing impactful research, however, is not the sole responsibility of authors. Rather, it is a collaborative effort and the responsibility of the entire scholarly community. We as editors at *JMS* seek to advance such research despite the challenges associated with conducting and evaluating it, because we believe that impactful research not only gives a new sense of meaning to scholars, but can also make an important contribution to improve societal conditions based on scientific evidence.

## NOTES

- [1] We do not wish to argue against different forms of replication, which are also important but typically do not deliver novel theory, but make an empirical contribution in support of existing theory.
- [2] [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14676486/homepage/jms\\_classic\\_articles.htm](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14676486/homepage/jms_classic_articles.htm)
- [3] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14676486/homepage/covid19-commentaries>

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