

---

# Between Sweet Harmony and a Clash of Cultures: Does a Joint Academic–Practitioner Review Reconcile Rigor and Relevance?

The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science  
47(1) 53–75  
© 2011 NTL Institute  
Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>  
DOI: 10.1177/0021886310390866  
<http://jabs.sagepub.com>



Alexander T. Nicolai<sup>1</sup>, Ann-Christine Schulz<sup>2</sup>,  
and Markus Göbel<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

A substantial body of literature discusses the so-called rigor–relevance gap in management science and possible ways of overcoming it. A frequently advocated approach, in line with Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartz, and Trow’s “Mode 2” idea of creating “hybrid fora,” is the introduction of joint academic–practitioner review processes in management journals. In an empirical case study of one of the oldest management journals in the world, the authors show that the demands of academic and practitioner reviewers are hardly compatible, and, to some extent, inversely correlated. In contrast to other studies, here the authors show that the reason for the tension between academics and practitioners with regard to this issue does not lie in differences in the evaluation criteria of each group. Rather, the different worldviews of academics and practitioners lead to different interpretations of these criteria and a striking incongruence between the two groups’ ideas of practical relevance.

## Keywords

bridging journals, hybrid fora, Mode 2, relevance, rigor

---

<sup>1</sup>Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany

<sup>2</sup>University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA, USA

<sup>3</sup>Hochschule Fresenius—University of Applied Sciences, Hamburg, Germany

## Corresponding Author:

Ann-Christine Schulz, University of California, Irvine, Paul Merage School of Business, Irvine, CA 92697, USA

Email: [annchris@uci.edu](mailto:annchris@uci.edu)

## Introduction

Academic literature has been recording the debate on the so-called rigor–relevance gap in management research for several years now (e.g., Baldrige, Floyd, & Markoczy, 2004; Buckley, Ferris, Bernardin, & Harvey, 1998; Kieser & Leiner, 2009). As a result, scholars have been increasingly discussing potential ways of “bridging the gap” between research and practice (e.g., Hodgkinson, Herriot, & Anderson, 2001; Huff, 2000; Rynes, 2007; Rynes, Giluk, & Brown, 2007). Many articles about this ongoing debate identify the diffusion channels through which scholarly knowledge is transferred to corporate practice as the key to solving the “relevance problem” (e.g., Bettis, 1991; Walsh, Tushman, Kimberly, Starbuck, & Ashford, 2007).

Alongside teaching, executive education, and consulting, publications are the most important channel for knowledge transfer. A glance through the editorial mission statements of top-tier management journals shows that these journals typically address academics as well as practitioners. The editorial mission statement of the *Academy of Management Journal*, for example, is “to publish empirical research that tests, extends, or builds management theory and contributes to management practice” (Academy of Management, 2009). However, participants in that ongoing debate have repeatedly voiced the criticism that these journals scarcely meet their own demands (e.g., Dehler, 1998). An excess of “statistical methodologies” (Heracleous & DeVoige, 1998, p. 742), “academic jargon” (Kelemen & Bansal, 2002, p. 97), or “unclear implications” (Kieser, 2002, p. 220) makes academic journals inaccessible to practitioners. They are written in a style that tends to alienate practitioners (Kelemen & Bansal, 2002; Kieser & Leiner, 2009; Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). In fact, peer-reviewed journals rarely fulfill the stated editorial expectations and empirical evidence suggests that practitioners do not pay much attention to top-tier outlets (Daft & Lewin, 2008; Gopinath & Hoffman, 1995).

Many authors who engage in this ongoing debate attribute the lack of practical relevance of management studies to—among other things—the fact that the peer-review process in management journals relies solely on academic standards. As a result, it is not surprising that many of those authors have been attaching increasing importance to “bridging journals” (Cohen, 2007) such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Academy of Management Perspectives* (the former *Academy of Management Executive*), or *Sloan Management Review* (Bettis, 1991; Kelemen & Bansal, 2002; Rynes et al., 2007). Bridging journals focus on a readership consisting mainly of managers and executives but are read and authored by academics as well as practitioners (Rynes et al., 2007). Their mission statements promise academically “sanctioned” solutions for problems that arise in practice. With that in mind, several authors claim that journals should involve both scholars *and* practitioners in a double-blind review process to meet the requirements for rigor and relevance (e.g., Cohen, 2007; Von Krogh, Roos, & Slocum, 1994). Indeed, there is a growing tendency in the relevance debate to argue that the academic processes of research, review, and publication should be infused more directly with the norms and evaluations of practitioners.

This view is supported by Gibbons et al.'s (1994) "Mode 2 concept" of research, which has been taken up by many management scholars (e.g., Hodgkinson et al., 2001; Huff, 2000; Starkey & Madan, 2001) as well as other streams of related research such as the "design science" perspective (e.g., Romme, 2003; Van Aken, 2005). The "Mode 2 concept" propounds a new approach to the quality control of research, which incorporates interests and viewpoints that arise in broader social and economic contexts outside the "traditional" disciplinary-based tradition. Bridging journals that employ an academic-practitioner tandem in the review process can be seen as a prime example of this new approach to quality control.

In this article, we use a case study to analyze empirically whether this practice succeeds in solving the problem of making research more relevant to practitioners. What challenges does a journal face in its effort to satisfy the requirements for rigor and relevance by incorporating the views of both academics and practitioners in its peer-review process? We discuss this issue using the German *Zeitschrift für Führung und Organisation (ZFO)*, a classic bridging journal, as a case study.

## Theoretical Background

### *Mode 2 and the Peer-Review Process*

Ever since it was coined by Gibbons et al. (1994), the term *Mode 2* has been gaining prominence in the debate on how to increase the practical relevance of management research. In particular, the literature on "design science" and practitioner-academic collaboration is based on Gibbons et al.'s ideas (1994) and regards Mode 2 as a promising approach for overcoming the problem (e.g., Hodgkinson et al., 2001; Romme, 2003; Starkey & Madan, 2001; Van Aken, 2005).

Although "Mode 1" (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 1) refers to "conventional" science, which is governed largely by internal academic interest and has no immediate application potential, Mode 2 research can be understood as a system of knowledge production conducted in the context of application. Proponents of the Mode 2 approach argue that knowledge should be produced both in the context of a particular research discipline and in that of application, which has its own cognitive and social norms. Moreover, it should make use of a wider range of criteria for quality control. The evaluation of knowledge should therefore take place in "hybrid fora" (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 67):

In disciplinary science, peer review operates to channel individuals to work on problems judged to be central to the advance of the discipline. . . . In Mode 2 additional criteria are added through the context of application which now incorporates a diverse range of intellectual interests as well as other social, economic or political ones. (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 8)

The evaluation of knowledge is an important part of the research process. Most academic journals rely on a peer-review process, in which the reviewers—journal editors

and researchers well versed in the appropriate research domain—evaluate submitted papers and decide which of those will be published (Beyer, Chanove, & Fox, 1995). Reviewers serve as “gatekeepers” of the quality of publications by filtering out low-quality work not considered worthy of dissemination (Crane, 1967; Raelin, 2008).

