

ACADEMIC-PRACTITIONER COLLABORATION NEED NOT REQUIRE JOINT OR RELEVANT RESEARCH: TOWARD A RELATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP OF INTEGRATION

JEAN M. BARTUNEK
Boston College

Consider the photo in Figure 1. Think of it as depicting, on its not-so-parallel poles, academic and practitioner communities, solid, separate, and challenging for each other to penetrate. Look at the lone person 20 meters above the ground, in liminal space, taking steps towards bridging the gap between the poles. Think about the difficulty that person experiences in trying to span such boundaries. Also consider the importance of the person's efforts and the potential benefits that both communities might accrue from those actions.

The following story gives a context for my reflections on the photo:

In March 2007, I had an instructive, if sobering, experience. I was participating in a conference, Nexus for Change (nexusforchange.org), the bulk of whose attendees were designers and facilitators of “large group” or “whole systems” planned change interventions (Bunker & Alban, 2006; Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007).

At the conference, I gave a talk to a few of the participants about how external researchers and designers/facilitators of such interventions can collaborate to study the effectiveness of the interventions using a joint insider/outsider research approach (Bartunek & Louis, 1996). One of the people who attended that talk was a woman who has designed a successful large group intervention and who took several important leadership roles in conjunction with the conference. I was very impressed with her initiative, creativity, and considerable competence. She came to my talk because recent changes in funding requirements required her to demonstrate successful outcomes of her intervention. Thus, she was interested in learning something about research that could help her explore outcomes.

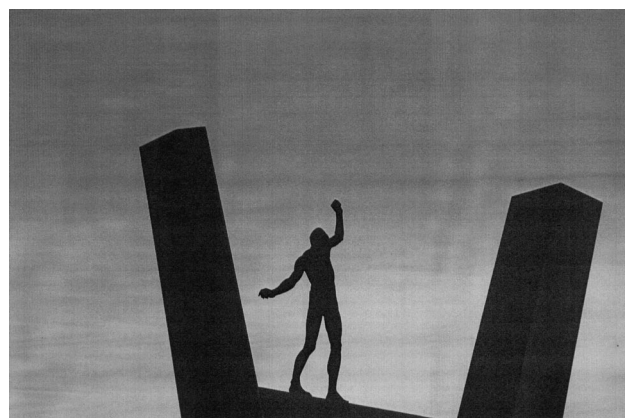
But while she was at my talk, she acted differ-

ently and less confidently than she had otherwise at the conference. She mentioned that she had taken a research methods class once and had barely passed it. Terms like “research question” did not have intuitive meaning for her, but instead evoked anxiety. Certainly, the language of independent, dependent, and mediating and moderating variables was foreign to how she designed or facilitated her large group intervention; she thought much more holistically. I drew a causal model, complete with boxes and arrows, regarding a possible study of the effectiveness of her intervention. But this was not, for her and for several other attendees at the talk, a familiar or helpful way of thinking.

How do we get from this type of experience to relationships that are productive for both practitioners and management scholars? What steps can be taken to bridge the gap that separated her and me (Figure 1)? How can our research have a positive impact on her rather than evoking anxiety? How can her experience have a positive impact on us as management scholars? It is questions like these to which I am responding in this essay.

How management research might have an impact on management practice has been of concern since at least the beginning of *AMJ* in 1958 (cf. Mowday,

FIGURE 1
The Space in Between



Source: Photo by Reut Livne-Tarandach (Boston College doctoral student), April 2004.

I am very grateful to Billie Alban, Stu Albert, John Austin, Barbara Bunker, Denny Gioia, Louis Glynn, Rita Kowalski, Joe Mahoney, Janice Molloy, Reut Livne-Tarandach, Chris Poulson, Linda Putnam, Sara Rynes, and Andy Van de Ven for their many helpful suggestions and comments on drafts of this essay.

