



Learning to Help Through Humble Inquiry and Implications for Management Research, Practice, and Education: An Interview With Edgar H. Schein

Author(s): FRANK J. LAMBRECHTS, RENÉ BOUWEN, STYN GRIETEN, JOLIEN P. HUYBRECHTS and EDGAR H. SCHEIN

Source: *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, March 2011, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2011), pp. 131-147

Published by: Academy of Management

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41318036>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Academy of Management is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Academy of Management Learning & Education*

Learning to Help Through Humble Inquiry and Implications for Management Research, Practice, and Education: An Interview With Edgar H. Schein

FRANK J. LAMBRECHTS
University of Hasselt

RENÉ BOUWEN
University of Leuven

STYN GRIETEN
Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel

JOLIEN P. HUYBRECHTS
University of Hasselt

EDGAR H. SCHEIN
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

For more than 50 years, Edgar H. Schein, the Sloan Fellows Professor of Management Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management, has creatively shaped management and organizational scholarship and practice. He is the author of 15 books, including Process Consultation Revisited, Organizational Culture and Leadership, Career Anchors, Organizational Psychology, Career Dynamics, and Helping, as well as numerous articles in academic and professional journals. Novelty, clarity, and relevance have always been the guiding principles of his work. In this interview, Schein moves on from his key formative learning experiences to focusing on humble inquiry as the key to building and maintaining the helping relationship. Comprised of both a helper's attitude and behavior, humble inquiry embodies "accessing one's ignorance" and becoming open to what the helper and the helped may learn from each other through observation, genuine empathic questioning, careful listening, and suspension of judgment. Schein not only identifies several challenges within management research, practice, and education, but also offers provocative recommendations to those involved.

INTRODUCTION

We interviewed Edgar H. Schein at the Academy of Management Meeting 2009 in Chicago, Illinois.

We would like to thank Edgar Schein for the interview and the close collaboration in making the revisions leading to this article. We also would like to thank *AMLE* Associate Editor Professor Myrtle Bell for encouraging us to interview Edgar Schein with a focus on management learning and education. We thank the three anonymous reviewers for their comments and assistance in developing this manuscript. We especially acknowledge Professor Felix Corthouts for his continuous support.

The occasion of the interview was his receiving the Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award for Scholar-Practitioner, the publication of his latest book *Helping* (Schein, 2009a), which synthesizes the process consultation approach (Schein, 1969), and the publication of a Special Issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* celebrating both his 80th birthday and his 50 years of contributing to the field (Coghlan & Shani, 2009).

Our primary focus is to learn from Schein's main contributions to organizational scholarship and practice in order to become better scholar-practi-

tioners, whose essential task is to generate new knowledge and to help human systems to improve (Schein, 2009b). In Schein's vision, these scholar-practitioners know how to collaborate with practitioners in a joint inquiry and learning process aiming at formulating joint problem definitions and developing new and meaningful knowledge to the benefit of both academic and practitioner communities (see also Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Coghlan & Shani, 2009).

Schein's central focus has always been to help client systems improve themselves by taking a clinical inquiry stance. By focusing on the needs of the *client* (instead of the needs of the *researcher*) and by participating in the client's issues and inquiry process as a helper or partner (Schein, 1995), he has been able to develop actionable knowledge that is having a high impact on both practice and academia (Coutu, 2002; Schein, 2006; Quick & Gavin, 2000). In his recent book *Helping* (Schein, 2009a), Schein introduces the notion of "humble inquiry" as the key process activity in building and maintaining the helping relationship. *Humble inquiry*, which encompasses both an attitude and a behavior of the helper, embodies "accessing your ignorance" and becoming open to what may be learned from each other in the actual situation through observing, genuine open empathic questioning, careful listening, self-inquiry, not judging but suspending judgment, and shifting helping roles as necessary (Schein, 1996, 1999, 2009a).

Based on his broad experience as a researcher, consultant, and teacher, Schein offers concrete ideas on what could be new in management research, practice, and education. The epilogue further draws out the implications for our field, and positions Schein's words in the current debate among scholars on the crisis and future viability of management research and education (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Detrick, 2002; Mintzberg, 2005; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, 2004; Starkey, Hatchuel, & Tempest, 2004, 2009; Starkey & Tempest, 2009).

Key Learning Moments: Experiences of Real Help

To begin, we would like to hear about your personal learning history. What are the key learning experiences that led up to your current view on helping?

The critical learning experience about helping was when I was invited by Doug McGregor, in 1957, to go to Bethel to experience the T-group and learn about the group dynamics workshops going on

there. I had come from a very traditional PhD program with experimental psychologists who were working in a laboratory setting. Soon after my arrival at MIT, which was a more applied area, McGregor sensed that maybe there was a need for me to learn some new things about what *really* went on in groups. So he "invited" me to go to a T-group and learn what that was all about. It was a totally new and a very powerful experience for me that forever changed my view of the management field. Instead of the leader of the group laying out the learning goals, the trainer of the group said: "We are here to learn together" and then kept silent. Not only was this a new experience for me but it forced me to examine the question, "Are there other ways of doing things than what I had been used to?" As I observed more and more of the group struggling and learning, I saw that what the trainer was really doing was a kind of facilitation, helping, stimulating but *never* telling—always asking, observing, encouraging. So this idea of a leader as a helper rather than as a director goes way back to those 1957 T-groups and learning how the group trainer in the T-group worked. I became very involved with National Training Laboratories (NTL), and began to run T-groups in the various NTL management programs (Schein & Bennis, 1965). It was then that I began to learn something about managers, management, and management education.

Later, when I learned how to be a consultant, the same issue came up: I would first try to give advice and found that it didn't work very well. It really worked better if I acted more like the T-group trainer, observing what was going on and then encouraging people to talk about their own observations. I happened to have clients, particularly Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), who were very, very self-determined people. The last thing they wanted was advice. They wanted help, and so I had to learn how to be helpful in that context.

When I was first invited to work with Digital in 1965, my explicit mandate was "to help the top management team, called the operations committee, improve their communication and to make them more effective as a team." Kenneth Olsen, cofounder of DEC in 1957, invited me just to sit with the group and help them in whatever way I could. He was a very interesting client because most clients wouldn't just invite you in to join the group and just see what you can do.

What I observed was very unruly behavior. The managers constantly interrupted each other; there was high emotionality in that they often shouted at each other; there was a lot of mutual blaming going on; "negative" information about each other

was shared; and other ineffective interpersonal behavior went on. You will recognize this story because I tell about it in almost all of my books and some articles (e.g., Schein, 1990, 2003). To get back to my story, I tried to make them into a better group by my mental model of what an effective group should be. People shouldn't interrupt each other; they should listen to each other and so on. And every time I tried to point out that "When you interrupt somebody, you cut off information" they would say "Oh, we are so sorry, we understand you, you are absolutely right" but ... nothing changed. They would apologize, and then continue to do exactly what they were doing until I finally kind of gave up and asked myself "Why don't they change?" They seemed to recognize that "this is not the best way to be" but they still continued to do it.

What I observed was very unruly behavior.—Schein

So I began to take a more *humble inquiry* approach and realized that they were young, academic, passionate, electrical engineers fighting for the future of their company. I began to understand that it was the passion and the energy and the academic background that made them interact like they did. Professors interrupt each other all the time; it is part of the academic game to fight for your ideas. I realized that "as long as they are so passionate, they are not going to pay attention to some simple rule that I might impose on them."

