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When in London, it's a Burger and Neapolitan Ice Cream for You:

A Rejoinder to "Identifying Research Topic Development in Business and Management

Education Research Using Legitimation Code Theory" –

Why Exploring Beyond the Top 100 is So Important

By

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If you're in London, and want to play it safe by following the trends and becoming part of the popular local "food stream," current research suggests that you should eat a burger followed by Neapolitan ice cream. If you're in Montreal, it's poutine and vanilla ice cream. In New York, it's sushi followed by chocolate ice cream. The data are clear; this is what people are eating in these cities (Canadian Dairy Information Centre, 2016; Diamond, 2015; Swanson, 2015; Victor, 2015). So, if you want to be a part of the crowd and eat foods that you know you can find in these locations, then these are by far your best choices. And, if a highly-regarded external rating of the cook drives your food choices, then maybe it's time for a burger made by a Michelin star chef for your next meal (Lendrum, 2016).

But what if you're in Montreal and you've already tried and genuinely don't want poutine (fries smothered in cheese and gravy)? What if the food that excites you can be found only in a small specialized restaurant in the city you're in? Or, what if you can't find the food you're interested in? Do you eat the food others are eating? Do you look for food created by a

Michelin star chef? Or, do you follow a recipe that looks interesting to you that was written by a home cook on the other side of the planet? Are you passionate enough to source the ingredients and make the food yourself?

As two scholars who have management learning and education as our primary research areas, we each made a conscious decision years ago to follow our own path – to figuratively look for recipes from around the world and then experiment with them ourselves. Yes, we read and respect the work of academics who would fall into the most popular or "Michelin star" category across a variety of management disciplines because current issues and trends are important to us in terms of what others in our field are thinking and writing. In the end, however, we use this information to inform us rather than to let it dictate what we do. We also recognize the importance of exploring the work of others in non-management books, journals, and conferences and work by "Michelin stars" found in other disciplinary domains.

So how does this connect to Arbaugh, Fornaciari, and Hwang's (2016) findings? On the positive side, as can be seen in the other published rejoinders, their work is already stimulating a rich discussion about their application of legitimation code theory (LCT) to business and management education (BME) research. We believe, and they would undoubtedly agree, that this is one of the primary goals of scholarly writing – to facilitate engagement and continued development of the field (Bell, 2009). However, with engagement and development come constructive commentary, alternative approaches, and lively debate. Here, we aim to offer all three.

Our greatest concern with Arbaugh et al.'s (2016) work is its inherently narrow and restrictive nature. First, the search terms they use to identify the BME top 100 are confined to

business education. Yet, there are thousands of resources that apply to business education but do not include the specific term "business" or any of the other search terms used. For example, their search criteria results excluded seminal pieces like Brown, Collins, and Duguid's (1989) "Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning" which has been cited 15,962 times according to Publish or Perish and Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons' (1992) article on motivation and academic attainment with 2,148 citations. Second, Arbaugh and colleagues (2016) examine how frequently the authors of the BME top 100 articles both cite the other articles on the list and have their work cited within the other articles in the list. This approach highlights one of the greatest challenges in many disciplinary fields, which is insularity (Ledley & Holt, 2014; Shrivastava, Mitroff, & Alpaslan, 2013; Waldman, 2013). This challenge, promoting a parochial view of scholarship, is not a new criticism of the publication process (see, for example, Mahoney's commentary in 1977) and is reinforced by an exclusionary gatekeeping system where highly cited authors serve as reviewers for journals, often viewing submissions through the lens of their own research and scholarship (Billsberry, 2013; Clair, 2015; Diaz & Bergman, 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Starbuck, 2009; Suls & Martin, 2009).

