Theory and Practice

Here There Be Monsters
At the Edge of the Map of Conflict Resolution

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Do your parties ever exhibit "reactive devaluation?" Has "loss aversion" ever impeded one of your agreements? If these basic conflict resolution concepts sound familiar, give yourself a pat on the back. But if you've never heard of them[2], don't worry — you're not alone and you're not at fault. The fault lies with the relationship — or more accurately, the lack of relationships — between the people who study conflict resolution and the people who practice it.

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There has always been a gap between what's known about conflict resolution in the halls of academia and what people actually use in the meeting room, the judge's chambers, or the church basement. The problem is that the gap is growing too wide. It's widening because scholars and practitioners, in general, are not talking *with* each other. We are not listening to each other. We are not learning enough from each other. We behave as if we are content to exist on two sovereign islands — one for academics, one for practitioners — separated by an uncharted sea, full of monsters.

Why Do We Care?

We believe this self-imposed separation has serious consequences — among them, that neither the thinkers nor the doers are getting better or brighter as quickly as they could be. On the research side, practitioners and academics are not collaborating nearly enough on the controlled experiments and evaluation studies that are critical if our field is to develop more sophisticated approaches to real problems. On the practical side, even some long-established concepts, such as "reactive devaluation" — let alone useful newer theories and research results — are not making their way into day-to-day use. (A few examples are outlined in boxes on succeeding pages.) As a result, conflict resolution practitioners are threatened with stagnation as professionals.

If the consequences of professional isolation are so dire, why do scholars and practitioners continue to ignore each other? It seems there are some good reasons — and some not so good. We'll tell you about both. And what can practitioners and academics do, in reality, to foster more cooperation? Plenty, we think. We'll tell you how.

The observations and suggestions we present here come primarily from our experience in Theory to Practice, a Hewlett Foundation-funded

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project whose sole purpose is to find ways to bridge the gap between academia (including both theory and research) and conflict resolution practice.[3]

One of the project's most successful explorations of scholar-practitioner relationships has been through a series of "conversations" — much like the role plays used in mediation training — in which the characters

portray mediators, scholars, law school deans, and foundation officers, placed in a variety of situations. (We've printed the names of the roles in italics in the examples below.) To create the scenarios, we tapped our colleagues' real-life experiences,[4] scripted the beginnings of dialogues, and let the role-players improvise the rest. Our actors were unusually experienced people from both practice and research, but we had them pretend that they were more typical examples of their assigned roles. As often happens in training, our actors quickly took their roles to heart, and the resulting dramas were honest, intimate and — we believe — real. The revelations were always interesting, often enlightening, and sometimes, shocking. We hope you will agree.

WHY SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS HAVEN'T GOTTEN ALONG

After conducting our role plays at several meetings and conferences, we identified five factors that combine to discourage and defeat collaboration between conflict resolution scholars and practitioners:

1. Scholars and practitioners define "wisdom" differently.

First and fundamentally, scholars and practitioners have different frames of reference.[5] That difference expresses itself in the contrasting ways they seek professional enlightenment.

Typical scholars see truth as deriving from careful comparison of many pieces of data, whether collected personally or not. This viewpoint tends to make scholars uninterested in typical practitioners as sources of wisdom; what the practitioner has to offer is "merely" direct and singular experience, and that, in the lexicon of the researcher, makes one a *subject*, not a *partner*.

The practitioner's definition of truth, meanwhile, is derived primarily from personal action and direct observation; wisdom then becomes the aggregate of a long series of such truths. The academic's whole structure of wisdom — gained primarily from indirect means — is pallid and unpersuasive to most practitioners. Practitioners desire face-to-face intimacy. Academics prefer arm's length rationality.

Academics also require time — time to hypothesize, to design, to collect, to analyze, to critique, to publish. That painstaking process is routinely misunderstood by practitioners, who in their daily work are

constantly called upon to make decisions "on the fly," based on imperfect or incomplete information. By contrast, there can be severe consequences for academics who publish research prematurely. While scholars often wait years for their theories to be validated or even critiqued, practitioners feel the need for rough-and-ready answers to their practice issues "yesterday."

Our role plays demonstrated that these differences in how scholars and practitioners view truth and time — tantamount to cultural differences — can make even simple conversations about conflict resolution confusing, if not downright antagonistic, between those of us in the lab and those of us in the field.

2. Scholars and practitioners don't speak the same language.

Compounding that confusion is the fact that scholars and practitioners — like residents of foreign lands — often can't understand each other, even when they *try* to communicate.   Academics in all disciplines develop specialized terminology (jargon) to communicate with their colleagues accurately and efficiently. Practitioners in many fields, of course, do the same thing, but often don't notice their own forms of specialized language[6] (if you doubt this, try having a conversation with a federal or military official or an engineer about what's what in her organization).

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Jargon, then, is natural enough. The problem comes when people who habitually communicate about a given subject in one way meet people who communicate about that same subject in another way. In an example from a role play, a *Senior Mediator* griped to a scholar that talking with academics about conflict resolution was like trying to converse with space aliens.

"I am not sure what you mean by a 'longitudinal study,'" he said. "One of your students started to interview me, he was talking about 'epistemology' and 'paradigm shifts.' I don't know what planet your university is on, but it isn't mine."

The languages of conflict resolution scholarship are particularly frustrating to practitioners because they believe their own professional vocabulary is grounded in the (supposedly) plain-talking

"Oh, we don't sort things into categories like fiction and nonfiction anymore, sir. Now it's either 'popular' or 'élitist.'"

world of their parties. At worst, practitioners dismiss academic language — whether in person or in print — as deliberately obtuse and elitist. It's all too easy for them to conclude that academics themselves must be that way. Academics' discourse, meanwhile, often derides simple language as shallow and simplistic; it's all too easy to conclude the same about people who use that language. Is it any wonder that when scholars and practitioners do get together, the result can be miscommunication and misunderstanding?

