CARVing Quality vs. Characterizing Capital: The Scholarly Capital Model, a Portfolio Approach

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CARVing Quality vs. Characterizing Capital: The Scholarly Capital Model, a Portfolio Approach

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Abstract:

We thank Karlheinz Kautz for organizing this debate and the four respondent groups for their thoughtful and challenging comments. In this rejoinder, we take the opportunity to amplify and clarify some points that were perhaps unclear or misunderstood in our initial article and to respond to areas where we disagree. We also acknowledge proposed extensions of the scholarly capital model (SCM) to include the assessment of the impact on practitioners and on others outside of academia. Our main point throughout the dozen years we have pursued this project is that for the field to progress we must have an open democratic discourse in which all ideas and all comers have access to the discourse. That does not mean that “anything goes”. Rather, we advocate a disciplined metatheoretical pluralism in which we evaluate work for admission to the discourse not by conformance to “normal science” but rather by its conformance to its stated metatheoretical commitments. The marketplace of ideas then determines which of the proffered ideas has the most use. Scholars can then be evaluated based on a profile of measures assessing their impact to the field such as those produced by the SCM.

Keywords: Scholarly Capital Model, IS Research Evaluation, CARV, Disciplined Metatheoretical Pluralism.
1 Introduction

In our article “Reconsidering Counting Articles in Ranked Venues (CARV) as the Appropriate Evaluation Criteria for the Advancement of Democratic Discourse in the IS Field” (Cuellar, Truex, & Takeda, 2019) we argue that, for the IS field to advance its knowledge, the field needs a free and open discourse in which scholars can hear and fairly consider all ideas. We argue that the method used to evaluate scholarly output represents one important determinant of an open discourse. We term the dominant method of evaluating published scholarly output which restricts scholarly output to published research in selected venues, CARV (counting articles in ranked venues). Further, we argue CARV adopts an underlying assumption that the publication venue itself indicates an article’s “quality”. We suggest CARV, as a primary evaluative measure, is problematic because: 1) the concept of quality it purports to measure is implicit and undertheorized and, thus, cannot be operationalized, 2) CARV is only a single and partial measure that focuses solely on publication output, and 3) venue rankings have serious flaws that result in bad data and, thus, bad decision making. Accordingly, relying on CARV as a dominant evaluative measure creates distortions and inhibits a free and open discourse. We argue that any alternative method to ameliorate these issues should produce easy-to-compute profiles of measures that assess a construct for scholarly output other than the current poorly theorized notions of quality. This new method should be founded on a well-defined theory base. Any replacement methodology should also reduce the dependence on publishing in any particular journal. As an example of such a method, we suggest the scholarly capital model (SCM) (Cuellar, Takeda, Vidgen, & Truex, 2016).

We thank Karlheinz Kautz for organizing this CAIS debate issue. We also thank the authors of four response/critique articles and for their thoughtful and challenging comments. Two response articles had multiple authors: Subhashish Samaddar and Samir Chattarjee (2019) and Claudia Loebbecke, Bob Galliers, and Cristoph Rosenkrantz (2019). The other two articles had individual authors: Alexander Serenko (2019) and Rick Anderson (2019) (from the allied information science field). Each response article provides challenges and critical concerns to “stoke “the fires of the debate” (Loebbecke et al., 2019, p. 5).

As one might expect, no article universally accepted our precise position. The four critique articles span from dismissive to highly enthusiastic. Rick Anderson (2019) quite heavily criticizes our project and challenges our ontological and epistemological underpinnings and our findings and recommendations. The remaining articles concur with part of our critique of CARV as problematic and “gameable” but vary in how they treat our recommendations. Loebbecke et al. (2019) dismiss our assertion that democratic discourse is a desirable aspect of academic inquiry and asserts the notion that our critical theoretical philosophical framing speaks only to a small minority of the academy. Serenko (2019) and Samaddar and Chattarjee (2019) agree with our key critiques of CARV and go so far as to offer extensions or enhancements to our proposed portfolio approach in the SCM to incorporate other aspects of knowledge uptake. Serenko (2019) proposes to extend the SCM by suggesting a way to add practitioner’s intellectual capital to the analysis. Samaddar and Chattarjee (2019) agree that we need a free and open discourse for the field to advance but argue we confound individual research contribution (IRC) with the field research discourse (FRD). They argue CARV impacts IRC but not FRD. They provide an alternative proposal to supplement or substitute for CARV. They argue that any method that does not include FRD would be flawed.

