“Building Academic/Practitioner Collaborations”

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Perspective and Motivation

- Organizations and institutions are social artifacts—created and changed by human beings in pursuit of their purposes
- Organizational and management research is necessarily an applied (or irrelevant) science
- Relevant management and organizational research is necessarily that which contributes to understanding that enables organizations to design themselves more effectively to accomplish their purposes

Design Causality

- New Architectures that are conceived by executive management embody knowledge that comes from the strategy and design processes that they have gone through.
- The implementation of the intended architecture relies on organizational members' learning—on their developing the knowledge required to implement the new architecture effectively.
- For the knowledge embedded in the new architecture to be useful to the various units of the organization, it must contribute to their sense of design causality – it must be configurable into a design that the human actors can use in a causal manner to achieve intended outcomes
- Contextualization – the processes through which the intended meaning of the new design is ascribed by the "recipients" of the changes to inform causal action in their local settings.

(work of Argyris; Schon; Tenkasi, Mohrman & Mohrman)

Different World Views and Languages (Examples)

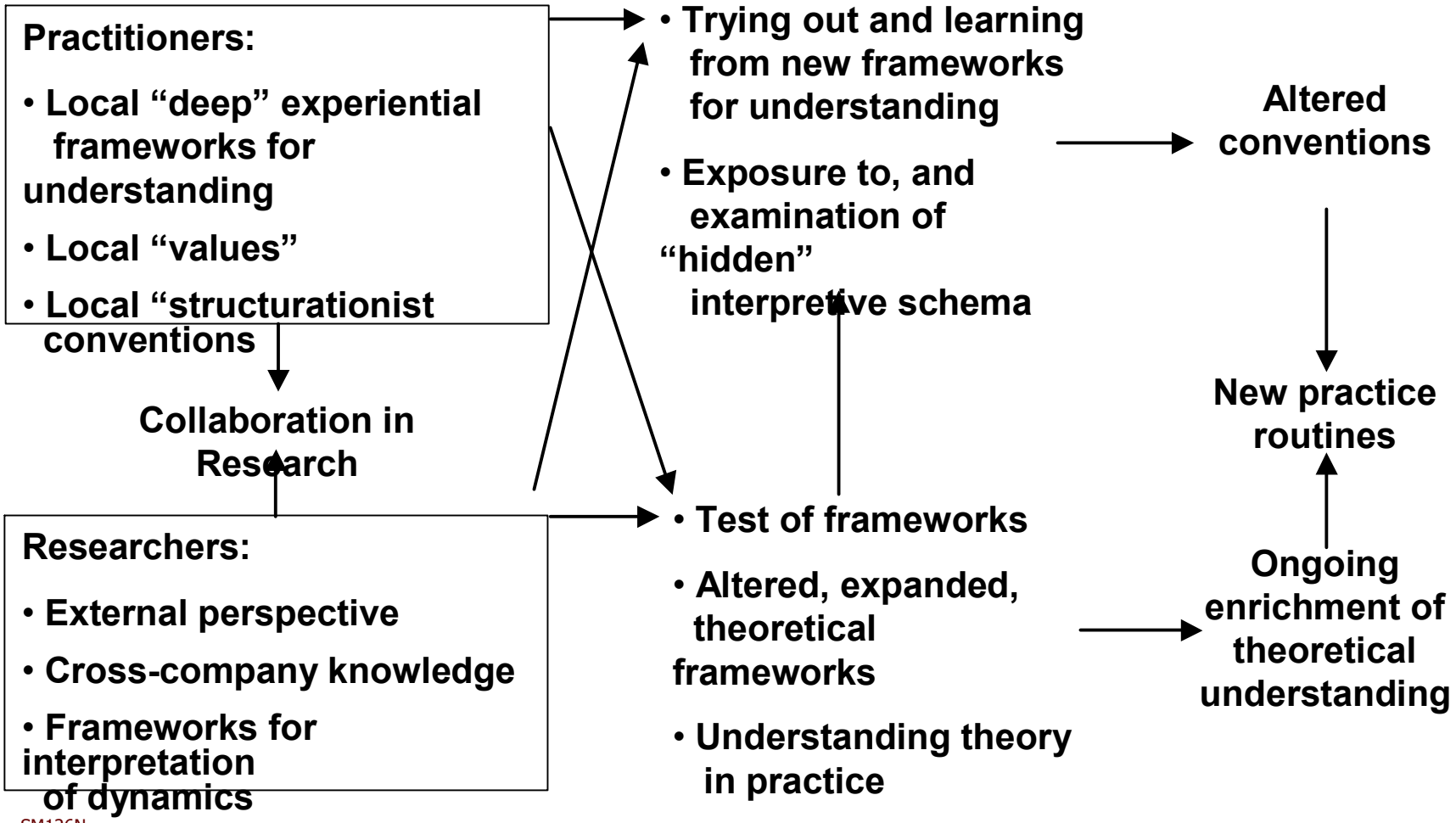
Practitioners-Contextually Focused	Researchers-Interested in Generalizable Findings
Focus on Achieving Purposes (Organizational and Individual)	Knowledge to Explain
Deal with Concrete Situations	Theory, Abstractions and Concepts
Concerned with Increasing Effectiveness	Research Control
Interested in Knowledge as an Action Tool	Action as Test of Knowledge

