

# Editorial Commentary

**“RESEARCH MEANS CONVERSATION”.** Academic scholars typically begin participating in, and contributing to, a conversation by crafting a comprehensive and in-depth treatise on a specific topic, widely referred to as a thesis or dissertation. The term *thesis* is derived from the Greek *θέσις*, which has the meaning of “something put forth”, and *dissertation* comes from the Latin *dissertātiō*, which means “path”. By delving into a specific topic and the related literature, young IB scholars have the exciting opportunity to become experts on this topic, build on and constructively criticize extant research, reveal new findings and develop new insights, and so “put forth” a “path” for a fresh conversation on the topic.

There are cross-country differences as to the type and nature of a thesis or dissertation. In the US and the UK, for example, the terms *thesis* and *dissertation* are used interchangeably. In France, a doctoral treatise is called a *thèse*, while the word *dissertation* is reserved for shorter, typically more generic academic treatises of less than 2,000 words. In Germany, a thesis is required to achieve an undergraduate or master’s degree and a dissertation is called *Doktorarbeit*, which is typically followed by another, independently crafted dissertation called *Habilitationsschrift*, a requirement for the Habilitation (Latin: *habilis*) that also exists in other European and Central Asian countries, the Caucasus region as well as in parts of Brazil, where it is referred to as *Livre-docência*.

Doctoral dissertations or theses also differ in their length, most with hundreds of pages and an equal number of references but others being rather the size of a conference paper, such as the one crafted by John F. Nash, Jr. titled “Non-Cooperative Games” (1950, Princeton University). Nash’s dissertation consists of 29 pages (including abstract and table of contents), builds on a total of two references (one of the two being a proceedings paper by John Nash himself) and is filled with handwritten equations, calculations and even handwritten editorial corrections of words misspelled by the typewriter. This short dissertation introduced the foundations for the “Nash equilibrium”, a crucial concept in game theory for which Nash won the 1994 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

As the aforementioned example also illustrates, it may take time until the contributions of a thesis or dissertation are recognized in a specific field of study. This may be related to the publication, and thus wide dissemination, of a thesis or dissertation. Some theses and dissertations are published in their entirety as books, e.g., in several European countries where books have a similar or higher standing than journal articles. In the US, publications in journal articles are typically more highly valued and dissertations or theses are often structured in a 3-essay format to more readily and quickly publish parts thereof in academic journals. Other dissertations are not published until years or decades later. For example, the dissertation by Stephen H. Hymer titled “The International Operations of National Firms: A Study of Direct Foreign Investment” was completed in 1960 but not published until 1976, when Charles P. Kindleberger, Hymer’s doctoral advisor, published it posthumously due to Hymer’s untimely, accidental death. Since then, Hymer’s dissertation research has made a significant impact on the IB field.



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Notwithstanding these cross-country differences in type, nature, page count and publication date of a thesis or dissertation, what matters most is the quality and contribution to a respective academic field of study. Starting in 1986, the Academy of International Business has honored the best dissertations in international business on an annual basis by awarding the AIB Dissertation Award. All dissertations in the field of IB written in a given year at universities around the world qualify for the award, and submitted dissertations are perused and evaluated by an AIB dissertation award committee that typically selects four (and starting with this year's award, five) finalists. Finalists are invited by the AIB to its annual conference to present their work to the award committee and conference participants in an open AIB dissertation award presentation session. The winner is announced at the conference-concluding annual AIB awards ceremony and business meeting. The AIB dissertation award was named after Richard N. Farmer for the past 26 years and, starting this year, has been named after Peter J. Buckley and Mark Casson.

With this first special AIB Insights issue dedicated to the AIB Dissertation Award, we aim to recognize the history of the award in more than a quarter century of existence and to draw attention to the innovative dissertation research of this year's award finalists. As a former AIB dissertation awardee, the associate editor of this journal is particularly excited about the great support of the AIB executive board for the initiative to publish this special issue and, on behalf of this year's as well as former awardees and award finalists, would like to thank the board, the founding and subsequent award committee members and sponsors for their great efforts and support of this award.

The special issue starts out with an article by Alan Rugman, who provides a brief history of the AIB dissertation award. Alan Rugman was elected to the AIB Board in 1989, served as AIB program chair in 1990 and joined the AIB Dissertation Award committee in 1992. He was Director of the Indiana University CIBER in 2002 when the AIB Executive Board requested sponsorship of the Richard N. Farmer Award. Due to Alan Rugman's support and leadership, Indiana University took over the sponsorship of the award in that year and continued to do so for a number of years. He also was instrumental in securing the funding for the newly named Peter J. Buckley and Mark Casson AIB Doctoral Dissertation Award from the University of Reading and the University of Leeds. The second article comprises a summary of this year's award-winning dissertation titled "Networks of Influence: Implementing Politically Sustainable Multinational Stakeholder Strategies" by Lite J. Nartey. The following articles include the dissertation summaries of the four award finalists: Hamid Akbari, Elena Kulchina, Quyen T.K. Nguyen and Sanjay Patnaik (who are listed in alphabetical order).

Research means conversation, and we hope that the publication of this special issue will facilitate fresh and fruitful conversations on the respective topics by drawing attention to the innovative and thought-provoking dissertation research of this year's award winner and finalists.

Congratulations to the 2013 awardee and finalists for their significant accomplishment!

## References

- Hymer, S. H. 1960. *The International Operations of National Firms: A Study of Direct Foreign Investment*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Published posthumously 1976. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nash, J. F. 1950. *Non-Cooperative Games*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University.