Lost in Translation, Recovered in Conversation? Leadership and Social Media

Lost in Translation, Recovered in Conversation?
Leadership and Social Media

Leah Tomkins, Incoming Social Media Editor for *Leadership*
Twitter handle: @leadership_jour

Accepted for publication in *Leadership* September 2020

Abstract

'Twitter is not a technology, it's a conversation. And it's happening with or without you.'[i]

As *Leadership* takes its first steps into the realm of social media, we should think about why we are doing this and what we might hope to achieve. Far from being merely a decision about which platforms and tools to use to advertise our work, the establishment of a social media presence is a spur to reflect on the qualities of our relationships both within and beyond our community of authors, readers, reviewers and editors. In this essay, I link our approach to social media to broader concerns about the state of our discipline, our alienation from practice, and our responsibilities as both scholars and practitioners of leadership. Although framed in relation to social media, I hope these reflections have resonance for our involvement in social, political and institutional commentary more generally, even amongst those who have no interest in Twitter *per se*!

Key words

Social media; leadership; academic leadership; academic/practitioner gap; narcissism; engagement; REF; impact

A Crisis in Leadership Studies?

There are growing laments about the state of our corner of academia, whether classed as management studies (Tourish, 2020), leadership studies (Spoelstra, Butler and Delaney, 2016), or social sciences (Alvesson, Gabriel and Paulsen, 2017). Harley (2019) suggests that many people enter academia to ‘make a difference’, and suffer a crisis of confidence when they discover that they not only fail to make that difference within the world at large, but often make little difference within the narrow confines of the discipline, either. Much of the anguish centres on what Parker calls ‘the professionalization of academic labour… exemplified by the sort of person who knows the impact factors of the journals that they publish in, or who will write any old shit with anyone in order that they hear other people calling them professor’ (Dunne, Harney, Tinker and Parker, 2008, p.274).

Tourish’s (2020) recent polemic on the triumph of nonsense in management studies focuses on three key problems: The inaccessibility of academic writing; the torturous process of journal reviews; and the predominance of theory, with a particular pressure to develop *new* theory. These issues are interrelated, he suggests, because writing comprehensibly might be perceived to diminish a paper’s claim to serious theory development and theoretical ‘contribution’. Furthermore, any elegance or freshness that a paper might have started out with is often beaten out of it as authors bend, stretch and distort their arguments to incorporate reviewers’ ‘suggestions’.

These problems do not reflect a straightforward split between mainstream, positivist work and alternative critical and/or philosophical approaches. Scholars on both sides of this divide are guilty of writing that is divorced from the realities of organisational experience (both their own and other people’s) and accessible only to those within their own sub-disciplinary silo. One of the consequences of this malaise is the creation of genuine imposters, who ‘use big words to create the illusion of theory development, produce tautologous hypotheses, and pray that outsiders will be too baffled and bored by your prose to see through what you are doing. Given enough practice, you may even fool yourself’ (Tourish, 2020, p.106).

The predominance of theory is the springboard for my reflections, because this is presented as a problem mostly because it discourages work that might have an *impact on practice* (Hambrick, 2007). I use a broad understanding of the term ‘practice’ here to include the many constituencies who have a stake and/or an interest in what happens under the aegises of ‘leadership’. These include professional bodies such as chartered institutes, trade associations, trade unions, policy makers, social and political commentators, lobbyists, law makers, community groups, and indeed, society at large. This broader take on ‘practice’ is derived from the UK Higher Education Regulator’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) terminology of ‘impact on practice’ as a short-cut for the notion (and expectation) that our work should have relevance beyond academia.[ii] In REF terms, an ‘impact on practice’ means ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’.[iii] Therefore, when I talk about improving our relationships with ‘practice’, I mean more than just those who identify as, or aspire to be, leaders. I read the REF’s ‘impact on practice’ as ‘resonance beyond academia’.