Collaborative Management Research

- Collaborative Research is an effort by two or more parties,
- at least one of whom is a member of an organization or a system under study and at least one of whom is an external researcher,
- to work together in learning about how the behavior of managers, employees, management methods, or organizational arrangements affect outcomes in the system under study,
- using methods that are ***scientifically based*** and intended to reduce the likelihood of drawing false conclusions from data collected,
- with the intent of ***improving performance*** of the system and ***adding to the broader body of knowledge*** in the field of management"

From: **A.B. Shani, S.A. Mohrman, W.A. Pasmore, B. Stymne & Adler, N. (Eds.).** (2007). Handbook of Collaborative Management Research.. Thousand Oaks: Sage Press.

Outcomes/Products of Collaborative Research



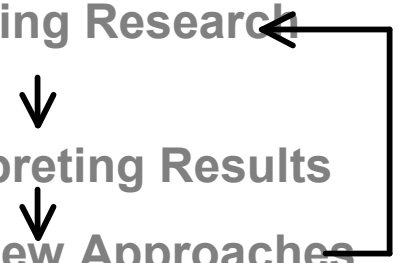
Building A Sustainable Partnership

Exploring the Potential of Partnership (Joining Thought Worlds) → **Iterative Reframing of Collaboration, Combining Knowledge, and Yielding New Knowledge Through Time**

Initial Dialogue—Sharing Perspective, Knowledge, Concerns, Experience

Joint Exploratory Investigations
Start to share knowledge and gain appreciation of each other's conventions

- **Jointly Defining Research Focuses**
- **Jointly Interpreting Results**
- **Trying Out New Approaches**



Ways to Achieve Generalizability and Contextualization

- Multi-Company Studies/Commonality of Methodology, Research Questions and Content of Research
- Tailoring for Each Participating Company to Incorporate Their Issues
- Feedback/Interpretation Sessions Within and Across Companies - These Sessions as a Source of Learning for All Parties

Ways to Achieve Generalizability and Contextualization (cont.)

- Long-Term Relationship Between Companies and Researchers -- Develops Academic Understanding of Organization and Trust by Practitioners That Study Learnings Will Be Useful
- Evaluating Impact of Action Taken in Response to Study Results

"Programmatic" Action Research—Teams in Knowledge Work Settings

"Grounded" Learning from Successive Action Studies

Initial exploratory study

(1 Corporation, 10 divisions)

- **Classic grounded research**
- **Interview-based**

→

Model "tested" in second setting

(1 Corporation, 6 programs)

- **Classic grounded research**
- **Interview-based**

→

Pilot for survey study

(1 Corporation, 4 units)

- **Interviews**
- **Survey/path analysis**

→

Large-scale test

(7 Corporations, 4 - 6 units in each)

- **Interviews**
- **Survey/path analysis**

“Programmatic” Action Research
“Grounded” Learning from Successive Action Studies

Locus of Collaboration:

