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The Great Academic-Practitioner Divide: A Tale of Two Paradigms

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Abstract
For decades, many academicians have expressed concern about the gap between themselves and practitioners. In those decades, much has been written about the probable causes of and methods for narrowing this gap. Despite the dialog and the efforts to narrow it, the gap remains. This paper explores four assumptions related to the gap. We use paradigm theory to examine the "academic world" and the "practitioner world" and to explain how the separate worlds perpetuate the gap. We then propose that academicians either accept the gap or legitimize the pracademic viewpoint, a paradigm that reconciles the differences between the academic and practitioner paradigms. Specific suggestions are provided regarding the establishment and development of the pracademic paradigm.

Introduction
For many years, it has been acknowledged that management academicians and management practitioners have different interests (Campbell, Daft, & Hulin, 1982).[1] So, it is not surprising that management academics have been criticized for studying topics of little interest to and relevance for practitioners (Dipboye, 2007). For example, Sackett & Larson (1990) report that only 3% of human resources (HR) research addresses real-world problems while 84% focuses on topics from the academic literature.
Recently, this academic-practitioner gap has received considerable attention in the academic literature. For example, in April, 2001, an issue of the Academy of Management Journal had a special research forum on "Knowledge Transfer between Academics and Practitioners." A year later, in 2002, The British Journal of Management devoted a special issue to the topic. Then in 2007, the Academy of Management Journal again addressed this topic.
The recent focus, however, does not mean this gap is new. In 1949, Merton was also concerned about an academic-practitioner gap and asked social scientists to consider the usefulness of their work (Cetina, 1991). Then, thirty years later Susman and Evered (1978) bemoaned the fact that the sophisticated research techniques of that era were not being used to solve practical problems. Similar concerns exist today (Hollenbeck, DeRue, & Guzzo, 2004; Rynes et al., 2002). Thus, while much has been written about the research-practitioner gap, little has changed over the decades. In fact, there is a growing concern

[1] Although this paper focuses on the gap in management, other disciplines, e.g., marketing, are also grappling with this issue.

that the gap is widening (Aguinis & Cascio, 2008). Given the awareness of the problem and the numerous suggestions for bridging the gap, we ask why the gap has not been closed, or at least narrowed.

Our premise is that the gap cannot be closed while academics and practitioners cling to differing views of the world of management. That is, each group asks different questions, uses different methodologies to answer those questions, and generates answers that are often irrelevant to the other party. This may explain why attempts to close the gap have failed.

Since the academic paradigm does not fit the practitioner's reality, we assert that academics should stop trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. Instead, we advocate either (1) accepting the status quo and stop expending resources on a problem that will likely never be solved, or (2) developing and legitimizing a third paradigm, the "pracademician" paradigm that can span the two worlds.

In this paper, we first review some of the academic-practitioner gap literature. This is followed by an examination of four assumptions about the gap. Next, we use paradigm theory to explain the current dilemma and failed change attempts. We then conclude with recommendations that stem from the realities of the situation and that can actually bridge the two worlds.

The Gap: The Problem and Recommended Solutions

We first share some examples of research highlighting the research-practitioner gap, followed by recommendations and efforts to close it. Because so much has been written in this area and since the focus of the paper is the pracademic paradigm, we do not pretend to nor is it our intention to present an exhaustive literature review.

Past studies show that academics and practitioners have different viewpoints. For example, research examining HR professional and HR academic journals over the past 30 years found major gaps between research topics of interest to academics and topics of interest to HR professionals (Deadrick & Gibson 2007; Deadrick & Gibson, 2009). This suggests that too often academic research provides answers to questions practitioners do not consider relevant. However, academics contend that their research can, in fact, improve management practice. They believe the problem is that practitioners are not aware of this knowledge or are not using it (Hollenbeck et al., 2004; Rynes et al., 2002).

Lack of awareness or use may be because research findings are not communicated in a way that managers can understand. Answers may be lost in academic jargon and a litany of uninterpretable statistical analyses (Rynes et al., 2002). For example, Bartunek & Rynes (2010) show that articles in top journals are written at the graduate level which may be inappropriate for many managers.

However, even if the findings are clearly communicated and deal with relevant topics, practitioners indicate that much academic research is based on narrow, single-sided approaches that do not recognize or consider the situational parameters and realities of the practitioner's world (Rynes et al., 2002). For example, most academics do not address the difficulties of organizational change when making recommendations. This includes costs associated with change, resistance to change, and possible legal issues. It is no wonder that academics (and their journals) are too often perceived as out of touch and having little to offer. Illustrative is the phrase, "it's academic," meaning that something is

inconsequential or not practically important. For their part, practitioners contend that the management practices they use are sound, even though some may deviate from academic recommendations (Rynes et al., 2002).