3. Scholars and practitioners don't trust or respect each other.

If the only problem between scholars and practitioners was a fundamental difference in professional culture, we'd all have made much more progress on it — many mediators, after all, deal with that kind of problem for a living. A more disturbing revelation from our role plays was that the bedrock of any successful collaboration — mutual trust and respect — was missing between researchers and practitioners. We don't know whether that professional disdain was the product of experience, of the clash of cultures, or both. But we do know that our make-believe scholars and practitioners betrayed a callous disregard for each other's needs and concerns in the role plays — not always, but regularly enough to be

worrisome. They often seemed to view each other merely as means to their own professional ends, tools to be used and then discarded.

This attitude came to its most glaring light in a role play that required an ambitious *Junior Researcher* to negotiate with a reluctant *Program Manager* for access to mediations. The researcher wanted to test a hypothesis that incompetent lawyers were disproportionately sending clients to mediation because the confidentiality of that process allowed lawyer error to be swept under the rug.[7] If this were proven, the researcher could write an explosive, career-making scholarly paper. The *Program Manager* wanted no part of a study whose very premise could alienate her lawyer clients. Instead, she wanted the study to explore what types of lawyers refer cases to mediation, so she could better target her marketing. "Frankly, I couldn't care less whether investigating [the hypothesis] would bring us national attention and accolades from the ADR community," she declared. "What I'm concerned about is whether we are going to be able to continue, to survive."

DID YOU KNOW THAT...
The mediator's race may make a difference.
A study found that disputants of color had worse outcomes than white disputants in mediated court-connected small-claims cases. But when the mediation was conducted by two co-mediators of color, the negative impact of the disputant's ethnicity disappeared.[8]

But the *Junior Researcher* needed access first of all. So he gave in to the *Program Manager's* demands — at least, to her face: "We're not in the business of making judgments," he said to placate her. "We're social scientists — good and evil, it's all the same to us." Behind his cooperative facade, however, the pressure to publish a far-reaching paper — and the temptation of a juicy one, at that — proved irresistible. Our young scholar decided that if he couldn't get along, he would get ahead — at the expense of the hapless *Program Manager*. He schemed out loud: "I don't plan to spend my entire career in this community. If I go off and publish a piece in *Law & Society Review* about all these really corrupt and incompetent lawyers in this small town, in four or five years' time, when we have completed the project . . ."

We should point out that at this moment the actor's improvisation was interrupted by gasps of shock from practitioners watching the role play. They were outraged by the *Junior Researcher's* manipulation and casual betrayal of the *Program Manager's* trust. That a researcher might

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actually think this way, of course, played exactly into the practitioners' fears about giving access to researchers. They appeared not to notice, however, that the *Program Manager*, too, was engaging in her own manipulation, rather than trying to bridge the very real interests and concerns and create a study that would benefit both practice (and her business) and scholarship (and the scholar's career).

We feel that less sensational versions of this scenario, played out in the real world over other research collaborations, have driven a wedge between scholars and practitioners, making it less likely that they would seek and establish personal or professional relationships with each other.

One more thing adds to the trust problem. Our role plays illuminated a perception among practitioners that in a scholarly collaboration, they take all the risks and get little of the benefit. After one exercise, one of our colleagues, who in real life is an experienced public policy mediator who has been the subject of many studies, noted one reason many practitioners felt justified in being leery of being evaluated by researchers. "[Scholars] who do bad research remain unsanctioned — unlike practitioners, who are in a marketplace and whose careers are at risk," he said. "I know of no consequence that occurred to the people whose research was distorted." And it is ironic, the mediator added, that when practitioners complain about skewed evaluations and bad research, the researchers resent the criticism: "There is a visceral sense of an injustice [among practitioners] because the proponent of evaluation is outraged by the notion of being evaluated."

If practitioners believe that they may be betrayed by scholars, they will react accordingly. And even if "betrayal" is too strong a word, the problem is that researchers often fail to take into account the real-world conditions of the practitioner programs they evaluate. This failure, from the practitioners' viewpoint, produces bad research that creates real-world problems for their programs. If this pattern continues, it will always be hard for scholars to get practitioners to cooperate in academic research.
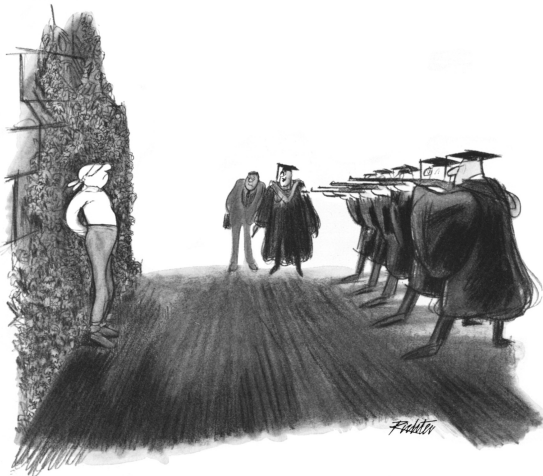
4. Scholars and practitioners face different professional pressures.

Let's delve deeper into the "write the explosive paper later" scenario. Does the *Junior Researcher* above plan to betray the *Program Manager* out of sheer malice? We believe not. We see a more powerful force motivating the behavior of both parties — i.e. survival. Scholars and practitioners often aren't aware of the intense competitive demands that the others face

in their "native cultures."

The *Junior Researcher*, if he is to survive in academia, must conduct research and publish the results. That's where the old phrase "publish or perish" comes from.Thus everything our young scholar does is directed toward sniffing out issues that could make a big splash in his field and his career. His livelihood depends on impressing his senior advisors and his peers, not his practitioner partners. Little wonder he couldn't resist the lure of a potentially controversial topic, even if it meant deceiving the *Program Manager*.

But the *Program Manager*, as she said, also must survive, by keeping clients and attracting new ones to her mediation business. She is leery of anything that could scare away those who currently or in the future might hire her firm. Since not only her own livelihood, but also her self-image as a professional, depends on impressing members of her community that hers is a safe, neutral environment, naturally she prefers a less controversial study — and one that could also help her financial bottom line.