If Arbaugh et al.'s (2016) work is seen as an intentionally restrictive example of only one of many possible lists and categorizations of existing publications that relate to BME research, then it is useful in terms of raising questions, stimulating discussion, and encouraging engagement (as we are all doing here). If, however, it is read primarily as a "predictive guide to the future of various research areas, which can help researchers determine their own priorities and foci as they consider their career paths" (Arbaugh et al., 2016: p.23), then we fear scholarship in the business and management education domain will become even more insular and narrow than it already is today. This is troubling, particularly if their outcomes are

further used to "help us understand what may constitute fads, fashions, and folderol and what may constitute legitimate research areas" (Arbaugh et al., 2016: p.23). For there can be no doubt that a rich and diverse array of legitimate research areas exist outside of their top 100 list, providing ample opportunity for people to shape their scholarly careers around personal interests, preferences, and passion, if that is the path they choose.

Let's take a look at two examples, one related to a career path and the other a seminal article, each of which fall outside of the Arbaugh et al. (2016) framework. As stated above, we believe (and we think Arbaugh and his colleagues would agree) that an individual's passion should drive his or her research and scholarship. The first author on this piece, Amy Kenworthy, has shaped her entire career around the educational practice known as service-learning. Having been a member of the educational team led by Professor Edward Zlotkowski at Bentley University (then Bentley College) in the early 1990s, her passion for service-learning fuelled her desire to enrol in a Ph.D. program. It was service-learning that drove Kenworthy's interest to become a faculty member so that she could work to extend the practice and scholarship of service-learning in the business and management education domain. However, if Kenworthy were a newly minted faculty member today, and she turned to the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list as a "predictive guide," it is unlikely that she would be exposed to service-learning's rich and diverse literature across the disciplines. Yet, service-learning has become common practice in many business school programs and has been the topic of special issues in three of the top management journals (*Journal of Business Ethics*, 1996; *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 2005; *Journal of Management Education*, 2010) – each of which Kenworthy was involved in as either an author or guest co-editor. In addition, service-learning has been the focus of countless business and management education conference presentations, symposia, plenaries, showcase

sessions, grants, and journal articles too numerous to reference here. However, neither the scholarly thought leaders nor the seminal pieces in this management education domain are included in the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list. Using their framework, it would appear that service-learning is not one of the "emerging research topics in BME research" (p.23) with the implication that it is not a wise investment of one's scholarly resources, regardless of one's own interests, preferences, or passion. We disagree.

To explore the impact of service-learning on the larger field of tertiary education, we used similar protocols as Arbaugh et al. (2016) to run a search with the term "service-learning" using Harzing's (2013) Publish or Perish software and the same 1970-2014 timeframe. The result was 81,338 citations across 998 publications. The most cited piece was a book titled *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* written by Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles (1999) with 2,543 citations. While both of these authors are considered "household names" in the service-learning domain, neither this book nor the authors are present in the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list. We then ran a search on each of these authors and the term "service-learning." We found that Eyler has 6,684 citations, Giles has 6,762 citations, and both have an author h-index score of 23. According to the h-index of 40 "cut off", both of these leaders in the service-learning literature would fall far short of the score required for the "Knower" or "Elite" quadrants where authors are placed only once they "begin to be recognized in the community" (p.17). As two scholars familiar with the service-learning literature, we would certainly argue that both authors are recognized as thought leaders in the tertiary education domain. Interestingly, when we explored the service-learning top 1,000 list (the top 100 seemed far too restrictive given the cross-disciplinary nature of this pedagogical approach and our cross-disciplinary interests), we found 29 publications with the term "business" in the journal or article title. In terms of publications in BME journals (some of which do not have

the term "business" included), we found 34 publications - ten articles in the *Academy of Management Learning and Education* (five of which were published outside of the special issue), seven in *Journal of Business Ethics* (three outside of the special issue), six articles published in the *Journal of Education for Business*, five in *Business Communication Quarterly*, four in the *Journal of Management Education* (all from outside of the special issue), and two in the *Review of Business*. All-in-all, there would appear to be a rich and extensive foundation for anyone interested in drawing upon extant service-learning literature to develop the BME field, as Kenworthy others continue to do, yet this entire domain is missing from the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list.