I also noticed that their real problem was that they never got their information very well documented and shared. Somebody would start an idea and get interrupted. So, one day, I decided just to go up to the flip chart and if someone started an idea, I would start to write it down. If another member interrupted the person giving the idea, instead of saying, "you have interrupted; you have cut off information" with my new insight, I would say "I didn't get your whole idea here, could you give me the rest of it." That, of course, stopped the process because I was at the board, I was writing things down, and it was in their interest. Pretty soon they were using the ideas on the board, saying, "yes, we want to do more of this, less of that, and so on." Ideas got elaborated. And at the end of those kinds of meetings they would say, "You know Ed, now you were *really* helping."

[T]heir real problem was that they never got their information very well documented and shared. Somebody would start an idea and get interrupted.—Schein

What was the difference? The difference was that I was finally getting into what the *client* wanted. I couldn't be helpful until I gave up my own notion of what the management team as a group should be according to my own assumptions. Only when I began to focus on what the group was actually trying to do, could I be helpful. I began to intervene in the "real process" of the group, that is, its *task process* of creating a future for their company. They didn't want to be a good group; they wanted to make good decisions. So until I got into their world by observing what they were trying to do, I did not really understand *how to help*. That was a huge lesson to me—you have to figure out what the client really wants to do instead of assuming that you see something wrong and have to fix it. What I see traditional consultants do is that they hear what the client says is wrong and then immediately put all their diagnostic machinery into motion. But I realized that taking that first presentation of the problem may not be what the client really needs or wants. First, you have to engage in a certain amount of humble inquiry to make sure that you end up working on the right problem. Every therapist knows this. The client comes in with some statement of his or her problem but after a few hours you discover that the problem is something entirely different.

So the origins of helping were many. Another influence was the concept of experiential learning that became popular. At MIT, we had the first book written on organizational psychology that took an experiential learning approach to management teaching (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1971). This book was a set of experiential learning exercises that student groups could administer to themselves. But until I wrote this current book on helping (Schein, 2009a), we took the word "helping" for granted as if we understood exactly what helping is. But if some person said, "What exactly do you mean by being helpful?" you couldn't find good definitions anywhere in print. We assume that everybody knows what helping means and we often confuse efforts to be helpful with actual help delivered. Of course, when you deconstruct "helping," it is really a very complicated concept, hence, a whole book about it.

THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF HUMBLE INQUIRY: MULTICULTURAL GROUPS AND DIALOGUE

The core working mechanism you mention is humble inquiry. What really works in humble inquiry? What is its essence?

The essence of it is to create a situation, a relationship, where the other person will trust you enough to tell you what is really on his or her mind. In simple situations that may not be a problem. When somebody asks you for directions, you don't necessarily have to worry about that. But the example I use in the book on helping (Schein, 2009a) is very meaningful because even when somebody asks you for directions you have a choice of how to help. Outside my house one day, a woman pulled up and asked how to get to Massachusetts Avenue. When I asked her where she was trying to go she said, "I'm trying to go to Boston," and she was in effect already on the road to Boston. I could have sent her in the wrong direction if I had literally answered her question. When someone, a friend, asks you for some advice, what should you do? Humble inquiry would initially be a moment or two of silence. Maybe he has something more to say. And if silence does not produce anything, you could say, "Tell me a little more," "What is going on?" "What is prompting you to ask this right now?" "Only when you feel the person has finally laid out what is really bothering him can you try to proceed. I use the example of kids coming to their parents with specific questions like "can you help me with my homework?" Often, they really want to talk about something else, but they don't know how to ask except through some specific, concrete question. Humble inquiry gives them a chance to tell what may really be on their minds.

Since the sixties you have been a pioneer in conceptualizing change as being constructed in the interaction (Schein, 1961). Reality is not just a given but is constructed in the interaction between people. Change is a reconstruction, a redefinition or a reframing. Symbolic interactionism was a major inspiration for this idea. We were wondering how you would look upon this idea now.

Symbolic interactionism is, right now, my main interest. I want to bring Erving Goffman back into people's thinking (Goffman, 1967). This is of the highest importance because I now realize that if the world goes global, as it is going to, we are going to have more and more groups and organizations that are multicultural. Each culture has its own rules of interaction; its own social order. Dif-

ferent cultures have different rules about the appropriate way to interact with each other and with authority figures. So when multicultural groups get together, the big question is "how will they find a *modus operandi*?"

First of all, we need to show managers that culture operates through the day-to-day rules of interaction; through face work; through all the ideas that Erving Goffman talks about. From the field of group dynamics, we know that those rules are different across cultures in two critical areas. That is, specifically, in the management of *authority* and in the management of *intimacy*. The rules of how to behave up and down are very different across cultures. Hofstede (1980) might call this "power distance" but power distance is just an abstraction. What I really think is important, inspired by Erving Goffman, are the rules of *deference* and *demeanor*. How should the boss present himself—proper look, proper dress, uniform, bearing—and how should the subordinate be properly deferent—eye contact or no eye contact, interrupting the boss is okay or is not done, orders are to be obeyed or challenged if they seem wrong, and so on. These rules are obviously very different in different cultures.

What might be a powerful approach when a multicultural team is supposed to get to work is to start with a *dialogue* format in a *cultural island* setting. Sitting around the "campfire," each person just tells to the campfire, "In my world, if I disagree with the boss, this is the kind of thing I do." As a leader you then say, "Leave it there, and now, the next person, tell what you do." As they each tell their stories, they will begin to have some level of mutual understanding. "You know, I never tell my boss anything and this guy, he tells his boss everything; we clearly have a different outlook on things." That's the kind of information they need to have in order to identify how they might begin to work together. Then, the second question would be "How do you know when you can really trust somebody?", "What do you mean by a good intimate relationship?" Again have everybody talk in order to the campfire and slowly build up mutual understanding around those questions. What is original about this is to say, "Don't discuss your culture generally, don't try to cover everything, just focus on a couple of things that are most likely to be very important in getting any work done." Authority—cross-status communication—and intimacy—building trusting relationships—always surfaced in the group dynamics movement as the two critical issues that every group has to solve. I assume that these will be the biggest problems in a multicultural group.

I have only begun to write about that but that's the direction I'd like to go; to focus on "What is a cultural island? How do we manage the dialogue process? Will we need more and more cultural islands?" And so on. If a surgical team has to get to work and have the doctor, the nurse, and the anesthesiologist really become a team, the only way they can do that is to go off into a cultural island, go through some team training and team work, and then come back and do the job. I doubt that they can do it "on the job" because the culture of nursing and the culture of the doctors is so different. So when I say "multicultural," I don't just mean different in nationality, I mean different in occupation, function, expertise, any area.

"TALKING TO THE CAMPFIRE": SUSPENSION IS THE KEY

You stress "talking to the campfire." What is the working principle behind that? When we compare it with the T-group, where feedback is always very personal and directed, we see a difference. Is "talking to the campfire" related to a kind of mechanism that makes mutual understanding and reframing possible?

In an article that I wrote for *Organizational Dynamics* (Schein, 1993b), I tried to compare the T-group with dialogue. The T-group focused on how to deal with the emotions of self-presentation, and therefore, how to give and receive "feedback." Dialogue, especially how William Isaacs structures it (Isaacs, 1993), is not about emotions and feedback. It is essentially about the *thought* process of a group. If I'm to really understand your thought process, I need to develop a different listening style and I need to get acquainted with my own filters. That's difficult to do even now in this conversation. If I really focus on you, I get preoccupied with all sorts of other things besides what you actually said. So the power of dialogue is that, by "talking to the campfire," I not only abstract myself, but I'm also not trying to impress you. I am really trying just to get my thought out and lay it out there. If I do it that way and don't maintain eye contact, maybe you have a better chance of hearing what I am actually saying because I'm not directing it at anyone. When I'm finished, I hand you the "talking stick" and say "it is your turn." Then I just go into a listening mode. I may close my eyes, I don't have to look at you because you're not looking at me: You are looking at the "campfire."