"It's publish or perish, and he hasn't published."

The interplay of these motivations can turn scholar/practitioner collaboration into a tense experience for all players, as they tiptoe through a professional minefield. "Even the decision of what to spend resources evaluating can be an immensely political decision," said one of our actors, when the exercise just concluded had mutated a proposed study of "facilitative" mediators into a study of judge-mediators. "There is a field of forces that you have to tread your way through carefully."

5. Scholars and practitioners have to "pay the trolls."

Even if scholars and practitioners manage to overcome the odds and establish a productive professional relationship, the strength of any collaboration may be sorely tested by the influence of "gatekeepers." We

define gatekeepers as people or institutions possessing the power to direct scholarship toward their own agendas (though we're tempted by the image from childhood fables of the troll who lives under the bridge!) The term encompasses people, such as deans, department heads, and shareholders, and institutions, such as government agencies, foundations, and professional societies. They may be well-meaning, but they usually get their way.

In one exercise, a *Senior Scholar* refrained from dismissing outright a research idea proposed to a junior colleague by a mediator. It didn't fit his conception of a properly grounded study. But in looking for an opportunity to help the *Junior Scholar* make something of it, he changed its fundamental focus: "The major funders are really just interested in taking established theory and building on it in a very incremental way," he strategized. "[The *Junior Scholar*] has to be careful if he takes on this assignment that he's able to tie it back to some theory so that we can build knowledge in the field and not just have this be a one shot, interesting answer to the *Junior Mediator's* question."

Thus from the first moment the research idea came in contact with the *Senior Scholar*, the subject of the inquiry subtly started to shift. By the time the proposal had been reviewed, revised, massaged and manipulated by other gatekeepers, the final research project bore little resemblance — or relevance — to the mediator's original issue. An academic in the role play resignedly referred

"Sure, we need more research in alchemy, necromancy, and sorcery, but where is the money going to come from?"

to the metamorphosis as "the price of fame" for the young scholar.

The price is paid by the practitioner, who is left with unanswered questions and a sense of betrayal; by the scholar, who may have jeopardized any future cooperation from local practitioners; and ultimately, by the field of conflict resolution, which loses yet another opportunity (albeit a fictional one in this instance) to build a bridge between theory and practice.

We don't need exercises to illustrate the consequences when research gets designed without adequate input from practitioners. One of the largest and most carefully done studies in the history of conflict resolution provides an example. In 1996, RAND's Institute for Civil Justice reported its findings in a study of dispute resolution in the federal courts.[9] The study compared cases that went through ADR processes with those that went through litigation. To the outrage of dispute resolution advocates, it found *no significant savings* in costs or time to disposition overall for cases that went through ADR. RAND endured much ill-informed criticism from people who had been busy selling ADR based on widely held assumptions of cost and time savings to litigants. We rather thought the disappointing overall results might be explained by the fact that the quality of mediation, even within a given program, can vary widely with the mediator—and by our field's widespread failure to ensure consistent quality control.[10] So we asked if the study's data could be re-analyzed to answer the question of whether the "best" mediators in the federal programs saved their parties more money and time than did the other mediators.

The answer was no, the data couldn't be re-analyzed – because nobody in the Congressional office that commissioned the study had thought to ask the question, because the researchers hadn't thought of it on their own, and because during the design phase nobody asked for feedback from practitioners who were most concerned with quality control in mediation. Therefore, a design adjustment that could have significantly enhanced our knowledge at minimal additional expense wasn't made – at a cost to the researchers' reputations, and to the practitioners' ability to improve their field.

WHY USEFUL SCHOLARSHIP RARELY MAKES IT INTO PRACTICE

Why don't we as practitioners know more theory, when at least some of the theories could prove downright useful to us? Why don't scholars

communicate their relevant research findings to practitioners? Scholars, after all, invest substantial energy and effort in their research, and they believe it truly contributes to the public good. Through the Theory to Practice project, we have identified some troubling reasons why relevant theory and research results don't cross the waters to the domain of practice. Part of the problem lies with practitioners; we can be unreasonable in our demands. And part of the problem lies with academics, or rather, academia; scholars often don't try to reach practitioners, and sometimes, they can't afford to.

1. Scholars must publish in the "right" journals.

Earlier we noted the old saw that academics must publish or perish, and discussed how that pressure can corrupt scholar/practitioner collaboration. Beyond this, the scholars, deans and department chairs in our role plays made it clear that it's not enough for scholars to publish — they must publish in the "right" publications. The most highly-sought placements — narrowly focused but prestigious academic journals or law reviews — invariably meant the articles were obscured from the view of most practitioners. Meanwhile, there is often no reward for scholars who place their articles in journals for practitioners (such as this one). In fact, scholars can be *penalized* for trying to reach non-academic audiences, and they risk disparagement by peers. One veteran scholar described the ultimate put-down for a scholarly paper: "It might turn up on a report on a web page or something like that."

> **CAMPUS SURVIVAL GUIDE**
> **Our role plays exhibited five keys to career advancement in academia:**
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> 1. A faculty member must conduct research;
> 2. She must find funding to support the research;
> 3. She must consider what topics are most likely to be funded;
> 4. She must publish, ideally in the journals respected by those who will decide whether to promote her; and
> 5. She must therefore consider what topics are most likely to be published in these journals.

After a role play, one of the actors described how, as a young academic, she once proposed to publish her research in a book designed to be highly useful to practicing negotiators and mediators. Her department head's acid response: "You can publish that, as long as you do it under a pseudonym." He hinted that the tenure committee would not merely

disregard such a book, but hold it against her as a *distraction* from the institution's definition of scholarship. Such experiences apparently are typical of scholars and practitioners who have tried to "do the right thing" by crossing their professional borders.

