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Wolfenden, Helen; Sercombe, Howard; Tucker, Paul

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**Making Practice Publishable: what practice academics need to do to get their work
published, and what that tells us about the theory-practice gap**

Helen Wolfenden, Howard Sercombe and Paul Tucker

School of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies; Macquarie University;

School of Education, University of Glasgow and School of Social Sciences, University of

New South Wales

School of Media Culture and Society, University of the West of Scotland;

Corresponding author: Helen Wolfenden is a Lecturer in Radio at Macquarie University.

Helen has spent much of her professional life as a public radio broadcaster. Helen is interested in the formation of on-air identity, podcasting, radio as a research tool and the intersect of professional and academic knowledge.

Phone: (+612) 9850 2169

Contact: Macquarie University, Macquarie Park NSW 2109, Australia

Email: helen.wolfenden@mq.edu.au

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1392-4371>

Twitter: @helenwolfenden

Howard Sercombe is a sociologist, youth work academic and practitioner. He has published widely on the sociology of youth and on professional ethics. He holds an honorary Professorship in Education with the University of Glasgow and lectures in Criminology at the University of New South Wales.

Email: h.sercombe@unsw.edu.au/h.sercombe@yahoo.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4691-0539>

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/howardsercombe

Paul Tucker is a Senior Lecturer in Broadcast Production: TV and Radio at the University of the West of Scotland. Paul has worked in broadcast television production in London, San Francisco and Glasgow, making over 100 hours of television over twenty years. Paul's research interests include Production Studies and Production Cultures.

Contact: University of the West of Scotland, University Avenue, Ayr KA8 0SX, UK.

E-mail: paul.tucker@uws.ac.uk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7752-7407>

Making Practice Publishable: what practice academics need to do to get their work published, and what that tells us about the theory-practice gap

Abstract

For centuries, universities have supported the pursuit of knowledge through the academic disciplines while also preparing students for the professions. These two purposes are frequently in tension: hence widespread comment on the ‘theory-practice gap’. Academic work has struggled for relevance in the field. Practice academics have struggled to find a validated place for their expertise in academia - including publication in academic journals.

In this paper, we follow a practice academic’s uncertain, but ultimately successful attempt to publish an article about television scheduling in the *Journal of Popular Television*. We find that the problem is not really about theory versus practice, or relevance versus rigour, but about profound epistemological differences. Practitioners’ knowledge needed to be translated into an epistemological form that an academic journal would find acceptable.

This included translating, via the use of theory, the particular and specific knowledge of practitioners into universal, context-free discourse, and a focus on social processes rather than accounts of the agency of particular actors. Generosity and openness from both sides were important to make it work.

We conclude that the practitioner gap will be a problem until universities recognise it as epistemological, and pay attention to the recruitment and use of skilled translators at the academic/practice boundary.

Keywords: theory-practice gap, epistemology, publication, practitioner, pracademic, writing

Introduction

In 2014, the *Journal of Popular Television* issued a call for papers for a special issue around the theme of seasonality: summer, Christmas, Ramadan, and so on. Paul Tucker, a television director and academic at the University of the West of Scotland contacted the editor to see whether the journal might be interested in a paper about a television programme that he had directed for BBC ALBA in 2011. The scheduling of the programme was particularly interesting. While it was filmed in the summer of 2011, it was scheduled in the prime time of times: 9pm on Christmas Day.

This would be Paul's first academic paper. The editor of the journal thought that the piece would fit well into the special issue, and that a practitioner perspective would be interesting. Paul set about writing the account of the production and scheduling of this piece of television.

It was not immediately successful. The first draft was returned with a number of suggestions. The second draft was also returned, with the judgment that a collaboration with a more experienced academic writer might get the piece into a publishable form. Paul pursued this with two colleagues, radio studies academic Helen Wolfenden, and Howard Sercombe, a professor of Community Education. After some extensive reworking, the article was accepted for publication as 'Scheduling for Christmas: How a piece of ordinary television became extraordinary' (hereafter *SfC*: Tucker, Wolfenden, and Sercombe 2017).

This process exposes a problem endemic in the production of knowledge in universities and in the academic world, often (though, we think, mistakenly) described as the theory/practice

gap. Universities have always contained within them both the pursuit of knowledge within the academic disciplines, *and* the task of training the minds and bodies of people in the professions, often in symbiotic relationship. The disciplines provide intellectual grounding, and with it some status, for practice. Practice provides much of the economic resource for the disciplines in terms of income from students who eventually want to make a career in practice professions, and industrial and government funders who wish to use the university's status and intellectual resources for applied research and development.

However, the relationship is not easy. There is a fluttering gap between the kind of knowledge produced in the disciplines and what intelligent practice requires. On the other side, the knowledge developed in practice often does not meet the requirements for recognition as research in the university (Schön 1987, 1995; Shulman 1998).

This problem is generally addressed by university programmes hiring experienced practitioners. Frequently, however, because practice academics (or 'pracademics' (Nalbandian 1994; Posner 2009)) find that the knowledge they possess does not work in the world of research and academic writing that is the currency of the modern university, they often have difficulty engaging in the (now largely mandatory) academic research game and getting their work published.

This paper explores the practice academic's experience of trying to get a piece of research published. It is an exploration of two epistemological worlds, in contact but not necessarily commensurable. It is not a criticism of academic or scientific knowledges, though because we

were practitioners knocking on their door, it might appear that way¹. Rather, accepting the power of science as an explanatory system and the academic world's right to structure knowledge the way it does, it is an exploration of difference. By analysing what needed to change to make this paper acceptable, we seek to illuminate the differences between this epistemological frame and the frame that *SFC*'s writers were working within, and to identify key points of translation which may be helpful for others.

