



EDITORIAL

# Developing international business scholarship for global societal impact

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this *JIBS* editorial is to outline the vision and mission of the new *JIBS* Societal Impact Advisory Committee (SIAC). We define “societal impact” as research that has potential effects outside academia, for example, on communities, economies, environments, and other actors. We propose that societal impact is especially important for international business (IB) research but also particularly challenging, given the cross-national dimensions of IB and the differing social, economic, and political preferences faced by MNEs across the contexts in which they operate. We reference the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) movement and other professional association initiatives as potential sources of inspiration and guidance for understanding the societal impact of IB research generally and the vision and mission of the SIAC in particular. We outline some implications for IB scholarship to improve its societal impact and conclude by describing SIAC’s roles and responsibilities as related to *JIBS* authors, editors, reviewers, and the broader IB scholarly and practice communities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Our world is under stress and in turmoil, with many existential crises that affect international business (IB): public health, global warming, wars, refugee dislocation, economic upheavals, extreme inequality, racial tensions, and persistent gender inequity, to name just a few. In the past two decades, multinational enterprises (MNEs) have experienced unexpected pressures and shocks regionally and globally far more often than in previous decades. Business is not as usual, and the role of MNEs and IB in the world economy is under scrutiny.

There are both threats and opportunities for MNEs to be responsible global citizens and for IB scholars to contribute new knowledge that addresses timely societal issues. IB research can and must go beyond narrow questions of global firm performance defined exclusively by shareholder and investor benefit. IB researchers must also examine how businesses can contribute to solving some of the grand challenges of our times.

The United Nations (UN) considers businesses – large and small, local and global – to be a major instrument, along with government and non-profit organizations, for addressing the social, economic, and environmental issues threatening the present conditions and the long-term survival of humanity as articulated in the 17 UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). MNEs and IB can and must be part of the solution of a world in need. Indeed, SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals, explicitly outlines the relevance of cross-sectoral collaboration among business, government, and civil society to implement the other 16 goals.

In the past, IB scholarship has sometimes been reluctant to fully address societal grand challenges (George, Howard-Grenville, & Tihanyi, 2016) and IB scholars have expressed some concerns that the IB discipline is ceding these important issues to allied social sciences (Buckley, Doh, & Benischke, 2017). We believe that IB can and does have the potential to make important discoveries that have discernible societal impact, and that these efforts can be further encouraged and made more explicit. This is the role and purpose of the new Societal Impact Advisory Committee (SIAC) to the *Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)*.

*JIBS* aspires to “make the world a better place” by publishing research that can potentially inform policies and practices, enabling business organizations to lead in helping address the many critical challenges of our times. To encourage this outcome, *JIBS* Editor-in-Chief Rosalie Tung has created two advisory committees – the Research Methods Advisory Committee (RMAC) and the Societal Impact Advisory Committee (SIAC) – as well as established a new domain area for the journal in Sustainability. The two advisory committees are tasked with helping ensure that published research in *JIBS* meets rigorous methodological standards and has positive societal impact. The vision of SIAC is to help *JIBS* to become a journal that cares about both IB scholarship and society. The mission of SIAC is to support the producers (the authors, editors, and reviewers) and users of *JIBS* publications to enhance the potential societal impact of their articles. Through this editorial, we hope to clarify how we can support the work of these knowledge producers and users.

### WHAT IS SOCIETAL IMPACT?

In 2010, then *JIBS* Editor-in-Chief Lorraine Eden argued that *JIBS* articles needed to meet three publication criteria: fit, quality, and contribution

(Eden, 2010). She proposed that *JIBS* articles must (1) fit within the *JIBS* domain statement; (2) be high-quality, rigorous in theory development and empirical work; and (3) make a contribution. Contribution, which Eden argued was the most difficult to achieve and assess, involved two sub-criteria: the article must be insightful (“That’s interesting!”) and impactful or influential on other scholars. Authors were urged to ask themselves, “How does my research matter?”, where “matter” meant “generating knowledge that is relevant and useful to both IB scholars and practitioners” (Eden, 2010: 1098).