2. Scholars must research the "right" issues.

Even if scholars dutifully place their articles in the "right" journals, they still court disfavor if their research is perceived as responding too directly to practitioners' concerns. In other words, they must conduct the "right" research, as well. That means that a researcher must first develop an acceptable theory, and according to our role plays, issues that arise out of practice don't usually provide an obvious framework for a "theory" worth exploring. More likely, a

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...

The party who speaks first may dominate.

Despite the common assertion that all parties have equal time and opportunity to tell their story in mediation, it has been found, particularly in disputes between unsophisticated disputants, that the first speaker's story can dominate the discussion and thus marginalize the stories of later-speaking parties. Moreover, this inequality can be exacerbated by the actions, questions and summaries of mediators who have not been trained to watch for and compensate for such distortions in discourse.[11]

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practitioner's concerns will be derided as merely exploring "the politics of the day," incapable of stimulating worthwhile scholarship. Such derision, of course, discourages practitioners from exploring with scholars research designs that could develop theory while answering practical issues.

Our role plays also revealed that tenure-hungry new scholars are no more likely than their experienced counterparts to undertake research that can be perceived as focusing on "the politics of the day." Furthermore, in certain disciplines, new scholars are discouraged from undertaking research that is regarded as derived from another discipline's methodology — regardless of its utility.

To be fair to academia, what we somewhat sarcastically refer to as the "right" issues and the "right" publications are not arbitrary standards. Research topics must be carefully selected for their potential to add logically to the state of knowledge within a field. And once conducted, that research must be subjected to expert scrutiny by publishing it in the field's most rigorous journals. It is right that only research that can defend itself against a tough standard of review be considered a true advance.

We are far from wanting spurious research. Our point, rather, is that if

academics continue to make, at best, half-hearted efforts to communicate their work outside of academia, then the ultimate purpose of studying conflict — to improve the human experience — is bound to be frustrated. Furthermore, by failing to speak plainly and in places (whether on paper, in person, or in cyberspace) where practitioners will be found, scholars effectively prevent practitioners from helping to sharpen the focus of their research. Many practitioner experiences and insights are relevant to the design of good research. But scholars seem indifferent to these ideas — so how many practitioners are going to batter down doors to offer them?

3. Practitioners only want "news they can use."

While scholars are discouraged from producing and placing articles to reach practitioners, busy practitioners are likely to view scholarship — even relevant scholarship — with a skeptical eye. Our role plays revealed that most practitioners want to be assured that what they are reading or learning about will be *immediately* useful — for example, an article that will alert them to competition, or one that will enable them to sell services more effectively. They are unlikely to go out of their way to seek knowledge for knowledge's sake or to broaden their concept of what their work is about. (If anything, the trend is toward narrowness.[12]) You may recall the *Program Manager* we mentioned earlier, who was only interested in a proposed study's usefulness as potential market analysis for her mediation firm. She was not curious about the fundamental questions about justice implied in the research question, nor was she interested in the opportunity to help advance her *profession*.

In some sense, conflict resolution practitioners demand that scholars prove they have something that is "worth learning" according to the practitioners' own constrained views of their profession and their role in it. As we've seen earlier, most scholars are far from feeling a need to prove themselves in this way.

Practitioners' frequently cavalier attitude toward professional enlightenment is disheartening and puzzling. We believe that more practitioners should seek to learn more about conflict resolution, if not as an intellectual pursuit, then at least as vocational training that would enable them to serve their clients better. How can you know if a theory is useful or not if you don't know it?

4. Scholars don't think practitioners are smart enough.
    We saved this for last because it is, in some ways, the most troublesome of our observations on the divide between scholars and practitioners.

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Much of what we have written about scholars' work — its unintelligibility, its obscurity, its fear of "the politics of the day" — sends an unpleasant message that practitioners just can't get it. You might remember the old saw, "those who can't do, teach." Today, that saying seems to have been flipped on its head to "those who can't teach, do."
    Patricia Limerick[13], herself a renowned scholar, described the typical attitude:

> "In ordinary life, when a listener cannot understand what someone has said, this is the usual exchange:
>   *Listener*: I cannot understand what you are saying.
>   *Speaker:* Let me try to say it more clearly.
> But in scholarly writing in the late twentieth century, other rules apply. This is the implicit exchange:
>   *Reader:* I cannot understand what you are saying.
>   *Academic Writer:* Too bad. The problem is that you are an unsophisticated and untrained reader. If you were smarter, you would understand me.
> The exchange remains implicit, because no one wants to say, 'this doesn't make any sense,' for fear that the response, 'It would, if you were smarter,' might actually be true."

    Beyond sending the message that practitioners are not smart enough to understand their research, scholars also have been known to behave in

ways that imply that they have nothing to learn from practitioners. After one role play, a scholar recounted a (rare) joint scholar/practitioner conference at which first, scholars were to present their research; then, practitioners were to follow with practice issues; and the rest of the conference was to be devoted to a rich discussion between the two groups. That construct, however, never had a chance; after their speaking time was up, the researchers simply left the conference!

A final observation is that within academia, the field of conflict resolution has yet to gain full respect as a valid scholarly pursuit. As one scholar remarked during a role play, "A lot of law schools have big dispute resolution programs; but most of the people — not all but most of them — are (seen as) kind of marginal (to the law school's mission)." Understandably, conflict resolution scholars, who are trying to win the esteem of colleagues in more traditional fields, may be inhibited from pursuing "unscholarly" work. But if leading scholars in our field won't help advance this important new profession by risking collaboration with practitioners, why should conflict resolution scholarship be considered to be "leading" anything important?

"I know so much that I don't know where to begin."

GETTING SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS WORKING TOGETHER

We've spent the first half of this article talking about what's wrong between scholars and practitioners in conflict resolution. Now we offer some ideas for developing new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. Most of them involve deliberately creating events and venues where scholars and practitioners can speak with each other comfortably,

setting aside the suspicions and stereotypes that have kept them from crossing the professional gulf that separates them.