So I found the dialogue method profoundly different from the T-groups. It is a totally different process: It is oriented toward thought, toward lis-

tening, toward building a collective consciousness. The T-group was really working on interpersonal dynamics, feedback, and emotions. The two are almost not overlapping in my mind. For purposes of *building a multicultural unit, you need dialogue*; you do not need T-groups. In fact, T-groups would be horrible because the kind of feedback that might be appropriate in one culture would be totally offensive in another.

That's true. For example, if you give feedback in the Japanese culture, the receiver loses a lot of face.

Exactly, so it has got to be the dialogue style. This style makes the process *culturally neutral* and allows different thoughts to merge slowly. You have the challenge now with your students. You have a group of students who come from different countries. What's the right way to get them going? They all speak a little bit of English, so you have to assume that there is at least a minimum of some language. The best way to get them going is to give them a task of the sort that I just described. Sit in a circle, pretend there is a campfire there, and talk about how each of you relate to your bosses. Maybe even more concretely, say, "What happens if you see the boss doing something that is wrong, that is going to hurt the project, what do you do?" They go in order of each person telling about it. When you are completely finished, then maybe they talk to each other about it. But use that as a breaking-in device. What do you think about that? Could that work or could there be a better way?

It could work. The idea of the campfire is intriguing. When people sit around the campfire, like the Boy Scouts do, a kind of neutral transition zone is created. Everything is possible over there as long as it is going on and things can be done in a sequence. What exactly makes this method so strong?

The key working mechanism is not to worry about eye contact, a specific relationship. Our whole human resources idea in the West has distorted the relational process and acted as if the way we do it is the only way. And yet, think of all the cultures in which looking at the boss is disrespectful. "You must not look the boss in the eye, you must keep your head down," be deferent. So where do we get the idea that the best relationship is the one where I really look at you and say we are going to talk face-to-face intimately? These theories would say "that's the only good way to communicate. Pay attention to body language, look how he is sitting, is he mentally conflicted or not, etc." *That is all*

nonsense in a cross-cultural context. It may be very relevant in some very specific situation, but if you're dealing cross-culturally, I think we have to find a much more neutral way to converse. The campfire dialogue setting creates the cultural island even if it is done at the place of work. Have you ever been in a dialogue group where somebody set it up under those rules?

Not exactly in that format but we have been working with multiactor stakeholder projects where groups of actors with very different perspectives meet. There the rule is also that people speak up but don't respond to each other directly. They just take what the other actor is saying for a given and try to understand what is being said.

That's the core rule of dialogue. To add the campfire as a metaphor just makes it a little easier to do that. *The key is to suspend instead of respond.* If you say something and I violently disagree with it, I have to make a choice. Do I blurt out my disagreement or do I suspend it and say to myself: "Why do I think so differently from what he just said?", "What's going on in me that makes me feel so differently?" That begins then to build what Isaacs (Isaacs, 1993) would call "group consciousness" rather than a debate about which of us is right. Suspension is a central idea in dialogue. Let everybody's thoughts just sit there. Don't debate it, don't argue with it. Add your own thoughts; maybe your own thoughts are different. It goes way back to older cultures where the tribal councils worked that way. The elders sat around the campfire, and they each spoke their opinion. They never argued with each other, they just kept speaking, and pretty soon it was clear where they agreed and where they didn't agree. The senior person then could say, "Well, this is what we have decided." But it was merely decided by just laying opinions and ideas out there without discussion, debate, or disagreement.

Is the dialogue method that you are describing also related to the organizational learning approach of Chris Argyris with, at its core, the idea of making assumptions explicit (e.g., Argyris, 1985)?

Argyris makes the assumption that we can and will state our unconscious assumptions. However, if you believe in Goffman (1967) and symbolic interactionism, you realize that the reason I withhold these assumptions is very profound. It is not just a mechanical problem. It is a problem that if I really, really told you what I think, I might be disrupting the social order. So Argyris' "left-hand right-hand column" helps people to look at the consequences

of how what they say and what they think leads to faulty communication. This is very valuable but to get people to confront some of what they think and actually to make it explicit requires the elaborate kinds of training that Argyris requires of his clients. Chris is always fighting an uphill battle. He wants things to be more explicit, but often this goes against the rule-driven nature of communication. Once a group has learned to do what Chris suggests, it is very effective, but it is a lot of up-front investment to get to that point.

You are saying that not everything can be made explicit. Open communication as such is not the absolute truth. Communication is always contextual and relational?

Exactly, and very much rule-driven in a culture. Every culture has its own rules about what you can be open about and in what setting this is allowed. For example, the Japanese have the rule that when you go out and get drunk together you can be more open. I asked a colleague of mine, who really understands Japan, "Can you pretend to be drunk if you have an alcohol problem or allergy?" She said, "No, you can't pretend, people would realize that you are sober and then it would have a different meaning." She was arguing that if you can't drink, you can't do certain kinds of jobs in Japanese organizations; that actually getting drunk is essential for some kinds of work.

LEADERSHIP AS ACTS OF HUMILITY

You have been speaking of dialogue and being reflective in a cultural island in order to learn from each other. The problem often stated is this: "How can you bring what is learned to the daily work context?" Don't you think this transfer problem is an important pitfall? People say things such as, "Well, there I can talk to the campfire but the next day when I'm back in the routines, I behave totally differently or I haven't got the space to do that again."

You are assuming the T-group mentality. You're assuming that the interpersonal openness is the issue, and it may very well be that what goes on in that cultural island has nothing to do with that. It has to do with trying to understand each other's culture a little better so that we can work together. It's like when the military does these after-action reviews where they say, "Well, let's have everybody tell what they did and what worked and what didn't." It's very task-focused. It's not "how I feel about you" but it's "how we did what."

Do you know the author Amy Edmondson? She

has written a lot about surgical teams. She has one article that was in *Administrative Science Quarterly* that is very important (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001). She compares eight hospitals that successfully adopted a very new sophisticated open-heart procedure and eight other hospitals that tried it and abandoned it. She got curious: Why did some hospitals use it and others abandon it? She found that in the hospitals that continue to use it, the senior surgeon had said, "This is going to be complicated; the key nurse, anesthesiologist, perfusionist and I are going to have to go off and train together." So they went off for 3–4 days and practiced this new technique. In that process they established signals and communication. The surgeon said, "Look, if I am doing this, you have got to tell me this and this." In the other group of hospitals that never adopted the new procedure, the senior surgeon said, "This is a matter of professionalism; we are going to go in and put the best key nurse, the best anesthesiologist, the best perfusionist in." They also went to the training program on the technique but apparently were not mindful of the need to learn to work together as a team. For them the new procedure did not work. They kept failing. So they said, "This procedure is too complicated." But what they hadn't done is gone off to a cultural island to establish communication channels and ways of working that would enable them to quickly communicate under the crisis of the actual operation.