Turning to the most severe critiques, first, Loebbecke et al. (2019) argue, in contrast to our assertions, that CARV does not purport to assess research output quality and, thus, does not limit the field’s quality or growth. They posit that any substitute evaluative model would simply just change the rules but not alter the game. They argue all academics enter the field knowing the rules of “publish or perish” and should, therefore, be content to “play the game” by those rules. Although Loebbecke et al. (2019) acknowledge CARV is not ideal and, in fact, concur with many of our observations about CARV’s flaws, they—speaking as masters of the CARV game—accept the status quo and do not think CARV, as the dominant procedure, represents a threat to the field’s advancement. To the extent CARV needs any changes, they argue that those “on top” need to determine them. Second, Anderson (2019) contests that the field even needs a free and open discourse to be advanced and he disputes the way in which we assess the flaws of the CARV system. He clearly rejects our position (i.e., that there does not exist a clear and generally accepted definition of scholarly output quality) and says that scholars do in fact share a common definition of quality that they employ consistently across all journals. He enumerates attributes that he asserts scholars to universally hold to prove his claim. He believes to adopt the SCM and a portfolio approach to measure a scholar’s intellectual capital versus a single metric would move the field in the wrong direction.
The SCM, he argues, can be gamed and focuses on the wrong areas. Finally, Anderson (2019) argues that academic deans and P&T evaluators can and do assess the quality of a candidate's research prima facie.

The rejoinder articles raise too many issues to address individually, so we look for common themes and address them in terms of: 1) what we need to amplify, clarify, or correct; 2) our responses to disagreements; and 3) needed enhancements, extensions, and alternative approaches to the SCM. We close the article by discussing the project to this point.

2 Amplifications, Clarifications, and Corrections

In reading the rejoinders, we recognize that we need to explain some ideas and concepts more fully and correct some misunderstandings about our points. We do so in this section.

2.1 Consensus: CARV is Not a Good Evaluative Mechanism and Needs to be Replaced

First, we note that three of the four responding articles agree CARV is not a good evaluative mechanism for scholarly output. In addition, all of the IS respondents agree with this notion. Serenko (2019) says that using journal lists as a proxy for quality has created "many horror stories" in research evaluation when evaluators "blindly" apply journal-ranking lists.

Samaddar and Chatterjee (2019) state that P&T committees misuse CARV when they use it as a single indicator for quality. They suggest this error occurs because committee members neglect their duty. They see this neglect as having spread to those mechanisms that should provide a different perspective such as external evaluators and has even entered the grant review process, which has amplified the issues with CARV. Samaddar and Chatterjee (2019) suggest "a CARV-free world may be the best for P&T" (p. 206).

Drawing on Adler and Harzing (2009) and Mingers and Willmott (2013), Loebbecke et al. (2019) describe CARV as "partially inconsistent, volatile, and in some ways inherently unfair given that it encourages individual self-interest and can undermine good scholarship" (p. 211). Loebbecke et al. (2019) also indicate that they believe that "a new method will replace CARV in the not so distant future" (p. 210), but new mechanisms will not do much better or be more accepted than CARV. Such proposals, they assert, should come from the "top" (i.e., senior scholars and leading research schools).

Only Anderson (2019) fully supports CARV and argues that it is a:

> reasonably reliable indicator; one can reasonably see publication in a journal that has established a strong reputation for selecting high-quality articles by means of peer review and rigorous editorial oversight as a solid (if not perfect) indication that the author has done high-quality scholarly work. (p. 230)

2.2 What is a Free and Open Discourse?

In the introduction to our précis article, we argue that, for "an academic field to advance, scholars must be able to freely and openly exchange ideas" and that mechanisms that restricted scholars from hearing ideas in the field would retard its development. This raised a number of objections and questions from the rejoinder authors. Anderson (2019) questioned "how 'free and open' the exchange must be" (p. 228) and what it means for ideas to be restricted? At the same time, Loebbecke et al. (2019) ask how we measure growth and question what it means for the field to advance or develop.