The call for “hybrid fora” demands a social infrastructure that serves as a “bridge” between the academic and practical spheres. Several authors think that such an infrastructure can be provided by “bridging” or “transfer journals” that involve both practitioners and academics in their review process and thus try to fulfill the “twin imperative” of rigor and relevance (Hodgkinson et al., 2001, p. S41). For example, Cohen (2007, p. 1017) recently proposed a “roadmap for change” and demanded that “practitioner reviewers should be included as reviewers for all blind-peer-reviewed submissions to academic journals such as *AMR* and *AMJ* and the like.” This call is not new. Previously, Thomas and Tymon (1982, p. 350) argued that it is necessary “to involve practitioners (with their first-hand knowledge of practitioner needs) in feedback and review processes within the organizational sciences,” and in a similar vein, Choudhury (1986, p. 28) argued that “the inclusion of practitioners on the editorial boards of journals would appear to be a step in the right direction.”

### *The Rigor–Relevance Gap*

The notion of creating hybrid fora and the call for more joint academic–practitioner reviews raises the question to what extent the pursuit of truth, which is pivotal in science, can be reconciled with the pursuit of applicable knowledge, which is central to the expectations and cognitive norms of practitioners. There is broad consensus that rigor and relevance *should* be combined (e.g., Hodgkinson et al., 2001; Pettigrew, 1997).

However, there is disagreement in how far rigor and relevance *can* be combined. A majority of management scientists, including proponents of the Mode 2 and the “design science” literature (Bate, 2007; Jelinek, Romme, & Boland, 2008), postulate a harmony between both dimensions (e.g., Cohen, 2007). It is in this context that Kurt Lewin’s comment is often cited: “There is nothing as practical as a good theory” (e.g., in Starkey & Madan, 2001, p. S4). In a similar vein, Van de Ven and Johnson (2006, p. 803) argue: “To say that the knowledge of theory and practice are different is not to say that they stand in opposition or they substitute for each other; rather, they complement one another.” If rigor and relevance are complementary rather than conflicting demands, collaboration between academics and practitioners throughout the research process should be a promising way to bridge the gap (Romme, 2003; Van Aken, 2005; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006).

At the same time, a minority of scholars argues that there might be tension or even a trade-off between rigor and immediate practical relevance (e.g., Kieser & Leiner, 2009; Lampel & Shapira, 1995). Behind this view lies the assumption that academics and practitioners represent different cultures with incompatible social norms, values, and social dynamics (Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984). In this view, a collaborative approach of aligning rigor and/or with relevance does not enhance the applicability of

scholarly knowledge but would lead to conflict and “false hope” (Kieser & Leiner, 2009, p. 529).

Thus, although there is overall agreement that rigor and relevance should be reconciled, there is no consensus on how this should be effected. More specifically, whether joint academic–practitioner reviews foster the production of Mode 2 knowledge is a moot point. In view of that, our study addresses the following two questions: First, is a joint review process that involves academic scholars and practitioners a promising way of making research relevant to practitioners, that is, bridging the gap between academics and practitioners? The second, more general, question relates to one of the basic assumptions of the Mode 2 concept. More specifically, we ask whether the relationship between rigor and relevance can be described as being harmonious or contradictory.

To answer these questions empirically, we analyzed how practitioners and academics evaluate manuscript submissions using the bridging journal *ZFO* as a case study.

## Hypotheses

There are several studies that examine empirically the relationship between rigor and relevance (Baldrige et al., 2004; Duncan, 1974; Dunn, 1980; Shrivastava, 1987; Weiss & Bucuvalas 1977). On the whole, the results they present are mixed, ranging from negative to positive associations. Baldrige et al.’s (2004) more recent study on this topic indicates a positive correlation between the assessments of publications with respect to practical relevance, which were carried out by an expert panel of 41 practitioners, and an objective measurement of rigor, expressed as the number of citations in leading management journals. Nevertheless, the degree of association between the two aspects of rigor and relevance appears to be relatively small.

In contrast to Baldrige et al.’s (2004) work, here we do not analyze the abstracts of selected articles nor do we use an objective measure of academic quality. Instead, we focus directly on how reviewers quantitatively evaluate manuscripts submitted to a bridging journal and use qualitative data to complement the results. By using quantitative analysis, we want to test for the importance of different criteria in the evaluation process. In a joint review process, academics may value rigor more highly than relevance, whereas practitioners may favor relevance (see Hypotheses 2a and 2b). However, if we take the *overall* assessment of a manuscript submitted to a bridging journal it is reasonable to suggest that academics also appreciate and value (to a certain degree) the practical usefulness of research. In the same way, practitioners may also pay attention to the consistency of the arguments presented in an article, or other aspects of scholarly quality. This is consistent with the Mode 2 concept, which demands from the various actors “empathy” for the different social contexts that research addresses. With that in mind, we formulate our first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1a:* The final recommendations of academics and practitioners for manuscripts submitted to a bridging journal are positively correlated.

From an exclusively academic point of view, we should expect that more rigorous research is on average more relevant. As discussed above, the majority of management scholars assume that there is a more or less harmonious relationship between rigor and relevance (e.g., Cohen, 2007), which leads us to our second argument:

*Hypothesis 1b:* The rigor and practical relevance of a manuscript are positively associated from the perspective of scientists.

According to the notion of different “frames of reference,” the idea of relevance might be different from an academic point of view, compared with a practitioner’s point of view (Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984). Consequently, the confirmation of Hypothesis 1b could be attributed to a purely scientific construction of relevance. At the same time, the idea of a trade-off between rigor and relevance can be disputed only if the practitioners’ evaluations of relevance are positively correlated to the scientists’ evaluations of academic quality. The proponents of the idea that nothing is as practical as a good theory assume a positive correlation between rigor and relevance, and we too follow this widespread argument. However, we expect that the actual correlation between rigor and relevance is lower than what the strictly scientific view suggests (Hypothesis 1b). Relevance judged within an academic frame of reference should be closer to rigor than relevance judged within a practitioner’s frame of reference. This can be summed up as follows:

*Hypothesis 1c:* In the context of peer reviews, academic evaluations with respect to rigor, and practitioners’ evaluations with respect to relevance are positively correlated (but to a lesser extent than in Hypothesis 1b).

In a joint review process, experts should follow the “twin imperative” and base their assessments on both academic and practical criteria. However, scholars may find it difficult to judge the usefulness of a manuscript (e.g., applicability or timeliness of a contribution) and concentrate on those criteria that they can evaluate with greater ease, whereas practitioners are not in a position to evaluate fully academic quality (e.g., consistency with previous empirical findings or methodological rigor). Hence, we expect that both groups of reviewers assign the highest value to those criteria that they are able to judge best:

*Hypothesis 2a:* Practical relevance plays the most decisive role from the practitioners’ point of view when evaluating a manuscript.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Rigor plays the most decisive role from the academics’ point of view when evaluating a manuscript.