Corporate organization design and effectiveness team Study team in each division	Corporate organization effectiveness team Study team in each division	Corporate HR change agents	Corporate organization effectiveness or change teams Unit-level management teams
Initial exploratory study **(1 Corporation, 10 divisions)** • Classic grounded research • Interview-based	→ **Model “tested” in second setting** **(1 Corporation, 6 programs)** • Classic grounded research • Interview-based	→ **Pilot for survey study** **(1 Corporation, 4 units)** • Interviews • Survey/path analysis	→ **Large-scale test** **(7 Corporations, 4 - 6 units in each)** •Interviews • Survey/path analysis

Next Study Often Stimulated by Action Learning and Observations of Practice

Within the same organization, different units were differentially “successful” at implementing a new design.

How do accelerated and slower units differ (what conditions are present when a unit is able to quickly adopt a fundamental change?

Learning During Transition Study

- **Longitudinal examination (1995-1998) of ten companies (60 units) implementing new organizational forms based on the prevailing academic and practitioner literatures about the use of teams.**

- **Purpose of the Study: To understand processes of implementation of a fundamental organizational design change.**

- **Established joint study teams in each company—for collaborative exploration of mutually interesting topic.**

General Research Question

- What internal and external processes enable units to successfully implement new architectures?

- We expect that internal (within unit) learning and contextualization processes will be highly related to successful implementation.

Measurements—1 year and 2 years into change process

- Structured Interviews with 20 people per company (in 4 units and corporate positions)
- Survey and Archival Data:
  - Traditional Top-Down (leadership driven?) change variables such as clarity of change, strategic intent, change communication, and change leadership
  - Within unit process variables relating to their ability to learn a new way of operating
  - Outcomes at unit level—extent of implementation; and performance improvement (our ultimate unit level learning measure)

Analysis

- Systematic Coding of Interview Data – informed by theory and hypotheses

- Structural Equation Model Using
  - Measures Over Time
  - Multi-Level Constructs