Twelve years later, *JIBS* articles must still meet fit, quality, and contribution criteria for publication but the definition of “impact” has broadened from impactful for other scholars to also include impactful for society. Incoming *JIBS* Editor-in-Chief Rosalie Tung has committed *JIBS* to publishing “meaningful and rigorous evidence-based research on topics that can inspire readers to action and change for the betterment of society” (Tung, 2022).

We define “IB research with societal impact” as IB research that has the potential to have effects outside academia, for example, on communities, economies, environments, other actors (households, businesses, workers, government) or societies elsewhere in the world. Our definition is consistent with the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)’s separation of impact into (1) academic impact (within academia) and (2) economic and societal impact (outside of academia). The ESRC defines the latter as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research has on society and the economy, and its benefits to individuals, organizations or nations” (ESRC, 2022).

Societal impact and social impact are often used interchangeably, both in our scholarly journals and in the popular press. We have chosen societal impact because the term conveys more clearly that IB research should have an impact on society; that is, outside the “ivory tower” of the academy. As scholars, we should not only be mindful of how impactful our research is on other scholars but also consider its impacts on society. We also want to acknowledge that social impact is just one area where research can have an impact on society; by focusing on societal impact, we hope to also encourage work on areas such as the environment, regional economies, governance issues, economic inequality, and other such topics.



We view societal impact as a broader term than corporate social responsibility (CSR) or sustainability; it incorporates and transcends both terms. CSR research, for example, focuses on community engagement, compliance with legal requirements or moral obligations (for the treatment of workers, customers, or suppliers), environmental stewardship, or philanthropy. Societal impact includes effects on business decisions or organizational practices, and on the well-being of people like employees, customers, supply-chain employees, or citizens in local communities. These outcomes may be psychological (such as subjective well-being, anomie), physiological (such as stress, quality of life, health), economic (upward mobility, income or wealth inequality) or sociological (interpersonal or intergroup conflict, crime, education).

Defining the societal impact of one's research is difficult, can be confusing, and even contentious. Attempts to measure societal impact have also been controversial with at least one scholar referring to societal impact metrics as a Frankenstein monster (Martin, 2011). Part of the problem is that research impact can be measured at different stages of the research process, starting from the initiation of the project through its completion, followed by awareness, use and application of the research findings in subsequent studies, and beyond the academic world, in the influence that scholars who take such research into the world can have on firms, governments and transnational institutions, as they are invited to consult or sit on boards or on policy-making bodies. *Academic* (or scholarly) impact is perhaps easiest to measure as it is typically captured by citation counts. As we consider the contribution of research beyond the academic world, to business and communities and policy-making, especially as it contributes to creating a better society over time – however it is measured – we define this broadened contribution as *societal* impact (see Ozanne, Davis, Murray, Grier, Benmecheddal, Downey, Ekpo, Garnier, Hietanen, Gall-Ely Le, Seregina, Thomas, & Veer, 2017: 2).

Societal impact may occur through different methods and venues, including as embodied knowledge in a product, being used or adopted in processes, or having societal benefits by affecting culture, policy, professional practice or education (Bornmann, 2013; de Jong, Barker, Cox, Sveinsdottir & Van den Besselaar, 2014: 90). For example, in an in-press article (Ely & Facticeau, 2022), the current editor of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and her coauthor offer many ideas on how scholars of organizational behavior and human resource

management can improve the policy implications of OB/HRM research.

There have been many examples of IB/Strategy scholarship with significant societal impact, often thanks to scholars who have been willing to engage with practitioners and policymakers and talk about research in public forums. Lorraine Eden's work with the UN that could change tax policy worldwide based on her core research area of transfer pricing, Tarun Khanna's involvement with improving healthcare in India based on his extensive work on emerging market institutions, Sri Zaheer's work chairing the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank informed by her early work on risk in banking, and Michael Porter's willingness to take on a range of societal issues (e.g., ranked-choice voting, improving healthcare systems in the US, and setting up FSG, a consultancy focused on social impact) are all examples of actual and potential impacts that go well beyond academic boundaries. All of this long-term societal impact starts with research that seeks to answer questions that matter to business, to policy and to society, which is what SIAC hopes to support and encourage.

### INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

There is now a sense of urgency that it is time to "get serious" about the societal impact of research done in business schools and that urgency also extends to IB scholarship. The IB context is especially relevant – and challenging – with regard to societal impact. MNEs operate in countries that have distinct political, economic, cultural, and societal attributes, and face the entire spectrum of stakeholders in each of these jurisdictions. These stakeholders are likely to have different agendas, priorities, demands, and expectations. For example, governments may prioritize some sustainability goals over other goals. NGOs may express themselves in different ways and using different tactics (in some countries – such as China and Russia – truly independent NGOs do not exist). Employees may be subject to differing regulations and have differing rights. Consumers and financial institutions may have distinct views toward "green" consumer or financial products. IB and IB scholars, therefore, face unique challenges (and opportunities) to tackle societal impact when "society" is not only pluralistic and diversified but full of fractures and tensions, even among the same group of stakeholders in different countries.

In addition, MNEs themselves are actors and agents of societal impact in the same way that they are conduits through which various strategic and institutional practices are propagated (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). Given this, MNEs' global strategies, operations, and behaviors in the commercial realm may also shape their approach to nonmarket strategy (NMS), which include corporate political activity (CPA) and corporate social performance (CSP) (Sun, Doh, Rajwani, & Siegel, 2021). For example, an MNE's global strategy and posture may influence the diversity and breadth of the global stakeholders that its NMS aims to serve. In addition, just as an MNE's global commercial strategy is dependent on foreign resources, foreign markets, and foreign stakeholders, so too may its NMS social actions rely on these facets. As these dependencies increase, international NMS becomes more critical to the MNE's global success. In this regard, MNEs must balance global harmonization and local adaptation in pursuit of these nonmarket objectives (Lucea & Doh, 2012).

Despite the challenges, IB scholars have begun to make important strides in incorporating societal impact in their research programs. Some researchers directly study the impacts of MNEs on society; for example, Ballesteros, Useem and Wry (2017) found that societies struck with natural disasters recovered much faster where there were local operations of MNEs. Another way to measure societal impact is to estimate the potential benefits that the findings from a study may have on other actors or organizations beyond the firm's shareholders; for example, there may be positive (or negative) outcomes on stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers), the community where the firm operates, government policy, or the environment.

IB scholarship has a long tradition of considering the broader, often developmental impacts of IB generally and foreign direct investment (FDI) in particular (see, for example, Caves, 1974). Since the 1960s, IB scholars have explored a range of questions related to whether and to what degree FDI generates economic and societal "spillovers" to host countries and firms (see Meyer & Sinani, 2009, for a review). Over the past half decade or so, there has been a renewed interest in these topics, especially in the impact of FDI, including its effects on wages, human rights, environmental pollution, inequality, and poverty more generally.

Here we highlight a few examples of this scholarship. Girma et al. (2019) explored the impact of FDI on wages in China, finding that the direct wage effect of foreign ownership is positive and increases with the employment share of foreign-owned firms but that the indirect effect on domestic wages varies with the foreign share and may even turn negative as that share comes to dominate a local economy. Van der Straaten et al. (2020) find that the distributional effects of the impact of MNEs on wages vary with a range of institutional factors and, importantly, are negative for females working in developing countries. They also find that the gender wage gap is smaller in MNEs than in domestic firms in developed countries but larger in developing countries. Brandl, Moore, Meyer and Doh (2021) document the potentially negative impact of FDI on community informal institutions and poverty, while Jacqueminet (2020) explored the diffusion of CSR practices within multinationals, focusing on how subsidiary units play a pivotal role in whether and how those practices are adopted and implemented. In the wake of the tragic deaths in the 2013 Dhaka garment factory collapse, Narula (2019) explored the challenges of MNEs taking "full chain" responsibility to reduce the exploitation of workers in countries with lower labor standards. These are but a few examples of IB scholarship that have discernible societal implications. We should note that even "conventional" examinations of standard IB topics, such as foreign market entry, can generate insights that inform how entry modes impact various stakeholder groups, so societal impact can be explored and measured in and through a wide range of topics, methods, and approaches.

