Integrating Theory, Research & Practice

NJOD Learning Day
November 13, 2014

Dr. Michael Horne

Dr. David W. Jamieson

Our Purpose

- Frame the *Divides and* suggest *Bridges & Intersections* Among Theory, Research & Practice
- Prep today's various conversations
- Focus attention on what we need to do as academics and practitioners

Reduce Some Confusion in the Theory-Practice Dilemma

So What are Theory, Research and Practice?

- Theory
- Research
- Practice

Various Roles Are Involved

In what ways are the roles more rigidly enacted? More fluid?

- Researcher
- Scholar-contributes to literature and teaches
- Change Practitioner
- Accountable Manager/Client

What Are the Current Interests?

- What do we find in 3 different dissemination channels?
- What captures your interest?
- What do you trust?

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Organization Development Network

ODPractitioner

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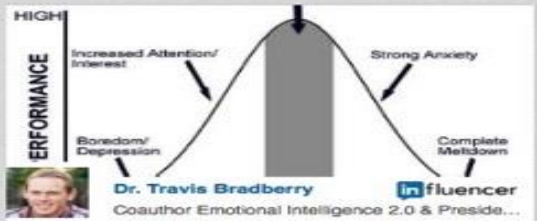

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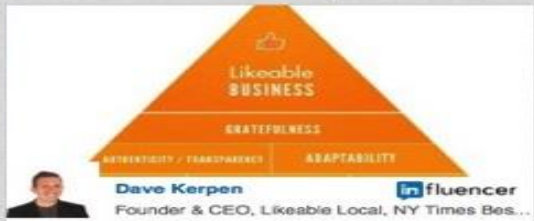

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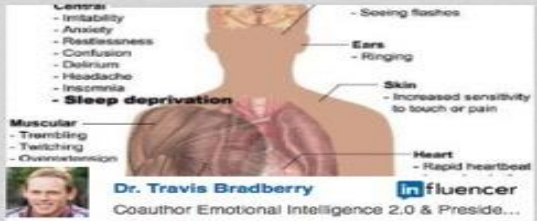

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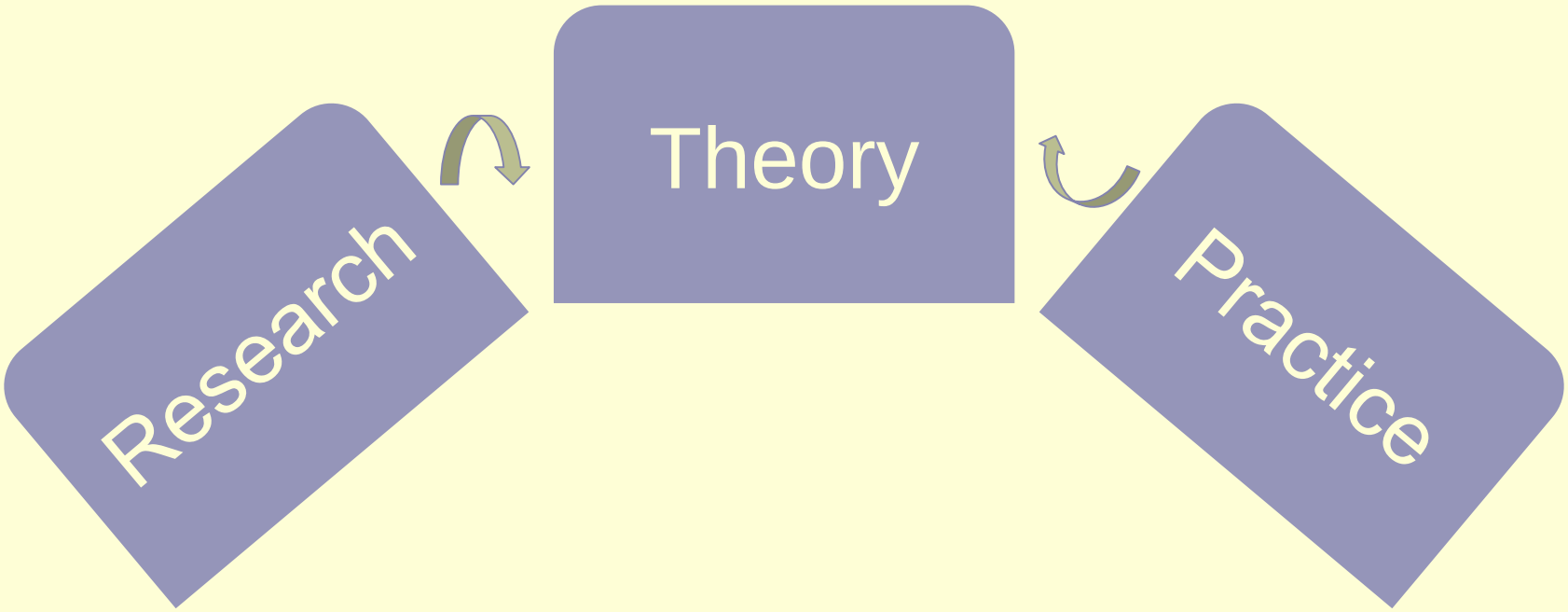
Lewin’s Mantra

Nothing is so practical as a good theory

Research-Theory-Practice Continuum



The Theory-Practice Gap

Who Leads Whom?

- How much of what we do starts from *theory or scholarship* or from *practice in the field*?
  - Convergence of HR, OD & HRD
  - Polarity management
  - Appreciative Inquiry
  - Culture change
  - Team development
  - Employee engagement

Let’s hear from you about your work in the theory-practice gap

Small Group Activity

(discuss all or select as you wish)

- **Pick an area of your practice. What theory informs your work?**
- **How does your practice inform theory?**
- **How do you stay current in your non-dominant role?**
- **How have you adapted theory in practice?**

An Example from Lawler

- His theory of high involvement management that leads to high performance-***knowledge, information, power and rewards*** (Lawler,1986)
- Yet, in practice how difficult is it to get these conditions operating simultaneously!
- A perfectly good theory for practice, yet..

Another involving Katzenbach

- What did he add to theory and how has it changed practice?

So What's Needed

- Understanding the drivers across these worlds and roles
- Making the case for both research and practice *contributing* to theory
- Our responsibility (as teachers, scholars, researchers and practitioners) to access each other and close divides

Understanding the Drivers

- Research
  - Significant rigors
  - Methodology and methods dominate
  - Peer respect
- Scholarship
  - Publication criteria
  - Reviewer biases
- Practice
  - Results
  - Practicality
  - Efficiency
  - Solves a problem

Understanding the Drivers

- Differing reward systems
- Different audiences and peer groups
- Different time horizons
- Different needs for perfect & complete vs “good enough”

Research & Practice as Contributors to Theory

- Practice
  - Tests the applicability of theories
  - Provides data for adaptability
  - Accumulates experiences across cases of what actually works
- Research
  - Tries to include all relevant variables
  - Attempts to explain causality and influence
  - Works from specifics to generalizability
  - Basic and applied research

Closing the Divides

- The scholar-practitioner role
- Living on the Bridge; developing boundary-spanners
- Changing some dissemination channels
- Go-to strategies for being informed across worlds
- Aligning practice needs with academic research (eg, Engaged Scholarship); producing more useful research based on needs in the field; different tacit knowledge
- More practitioner-led research on implementation
- More education options to bridge theory & practice

THE ONE WITH THE LARGEST VIEW WINS!
Jamieson