1997), and multiple answers have been given in the Academy throughout the past 50 years. One of these responses is the *Academy of Management Executive* and its replacement journal, *Academy of Management Perspectives*. Another is the Academy's employing Ben Haimowitz as our public relations director, which has been accompanied by increasing attention over the years to making our work known to others through articles in newspapers and other media. The Academy's Web site now makes news briefs available to others and enables members to be aware of the latest media coverage. Shapiro, Kirkman, and Courtney (2007) recently wrote a "From the Editors" paper in *AMJ* about complications associated with translating research findings for practitioners. Several presidents of the Academy (e.g. Bartunek, 2003; Hambrick, 1994; Huff, 2000; Van de Ven, 2002) focused on this topic in their presidential addresses. Recently Denise Rousseau (2006) spoke in her presidential address about the importance of evidence-based management, and the Academy is cosponsoring a series of conferences on this topic in 2007 and 2008. In our journals, Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) have written about engaged scholarship, and Rynes, Bartunek, and Daft (2001) coedited a special research forum on academic-practitioner knowledge translation. There have been multiple other responses as well.

In other words, the question of how our research can affect management practice has been a central question for the Academy for at least 50 years. Much of what the Academy does in this regard has been based primarily on the research its members conduct.

Of course, management practitioners have not been simply waiting for the past 50 years for management research to speak to them. Action research, a method in which, in theory at least, practitioners and academics collaborate to address important organizational issues and make scholarly contributions as a result, is alive and well. Practitioners as well as academics publish in journals such as *Action Research*, the *International Journal of Action Research*, and the *Journal of Organizational Change Management*. A wide variety of action research methods has been developed, and several of the large group/whole systems change methods build on these (Austin & Bartunek, 2003). There are practitioner-oriented doctoral programs on several continents. A second edition of a popular *Handbook of Collaborative Management Research* (Shani, Adler, Mohrman, Pasmore, & Stymne, 2008) has just been published. Some have initiated practitioner-oriented research approaches, for example, "Mode 2" (Tranfield & Shar-

key, 1998) and "design science" (Van Aken, 2004). This work is not always as rigorous as academics have come to expect in publications in *AMJ* and similar journals. But management practitioners do not always see rigorous methodologies as particularly relevant or helpful (Van de Ven, 2007).

I develop the remainder of this essay as follows: First, I explore a common method academics have for communicating practical advice, in the "implications for practice" we discuss in journal articles. I analyzed the implications for (management) practice in papers published in *AMJ* in 2006 to determine the type of advice that is most frequently given.

Then I examine the issue of researcher communication with practitioners. In particular, I focus on the role of emotion in such communication.

Drawing on these two sections of the essay, I then suggest that we need to stop thinking about research, even relevant research (Anderson, Herriot, & Hodgkinson, 2001), as the primary way that academics and practitioners join together and collaborate. Rather, we need to enlarge how we think about bridging academic-practitioner gaps. I propose that we expand Boyer's (1990) scholarship of integration to include academics' relationships with practitioners in ways that go well beyond research per se. That is, I propose that we develop a *relational* scholarship of integration.

HOW DO ACADEMICS WRITE FOR MANAGEMENT PRACTITIONERS?

The *AMJ* Web site, <http://www.aom.pace.edu/amjnew/>, states this: "To be published in *AMJ*, a manuscript must make strong empirical and theoretical contributions and *highlight the significance of those contributions to the management field*" (emphasis added). In practice, these contributions typically appear in a section near the end of *AMJ* papers that discusses implications for managers and/or practice.

To determine the kinds of contributions to practice typically provided in *AMJ*, I reviewed the 59 refereed articles published there during 2006 and searched for the terms "implication," "practic*" and/or "manage*." I found explicit discussions of implications for practice in 38 of the 59 articles. (This represented 64 percent of the refereed articles published. That many of the articles didn't include such a discussion is of interest in itself.) I then explored the types of advice typically offered as implications in these articles, considering only the advice given in at least 15 percent of the articles in which there were recommendations for practitio-

ners to be typical. Table 1 summarizes the most frequently given types of advice.

As Table 1 shows, a summary of the authors' study results was presented in 66 percent of the articles including implications for practice. For example, Barger and Grandey stated that, among other things: "this study provides evidence for the continued interest in encouraging service with a smile on the part of employees on the front lines. Even in brief encounters, maximal smiling by employees made customers respond similarly, and they perceived the employees as providing quality service and felt satisfied with their encounters overall" (2006: 1236).

Seventy-six percent of the articles that included implications for practice provided one or more specific recommendations for action. These recommendations were usually, though not always, based on the results of the reported studies. For example, building on their summary of their results, Barger and Grandey recommended, among other things, that "managers need to hire employees who are more likely to be genuinely positive and to foster a workplace that enhances authentic positive moods and expressions" (2006: 1236).

