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INTERVIEW

Insights and observations on the decision to trust in both science and practice: Interview with Robert F. Hurley

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In this interview, Dr Robert F. Hurley shares his own professional journey through the worlds of scientific research on trust and the practical application of trust research. Dr Hurley also shares his views on the nature, magnitude, and causes of the science-practice gap, and he discusses how practitioners and scholars might fruitfully bridge the gap.

Keywords: Trust; practitioner; science-practice gap

Introduction

The *Journal of Trust Research (JTR)* aims not only to advance the science of trust in organisations, but also to facilitate the application of scientific knowledge to address problems in practice. One way this can be done is to share the insights, experience, and advice of trust scholars who have successfully spanned the science-practice gap. In the following, we document an interview with Robert F. ‘Bob’ Hurley, conducted by Donald L. Ferrin, *JTR* Deputy Editor-in-Chief, in July 2015.

Most readers of and contributors to *JTR* are academics, with interests and careers focusing primarily on the science of trust, and with application a secondary priority. Meanwhile, the world of organisations is replete with trust problems and challenges, many of which may be successfully addressed with existing and future scientific research on trust. Unfortunately, little of the science of trust has made its way into practice, leaving a wide science-practice gap (Ferrin, 2013).

Robert Hurley is a distinctive trust expert due to the fact that, perhaps as much as anyone, he has both deep scientific experience in studying trust, and also deep practical experience as a consultant helping organisations to address their trust issues. Bob earned his doctorate at Columbia University, a student of Morton Deutsch. Since completing his Ph.D., Bob has served on the faculty of Fordham University where he has formed the *Consortium for Trustworthy Organizations*, authored more than 20 scholarly and practitioner articles and chapters, and for more than 25 years has consulted in the areas of trust and related topics to a long list of organisations large and small, public and private, for-profit and non-profit.

In this interview, Bob first describes his own personal and professional path towards his Ph.D. and the study of trust. He then shares his objectives and his

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approach to leveraging the scientific literature to address trust issues in practice, both directly with organisational leaders, and indirectly through the formation of the *Consortium for Trustworthy Organizations*. Next, Bob provides his appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the trust literature, and the state of management practice as it relates to trust. Finally, Bob discusses the nature and magnitude of the science-practice gap, and how the gap might fruitfully be bridged.

Path towards trust scholarship and practice

Donald L. Ferrin (DF): *Bob, thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. To start, please tell us about your early years as a Ph.D. student and young faculty member. How did you get interested in trust?*

Robert F. Hurley (RH): My pleasure, Don. My journey to academe was a bit of a semi-planned evolution in my work life. I say work life because these changes took place grounded in my family life with my wife Kathy and our three kids. I was working in Public Accounting, as you did early in your career, first in auditing at Ernst & Young, and then in Tax at Arthur Andersen. I decided that accounting was not a career for me; it involved too much categorising of decisions made by others on the front lines. So, in the early 1980s I decided to go to Wharton to get an MBA. At that time, I had an inkling of perhaps continuing for a Ph.D., and inquired about it prior to starting the MBA. So, while I was in the MBA programme I took two doctoral courses, both of which had a big impact on me. One was Organizational Theory with Graham Astley. Graham was a brilliant scholar and thinker and the course was fascinating. The other was a course in Russell Ackoff's programme on Social Systems Sciences. The course I took was taught by Hasan Ozbekhan, an innovative thinker who founded the *Club of Rome* and was a leader in the 1970s in strategic planning to deal with complex messy problems. He believed that one of the reasons we have recurring problems like poverty, violence, and climate issues is that we take action based on flawed models of planning that fail to consider longer term multi-stakeholder impacts. In fact, I am now using some of Hasan's work in bringing together multiple stakeholders in the US health care system to deal with trust and collaboration issues that we hope can move that ecosystem to a better place.

But after two years in the Wharton MBA programme, I decided that I wasn't sure that being an academic would be more interesting than being an executive, so I decided not to enter the Ph.D. programme and instead took a job as a Brand Manager at General Foods. I loved that job and learned a great deal about marketing and running a business. But after five years I arrived at a point of clarity and transition that would shape my life for the next 25 years. I decided that managerial jobs were lucrative and provided power and status, but that they did not satisfy my intellectual curiosity. Getting ahead seemed to be based on doing things and not understanding things. This forced me to embark on an unnervingly risky course of action: quit my well-paying job to become a poor doctoral student and meanwhile figure out how to support my wife and child and pay my mortgage. I was a wreck for the next four years at Columbia University, but it was thrilling to be learning so much about organisations. I use these experiences in teaching a class on Personal Leadership Development to help students unpack their motives and passions to figure out how to plug into a very big world. That is what I was trying to do in my own journey and self-leadership.