## Method

### *The Case of the Zeitschrift Führung und Organisation*

We chose the German *ZFO* as our case study for three different reasons: (a) the *ZFO* is one of the oldest management journals in the world and enjoys a good reputation in

the German-speaking part of Europe; (b) the journal is a classic bridging journal, which has in place a double-blind review process including both academics and practitioners; and (c) the *ZFO* provided us full access to necessary data.

Originally, the *ZFO* was launched under the name *Organisation–Mitteilungen für Industrie, Handel und Behörden* in Baden-Baden (Germany) and published its first issue in 1898. From the very beginning, the journal strived to provide a discussion forum for scholars and practitioners in order to encourage the transfer of knowledge between the two groups. Today, the journal's editors still feel bound to honor this objective. The *ZFO* is published by a general editor and an advisory board of editors that comprises members of the German, Austrian, and Swiss associations for organization and management. The board consists of academics and practitioners and all articles in the *ZFO* must be clearly relevant to the interests of both (protocol of editorial board meeting, 2001). Although the journal's aims and editorial procedures were formulated long before the Mode 2 concept became popular, it is fair to say that the *ZFO*'s objectives come close to the agenda of Gibbons et al. (1994).

To guarantee its own quality demands and to compete successfully with other journals, the *ZFO* introduced a double-blind review process in 1995. Since then, submitted manuscripts have been reviewed by both an academic and a practitioner. In 2000, the editors relaunched the journal to strengthen its mediating position (protocol of the editorial board meeting on the occasion of the *ZFO* relaunch, 2000) and editorial and linguistic standards were introduced. It was stipulated that pages overloaded with text should be avoided. Formal content should be rendered into more practice-oriented language (protocol of the editorial board meeting, 2001).

### *Data and Sample*

Our case study analysis comprises method triangulation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jick, 1979). We analyzed our hypotheses using a classical theory–testing approach and complemented the results by using qualitative methods to examine in depth the academic–practitioner relationship. Qualitative findings can contribute to the quantitative analysis of the assessments of reviewers with respect to the validation of results, the interpretation of statistical relationships, and the clarification of puzzling results (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Jick, 1979). In line with this, we collected our data from multiple sources to provide a greater range of perspectives and information. The qualitative data comprise protocols from board meetings as well as an interview with the former general editor of the *ZFO*.

To test our hypotheses, we used the *ZFO* review surveys of practitioners and academics. The survey data consist of archival records for the period 1995 to 2005 and provide a unique sample, consisting of academics' and practitioners' evaluations of manuscripts submitted to the *ZFO*. The questionnaires sent to practitioners and academics are very similar. Answers range on a scale of 1 (“bad”) to 5 (“excellent”). Among other things, both are asked to evaluate whether the article is up-to-date (“timeliness”), whether it is relevant to practitioners (“practical relevance”), and whether, on the whole, they would accept or reject the manuscript (“overall assessment”). Some



questions are specifically addressed only to scientists and others only to practitioners: Academics are asked to evaluate whether the manuscript has a good grounding in theory (“theory”), whether the argumentation is stringent and its logic coherent (“stringent argumentation”), whether the ideas are innovative (“originality”), whether the presentation is of high quality (“presentation”), and whether the manuscript is relevant to scientists (“academic relevance”). The questionnaire sent to practitioners asks whether the manuscript’s subject is forward-looking (“future perspective”), whether the language is comprehensible (“comprehensibility”), whether the argumentation is understandable (“argumentation”), whether the presentation is understandable (“presentation”), and whether the subject refers to a practical problem (“practical problem”).

In the period 1995 to 2005 that our sample represents (i.e., after the double-blind review process was introduced), a total of 578 questionnaires were filled out: 263 questionnaires were completed by practitioners and 315 by scientists. Of these, we had to eliminate several reviews because of various reasons (e.g., questionnaires were incomplete, reviewers did not adhere to the 5-point scale, manuscripts were evaluated by three reviewers). Our final sample consisted of 142 manuscripts that had been reviewed by one scientist and one practitioner. The majority of these manuscripts (62.9%) were not published. We used the final sample to test our hypotheses and analyzed the data applying correlation diagnostics and ordinal regression models.

## Results

### *Analyses of Overall Evaluations of Academics and Practitioners*

To analyze the relationship between rigor and relevance, first we have to look at the correlations between the final recommendations of academics and those of practitioners as to whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected. As can be seen from correlation diagnostics in Table 1, the coefficient for the final sample is a relatively low .19 ( $p < .05$ ), indicating a weakly positive relationship between the evaluations of academics and those of practitioners.

But it should be noted that the low consensus cannot be regarded as peculiar to the academic practitioner–reviewer tandem. Many studies analyzing the peer-review process in psychology, sociology, and organization studies indicate dissensus among reviewers regarding the assessment of the overall quality of submitted manuscripts (Miller, 2006; Gilliland & Cortina, 1997; Starbuck, 2003).

A more detailed picture is drawn if we divide the sample into subsamples of rejected ( $n = 88$ ) and accepted ( $n = 54$ ) manuscripts. In the case of the subsample of rejected papers, we find an insignificant coefficient of .02. This value seems to be relatively low, considering that the notion of “poor quality” (e.g., typos, wrong grammar, contradictions, outright nonsense) should be the same no matter whether the reviewers are practitioners or academics and that universal standards should lead to a higher agreement among reviewers. One would expect to find higher consensus on “bad” manuscripts. The results for the subsample of “high quality” (accepted) papers are even more



**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients of All Variables (Spearman)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. SCTimeliness	3.84	1.02																	
2. SCTheory	2.08	0.91	0.27																
3. SC Stringent argumentation	2.87	1.10	0.22	0.50															
4. SC Originality	2.30	1.10	0.45	0.56	0.54														
5. SC Academic relevance	2.27	1.16	0.34	0.71	0.57	0.69													
6. SC Practical relevance	3.01	1.18	0.40	0.42	0.57	0.57	0.60												
7. SC Presentation	2.71	1.00	0.23	0.47	0.69	0.48	0.52	0.57											
8. SC Overall assessment	2.32	1.32	0.40	0.64	0.64	0.73	0.74	0.67	0.63										
9. PR Timeliness	3.68	1.18	0.23	0.13	0.12	0.22	0.23	0.19	0.08	0.22									
10. PR Practical relevance	3.35	1.26	0.24	0.14	0.17	0.25	0.19	0.26	0.14	0.26	0.61								
11. PR Future perspective	2.96	1.06	0.21	0.24	0.27	0.26	0.31	0.20	0.15	0.28	0.56	0.54							
12. PR Comprehensibility	3.66	1.02	0.12	0.06	0.13	0.12	0.14	0.11	0.01	0.14	0.29	0.44	0.40						
13. PR Argumentation	3.53	1.06	0.19	0.12	0.19	0.08	0.15	0.10	0.07	0.15	0.34	0.45	0.49	0.67					
14. PR Presentation	3.43	0.97	0.22	0.17	0.24	0.19	0.24	0.18	0.10	0.24	0.34	0.45	0.47	0.65	0.74				
15. PR Practical problem	3.12	1.13	0.20	0.13	0.21	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.06	0.19	0.42	0.54	0.57	0.52	0.55	0.58			
16. PR Experience value	2.89	1.14	0.25	0.26	0.31	0.26	0.31	0.24	0.17	0.28	0.53	0.60	0.69	0.49	0.58	0.67	0.74		
17. PR Overall assessment	3.20	1.43	0.22	0.14	0.13	0.21	0.22	0.19	0.13	0.19	0.51	0.62	0.68	0.56	0.62	0.65	0.66	0.73	

Note. All correlations of  $r > .16$  are significant at the 5% level.