When I talk about the particular way in which ‘practitioners’ are conceptualised, I focus mostly on those who see some or all of their role as constituting ‘leadership’. Here, too, I adopt a relatively inclusive approach, that is, I see many people in organisations, institutions and communities as ‘practitioners’ of leadership, not just an elite few. This view reflects key themes in leadership as practice (Carrol, Levy and Richmond, 2008); leaderful practice (Raelin, 2011); relational leadership (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011); various forms of ‘leadership in the plural’ (Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012, p.211); and organisation as a space of multiple, simultaneous experiences of both ‘leadership’ and ‘followership’ (Jaser, 2020). In contemporary Western organisations, where work is organized by project and matrix as much as by hierarchy, many people are leadership ‘practitioners’ at least some of the time.

As I will suggest in this essay, my point about both ‘practice’ and ‘practitioners’ is that we do not really understand who or what they are. We use the terms quite loosely to refer to a world beyond academia, some of which is in reasonably sharp focus, whilst other aspects are more fuzzy. When we draw on the REF’s mnemonic of ‘impact on practice’, this is often a vague hope that something of what we have said, written or done might stick, rather than a targeted understanding of who might be interested in, or affected by, our research - and why. In short, my position in this essay is that the problem of a predominance of leadership theory is enmeshed in a profound alienation from leadership practice - understood in the broader sense outlined above. This is exacerbated by the construction of relations between academia and other sectors in terms of a ‘gap’, whether between theory and practice, between scholars and ‘practitioners’, or simply between us and the rest-of-the-world.

Mind the Gap!

The 'gap' has been worrying organisational scholars for decades (Thompson, 1956; Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). Much of the debate centres on perceived differences between academia and other sectors - differences in values, objectives, attitudes to knowledge, time-scales for addressing problems, methods, reward systems, etc. Discussions emphasise different aspects of the problem created by such differences: Some see it as an issue of knowledge transfer, that is, a 'lost in translation' problem; whilst for others it is primarily a matter of knowledge production, that is, a 'lost before translation' problem (Shapiro, Kirkman and Courtney, 2007). It is significant, however, that this debate is conducted mostly amongst academics, rather than with or amongst people in other sectors (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014). In a sense, the very construction of the problem reinforces the problem.

My own take on the 'gap' is as follows. As a former 'practitioner' who never once heard that label being deployed or used it to describe herself, I wish we would resist using these poles to differentiate between academic and other perspectives, and explore alternative ways of framing our cross-sector relationships through metaphors other than the 'gap'. My own experience sometimes feels like one of 'poacher-turned-game-keeper' and at other times like 'game-keeper-turned-poacher', and the similarities, overlaps and relationships between these perspectives and interests feel more interesting and illuminating than the differences, especially where they demand and/or cultivate the same or similar skills. Where others see fundamental differences in philosophy or ontology, such that the 'gap' can never be fully bridged (Dipboye, 2014), I tend to see differences in emphasis and/or convention.

For instance, Bartunek and Rynes (2014) highlight that people outside academia do not usually open their reports with a literature review, whereas academics invariably do. They see this as a difference in the *logic* of inquiry, whereas I would argue that such logic *is* present in typical business and government reports, but manifests more overtly as making the case for the report, or for the need for a piece of work, or the now somewhat discredited discourse of 'the case for change'. To my mind, academic literature reviews and non-academic report introductions serve a very similar purpose, namely to provide context and rationale for the work; acknowledge what has already been done in a particular area, and which can be built upon; and prepare the reader for what is to follow. We may use different information sources and formats for this, but I do not see this as a fundamental difference in the *logic* of our arguments. Indeed, if we want to move past formulaic 'gap-spotting' as justification for research (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011), we might benefit from adopting *more* of a 'practitioner' mindset here, and develop more critical awareness of the politics of the construction of these ‘gaps’ in leadership theorising (Wilson, 2016).[iv] Our literature reviews may pretend that we are librarians, painstakingly cataloguing the previous literature on a topic. In reality, I suggest, we are more like trial lawyers, carefully emphasising and extending those arguments that serve our own purposes and glossing over the rest.