1. Host a "Moveable Feast."

This is our satirical term for an informal working meeting that doesn't require a major commitment of funds and time, to which only experts are invited, at which many points of view are represented, and that produces a tightly focused product, fast. Theory to Practice has created discussions of this type[14] on half a dozen major issues, and we think the format shows promise for broader use. The idea is to create an informal atmosphere that encourages frank, honest, open discussions among the attendees. What you need is not that hard to organize — a deliberately ephemeral group; a selective invitation list of scholars and practitioners; an informal setting including some food; a "working party" orientation rather than a typical symposium or conference; and a "laboring oar" who undertakes to collect and report the results of the discussion. This, we think, is about all it takes to get a good-natured but blunt discussion going. There's no shortage of local and regional issues that could benefit from such discussions. And if researchers and practitioners can feel freer to be blunt about the problems, they are more likely to discover how they can find mutual gains by putting their different perspectives to use.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Process, not skill, may be key to settlement.

A study using the exacting, moment-by-moment "conversation analysis" technique concluded that four features of mediation *independent of the mediator's skill* help to make the discussion more productive:

- delayed placement of denials (because the parties took turns speaking);
- selective, rather than blanket responses to accusations;
- a pattern of the parties addressing the mediator rather than each other; and
- a "normative order" of being cooperative with the process.[15]

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2. Turn your "scholar" or "practitioner" conference into a hybrid.

For all of its strengths, the "moveable feast" has one unavoidable limitation: it only works when experts make up virtually the entire guest list. The Theory to Practice team wished to find a larger occasion to integrate scholars' thinking and practitioners' experience in dispute resolution. The well-regarded regional conference of the Wisconsin

Association of Mediators (which attracts upwards of 250 people from a dozen Midwest states) offered an unusual opportunity.

In 1999, the Theory to Practice group, joined by faculty members of the Institute for Legal Studies of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Marquette University, was invited to present nine innovative sessions at the conference. The Theory to Practice sessions were designed to be interactive, which created, in effect, a series of moveable feast-type encounters in tandem, with hundreds of participants. Both the choice of topics (risky and experimental[16] rather than cut-and-dried) and format (roundtable rather than panel), were designed to encourage more two-way traffic in information than is usual when academics speak to practitioners. We believe this worked rather well. We tried something similar at the 2000 conference shared by the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution and the Conflict Resolution Education Network. Audience evaluations at both conferences were favorable[17], and we hope to encourage other conferences to move in this direction.

You can do this in smaller groups, too. If you're a conflict resolution scholar, consider inviting the more experienced practitioners in your area not just to the occasional dinner, but to more workaday occasions when you're designing research. If you're a conflict resolution practitioner, think about inviting academics in your area, not just to come by and give a talk, but to stick around for long enough to give you a perspective on what's going on in your program.

3. Get the best practitioners and scholars to list themselves in "The Guide."

Early on, the Theory to Practice project published "A Researcher's Guide to Dispute Resolution Practitioners," a 100-page guide to some of

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**Practitioners add to discussion at
Hewlett Theory Centers' annual conference**

The 19 groups of scholars across the country funded by the Hewlett Foundation to develop theory in conflict resolution represent an extraordinary array of talent. Yet until recently, their annual meeting, though academically sophisticated and cross-disciplinary, did not involve any interchange with practitioners. Beginning in 1996, however, as a part of the same train of thought that led to the Theory to Practice project, the conference began to include a few selected practitioners. The consequence has been an enriched dialogue and better feedback to significant on-going research. We also applaud the increasing willingness of many of the Hewlett Theory Centers to invite practitioners into their discussions.

the most thoughtful practitioners active in a wide variety of neutral work. Later expanded to include scholars and republished as the "Guide to Dispute Resolution Practitioners and Researchers," this publication is now moving into a new phase, as the basis of the Scholars and Scholarly Practitioners section (a tentative title) of the massive new CRInfo.org database. By 1999, we had found more than 75 expert practitioners and about 50 scholars, including some of the most famous in the field, who were willing to open their phone and e-mail to contact. Virtually everyone in the Guide is already inundated with messages and buried in projects, so this speaks eloquently about the willingness of a significant subset of experts to help researchers and practitioners talk to each other.

Included in the Guide was a basic "speaker's bureau" — a list of potential speakers expert on various dispute resolution topics. The willingness of more than half those listed in the Guide to entertain speaking requests creates broader direct access to experts, and increases the channels for direct and timely feedback to researchers. We intend to replicate the speaker's list at CRInfo.org.

4. Team up with journalists.

How many times have you cringed at a reporter's misuse of the term "mediation?"[18] We know that everyone these days is overwhelmed with information. Time and attention spans are short. Yet the daily paper gets read. So we believe it is imperative that we work more effectively with the press. If we work harder to enlighten journalists about what conflict resolution is and isn't, they in turn can better inform their readers and viewers. The payoff will be a public that is better educated about the work we do.

Another benefit to working with journalists is that they can help translate theory and research into a form that is accessible and relevant to practitioners. We're particularly excited by one new cooperative effort. Discussions initiated by the Theory to Practice project have led to the creation of the first joint center between a group concerned with developing better journalism (the University of Missouri's highly regarded journalism school) and a conflict resolution research center (the prestigious Center for the Study of Dispute Resolution at Missouri's law school.) Two full-time equivalent, tenure track positions — one in each school — will staff the joint center, and the first faculty member hired explicitly to develop the collaboration began work in the fall of 2000.

The new joint center at Missouri will work toward building relation-ships between journalists and conflict resolution professionals and toward increasing each group's knowledge of the other's work. But there is a parallel role for local and regional dispute resolution professionals and

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D I D   Y O U   K N O W   T H A T...