**Table 2.** Correlation Coefficients of Rigor and Relevance (Spearman)

Relevance → Rigor ↓	Perspective of Academics	Perspective of Practitioners	
	Relevance to Practitioners	Relevance to Practitioners	Refers to Practical Problem
Theoretical foundation	.42**	.14	.13
Academic relevance	.59**	.19*	.17*
N = 142			
Theoretical foundation	.26	-.16	-.25
Academic relevance	.42**	.02	-.15
N = 54 (accepted manuscripts)			
Theoretical foundation	.16	-.04	.08
Academic relevance	.42**	-.03	.08
N = 88 (rejected manuscripts)			

\*\* $p < .01$ . \* $p < .05$ .

remarkable. In this case, there is a significant—but negative—correlation ( $r = -.25$ ;  $p < .10$ ). The manuscripts that academics would highly recommend for publication are given poor evaluations by practitioners, and vice versa. Overall, we only find little support for our Hypothesis 1a.

This latter finding is corroborated by our supplementary qualitative study. The general editor reported that there were often differences between the reviews of academics and practitioners. For example, if the manuscripts contained mathematical formulae, practitioners would perceive them as too theoretical. Consequently, the editors were presented with a conflict between the need to preserve scientific legitimacy on the one hand and acceptance by practitioners on the other (interview with the general editor, 2009).

### The Relation Between Perceptions of Rigor and Relevance

To analyze the relationship between rigor and relevance in depth, we tested our Hypotheses 1b and 1c by calculating various correlation coefficients between rigor and relevance variables. The coefficients were computed separately for the whole sample and the subsamples of accepted as well as rejected manuscripts. The results are presented in Table 2. The “rigor” variable is quantified by the item “theoretical foundation,” which is fairly representative of overall scientific quality and by “academic relevance.” The evaluations of rigor are only available from the perspective of academics; there are none from that of practitioners. In contrast, relevance is measured from both perspectives. The academics’ perceptions of *practical* relevance are measured by “relevance to practitioners” whereas those of practitioners are measured by “relevance to practitioners” and “refers to a practical problem.”

The first column of Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between perceived rigor and perceived relevance from the perspective of academics. The results show

positive and significant associations between rigor and relevance in nearly all cases. For academics, the scientific quality of a manuscript seems to be compatible with practical relevance. This confirms Hypothesis 1b. In a purely “academic world” there seems to be no trade-off between rigor and relevance. The idea of a harmonious relationship between these two aspects is in line with the Mode 2 and design science literature.

However, practical relevance in the eyes of academics may differ from what practitioners define as relevance. The correlation coefficients between relevance from the practitioners’ perspective and academic rigor appear in the second column. These results indicate an ambiguous relationship between the two variables. Whereas the correlation coefficients for the whole sample are only weakly positive and insignificant in half of the cases they are negative for the subsample of accepted manuscripts. Therefore, Hypothesis 1c is not confirmed. This finding implies a possible trade-off between the two variables: The higher a manuscript’s academic quality, the lower its relevance to practitioners. This finding matches the editor’s idea that more rigorous research (e.g., represented by formulae) conflicts with practical relevance (interview with the general editor, 2009). This conflict can be illustrated by some examples of comments made by reviewers (and translated by us), which they attached to their questionnaires:

Manuscript 1 (rejected by academic, accepted by practitioner)

*Academic:* “The whole argumentation is only based on common sense.”

*Practitioner:* “Less academic in character, and the manuscript will become a big hit.”

Manuscript 2 (rejected by academic, accepted by practitioner)

*Academic:* “The article is too much of an ‘in-between’: As a conceptual paper it lacks a theoretical foundation (as well as recent literature), as a practical paper it is far too abstract.”

*Practitioner:* “A very informative paper of high practical relevance; precisely to the point.”

Manuscript 3 (rejected by academic, accepted by practitioner)

*Academic:* “The contribution of the author remains very limited. . . . Particularly, results and consequences remain largely open. This, especially for the practitioner.”

*Practitioner:* “Accept. . . . Shorten if possible.”

Consensus between academics and practitioners seems to be difficult—even if academics do not see a trade-off between rigor and relevance.

### *Analysis of the Reviews of Practitioners*

We suggest that both groups of reviewers assign the highest value to those criteria, which they can evaluate with greater ease (Hypotheses 2a and 2b), that is, practical relevance plays the most decisive role for practitioners while rigor plays the most decisive role for academics. Hence, those criteria should have the highest impact on their final recommendations. With relation to that, we have to measure the impact of the different evaluation criteria used on the final recommendations of practitioner and academic reviewers. These associations can be quantified using multivariate regressions. We applied an ordered logit regression model because the dependent variable takes ordinal discrete values (Greene, 2003). Table 3 displays the results of an ordered logit regression of the effects of the different variables (e.g., experience value, future perspective, comprehensibility, relevance) on the practitioners' final recommendations.

We estimated the coefficients for the whole sample as well as for the two subsamples of accepted and rejected manuscripts.

The ordered logit coefficients in Table 3 indicate the directions of the relationships. In addition to the raw coefficient estimates, which are difficult to interpret, we also computed a measure of the importance of the explanatory variables. This measure is the average probability change (in percentage) of a reviewer giving a higher recommendation when a variable increases by one unit from its median while all other variables are held constant to their median (e.g., Greene, 2003).

With respect to our Hypothesis 2a, in which we state that practical relevance plays the most decisive role for practitioners' evaluations of manuscripts, the results of our estimates for the whole sample show that the variables "relevance to practitioners" and "reference to practical problem" have a significant positive influence on the probability of a reviewer giving higher evaluations. Changing these variables by one unit from their medians increases the probability of giving a higher evaluation by 3.24% and 3.77%, respectively.

Nevertheless, practical relevance is not the main criterion on the basis of which practitioners judge a manuscript. We found a stronger positive association between either of the two variables "future perspectives of the topic" and "understandability of the presentation" (both significant at the 1% level) and the likelihood of a higher recommendation. On the basis of that, we cannot directly confirm Hypothesis 2a, but we can state that "practical relevance" and "reference to a practical problem" are both important factors that influence the recommendations of practitioners on whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

### *Analysis of the Reviews of Academics*

Following a similar procedure, we estimated the coefficients and probabilities with relation to various qualities on the basis of which academics evaluate manuscripts (e.g., originality of ideas, relevance, quality of presentation, etc.) to test Hypothesis 2b. The results we obtained are documented in Table 4.