DF: What was it like being at Columbia and how did that lead to studying trust?

RH: Two things happened to me at Columbia that shaped my life, and as before at Wharton, these shaping forces came in the form of people. The first was taking Mort Deutsch's courses in Social Psychology and Conflict Resolution. Mort was not the most dynamic teacher in his style of presentation, but he was incredibly inspiring in his writing and in how he worked with doctoral students. There was recently an event at Columbia celebrating Mort's 95th birthday. People like Roy Lewicki, Barbara Bunker, Noel Tichy and others were transformed by Mort's mentorship. I can remember to this day reading Mort's chapter on trust and suspicion (Deutsch, 1973) and his book on social psychology (Deutsch & Krauss, 1975) and being amazed at the quality of his thinking and writing. Mort also appreciated the world of practice and he founded an institute for conflict resolution at Columbia that is still active. I think Mort tried to find the major questions that needed to be answered. In that sense he was a great scholar and, over time, influenced practice by shaping how people thought about trust. Not a lot of people know that Mort got interested in trust and the resolution of conflict because of his experience in the Air Force dropping bombs on Germany during the Second World War.

Another formative event while at Columbia was working with Warner Burke, both as one of his doctoral students and also as an employee in his consulting firm. For four years I was immersed in both the practice of helping organisations and in the study of them as an aspiring scholar. Warner had a profound appreciation of both scholarship and practice. Had the world of academe evolved towards appreciating application as much as scholarship, Warner would have been even more of an academic star. As it turned out, academe increasingly seemed to look down on practical application, preferring more narrow, sophisticated but less relevant questions. While working for Warner, two major projects I was working on turned on a question of trust. The first was when I was thrown out of the office of a Senior Vice President of Human Resources for refusing to reveal what was clearly confidential information. It turned out that this organisation, which in 2008 was one of the major culprits of the Global Financial Crisis, was in the late 1980s an organisation run by a tyrant for whom the head of HR was his major informant. The HR Head's job was to find out what was really going on and report back. I was stunned and shocked, but the scientist in me took note of an extreme of organisational behaviour that I had never imagined before.

The second project was a major organisational change initiative. I was working with the C-Suite of a consumer products company on a major transformational change project, and one of the executives asked me to work with his team because he said there were some 'trust issues'. I interviewed all the players to diagnose the situation, but it was during my interview with the C-Suite executive who had hired me that I was stunned. When I asked him who he trusted, he looked at me puzzled and then said, 'Well I am not sure I trust anyone, I try to calculate the probability of each person betraying me'. He used the word loyalty and trust constantly and it occurred to me in reflecting on the interview that HE was the source of all the trust issues in his department. His lack of trust caused him to form an inner circle that many could not hope to penetrate, and they felt like outsiders. In trying to fix this situation I learned how carefully we need to proceed when there are trust issues at play.

DF: Please tell us about your transition from early work with Morton Deutsch, to research in Marketing, to research in Organizations, to your practice of organisational consulting around trust.

RH: While I was in the doctoral programme at Columbia, I leveraged my Brand Management experience to get a job teaching marketing to MBA students on Saturday mornings. So I was teaching marketing and studying organisational psychology. Thus not surprisingly, much of my early research was at the nexus of marketing and organisation. Actually, my research on innovation and market orientation (Hurley & Hult, 1998) has been cited much more than my work on trust. In the late 1990s I made a conscious shift to work on trust. This was in part because I felt that marketing was too focused on manipulating consumers; I lost interest in studying that, and studying dependent variables like increasing market share and profit. In recent years, as the topics of trust, reputation and branding have been connected, I think my work and research in marketing have helped me integrate these facets of organisations. In the 1980s, marketing was considered an ‘integrating function’ whose job was to deploy the voice of the customer and make the firm customer centric. Recently, I guest edited a *Special Issue of the International Journal of Bank Marketing* on trust (Hurley, Gong, & Waqar, 2014). In reviewing the literature in marketing, it surprised me how much researchers had over-focused on customers and ignored other stakeholders. One could argue that we are beyond customer centricity now; that is, being customer focused is not enough and we need leaders who can balance the interests of investors, customers, employees, regulators and communities. It may be the Chief Communications Officer or the Chief Marketing Officer who takes the lead in that role, and it requires an outside-inside perspective that builds a chain of trustworthiness that is authentic and sustainable. In a world of tweets and instagrams, we cannot just advertise our way to a stellar reputation.

