

Brief #7: Are the conversations enjoyable?

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Background: In early 2018 I reached out to several practitioners' listservs and invited them to share problems they were facing in their work in which they thought research might be helpful. In response I would match them with a social scientist one-on-one. I targeted listservs composed of non-partisan, non-profit organizations with a mission to remedy social ills. 37 practitioners responded over several months.

Main Finding: In addition to gathering feedback on the substance of the conversations, it was also important to learn about how practitioners and researchers evaluated the experience itself. After all, they are diverse in terms of their professional experiences (as well as possibly many other attributes) and although "diversity increases creativity and innovation...interacting with people from different backgrounds...can [also] be a source of...conflict."¹ With that possibility in mind, I wanted to know if the experience itself was enjoyable.

As shown in the table below, the large majority of researchers and practitioners reported that the experience was enjoyable. There was only one researcher who reported that it was a negative experience, largely due to the practitioner not being very conversational.

Note that having an *enjoyable* conversation is not the same thing as a *useful* one. For example, in another paper I described how one practitioner reported that the conversation missed the mark in terms of his substantive goals.² Nevertheless, he reported that the researcher was enjoyable to speak with. This particular experience underscores how the instrumental value of a conversation (e.g. learning something useful) can be distinct from its relational value (e.g. whether the conversation itself is a pleasant experience). Both are important.

Evaluations of their Interactions

<i>Proportion of researchers who reported that their experience speaking with a practitioner was enjoyable (N=37)</i>	<i>97%</i>
<i>Proportion of practitioners who reported that their experience speaking with a researcher was enjoyable (N=37)</i>	<i>100%</i>

Check out www.r4impact.org/how-it-works for more on what we're learning about researcher-practitioner relationships!

¹ Galinsky, Adam D., et al. 2015. "Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Pains of Diversity: A Policy Perspective." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10: 742-8, page 742.

² See here: <https://www.r4impact.org/sites/default/files/paper4.pdf>