Face-to-face discussions are not necessarily ideal.
A landmark series of studies of negotiation found that when one side offers a compromise, concession or solution, the other side is likely to devalue that proposal simply because it came from a perceived opponent.[19] This result argues for the use of a mediator, who can take responsibility for ideas and present them without an opponent's taint. A more recent study argued convincingly that communication in caucus can actually be *superior* to direct communication, because the information transmitted by the mediator is generally stripped of negative overtones that get in the way of efforts to build understanding and agreements.[20]

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scholars; many conflicts in the public eye will be easier to resolve if the local press can communicate what's at stake, what the real possibilities are, and how conflict resolution processes can and cannot help.

5. Buttress the "bridge" people.

Bridge" people are those conflict resolution professionals whose personal commitment is to bridge the gap between theory and practice. There has always been a small population of professionals — some in academia, others in practice — who see this kind of hybrid work as close to their professional core. They have been a long-suffering and under-appreciated group, perhaps because their orientation seems fey to many full-time practitioners, and unscientific to many full-time research-ers. Neither fish nor fowl, their reputations grow among a small group of cognoscenti even as their sources of funding, their scope of work, and sometimes their careers suffer from the incomprehension of their immedi-ate colleagues.

Theory to Practice values the "bridge" people's contribution to the field. We have found it heartening that our efforts have, arguably, provided a better platform for those who have found themselves disfavored by conventional journals and other prestigious mechanisms of dissemination. Emblematic of this trend is the recent inclusion in Hewlett Theory Centers annual meetings of a larger cross-section of "bridge" figures. But to change the pattern in an enduring way will demand sustained attention to the perverse career incentives we have outlined earlier.

6. Scholars should publish, but not just in books (or academic articles).

The default way to disseminate major research results is to publish a book. Most academics automatically think this is effective. But decades of research demonstrate that even a very good book, without more, will accomplish little in the way of actually getting anyone to change behavior. (See Appendix A.)

Furthermore, and contrary to conventional wisdom, it isn't just nose-to-the-grindstone practitioners who fail to read books or articles on important new theories and research results. Scholars, too, do not always read their colleagues' work — at least, in the original. At the outset of the Theory to Practice project, we gave celebrated scholars a short survey about their familiarity with six potentially influential books about conflict resolution.[21] Among the scholars were co-authors of one of the books cited. Yet — as these authors were visibly shocked to discover — almost one-third of those responding had never even heard of their book. (See Appendix B, lines 1-7.) A key point: Even among highly regarded scholars, the one book that virtually everyone had read in its original form was the one that could be read on an airplane.

"As a matter of fact, I confess to modest hopes—not wildly unfounded, I trust—that my book may resonate beyond the reaches of academe."

That's not all we learned from this exercise. The same people were asked about *nonformal* means of learning these books' contents. Even among a highly scholarly audience, this revealed that nonformal methods of dissemination (Appendix B, lines 8-12) were quite effective, while the traditional means had been ineffective. We are *not* suggesting that this

group of scholars had remained ignorant of new ideas; the table shows otherwise. We suggest, rather, that scholars' traditional assumption — that if they write a really important book, the "smart" people who are interested in the topic will read it — has been invalidated under the constant time pressure virtually all professionals now experience. While there's reason to believe that publishing a book is still essential for scholarly purposes, it's the other distribution methods that actually get through to people.

7. Add new theory to training.

As noted above, strategies of dissemination other than expecting people to read a book are more effective, even when the target audience is scholars. But what does work? Theory to Practice has experimented with several approaches to "alternate publication." One is to integrate theory into training more directly.

We have been using two findings published in the landmark book *Barriers to Conflict Resolution* — "reactive devaluation" and "loss aversion" — as a test bed for integrating theory into training.[22] In an article in this journal, Jeffrey Senger and Christopher Honeyman describe experiments in designing exercises to explain such concepts to practitioners. The key to getting an enthusiastic response to such exercises, we have found, is to redesign the exercises for each audience. For instance, a government-wide group of professionals meeting at the U.S. Department of State showed little inclination to adopt wholesale the exercises in the Senger/Honeyman article, which were created for assistant U.S. attorneys, a professional group few of them empathized with. But they brightened visibly when told that the purpose of the exercises was to challenge them to draft better ones for their audiences.[23] We are pursuing the logic of this approach in a forthcoming experiment with a group of about 90 people, working from a major new work in conflict resolution.[24] The group will meet in spring 2001 to design interactive exercises and other "translations" for different audiences.

Relevant ideas will spread even more quickly if scholars themselves take a part in the process, by speaking regularly (and in vernacular language) to the public about their different "takes" on conflict resolution, by reviewing sample exercises based on their work, or — gasp! — even by essaying crisp and entertaining summaries of their newest discoveries. By "crisp" we mean *one page*. At a recent conference mostly of scholars, we

offered around a one-page summary of 30 years' research on behavior change (see Appendix A), along with a three-page summary of 30 years' research on diffusion of innovation — a closely related phenomenon, and one particularly relevant to the theme of that conference. A number of people immediately requested a copy of the one page on behavior change. But *not one person* requested the corresponding three-page excerpt on diffusion.[25] This fits with our general obervation: most professionals are so pressed for time that a one-page summary stands a significantly better chance of being read and absorbed than even a two-pager. If you wish to describe this as a sad situation, we won't argue, but there is nothing to be gained by continuing to ignore reality.

8. Seek diverse sources of knowledge.

By paying greater attention to diverse sources of learning, our field could spark radical changes in dispute resolution course materials. In the summer of 1999, we organized the first in a series of inquiries on "practical theory." At a "moveable feast," a group of highly experienced professionals — half scholars, half practitioners — gathered for a discussion, in the course of which they were invited to tell about research and theory that were important to *their own* learning in the field, but not widely known. We were startled that virtually everyone there, it seemed, had at least one work in mind that had been influential in his or her thinking, but which the others had never heard of. A second session with a different group has lengthened the list of works. We expect we will compile a rich store of narrowly disseminated works that may lead conflict resolution trainers and teachers to revise their

"If you were to boil your book down to a few words, what would be its message?"

materials.[26] One early outcome of this discovery was an experimental competition in which Georgetown University law students translated research topics from this list of unknowns into newspaper-style articles.