Leveraging the science of trust to address real-life trust issues

DF: I understand you have spent the last 25 years helping organisations with their trust issues, in part through your consulting practice, and in part through the Institute you formed at Fordham, the Consortium for Trustworthy Organizations. Please tell us about your efforts. What kinds of organisations do you help, what kinds of problems do you help companies tackle, and how do you help these organisations? What have been your greatest successes, and greatest frustrations/challenges?

RH: We have tried to partner with companies and academics who want to move the needle on trust, and offer them a place to meet like-minded people, learn together, and develop tools to make both the companies and the academics more successful. In three years now, we have organised three major conferences on trust. We are presently planning our fourth conference, which will be concerned with trust and the health care system. Working with people like yourself, Nicole Gillespie and Graham Dietz, we have delivered corporate trust seminars in London, Sydney, Singapore, South Africa, Zurich, Beijing, Taipei, Tokyo, and New York. Graham’s passing was a major blow to me and to the world of practice in trust building. He was a very gifted teacher and a great human being (editor’s note: see Li, Ferrin, & Möllering, 2015).

In our consulting and trust seminars, we aim to provide participants with a transformative experience with trust. We help them understand and actually feel the vulnerability that arises when trust is lacking. We help them understand what trust is, and how to diagnose a relationship in terms of strengths and weaknesses in trust. We help them develop a strategy for strengthening specific aspects of trust in a real-life relationship. We help them understand how organisations can experience ‘drift’ away from best trustworthy practices. And we help them understand how they can coordinate with other leaders to correct drift and play their role in building a trustworthy organisation.

Our greatest successes have been that we have delivered many highly rated trust seminars in many parts of the world. The design, piloting and refinement stages of these programmes have been very challenging due to two factors: Executives have very high expectations that they will walk away with actionable learning about trust, and yet the trust area lacks established tools, simulations, cases, etc. for teaching trust, which essentially required us to develop our seminars from scratch. Fortunately, in all the engagements we ended up with programmes that participants and the learning and development folks have been very happy with. The major frustration is that it has become abundantly clear to me that unless the CEO directly supports these programmes, they have almost no hope of making organisations more trustworthy. In too many organisations, the Compliance, HR and Learning departments are not influential enough to make trust matter in the face of much more powerful commercial interests. I think we as organisational scientists need to come to grips with the reality that many businesses care much more about the hard pressures than the soft pressures. Profits and stock price are the hard pressures and ethics and relational outcomes are the soft pressures. There are virtuous exceptions and we need to celebrate these leading firms more than we currently do. Firms that treat ethics and trust as reputational window dressing need to be called out. Wouldn’t it be great if we had measures to reward the virtuous and hold the window dressers more accountable for authentic trustworthiness?

Another observation from the front lines working with various organisations on trust is how tremendous the variance is in the degree of trust. I have had investment bankers in multiple countries tell me that trust does not exist in businesses and that being benevolent is foolish. I have had investment bankers react with shock at the idea that there may be some transactions that they should not be involved in – ‘someone will do that deal, why shouldn’t it be me?’ Even more remarkably, these conversations occurred in executive seminars conducted after the Global Financial Crisis. On the other hand, I have seen pharmaceutical and bank executives work very hard and earnestly on understanding trust and trying to sustain it under challenging circumstances. Over the years, I have gotten much better at assessing how serious a company is about building trust and whether the elements are there for success. This has led me to refuse to work with a number of companies in recent years who were serious in how they talked about trust but not in how they acted about trust.

DF: More than perhaps any other practitioner in the area of trust, you aim to leverage the science of trust in your work. How do you do that?

