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LINKING THEORY & PRACTICE

Building Bridges: What We Can Learn From Combining Otherwise Separated Debates

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We are very pleased to be able to present two interesting articles in the Linking Theory & Practice section. What makes both articles relevant for the section is the particular ways in which the authors manage to build bridges between otherwise separated scholarly debates.

In the first article, "Using Procedural Justice to Understand, Explain, and Prevent Decision-Making Errors in Forensic Sciences," Scott J. Behson and Roger Koppl combine their knowledge of the business and management domain with that of forensic science. The authors start with a concern that echoes an important societal debate: Too often we see the criminal justice system fail because of errors in forensic testing. False felony convictions are the result, with devastating effects not only for the wrongly convicted defendant but also for the legitimation of our criminal justice system. What makes the article of particular interest for organization scholars is the focus on procedural justice in the industry practices of forensic science. Procedural justice is seen as the perceived fairness of the procedures used in making decisions. Leventhal's six criteria for establishing procedural justice play a major role in this contribution. They enable the authors to understand (industrial) errors and biases in decision-making processes. For example, a typical error in the justice system is tunnel vision, in which the focus of attention is on a particular outcome without considering alternative explanations. Self-interest is the most common bias in decision-making processes. It can happen in the justice system when, for example, forensic science laboratories are administered by law enforcement agencies. Behson and Koppl don't stop with the diagnoses. Instead, they come up with recommendations for improving decision making in the justice system. Built-in redundancy is maybe the most important insight they come up with. As in the "Highly Reliable Organization" (Roberts, 1990; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001), redundancy will reduce "any one actor's monopoly over decision making" (p. 106). Redundancy is often seen as inefficient, costly, and time-consuming, but in the end it will result in more careful and just decision-making processes. This is a lesson that transcends the forensic sciences, since built-in redundancy will be of added value in any circumstance in which erroneous decisions will affect the way individuals are treated.

Kerri S. Kearney and Kayla D. Siegman combine the study of emotions with organizational change literature in the second article, "The Emotions of Change: A Case Study." So far the debate on emotions in organizational change has been more on the collective, abstract problems and less on the emotions of the individual in the organization. With the focus on a particular individual, Kearney and Siegman fill an important gap in the literature. As they say, "Work is profoundly personal and emotional" (p. 118). Individuals might have different feelings about what is going on in their organization, and it is important to listen to their voices. The fact that the authors don't hesitate to include their own experiences and, for that matter, their emotions in the case study gives this contribution an extra dimension: It is not just another story about organizational change. The first author, Kearney, acted as a consultant/researcher years ago in the company in which the second author, Siegman, was employed. After 6 years they met each other again to reflect upon their experience with the organizational change program. The distance—in terms of time—enables both authors to deepen their understanding of the complex, problematic, organizational episode. The result is a fascinating and at times very personal story that certainly

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will hold the attention of readers who want to look beyond the technical aspects of organizational change. However, we don't do justice to this contribution to characterize it as a purely personal description of emotions in a work-related environment. Instead, it offers a thorough analysis of individual emotions to result in tools that can help organization members to cope with "change-based emotions."

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