Methodology

Because we wrote the paper in question, we have access to the manuscript in its various versions, and analysis can reveal what happened in its transformations to make it acceptable. We were also able to ask the original research informants about their relationship to the text as it changed, whether the transformation of their knowledge into academic form has added value to their data, or whether it meant that previously interesting practice material was now no longer recognisable, understandable or useful for them.

We use a multi-modal approach, combining textual and discourse analysis, autoethnography and semi-structured interviewing with a range of participants, including the authors, journal editor, and original research participants. Consistent with multi-modal approaches, we have disaggregated the research methodology into its epistemological, theoretical and practical method elements (Guba 1990; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Epistemology and theoretical approach

Epistemologically and theoretically, the study is grounded in social epistemology. There are a range of possible frames through which to understand the data: the work of Bourdieu on habitus and field, Foucault's perspectives on discourse and power/knowledge, Habermas's

¹ We thank an anonymous referee for encouraging us to think more carefully about this important point, by anticipating an entirely understandable reaction but one we had not intended. More generally, the paper has been significantly improved by this journal's stringent review processes and by the reviewers' critical attention and helpful suggestions.

theory of communicative action, Gramsci on ideology, the work of feminists such as Haraway on particularity and the philosophy of science. While acknowledging the power of these analyses, we have chosen to work with the pragmatism of William James (2000), and John Dewey (Dewey et al. 1917).

The logic of this choice is threefold. First, Jamesian pragmatism has a significant track record specifically in the interrogation of the theory-practice gap, particularly from the practitioner side (Shields 1996, 2006, Lentricchia 1986, Baskerville and Myers 2004, McCready 2010). Second, in a situation where the status of knowledge is uneven, there may be a tendency to cast practitioner knowledges in deficit. While he would have rejected the postmodern position that there are no privileged discourses (Best and Kellner 1991), James' position is epistemologically pluralist, and supports an open conversation about the boundary between academic and practitioner knowledges. Third, this inquiry is specifically about representations of truth, and how differences in truth-systems, expressed through the vehicle of the journal, can be negotiated. The question of the status of truth-claims and their validation is central to James' interests (McCready 2010).

James sees knowledge as being created in the meaning-seeking activities of individuals and collectives. Consistent with pragmatist positions, 'truth is what happens to an idea' (James 1909/2002, v). Ideas or concepts, beliefs or assumptions are verified in everyday life by their efficacy: their capacity to solve problems, their ability to integrate new information into frameworks of knowledge already held, their usefulness in facilitating onward movement or flow in thought or action, and in removing barriers or stumbling blocks to such movement. At the social level, truths are verified by relevant epistemic communities who represent and operationalise knowledge frameworks to validate truth for their own community and, if they

are recognised as authoritative, for other communities as well. An idea, concept, description might be useful at the individual level. It becomes true when it is validated by the relevant epistemic community.

We are agnostic about whether our descriptions ‘accurately’ represent the external ‘reality’ in itself: that is, independently of the observer. We have no access to realities independent of the observer. The best we can do is to say that a concept ‘works’, that it solves problems, integrates new information, etc. And that other people use it too.

It is implicit in this perspective that there is no single valid epistemology, and no single epistemic community or validating authority: not the Church, not the Emperor, not Science. Different epistemologies correspond to different uses. The methods of physics are not good for appreciating poetry, religion is not so useful in the construction industry, and truth in blues music is different from the truth of a mathematical equation. We all use multiple epistemologies all of the time, concurrently or switching constantly between them. In evaluating this last sentence, that is what you will be doing.

Efficacy is of course not the only criterion for authority: the question of who an idea works for is as important as what it works for. Power and the service of vested interests is a key determinant. And because knowledge is power, and truth is coercive, the epistemological keys to the kingdom are highly contested.

This paper explores territory at the boundary of epistemologies. Paul is a member of a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger 1998), an epistemic community: he has friends and colleagues in television and they talk about television and make programmes together and

occasionally write about it. The Journal is an instrument of an epistemic community, through which members of that community validate information as ‘true’: or at least, ‘true for now’. Papers are presented to the journal, reviewers and editors assess whether they meet the criteria established by the community, and decide whether to publish (Galliers 2003).

The paper uses ‘academic’ and ‘practitioner’ frames broadly. Both are difficult to define neatly, though specifically in this case they mean people whose credentials derive from working in the media and making television programmes versus people whose understanding of television derives from the disciplined analysis of television as an artefact and as text, using tools derived from university-based scholarship. There are of course many practice communities, and many academic communities, whose epistemological frames may be similarly incommensurable. The ‘two cultures’ problem (and there are many more than two) is of long and irresolvable standing (Mackenzie and Murphie 2008).

Paul’s paper was not, initially, published. This was not because the paper was not good. According to the editor, the paper *was* good: it was ‘saying something’, but needed to change to be publishable. It needed reworking, perhaps translating. The revision (or *redaction*) process can tell us things about the distance between the epistemology of the community of practice and the epistemology of the scholarly community, both in the analysis of what happened to the text itself, and in how both communities responded to the change.

Research questions

The research was framed by a primary research question and five secondary questions. The primary question was: What do you need to do to convert practice knowledge into an academic outcome?

The secondary questions were:

- What barriers prevent practice academics from engaging in recognised research?
- What processes can practice academics use to synthesise observation and practice wisdom into theory?
- What is missing from the knowledge-formation processes involved in practice compared with academic research? And vice versa?
- How might academic speech communities be opened up to better recognise practice wisdom?
- What gets lost in translation?