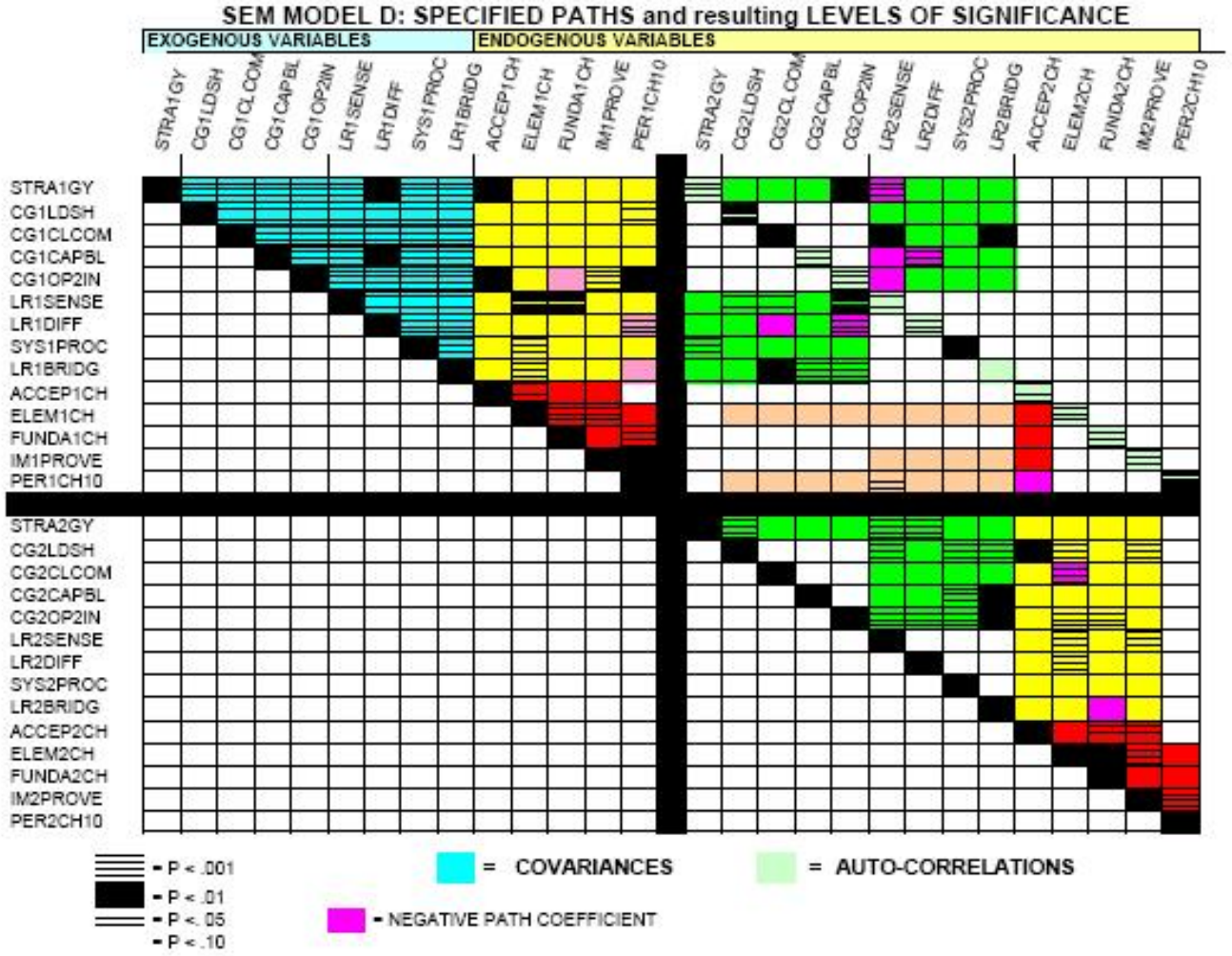
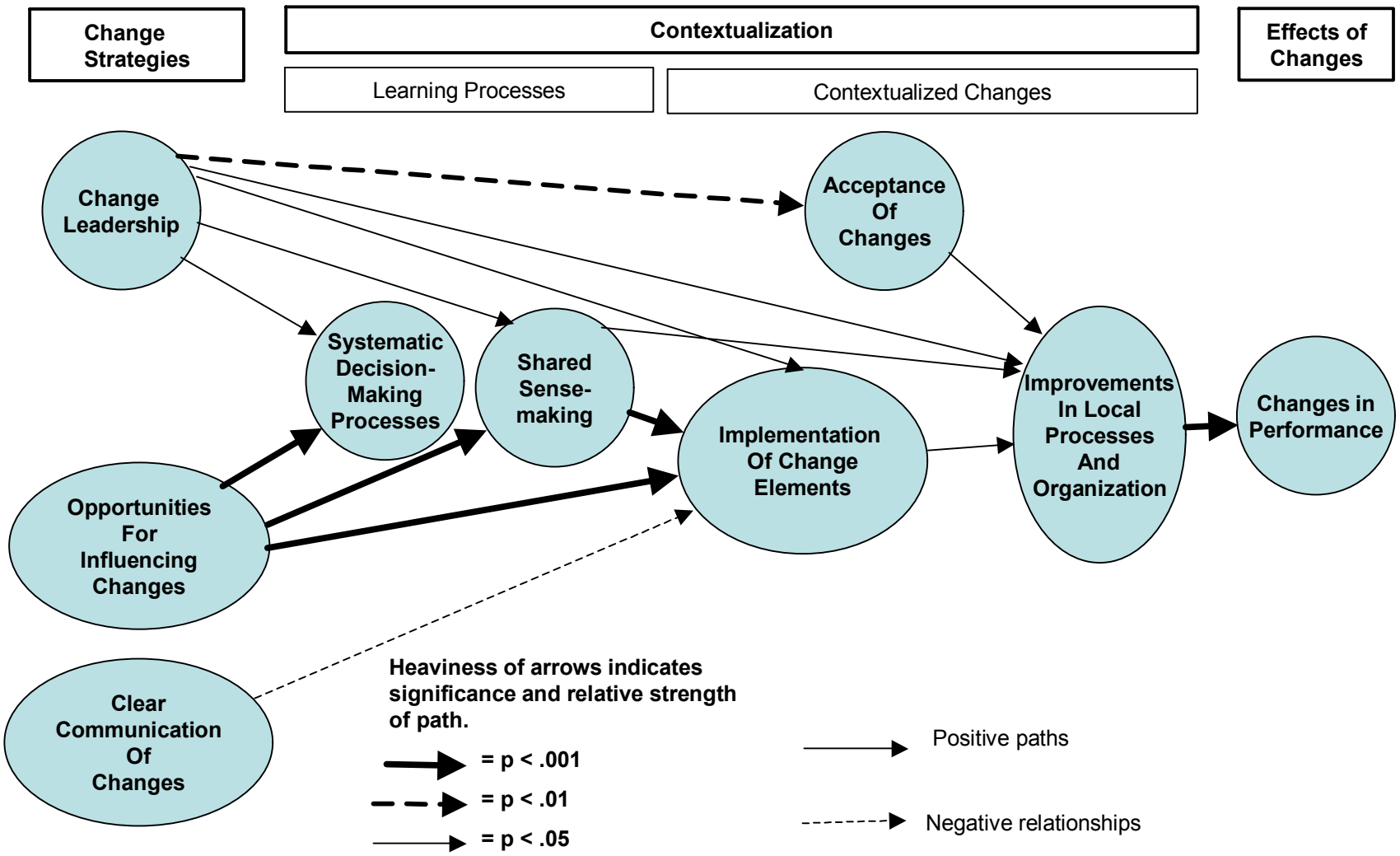