Most assuredly we do NOT take the position Anderson (2019) asserts; namely, that a free, open, and democratic discourse means anything goes in sense of allowing "unsubstantiated" or "biased noise" (p. 229). We agree with Anderson’s (2019) argument that "without some kind of filtering for coherence, basic credibility, and methodological rigor, the scientific discourse in any field runs the risk of becoming confounded by rampant nonsense" (p. 229). However, we do not accept his assertion that, res judicata, positivist “normal science” defines coherence and rigor. Rather, we argue for a disciplined metatheoretical pluralism. Articles may deal with any topic in the field, use any methodology (established or novel), write from any set of metatheoretical commitments, and argue for ideas and concepts that fall outside the mainstream or “standard paradigm”, strain credibility, or even seem offensive. All articles should have the opportunity to be heard. Of course, one needs to seriously consider some conditions in that discourse.
The work must rigorously conform to the metatheoretical commitments (philosophical paradigm) it espouses, rigorously execute the methodologies it employs, and interpret findings in light of its metatheoretic commitments. As we discuss in our précis article, this open, democratic discourse is available to all individuals who can participate at all levels regardless of who they are without privilege or prejudice as long as they commit to participate in an honest truth-seeking enterprise (Cuellar, Truex, & Takeda, 2018) versus being rejected out of hand as sui generis not conforming to mainstream notions.

2.3 What Does it Mean for the “Field to Advance”?

Loebbecke et al. (2019) ask: “How do we measure growth?” (p. 212). They wonder if we do so via number of manuscripts, colleagues in academic positions, or number of degree programs. They answer the question by noting that scholars and other actors outside a field need to respect it for it to grow, and growth occurs when a field adds people, content, and quality beyond what it already contains. We did not mean any such structural growth since we consider them political concerns. Rather, by growth, we mean the intellectual ability to describe and explain its subject matter content. We believe that a field grows or advances when it achieves greater conceptual clarity, provides more extensive and efficacious ability to explain phenomena, and provides a greater ability to direct practice to achieve more efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, we argue that the field needs to develop a greater ability to conceptualize phenomena, explain them, and provide direction to practice allowing scholars to have access to all ideas, even the wild and crazy, as long as the ideas exhibit a disciplined metatheoretical commitment.

2.4 What Does CARV Assess?

Loebbecke et al. (2019) argue CARV does not and never has evaluated article “quality”. Rather, CARV provides “guidance” to scholars as to where to publish their work and actually measures a scholar’s ability to play the “IS field’s publication game”. We do not concur. Nor does Anderson (2019), who vociferously argues that evaluators use CARV to measure the quality of an author’s research “as measured by its acceptance into publishing venues with a strong reputation for selecting significant, well-designed, responsibly interpreted, carefully written articles” (p. 232).

We found evidence in the literature clearly indicating that evaluators use CARV as a surrogate for the quality of articles based on their placement in ranked venues. To that point, we reviewed 39 articles in the IS field that have assessed research output and found these articles used the term “quality” for the research output they assessed (Cuellar, Truex, & Takeda, 2016a). Some examples include Athey and Plotnik (2000), Barnes (2005), Clarke (2008), Dean, Lowry, and Humphries (2011), Dennis, Valacich, Fuller, and Schneider (2006), and Katerattanakul and Hong (2003). Each of these articles assesses the concept of “journal quality”. Harzing (2018) maintains a list purported to rank journals as to their “quality”. The journal-ranking research stream supports the notion that CARV represents a surrogate measure for scholarly quality.