I am not, of course, saying that there are *no* differences between academia and other sectors, institutions and domains of society. Rather, my argument is that over-stating these differences may be causing us problems. Within leadership studies in particular, I believe that the construction and reinforcement of the theory/practice ‘gap’ encourages us to Other leaders in the world at large. And of course, when we Other people, we tend to simplify and denigrate them, emphasising how different they are to us. This may be at least partially because most occupants of leadership roles that academics encounter fall into one of two categories; leaders of academic institutions and leaders in the public, often political, domain. Both groups are easy to criticise, caricature and lampoon; the former because the leadership of academic institutions is often woeful, and it is hardly surprising if leadership scholars wish to distance themselves from these examples[v]; the latter because public leaders are often treated like pantomime characters, and we make little effort to try to understand them as human beings or reflect honestly on what we would have done in their shoes. In other words, I suggest that leaders - especially decent leaders - are strange to many leadership scholars because of a lack of exposure and familiarity, and that this is exacerbated by discourses of the ‘gap’.

So, my provocative explanation for why we resort to theory is because we are *afraid* of practice and, in particular, leadership ‘practitioners’. We do not really understand who or what they are, so it is easier to simplify them into tools, checklists or recipes for leadership; turn them into scapegoats we can blame for the wrongs of the world; and/or airbrush them out of leadership and organisational theory altogether. That inward focus that keeps us hidden in our institutional shells, locked in the metrics and citations battles we loathe, can perhaps also be seen as a place of safety, albeit a perverse one - a variant of the ‘better the devil you know’ argument.

Unless we engage regularly and open-mindedly with leaders outside our own sector, especially good, or at least adequate, ones, we risk reinforcing an assumption that what passes across the theory/practice ‘gap’ is basically one-way traffic, and that our challenge is about what we can teach them, not what they can teach us. This is a misplaced and arrogant assumption, even if it stems from anxiety and fear of inadequacy. In short, the tendency to frame our relationships with practice as a matter of knowledge production and/or knowledge transfer means that we limit the possibilities of knowledge acquisition, absorption, development, challenge and co-creation. And without two-way, indeed, multi-way traffic, we will continue to address questions that few people outside academia think are an issue, let alone one on which it is worth spending much time or effort. We will miss the tide changes in how leadership is being practised, contested and experienced.

Ourselves as Leaders

Moreover, an Othering of leaders 'out there' distracts us from our own responsibilities and possibilities as leaders. Except for perhaps the earliest of early-career scholars, we have a significant amount of agency and choice in our work and our behaviour. And if we believe that at least an element of leadership - both its pluses and its minuses - could and should be dispersed throughout an institution or community, we should surely see *ourselves* as leadership 'practitioners'. Our role - our opportunity - is to try to understand and shape/reshape the world and role-model a better relationship with it through what we teach and what we write, but also through how we behave, especially in our relationships with others. This is how we say we want to 'make a difference'; and what is 'leadership' if not that? I agree with Harley's (2019) framing of the crisis in academia as a crisis of leadership, and *that includes us*. Yet we feel much more comfortable excoriating leaders 'out there' for their failings than we do holding the mirror up to ourselves.

To give an example: Much of academic life revolves around reviewing, reacting to and giving feedback on other people's writing, and having others do the same with our writing. Most academic relationships, I would suggest, revolve around the emotional and power dynamics of this experience. When we read the work of others, we process and evaluate it according to our own filters, frameworks, assumptions and preferences. Relating what we encounter to what we already know is central to theories of human perception and memory, going back to Plato, if not earlier. It is not just an issue of intellect or cognition, but vital for the coherence and continuity of our sense of self (Warnock, 1987). If we could not do this, we would have to interpret every word, every idea, and every argument as if we were encountering it for the first time. As a consequence of this, however, the more successful someone else's work feels, the more likely it is that our *own* criteria are being invoked and satisfied, i.e., that it is close to how we would have written it ourselves. And on the flipside, when we criticise other people's work, what we are often implicitly saying is 'that is not how I would have written it'.