SEM MODEL D: SPECIFIED PATHS and resulting LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE
EXOGENOUS VARIABLES
ENDOGENOUS VARIABLES
STRA1GY
CG1LDSH
CG1CLCOM
CG1CAPBL
CG1OP2IN
LR1SENSE
LR1DIFF
SYS1PROC
LR1BRIDG
ACCEP1CH
ELEM1CH
FUNDA1CH
IM1PROVE
PER1CH10
STRA2GY
CG2LDSH
CG2CLCOM
CG2CAPBL
CG2OP2IN
LR2SENSE
LR2DIFF
SYS2PROC
LR2BRIDG
ACCEP2CH
ELEM2CH
FUNDA2CH
IM2PROVE
PER2CH10
= P < .001
= P < .01
= P < .05
= P < .10
= COVARIANCES
= AUTO-CORRELATIONS
= NEGATIVE PATH COEFFICIENT

Figure 1: Core Paths For Contextualization of Change Elements in Achieving Performance Change



From SEM model based on LDT study findings in Tenkasi, R., Mohrman, S.A., & Mohrman, A.M. Jr. (1998) *Accelerated learning during transition*. In S.A. Mohrman, J.R. Galbraith, E.E. Lawler, III, & Associates. Tomorrow's organization: Crafting winning capabilities in a dynamic world: 330-361. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Key Finding

- Although the framework for change in the firms' technical, market and organizational "architectures" were designed at the company-wide level,
- And implemented through a company-wide change implementation initiatives,
- Our SEM analyses show that unit level contextualization is required if the unit is to achieve an improvement in performance through the implementation of the new design.
- Two particularly strong aspects of contextualization are
  - **collective sense-making by the group**
  - **creation of improved processes to enact the new design in context (proceduralization)**

KEY ACTION OBSERVATION

Only some of the 10 companies incorporated the learning from the study into their implementation approaches.

- LED TO A FOLLOW –ON STUDY

  What conditions have to be in place for a collaborative study to be useful to a participating organization?