**Table 3.** Regression of Practitioners’ Overall Assessments on Their Ratings of Specific Paper Dimensions (Ordinal Logistic Regression)

Variables	Full Sample		Accepted		Rejected	
	Coefficient (SE)	Change in Probability	Coefficient (SE)	Change in Probability	Coefficient (SE)	Change in Probability
Timeliness	0.24 (0.21)	2.43%	0.02 (0.53)	0.08%	0.35 (0.25)	3.30%
Practical relevance	0.33** (0.19)	3.24%	0.37 (0.53)	1.98%	0.47*** (0.22)	4.44%
Future perspective	0.90*** (0.25)	8.68%	1.31*** (0.51)	9.24%	0.78*** (0.32)	7.58%
Comprehensibility	0.00 (0.24)	0.01%	0.20 (0.56)	1.03%	0.04 (0.29)	0.35%
Argumentation	0.42* (0.24)	4.15%	1.63*** (0.56)	12.32%	0.10 (0.31)	0.92%
Presentation	0.79*** (0.31)	7.68%	0.94 (0.69)	5.98%	0.74*** (0.37)	7.12%
Practical problem	0.38* (0.24)	3.77%	1.48*** (0.50)	10.82%	-0.07 (0.29)	0.61%
Experience value	0.45* (0.29)	4.42%	-0.53 (0.67)	2.92%	0.91*** (0.34)	8.79%
Cutpoint 1	7.66 (1.08)		13.74 (3.03)		6.85 (1.27)	
Cutpoint 2	10.04 (1.21)		16.13 (3.29)		9.49 (1.48)	
Cutpoint 3	11.63 (1.34)		18.24 (3.57)		11.00 (1.62)	
Cutpoint 4	14.05 (1.49)		22.00 (4.06)		13.14 (1.78)	
Sample size	142		54		88	
Log likelihood	-143.92		-39.16		-93.02	
LR test $\chi^2$	162.44		70.65		92.17	
Model <i>p</i> value	0.00		0.00		0.00	
Correct predicted	0.62		0.70		0.63	
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.36		0.47		0.33	
Nagelkerkes <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.71		0.78		0.68	

Note. SE = standard error. A Brant test of the parallel regression assumption shows that the assumption is not violated. We also tested for multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor, which indicated with a mean VIF of 2.46 for the whole sample that there is no serious problem with multicollinearity.

\*\*\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .1. \**p* < .15.

With regard to the whole sample we find evidence that rigor plays indeed a very important role in the scientists’ evaluations. Rigor, as measured by “theoretical foundation” and “relevance to scientists,” is positively associated with the probability that a manuscript will be more highly recommended for publication (both coefficients significant at the 5% level). The two variables are fairly important. Changing them by one unit, starting from their medians, increases the probability of a reviewer recommending a manuscript more highly by 5.14% and 3.59%, respectively.

However, there are other nonhypothesized variables that seem to have an even stronger influence on the evaluations of manuscripts. These variables are “relevance to practitioners” and “originality of ideas.” Both are highly significant (*p* < .01) and positively associated with higher recommendations. Surprising is the strong influence of “practical relevance,” which has a probability change of 4.63, especially with regard to the coefficient estimates in the case of accepted manuscripts. Here, “relevance to practitioners” is the most decisive variable in terms of significance level and importance. The academic reviewers assess practical relevance highly. This is also supported by

**Table 4.** Regression of Academics' Overall Assessments on Their Ratings of Specific Paper Dimensions (Ordinal Logistic Regression)

Variables	Full Sample		Accepted		Rejected	
	Coefficient (SE)	Change in Probability	Coefficient (SE)	Change in Probability	Coefficient (SE)	Change in Probability
Timeliness	0.45** (0.27)	2.96%	-0.13 (0.66)	0.59%	0.48* (0.32)	5.72%
Theory	0.73** (0.29)	5.14%	0.72* (0.46)	2.46%	0.61* (0.41)	7.21%
Stringent argumentation	0.49** (0.26)	3.22%	0.47 (0.42)	1.78%	-0.02 (0.43)	0.21%
Originality	0.87*** (0.26)	6.33%	0.55 (0.53)	2.02%	1.10*** (0.33)	11.93%
Academic relevance	0.54** (0.26)	3.59%	0.79* (0.54)	2.79%	0.54** (0.32)	6.46%
Practical relevance	0.67*** (0.23)	4.63%	1.07*** (0.41)	4.22%	0.36 (0.31)	4.40%
Presentation	0.67** (0.29)	4.65%	0.39 (0.40)	1.52%	0.83** (0.47)	9.47%
Cutpoint 1	9.99 (1.48)		6.90 (2.52)		8.98 (2.00)	
Cutpoint 2	13.16 (1.69)		10.43 (2.83)		12.25 (2.42)	
Cutpoint 3	14.23 (1.79)		11.51 (2.95)		13.69 (2.39)	
Cutpoint 4	18.34 (2.12)		16.05 3.31		—	
Sample size	142		54		88	
Log likelihood	-109.25		-42.87		-58.91	
LR test $\chi^2$	178.89		56.96		58.47	
Model <i>p</i> value	0.00		0.00		0.00	
Correct predicted	0.62		0.65		0.67	
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.45		0.40		0.33	
Nagelkerkes <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.76		0.70		0.56	

Note. SE = standard error. A Brant test of the parallel regression assumption shows that the assumption is not violated. We also tested for multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor, which indicated with a mean VIF of 2.18 for the whole sample that there is no serious problem with multicollinearity. \*\*\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .1. \**p* < .15.

qualitative evidence in the form of comments by academic reviewers. For example, as two scientists stated,

Especially for practitioners it would be interesting to know which operational consequences some of the recommendations have, or rather how they can be turned into action. (Reviewer 1)

For practitioners it might be helpful if the schematic process of initiation, implementation and processing of the analytical group discussion is graphically illustrated and rearranged. (Reviewer 2, who commented a manuscript about group dynamics)

This finding challenges the belief—widely held by authors participating in the relevance debate—that the observed incongruencies are because of academics who are

“arrogant and insensitive to external realities” (Lynton, 1984, p. 87) and show a “lack of interest in relevant research on real-world business problems” (Oviatt & Miller, 1989, p. 304). Our results draw a different picture: For academics, practical relevance is not only a legitimate criterion but has an important influence on their final decision to accept or reject a manuscript. At the same time, academics see no contradiction between rigor and relevance. This raises the question why the evaluations of manuscripts by academics are often very different, even diametrically different, from those of practitioners (as reported above). Our results contradict the widely held view that a lack of empathy for and interest in the needs of practitioners, or an entirely different set of evaluation criteria, is the main reason for this disagreement. Our data suggest that this discordance arises from different interpretations of the criteria on which evaluations are based. More specifically, we found evidence that the ideas of rigor and relevance (as well as of other criteria of manuscript quality) diverge considerably between the two groups.