Within the context of academic relationships, Eda Ulus and I have explored this phenomenon as a form of unconscious narcissism, that is, a lack of awareness that what we think is an engagement in someone else's work, and indeed an engagement *in relationship*, is in fact an obsession with ourselves (Tomkins and Ulus, 2015). Academic readers and reviewers are especially prone to this type of narcissism, facilitated by the use of 'tracked changes' through which a reviewer can take charge of an author's words. By the time one's authorial efforts get through such reviews, they no longer feel like the words belong to us (Cederström and Spicer, 2017). This appropriation-through-review suggests a lack of critical self-reflection on the part of the reviewer, made all the more ironic by the emphasis placed on critical reflection in business school education (Tomkins and Ulus, 2015).

If the *only* mode of feedback we give is remedial and appropriative (and I venture that this is all too often the case), we have an everyday instance of us not practising what we preach. When we *theorise* leadership and organisational relations, we highlight the need for a balance between direction and facilitation, between correction and empowerment, being steering and enabling, etc. We preach that the objective of an encounter is not always to get to the 'right answer', but is often more concerned with encouraging (or at least not destroying) the originator's sense of ownership of, and pride in, an idea. These are well-established themes in the more relational literature on authentic leadership and caring leadership, for instance, as well as in the literatures on coaching, mentoring, change management, marketing and communication, education in general and leadership development in particular. Indeed, the entire 'engagement' discourse (student engagement, employee engagement, stakeholder engagement, citizen engagement, patient engagement, etc) may attract a certain cynicism, but it contains the seeds of an important principle, namely that the best ideas often emerge when *other* people have a say and a stake in them, rather than being dictated from the top, from the centre, or by a handful of the experts. In our own day-to-day activities, however, we often ignore these ownership dynamics and their centrality to effective and satisfying leadership relations. We quash and distort each other's work, attempting to correct it into something closer to what we ourselves might have written. As a sector, we have a great deal to learn or re-learn about leadership if we are to bridge our own 'gap'.

Further alienating us from practice is our distortion of impact into 'Impact', that is, the way in which the REF system in the UK (and, I am guessing, its equivalents elsewhere) is turning the notion of 'making a difference' into something so bureaucratised, inept and awful that being an 'Impact Case Lead', i.e., the leader of any project which seems to be resonating with people beyond academia, has become something to dread, rather than celebrate. If we were already a little suspicious of, or unsettled by, leaders in the world at large, then the Kafkaesque industrialisation of the process of collecting, classifying and evaluating ‘evidence’ of our ‘Impact’ is enough to send even the most practice-orientated of scholars scuttling back into the ivory tower of theory. If the journal review process is quashing both the joy and the ownership of our theoretical papers, then our sector’s approach to ‘Impact’ is making great strides towards a similar sense of dismay in our more practice-orientated work. The choice of the word ‘Impact’ does not help, with its connotations of one force smashing into or colliding with another - like a car crash. I am not sure that is the kind of ‘making a difference’ any of us wants.

Pulling these ideas together, I am suggesting that more mutually interesting, illuminating and enjoyable relationships between people in and out of academia are possible and desirable, especially if we focus on what we have in common, rather than what differentiates us. We need leaders to be less exotic and strange to us to help us come out of the shell of academia, where the problems highlighted here are allowed to fester. And to be blunt, we should be more open to what leaders in other sectors can teach or remind us about leadership, and challenge any assumption that the education or consciousness-raising only goes one way. Lessoning the grip of, and on, leadership theory requires developing a healthier relationship with leadership practice, both other people’s and our own.