Our second example of why we believe it is critical for people to look beyond the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list stems from our genuine commitment to, and appreciation of, the countless contributions to the BME literature that can be found in the pages of the *Journal of Management Education* (JME). We share Arbaugh et al.'s (2016) view that "JME's influence is significant" (p.22) and that it has a "reputation as a leading edge journal that is willing to tackle new topics before anyone else" (p.21) with a "long-standing editorial commitment to publish works that will 'have a significant impact on thinking and/or practice in management education'" (p.21). Yet, given these exemplary qualities, there are only six JME articles included in the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list. After reading Arbaugh et al.'s (2016) piece, we were immediately reminded of the recent editorial written by JME co-editors, Kathy Lund Dean and Jeanie Forray (2016), in which they reflect upon our field's reliance on "citations and other quantitative measures of article usage" (p.4) as cause for "worry about what we are missing as a field when we focus on 'counting' in such a myopic, simplistic way" (pp.4-5). They share their fondness for Kerr's (1975) article on "folly" that, although cited only 1,506 times at the time of their editorial (1,573 as of April 12, 2016), has a citation count which

"grossly underestimates the impact of a work that is so well known, and so embedded as seminal thinking about motivation systems" (p.5). We feel the same way about many of the editorials and articles in JME that have been published over the years and have impacted our field in significant and paradigm-shifting ways yet are not included in the Arbaugh et al. (2016) top 100 list.

To use the metaphor we introduce at the beginning of our commentary, just because poutine is popular in a given geographical location doesn't mean we should have to eat it if we choose to live there. Alternatively, just because we work in the BME field doesn't mean we should view scholarly success as only accessible via the four topical areas for research identified in Arbaugh et al. (2016). Similarly, just because a chef has been awarded one or more Michelin stars doesn't mean we should all book a table at that restaurant or try to cook the same type of food. In this context, just because someone is a well-published scholar doesn't mean that we have to adopt his or her particular research areas for our own.

As management education scholars, we feel a particularly strong sense of obligation to explore the world, appreciate the diversity in cooking styles, taste different foods, learn new recipes, source key ingredients where we can, adapt and replace ingredients to fit our preferences, and share everything we learn and do with others as often as we are able. There is a seemingly limitless, complex and cross-disciplinary array of readily accessible and genuinely interesting teaching- and learning-oriented questions, ideas, and concerns waiting to be explored. Whether your research interests lie in one of the quadrants of Arbaugh et al.'s (2016) application of Howard and Maton's (2011) legitimacy code framework or in a "pre-relativist" category (i.e., ideas that neither draw upon articles with "a generally acceptable

level of interest in the knowledge area" nor those written by authors with a minimum threshold of "author recognition" (Arbaugh et al, 2016: p.7)), they are still your ideas and deserve to be explored. You will find inspiration in the literature, and the Arbaugh et al (2016) top 100 list is certainly a good place to start, but please know that there is an entire world of rich and diverse extant literature waiting for you. Why not run your own *Publish or Perish* searches using terms you find interesting? Why not talk to colleagues in other disciplines to discuss if there are non-BME journal publications, conferences, or other scholarly outlets you should investigate or attend? Why not let your passion, enthusiasm, and curiosity drive you? Why not view the exploration, identification, examination, and dissemination of knowledge in areas that interest you as genuinely beneficial to others? Antal and Richebé (2009) conceptualize academic knowledge sharing as a gift. Why not read Ashforth's (2005) commentary on how we dilute the impact of research via institutionalized processes where "many of us stop thinking in novel ways about important questions and become contented with cranking out endless variations on tired themes… we become vanilla pudding" (p.400) and then follow that up with another commentary from Brickson (2011) where she shares techniques for harnessing passion in our research and teaching through the potentially transformative process of job crafting.

In the end, quality research and scholarship takes time. Having a baseline of genuine interest in a topic is an important prerequisite to creating work that has meaning (Conklin, 2012); that is, work that will benefit scholars and practitioners in not only BME but also other disciplinary fields. Sometimes the best type of cooking takes place when you explore new areas, find something that you love, bring it home to your community, and share it with others. If it can happen with poutine, it can happen with anything.

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