It had nothing to do with T-groups or feedback. So, when I say *cultural island*, I'm saying more task-related culturally oriented communication and building new norms of dealing with authority and trust. Such norms can be brought back to the workplace. "The doctor has a new relationship with this nurse now." That will carry over, not only into that operation, but maybe into other tasks as well. Because now, "even if I'm the doctor and she is the nurse, we now have learned how to communicate with each other without there being a status problem." And the nurse may feel confident enough that if the doctor is doing something wrong, she will speak up. Whereas in these other groups that never became mindful of the need for new communication norms, the nurse would still be scared, would keep silent, and would let the doctor make the mistake. These surgical teams illustrate the issue of what has to be new in management education, particularly for potential leaders, like leaders of surgical teams. I think during the training period, somewhere they have to *learn how to be temporarily humble in the interest of building relationships with the people on whom they are dependent*.

How can we do that? How can we educate people, particularly leaders or future leaders, how to be temporarily humble?

It is going to be very tricky because, as Goffman would tell you, the whole point of being a leader is that you now "know everything." Leaders are supposed to know what to do, so people below the leader are going to defer to him or her—let them be the deciders even if they don't know enough to make good decisions. But in a world where leaders do not know everything, where the subordinates are highly skilled technicians, how are we going to get leaders to admit that they don't know everything and actually ask for help? What is it about these cardiac surgeons that made them say, "Oh, oh. This is going to be difficult, I'd better join this group and we'd better train together." What an *act of humility* by the doctors to go off and train with these others who are below them in status. If we don't train leaders to accept help and ask for it, organizations are going to have trouble because the reality is that the subordinates will be from different cultures, have different occupations, are much more expert. In that situation, the leader will have to accept that "I may be the coordinator and the facilitator but I'm not the decision maker."

The leader has to learn to accept and manage a high level of interdependence?

That's right and you, the researcher-educators, have to begin to insert this mentality into the students early so that they don't say, "OK, I'm a student now, so now I have to be humble but when I get to be the boss then I can tell everybody what to do."

How you train leaders in humble inquiry is the 64-dollar question. I don't know how to do that but I think it is going to be essential. Maybe you start out by giving them helping theory (Schein, 2009a) and get them thinking in terms of *nonhierarchical helping relationships* so that they get trained in humble inquiry in normal day-to-day situations with spouses, friends, and children. I think the most important idea I want to push in the next years is this idea of the leader having the insight and the skill to create cultural islands for themselves and their subordinates. The idea of "on-the-job" training will not work in a multicultural context. People have very different experiences and live in different social orders so they will not be able on-line to suddenly blend with each other. But cultural islands may not be very long, it may be only an hour, it may be several days, but the key is temporary *dialogue and suspension* of the normal

cultural rules, so that we can begin to see how each other really thinks.

MANAGEMENT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN 2020: A "HAPPY" FUTURE?

Now that you've made the shift to the future and have talked about training/education and what needs to happen, another question emerges. Take a moment to imagine the field of management learning and education in 2020. It embodies all that you really mean by "helping." You already mentioned the importance of managers learning to work in cultural islands, to set up dialogues, to be humble inquirers. What would the field look like? How is research and teaching done? How are PhD students trained?

Training programs will have to build in some kind of *internship at every level*, undergraduate or graduate, that puts students for a time into a helping situation where they are out there to give help. That is very important. The mistake we make in management learning and education is that we send people out into organizations to do research. We say "gain entry and gather data." But from the organization's point of view that is a waste. They don't really get anything out of it. We promise them feedback but we rarely really help them.

Students as future leaders will have to learn to say to a company: "I am in this university program and I'd like to spend 6 months in your organization doing whatever you think needs doing." Let them have the experience of even finding their own organizations and begging for a job. If the faculty provides all the organizations as research sites and says, "this student goes here, this student goes there," the students are not learning how to be humble. But to say, "Every student must find during their 2-year program an organization to which they apply for 6 months or a year of work trying to be helpful to that organization," or some version of that, then they have a chance to learn humility. During this internship students can do field notes, write a journal, document what that it felt like, and use that material for an important paper on *learning how to help*. Then they will be better researchers because they will know how to interact with an organization to create the climate for producing high-quality data that isn't just check marks on a survey instrument.

We see that PhD students are experiencing more and more time pressure because they have to do their PhDs in a limited time span. When we read your book on helping, we notice that engaging in helping, and learning from this experience, is a process that needs

a lot of time. But we couldn't help thinking, "Universities usually don't give a PhD student enough time to actually go into an organization for, say, 6 months." Maybe you have some advice for PhD students about how to deal with this time pressure and increasing pressure to write articles?

A PhD student in that situation hasn't got much choice. If you really want that PhD degree and the faculty says, "You have to do it in this way," you only have the choice to do what they say or go to some other university. I don't think there is some magic way of creating time in a situation that does not allow it. It is a tough choice, you know, "Do you really want the degree enough to play by the rules of the institution?" My advice then would be "Get through it as fast as you can and then, afterward, do what you feel is more appropriate."

If you look at who is running all these doctoral consortia that have been going on here (Academy of Management Meeting 2009), it is mostly the tenured professors who are telling the students, "If you want to get your doctorate, better do this and this." I'm fortunate that I am through that. I had to go through it as well. Publish and get things done. I was fortunate because Harvard Social Relations did have a required 1-year internship. *The trend in many universities and business schools isn't necessarily a very happy one.* Many of the business schools I have talked to lately are all going toward more traditional academic research with a strong quantitative orientation with little emphasis on learning how to be helpful.

We can rebel, protest?

You can do what I do and just criticize it from the outside and say, "Look, clinical real-life research is more important, all students should have an internship," or work in shorter experiences that have a similar broadening effect. We used to do an exercise, "The Empathy Walk," (Schein, 1996) that went like this. You have a group of say 20 students. You give them the following instructions. "As part of your homework next week you are going to pair up, preferably with someone you do not already know. Your first task will be to get acquainted with each other sufficiently to decide on what kind of person is most different from the two of you concerning occupation, social structure, status, nationality, and so on. Once the two of you have figured that out, find such a person, and interview them about their world. Next week in class we will have each pair report on whom they picked, how they established contact, and what they learned from their get-together." People at first throw in all kinds of examples to see whether or not you ap-

prove, and I just say, "I have given you all the instructions." Then they get creative and begin to think of beggars, street musicians, a famous actor, a union leader, and so on. They know what you mean: someone who is "very different." They have a week to do this exercise. When you say "you really have to do this" people at first want help, but if you don't give them any help, they figure it out themselves and people go to Trappist monks, prisons to find a prisoner, and so on.

They always come up with something interesting. They bring back incredible stories and often find out that the person "wasn't as different as we thought." "Their life was different but they have the same dreams and aspirations." More important from a cultural training point of view is that they sometimes discover that the difference between the two was greater than between them and the other person. The exercise forces them to confront the rules of the social order—how to make contact with someone from another culture and establish a relationship. The ability to empathize, learning to see and experience the world through someone else's eyes and to establish relationships across boundaries, is a crucial ability for everyone in a leading function. As our world is becoming more global every day, this ability will become even more important in the future. Leaders will have to develop the ability to handle diversity constructively. The hardest part is usually to actually make contact with that other person. Say they pick a street musician. "How are we going to actually break the ice and start talking to this person?" Why should that be so difficult? It is because of the social order, the status rules; you do not have a prior connection. So they invent things such as, "If it is a poor person let's offer to take him out for a meal."

One of the most dramatic cases was when a pair wanted to contact a young AIDS patient. This pair was scared to death because they were really afraid they were going to catch AIDS. They actually found this young man, got together with him, and were profoundly influenced by the fact that he was desperately scared of catching something from them because that's the real danger. He was the one with AIDS, his immune system was very vulnerable, he was in much more jeopardy from talking to them than they were from him. That was an enormous insight for them.