We also analyzed how the academics’ perceptions of relevance correlate with those of practitioners. In the case of accepted manuscripts, we obtained a negative and significant correlation of  $-0.22$  ( $p < .10$ ). This suggests that the more relevant a manuscript is in the eyes of an academic, the less relevant it is in the eyes of a practitioner and vice versa.

Indeed, it seems to be difficult to reach an intersubjectively shared understanding of what practical relevance actually is. As Augier and March (2007, p. 138) stated, “relevance is ambiguous, its measurement imprecise, and its meaning complex.” The notion of relevance leaves much room for interpretation and how this room is filled depends on the “frame of reference” of each group (Astley, 1985; Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984). To put it more generally, contradictions between academics and practitioners do not come to light on the level of stated goals and evaluation standards but in the process in which the criteria are interpreted and applied. Consensus on evaluation standards and legitimate goals is more feasible than congruence between different frames of reference. The latter seems to be the main problem in creating hybrid fora.

This observation helps explain why the “relevance gap” has been so persistent, even though for years now there have been vehement demands, both within and without the scientific community, that management science strive for application-oriented results. Simon (1976, p. 338) already noted the persistence of the problem and compared aligning rigor and relevance to “mixing oil with water.” This problem is also apparent in the long-term progress of the *ZFO*: After the journal had been established in academic circles, both academic and practitioner board members agreed unanimously to the editorial goal of making *ZFO*’s content more attractive to the business community. The first step was to introduce the double-blind review process with the academic–practitioner tandem. The second step was the relaunch of the journal in 2000. The editorial board tried to expand its readership among practitioners with a new and reader-friendly design that included more graphic elements (interview with the general editor, 2009). However, several years later, as a result of these efforts, the *ZFO* found itself in a “stuck-in-the-middle position”: The results of a reader survey (with 64 respondents) conducted after the relaunch showed that readers from the



business community still called for more practical relevance and more visual elements in the journal articles (reader survey, 2001). At the same time, the academic community penalized the trend, as the decrease in the journal's VHB ranking<sup>1</sup> showed (protocol of the editorial board meeting, 2000). Given this ranking, it appeared that the *ZFO* had not managed to approach its original goal of becoming the leading German-speaking journal for management, strategy, leadership, and organization (protocol of the editorial board meeting, 2000). As a result, the discussion in the editorial board about the strategic positioning of the journal as a transfer medium between theory and practice was resumed.

### *Limitations*

Our empirical study is subject to a few limitations. First, the peer-review process may have a certain distorting effect on our results: Peer reviews are rarely truly blind. For example, many reviewers are able to guess the identity of authors from the writing style, content, cited papers, and so on. Moreover, it is possible that some authors might try to manipulate the selection of reviewers, for example, by including in their manuscripts citations from colleagues whom they would prefer as reviewers (e.g., Gilliland & Cortina, 1997). However, our interview with the general editor, the 284 reviews of our sample, and the authors' submission letters did not provide any indication that such problems (e.g., the disclosure of authors' identity, systematic acceptance of low ranked manuscripts) played a major role in the case of the *ZFO* so that we have no reason to think that they biased our results.

Second, reviewing for the *ZFO* carries a certain degree of prestige for certain groups of practitioners, such as consultants (interview with the general editor, 2009). Compared with the average practitioner, members of those groups probably have a higher affinity for scholarly work. Thus, our sample is not totally random but biased toward practitioners with scholarly interests. In view of that, we would expect even larger differences between rigor and relevance in a truly random sample.

Third, it has to be kept in mind that the academic evaluations we analyzed were prepared for a bridging journal. For academics, "practical relevance" may be an important criterion only in this specific context. Thus, it is still possible that academics' disinterest in application-oriented research results is one of the main reasons for the relevance gap. However, even the editorial policies of top-tier journals value practical relevance and managerial implications (Nicolai & Seidl, 2010) and some empirical evidence supports the notion that academics are personally concerned with the relevance issue (e.g., Shapiro, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007).

Finally, one can hardly conclude from a single case study whether our results hold for hybrid fora in general. Since many management scholars highlight the need of collaborative research projects, it would be of particular interest to know whether or not our findings can be extended to the "production side" of knowledge. Some evidence (Greenwood, 2002; Mulkay, Pinch, & Ashmore, 1987; Shove & Rip, 2000) suggests that action research and other collaborative efforts on the intersection between the

world of academia and that of business practice suffer from similar tensions we identified here. Indeed, when academics' evaluations of knowledge claims are more or less independent from the practitioners' evaluations and when both sides have fundamentally different interpretations of "practical relevance," these tensions could also inhibit collaborative research projects. This may be one reason why jointly produced research results are still rare (Kieser & Leiner, 2009), although collaborative research is widely applauded. However, to determine whether our findings really extend to the production side will require further studies that will empirically analyze the process and output of collaborative research projects.

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

To date, many authors have criticized the lack of practical relevance in management studies. This criticism has gained importance especially during the past two decades, as the relevance debate intensified and academics increasingly started to search for solutions to the problem of "bridging the gap" between research and practice. One solution in line with the widely discussed Mode 2 ideas is to incorporate the views of both academics and practitioners in the peer-review processes of journals, in order to create a hybrid forum for quality control. In this article, we used the German bridging journal *ZFO* as a case study to analyze empirically whether this measure is a promising editorial approach and, more broadly, whether it helps align rigor and relevance. In contrast to one of the basic assumptions of the Mode 2 concept, our empirical findings propose that there is a tension between academics' and practitioners' evaluations of management knowledge.

The final assessments of *ZFO* manuscripts by academics and practitioners showed a zero correlation between both groups in the case of rejected manuscripts. Regarding high-quality papers (indicated by the fact that they were accepted), we found that the final recommendations of scholars and of practitioners are inversely related and that practitioners' perceptions of an article's practical relevance are hardly compatible with academics' assessments of rigor. This tension became discernable also in the way the *ZFO* has evolved over the years. Although the journal's aims were consistent with the Mode 2 concept, it had severe difficulties in establishing a hybrid forum that successfully contributed to both the academic and the practitioners' discourse. Instead of uniting the best of both worlds, at some point the journal seemed to slip into a "stuck-in-the-middle" position.

Given this tension management scholars cannot rely on the assumption that "there is nothing as practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1951, p. 169). Relevance will not follow more or less automatically as management science progresses and academic quality increases. This finding highlights the need for an active change of the current editorial strategies.

However, our study contradicts the widely held view (e.g., Buckley et al., 1998; Vermeulen, 2007) that more social pressure and better incentives for academics to produce applicable knowledge are sufficient to resolve this dilemma. Our study raises

doubts that the main reason for the tension is that academics do not value practical usefulness enough. The editor and other academic board members shared the traditional orientation of the *ZFO* toward applicable knowledge in the same way as practitioners. Not only for practitioners but also for academics “practical relevance” was an important criterion for their recommendations to accept or reject a manuscript—in fact, the most decisive one. In short, on the level of the stated goals and intentions there was a “sweet harmony” between academics and practitioners. This leads us to conclude that the tension we found cannot be explained by a lack of interest or incentives alone; it is more deeply rooted. Both academics and practitioners value practical relevance but their social constructions of relevance differ (Astley, 1985). In our case study, they were inversely related: The more practically useful a manuscript from an academic’s point of view, the less relevant to practice from a practitioner’s point of view, and vice versa. On this level we find, indeed, strongly opposing world-views, a “clash of cultures.”