9. Harness new technology.

As infuriating as electronic means of dissemination frequently are, they unquestionably make it easier to get the right information to the right people, quickly and cheaply. Our experiences with high tech, like most people's, have been mixed, but things are rapidly improving. We have particularly strong hopes for the massive CRInfo.org database, with which Theory to Practice collaborates closely. Among other design elements that take people's differing needs seriously, CRInfo.org has created several information "gateways," each tailored in form and content to appeal to a unique interest group in conflict resolution. We encourage readers who control substantive conflict resolution data, findings, research or practitioner wisdom to consider republishing it on CRInfo.org.

> "
> This is a particularly significant time in our field, and scholars and practitioners need each other more than they realize.
> "

PUTTING DETAIL IN THE MAP

Long ago, cartographers sometimes filled in the gaps in their knowledge of the oceans with "Here there be monsters." The imagery holds for other settings in which groups are isolated from each other. As you can see, there are plenty of reasons why scholars and practitioners in conflict resolution are divided, and why good work launched from one island often stays close to its home shore. But we hope you also can see that it is possible to build bridges. Courageous people and new institutions are building out there now. We hope readers of this new journal will join them.

These bridges, and the people who build them, are our best hope for a strong and prosperous profession. This is a particularly significant time in our field, and scholars and practitioners need each other more than they realize. Conflicts and controversies abound: Will lawyers and law-based ideas take over the field of mediation? Will, and should, courts and agencies force disputants to use mediation or other ADR processes? Can we define consistent models of practice and standards of quality? Can we craft a uniform act that accurately defines and reasonably regulates mediation? And can we write a clear, enforceable code of ethics? Not one of these questions, nor any of the other key issues now facing us, can be answered in any useful way without enlisting both scholars' and practitioners' expertise.

Many of these questions are products of our field's successes. Alternative dispute resolution processes — particularly mediation — have been "institutionalized" within government and business, educational institutions and courts. And yet institutionalization often comes at a price; we don't have to look far to find evidence that this process can lead a profession into complacency, stagnation, and ultimately, obsolescence. Will our field, like so many others, lose its innovative edge, become bureaucratized and spiral into irrelevance? Or can we constantly reinvent ourselves, reflecting new learning, new needs, new situations?

If our field is to confront these issues and come out not just alive, but vital in every sense, scholars and practitioners must be willing to try harder to overcome the mutual mistrust and suspicions that they have harbored over the years. Only a continual effort will allow conflict resolution to continue to thrive in academia and in the field.

Appendix A

People are more likely to change behavior[27] when:
1. They are presented with behavior choices which:
    a. provide immediate, observable consequences
    b. are similar to what people already do
    c. do not require a lot of steps or training
    d. are relatively low cost in terms of time, energy, money, and materials.
2. They have had a personal discussion with someone about the new behavior, e.g. (For water conservation issues) a neighbor asks them if they plan to wash their car on the lawn instead of on the street.
3. There is peer pressure, e.g. others on the street are visibly engaging in the new behavior.
4. They get an opportunity to verbalize a commitment to change.
5. They get a chance to practice the new behavior while in the educational setting.

Education messages and programs are more likely to be successful if they:
1. Emphasize the "well baby" instead of the sick one. In other words, help citizens understand how their individual action will make a difference, rather than tell them how bad things will be if they don't change.
2. Take advantage of existing social structures to provide an avenue for new information.
3. Are designed to:
    a. take place close to the targeted behavior
    b. relate to a specific product or topic (rather than multiple topics)
    c. be eye catching, i.e. bright and humorous
    d. provide details on how to do the exact behavior required to meet objectives
    e. reach people in multiple ways, e.g. plan for store posters, **and** store shelf stickers, **and** individual product information pamphlets, **and** press releases, **and** a speaker's bureau.

Appendix B

	How do you know about this book? Mark the most appropriate box.	Barriers to Conflict Resolution (Stanford Center)	When Talk Works (Kolb et als)	The Promise of Mediation (Bush and Folger)	Dispute Resolution (Goldberg, Sander and Rogers)	Getting to Yes (Fisher and Ury)	Getting Disputes Resolved (Ury, Brett and Goldberg)
1.	Never heard of it.	6	1	1	1		1
2.	Skimmed it.	1	3	2	1	1	2
3.	"It's on my pile."	5	3		3		1
4.	I read at least one chapter.	3	3	8	6		2
5.	I read at least half of it. Really.	1	4	3	1	1	4
6.	I read at least 80% of it (or, I was a co-author).	4	7	7	9	20	10
7.	I'm waiting for the movie.		1	1			
8.	I talked extensively with one of the authors about it.	2	8	12	4	4	7
9.	I heard a summary at a private or public academic meeting.	4	3	3	1	5	4
1-0.	I heard a public presentation given by a co-author (e.g. to a practitioner audience)	7	8	14	6	10	8
1-1.	I read a summary or a book review, in an academic or professional journal.	5	12	14	8	11	10
1-2.	Other	1	2	2	2	3	3

End Notes

1. About the authors: Christopher Honeyman is president of Convenor, a dispute resolution consulting firm, and project director and principal investigator of Theory to Practice, a national project funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to develop better linkages between people who study conflict resolution and those who practice it. His e-mail address is honeyman@convenor.com

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2. An accompanying article by Jeffrey M. Senger and Christopher Honeyman discusses these concepts in more detail.

3. For more information on the Theory to Practice project, please see our web page at www.convenor.com/madison/t-t-p.htm

4. We would like to thank our colleagues whose depth of knowledge made the exercises credible. Role players included Peter Adler, Lisa Bingham, Juliana Birkhoff, David Chandler, Sara Cobb, Robert Dingwall, Marc Galanter, Deborah Hensler, Chris Honeyman, Karen Intrater, Barbara McAdoo, Elizabeth Neumeier, Charles Pou, Jr., Sheila Purcell, Leonard Riskin, Michael Thompson, Bill Warters, and Nancy Welsh. In addition, an array of equally experienced scholarly and practical players in the field (Howard Bellman and Craig McEwen, for example), offered wise comments from the audiences. In all, more than 40 experienced scholars and practitioners invested significant time helping us create the events and experiments that led to this article.