2.5 The Connection between CARV and the Field’s Advancement

Samaddar and Chatterjee (2019) assert that we argue that CARV assesses the field’s research discourse. No, rather, we see CARV as having an indirect effect on the field’s advancement as follows: CARV assesses individual research contribution (IRC), which, in turn, impacts the field research discourse (FRD). In other words:

\[ \text{CARV} \rightarrow \text{IRC} \rightarrow \text{FRD}. \]

To be clear, we agree with Loebbecke et al. (2019) and argue that CARV, by its very nature, provides “guidance” (irony intended) to scholars as to where and how to publish. As an evaluative mechanism, CARV has performative effects on what scholars choose to research, the methodologies they follow, and how they make their arguments. The implicit argument goes: publish on the list and it will be easier for you attain your desired goal whether it be promotion, tenure, funding, and so on. However, attempting to publish on “the list”, in turn subjects a scholar to the demands of the reviewers and editors pressuring authors to conform to the editors’ and reviewers’ desires in order publish the work (Bedeian, 2004). These demands change the authorial voice and guide authors toward established forms of thought, theory, and methodology; toward what Grover and Lyytinen (2015) called “epistemic scripts”. In turn, the negotiation between reviewers and authors and authors’ conformance that often results diminishes the novel
concepts and methodologies in the field and, thus, hinders the field from advancing (Mingers & Willmott, 2013). The SCM reduces, if not eliminates, these pressures with the attendant performative effects on the field by decentering the publication venue by making the venue one of several measures. Eliminating these pressures allows scholars more freedom to pursue novel topics and methodologies that foster a more democratic discourse.

2.6  Using the SCM

Loebbecke et al. (2019) mistakenly assert that we require evaluators to rigidly apply all nine indices in the SCM, for all candidates, for all purposes, and for all institutions:

* A fixed algorithm that does not allow for parameterization or configuration does not consider different needs. The idea that SCM implies—that all committees weigh the different data points for all candidates and decision situations in the same pre-coded way—seems neither wanted nor generally helpful or realistic. (p. 213)

Here, they misunderstand how we believe one could affirmatively use the SCM. We see the SCM as an adaptable and configurable portfolio of assets that individual institutions could tailor to their needs to make specific decisions for a specific purpose. For example, for P&T purposes, a teaching-oriented school would weigh the elements differently to how a research-oriented school might weigh them. Additionally, a school might choose to lay more stress on influence and venue representation than connectedness. We emphasize each school must establish for itself the configuration of the SCM components for its specific situation and needs.

2.7  Misleadingly Citing Sources

Anderson’s (2019) rejoinder says we have used sources to support points the original authors do not support. He refers to our statement that “no theory of quality or operationalization of quality for academic literature exists” (Cuellar et al., 2019, p. 194), which we support with statements from Dean et al. (2011), Locke and Lowe (2002), and Straub and Anderson (2010). He then goes on to claim our statement lacks validity because it violates what each of the authors have said.

Anderson (2019) is incorrect. We return to the original works to show why. For instance, Dean et al. (2011, p. 2) state “no universally accepted method exists for determining the quality of any given journal”. This statement directly supports our contention that no established operationalization of the concept of journal quality exists.

Similarly, Anderson (2019) misinterprets Locke and Lowe (2002) to argue that “there is a pervasive view of how best to measure journal quality” (p. 230). However, in actuality, Locke and Lowe describe an implicitly defined transcendent view of how best to measure journal quality that “has tended to concentrate on perception and citation studies” (Locke & Howe, 2002, p. 46). They further say:

* An overarching difficulty is our inability to capture what quality means…. Even if we were able to capture the concept it is not likely that we could either communicate it through the textual confines of a perception based study nor that we could somehow achieve consensus across the academic accounting community. (p. 47)

In their conclusion, Locke and Lowe (2002) state: “We see quality as a very poorly understood concept in this area and would like to see our research contribute to a reassessment…of just how it is constituted” (p. 63, emphasis added) and that “all this means that it remains very hard to achieve any common agreement on how journal quality is ‘really’ constituted” (p. 63).

Finally, referencing Straub and Anderson (2010), Anderson (2019) asserts “a theory and operationalization of quality exists for academic journals, but their entire article reviews the various criteria by which researchers currently assess quality and critically evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each one” (p. 230). We do not concur with Anderson’s (2019) interpretation. Straub and Anderson, rather than cite the literature or reference a theory of quality, which they would have done if one existed, say: “If we put on our researcher hats and ask ourselves what we mean by the construct of journal quality” (p. iv. emphasis added) and “ruminate about journal quality as an abstraction” (p. iv). Their continued discussion indicates they do not believe an agreed standard exists. On their last page (p. x), they provide some ideas for how one may develop the construct of quality, which further indicates that they do not believe a generally accepted construct of quality exists.
To summarize, we have correctly interpreted and cited the ideas held in Dean et al. (2011), Locke and Lowe (2002), and Straub and Anderson (2010). The sources provide support for our contention that neither a generally accepted formal theory nor an operationalization of research output quality exists.