Emphasising the ‘gap’ between two behemoth constituencies of scholars and ‘practitioners’ simplifies and distorts the study of leadership. It creates an impression that the only people who conceptualise and critique leadership are academics, and the only people who put these concepts into action and hence invite this critique are ‘practitioners’. This downplays both our own responsibilities and inadequacies as leaders and the everyday work of conceptualisation and critique undertaken by leaders and managers as ‘practical authors’ (Cunliffe, 2001).

There are, of course, examples of exceptional leaders in academia, both those in formal leadership roles and others who simply recognise that what they do and how they do it has a profound effect on others. Such leaders teach, talk and write about leadership with a sensitivity to the demands and challenges of all institutional relationships constructed around differences in power, expertise, experience and/or fortune. There is a consistency between their leadership theorising and their leadership behaviour, and an acceptance of their duty to monitor this consistency. But frankly, there are not as many such leaders as there should be. And for this to be the case in leadership studies *of all disciplines* is an irony that ought to concern us more.

How Might Social Media Help (or Hinder)?

What does any of this have to do with social media?! How might decisions about our social media presence relate to concerns about the state of academia in general and leadership studies in particular? What is the link between impact (and indeed ‘Impact’) and the conversations we have and want to have with people beyond our own sector? Are we jumping on the social media bandwagon because other journals are doing it, or could we pause and consider how our use of social media might both reflect and shape our relationships with the world at large and those we purport to be studying?

As the quote at the start of this essay suggests, social media can be approached as more than a set of tools and technologies which intrigue and/or terrify us. Schlagwein and Hu (2017) argue that the key question with social media is not *that* one has a presence, but rather, *why* and *how* this presence is adapted, developed and deployed for particular purposes. Whilst their analysis is geared towards individual organisations’ social media strategies, I think it also helps to frame our thinking on what we want as a community of authors, readers, reviewers and editors of *Leadership*.

Schlagwein and Hu (2017) connect the question of social media to individual, collective and organisational learning. They propose that the type and degree of social media use can influence an organisation’s (or community’s) performance in terms of gathering and enriching knowledge, not just disseminating and publicising it. This reinforces my main proposal, namely that we *could* use social media to source, test, refine and enjoy our ideas, not just promote them once they have been baked into papers accepted for publication. In other words, how we approach social media will reflect whether we see leadership education and ‘thought leadership’ as one-way traffic from academia into practice, or are interested in forging relationships of mutual influence, insight and learning.

Building on Schlagwein and Hu (2017), table one depicts five main uses of social media.

Mode	Description
Broadcast	• One-direction dissemination or promotion • Can be used to signal expertise • Content is usually highly curated
Knowledge management	• A formalisation of knowledge and ideas • Can be used as a kind of audit trail

	• Can turn implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge
Dialogue	• Conversation, not just dissemination or promotion • Can be used to test resonance and get feedback on ideas • Contributions can integrate expertise and experience
Collaboration	• Facilitates not just communication, but also collective action • Can co-ordinate activities across organisational boundaries • An informal form of 'project management'
Sociability	• Can foster feelings of belonging within a community • Can build a sense of community 'personality' • Useful when community members are spatially distant and/or institutionally isolated

Table One: Social media uses

As we establish our social media presence as the community of *Leadership*, our first instinct is probably to use the platform(s) to publicise work when it gets accepted into the journal, i.e., Broadcast. This is how many other journals seem to be using social media. However, if we *only* do this, it may exacerbate the problem of an obsessive focus on citations metrics, beloved of academic promotions committees, but hardly the main indicator of whether our work is being read, let alone reflected or acted upon. This is because Broadcast-mode tweets (or equivalent) are probably noticed mostly by fellow academics, and any further circulation/re-tweeting is more an act of solidarity than the result of a close reading of the work. The publication of a new academic article is simply not 'a story' that interests many people beyond our immediate circle of friends, co-authors and people we are supposed to impress and/or cite on particular topics. If we want to move into the public space and explore issues of mutual interest, we need to accept that our own preoccupations and achievements hardly cause a ripple on the waves of social commentary, and look instead to other modes beyond Broadcast, especially Dialogue, Collaboration and Sociability.