5. See Christopher Honeyman, "Frames of Reference," *Mediation Quarterly* 15 (1998): 269-276. The paper anchored this special issue of *Mediation Quarterly*. Republished as www.convenor.com/madison/framesof.htm

6. For example, Charles Rembar, a noted New York lawyer, described attorneys as speaking in a "mysterious tongue, composed of Latin, French, English, incantation and a bit of mumbling" and said they found it "easier to repeat a baggy formula than find words that really fit." Charles Rembar obituary, *The Economist* (November 4, 2000): 97.

7. In our scenario, this concern had been raised originally by a practitioner — but one too junior in her organization to get any "traction" on so obviously incendiary a possibility.

8. M. Hermann, "MetroCourt Project Final Report: A Study of the Effects of Ethnicity and Gender in Mediated and Adjudicated Small Claims Cases at the Metropolitan Court Mediation Center" (1993). See also Nancy Welsh and Debra Lewis, "Adaptations to the Civil Mediation Model: Suggestions from Research into the Approaches to Conflict Resolution Used in the Twin Cities' Cambodian Community," *Mediation Quarterly* 15 (1998): 345-358.

9. James S. Kakalik et al., *Just, Speedy, and Inexpensive? An Evaluation of Judicial Case Management Under the Civil Justice Reform Act* (Institute for Civil Justice, RAND Corp., 1996).

10. For background, see Christopher Honeyman et al., *Performance-Based Assessment: a Methodology, for use in selecting, training and evaluating mediators* (Washington, D.C.:

National Institute for Dispute Resolution, 1995). This monograph, along with some of the key papers that led up to it, is reproduced at www.convenor.com/madison/quality.htm

11. See, for example, Sara Cobb and Janet Rifkin, "Neutrality as a Discursive Practice: The Construction and Transformation of Narratives in Community Mediation," in Susan Silbey and Austin Sarat, ed., *Studies in Law, Politics and Society 11* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1991).

12. See Christopher Honeyman, "Not Good for Your Career." *Negotiation Journal* 14 (1998), 13-20. Republished as www. convenor.com/madison/career.htm

13. See Patricia Limerick, "Dancing with Professors: The Trouble with Academic Prose," in *Something in the Soil: Field Testing the New Western History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

14. For more information, see Christopher Honeyman, "ADR Practitioners and Researchers in a 'Moveable Feast,'" *Alternatives to the High Costs of Litigation* (June 1999). Republished as www.convenor.com/madison/moveable.htm

15. See Angela Garcia, "The Relevance of Interactional and Institutional Contexts for the Study of Gender Differences: A Demonstrative Case Study." *Symbolic Interaction* 21 (1998): 35-38, and previous Garcia work cited there. Other — and highly significant — findings produced in lengthier studies by Robert Dingwall and others, using the same type of research methodology, are better known in academia, but hardly any better known among practitioners.

16. Descriptions of the sessions can be found at www.convenor.com/madison/wam.htm

17. Averaging across all measures, the Theory to Practice sessions comfortably exceeded a rating of 4 out of a possible 5 at both conferences.

18. An article by Chris Honeyman on why we need more collaboration with journalists, first published by *IRE Journal* (the newsletter of the journalism society Investigative Reporters & Editors), can be found at www.convenor.com/madison/journali.htm

19. Lee Ross, "Reactive Devaluation in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution." In Kenneth Arrow et al., ed., *Barriers to Conflict Resolution* (New York: Norton, 1995).

20. Ian Ayres and Barry J. Nalebuff, "Common Knowledge as a Barrier to Negotiation," 44 *UCLA Law Rev* 1631 (1997).

21. These titles were chosen for the survey based on a previous survey by Bill Warters, which showed them (except for the undeservedly obscure *Barriers*) to be among the most widely used by well-respected teachers of conflict resolution.

22. We chose these concepts because when we surveyed a group of top-flight civil litigators — our initial target market for these ideas — as to theories they thought relevant to their daily lives, these two topics were ranked very high in practical importance. Our explanations of these concepts were in everyday language, and none of the survey respondents had ever heard of either line of research. See also note 19 above.

23. The Theory to Practice web site contains a series of "research translations," each of which uses settings and examples chosen by its particular author for the specific audience being addressed. We believe these strategies are far more effective than talking in general terms about principles. Jeffrey Senger, Sharon Press, Juliana Birkhoff, Charles Pou, Jr., Linda Stamato, Roy Lewicki, Lela Love, Josh Stulberg and others already known to fit the definition of "expert" are among those who have taken this kind of trouble — many, without any prompting from us.

24. Morton Deutsch and Peter Coleman, ed., *Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.)

25. If you're made of sterner stuff, you will find it reproduced at www.convenor.com/madison/diffus.htm

26. For the list of topics generated by the moveable feasts, see www.convenor.com/madison/prototyp.htm

27. Adapted from E. Andrews, fact sheet for "Discussion Paper: An EPA/USDA Partnership to Support Community-Based Education." For background report, see EPA Report 910-98-008. This fact sheet is the tightest summary of many years' research on behavior change we have been able to find. But note that getting to this concentrated "essence of research" required three successive stages of boiling down — an effort of significant proportions. Yet some researchers recognize it *is* possible to boil down what a practitioner needs to know into a page or two. At a Theory to Practice discussion at RAND's Institute for Civil Justice, one of the Hewlett Theory Centers, a highly experienced economist remarked "When I write, almost everything I say is intended to answer in advance the methodological questions I know other scholars are going to pose. But the essential findings could be said in a page."