3 Disagreements and Responses

In this section, we move on to respond to the disagreements that the respondents make to our article.

3.1 Loebbecke et al. (2019)

Intended or not, Loebbecke et al. (2019) defend the established order. They argue the SCM opens up a Pandora’s Box and would not change the game but only alter the game’s rules. They argue for the present game because CARV presents a relatively stable, if imperfect, target metric (i.e., status quo by privileging stability). On the other hand, they fault the SCM for instability because the SCM changes as a scholar produces various contributions and the field reacts to those contributions. Moreover, they also assert all scholars knew the rules of the game well when they joined the academy.

Despite defending the established order, Loebbecke et al. (2019) admit CARV constitutes an imperfect system that will likely soon change. Using arguments from Adler and Harzing (2009) and Mingers and Willmott (2013), they identify issues with the CARV system as follows:

As with any ranking system, CARV is partially inconsistent, volatile, and, in some ways, inherently unfair given that it encourages individual self-interest and can undermine good scholarship (p. 211)

[A] CARV-relevant A+ publication simply indicates that the (A+) authors have mastered the “IS field’s publication game” as assessed by experts who their colleagues in the IS field have nominated (EICs, SEs, reviewers, etc.) (p. 211).

After acknowledging CARV’s flaws and need to change, they then tip their power-laden hegemonic hand and assert that any efforts to “change evaluation or governance regimes should come from a position of strength—from IS researchers who are at the ‘top’” (p. 214). Loebbecke et al. (2019) also dismiss our critical social theoretic lens and, in particular, the notion of a democratic discourse (Mingers & Willmott, 2013) in saying our reference to these notions “plays into the hands of a rather small group of critical IS researchers” and runs “seems conflict with growing the community” (p. 213). Moreover, they postulate positivistic and technically oriented design science researchers would not buy into the notion.

We have in other places (including our debate précis article) provided an argument about how using the SCM would change the game and not simply the rules as Loebbecke et al. (2019) suggest. We also challenge their assertion that everyone knows the game before entering the field. By asserting that everyone knew the game before entering the field, they, as admitted and recognized masters of the game, argue from a position of an established elite using what Anderson (2019) refers to as “hegemonic tools that the powerful apply in an attempt to retain their privilege” (p. 228). In contrast to their assertion, we hold that young scholars do not inherently know the rules of the game. The doctoral program is an apprenticeship in which the apprentice scholar undergoes training in the entire paradigm(s) of academic research, which includes the concept of the importance of publication venue. Apprentice scholars only learn the rules as they interact with the social structures that control publication and P&T. Only then, and not at the time of entering a doctoral program or before, do they truly understand the notion of “publish or perish” and that publish means to publish in the “right” journals.

Loebbecke et al.’s (2019) argument that any change to the evaluation system should come from the top is problematic. The history of the last century is replete with examples of cultural and political change driven not from the top but from the bottom resisted by those holding the reins of power. What then is the warrant for believing that any meaningful change to evaluative processes would come from the top? Those who have concluded CARV is hegemonic and disempowering need to create and offer alternatives more conducive to a democratic discourse.

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1 In previous published work, we have sought for a definition of quality from other scholarly fields and shown how the IS literature has assumed an implicitly defined, transcendent form of quality (e.g., “I know it when I see it” (Cuellar, Takeda, & Truex, 2016a)), a form that many researchers in other disciplines have largely criticized as naïve and insufficient. No generally accepted, formal theory or operationalization of quality for assessing research output in the IS field exists. Each person relies on their own implicit, subjective, path-dependent notion of quality.
In challenging our use of critical theory, Loebbecke et al. (2019) doubt “whether technically oriented design scientists or positivistic researchers [would] buy into the importance of democratic discourse and TCA-based grounding” (p. 213). In response, we note that Samaddar and Chatterjee (2019)—the latter a design science scholar (Hevner and Chatterjee, 2010)—offer support and extensions to the SCM in their rejoinder precisely because it broadens the field by admitting different and “more relevant” measures of a scholar’s contributions to the field, such as patents and technical articles. In fact, Loebbecke et al.’s (2019) own recommendations (p. 55) argue for opening up the field to interdisciplinary works and different literature bases beyond philosophical groundings—a wider and more inclusive discourse. Indeed, Walsham’s (2002) argument that scholarship and publication represents a conversation (i.e., a discourse) and that publishing represents the only way to meaningfully participate in it informs our position. If the powerful circumscribe the opportunity to publish, then they distort the discourse and the field loses. In fact, Loebbecke et al.’s (2019) position the powerful ought to choose and reify the very rules by which they have gained power is precisely one reason why a critical theoretic lens is appropriate.