This problem is more severe than academics might expect since their implicit idea of relevance has a harmonious relation to rigor, as our data indicate. Our study highlights the risk of underestimating possible conflicts and explains why also in the past other journals were too optimistic about the challenge of addressing academics as well as practitioners. For example, *Organization Science (OS)* originally tried to address equally practitioners and academics and in the editorial mission statement of its first issue set out to “encourage the joining of theory to practice” (Daft & Lewin, 1990, p. 7). Eighteen years later, however, the editors reflected their achievements and had to admit that “direct practical relevance was a naive aspiration for *OS*” (Daft & Lewin, 2008, p. 181). As a result, they suggested that *OS* should rather concentrate on publishing manuscripts for the scientific community. The *Academy of Management Executive*, another classic bridging journal, was also forced to reconsider its editorial policies and was relaunched as *Academy of Management Perspectives* because “[d]espite considerable effort and ingenuity, the goal of reaching an audience of practicing managers has been difficult for AME to achieve” (Academy of Management Perspectives, 2009).

Our study contributes also to the “production side” of knowledge. One obvious research implication of our findings is that scholars who contribute empirically to the relevance debate should take care to operationalize “practical relevance” properly. Studies that only use academics’ assessments of practical relevance (e.g., Dunn, 1980; Shrivastava, 1987) tend to find a positive correlation between rigor and relevance, whereas in fact this correlation is more likely to be negative.

Moreover, management scholars may follow potentially misleading assumptions of what kind of knowledge might practitioners perceive as useful when they formulate the relevance section in a journal article. Our study calls for a less ritualistic way of formulating managerial implications. Instead of relying on ad hoc assumptions of practical relevance academics should ground their implications on a research based—not to say more rigorous—concept of relevance. Design scientists borrow their understanding of relevance from engineering science and related disciplines and seek for “grounded technological rules” (Van Aken, 2005). Other authors hold the view that the use of social science knowledge follows a different logic and stress the importance

of more indirect, conceptional forms of relevance (Nicolai & Seidl, 2010). Given the differing viewpoints among academics, it is important to establish not only theoretically, but also empirically, what kind of knowledge is deemed valuable by practitioners. Otherwise, “relevance remains a hollow construct,” as Thomas and Tymon (1982, p. 348) once warned.

However, it is not always the case that practitioners can judge practical usefulness better than academics. For example, their constructions of practical relevance might be infused with the idiosyncrasies of their own, inherently unstable work environment and therewith of limited pertinence for other practitioners. Since academics strive for generalizable knowledge they aim at managerial implications that are relevant across different industries and different types of organizations. Therewith, academics cannot construct relevance independently of their theoretical assumptions about the nature of organizations. Thus, when academics start to analyze the features of relevant knowledge theoretically and empirically, we should not expect the academic and the practitioners’ views to converge and that the aforementioned tension will disappear.

To come back to our original question, which asked whether “a joint academic–practitioner review process” is “a promising way of overcoming the relevance gap,” we have to answer: Less than it appears at the first glance. However, it would be premature to conclude from our findings that the *ZFO* experiment has failed and that bridging journals are superfluous. At the same time, meeting the demands of both academics and practitioners cannot be reduced to popularization measures but requires the negotiation of differing points of view. *Harvard Business Review*, for example, does not simply transfer academic knowledge in a straightforward way but reinterprets data within the constraints of a practitioner-oriented context of meaning, which standards are not fully compatible with the original academic source (Dunbar, 1983). Dehler (1998, p. 71) even argues that dissensus rather than consensus is the prerequisite for relevance: “[T]he assumption that reconciliation of the academic and practitioner positions . . . is the *best* resolution of the ‘relevance problem’ is a seductive siren that would lead to unsatisfying, destructive conclusions.” Indeed, management scholars should not simply adapt to practitioner’s expectations but should seek to change actively managerial frames of reference and therewith also the practitioner’s definition of “problems,” “solutions,” and “relevance.”

The use of knowledge, it seems, requires more complex interactions and negotiations between academics and practitioners that address the possible conflicts between rigor and relevance directly instead of neglecting them (Kieser & Leiner, 2009). These processes of negotiation are poorly understood and seldom studied empirically. Rather than simply assuming that combining the social and cognitive norms of academics and practitioners will lead to a new mode of “good science” (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 7), further research is needed on how academics and practitioners can make sense of their differing world views.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

## Note

1. The VHB JOURQUAL is a ranking of journals that business researchers use and is based on the appraisals of the members of the German Academic Association for Business Research (Schrader & Hennig-Thurau, 2009).

## References

- Academy of Management. (2009). *Mission statement*. Retrieved from <http://journals.aomonline.org/amj/>
- Academy of Management Perspectives. (2009). *New direction and look for Academy of Management Perspectives*. Retrieved from [http://www.aomonline.org/aom.asp?id=44&page\\_id=215](http://www.aomonline.org/aom.asp?id=44&page_id=215)
- Astley, W. G. (1985). Administrative science as socially constructed truth. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30, 497-513.
- Augier, M., & March, J. G. (2007). The pursuit of relevance in management education. *California Management Review*, 49, 129-146.
- Baldrige, D. C., Floyd, S. W., & Markoczy, L. (2004). Are managers from Mars and academicians from Venus? Toward an understanding of the relationship between academic quality and practical relevance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25, 1063-1074.
- Bate, P. (2007). Bringing the design sciences to organization development and change management: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 43, 8-11.
- Bettis, R. A. (1991). Strategic management and the straightjacket: An editorial essay. *Organization Science*, 2, 315-319.
- Beyer, J. M., Chanove, R. G., & Fox, W. B. (1995). The review process and the fates of manuscripts submitted to AMJ. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, 1219-1260.
- Buckley, M. R., Ferris, G. R., Bernardin, H. J., & Harvey, M. G. (1998). The disconnect between the science and practice of management. *Business Horizons*, 41, 31-38.
- Choudhury, N. (1986). In search of relevance in management accounting research. *Accounting Business & Research*, 17, 21-32.
- Cohen, D. J. (2007). The very separate worlds of academic and practitioner publications in human resource management: Reasons for the divide and concrete solutions for bridging the gap. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 1013-1019.
- Crane, D. (1967). The gatekeepers of science: Some factors affecting the selection of articles for scientific journals. *American Sociologist*, 2, 195-201.
- Daft, R. L., & Lewin, A. Y. (1990). Can organization studies begin to break out of the normal science straitjacket? An editorial essay. *Organization Science*, 1, 1-9.
- Daft, R. L., & Lewin, A. Y. (2008). Rigor and relevance in organization studies: Idea migration and academic journal evolution. *Organization Science*, 19, 177-183.
- Dehler, G. E. (1998). "Relevance" in management research: A critical reappraisal. *Management Learning*, 29, 69-89.