The Empathy Walk is an exercise that doesn't take a lot of time but produces a profound interpersonal experience. If you make people cross the social status lines in an inquiry mode, they can have very enlightening experiences. It is also an illustration of the use of creativity to get at some things. We may not do enough of that in our edu-

cation efforts. We need to invent new ways of giving people learning experiences without having the time for a whole internship. Change the process if not the timetable.

Do you see other important influences that will change management education and learning?

The bigger question is what will things look like in the future? I think we all have to watch with interest and not make any assumptions about it. The biggest influence will probably be information technology. Even right now, how many organizations are totally geographically decentralized? People have no offices and sometimes never meet. Relationships will be on the Internet, not face-to-face. I have no idea where this is going to go, nobody does probably. Maybe the kids do. I look at my grandchildren: teenagers. They may have a more accurate vision of the future. Maybe we should ask them instead of second guess it. Even this idea that the 14-year-old has her 25 people on Facebook, and does she go out on a date? No, she interacts with these 25 people. That is her relational set. Does she want anyone of them especially? No, she communicates with *all of them*.

That's a totally different set of rules. Maybe organizations will be like that. There won't be colocated teams, jobs will migrate into something that can be done on the Internet, and people will collaborate across continents. Education may change that way. We now already have a lot of distance education. I do a Global Classroom in which I lecture to and interact with over 400 people all over the world. I could have a group of students who will be networked for the next 6 months, working on a joint project, writing each other about how they relate to authority. Focused readings could simply be sent as e-mail attachments. You are *constructing educational events* from which you think they will benefit. You might even, at the end of the course, give them a degree without ever having seen them because you will have tested them through your interactions on the Internet.

Where is the experiential learning in this story, experiential learning that needs a lot of "touch"?

They are having different kinds of experiences, but it is not face-to-face. Why do we think that face-to-face experience is sacred? I have an example of one of my grandchildren about how the language itself is adapting. He is the middle brother of three. The rest of the family went to Hawaii on holiday. He is in college, so he couldn't go. They are all big athletes, and they all surf. The younger brother had a very good ride on a wave, and they took a

really good picture that shows Oliver on this wave, a beautiful photograph. This was sent to everybody, also to Peter who was in college. What comes back from Peter is the following message that all of us got: "that was soooooo unfair." He got it all across in one short line by stretching the word. You immediately understand what he feels and you are laughing. Who is to say that we are not going to develop a whole emotional language with these tools? Stretching words, sending pictures, and so on.

Embrace what is going to come?

Yes. And the best way to relate to my grandchildren is just watch them. If I get upset about what they are doing because they are spending too much time on television or their computer screens, that is stupid. It is *their world*. It is a different world from my world. We complain that they are superficial. By doing all this multitasking, they are not getting into anything deeply enough. Maybe true but so what? Why put a judgment on it? They may live in a world where depth is not important but where the ability to multiprocess is much more important. They can do things that I can't do. They can simultaneously text, listen, and watch, and that is what they are mostly doing in the classroom, too.

You are considered the father of organizational psychology. We are concerned about the future of organizational psychology. We see organizational psychology becoming very "poor," that is to say, moving back to experimental social psychology or being very instrumental and functional. Is there still a future for the experiential learning, group dynamic, processual approach?

It is essential and will catch on more and more. *If anything is going to die or will become irrelevant it will be traditional ivory tower academia.*

That's a statement, that's a very strong statement.

The human fields require a tight linkage between theory and practice. Good theory is not enough. Even in the very esoteric fields like finance, it is the tools, the applications, the financial mechanisms that the world has learned to use. And, as I have argued in the clinical approach, unless scholars have relevant experiences with real organizations, they cannot develop good theory. And out of good theory then comes good practice. The future is in practice. We, therefore, need much more respect for *theories of practice* in the social human field. What physics, math, and others do, that's another matter. In the human field, abstract theories aren't

very useful unless they are based on and linked with experience.

The human fields require a tight linkage between theory and practice. Good theory is not enough . . . abstract theories aren't very useful unless they are based on and linked with experience. —Schein

CORE CONTRIBUTION: IT IS EVOLVING

You have been working in a broad field. If you look back on all your contributions, what do you consider the most important, the one that you are most attached to from the work with the war veterans (Schein, Schneider, & Barker, 1961) to the work on helping (Schein, 2009a) you are doing now?

It is evolving. I don't think I have a single thing that I consider to be the most important. Each area seemed to lead to other areas. What is important varies with the audience. For example, I was asked to meet with a group of hospital administrators who were trying to improve health care. My consultant friends who were working with this group invited me in because they thought it was very important for the doctors to learn about culture and subcultures. All my experience with the health care system suggested that they really needed to understand culture better. So, on this particular Sunday afternoon, I gave them all the ideas about culture and it was all going very well. Then somehow an issue came up about "All doctors are like such and so, all doctors want autonomy, and so on." So I said just off the cuff "I have done some other research on careers that suggests to me that in fact maybe different doctors want different things." They looked a little bit puzzled. I explained a little bit on career anchors and made clear that some people want to be managers and some people want to be the world's best surgeon. The energy in the group shot up because suddenly they were being told something that was *brand new to them*. Culture, "Yes, interesting," but they knew about culture. But the idea that different doctors are in their field for different reasons simply hadn't occurred to them. And that there was research on this was a revelation for them. So we ended up having a very productive couple of hours on career anchors, totally unanticipated.

So I could say, "That's the most important thing I have done, the career anchors . . . for doctors." But maybe for some other population, it is something else. The human resources people might consider

the career anchors relatively routine. They might be more interested in some other aspect of what I have written about. I've learned that *what is interesting to people is what they do not know about*. So what's the most important thing to me? It doesn't resolve. Certainly the book on helping (Schein, 2009a) focuses a lot of it. I think I've always been obsessed with the relationship between the individual and the system, the individual and the organization. You can say that the career anchors idea is all about the individual, culture is really all about the organization, and process consultation and helping are about the relationship. So the contribution is the total package rather than one element of it.

Thank you very much for this interview. It was a wonderful experience. Did you enjoy it?

It was fun to do. I hope it will be useful and others can learn from it as well.

EPILOGUE

The main purpose of the interview was to learn from Schein's contributions to organizational scholarship and practice in order to become better scholar-practitioners. According to Schein, becoming a good scholar-practitioner comes down to developing process expertise in building and maintaining the helping relationship by engaging in "humble inquiry" as the situation demands. Although Schein has laid the groundwork and paved the way, helping is a very complicated social process (Schein, 2009a) that must be examined more closely in order to understand its profound implications on management research, practice, and education.

Helping and Humble Inquiry

From a temporal perspective, every helping relationship between a client and a helper-to-be is initially in a state of imbalance and ambiguity. Emotionally and socially, when clients ask for help they are putting themselves "one down." This makes them temporarily vulnerable because they are taking on a dependent role vis-à-vis the helper. Asking for help implies a temporary loss of status, face, control, and independence in the acknowledgment of not knowing what to do next or of being unable to do it. In all cultures in which growing up to adulthood means becoming increasingly independent, this feeling of losing independence is particularly strong. At the same time, the helper is "one up" having been given power, status, and value by the client, which also provides the helper

an opportunity to take advantage of this position (see Schein, 2009a: 40).