### 3.2 Anderson’s (2019) Critique

At the beginning of Anderson’s (2019) article, he announces two non-negotiable boundary conditions on what he considers as good science. These conditions, drawn from logical positivism, would limit what one considered science only to those methodologies that accord with its scientific principles (Klein & Lyytinen, 1985). The IS field has rejected this limitation since the early 90s, and we hold that such a limitation would harm the field’s development. Anderson (2019) gives little recognition of the field’s 30 years of progress (e.g., Kaplan & Duchon, 1988; Klein & Myers, 1999; Lee, 1989; Markus & Lee, 1999; Myers & Klein, 2011; Trauth & Jessup, 2000; Vessey, Ramesh, & Glass, 2002; Walsham, 1995). To consider only ideas that accord with positivistic principles as valid, limits the ideas and perspectives available to the field by inevitably retarding its progress.

We advocate for a free and open discourse of work bound by disciplined metatheoretic commitments. In this context, we argue that, as a field, we should “let a thousand flowers bloom” (Walsham, 2005) so that we can access new ideas, methodologies, and viewpoints to let the field progress as rapidly as possible. We argue that the field’s members, either individually or in research groups, can critically evaluate the arguments of articles and do not need to rely on the opinions of “experts”. Thus, we hold Anderson (2019) should be able to present his ideas in a positivist paradigm and we should be able to present ours using critical theory and the field should be able to decide as to who presents the best argument. We hold that restricting one paradigm or another a priori harms the field and inhibits scientific progress. We contend only that the article should rigorously follow its metatheoretic commitments (i.e., positivist articles should be good positivist articles that rigorously hold to positivist commitments and practice; critical theory articles should be good critical theory articles that rigorously hold to critical theory commitments and practice). In either case, the chosen research method should be appropriate for the research question and consistent with the theoretical framing (Holmström & Truex, 2011; Truex, Holmstrom, & Keil, 2006).

Based in his positivist meta-theoretic commitments, Anderson’s (2019) essential position seems to be:

> one can reasonably see publication in a journal that has established a strong reputation for selecting high-quality articles by means of peer review and rigorous editorial oversight as a solid (if not perfect) indication that the author has done high-quality scholarly work. (p. 230)

Thus, Anderson (2019) rejects our contention that CARV as a single metric is limited, partial, and inconsistent and insists on relying on journals’ reputation to overcome its limitations. He even goes on to suggest CARV as being possibly a “perfect” system. Anderson (2019) rejects, based on his positivist commitments, the idea that the review process itself changes the content of articles and relies on “subjective judgment and interpretation” (p. 229). Anderson (2019) relies on a transcendent view of quality to justify the idea that a pervasive theory of quality exists. He argues without any citation or empirical evidence that a clear and widely accepted set of “quality markers” exist that, taken as a whole, constitute an academic article’s quality. He asserts these markers, themselves each a subjective qualitative measure, as if each of these markers were not subject to debate, judgment calls, and social agreement. We suggest that his position might be better termed a transcendent appropriation of the term quality sans theoretical evidence (or, simply, TASTE).