The management action that was recommended most frequently (in 38 percent of articles making recommendations) emphasized the importance of increasing managers' awareness of one or more phenomena (see Table 1). Articles used terms that suggested that managers and other practitioners need to *monitor* stakeholder demographic characteristics (Kassinis & Vafeas, 2006: 156), *understand* how to make effective governance decisions (Mayer, 2006: 82), be *cognizant* that HR practices

can be used to build human capital (Ployhart, Weekley, & Baughman, 2006: 674), and so forth.

Some of the articles (21 percent of those making recommendations) advocated some type of employee training. For example, "Supervisors of a heterogeneous workforce need to manage . . . the training and orientation for . . . tasks" (Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2006: 389) and "Another option may be to enhance or strengthen team interaction mental models and transactive memory through team training" (Ellis, 2006: 586). Seventeen percent of the articles making recommendations suggested that managers or other practitioners influence interactions among others in some way. For example, "employers could . . . encourage minisabbaticals that involve employees' spending time in other settings to facilitate the development of outside connections (Perry-Smith, 2006: 98) or "expend efforts in developing interorganizational trust" (Krishnan, Martin, & Noorderhaven, 2006: 909).

Another 17 percent of the articles making recommendations provided advice about how much heterogeneity employees should encounter, but unless management practitioners are capable of constructing their own contingency models, this advice might appear contradictory. Articles by Broschak and Davis-Blake (2006), Ployhart et al. (2006), and Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann (2006) raised cautions about the amount of heterogeneity employees should deal with, yet articles by Polzer, Crisp, Jarvenpaa, and Kim (2006) and Richter, West, van Dick, and Dawson (2006) called for greater heterogeneity.

For example, Broschak and Davis-Blake suggested that "managers should integrate nonstandard workers into ongoing work groups with caution" (2006: 388), and Ployhart et al. argued that "during the selection phase, managers must recognize that it is not better to hire or tolerate otherwise competent individuals who differ markedly from the unit average personality" (2006: 674). On the other hand, Richter et al. proposed that "practitioners who want to optimize team-based organizations should ensure that intergroup working is on a group's agenda, in order to combat "silo working" and foster employees' dual identification" (2006: 1267).

Obviously, the articles are dealing with a range of situations and varying types of heterogeneity. Nevertheless, it might still seem difficult to implement their advice in a consistent manner.

When considered as a whole, much of the advice given in the 2006 *AMJ* articles, not only advice about dealing with heterogeneity, is not easy for managers or other practitioners to apply. Recommendations to pay special attention to a phenome-

TABLE 1
Most Frequent Types of Statements Offered as Implications for Management Practice^a

Implications for Management Practice	Percentage of Articles Including This Material
Summaries of the research	66%
Recommendations for management practice	76
Increase awareness of phenomena	38
Provide training on some topic	21
Influence others' interactions	17
Increase/decrease heterogeneity among employees	17

^a The texts analyzed were in the 59 refereed articles published in *AMJ* in 2006. Thirty-eight (64%) of these articles explicitly discussed implications for practice. This table is based on those 38 articles.

non do not help a manager know what to do in response to it. Moreover, little of the advice includes rationales for intended actions, even though there are extensive conceptual rationales for the studies whose findings lead to the proposed actions (cf. Schulz & Hatch, 2005; Van de Ven, 2007: Ch. 8); that is, implications are typically suggested in a decontextualized, distant way. Some of the advice would appear to many readers to be contradictory, and some of it is simply hortatory.

The material described above raises questions about how authors of *AMJ* articles see themselves as communicating with managers and other practitioners in their articles. Do they expect management practitioners to read (this section of) the articles? How and how much are they trying to convince potential users of their research about its value and applicability? Is their communication style likely to be persuasive?

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION WITH PRACTITIONERS

The typical way that we as academics are accustomed to having an impact in scholarly writing is through the strength of our logic and our data (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2006); we find gaps of some kind, convince others of their importance, and then attempt to fill them in our work. Although this works for academic scholarship, it is not all there is to having an impact, and it is not likely to appeal to practitioners who are not particularly interested in, or aided by, filling scholarly holes.