Method

This paper presents a case study: a single instance of an attempt by a practice academic to get an article published in a recognised, peer-reviewed journal. The difficulty always in case study is in the claim that a particular instance stands for a wider story about (in this case) the place of practice academics and their knowledges in university contexts.

We address that question through the literature review, which substantiates the general disconnect between the practice academic and the university milieu, and by drilling four shafts into the data that we have available to us. First, we have the texts: the successive drafts of *SfC* and the correspondence between Paul, the original author, and Derek Johnston, the editor of this edition of the Journal. Second, we authors have our own account of what happened, the conversations between us as we remember them, and what we thought we were doing. Third, the editor of the Journal agreed to be interviewed. Finally, we had access to the practitioners who were interviewed for *SfC*, and to their reflections on what happened to their knowledge in transmission. These different sources provide different perspectives on the transmission and translation of *SfC*, and triangulate each other.

The texts are analysed by means of Redaction Analysis. The other sources are interrogated through semi-structured interview, guided by Schön's concept of Reflection on Action. Concordant with the skills of Helen and Paul the analysis of the interviews was conducted in audio. While transcripts were produced for reference purposes Helen edited the recorded audio (using professional editing software). This involved collating material under key themes, creating an audio narrative which could then be available for analysis.

There is not scope in the present work to comment in any detail on the effects of working directly in audio, rather than in transcript. Others have commented on the way in which the text changes in its transformation onto the page (eg Lapadat and Lindsay 1999; Mondada 2007; McHugh 2011). Of course, the audio editing process also changes the audio text as talk about certain themes or various answers to a question are brought together as if in conversation. But the question of what is preserved by working in audio rather than on the page merits further study.

Redaction Analysis

Redaction Analysis is a textual or discourse analysis methodology developed in the post-war period, initially in biblical studies (Osborne 1977; Bornkamm, Barth, and Held 1963) but also employed in sociology and cultural studies. Critical analysis of both Old and New Testament biblical texts had revealed a number of points where the same source material had been reproduced at different points of the biblical canon by different writers: for example, the authors of both Matthew and Luke's Gospels either copy or paraphrase the Gospel of Mark.

In the process of transmission, the text changes: we can see that some material is included and some is left out, passages are moved or rearranged and placed in a different context or at

a different point in the chronology, and commentary or added linking material reframes the source material. Redaction Criticism or Redaction Analysis is the analysis of the discursive, ideological or political position and purpose of the author inferred from the transformations in the text that can be observed through the editing process.

In this case, a paper that was assessed as not academically publishable was redacted into a form that was. Using close reading, redaction analysis investigates the progression from Paul's first submitted draft (referred to from here on as P1), through the returned manuscript (P2) to the final accepted manuscript (PHH) to determine exactly what changed in order to make the paper publishable and to identify the elements that achieved that result. This may enable some understanding of the gap between practice knowledge and academic knowledge in this case, and what academic knowledge needs that practice knowledge may find difficult to supply.

Reflection-on-action

Donald Schön (1995) describes the necessity of a research process which enables the generation and academic validation of knowledge-in-action. He describes reflection-on-action as necessarily sitting under a different epistemology from the 'technical rationality' that underwrites knowledge production and validation in the university.

Using the kinds of methods advocated by Schön, this paper involves research into knowledge-in-action of the academic practice of practice academics in attempting to solve the problem of how to get practice knowledge published. Using a semi-structured interview process, we began by interviewing each other, as people who were involved in the production of *SfC*. Helen interviewed Paul and Howard, and Helen and Howard interviewed *Journal of*

Popular Television special edition editor Derek Johnston. We then re-interviewed the practitioners who were interviewed for the *SfC* research: Paul interviewed Alan Esslemont (Head of Content, BBC ALBA), Maggie Taylor (Head of Scheduling, BBC ALBA), and Patsi Mackenzie (Executive Producer of *Is Mise Michelle*, STV Productions). The academics were interviewed in order to determine the process of transforming the original paper into something that was acceptable for publication; the practitioners to understand, from a practice point of view, what happened to their knowledge in the process.

Traditional academic methodologies may question a process that includes ourselves as part of the data. According to such views, ‘if we describe something as part of our living presence we cannot also logically describe it from the standpoint of “rigour”’ (Wood 2000, 48). By relinquishing the objective standpoint, we also relinquish the claim to objective knowledge. From a pragmatist position, we would argue that this is not necessarily a problem. Pragmatists would argue anyway that objective knowledge is not possible, and that knowledge is validated in its uses. As James argued,

Our great difference from the scholastic lies in the way we face... Not where it comes from but what it leads to is to decide (James 1897, par. 25).

Literature review

The problem of translating practice-based knowledge into academic knowledge and vice versa is endemic in modern universities and has long been so – across the decades and the disciplines. It has been described in various ways: as the theory/practice problem, the problem of impact, the rigour/relevance dilemma.

For example, John Dewey's (1904) paper "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education" addresses the particular problem of how to educate the modern professional. Advocating for the university as the appropriate place to educate teachers, Dewey nevertheless recognises the problem that has plagued the professions: that while a purely workplace-based education does not create the kind of capacity for independent judgment that the professions require, the university also does not, from within its own epistemic resources, deliver a teacher who can do the job.