Another way IB scholarship can contribute to societal impact is by shaping or influencing government policy or managerial practice. A well-known IB example is Dunning's OLI paradigm where his research on "L" (locational advantages), including three articles in the top 25 most highly cited *JIBS* publications, has been for at least 30 years the core theoretical building block for UNCTAD's policy prescriptions encouraging inward FDI in its *World Investment Reports*. Another recent example of business school research affecting government policy has been the impact of the new behavioral economics on "nudge thinking" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, 2021), which led to Richard Thaler's 2017 Nobel Prize in Economics (Earl, 2018). The idea that carefully designed prompts or "nudges" can be used to motivate changes in behavior has





been adopted by government policymakers, for example, in setting defaults so as to increase policy compliance (O'Leary & Murphy, 2017). A recent meta-analysis of 440 behavioral interventions found that nudging was "an effective and widely applicable behavior change tool" (Mertens, Herberz, Hahnel, & Brosch, 2022: 9). Using research in the classroom can also affect managerial practice. For example, Jung and Shin (2018) showed that CEOs who were taught about the negative effects of corporate diversification when they were MBA students in the 1970s and 1980s were significantly less likely to engage in corporate diversification when they became CEOs. In IB, teaching MBAs frameworks such as the Global Integration-Local Responsiveness model (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989), and its counterpart in international business ethics, the Integrative Social Contracts framework (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999), undoubtedly influences the way future global managers will approach international business challenges.

### **SOCIETAL IMPACT: INSIGHTS FROM THE RRBM PRINCIPLES**

*JIBS'* focus on societal impact is related to – and draws inspiration from – the ideas proposed by the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) network and other initiatives such as the British Academy of Management "Principles for Purposeful Business" initiative. RRBM refers to scientific investigations that produce both credible and useful knowledge in business and management.

RRBM's focus on both credibility and usefulness is similar to the focus of *JIBS's* two new committees supporting the work of the authors, editors, and reviewers. The new *JIBS* Research Methods Advisory Committee (RMAC) will enhance the credibility of empirical studies whereas the new Societal Impact Advisory Committee (SIAC) will strengthen the relevance, usefulness and dissemination of the findings. Similar to the RRBM, we argue that research published in *JIBS* should have relevance for business or society either directly or indirectly, immediately and later pending further development of the ideas. We can therefore view the SIAC's role as encouraging Responsible Research in International Business (RRIB).

RRBM (Cofounders of RRBM, 2017, 2020) provides seven principles to guide research design that will strengthen the potential societal impact of the research. While designed for business and

management research in general, they are adaptable for IB research. Principle 1, science in service of society, is foundational. Principles 2 to 4 are intended to enhance the credibility of research outcomes. Principles 5 to 7 are designed to improve the potential usefulness of the knowledge derived from the research findings. Here we focus on Principles 1, 5, 6, and 7 in our suggestions to *JIBS* authors on building societal impact into their research projects. Table 1 provides a brief description of the seven principles.

Science serves a social function in addition to the quest for knowledge (Principle 1). As we explained above, societal impact of research begins at the first step when choosing the research question to study. The researcher needs to consider who will benefit from the research findings. *Such* research may have societal impact via different approaches, for example, by: (1) systematizing knowledge of best practices, past and current; (2) creating knowledge based on innovative ideas to identify new solutions on old or new problems; or (3) observing the blind spots and identifying potential downsides of business decisions or practices.

Stakeholder involvement is a major intellectual contribution of the late Andy Van de Ven in his book *Engaged Scholarship* (2007), and that perspective serves as the foundation for Principle 5. Different stakeholders play a critical role at different stages of the scientific process. Stakeholders include those who are the research subjects (firms, groups, or individuals) and those are the knowledge consumers (policy or decision makers in government, in industry, or in organizations). Their involvement can range from serving as consultants or advisors to being full partners in the entire research project. The deepest level of involvement is the "co-creation" of knowledge with the relevant stakeholders (businesses, NGOs, trade unions, governments, industry associations, social enterprises, customers, and managers or employees). However, scientific independence, the protection of identity, the integrity and the public nature of the research findings must be negotiated and clarified with the stakeholders involved in the research project. Agreement on anonymity of the firms or individuals involved and respect for the confidentiality of individual responses can provide trust between the researcher and the stakeholders, and can enhance the quality of the data and ideas generated from the research.