Aristotle (1954; also see Green, 2004; Ramage & Bean, 1998; Van de Ven, 2007) distinguished among three types of rhetoric: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. *Logos* is what academic articles typically emphasize; it refers to the clarity and logic of an argument and its supporting evidence. Its impact is sometimes called an argument's logical appeal. *Ethos* refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of a writer or speaker, and is conveyed through the tone and style of a message as well as the writer's reputation. Its impact is sometimes called the argument's "ethical" appeal, or appeal based on credibility. *Pathos* is typically associated with an emotional appeal, though it more fully refers to helping the audience feel as the writer feels. It may best be conveyed through a story that can transform the abstractions of logic into something palpable and convey values, beliefs, understanding, and affect in an imaginative way that moves an audience to action.

While academic writing primarily focuses on *logos*, Aristotle argued that all three rhetorical devices need to be considered together. Moreover,

rhetoricians (e.g. Green, 2004; Poggi, 2005; Waddell, 1990) have argued that appeals to *pathos* are particularly influential in making an initial impact (although *ethos* may be most important over the long run). The importance of emotion to understanding has also been suggested by recent scientific findings (e.g., Seo & Barrett, 2007) that indicate that emotional experiences underlie and govern thinking and reasoning and may be crucial for decision-making ability. Thus, the emotions evoked by our scholarly writing affect how others respond to what we write.

The importance of emotion was underscored by some scholar-practitioners with whom I talked in preparation for writing this essay. When I asked them what would help management research have an impact on practice, they spontaneously replied that emotion was required. They discussed the value of dramatic studies (such as the Milgram obedience study and Zimbardo's prison study) that evoke emotion in and of themselves as well as the value of writing that has emotional components, includes narrative, and offers readers the possibility of seeing themselves in the situation described.

In multiple scholarly articles and in a recent trade book, Heath and his collaborators (e.g. Barber, Heath, & Odean, 2003; Berger & Heath, 2005; Heath, Bell, & Sternberg, 2001; Heath & Heath, 2007) have described ingenious studies regarding what it is that causes ideas to "stick." For example, Heath et al. found that ideas that endure "are selected and retained in the social environment in part based on their ability to tap emotions that are common across individuals" (2001: 1029). In their recent book, Heath and Heath (2007) summarized prior scholarly work to suggest that ideas that stick are those that are simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, and likely to be told as stories, a style of writing that in itself contributes to *pathos* in that it moves readers to feel as the author does.

Some management scholars (e.g., Frost, 1999; Gagliardi, 1999) have also argued that for theories to have an impact on others, they need to include a component of *pathos*. Karl Weick (1996, 1999, 2005) has been particularly strong in emphasizing the necessity of *pathos* if management scholars wish to have an impact on practitioners. For example, Weick (1999) wrote that in theories that are "moving," that matter to others, emotions play a strong role. So, he noted, do affirmations, statements that convey to an audience that something they thought or did is acceptable. People are more likely to respond positively to an argument that at least partially affirms them than an argument that disaffirms them. In common consultant parlance,

they are likely to respond more positively to language that wins both their hearts and minds.

Research on self-affirmation supports this latter argument. Several studies have shown that individuals seek and interpret information in ways that preserve a positive self-image (e.g., Alicke, LoSchiavo, Zerbst, & Zhang, 1997; Dunning, Perie, & Story, 1991). Thus, research that threatens a reader's self-image evokes negative emotions, but research that is affirming evokes more positive emotions. In other words, even if our writing does not explicitly include an emotional appeal, it may evoke practitioner affect based on how affirming it is.

Essentially, then, "practical implications" of scholarly articles may not have a positive impact, regardless of how relevant they are or how much they flow directly from the research that the articles report. They are typically presented in rather austere, decontextualized ways, despite the fact that the context out of which they have been developed is often very rich. They do not convey an appeal to pathos. They rarely affirm managers in any explicit way.

Perhaps they shouldn't be expected to do this. But a positive emotional connection with managers and other practitioners has to happen somewhere if researchers' contributions are to take hold in practice. If our relationship with practitioners centers primarily around "newsbriefs" on the AOM Web site or implications for practice proffered at the ends of articles, that relationship remains distant and one-sided, and it is unlikely to be very engaging.

It is possible for Academy researchers to develop much fuller relationships with practitioners than our research easily allows. Such relationships would be emotionally engaging and would offer expanded chances for researchers and practitioners to have mutually beneficial impacts on each other.