This problem echoes across the professions: the health professions, including medical practice and nursing (Howie 1996; Stott 1983; Agbedia et al. 2014); management and business (Benson 1985; Trahan and Gitman 1995; Reed 2009); journalism (Petrie 2011); teacher education (Korthagen et al. 2001; Allsopp et al. 2006; Cheng, Cheng, and Tang 2010); engineering (Benjamin, Siriwardane, and Laney 1994; Bernstein 1999; Gao and Rhinehart 2004); architecture, design and planning (Watson 2008; Sanoff 1992); youth work (Emslie 2009; Buchroth and Parkin 2010) and social work (Sheppard 1995; Sung-Chan and Yuen-Tsang 2008; Al-Ma'seb, Alkhurinej, and Alduwaihi 2015). The literature on this question is massive: in description of the problem, in the analysis of its roots, in prescriptions for 'bridging the gap' between theory and practice, between academia and industry, or reports of experiments by universities or practice groups to do that.

While there is a considerable literature on how to get practitioners to recognise the work of academics, there has apparently been little in the way of research into the difficulties that practice academics might have in getting their work recognised and published within academic journals. Debra Cohen's (2007) survey of Human Resource Management journals found only a handful of articles in the scholarly journals that had any relevance to

practitioners, and that no practitioners published in them. Freek Vermeulen (2007) noted that the gap between academics and practitioners was also reproduced in the journals. Non-practice academics publish in peer-reviewed academic journals. Practice academics largely publish in trade publications, which are typically not recognised in research audits or promotion assessments (Davenport and Markus 1999). Susskind (2013) from a long career as a practice academic, sympathises with the difficulties facing colleagues in the current era. The choice appears to be to forget practice for the six or seven years that it takes to earn tenure, or forget tenure.

The failure to publish research is cited by Glasziou and Chalmers as a major contributor to research wastage in medicine (Glasziou and Chalmers 2018; 2009), and we would expect the same in other fields. The implication is clear: if practice academics do not research or find barriers in publishing the research that they conduct, the gap between the academy and practice intensifies. Benbasat and Zmud (1999), in an intervention about the rigour/relevance dilemma that sparked a significant debate in the Information Systems field, note that journal reviewers constitute a major obstacle through an over-emphasis on rigour and an under-emphasis on relevance.

Because of the wide range of professions and fields of practice impacted by the academic-practice gap, there may be specific work on practice academics' experience of trying to get their work accepted for publication that we did not find. It does appear, however, that commentary on this aspect of the academic experience is limited, and empirical research even more so. The question of exactly *how* practice knowledge might be translated into something capable of being validated by the academic community through publication clearly merits inquiry.

Findings

The research findings are presented thematically, corresponding loosely to our key research questions, rather than presenting the findings of each method seriatim. Under each heading, information may flow from the different methods we have used, though that will be uneven across the research questions. Redaction analysis will have more to say about form than it does about the usefulness to practitioners, for example.

The first question addresses the barriers that prevent practice academics from engaging in research and publication.

The writing/publishing process

Senior, becoming junior

A key barrier identified in the autoethnography is a question of confidence. Paul is a confident and professional practitioner, secure in his field. But having come from a position of status in their field, practice academics find that their status does not always carry over.

[W]hen I moved from television, I was quite a senior level, series producer and it's quite difficult to start from scratch. (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017)

Howard has been close to this issue for many years.

There's a significant kind of humbling that needs to happen in order to begin as a very, very junior researcher in this new field when you are very, very senior in your substantive area ...

[O]ften they're really punitive. ... Universities themselves don't understand that these are two fundamentally different modes of truth making ... and without that stuff being understood it just creates huge suffering, actually. (Howard Sercombe, research interview, 2017)

Already, the question of how to understand the practitioner gap arises. As the Literature Review indicates, the gap has been theorised either as a problem of relevance, or a problem of distinct epistemologies (or world views, truth systems, philosophical assumptions etc). If it is a problem of relevance, the problem could be solved perhaps through better communication, or collaboration, or contact, so that academics become aware of the problems that practitioners are interested in and start to address those problems rather than the ones generated from inside the discipline. If it is an epistemological problem, that would

not work: the kinds of things that count as knowledge for practitioners do not count as knowledge for academics. In this case, active translation is needed for the knowledge developed in one sphere to be useable in the other. If at all. It may involve translating knowledge that the practice academic knows is useful into knowledge that they know is not.

The assumption that the research game is immediately accessible to practice academics also means that

...there's a whole methodology of how you should go about it that no one ever tells you when you start (Paul Tucker, research interview 2017).

There is a sense then of scrambling to find enough of the right fragments to make the exercise passable, without ever being secure about foundations.

I suppose the question I'm always asking myself is how much of this stuff do I need to know in order to work within it ... without people saying well, obviously there's a corner of this world that he doesn't understand? (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

Epistemic generosity

The autoethnography highlighted how encouraging the Editor was and how much time he took with his feedback. This is not necessarily typical of the experience of submitting work to journals and getting back peer reviews: at least, not ours, and may be an unrealistic expectation under contemporary academic workload pressures. Howard takes a position that there is a role for an advocate as well as a critic in the reviewing process.

[S]omeone who's prepared to go into bat for a piece, so to advocate for it, despite its initial non-compliance, so to speak ... I wonder if you've got any

reflections on that in terms of your own experience with this. (Howard Sercombe, research interview with Derek Johnston 2018).

Derek's response is that it depends where the non-compliance is and for a piece like Paul's, all the ideas were there.

I think a good editor will advise and guide. ... Certainly, I've had experience of getting readers reports back where ... they've done nothing to suggest ... what could be done with the work to bring it up to standards or to make it even better. (Derek Johnston, research interview, 2018)

The collaborative relationship

A key element of the process of moving the text to a form that was publishable was the collaborative relationship that emerged between Paul and Derek, in the first instance, and then with Helen and Howard after P2, the returned manuscript, was rejected.