- Dunbar, R. L. M. (1983). Toward an applied administrative science. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28, 129-144.
- Duncan, W. J. (1974). Transferring management theory to practice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 17, 724-738.
- Dunn, W. N. (1980). The two-communities metaphor and models of knowledge use: An exploratory case survey. *Science Communication*, 1, 515-536.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 532-550.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 25-32.
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartz, S. P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The new production of knowledge*. London, England: Sage.
- Gilliland, S. W., & Cortina, J. M. (1997). Reviewer and editor decision making in the journal review process. *Personnel Psychology*, 50, 427-452.
- Gopinath, C., & Hoffman, R. C. (1995). The relevance of strategy research: Practitioner and academic viewpoints. *Journal of Management Studies*, 32, 575-594.
- Greene, W. H. (2003). *Econometric analysis*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Greenwood, D. J. (2002). Action research: Unfulfilled promises and unmet challenges. *Concepts and Transformation*, 7, 117-139.
- Heracleous, L., & DeVoige, S. (1998). Bridging the gap of relevance: Strategic management and organisational development. *Long Range Planning*, 31, 742-754.
- Hodgkinson, G. P., Herriot, P., & Anderson, N. (2001). Re-aligning the stakeholders in management research: Lessons from industrial work and organizational psychology. *British Journal of Management*, 12(Suppl. 1), S41-S48.
- Huff, A. S. (2000). Changes in organizational knowledge production. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 288-293.
- Jelinek, M., Romme, A. G. L., & Boland, R. J. (2008). Introduction to the special issue: Organization studies as a science for design: Creating collaborative artifacts and research. *Organization Studies*, 29, 317-329.
- Jick, T. D. (1979). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 602-611.
- Kelemen, M., & Bansal, P. (2002). The conventions of management research and their relevance to management practice. *British Journal of Management*, 13, 97-108.
- Kieser, A. (2002). On communication barriers between management science, consultancies and business companies. In T. Clark & R. Fincham (Eds.), *Critical consulting: New perspectives on the management advice industry* (pp. 206-227). Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Kieser, A., & Leiner, L. (2009). Why the rigor-relevance gap in management research is unbridgeable. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46, 516-533.
- Lampel, J., & Shapira, Z. (1995). Progress and its discontents: Data scarcity and the limits of falsification in strategic management. *Advances in Strategic Management*, 12A, 113-150.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science: Selected theoretical papers*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

- Lynton, E. A. (1984). *The missing connection between business and the universities*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Miller, C. C. (2006). Peer review in the organizational and management sciences: Prevalence and effects of reviewer hostility, bias, and dissensus. *Academy of Management Journal*, *49*, 425-431.
- Mulkay, M., Pinch, T., & Ashmore, M. (1987). Colonizing the mind: Dilemmas in the application of social science. *Social Studies of Science*, *17*, 231-256.
- Nicolai, A. T., & Seidl, D. (2010). That's relevant! Different forms of practical relevance in management science. *Organization Studies*, *31*, 1257-1285.
- Oviatt, B. M., & Miller, W. D. (1989). Irrelevance, intransigence, and business professors. *Academy of Management Executives*, *3*, 304-312.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1997). The double hurdles for management research. In T. Clark (Ed.), *Advancements in organizational behaviour: Essays in honour of D. S. Pugh* (pp. 277-296). London, England: Dartmouth.
- Raelin, J. A. (2008). Refereeing the game of peer review. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *7*, 124-129.
- Romme, A. G. L. (2003). Making a difference: Organization as design. *Organization Science*, *14*, 558-573.
- Rynes, S. L. (2007). Editor's foreword—Carrying Sumantra Ghoshal's torch: Creating more positive, relevant, and ecologically valid research. *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*, 745-747.
- Rynes, S. L., Giluk, T. L., & Brown, K. G. (2007). The very separate worlds of academic and practitioner periodicals in human resource management: Implications for evidence-based management. *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*, 987-1008.
- Schrader, U., & Hennig-Thurau, H. (2009). VHB-JOURQUAL2: Method, results, and implications of the German Academic Association for Business Research's journal ranking. *BuR - Business Research*, *2*, 180-204.
- Shapiro, D. L., Kirkman, B. L., & Courtney, H. G. (2007). Perceived causes and solutions of the translation problem in management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*, 249-266.
- Shove, E., & Rip, A. (2000). Users and unicorns: A discussion of mythical beasts in interactive science. *Science and Public Policy*, *27*, 175-182.
- Shrivastava, P. (1987). Rigor and practical usefulness of research in strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, *8*, 77-92.
- Shrivastava, P., & Mitroff, I. I. (1984). Enhancing organizational research utilization: The role of decision makers' assumptions. *Academy of Management Review*, *9*, 18-26.
- Simon, H. A. (1976). *Administrative behavior*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Starbuck, W. H. (2003). Turning lemons into lemonade: Where is the value in peer reviews? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *12*, 344-351.
- Starkey, K., & Madan, P. (2001). Bridging the relevance gap: Aligning stakeholders in the future of management research. *British Journal of Management*, *12*(Suppl. 1), S3-S26.



- Thomas, K. W., & Tymon, W. G., Jr. (1982). Necessary properties of relevant research: Lessons from recent criticism of the organizational sciences. *Academy of Management Review*, 7, 345-352.
- Tranfield, D., & Starkey, K. (1998). The nature, social organization and promotion of management research: Towards policy. *British Journal of Management*, 9, 341-353.
- Van Aken, J. E. (2005). Management research as a design science: Articulating the research products of Mode 2 knowledge production in management. *British Journal of Management*, 16, 19-36.
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Johnson, P. E. (2006). Knowledge for theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 31, 802-821.
- Vermeulen, F. (2007). "I shall not remain insignificant": Adding a second loop to matter more. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 754-761.
- Von Krogh, G., Roos, J., & Slocum, K. (1994). An essay on corporate epistemology. *Strategic Management Journal*, 15, 53-71.
- Walsh, J. P., Tushman, M. L., Kimberly, J. R., Starbuck, B., & Ashford, S. (2007). On the relationship between research and practice: Debate and reflections. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 16, 128-154.
- Weiss, C. H., & Bucuvalas, M. J. (1977). The challenge of social research to decision making. In C. H. Weiss (Ed.), *Using social research in public policy making* (pp. 213-233). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

## Bios

**Alexander T. Nicolai** is professor for entrepreneurship at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany. His major research interests are in the areas of entrepreneurship, organizational behavior, and strategic management.

**Ann-Christine Schulz** is currently a visiting scholar at the Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California, Irvine and a doctoral candidate at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany.

**Markus Göbel** is professor of management at the Hochschule Fresenius–University of Applied Sciences, Hamburg, Germany. His research interests include expatriation management, psychological contracts, multi-case analysis, interorganizational relations, exchange theory, and new public management.