Yes, academic research can improve corporate social & environmental practices: Some examples, and increasing the odds

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QUASI Seminar Series @ April 16, 2021
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**Some examples**

- King & Lenox “Industry Self-Regulation without Sanctions” led the chemical industry to improve its *Responsible Care* program
- Pacala & Socolow: climate stabilization wedges widely referred to by policymakers
- Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim: sustainability alpha widely referenced in sustainability finance practitioners
- Levine, Toffel, & Johnson: OSHA inspections reduce injuries referenced by OSHA director, Congressional testimony, Federal Register
- Short, Toffel & co-authors: improving social auditing practices referenced by brands & social auditors

**Not just peer reviewed work: Engagement as experts**

Beyond sustainability...balanced scorecard, innovator’s dilemma, Milton Friedman, Jensen & Murphy, etc.

**Some examples of debunking**

- Pucker: “Overselling Sustainability Reporting”
- King & Pucker “The Dangerous Allure of Win-Win Strategies“
- Bergquist et al. “Understanding and Overcoming Roadblocks to Environmental Sustainability”

Beyond sustainability...Simonsohn, Nelson, & Simmons’s dataColada.org; Goldfarb & King “Scientific apophenia in strategic management research: Significance tests & mistaken inference”, etc.
4Rs to improve the odds that research improves social/env practices...

R1: Relevant
- Pick topics that scholars and managers/policymakers care about—or should care about
- Ground hypotheses in scholarship and reality
- Managerial implications ought not be an afterthought
- See: Toffel “Enhancing the Practical Relevance of Research” (2016 POM)

R2: Robust
- Too much empirical analysis is done poorly
  - Construct validity, identification
  - Methods too unsophisticated or overly sophisticated
  - Unstated assumptions: make explicit, defend, sensitivity
- DataColada.org
- Omitting asterisks isn’t the solution
- We must improve training of PhD students + faculty

R3: Readable
- We wrote like normal people before academia, and then most of use decide it’s better to speak in jargon (e.g., legitimacy, endogeneity, scientific apophenia)
- This does not make us look smarter.
- It makes our work inaccessible to scholars outside our narrow field, to the media, and to practitioners.
- *Science* “Research in Science journals” + *NEJM* “Perspectives” vs *SMJ* managerial summaries

R4: Reachable (the last mile problem)
- Crossovers: HBR, SMR, SSIR, Rutgers Bus Rev, etc.
- Op-eds: NYT, Guardian, The Hill, Grist...
- Trades: OHS Online, EHS Today, E&E News...
- Faculty blogs: Global Supply Chain, Operations Room
- Bridging conf’s: EPA+scholars, Managers+scholars
- Webinars & podcasts: HBR IdeaCast, Climate Rising
- Microsites: HBS Working Conditions in Supply Chains
- LinkedIn, Twitter
- B-schools & institutes should invest in this

**ARCS**: Alliance for Research on Corporate Sustainability  |  **RRBM**: Responsible Research for Business & Mgmt