Together with this imbalance, the initial relationship is characterized by ambiguity and tension because there is a great deal of ignorance about each other's internal worlds. Neither the helper nor the client initially knows what to expect or how to enact the relationship (Schein, 2009a: 35). At this stage, the helper's role is to create a conversation that will permit both the client and the helper to reduce their ignorance and establish equilibrium in their relationship. For the helper, this means engaging in humble inquiry. How this process plays out will depend very much on the actual situation, as is illustrated in the interview, the endeavor, however, is always to establish a working interpersonal relationship. The intention is to balance the status, build trust, and obtain crucial information that enables the helper to figure out what to do next. The helper has the choice to stay in the process consultation role doing humble inquiry or to move to the expert or doctor role. Depending on the emerging situation, the helper may shift between all the three roles as much as needed (Schein, 2009a: 64).

As humble inquiry is the common thread of the interview, the concept deserves further attention. According to Schein (2009a), humble inquiry is both a helper's attitude and his or her behavior. It embodies "accessing one's ignorance" and becoming open to what may be learned from each other in the actual situation through attentive presence and observing, genuine open empathic questioning, careful listening, self-inquiry, and suspending any judgment (Schein, 1996, 1999, 2009a). In this description, "to access your ignorance" means asking yourself "What do I truly not know?" It is not about testing your preconceptions or hypotheses, as clients will be inclined to follow them instead of disclosing their concerns. It is about genuinely and openly inquiring into the situation—suspending your assumptions, preconceptions, and expectations based on past experience—to enhance understanding. The interview makes clear that humble inquiry is important in the initial relationship-building process. However, it is also crucial in strengthening and maintaining the helping relationship because it provides a concrete way to stay continuously attuned to the client system (Schein, 1999, 2009a).

On the basis of his experiences as a researcher, consultant, and teacher, Schein illustrates above that learning to build and maintain helping relationships through humble inquiry opens up new possibilities to advance management research, practice, and education. By laying out a concrete relational path, Schein adds an important and new element

and level to the discussion on the crisis and future of our field (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Mintzberg, 2005; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, 2004; Starkey, Hatchuel, & Tempest, 2004, 2009; Starkey & Tempest, 2009). In what follows, we further develop and integrate Schein's insights into this discussion, stressing the implications for management research, practice, and education.

Management Research

The big problem that Schein sees looming ahead is that management academia will become irrelevant to the world of practice. Several others in the *Academy of Management Learning & Education* and elsewhere have made similar observations about our field (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). According to Schein, the core of the crisis is that management research is far removed from the actual practice of managing and organizing (see also Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002) and so produces over-abstract and de-contextualized organization theories that are not very useful in practice. And even when we go into organizations, Schein argues, often our goal is not really to help practitioners but rather to collect data for our own research and publication agenda. By taking and not giving, asymmetrical, low-quality relationships are being built, which makes it unlikely that practitioners will reveal what is really on their minds. In this way, not only are we unhelpful to practitioners, but also we are not meeting our original goal of creating strong, impactful theories of what goes on in organizations because our research variables often do not reflect real-life organizational problems (Schein, 1993a, 1995, 1996). Moreover, Schein sees a growing trend in universities and business schools toward even more traditional academic research with a strong quantitative and prestructured orientation away from clinical, real-life research.

What should be done about this gap between the world of management research and the world of management practice? Schein's answer is straightforward. More academics have to learn how to collaborate closely with practitioners in shared projects, fostering mutual inquiring and learning, aimed at coproducing knowledge that benefits both communities in their own way. Others have also suggested coproduction as a possible solution for the big relevancy problem we are having (e.g., Starkey, Hatchuel, & Tempest, 2009; Starkey & Tempest, 2009). What is new, however, is that Schein gives us real actionable insight into the critical condition needed for beginning and sustaining a cocreation process that is mutually beneficial. Researchers have to participate in the

client's issues as engaged helpers or partners trying to assist practitioners in becoming more skilled in solving their own problems.

What is new, however, is that Schein gives us real actionable insight into the critical condition needed for beginning and sustaining a cocreation process that is mutually beneficial.

"Co-creation then is (a) an emerging reciprocal process of status negotiation . . . and (b) a process of trust building through reciprocal calibration of the degree to which each bit of conversation is understood and accepted by the other" (Schein, 2009b: 150). As the researcher and the practitioner converse, they might gradually remove some of each other's ignorance, and, if the researcher-helper has managed to make the "client" feel able to move forward, mutual trust is built that allows them to move forward *together* (Schein, 2009b). When this process goes well, they increasingly become involved in each other's inquiry and learning process as partners (Lambrechts, Grieten, Bouwen, & Corthouts, 2009). The researcher helps the practitioner in dealing with organizational issues, and the practitioner helps the researcher by generating more valid data, thus allowing the scholar-practitioner to build relevant organization theories that can have a major impact in both practice and academia. Therefore, like others (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Starkey, Hatchuel, & Tempest, 2009), Schein advocates relevance as a necessary condition for rigor in his path to theory development.

Note that Schein does not want to contend that the academic is solely to blame for the practitioner-academic divide (see also Bennis & O'Toole, 2005: 103). Both scholars and practitioners have to learn how to become better helpers and better clients *vis-à-vis each other* (see also Beer & Nohria, 2000). As we argue below, management education might well play an important role in setting-up and facilitating these learning processes.

Management Practice

In the interview, Schein conveys an important message for management practice that must be examined carefully: "[Leaders] have to learn how to be temporarily humble in the interest of building relationships with the people on whom they are [increasingly] dependent." Given that organizations and societies live in a world that is becoming increasingly global, complex, interdependent, multi-

cultural, and multiexpert, leaders are going to find themselves more and more in situations in which (a) they do not know everything and need to ask and accept help from subordinates who are much more expert in some content area than they are, (b) subordinates ask for help in content areas in which the leaders are not experts, and (c) they are increasingly challenged to build and lead multicultural teams. However, enacting this humble helping role will be very difficult and problematic for most leaders: Not only do all the complexities of the helping process apply but also the presence of a hierarchical relationship compounds the issue.

From childhood on, we learn that interactions and relationships are made possible through mutual maintenance of "face." We gradually learn to respect the social order, reinforce it with our actions and interactions, and avoid threatening it by "misbehaving" (Goffman, 1967). As subordinates we learn how to be properly deferent, and as leaders we learn what kind of demeanor is necessary to gain and maintain the respect of those below us, thereby making relationships felt to be fair and equitable (Schein, 2009a: 23).

The problem for leaders is that, in most cultures, asking and accepting help from a subordinate or admitting not knowing the answer to a subordinate's question disrupts the normal social order. It is "countercultural," thus often "not done," and might be felt by the leader as a loss of face (Schein, 2009a) and even career threatening in highly political organizations. For these reasons, it is doubtful that a leader will display enough humility even when this is necessary to build helping and learning relationships. However, Schein is not alone in stressing the importance of leaders taking a more humble stance toward the people they lead. Edmondson (2008: 65), for example, argues that the display of humility by leaders helps them to create safe psychological environments, thereby fostering mutual learning and inquiry (see also Prokesch, 1997). Collins (2001), too, states that effective "good-to-great" leadership embodies blending personal humility (as opposed to self-promotion, arrogance, egocentrism) with an intense professional will to excel (see also Mintzberg, 2005).