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION: BOYER'S SCHOLARSHIP OF INTEGRATION

One way to expand possibilities for academic-practitioner relationships is through Boyer's (1990) scholarship of integration. Boyer described this type of scholarship as including, among other things, scholars giving "meaning to isolated facts, putting them in perspective . . . making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating non-specialists too" (1990: 18). Some means that fit this category are textbooks, popular press books that address disciplinary and interdisciplinary topics, and talks on radio or television or to local organizations, alumni groups, or

high schools (Braxton, Luckey, & Helland, 2002). These all link with people and groups beyond the academic community in ways that do not deny the importance of rigorous research, but also go beyond standard research presentations and enable the possibility of emotional connections.

Many well-known management scholars engage in this type of scholarship. To give just a few examples, Dick Scott (2006) has found the writing of textbooks very important for his own scholarly development, Bob Sutton is one of several researchers to have a blog (<http://bobsutton.typepad.com/>), and James March made a movie about Don Quixote (*Passion and Discipline—Don Quixote's Lessons for Leadership*) and has written several books of poetry (e.g., March, 1990, 2000). Nancy Adler, Keith Murnighan, Al Bluedorn, Denny Gioia, Mary Jo Hatch, and several others have presented exquisite art and photography. All of these expressions almost certainly enable communication with (and learning from) people beyond academia in ways that may well include more affective connections than standard approaches to scholarship easily allow. Many more academics whose research is not as well known do excellent jobs of bonding with practitioners, appreciating their concerns, translating research findings for practitioner audiences, and expressing managerial scholarship in ways that go beyond journal articles. However, the scholarship of integration as Boyer defined it is one-sided, in that it focuses almost exclusively on individual academics presenting to practitioners. It does not address academics learning from practitioners or engaging mutually with them on any deep level. Thus, it is important to develop an explicitly *relational* scholarship of integration.

TOWARD A RELATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP OF INTEGRATION

To begin to develop a relational scholarship of integration, it is first necessary to consider why it might be of value to academics to create more equal relationships with practitioners. A primary reason is that managers' and other practitioners' knowledge often complements that of academics (e.g., Van de Ven, 2007: Ch. 1), and practitioners' skill and knowledge are often required for academics' writing to matter in the world. For example, Evered and Louis (1981: 392) distinguished "inquiry from the inside," which characterizes practitioners who inquire about a setting in order to operate effectively there, from "inquiry from the outside," which is typically practiced by detached researchers who aim to uncover knowledge that can be generalized to many settings. They argued that "we

in the organizational sciences need both ways of knowing and both ways of knowledge to advance our understanding of organizational phenomena.” Even before Evered and Louis, Chester Barnard focused on the complementarity of scientific and practitioner knowledge, noting

It is the function of the arts [such as management] to accomplish concrete ends, effect results, produce situations, that would not come about without the deliberate effort to secure them. These arts must be mastered and applied by those who deal in the concrete and for the future. The function of the sciences, on the other hand, is to explain the phenomena, the events, the situations, of the past.

In other words, without management, management and organizational scholars would have no work.

In addition, it is often the case that practitioners know of certain phenomena long before academics do. Speaking of the natural sciences, for example, Kuhn (1977: 144) wrote:

When Kepler studied the optimum dimensions of wine casks, the proportions which would yield maximum content for the least consumption of wood, he helped to invent the calculus of variations, but existing wine casks were, he found, already built to the dimensions he derived. When Sardi Carnot undertook to produce the theory of the steam engine, a prime mover to which, as he emphasized, science had contributed little or nothing, the result was an important step toward thermodynamics; his prescription for engine improvement, however, had been embodied in engineering practice before his study began. With few exceptions, none of much significance, the scientists who turned to [practical needs] for their [research] problems succeeded merely in validating and explaining, not in improving, techniques developed earlier and without the aid of science.

Academics' and managers' forms of knowledge do indeed complement each other. In addition, managers' and other practitioners' knowledge may often precede academics' knowledge.

Collaborative Research as a Type of Relational Scholarship of Integration

The most frequent means of creating academic-practitioner relationships is through engaged scholarship, or collaborative research. Engaged scholarship such as that articulated by Van de Ven (2007) and Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) and collaborative research as it has been described by both academics and practitioners (e.g. Bartunek & Louis, 1996; Kowalski, Harmon, Yorks, & Kowalski, 2003; Mohrman, Gibson, & Mohrman, 2001; Shani et al.,

2008; Yorks, Neuman, Kowalski, & Kowalski, 2007) are fundamental ways that academics engage with practitioners. Such methods imply relationships between researchers and practitioners that jointly produce knowledge that can both advance the scientific enterprise and enlighten a community of practitioners.