Next, Anderson (2019) disputes our claim that CARV relies on distorted data. He asserts we have insufficiently defended our assumptions. To this statement, we would point the reader a series of published empirical studies in which we lay out our analysis (Cuellar et al., 2016a; Cuellar, Truex, &...
Takeda, 2016c). Based on a literature review, we determined that one can best conceptualize quality as “fitness for use” (Cuellar et al., 2016a). We operationalized quality using citations while understanding citations do not perfectly measure quality (Tahamtan, Alshar, & Ahmdzadeh, 2016). Using this proxy, we conducted empirical tests and found numerous type 1 and 2 errors in journal list classifications and found the journals themselves to not consistently report quality (Cuellar et al., 2016c). This finding parallels similar results that Singh, Haddad, and Chow (2007) found in the management field.

Finally, Anderson (2019) attacks the SCM. His objection lies in evaluating scholars based on capital rather than quality. He argues quality as measured by publication in journals represents a better evaluation criterion than scholarly capital. He misunderstands what the SCM measures. The SCM measures a complex construct called scholarly capital formed by scholars’ ability to influence the field with their ideas, their ability to form research relationships with others central to the field, and their ability to publish in venues central to the field. These abilities comprise the capital a scholar builds and can bring to their organization in terms of research. We argue that these abilities have more use to an organization than the mythical idea of publication quality. Scholars with high scholarly capital have more importance to an organization in terms of faculty recruitment, grant money acquisition, or organizational prestige than simply “high-quality” articles. From this perspective, the SCM represents a much richer measure than CARV to measure scholarly research ability.

4 Enhancements, Extensions, and Alternative Approaches to the SCM

We note two rejoinder articles make proposals to extend or provide alternatives to the SCM. Both articles emphasize the need to consider the contribution to practitioner and societal goals.

Serenko (2019) suggests we add three measures of practical capital to the SCM: knowledge outreach, knowledge impact, and community engagement. Knowledge outreach “refers to the scholar’s direct contribution to non-academic forums, such as trade magazines, practitioner journals, …and so on” and “represents the body of knowledge that the scholar has created in practitioner-oriented literature” (p. 219). Therefore, knowledge outreach refers to publications in practitioner-focused venues. Knowledge impact, “a scholar’s indirect contribution to public knowledge in a non-academic domain when others use the scholar’s works to extend the professional body of knowledge” (p. 219), is the correlate to ideational influence, but only in the practitioner sphere. Community engagement refers to “the breadth and depth of a scholar’s connections with members of the non-academic sector” (p. 220). It involves such activities as consulting and engaging with practitioner organizations. Therefore, community engagement is the correlate of connectedness but only in the practitioner sphere. Serenko (2019) also provides actionable advice on how to use the SCM and how it should be adopted in academia.

Samaddar and Chatterjee (2019), who have concerns about article influence and influence beyond academia, express a similar position. They offer a multi-dimensional measure of IS research influence. Similar to Serenko (2019), they want to extend the measurement beyond academia to include industry/practice metrics and societal metrics.

We agree with the intention and desirability of both Serenko’s (2019) and Samaddar and Chatterjee’s (2019) proposals. In fact, we have thought to address these concepts in subsequent work to extend the SCM to include a set of measures of how individuals outside academia actually apply a scholar’s ideas. We welcome Serenko’s (2019) and Samaddar and Chatterjee’s (2019) proposal of a set of such measures. Clearly, IS scholars should work with and impact practitioners and society at large. We envisioned the SCM not as the end point in this research but as a beginning and a framework to which researchers could add other areas of capital. We encourage Serenko (2019) and Samaddar and Chatterjee (2019) to continue their work in these areas and invite others to extend the SCM to include other areas of capital that might be of interest in evaluating scholars.

5 Conclusion

The method of scholarly evaluation remains an unsettled topic, and we most emphatically do NOT argue for closure via a definitional slight-of-hand or via substituting tools as surrogate notions. CARV as a simplistic single metric has flaws: it is inconsistent, circularly reasoned, and subject to power distortions by those who set the game rules and, therefore, control and inhibit (if not close) the discourse as to what research questions, theories, or investigation methods may become relevant. Instead, we argue for a disciplined metatheoretical pluralism that provides all ideas and methodologies full and proper
consideration. In terms of scholarly evaluation, we advance the SCM, as a portfolio of measures, as an alternative to CARV. The SCM includes other factors and work products of scholarly work and allows decision makers the opportunity to set threshold characteristics for developing an academic team rather than depending on a single flawed and mindless measure.
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