As emphasised earlier, the notion that effective relationships involve listening as much as talking is a well-trodden theme in the literatures on leadership and organisational relations, as well as discussions of coaching, mentoring, change management, marketing, education in general and leadership education in particular. If the 'engagement' discourse is to have any real meaning for us, it is as a reminder to receive, not just transmit; learn, not just instruct; enable, not just direct; and explore, not just promote. Social media offer us a space to do all of these things if we choose to use them in this way. And in the process of forging more interesting connections, we might just feel a little better about our work and identity as scholars.

A Call to Action for the Community of *Leadership*

Moving beyond Broadcast into more reciprocal forms of conversation may help us to focus less on ourselves as distinct from 'practitioners', lamenting the fact that we are not 'making a difference' yet complicit in turning citations metrics and impact factors into the taken-for-granted way the 'game' has to be played. The way we approach social media - and other conversations in the public forum - might help or hinder our own practices of leadership, and remind us to at least *try* to practise some of what we preach.

I am not for one second suggesting that *all* our work should be orientated towards impact, even genuine impact as opposed to REF 'Impact'. Nor, of course, am I suggesting that social media presence is the only way (or even the best way) to nudge our discussions from Broadcast towards Dialogue, Collaboration and Sociability. Indeed, our claiming social media space brings its own risks and exclusions: It may help to foster some conversations whilst marginalising others, not least with colleagues in non-English speaking countries and those without the desire or means to engage with the technology. It also involves exposure to the nastier side of public debate, such as trolling and cyber-bullying. But these caveats aside: For those interested in joining the social media conversation with and on behalf of *Leadership*, we might just be able to craft some interesting connections and worry less about impact (let alone 'Impact').

In short, the establishment of our social media presence is an opportunity to reflect on how we write and what we write about. Furthermore, we might review *why* we write and who we are writing *for*. If we only write for 'Impact' and for the REF assessment committee, then our relationship with practice will remain sterile, inconsistent and Othered - one-way traffic at best. Paradoxically, the increasing taken-for-grantedness of the REF discourse of 'impact on practice' might deepen our alienation from what is happening in the world at large. If we only use social media to Broadcast, we should not be surprised if nobody really listens to us, let alone wants to talk to us. If we nail 'the why' and perhaps expand our horizons on 'the who', better answers on 'how' and 'what' may follow.

When the Twitter account for *Leadership* is launched with the October 2020 issue, please consider how to use it to enrich the dynamic of our relationships with practice.[vi] When you think about tweeting and re-tweeting, about who and what to tag and hashtag, and who to try to bring into the conversation, you have more power and potential than you may realise. Broadcast alone is not going to give our ideas wings, but dialogue, empathy, respect, imagination and curiosity just might. If we want to ‘make a difference’ in the leadership space, we should pay attention to how others are crafting leadership matters into newsworthy stories and to the dynamics that give (or do not give) *their* ideas wings. Approaching social media as discussion, not advertising, might give us new insights, new partnerships, and new motivation to write about the things that inspired us to come into leadership studies in the first place. What has been lost in translation might just be recoverable in conversation.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Deborah Brewis, outgoing social media editor at *Management Learning*, for showing us what social media can do for an academic community, and for reminding me that there are many, many ways in which ideas and perspectives can be lost before, during and after translation.

References

Alvesson, M., Gabriel, Y. & Paulsen, R. (2017). *Return to meaning: A social science with something to say*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bartunek, J.M. & Rynes, S.L. (2014). Academics and practitioners are alike and unlike: The paradoxes of academic–practitioner relationships. *Journal of Management, 40*(5), 118-1201.