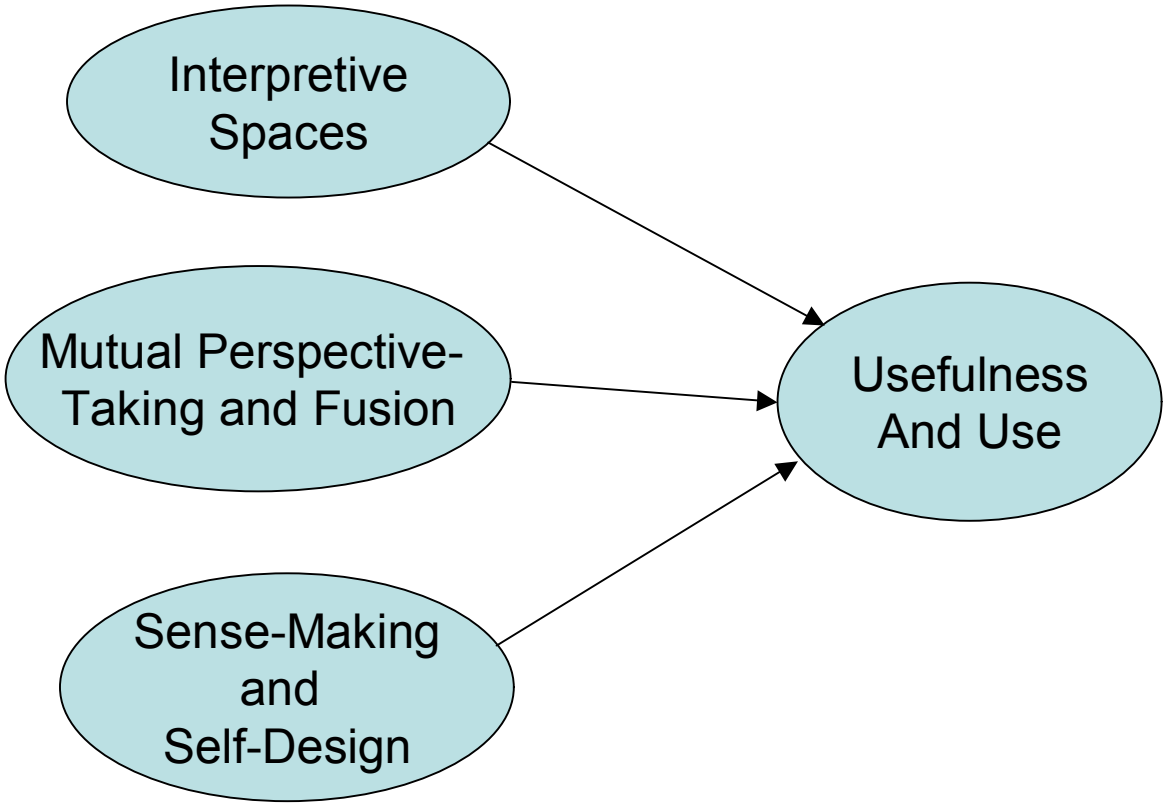
Study of the Study

- 1999—Retrospective study to determine what factors in the conduct of study 1 and in the relationship of researchers to the practitioners determined whether or not the research was useful to and used by the company. Built on:
  - Archival data from researcher records of the key events of the study at each company
  - Interviews with key sponsor of the study in each company
  - Data collected by and coded by a Cristina Gibson, who had not been associated with the first study

Theoretical Underpinnings

- Usefulness of research inevitably depends on how organizational actors view the knowledge generated by it--views that are necessarily deeply embedded in actors' frames of reference, experiences, perspectives, and causal beliefs.
- Usefulness to practice depends on influencing organizing--the ongoing processes conducted by practitioners that constitute and shape organizations.
- It is not sufficient for the research topic, methodology, and findings to relate to the problems being faced in the organization.
- Usefulness, we believed, also derives from the interactive processes and the relationships established between academic researchers and the members of the host organizations as both go about their respective and sometimes overlapping activities in pursuit of their multiple objectives.

Figure 2: Model Suggested by Study Two Findings:
Processes Leading to the
Use of Study One Findings by Participant Companies



Adapted from Mohrman, S. A, Gibson, C. B., & Mohrman, A. M., Jr. (2001). *Doing Research that is Useful to Practice*. Academy of Management Journal, 44(2), 347-375.

Implications

- **The application of management research depends on its ability to contribute to the design causality beliefs of practitioners.**
- **The mechanism by which this happens is contextualization, involving the combination of the knowledge from the research with the knowledge of the practice unit to yield new, dynamic proceduralizations.**
- **Contextualization can be facilitated but not accomplished solely by researchers becoming more sensitive to the practice context and embodying contextual understanding in the conduct of and recommendations from their research.**
- **Application of research results is more likely when the knowledge generated through the study connects to and is incorporated into the on-going self-design and periodic re-design activities of the organization.**