Leading multicultural teams poses yet additional challenges for leaders. When they face the task of building a good working multicultural team, leaders should start in a humble inquiry mode, Schein argues. As the appropriate rules of deference and demeanor are very different across cultures (Goffman, 1967), leaders might begin by structuring a group conversation in a more *culturally neutral* dialogue format (Isaacs, 1993) in which each team member, including the leader, tells in

turn how he or she deals with important issues, starting with the management of authority and intimacy. Through suspending their culturally driven assumptions and carefully listening to oneself and to others, both the team members and the leader reduce their ignorance of each other's internal worlds and gradually build sufficient common ground that might enable them to inquire collectively (Isaacs, 1993) into how they might begin to work together. What is important in this dialogue process is that the possibility of suspending collectively remains part of the process after the group has learned to do so (Isaacs, 1993). Leaders contribute to this process by modeling humble inquiry behavior that displays the ability to suspend their preconceptions and judgments, which is necessary to develop and maintain reciprocal helping relationships (Schein, 2009a: 107). However, most leaders have never learned how to be humble inquirers and set up dialogue formats either in their cultural learning or in their formal management education.

Management Education

Several scholars agree that management education, like management research, suffers from a lack of relevance to, and impact on, the real world of managing and organizing (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Detrick, 2002; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, 2004; Starkey, Hatchuel, & Tempest, 2004, 2009; Starkey & Tempest, 2009). The reasons are many but might be roughly summarized as follows: Inexperienced students are overtrained in analyses and quantification by professors with limited real-world experience, who strictly adhere to the scientific model of science delegitimizing pluralism in knowledge-production forms, acting completely in line with what their incentive and promotion system rewards, away from practitioners, considerably neglecting the development of important interpersonal management skills highly needed in management and organization practice.

Given Schein's thoughts about management research and management practice, what has to be changed in management education becomes crystal clear. More scholars and leaders (in business and faculty) have to learn during their training periods how to become better helpers who can engage in humble inquiry as much as needed in order to build and maintain helping relationships with those upon whom they are increasingly dependent. Universities and business schools might contribute substantially to this learning goal if we

are willing to change "what and how we teach" (Bell, 2009: 574).

The core of Schein's argument is that more professors and management-educators should engage in constructing and facilitating experiential-learning processes in their training programs and courses that develop essential helping attitudes and skills (see also Detrick, 2002; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002). Like others (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Detrick, 2002; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002), Schein stresses that much more attention needs to be devoted to building in internships during the training period of future leaders and faculty. What Schein adds, however, is the clarification of the necessary learning experiences and processes that participants have to go through in order to become better helpers. Instead of faculty making it easy for them, being "student-friendly" and providing the candidate organizations for an internship, Schein stresses the importance of not patronizing students but letting them have the experience of struggling and working through ambiguity as a necessary condition for experiential learning on how to be humble instead of arrogant (see also Detrick, 2002; Mintzberg, 2005; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002). If an extended internship is not possible due to time constraints, Schein calls upon our ingenuity to invent more experiential-learning exercises such as "The Empathy Walk" (Schein, 1996), which invites the participants to use their creativity (see also Detrick, 2002) in order to cross and bridge social status lines in an empathic, open, humble inquiry mode. Schein also encourages us to learn how to set up dialogue formats with our multicultural student groups and experiment with constructing learning events using the Internet.

Note that going through these kinds of learning experiences and building helping attitudes and skills in the process are important for both the future leaders and the faculty. As our world becomes increasingly global, complex, diverse, and interdependent, leaders are challenged to become better helpers in their work with subordinates, colleagues, cross-functional and cross-cultural groups, external stakeholders, and . . . scholars, and faculty face the task of becoming better helpers in building interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research groups, facilitating the learning processes of undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and postgraduate students, and . . . setting up collaborative work with practitioners to coproduce knowledge that matters for both.

All these learning experiences can be supported and deepened by relevant theoretical material in course sessions in which learning experiences are shared and inquired into combined with paper as-

signments aimed at explicating the most important learning lessons (e.g., Schein, 1996). As do others (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Starkey & Tempest, 2009), Schein advocates inserting more content from the humanities into our curricula. However, for Schein this content (e.g., face work, social order, communication as relational, contextual and rule-driven in cultures) always has to be relevant and strongly connected to the shifting needs and challenges of the world of management and organizing. Central for Schein in all of this is that we need to learn or relearn to relate to the world around us through a spirit of open humble inquiry, creativity, and genuine curiosity (see also Starkey & Tempest, 2009).

Engaging in Further Discussion and Action

We agree with Starkey and Tempest (2009: 576–577) that "there is a pressing need to open ourselves up to new ideas, to new images of possibility, to new design principles . . . upon which to build." Given the current problems and issues we face in management research and education, Schein's ideas and insights have the potential to become building blocks for a more practice-close impactful management research and education field.

The major accreditation associations (AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS) and most universities and business schools worldwide underscore, at least in their espoused theories (Argyris, 1985), practice-closeness and relevance as key aspects of impactful research (e.g., AACSB, 2008). The challenge remains, however, to convert these words into meaningful deeds. Moving in the direction that Schein suggests, therefore, will not be easy in the field of management research and education due to the current institutionalized practices (e.g., Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002) that block change (e.g., the current incentive and promotion system only endorsing discipline-based "practice-distant" scholarship).

It could well be that our enthusiasm for Schein's ideas has led us to give insufficient attention to their complexity and potential limitations. However, we know from experience, and our colleagues have repeatedly reminded us that the core concepts of helping and humble inquiry are multifaceted, challenging, and replete with fields of tension. For example, the notion of "accessing one's ignorance" is complicated. It is a basic "way of being with the other," always trying, but never able, to reach and understand fully the other person. There will always remain things that one is not aware of, that one does not know that one is ignorant of, or even that one cannot understand.

Hence, making errors is inherent to the process. The only possibility helpers have is trying to be as receptive and responsive as possible to whatever the situation and relationship brings, building up awareness of their emotional makeup and readiness to change, the goal always being to help the client to the best of one's ability. Helping on the short versus long term is another challenging tension that must be dealt with. For example, helpers may suppose that they are being helpful at one moment only to discover later that their help actually eliminated important learning opportunities for the client. Nevertheless, working with tensions is inherent in working with human systems. They cannot be completely resolved; they can only be taken as explicit subject matter into the reciprocal attunement and learning process between the helper and the client.

Furthermore, Schein's concepts are not static and prescriptive by nature but rather dynamic and multilayered. Their evolving meaning and significance only comes alive in the specific relationships and practices that helpers and clients develop in their specific contexts. Therefore, we call for more research in our field that inquires into these practices in order to capture the complexities, subtleties, and boundary conditions of Schein's concepts in a diversity of interactive settings ranging from the interpersonal group to the interorganizational and multistakeholder collaboration level; in hierarchical versus nonhierarchical contexts; in everyday forms of organization and work versus mutually negotiated learning settings (e.g., "cultural islands"); and across cultures (e.g., to what extent is the dialogue format, indeed, culturally neutral?).

However, in some emerging fields, notably ecology, sustainability, and large-system innovation and learning, interdisciplinary and multistakeholder inquiry teams are being built (e.g., Senge, Lichtenstein, Kaeufer, Bradbury, & Carroll, 2007; Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit at Case Western Reserve University), driven by the joint desire to collaborate in order to seek and implement solutions for a variety of pressing complex societal messes (Ackoff, 1974). In these fields, the helping principles of Schein are currently being further developed, contextualized, and integrated in order to enact new cocreation forms to which multiple stakeholders and logics contribute. The question remains of whether the field of management research and education is willing and able to open up to these new possibilities and contribute in a humble but engaged way or whether it will leave it to others to do so.