I would've been happy to have worked with [Paul] directly on it if I'd had the time at that moment. And so, suggesting that he did find the people to work with, just to help him mould it but also in my feedback, it was trying to be constructive (Derek Johnston, research interview, 2018).

For Paul,

...the short answer to your question is ... I needed people that knew what they were doing, really. To couple with my quite good understanding of how TV works (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

The consequences of the collaboration for Paul were clear:

I am clearer on the process of how a paper gets from start to finish, you know? ...So there [are] just some things that I now know that you need to

do that I wasn't really aware that you needed to do. (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017)

In this case, there was a real generosity in the sharing of knowledge and experience. It is evident in our interviews with our programme maker practitioners, it is evident from the journal editor, Derek, and also between the three of us – who came together quite seamlessly at short notice.

The learning is embedded in the process. The practitioner's commitment to learning on the job is very much reflected in the academy as well – at least for practice academics. The human experience is also important.

And that's far better if you can sit down and have a cup of coffee or have a meal and chat through it and go, what's the really important thing here. Oh, have you heard about what this person said? They have a theory that does this. Does that help you? And just chat about it (Derek Johnston, research interview 2018).

The text

This section is concerned with what happened to the text in the process of transmission, and how the various participants interacted with that process. It addresses the primary research question: *What do you need to do to convert practice knowledge into an academic outcome?*

Form and structure

Writing research has expectations of form. This structure, and the inclusion of key elements within it, conveys symbolically that the text *belongs* in the discourse.

HS: [For] the presentation of a piece of work as research, there are formal rules ... and this is true for production of any discourse ... [I]n the first draft, those requirements were not met. ... So a lot of the work was to put the standard skeleton of a research paper in place and shuffle bits around, sometimes recombine them, until they fitted that skeleton....

PT: I think that's very fair and - and it strikes me that it's a bit like, a TV format. There's no point as a director of Bargain Hunt saying, I've got all this great material, I've just decided to structure it differently from all of the other hundreds of versions of Bargain Hunt. And I didn't know any of the format points. (Howard Sercombe and Paul Tucker, research interview 2017).

This is supported by the redaction analysis. In the move from P2 to PHH, the paper is moved into a (loose) research report format, with a more conventional abstract (the previous one was more like a pitch), a methodology section, a more distinct theory section, and effectively a findings section which moves into discussion and analysis. A new theoretical frame is inserted, bringing Stuart Hall's text 'Encoding, Decoding' (1980) to bear on the question of scheduling. Existing theoretical concepts from Bonner (2003) ('ordinary television'), Lotz (2014) ('mainstream niches') and Caldwell (2008) ('audience as author') are brought together in sequence, under Hall's lead, to constitute the new theoretical section, though Caldwell's influence is diminished by some firm critique from Howard in the new redaction. There are also subtle changes in linguistic register, in voice, which make the paper more 'hearable' for an academic audience. PHH complies with research conventions about a coherent and contained discussion of methodology, of theoretical framework, of findings and analysis.

Real people doing real things, or universal, context free process?

Academic study has a particular status but also a perceived impenetrability (Graff, 2000), and a continuing question about ‘real world’ relevance. These factors have tended to make practitioners wary and perhaps even cynical. In raising the secondary research question (*What is missing from the knowledge-formation processes involved in practice compared with academic research? And vice versa?*) the research brought together useful data on the difference between knowledge-making for practitioners and the academic process.

A key element of the difference is to do with the way academic knowledge production seeks to create objects that are universal (Williams 2013). It involves the transformation of local and particular objects into universal objects which are no longer tethered to their original context. Successful transition into the academic world requires that practitioners be able to do that.

The discipline is to find ways to name what exactly it was at that point that meant...this thing went that way rather than that way. ... Then you have got something that becomes much bigger than this particular programme on Christmas Day...

[T]he way that academia works is, at its best, the rigorous linking of things to bigger questions, to broader bodies of thinking and theory. So the linking of this story about how a television programme got to be ... screened on Christmas Day, to the whole story about ... how media products are transformed under certain circumstances and the different roles of different players in all of that. (Howard Sercombe, research interview, 2017).

The redaction analysis confirms that in both transformations, from P1 to P2 and from P2 to PHH, there is a move from the specific and local to the universal and context-free. In P2, this might include the connection of this production process to wider processes in the BBC, the movement of material with a more general theme from the conclusion to the introduction, and the elaboration of theory. In both, a stronger connection to theory facilitates this transformation from the particular to the universal.

This was not a conscious process for Howard as the redactor for P2 to PHH. He was mostly just working the text to make it acceptable as an academic paper. The extent to which this involved moving the narrative from the particular to the universal, and the extent to which that had already started to happen in P1 to P2, was revealed by the redaction analysis.

Theory

A key element of the transformation from P1 through P2 to PHH was the consolidation of theory. In both redactions theory serves as a gateway from the particular to the universal: P2 does this by an elaboration of Lotz (2014), PHH by the insertion of Hall's 'Encoding, Decoding' (1980). In particular, the introduction of Hall, a 'big picture' theorist, as a headline act lifts the mid-range theory of Lotz and Bonner (2003). PHH also introduces (broadly Marxist) elaborations which are universalising, such as the discussion of alienation from lands of origin under capitalism, and nostalgia for home under conditions of alienated labour.

This is a key, perhaps constitutive element of academic knowledge. Linking phenomena to theory links it also to other phenomena linked to that theory, other bodies of work, other analytical themes. Theory situates this particular set of events, this particular set of human decisions, within broader patterns of behaviour, in the workings of social systems. The data

then both affirms the theory and gives it substance (perhaps even extending the theory somewhat) and finds a home within the already-validated narrative that the theory embodies.

