Obstacles to Forming New Working Relationships: What are they? How to overcome them?

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For Mayoral Candidate Adam Levine, It’s ‘Everybody In, and Nobody Out’

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research 4 impact

We envision a world in which people with diverse forms of expertise seamlessly learn from each other, particularly those working to understand and solve complex social problems.

To that end, we offer three opportunities:

1) matchmaking that creates powerful new working relationships between social scientists and practitioners

2) interactive workshops that teach others how to build powerful new relationships themselves
We help others who are doing amazing work to understand and solve social problems by:

• **Matchmaking since 2018**: Building new civic relationships between researchers and practitioners

• **Workshops since 2019**: Teaching others how to build their own new civic relationships
New Working Relationships

My focus: voluntary working relationships with diverse others

When do they form?

When are they successful?
New Working Relationships

My focus: voluntary working relationships with diverse others
When do they form?
When are they successful?

Social change organizations and researchers
Social change organizations and grant-makers
Possible relationships that some Bridge Alliance members want but often don’t happen:

• With evidence-based practitioners
• With conservative/libertarian groups
• With prominent, but perhaps controversial groups
New working relationships

My focus: voluntary working relationships with diverse others

Diverse Relationships: Possibility for great innovation, yet potential for interpersonal tension & self-censorship
We help others who are doing amazing work to understand and solve social problems by:

- **Matchmaking since 2018:** Building new civic relationships between researchers and practitioners

- **Workshops since 2019:** Teaching others how to build their own new civic relationships

- **Linked-In style social network in 2017:** Total Bust!
3 Barriers to forming new working relationships

- Informational
- (Lack of) Trust
- Relational
Barriers to forming new working relationships

• Informational
  – What does the other person know?
    • Diverse relevant knowledge?
    • Duplicative information?
  – What’s your goal?
    • Brainstorming? Problem solving? Creative solutions?
    • Coalition-building?
Barriers to forming new working relationships

• (Lack of) trust?
  – Motives of the potential partner
  – Especially concern among those working on salient/controversial topics
  – Competing for same funding?
Barriers to forming new working relationships

• Relational: What will it be like to interact with the other person? Will the other person be engaged during our interaction?
  – Will the other person value my knowledge?
  – Will the other person be responsive to my concerns?
Practitioners’ relational concerns

• Example of not valuing knowledge:
  – “You assume you know a lot. But you get a lot of push-back. They want to talk all about what they know. I would get pushback from people outside.”
Can signal in advance

• Signal that you are engaging
  – Anticipate and respond to concerns
  – Express interest in others’ knowledge

• Signal trustworthiness:
  – Who have you worked with in the past?

• Signal knowledge:
  – Be explicit
Third parties

• Brokering new diverse working relationships
Techniques for brokering new relationships

1. “Role Assignment”
2. Highlight inclusive benefits
Example: Role Assignment

- **Not this**: “Adam and Sue, I’m happy to introduce you. Sue is an environmental science professor at Univ of Florida. Adam is a local resident who just joined Healthy Climate.”

- **This**: “Adam and Sue, I’m happy to introduce you. Adam, Sue is a environmental science professor and has some key research on how climate change will affect shoreline communities like yours in Florida. Some of her new findings will be helpful for contextualizing your experiences. Sue, Adam is a local resident who just joined Healthy Climate and has been living in a community along the coast for 20 years. He knows the neighborhood really well and wants to provide needed first-hand knowledge of the effects they’ve seen along the shoreline.”
Take-aways

• 3 types of concerns
  – informational
  – (Lack of) trust
  – Relational

• What to do?
  – Signal in advance
  – Use third parties
Questions?
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