REFERENCES

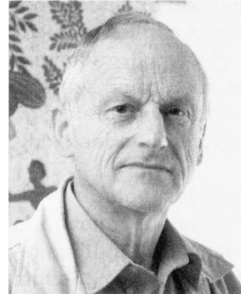
- AACSB International. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. 2008. *Final report of the AACSB International Taskforce. Impact of research*. Tampa, FL: AACSB.
- Ackoff, R. 1974. *Redesigning the future: A systems approach to societal problems*. New York: Wiley.
- Argyris, C. 1985. *Strategy, change and defensive routines*. Boston, MA: Pitman.
- Beer, M., & Nohria, N. 2000. *Breaking the code of change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Bell, M. P. 2009. Introduction: Changing the world through what and how we teach. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 8: 574–575.
- Bennis, W., & O'Toole, J. 2005. How business schools lost their way. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(5): 96–104.
- Bradbury, H., & Lichtenstein, B. M. B. 2000. Relationality in organizational research: Exploring the space between. *Organization Science*, 11: 551–564.
- Coghlan, D., & Shani, A. B. (Eds.). 2009. The challenges of the scholar-practitioner [Special Issue in honor of Edgar H. Schein]. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 45(1).
- Collins, J. 2001. Level 5 leadership: The triumph of humility and fierce resolve. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(7/8): 136–146.
- Coutu, D. 2002. The anxiety of learning. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(3): 100–106.
- Detrick, G. 2002. Russell L. Ackoff. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1: 56–63.
- Edmondson, A. C. 2008. The competitive imperative of learning. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(7/8): 60–67.
- Edmondson, A. C., Bohmer, R. M., & Pisano, G. P. 2001. Disruptive routines: Team learning and new technology implementation in hospitals. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46: 685–716.
- Goffman, E. 1967. *Interaction ritual*. New York: Aldine.
- Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture consequences: International differences in work-related values*. London: Sage.
- Isaacs, W. N. 1993. Taking flight: Dialogue, collective thinking, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22(2): 24–39.
- Kolb, D. A., Rubin, I. M., & McIntyre, J. M. 1971. *Organizational psychology: An experiential approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lambrechts, F., Grieten, S., Bouwen, R., & Corthouts, F. 2009. Process consultation revisited. Taking a relational practice perspective. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 45(1): 39–58.
- Mintzberg, H. 2005. The magic number seven—Plus or minus a couple of managers. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4: 244–247.
- Mintzberg, H., & Gosling, J. 2002. Educating managers beyond borders. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1: 64–76.
- Pfeffer, J. 2005. Why do bad management theories persist? A comment on Ghoshal. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4: 96–100.
- Pfeffer, J., & Fong, C. 2002. The end of business schools? Less success than meets the eye. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1: 78–95.

- Pfeffer, J., & Fong, C. 2004. The business school 'business': Some lessons from the US experience. *Journal of Management Studies*, 41: 1501-1520.
- Prokesch, S. 1997. Unleashing the power of learning: An interview with British Petroleum's John Browne. *Harvard Business Review*, 75(5): 146-168.
- Schein, E. H. 1961. The mechanisms of change. In W. G. Bennis, K. D. Benne, & R. Chin (Eds.), *The planning of change*: 98-107. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Schein, E. H. 1969. *Process consultation Volume I: Its role in organization development*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Schein, E. H. 1990. A general philosophy of helping: Process consultation. *Sloan Management Review*, 31(3): 57-64.
- Schein, E. H. 1993a. The academic as artist: Personal and professional roots. In A. Bedeian (Ed.), *Management laureates: A collection of autobiographical essays*, 3: 31-62. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Schein, E. H. 1993b. On dialogue, culture, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22(2): 40-51.
- Schein, E. H. 1995. Process consultation, action research and clinical inquiry: Are they the same? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 10(6): 14-19.
- Schein, E. H. 1996. Kurt Lewin's change theory in the field and in the classroom: Notes toward a model of managed learning. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 9(1): 27-47.
- Schein, E. H. 1999. *Process consultation revisited: Building the helping relationship*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Schein, E. H. 2003. *DEC is dead, long live DEC: Lessons on innovation, technology, and the business gene*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Schein, E. H. 2006. From brainwashing to organizational therapy: A conceptual and empirical journey in search of 'systemic' health and a general model of change dynamics. A drama in five acts. *Organization Studies*, 27: 287-301.
- Schein, E. H. 2009a. *Helping: How to offer, give, and receive help*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Schein, E. H. 2009b. Reactions, reflections, rejoinders, and a challenge. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 45(1): 141-158.
- Schein, E. H., & Bennis, W. 1965. *Personal and organizational change through group methods*. New York: Wiley.
- Schein, E. H., Schneider, L., & Barker, C. 1961. *Coercive persuasion*. New York: Norton Publishing Company.
- Senge, P., Lichtenstein, B., Kaeufer, K., Bradbury, H., & Carroll, J. 2007. Collaborating for systemic change. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 48(2): 44-53.
- Starkey, K., Hatchuel, A., & Tempest, S. 2004. Rethinking the business school. *Journal of Management Studies*, 41: 1521-1531.
- Starkey, K., Hatchuel, A., & Tempest, S. 2009. Management research and the new logics of discovery and engagement. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46: 547-558.
- Starkey, K., & Tempest, S. 2009. The winter of our discontent: The design challenge for business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 8: 576-586.
- Quick, J., & Gavin, J. 2000. The next frontier: Edgar Schein on organizational therapy. *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(1): 31-44.



Frank J. Lambrechts is assistant professor of organizational change & learning at the KIZOK Research Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, University of Hasselt (Belgium). Lambrechts received his PhD in social sciences from the University of Tilburg (the Netherlands). His research and teaching interests focus on the nature and quality of relationships that shape trust, leadership, co-ownership and joint learning in

organizational change and learning contexts. He has a special interest in how these relational dynamics play out in family firms and boards of directors. He is actively involved in executive postgraduate training on people and leadership development.



René Bouwen is full professor emeritus of organizational psychology and group dynamics at the University of Leuven (Belgium). His main research fields have been group processes, organizational conflict, innovation, and change consultation. Today he focuses on relational practices and process learning in multiparty and interorganizational collaboration in social and ecological sustainability projects. Relational construction-

ism and appreciative inquiry are guiding principles to embody actionable knowledge.



Styn Grieten is assistant professor of organization development at the Human Relations Research Group (Economics and Management) at the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel (HUB) in Belgium. Grieten's research focuses on organization development, process consultation, and sustainable collaboration. He is affiliated with the Center for Organization Studies at the University of Leuven.



Jolien P. Huybrechts is a PhD student at the KIZOK Research Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of Hasselt (Belgium). Her PhD is situated in the field of family business, management, and corporate governance. She specifically focuses on intangible resources that provide family firms with a sustainable competitive advantage.



Edgar Schein is the Sloan Fellows Professor of Management Emeritus at the MIT Sloan School of Management. He received his PhD in social psychology from Harvard in 1952, worked at the Walter Reed Institute of Research for 4 years, and then joined MIT where he taught until 2005. He has published extensively in *Organizational Psychology*, 3rd ed. (1980), *Process Consultation Revisited* (1999); career dynamics (*Career Anchors*, 3rd ed., 2006); or-

ganizational culture texts (*Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed., 2010; *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide*, 2nd ed., 2009); and analyses of Singapore's economic miracle (*Strategic Pragmatism*, 1996); and Digital Equipment Corp.'s rise and fall (*DEC is Dead; Long Live DEC*, 2003). He continues to consult and recently has published a book on the general theory and practice of giving and receiving help (*Helping*, 2009). He is the 2009 recipient of the Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner Award of the Academy of Management.