The elimination of agency

The redaction analysis also indicates a subtle shift of purpose in the move to PHH. P1 and P2 are about what television people do. PHH is about what happens to a text when they do what they do: so what happens to this television programme as a cultural product when it is moved unexpectedly into a prime television slot. In effect, PHH moves the narrative from a place where the agency of various participants is the key parameter, to a place where their agency is almost irrelevant, where their action is a result of substantially unconscious forces, and the key parameter is audience reception and effects. The process is depersonalised, de-subjectified. Social action is an outcome of cultural forces, and it is only action which is an outcome of those forces which is academically interesting. This indicates an academic ambivalence about agency, if not an epistemological incapacity to deal with agency in a meaningful way (Haraway 2003). The epistemological pressure, and effect, is to exclude the deliberations, intentions, decision-making process of people involved in a social or cultural process, or to render those intentions within broad cultural forces or themes.

This is supported in the interviews. Note Derek's comments about 'authorial intent':

With literature and so on, we spent so long fighting against any kind of authorial intent to say, well actually the audience can get different things out of this, that it can be easy to say, "Well, actually we don't need to know what the practitioner was doing" (Derek Johnston research interview 2018).

It indicates 'a fight' to deliberately *exclude* the production experience, to exclude accounts of the agency of particular actors, from the analysis.

Derek's precis of *SfC* in the introduction to the special edition of the journal provides an illustration of this. The paper, he says:

emphasizes a particular characteristic of Christmas programming, as being an extraordinary day which celebrates the very ordinary concepts of family and homecoming, and shared experience and heritage (Johnston 2017, 7).

When he considers scheduling, it is not from the perspective of people like Maggie and Alan, it is from within an audience framing, saying it:

... suggests the wider significance of scheduling as an under-appreciated part of the way that audiences interpret and engage with programming (Johnston 2017, 8).

Epistemological differences

Both the redaction analysis and the interviews indicate key epistemological differences between academic knowledges and practitioner knowledges. Practitioner knowledges are located and particular. Generalisation and pattern recognition happen and are valued and important, but within the embodied and geographical locus of time and space. Academic knowledges strive to be universal and context free, applicable to any relevant situation independently of time and space. An understanding that applies only to a particular situation is not an academic understanding.

This translates into the different forms and uses of theory in academic and practice contexts.

We say it again: practice is not free of theory, and theory-making is a practice. What creates

the gap is epistemological difference. Paul begins the conversation about these different frames for theory in this way.

I think there's theory-theory and there's practice theory and then there's practice. So breaking down a piece of scheduling work, that's practice theory. (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

Maggie describes another level of knowledge about scheduling.

I think it's still very much a dark art. A lot of the time you know what's going to work and you know where it might work or where it might not. I don't think it's something you learn, I think it's just something your experience leaves you with. ... You just get a feeling about what's right where... (Maggie Taylor, research interview 2017)

Paul reflects on the process of theorising: of translating Maggie's 'dark arts' into language and process and system, which then makes that knowledge transferable and available, in some degree at least, to other practitioners and potentially translatable then into academic discourse.

[W]hat a more precise paper about scheduling might have been able to do is to break down those decisions that she's making then, give them a name, send them back to Maggie. And I think ...that's the key...to making stuff that's going to be useful. It's probably never going to be useful for the people that are actually involved in the study, but it might be useful for people coming along, which is I suppose what the point of education is. (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

This indicates at least four epistemological frames for practice academics: the **scientific** (which might include a range of epistemologies: interpretive, positivist, constructionist etc (Guba 1990)); the **models of practice**, which name and classify elements of the practice, and describe relationships between them, often in the form of tables or diagrams or flow charts; **practice wisdom**, which might articulate ‘common sense’ or ‘folk knowledge’ in the practice, often aphoristic or story-telling in form rather than systematic; and what Paul just calls practice, perhaps **practice instinct**, often unarticulated, body-knowledge even, expressed as a gut-level sense of just *knowing* what to do or how to do things. This might include what Maggie calls the ‘dark arts’ of scheduling. As distinct epistemologies, the rules and methods for the production of truth in each domain are different, the processes of validation are different, the epistemic communities responsible for validation are different.

While he does not articulate it as an epistemological problem, Derek discusses the relationships between practice writing and academic writing in a way that reflects the four epistemological domains discussed above, or at least three of them.

[F]or this journal, while I wanted the practice experience to be represented, it was also trying to fit in with what does practice tell us about these theoretical ideas about audience and season and nostalgia and family ... I think the way that practice fits in with non-practice theoretical work, it can be to give us a dose of reality: to help us understand how the ideas and analysis are hopefully of use to practitioners. ... But when it comes to writing the articles, it’s got to be ... those kind of shared references, those standardised styles and standard engagement with the theoretical material (Derek Johnston, research interview, 2018).

Perhaps, *SfC* is somewhat of a novelty item as far as the journal is concerned. *The Journal of Popular Television* is very much a theory journal. As a piece of practice writing, it certainly sits as an outsider. Derek's phrase about a 'dose of reality' is telling: at some level he realises that it is an epistemological problem; that the kinds of truth presented in the pages of the journal may not 'work' in the different epistemological sphere of television directing or scheduling or acting. He is clear also that while there can be some accommodation, writing for the journal needs to assimilate to the epistemological frame that the journal supports.

It might be argued that this is simply a question of audience and context: contributions to academic journals are not written to be read by non-academics, as practice journals are not written for the academy. The difficulty in publishing *S*C* is then simply that it is the wrong audience. Vermeulen's (2007) research, supported by this study, indicates that practitioners, if they publish, mostly do so in practitioner publications, and the same is the case for academics. These separate worlds could continue to spin on their independent axes without a problem.