A research project can affect stakeholders both during the research process and from its findings

**Table 1** The seven principles of responsible research.

1. *Service to society*: Business research aims to develop knowledge that benefits business and the broader society, locally and globally, for the ultimate purpose of creating a better world
2. *Valuing both basic and applied contributions*: Business school deans, journal editors, funders, accrediting agencies, and other stakeholders respect and recognize contributions in both theoretical and applied research
3. *Valuing plurality and multidisciplinary collaboration*: Business school deans, senior leadership, journal editors, funders and accreditation agencies value diversity in research themes, methods, forms of scholarship, types of inquiry and interdisciplinary collaboration to reflect the plurality and complexity of business and societal problems
4. *Sound methodology*: Business research implements sound scientific methods and processes in both quantitative and qualitative or both theoretical and empirical domains
5. *Stakeholder involvement*: Business and management research values the involvement of different stakeholders who can play a critical role at various stages of the scientific process, without compromising the independence or autonomy of inquiry
6. *Impact on stakeholders*: Business and management schools, funders and accrediting agencies acknowledge and reward research that has a positive impact on diverse stakeholders, especially research that contributes to better business and a better world
7. *Broad dissemination*: Business and management schools value diverse forms of knowledge dissemination that collectively advance basic knowledge and practice

Source: RRBM (2017, 2020) position paper, [www.rrbm.network](http://www.rrbm.network).

(Principle 6). Impact is improved by repeated testing to yield robust evidence. Every study involves uncertainty in the form of type I (false positive) or type II (false negative) errors (known as inductive risk). The researcher should consider the consequence of wrongful conclusions involved in each type of error. The research design should minimize the error that would produce a serious consequence (e.g., type I error should be minimized in medical research with life-or-death consequences.) The moral obligation of not harming the subjects during the research process led to the creation of institutional review boards. Researchers have moral responsibility to avoid harm and ensure benefits to the research subjects when choosing the research questions, designing the data collection process, and minimize the risk of wrongful conclusions.

The traditional method of disseminating research findings in scholarly journals should be expanded to include other avenues for wider distribution (Principle 7). In addition to journal articles or books, authors should consider writing short reader-friendly essays that can be disseminated quickly and widely on social media platforms, especially to non-academic audiences. Many scientific associations have created companion journals targeting the research community and the practice communities (e.g., *JIBS*, *JIBP*, and *AIB Insights* by AIB). The Academy of Management publishes condensed and simplified versions of academic articles on societally relevant topics into brief pieces in

*Management Insights*, an on-line periodical intended for executive or professional readers. Research studies focusing on societally important problems or practical issues are likely to be well received in the classroom as well – by undergraduates, MBA students, and executives.

Four professional associations, the Academy of Management Fellows, the American Marketing Association, the Manufacturing and Service Operations Management (M&SOM) Society and beginning 2023 the American Accounting Association sponsor an annual Responsible Research Award. The M&SOM Society developed this mission statement for this award: “The purpose of responsible research is to encourage studies contributing knowledge that may have implications for making the world a better place by informing evidence-based, high-quality and societally beneficial organizational practices across business, government and non-government organizations.” (on RRBM website) In the four years from 2018 to 2021, the three associations of AOM, AMA, and M&SOM have given the award to 108 articles (the papers can be from any journal and most of the winners are in the top journals) and 15 books. The topics of the 108 articles relate to most of the Sustainability Development Goals (Tsui, Bitner, & Netessine, 2022) such as the well-being of employees, customers, or citizens, justice in economic or social (gender or race) domains; sustainability in energy, responsible consumption or production, or climate. These award-winning studies are potential



examples for authors to learn about viable topics and approaches to conducting research studies that have clear societal impact for successful publications in *JIBS* and other leading IB journals.

In addition to this Responsible Research Award, in 2022 RRBM also launched the RRBM Honor Roll to showcase work focused on the common good (Hill, 2022). The specific goal is “finding, recognizing, and publicizing work that sustains values of ethical and developmental business practice”, to give such research a better chance of being heard and being used to influence policies or practices. It is our hope that, in the years to come, *JIBS* will have many articles listed on the RRBM Honor Roll and go on to win the Responsible Research in Management Award.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE IB SCHOLARSHIP

We believe that the work of RRBM and its seven principles of responsible research, which we have summarized above, can be adapted for IB research. Below we outline some implications for IB scholarship to improve its societal impact.