Carroll, B., Levy, L. & Richmond, D. (2008). Leadership as practice: Challenging the competency paradigm. *Leadership, 4(4),* 363-379.

Cederström, C. & Spicer, A. (2017). Going public. *Organization*, *24*(5), 708-711.

Cunliffe, A.L. (2001). Managers as practical authors: Reconstructing our understanding of management practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, *38*(3), 351-371.

Cunliffe A.L. & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations, 64*(11), 1425-1449.

Denis, J.L., Langley, A. & Sergi, V. (2012). Leadership in the plural. *Academy of Management Annals*, *6*(1), 211-283.

Dipboye, R.L. (2014). Bridging the gap in organizational behavior: A review of Jone Pearce's Organizational Behavior: Real Research for Real Managers. *Education*, *10*, 222-236.

Dunne, S., Harney, S., Tinker, T. & Parker, M. (2008). Discussing the role of the business school. *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*, *8*(3), 271-293.

Hambrick, D. (2007). The field of management's devotion to theory: Too much of a good thing? *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(6), 1346-1352.

Harley, B. (2019). Confronting the crisis of confidence in management studies: Why senior scholars need to stop setting a bad example. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *18*(2), 286-297.

Huber, C. (2019). Kafka's 'Before the Law': The participation of the subject in its subjectification. *Organization Studies*, *40*(12), 1823-1840.

Jaser, Z. (Ed.) (2020). *The Connecting Leader: Serving Concurrently as a Leader and a Follower.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Raelin, J. (2011). From leadership-as-practice to leaderful practice. *Leadership*, *7*(2), 195-211.

Sandberg, J. & Alvesson, M. (2011). Ways of constructing research questions: gap-spotting or problematization? *Organization*, *18*(1), 23-44.

Schlagwein, D. & Hu, M. (2017). How and why organisations use social media: five use types and their relation to absorptive capacity. *Journal of Information Technology*, *32*(2), 194-209.

Shapiro, D., Kirkman, B. & Courtney, H. (2007). Perceived causes and solutions of the translation problem in management research. *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(2), 249-266.

Spoelstra, S., Butler, N. & Delaney, H. (2016). Never let an academic crisis go to waste: Leadership Studies in the wake of journal retractions. *Leadership*, *12*(4), 383-397.

Thompson, J.D. (1956). On building an administrative science. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *1*(1), 102-111.

Tomkins, L. & Ulus, E. (2015). Is Narcissism Undermining Critical Reflection in Our Business Schools? *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 14(4),* 595-606.

Tourish, D. (2020). The triumph of nonsense in management studies. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *19*(1), 99-109.

Tranfield, D. & Starkey, K. (1998). The nature, social organization and promotion of management research: Towards policy. *British Journal of Management*, *9*(4), 341-353.

Warnock, M. (1987). *Memory*. London: Faber.

Wilson, S. (2016). *Thinking differently about leadership: A critical history of leadership studies*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

[i] https://www.azquotes.com/author/64232-Charlene_Li

[ii] The UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the periodic assessment of academics' outputs, designed to:

- Promote accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment.
- Provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use within the HE sector and for public information.
- Inform the selective allocation of funding for research.

See https://www.ref.ac.uk/about/what-is-the-ref/

[iii] Although the REF is UK-specific, I understand that its reputation reaches beyond these shores as 'the paradigmatic example of performance measurement in academia' (Huber, 2019, p.1837).

[iv] Whether gap-as-chasm or gap-as-hole, gaps do not actually serve us very well. Not only do they reinforce difference and/or defect, they also tend to position the 'gap-spotter' as the possessor of superior insight, further limiting the prospects for mutual listening and learning.

[v] It is often said that academics are impossible to manage, because of the semi-autonomous nature of much of our work. This may well be true, but I do not think it makes us impossible to *lead*.

[vi] We are starting with Twitter. Other platforms may follow.