Unless, that is, there is an expectation that academic research makes a difference, in which case it will have to be understood and operationalised at some point by practitioners. Or unless keeping your job as a practitioner academic depends on publication in academic journals. Practice journals are routinely not recognised by universities and do not rate in citation metrics or research audits.

Transactional costs versus the benefits of trade

Howard says that he expects that for our practice participants, Patsi, Maggie and Alan, the re-constructed piece that was published will

feel more foreign to them...and won't necessarily vibrate in the way that Paul's original piece would, ... [but] that strangeness might be more of an advantage than a disadvantage. To some extent what poets do for us is to make language strange again (Howard Sercombe, research interview, 2017).

Paul commented that

as a practitioner you do need to take on some of the methods and vocabulary and ways of working that allow you to move into the academic world and to talk partly with the same language, you know? And to be the translator I suppose (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

Translation, however, does not come without a cost.

Something is always lost ... hopefully something's [also] gained in a process like this. But you can't trade currency across the border without losing some (Howard Sercombe, research interview, 2017).

Paul recalls a conversation with Patsi about working in Gaelic.

If Gaelic is a language that's worth preserving and persevering with...if you translate it into English it has to lose something otherwise there's no point having Gaelic... (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

The question of what is lost and what is gained in the translation of practice wisdom into academic work is important. It impacts on judgments about whether the interchange is a collaborative or an exploitative one, for example. The next sections explore whether practitioners find that the translation of their knowledge into academic work enriches or impoverishes it.

Access

The first question is about access. The move into a different epistemology might make the language unintelligible. It is no longer in the native language of television people. Asked what is lost in the translation, Derek replies,

a little bit of the liveliness and immediacy. But at the same time, the kind of academic approach should be more reflective and thoughtful. ... Hard balance to strike (Derek Johnston, research interview, 2018).

One of the requirements for media practice is that the language and register is accessible to a wide audience. Academic writing operates under a different set of disciplines. This does not mean that academic writing is necessarily inaccessible for a lay audience, though this often the case (Limerick 2012). For us, it was important to write in a way that is intelligible to colleagues who may not be university educated.

I think it is a readable paper. I've found so many papers that I think oh, that looks really interesting, I'll read that. And then I'm lost after about two or three paragraphs because it isn't readable. And so I'm really pleased about that. I think it's quite a good read (Paul Tucker, research interview, 2017).

A text, wherever it is produced and under whatever conditions, always has to do work beyond the transmission of content (Zamel 2012). Among other things, register, style, voice, vocabulary also signal the authors' bona fides as a member of the epistemic community, a person to be trusted, as 'one of us' (Shohamy 2006). Howard suggests that alongside its overt processes of testing research methodology, refining ideas and concepts and improving clarity, the review process in academic publication may constitute an intervention

which is usually nothing to do with its readability, but in terms of whether this piece of discourse makes the mark as an instance of knowledge

production or presentation within this speech community (Howard Sercombe, research interview, 2017).

These registers can function as a language of exclusion (Rose 1985). Howard addresses the notion of readability from the academic perspective, in the autoethnographic interview with Helen.

HS: [Some] academic writing [is] status writing. Its primary purpose is actually not to communicate. Its primary purpose is to signal the intellectual importance or depth or whatever of the writer.

HW: And at what? An exclusive club within which that conversation takes place? (Howard Sercombe and Helen Wolfenden, research interview, 2017).

Establishing conditions for communicative competence is the prerogative of any speech community, and it is not necessarily a problem that in a given instance such rules enable communication between members of the speech community and hinder the engagement of those outside. However, if the communication of research results to practitioners is an objective, communicative registers may need to be addressed. The literature also indicates that this is an issue in cultural minorities' access to education which may be another reason for working on translational fluidity (Rose 1985, Shohamy 2006).

'Readability' is an important symbolic marker. It represents something of a cross roads between the theoreticians and the practice academics.

The representation of their knowledge, and the engagement with its translation

There is universal agreement from all three (four, if we count Paul) of our original participants that the paper was accurate. They also seemed to find it useful to have their experience collated and reflected back in this way:

I was really engrossed from the start because like anything else where you've been forced – in the nicest possible way – to analyse something you've made, it's just a really healthy exercise (Patsi Mackenzie, research interview, 2017).

[P]robably it put into writing what we thought because we've never written what our thought processes were or why we did anything (Maggie Taylor, research interview, 2017).

But what about the more theoretical speculations about the 'dark arts', the unarticulated basis of judgments about what would work in a particular television slot? Paul reads Alan a quote from the paper, about alienation from lands of origin as a possible dynamic in the appeal of the programme and decisions about it. The quote asks: whether commissioners, producers or schedulers have in their minds (theoretical) ideas and analyses such as alienation from the lands of origin in making their decisions. It expects a negative answer: E overtly provides one:

AE: I suppose, the short answer is no (Alan Esslemont, research interview, 2017).

Esslemont, the most academically attuned of our practitioner participants, does not use the opportunity in interview either to test the analysis against his decision-making process, or to

generate alternative reflections on why he thought that *Is Mise Michelle* would work on Christmas Day. He goes back to the programme to describe the need to appeal to both the core and national audience and the quality of the programme, but does not reflect on what exactly the appeal might be.

This reversion back to practice happened throughout all of the practitioner interviews. We were wanting to see the connection with academic analysis, but it was always the programme, their programme maker colleagues' experiences of making the programme, and the reflection of their own experience that were the most compelling aspects. They appreciate the bridge-building, but generally do not cross the bridge themselves.

Contribution to practice?