RH: We start with an executive friendly review of the ‘value of trust’ from the empirical literature (the meta-analysis paper by Dirks and Ferrin (2002) was very helpful here). We might think this is obvious but it is not. Then we use some of the literature

on branding and reputation (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) to take a signalling approach – how do we send consistent signals of trust and avoid signals of distrust? We use the literature on shaping organisation culture and the role of leaders in trust (e.g. Dirks, 2006; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) to make the case that leaders need to own the trust and control environment in the part of the organisation they lead. We make a distinction between trust and trustworthiness drawn from Hardin's (2006) work and suggest that trust is influenced by increasing trustworthiness. We then use a six-factor model of trustworthiness (communication, benevolence, aligned interests, similarities, integrity and capability) drawn from Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), Deutsch (1973) and others to define the elements of trustworthiness. We teach the engineering of a trustworthy organisation using organisational models I developed that were informed by prior work by Burke and Litwin (1992) as well as Nadler and Tushman (1980). The organisation model was more recently updated via collaboration with Hurley, Gillespie, Ferrin & Dietz, (2013).

State of the science, practice, and the science-practice gap

DF: From a science-practitioner's perspective, what is your appraisal of the present state of trust research? What are the strengths of that research? What are its weaknesses?

RH: There are a number of strengths. It seems that there are more smart and well-trained people doing trust research than ever before. There is also a wonderful community of senior scholars that are generous and welcoming to new researchers. The first time you and I met we had a hard time scheduling time to chat because you were mentoring doctoral students in between conference sessions. Sim Sitkin, Roy Lewicki, Kurt Dirks, Ros Searle, Reinhard Bachmann, Nicole Gillespie, Shay Tzafrir – I could go on – are part of this generous community of trust scholars. I think *JTR* is a great addition that opens scholarship up to empirical but also conceptual and theory papers that help us to understand trust. I think that this journal can also begin to attract a readership in industry, specifically from the ethics and compliance functions who will find real value in this research.

Just like companies sometimes have incentives that cause stakeholder trust violations, academics have their own version of this. I think that junior faculty sometimes pick topics and write papers to get published but not to have impact. Our tenure and promotion system sometimes values quantity but not quality. I would like to see more difficult and relevant topics being explored. It is easier to write a very narrowly focused paper but it may not have any impact on either theory or practice. I also think books can reach an audience that journals will not, and I would like to see more books, especially ones that practitioners would be inclined to read. Unfortunately many universities place little or no value on books, and neither does the AACSB with its accreditation criteria.

DF: What is your appraisal of the present state of practical management of trust in organisations? Have you noted any cutting edge practices that should be disseminated?

RH: I cannot speak very accurately about the entire state of the management of trust in organisations, but I will give some observations based on experience. There are some organisations doing remarkable work with hundreds of thousands of people operating in hundreds of countries and doing it in a fairly trustworthy manner.

I would put organisations like GE, IBM, Lockheed, and BAE Systems in that category. They have many things in common. They have all created cultures where integrity is critical, and it has been reinforced and embedded in the culture across multiple generations of CEOs. They have great control functions that monitor organisational behaviour, and hold people accountable, but in a way that is not overly coercive. They strike a good balance between trust and control. Finally, they all select senior leaders carefully, develop them consciously, and train them to develop trusted leaders under them who care about doing what is right. This creates engaged leaders throughout the organisation rather than box checkers who are looking to cover all the items on a checklist so they can avoid blame.

DF: If anything, the trust problems in the world seem to be increasing rather than decreasing. What do you think is the cause of this?

RH: I am convinced that a lot of this has to do with less slack, increasing pressure for performance measured in limited ways, combined with increased complexity and the inability to understand and manage second- and third-order effects of strategic decisions. I think we need a new dose of Hasan Ozbekhan's and Russell Ackoff's social systems science (e.g. Ackoff, 1994). We need to fundamentally change the way we lead and manage organisations: more long term, multi-stakeholder and systems thinking.

DF: What do you think is the solution?

RH: When we teach leadership, we should be teaching about economic and relational aspects of performance, complex systems dynamics, modelling of systems, scenario and probabilistic decision models. As academics we should also be teaching critical thinking and making the case concerning how old methods of management have contributed to some of the problems we face today. I also think we need to emphasise more the important ways in which societal cultures – for example the culture of capitalism – and institutional logics drive organisational systems including their incentives and corporate cultures. The banking trust violations leading up to the Global Financial Crisis were largely driven by a corruption that permeated all of Wall Street and The City. Government must get this right but government has also been corrupted. Now we are into complex system dynamics. You see how important that is to locating the places where interventions are needed. We should be helping students pull this bit apart so they can be the solution rather than being part of the next generation's problems.