Most IB research has the *potential* to generate broader implications for societal stakeholders but in order to accomplish this, IB scholars must be purposeful and intentional in designing their research project from beginning to end. Meaningful impact is unlikely if the researcher does not consider the potential benefits or potential harm to various stakeholders of a society if and when the knowledge generated from the research project is being used to inform policies or practices.

Basic research is valued at *JIBS* because that knowledge may serve as the foundation for future applied research. Applied research usually is phenomenon driven or problem inspired but not all applied research will lead to benefits to society broadly defined. The SIAC focuses on research that provides actionable ideas that can be applied to solve problems that are challenging, or that could improve the condition of humanity presently or in the foreseeable future, such as those included in the UN SDGs.

IB research is, by definition, phenomenon based (Doh, 2015) or practice inspired. As such, consideration of the potential societal impact of IB research should begin from the project’s inception and certainly not wait until the preparation of a statement of “managerial or policy implications” in

a mostly completed manuscript. That is, societal impact should not be an after-thought but rather affect the decision of choosing what problem to study and how to study it.

IB scholars should begin with a research question that addresses a gap in our practical understanding or intuition around a phenomenon, not with a gap in theory or literature (Doh, 2015). The latter tends to result in examination of relatively narrow – sometimes incremental – questions that do not move the field forward in a meaningful way. Instead, the societal impact element of research at the design stage should be made explicit and fully integrated into the research design process. Scholars should begin with curiosity and observation of the real world around them and the many unanswered challenges, puzzles, and paradoxes it contains.

Both the *JIBS* and AIB’s companion journal, the *Journal of International Business Policy*, have published a number of articles related to the SDGs. Some of this research has investigated policies designed for the deliberate promotion of specific SDGs (e.g., Eden & Wagstaff, 2021; Ramirez, 2021) or those that indirectly impact on SDG achievement (Lewis, Yang, Moise, & Roddy, 2021). Other topics include interactions among MNEs, FDI and the natural environment (Kolk & Pinkse, 2008), the role of MNEs in protecting (or undermining) human rights (Wettstein, Giuliani, Santangelo, & Stahl, 2019), and the role of corporate social responsibility (and irresponsibility) in the MNE (Marano, Tashman, & Kostova, 2017). A newly edited book (McIntire, Ivanaj, & Ivanaj, 2022) discusses the unique role that multinationals play as facilitators of the implementation of the SDGs and as agents of positive change in the world.

Many societal problems are messy and wicked, where the goal is managing, not solving, the wicked problem (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021; Sharma, Greco, Grewatsch, & Bansal, 2022). There are often multiple reasons or causes of their existence and persistence. It is difficult to know where to begin. The work of the three 2019 Nobel laureates (Michael Kremer, Abhijit Banerjee, and Esther Duflo) in Economics (Ovchinnikov, 2020) provides a good example of how a complex problem like poverty can be studied by breaking it down into manageable research questions. They focused primarily on public health, early childhood education, and agriculture. The scholars broke down the

wicked problem of poverty into smaller manageable questions, identified different interventions that could change the behavior of teachers, nurses, or farmers, and used randomized controlled trials (RCT) with repeated testing (replications) of interventions (e.g., ways to reduce teacher and nurse absences, to incentivize farmers to use fertilizers). The results of their research have had an enormous societal impact. Five million Indian children benefited from remedial teaching; many countries increased their spending on preventative health care; and great improvements were realized in agricultural yield.

Many IB problems are similarly complex and multiple-determined. They can be tackled or analyzed from the perspective of different disciplines or through collaborative multi-disciplinary research teams. In particular, research on complex problems with good potential for societal impact would benefit from employing multi-stakeholder partnerships (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Stakeholder involvement from the beginning of a research project is critically important to develop a meaningful research question and promising value for application. Productive interactions are exchanges between researchers and stakeholders where “knowledge is produced and valued that is both scientifically robust and socially relevant” (Spaapen & Van Drooghe, 2011: 212). The interactions are productive when stakeholders engage in efforts to use that knowledge. Moving outside of academia to engage in joint research with practitioners (Sharma et al., 2022) or to share experiences and coauthor with practitioners (see, for example, Srinivasan & Eden, 2021) can also improve the societal impact of research.