However, engaged scholarship is still limited, because it involves practitioners on academics' terms, in the conduct of research activities in which we are far more expert than they. Kieser and Leiner (2007) recently questioned the plausibility of true collaborative research involving academics and practitioners. They argued, for example, that activities such as communication and problem solving in scientific systems differ considerably from these activities in practitioner settings, and thus it is not possible for there to be equal collaboration between the two groups. Moreover, as was the case with the woman at the Nexus for Change conference, standard academic research is not always a hospitable activity for the practitioners on whom we'd like to have an impact and from whom we might learn. Practitioners may not find such research to be very helpful for addressing many of the problems they face, especially if these problems are multilayered.

Thus, joint research fosters academic-practitioner collaboration in some instances, but it is not a necessary or sufficient means for developing joint relationships in which academics and practitioners truly learn from each other and share elements of pathos. Rather, it is important to extend understandings of academic-practitioner relationships more broadly. This includes determining what fostering such positive relationships might mean, the types of difficulties likely to be experienced in accomplishing these relationships, and some examples of structures that might help these relationships develop.

Fostering Positive, Mutual Relationships

Dutton and Dukerich (2006) noted that willingness to learn from those on whom we hope to have an impact, as well as bringing one's whole self to an engagement with others, being genuinely interested in their experience, demonstrating trustworthiness, and seeking feedback from them represent crucial relational attitudes that create high-quality connections (Dutton, 2003) and lead to a sense of mutuality (Jordan, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Academic attitudes towards practitioners that are likely to foster such relationships include trying to enter into and understand practitioners' worlds and modes of knowing, as well as empathizing with and

appreciating the complexities of practitioners' experience and knowledge (Bartunek & Trullen, 2007; Evered & Louis, 1981; Schön, 1983). Academics might, as Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) suggested, inquire about how practitioners obtain the knowledge that is important for them. How do they construct thought and action? How do competent practitioners "know" (Schön, 1983)? What do terms like "communication" and "problem solving" mean in practice contexts (Kieser & Leiner, 2007)? Practitioners might similarly question academics, to enter into our modes of knowing.

For example, in preparation for Nexus for Change, I participated in a conference call with several designers of large group interventions. I tried to participate in a way that conveyed that I was representing a research perspective in dialog with the perspective of the designers of the large group interventions, and that I respected the work they were doing. In addition, I participated fully in the conference, and the talk I referred to at the beginning of this essay took place as part of an "open space" session at the conference (Owen, 2007). It was not the type of formal research presentation I would ordinarily give at the Academy of Management meeting or other purely scholarly conference.

This was one small example of attempting to enter into a mutual relationship. Some academics have done much more; they have developed long-term relationships with practitioners that far transcend individual projects. William Ouchi's (Ouchi, Riordan, Lingle, & Porter, 2005) work, based on multiple years of collaborating with school systems, is one example. Another example is the work of Karl Weick (1996; Weick & Putnam, 2006), who has studied and worked with firefighters for years, has contributed to thinking about fire fighting, and has let his own understanding be informed and challenged by that of firefighters.

Difficulties in Fostering Mutual Relationships between Academics and Practitioners

It is relatively easy "in theory" to advocate mutual academic-practitioner relationships. It is much more difficult to create mutual positive relationships "in practice," as Kahn (2007) and others have noted. There is considerable relational skill involved in communication across such boundaries, such as the ability to avoid stereotypes about the other group that limit openness to its members' actual behavior (Davidson & James, 2007).

In addition to problems common to many kinds of relationships that cross group boundaries, a particular problem is associated with academic-prac-

itioner differences. This has to do with differing and strong opinions among academics about the value of "rigorous" versus "relevant" research (Anderson et al., 2001). Many academics insist on the importance of rigorous research judged solely by academic standards; others disdain it in favor of research that is directly relevant to practitioners and that may or may not be rigorous. These differing opinions are often expressed emphatically enough to signal a kind of "tribal warfare" among academics (Gulati, 2007). When those expressing their disdain for relevant research or, more generally, for close relationships with practitioners, do so powerfully, they can make it very difficult for junior faculty or doctoral students who, perhaps because of prior work experience, enjoy links with practice. To be more precise, they can make academics' positive relationships with practitioners appear equivalent to "illegitimate affairs" (Empson, 2007). Of course, a similar problem may be encountered by practitioners who partner with academics and thus risk their reputations with colleagues who do not see the value of such collaboration for addressing organizational problems (J. Molloy, personal communication, August 20, 2007). Taking steps to cross the divide between academia and practice under these conditions (Figure 1) requires considerable courage.