DF: In what ways could or should trust scholars be a part of that solution?

RH: Be bolder. Ask bigger questions. Blog more, influence more, don't be so shy. Have a point of view and argue for it while being open to the idea that we may be wrong and need to learn. I think we have more to contribute than we are currently doing. We are in some ways leading lives that are too small. We are trained to be careful and conservative, and we should be so in our research, but perhaps it's ok to step out on a limb in other ways.

DF: *Perhaps we should also ask, in whose interest is our trust research conducted? If trust research is (inadvertently) 'pro-management/owners', then why doesn't it have more impact? On the other hand, if trust research were to be seen as 'anti-management', then it may not be surprising that managers aren't putting our insights into practice.*

RH: Based on my experience, while trust does indeed lead to collaboration, when employees trust managers who are untrustworthy and inclined to exploit their employees due to lack of benevolence or conflicts of interest, employees put themselves at risk of making bad trust decisions. In fact, in some of our seminars the employees walk away understanding trust and trustworthiness so well that they become much clearer that they should not trust management. Trust often leads to productive relationships, but it may not be advisable in all situations for either employees or management. I do not think that trust scholars have much of a unitary or pro-management bias insofar as many recognise that a decision to distrust, while it leads to relationship damage, may be the best decision given the players involved and the overall pressures in the larger social system that influences organisation behaviour.

DF: *You have formed one of the largest and most active trust institutes, the Consortium for Trustworthy Organizations. Please tell us about the objectives and activities of this organisation. What do you hope to achieve in the future?.*

RH: We hope to contribute to building more trustworthy organisations around the world and joining forces with others who want to do so. In three years we have organised a number of conferences with a total of about 1000 total attendees from industry and academe. We have participated in seven other conferences, some of which were conducted by industry people. We have conducted over 50 executive seminars with industry in various locations around the world. We have published four book chapters. *Ethisphere* recognised CFTO as a thought leader in 2014. In the future we hope to expand our collaborations and engage more with FINT and scholars around the world to leverage the science of trust to change organisations.

DF: *Trust scholars frequently recognise the problems of the science-practice gap, but they have not made significant progress closing the gap. What are your thoughts about this gap? What are its causes? Is it a problem we should be concerned about?*

RH: I agree there is a gap and I think it is a huge gap. Practitioners for the most part do not read our work and do not use our research to inform practice. But they are hungry for good research that is relevant. Companies are more apt to turn to *CEB* (<http://www.executiveboard.com>), an industry-led research outfit, than they are to their local university. By the way, this also hurts our MS and MBA students who would benefit in their education and their job prospects if we were more applied and connected to companies.

I think a variety of factors cause this gap. First, scholars and practitioners live in very different worlds. We are focused on publishing in good journals, and that means we must find new and innovative ways to expand knowledge and theory, but we do this from our vantage point. Practitioners are focused on driving performance, which means offering new products and services and cutting costs to increase profit and the stock price. Increasingly, practitioners do not seem to have the time or inclination to step back and look beyond their silos to ask, what is right, and what will increase

multi-stakeholder performance? I have asked a few executives what they needed from scholars, and what they want is very basic tools and theories to help them with fundamental issues like how to create a culture of trust, and how to help people understand and deal with ethical dilemmas. I think if we were more immersed in the challenges that line managers face, we would ask different questions and write different papers. I also think we need to make our knowledge more understandable and actionable for managers. For example, I attended a paper session at a conference recently that used very sophisticated methods to test some leadership theories concerning trust. When we chatted about implications, it became clear that there were none. The findings would not change how senior managers went about increasing the trustworthiness of their leaders. We need to ask, how many of our papers will actually improve the state of trust in the real world in the short term or the long term?

On the practitioner side, managers need to ask – is what I am doing really going to work to build more trustworthy organisations? If not, have the courage to not do it even if some in the organisation want you to go through the motions. I think organisations also need more pressure externally to engage in real systemic reform and not be able to get away with providing a list of initiatives they can say they did without presenting any evidence of real change. Too often, what it takes to make real change in trust is very inconvenient, and managers turn back and take half measures that waste time and money with little lasting impact. Scholars and managers live in different worlds, but it does not have to be that way. After all, many of us teach in business schools, not history departments.

Bridging the science-practice gap

DF: How might the research-practice gap be closed? What are the responsibilities of practitioners in closing the gap? Of trust scholars?