So, when directly asked, do our practitioner programme makers see research of this form as having a contribution to make to their practice?

Alan points out that there is a need for theoretical work on television in Scotland, especially in light of the developing industry. Patsi reports that the paper gave her material that she could use to improve her own practice, particularly in pitching stories.

That really made me think. [I]s that something that we should be thinking about at pitching point? You know, do we need to rethink our whole...[Is] our generation of programme makers a bit stuck in our ways? (Patsi Mackenzie, research interview, 2017).

More generally though, participants are equivocal about academic research as a potential source of information on their practice.

Well I can only speak very personally here. It never has for me, but then that's probably as much to do with the fact that I didn't pursue higher education for a start (Patsi Mackenzie , research interview, 2017).

No, probably not, to be honest. It doesn't mean that I wouldn't read it if somebody sent it to me. But would I go out looking for it...? (Maggie Taylor, research interview, 2017).

However, there is enthusiasm for the bridge, and a sense of its potential.

It was probably a lot more detailed and analytical than I had anticipated. ... It probably surprises me that this kind of work goes on because it's just not something I ever think about. ... I mean, the academic references that are included were all completely new to me. ... [It] kind of leads me now to want to read more (Patsi Mackenzie, research interview, 2017).

Conclusions

In the Introduction to this paper, we indicated that construing the problem as a gap between theory and practice was a misunderstanding. The gap is not a gap between theory and practice. It is not that academics have the theory and practitioners have the practice: academics have both a theory and a practice, and practitioners do too. Rather, what we see in this set of conversations is an epistemological gap: that knowledge is produced, identified, articulated, presented and validated differently in the process of making a television programme vis a vis the academic process of studying and commenting on a television programme. This is the conclusion also of researchers studying the same set of problems in management, teaching and nursing, and we would expect it to be the case also for medicine, social work, architecture, engineering or physiotherapy.

There will be differences in how this plays out. The epistemology of both academia and practice in medicine is different to the epistemology of academia and practice in social work, and so the epistemological gap in these fields will look different. But across these fields, a clear understanding of the nature of this difference is essential to the process of knowledge transfer, in both directions. It is essential to the claims of universities who seek to prepare students not only for work in the disciplines, but also in the professions. It is essential to the everyday experience of those students who are trying to learn, in a university, how to practice as a radio presenter or a surgeon or a cleric, and the teachers who are trying to teach them. And it is essential to prevent the ongoing mistreatment of practice academics in the New Public Management audit culture now dominant in many universities, where one's worth is a function of the successful production of academic knowledge, validated by the highest-ranked journals and quantified through citation metrics.

This paper has sought to explore how a piece of writing moved across the gap between practice knowledge and academic knowledge. A number of conditions were important to the success of that move. The people were important: the partnership between people with practice knowledge and people with academic knowledge; the generosity and persistence of the editor as gatekeeper to academic validation. In terms of the text, an awareness of proper form and structure was needed to make the text acceptable within the academic frame. The paper needed to be able to move out from its located specificity into the sphere of universal, context-free connection. The mobilisation of theory was a key element of that translation.

In the process, much of the human decision, the particularities of human agency, are written out of the narrative. Technical details of the process are too. That, of course, also strips away much of the material that practitioners find interesting.

But it does have its compensations. The research process brings together information that practitioners in their located specificity may not have access to, or in the daily cut and thrust, do not talk about. They learn things from each other. New conjunctions of information are made available. The inquiry process makes them articulate things known perhaps only tacitly (the 'dark arts'), making that knowledge transferable and available to others, contributing to a building corpus of knowledge rather than dying with the elders and needing to be reinvented with each generation of practitioners. Translation into the academic epistemological frame recasts things they know, and makes them available to them in a different way. And recognition in the high-status epistemology of academia also lifts the status of their knowledge, and of their practice, in the public sphere.

Translation is a key term here. This translation process is highly skilled. Certainly, the materials will not translate themselves. It takes time, generosity, and aptitude in order to be successful. In order for the gap to be bridged, it is not enough to have both speakers of academia and speakers of practice, or even to have them working together. The location of academics in field settings is not necessarily sufficient, nor the engagement of practitioners in universities. Coexistence does not ensure communication. There is an active process of translation that needs to happen, and some people at least need to develop the skills of translation from one epistemology to another and to be available to facilitate the communication. Intelligent organisations would identify these people, advertise for them, train for them, create the kinds of structures that give them a role in doing the work that needs to be done.

The academic journals are included in this. Some generosity in recognition that practitioners are speaking a foreign epistemology may be appropriate when considering papers for publication. Advocacy for the practitioner voice, and a more generous approach to feedback and criticism may also be needed if journals want to be known to bridge the practice gap. The barriers to publication that practice academics face need to be recognised and compensated for in the calculation of research audits, assessments of impact, promotion and tenure. We need to question audits that grade the quality of research by how universal and context-free it is (for example, by whether it has gained ‘national’ or ‘international’ significance) and thereby eliminate research of profound, but localised significance.

New, fertile soil is often created at the boundaries: between stone and water, between organic and inorganic matter, between tectonic plates. The failure to facilitate a creative interface between practitioners and academics results in waste: the waste of academic work that lies untranslated for practice, the waste of practitioner knowledge that lies untheorised. It impoverishes discourse in both places, leading to a situation where bakers bake bread only for other bakers. In their attempts to promote research, universities have also created the conditions for anxiety, insecurity and inferiority for skilled and capable staff from practice backgrounds. In recognition of the integrity and validity of multiple epistemologies, we need a new focus on the skills of epistemic translation, and new structures which enable the kinds of conversations that will change the world.

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