Structures That May Foster the Building of Academic-Practitioner Relationships

Boundary spanning. As Gulati (2007) noted, especially in situations in which there is, at best, ambivalence on the part of academics about the value of mutually beneficial academic-practitioner relationships, attempts to create such relationships will likely require the efforts of boundary spanners, people who do not identify themselves fully with either the academic or practitioner community and who have the courage and the interest to treat both groups as of value and as having something to contribute to the other. The person crossing between the two poles of Figure 1 represents such a boundary spanner. There are scholar practitioners such as Billie Alban, Paul Bate, Barbara Bunker, Warner Burke, Armand Hatchuel, Gary Latham, Ed Lawler, Sue Mohrman, Andrew Pettigrew, Ed Schein, and many others who consciously move back and forth between academia and practice. This is important service.

In addition, I will suggest two examples of forums that might foster collaborative relationships for groups of practitioners and academics. These examples are not inclusive. They are simply meant

to stimulate academics' and practitioners' imaginations about how such links may be created.

Forums to flesh out journal articles' implications for practice. Most implications for practice in articles in journals like *AMJ* are left as more or less free-standing elements, rarely referenced by later work. But it might be possible for joint researcher/practitioner gatherings to consider implications for practice from both scholarly and practitioner perspectives.

For example, according to the 2006 *AMJ* implications for practice collected in Table 1, scholars who advocate *training* might meet with practitioners who conduct skilled training to explore what such training might involve, or to participate in such training. Practitioners and scholars might role play various ways of *influencing interactions among others* to imagine what these might look like in practice. Scholars who write about *heterogeneity* might meet with human resources and diversity directors and use participative means to explore together when and how more or less heterogeneity and diversity are useful. In such forums, academics might explain the rationales for their recommendations about these issues, and practitioners might describe their own experience and interest in the issues. They may also use a variety of communication media that help contribute to the experience of pathos, drawing academics and practitioners into caring about the experience of each other.

Forums to discuss topics about which there is shared interest among academics and practitioners. Academics and practitioners share interest in topics such as measures of success. For example, when consultants meet with clients to begin contracting and ask what success will look like, they are talking about metrics. Similarly, academics need measures or indexes of all of their variables. The types of metrics that might be helpful for both research and practice may provide very productive topics for discussion among academics and practitioners. (R. Kowalski, personal communication, May 27, 2007). There are likely to be other specific topics in which there is joint interest as well, such as capacity building and learning.

Impacts of Structures Such as These

Structures like these do not require change in how we as academics carry out our research projects or how we publish them in scholarly journals. They do not imply "watering down" research to make it more relevant to practitioners. They are also not likely to result in immediate and direct changes in practice. But they do extend the kinds of venues in which academics and practitioners, each

on their own terms, might discuss topics of mutual interest, and they may over time create contexts that foster more effective research and practice based on academics' and practitioners' interactions with each other.

These are just a few suggestions for fostering academic-practitioner relationships that are salient to both research and practice and that build on the competencies of both academics and practitioners. Obviously, individuals and groups of academics and practitioners may find and follow many other creative and engaging paths to sharing their work and its meanings in ways that are evocative, invite, response, and perhaps generate mutually beneficial and productive relationships.

Conclusion

Imagine a future in which academic-practitioner conversations and mutual relationships happen as a matter of course, and imagine how they might enliven research and practice by helping academic researchers and management practitioners enter into each others' worlds without needing to cast their own worlds aside. Imagine the cross bar in the photo (Figure 1) being broad and secure enough to carry many people regularly going back and forth between research and practice. Imagine how a relational scholarship of integration might help create an exciting and productive future relationship between academics and practitioners.

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Jean M. Bartunek (bartunek@bc.edu) is the Robert A. and Evelyn J. Ferris Chair and a professor of organization studies at Boston College. Her Ph.D. is in social and organizational psychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and she is a fellow and past president of the Academy of Management.