RH: Practitioners need to start reading more and caring about really understanding things, not just doing things. On the academic side, we need more incentives for faculty to do applied work. We also need journals to create special sections for applied work, not just the obligatory ‘implications for management’ section in a paper that is otherwise not of obvious relevance to practice.

DF: Young scholars entering the field of trust research face a situation in which there is already a large trust literature, and meanwhile there are very pressing trust problems in reality. What advice would you have for doctoral students and junior faculty about how to contribute to the science and/or practice of trust?

RH: Always start with the pressing problem and then find an interesting research question in that problem. But if you want to publish in an A journal, carefully figure out how this pressing problem and your theory are connected to the stream of the literature. Top journals will always ask, how is this paper moving theory forward? But from an applied perspective, always ask – who will care about this research – before you invest a year or two of your life. Great papers that matter will get cited and cited. You do not want to end your career with 30 papers, none of which have been cited more than 10 or 15 times. Write the paper that will be cited over a hundred times or even a thousand times. Roger Mayer and colleagues’ integrated model AMR paper (1995) has been cited over 8000 times. It’s also very relevant to practitioners.

DF: You say that practitioners need to start really understanding things, not just doing things. What does scientific research offer that might be of help to practitioners?

RH: Kurt Lewin, one of the great scholars in social psychology, and the mentor of Mort Deutsch at MIT, once said ‘there is nothing more practical than a good theory’ (Lewin, 1952, p. 169). If a manager does not have a reliable theory to explain cause and effect, he or she is just ‘doing stuff’ or what Deming called ‘tampering’ with the system. We need to train managers to really understand, and that the real impact comes when you understand cause and effect as well as use that understanding to get results. Anything else is both inefficient and ineffective. I would say that now we even need to go beyond Lewin’s perspective. Now we not only need to know cause and effect but also need to recognise complexity and our cognitive limitations and prepare to notice and deal with second- or third-order effects and even unintended consequences. Had the USA used this more modern, systems way of thinking, we would have perhaps not invaded Iraq or we would have done so recognising our inability to predict the variables involved in winning the peace. We might also be further ahead in managing companies in a way that helps sustain rather than exploit our natural environment.

DF: Are there differences between scholars and practitioners in what trust is conceptually, or how they view the links of trust with trustworthiness, behavioural choice, risk, vulnerability, etc.?

RH: My experience is that practitioners do not think deeply enough about trust to make these distinctions. They have a fairly intuitive sense of trust and use fairly imprecise ways of talking about how to increase trust. For example, they overemphasise honesty and ignore the need to align interests. We have a lot to add to practitioners here, but we often do so through the lenses of our own theories without grounding them in how our distinctions really matter to the way they manage. In this sense, we talk past each other and little value gets created. Academics are living in theory and fine distinctions, and managers are living in speed, results and crude distinctions. The two can come together, but we academics need to learn to ground our concepts in the real world of practice.

DF: From the practitioners’ perspective, how is trust related to national culture and organisational culture?

RH: Both national culture and organisational culture are conscious and unconscious internalisations of what the tribe and its leaders will reward and punish. They are both shaped by our experiential history in a social learning process. Both of these levels of culture shape behaviour which includes our calculations of who can be trusted and who cannot be trusted. For example, as Peter Ping Li has pointed out, the concept of trusting strangers is an oxymoron in the Chinese culture. On the other hand, trusting strangers is not counter-cultural in the USA or Norway. In a global organisation you have both company culture and national culture operating. In the best global organisations, a strong company culture creates a kind of tribe that enables trust across the national boundaries of the company. This enables company culture, in certain circumstances, to trump national culture. Having said this, both are always operating, but which culture is strong and which is weak at any moment depends on

the context. Trust is damaged when an executive disrespects a critical aspect of national culture such as asking a Japanese or an Indian employee to directly challenge their boss in a meeting. This executive must recognise that achieving candour and speed, if that is part of the company culture, will have to be achieved in a different manner in high power distance and collectivist nations. I talk about this and national culture in my book *The Decision to Trust*.