We hope this editorial will help *JIBS* authors to be better equipped to design research projects with greater potential for societal impact. We also aspire for authors to have a better idea of how to design a research project to enhance both the credibility and usefulness of the findings from the start of choosing the research question to the end of sharing the exciting findings with both the academic and practice audiences. The SIAC member (who serves like a mentor) assigned to a conditionally accepted manuscript can offer suggestions to strengthen the discussion of research conclusions including the risk of wrongful conclusions, the possibility of externalities or unintended consequences, and

potential direct and indirect benefits to specific stakeholders.

We expect that reviewers and action editors will guide the authors on such matters during the review and revision process. Reviewers and editors can help or encourage authors to identify the direct and indirect effects of their studies on various stakeholders, or in considering the intended and unintended consequences, positive or negative, if the knowledge is used to introduce policies or practices.

In some cases, the SIAC mentor may find the Potential Societal Impact section of the conditionally accepted to be well developed and will happily “sign off” on this conditionally accepted manuscript. In other cases, the SIAC mentor may offer further suggestions on how to strengthen the discussion of this section. The ultimate decision of acceptance lies with the *JIBS* Editor-in-Chief. The SIAC mentor’s suggestions are advisory, like those of the reviewers and action editor.

In brief, considering the societal impact of a research project begins with considering the potential beneficiaries of the findings of a research study. However, this is not sufficient. The authors must also address the uncertainty of any conclusions they draw from their study, and engage in a genuine identification and discussion of the unintended consequences of wrongful conclusions. These additional steps are not typically part of the current review process at our IB journals nor of current research practice. *JIBS* will set a necessary standard for responsible research practices in our scientific community. Such expectations may not be necessary if we do not expect our findings to be used in practice. If we do, however, then we must engage in research practices that ensure both credible or replicable findings and useful or actionable knowledge that will have positive and not negative impacts on society.

The SIAC will also assist *JIBS* authors in disseminating their research not only to other IB scholars but also outside of academia. For example, accepted papers at *JIBS*, which are viewed as having potential societal impact, may be nominated to be listed on the RRBH Honor Roll and a subset of the strongest papers may be nominated for the Responsible Research Award. The SIAC also plans to work with the *JIBS* Office in creating news releases, videos, or other formats for wide distribution in the public via social media or other news venues. Authors may be



interviewed for behind-the-scenes stories of the projects. We may arrange webinars (in collaboration with RRBM) to share the most exciting articles with the strongest potential for having societal impact in either the short or long term, or both. We also sincerely welcome your suggestions for how *JIBS* can improve the societal impact of IB scholarship.

### CONCLUSION

We began this editorial by expressing our concern of a world in need. The many existential crises that the world faces imply both a responsibility and an opportunity for MNEs to be responsible world citizens and for IB scholars to be responsible social scientists. IB scholars can study the actions of responsible MNEs or can suggest new ideas to be tested in MNEs or other organizations through different degrees of collaboration all the way to “co-creation” of knowledge. A partnership between practice and theory can contribute toward a better world by improving the short-term well-being of the global community, the long-term survivability of humanity, or both. It is our sincere wish, along with a degree of confidence, that IB scholarship published in *JIBS* can contribute knowledge with potential impact on making the world a better place for communities in both the developed and developing economies.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup><https://www.palgrave.com/gp/journal/41267/volumes-issues/most-cited-articles>.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.rrbm.network>.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/future-of-the-corporation-principles-for-purposeful-business/>.

<sup>4</sup>Six tips for increasing the societal impact of research are (1) collaborate with NGOs and civil society when developing your research proposal; (2) post links to and summaries of your research across social media channels (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter); (3) promote your research on podcasts; (4) present at public lectures, conferences and video discussions; (5) add your article to open-access repositories; and (5) add a summary of your research to databases accessible to lay readers (Cisternino, 2022).

<sup>5</sup><https://aaahq.org/About/Directories/2022-2023-AAA-Committees-Task-Forces/Award-Committees/Award-for-Research-Impacting-Societal-Challenges/Award-Criteria>.

<sup>6</sup>Authors, editors, and reviewers can reach out to any member of the SIAC on these matters, or contact *JIBS* Managing Editor at [managing-editor@jibs.net](mailto:managing-editor@jibs.net).

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