DF: *Of all the practitioner articles and books about trust, your HBR article (Hurley, 2006) and your more recent book (Hurley, 2012) are perhaps the best at leveraging the science of trust for the benefit of practice. Please share with us your motivation for writing these two pieces.*

RH: For the HBR piece, I wanted to write something about how leaders could use the science of trust. I read all the trust-related pieces in HBR and saw that none had taken a leadership perspective. I crafted the piece and sent it to an editor whose name Joel Brockner, a friend and colleague at Columbia, had given me. For my book, I wanted to teach leaders how to understand trust and build more trustworthy organisations. I thought this would make the world a better place, and for me it was more focused and actionable than writing about sustainability or a more general topic. I saw a method of understanding the science of trust in a way that could lead to informed action, and I tried to get the reader to see it and experience it in a compelling way. As a related example, over the years I have worked with many different kinds of teams in organisations. There was a way to understand the different types of teams using the life of the team and the nature of interdependence. I then drew out the implications for trust building and offered a model for building team trust that considered the context and structure of the team. I have done the same with trust repair, drawing on work by Kim, Dirks, and Cooper (2009), Gillespie and Dietz (2009), Kramer and Lewicki (2010), and your work (e.g. Ferrin, Kim, Cooper, & Dirks, 2007; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004) to try to help managers understand how trust repair could be done.

My overarching goal in the book was not to bemoan the loss of trust in society or organisations or to demonise greedy managers. I wanted to help the many well-intended leaders learn how to manage trust based on science. I tried to get away from the model of consultants who sometimes develop simplistic models that are at odds with the science and academics who develop complicated models that are at odds with the context of implementation. I hope I struck the right balance.

DF: *Were there any noteworthy challenges? How did you overcome them?*

RH: Yes, writing a book is very hard. It took me four years and I re-wrote it in my head once and on the computer twice. Another challenge is that for HBR or a book written partly for an executive audience, you have to present theory and science using stories and examples. I think a lot of academics, who may not have done consulting, struggle with finding examples and stories. This goes back to what I was saying earlier, we academics sometimes write without considering the implementation context. This can be overcome. At CFTO we have a weekly *Trust Digest* that we send out each week that presents examples of trust issues that appear in the press each week. These can be used to find concrete examples of the application of the science of trust. (If your readers

would like to receive the *Trust Digest* they can email me at drbobhurley@gmail.com and I would be happy to put them on the distribution list).

DF: *If you were to dream of what the science and practice of trust might become in the future, say 20 years from now or more, what would that dream be? How do we get there?*

RH: Given what I know is the horrible forecasting ability of most experts (I read Dan Kahneman's last book) (Kahneman, 2011), let me be a bit humble and talk about what I would hope for, and perhaps how that hope may be realised. I would say that institutions have been on a 40- to 50-year journey of disappointing people to some degree, and that this is largely responsible for the decline in trust. Some portion of that disappointment, or failure to meet expectations, is due to environmental pressures and increasing constraints. For example, employees at IBM who are in the 50- to 60-year age range feel a loss of trust because their pensions and medical benefits have been significantly cut. IBM's senior leadership felt it had to make these changes to compete in today's hypercompetitive environment. But these cuts reflect a radical change from the practices and promises that existed when IBM dominated the mainframe market in the 1960s and 1970s. Beyond these kinds of competitive pressures, some of the loss of trust in companies in general has also been due to our ineffectiveness in managing in a constrained and complex environment, and particularly a multi-stakeholder environment. When we are under pressure, we are reluctant to consider or ask how the wider stakeholders would like to deal with trade-offs. I think trust researchers and managers must develop ways of dealing with external pressures, constraints, complexity, and multiple stakeholders in a more sustainable manner. I would like to see trust researchers draw on research in ethics, systems theory, paradox, and reflexivity to reshape the way we teach leadership and trust. I would like to see more research that bridges micro and macro treatments of trust and trustworthiness. More qualitative research would also be helpful, however in the case of qualitative research, I would like to see more rigor. In my opinion there have been too many papers at conferences that rely on too small and limited a sample, and do not have a sufficiently rigorous research design or analytical approach. Finally, I would like to see trust researchers voice their views and be stronger activists towards shaping the future of how companies lead and manage. We need to help explicate the reasons for the loss of trust and advocate for approaches that will avoid or address these issues, particularly as we move into a future where access to such basic needs as clean water and air will be problematic. If we think we have faced severe constraints in the past, just wait until we start dealing with the more extreme social and sociological effects of climate change and the widening gap between the haves and have nots. The most recent Edelman Trust Barometer indicated that academics are among the most trusted professionals. Let's not squander our influence, but instead let's weigh in and use our science to help influence how trust is managed in our societies.

DF: *What are the next big challenges for trust practice and research?*

RH: Climate change will create major vulnerability, justice and trust issues. I think policy-oriented research centres and journals such as *Behavioral Science and Policy*, co-founded by Sim Sitkin, are important for bringing social science research into the conversation in dealing with these issues. We will need more modern theories

and models to maintain some social cohesion in a world where scarcity is a compelling reality. From a practice perspective, organisations will have to figure out how to get out of their silos in the ethical management of the firm. There are very few companies where HR, Compliance, Communications, Investor Relations and Marketing work together in an integrated manner to ensure that the firm is sustaining stakeholder trust. I see trust as an issue that Boards should be taking up more. They need to go well beyond the Audit Committee and Risk Committee to get deeply into the organisation and develop a robust understanding of whose trust the firm is earning and whose trust it is eroding each year.

Trust researchers can help develop tools to show leaders where they are on a maturity curve. We have tested our online Trust Survey with two organisations and found that each organisation has its own environment and idiosyncracies that reflect a unique journey on the road to building the trustworthy firm. Trust researchers can help practitioners by providing expertise in how to deal with the multi-dimensional and multi-level nature of system trust. We can also help by providing a more precise understanding of what culture is and how cultures change. Perhaps the hottest topic in practice today is culture; I constantly hear statements such as, 'we need a culture of trust', 'it's all culture', and 'it's the culture that needs to change'. But these kinds of assessments are akin to telling a depressed person, 'it's all emotion, we just need to change your feelings'. It's not very helpful. You do not change culture or feelings directly, you change them indirectly. We need more research on which antecedent variables seem to change ethical culture the most effectively. For instance, is it the strategy, the incentive system, leader behaviour?

***DF:** How has your own thinking about trust changed or evolved over your career in trust?*

RH: My thinking about trust has changed a lot. When I studied with Mort Deutsch, the focus was on the psychological variables, but now I pay much more attention to the forces in the larger system and how they shape individual and organisational logics. I suppose when I started studying this subject, I thought that trust violations were primarily due to ethical lapses. Now I see major trust violations as a sort of semi-conscious culture-shaping process that is influenced by individual opportunism, altruism, societal culture, industry history and company norms.

As I said in my book, I think loyalty is gone for companies because both leaders and followers recognise that economics will drive outcomes rather than relationships. I think this is the unintended consequence of market capitalism which has pervaded most advanced economies. Having said that, we cannot afford for this to extend to a loss of trust. A loss of trust spells disaster for organisations and societies. It makes all collective action slower and more difficult and this will put us all at risk. I still think trust is incredibly important, but it is harder to achieve than I used to think. Organisations and countries are under threat and too often the instinctive response is to revert to power and control. If the Arab Spring has taught us anything, it is that low trust, authoritarian means of governance are unstable and unsustainable. So often, when I am discussing my work with others, or even designing trust conferences, people will say to me, 'well that's a timely topic'. Some will even joke about trust building in banks, 'good luck with that', as if it is an impossible or even foolish goal. I think trust research and the practice of building trust in organisations are very timely. Our work is important and it is critical that we succeed.

Perhaps we need to remember this most when we get a journal rejection or an organisation twists us around as we try to help them repair trust. We need to persist, the future is truly at stake.

Concluding remarks

According to Bob Hurley, trust in our institutions has indeed been in decline over the last several decades due to a variety of factors including increased competitive pressures on companies, leaders, and employees, and the increasingly complex nature of economies, societies, and organisations. The trust literature, and trust scholars, have much to contribute to practice, and they can play an important role in addressing this decline in trust. And there are many pressing problems in practice that can provide interesting and important questions for science. Unfortunately, the science-practice gap is wide, with practitioners and scholars being driven by different pressures and incentives, and focusing on different facets of the trust problem. Bob offers numerous insights and recommendations for how practitioners and scholars might better learn from each other, inform each other, and collaborate to better address the trust problem.

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Donald L. Ferrin is Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University. He earned his Ph.D. from the Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota in 2000. Don's research focuses entirely on trust, including determinants and consequences of interpersonal trust, trust in leadership, trust development processes, trust in the context of networks, trust violations and trust repair strategies, effects of culture on trust, trust in the context of negotiation, trust in e-commerce, and group- and organisation-level trust development and repair. His research has appeared in journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organization Science*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *MIT Sloan Management Review*. Don currently serves as Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *JTR*.

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