There is no shortage of gap reducing recommendations. These generally have one of three themes. The first deals with what and where academics publish. One suggestion has researchers reframing hypotheses and questions to appeal to practitioners while emphasizing practical implications (Aguinis & Cascio, 2008). This is a valid recommendation since Bartunek & Rynes (2010) found that 42% of the articles they analyzed did not discuss implications for practice. However, to gain the attention of practitioners, the recommendations have to go beyond "creating awareness" and "more training" which are common recommendations (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010). Another suggestion is that all academic articles should start with a "why this is important to managers" section (Ford et al., 2003). Others indicate that academics should spend more time writing for outlets that practitioners read such as professional association magazines, the popular press (e.g., the Sloan School of Management's articles in the Wall Street Journal), practice-based research translations, and trade books (Deadrick & Gibson, 2007; Rynes et al., 2002). A related recommendation is that top journals should have special practitioner issues, practitioner translation sections, and even make titles more inviting to attract practitioner readers (Burke, Drasgow, & Edwards, 2004).

The next set of recommendations focuses on improving communication between the two groups. Suggestions include: (1) forming closer alliances between managers and academics to educate and inform each other about mutual areas of concern and interest (Deadrick & Gibson, 2007), (2) having academic-sponsored conference workshops to bring academics and practitioners together to address the gap (Aguinis & Cascio, 2008), (3) developing a networking web site where practitioners can read summaries of current research and academics can learn of field research opportunities and issues important to practitioners (Aguinis & Cascio, 2008), (4) forming a consensus about and then developing and promoting a common body of knowledge that management professionals should master to facilitate communication (Deadrick & Gibson, 2007; Huselid, 2002), and (5) educating managers about management science and more clearly communicating the results of this science (Dipboye, 2007). These suggestions indicate that academics must understand the hurdles that inhibit the transfer and application of research by practicing managers and learn to present their research findings through sources and in ways that resonate with practitioners (Rynes et al., 2002).

A third theme of gap-closing recommendations is that each side must become more involved in the "other camp." This might come about if academics and practitioners collaborate on research to better understand the issues of importance to practitioners (Mohrman, Gibson, & Mohrman, 2001; Rynes, McNatt, & Bretz, 1999). Other recommendations involve encouraging academics to spend more time in organizations. One way to achieve this is to modify graduate training to include first-hand experience with organizations (Aguinis & Cascio, 2008; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005) while another is to establish executive-faculty mentoring programs or academic-in-residence positions (Deadrick & Gibson, 2007). Finally, managers have also been encouraged to close the gap from their side by developing knowledge from and linking with the academic community

(Deadrick & Gibson, 2007). Although these are creative ideas and recommendations that should work and some organizations such as Society for Human Resource Management and Society for Organizational and Industrial Psychology include both academics and practitioners, they have not sufficiently narrowed the gap.

Assumptions About the Academic-Practitioner Gap

To explain why the gap has persisted despite attention and efforts to close it, we present four assumptions about the gap. We assert that focus on the academic-practitioner gap may be unwarranted due to the nature of the assumptions upon which it is based. [2]

1. The Gap is Meaningful

Consider that management has been practiced for thousands of years prior to academics becoming involved. For example, management played a role in building the pyramids and there are even management tips in the Bible, e.g., Do not delay payment of a hired man's wages (Lev. 19:13). Also, today's practitioners seem to be getting along fine with the present level of academic research they are using and may have more knowledge than previously thought. For example, Rynes et al., (2002) tested whether practitioners knew key HR-related research findings and found that most HR professionals had seven misperceptions. They cited this as evidence of a gap and a need to close it. Yet, this was 7 "errors" out of a total of 35 items resulting in a respectable score of 80% (plus it is arguable whether several of the research findings cited truly represent best practice). This indicates that HR professionals are reasonably in-tune with relevant research-findings, and so the knowledge gap might not be meaningfully large which means there is little need to address it.

2. There is a Body of Knowledge

The second assumption is that there is a "body of knowledge" for practitioners (and that having practitioners use it would meaningfully close the gap and improve business practices).[3] While there has been considerable discussion of the value of creating a body of knowledge based on scientific evidence (evidence-based management), Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) concede that it is more of an ideal than a reality since there is so much conflicting literature and since there are so many implementation issues. Also, one must question whether there is a body of management knowledge or a merely a collection of useful management tips. For example, that specific goals are more effective than general goals was given as an example of evidence-based management (Rousseau, 2006). Academic researchers view as part of their mandate to create knowledge. However, knowledge is more than a collection of isolated facts. It involves a critical analysis and synthesis of findings resulting in a comprehensive understanding of relevant phenomena (Dipboye, 2007). By and large for the management literature, this has not been done. Part

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[2] We recognize that exceptions to our generalizations exist. However, space imitations and readability issues prevent us from addressing these exceptions, although some will be presented in footnotes. We believe that even after considering such exceptions the points we raise are valid.

[3] This is not to say that there aren't certification or other programs for practitioners that contain a body of knowledge, e.g., Human Resource Certification Institute. Interestingly, if these certification programs meet practitioner needs and if the source of the body of knowledge does not include the academic literature, then academic research is not needed to improve to practice.

of the dilemma with the "knowledge creation mandate" is that if academics are always creating new knowledge, who is going to organize it into some meaningful and usable format? With the possible exception of the Annual Review series or the Annals of the Academy of Management, academic journals (including special editions around given topic areas) are simply collections of articles that are rarely integrated. Is it realistic then for academics to expect practitioner's to scan through an estimated 4,000 management journal articles to find what they need, organize and integrate it, and then apply these findings to their specific situation?[4] If they cannot or do not, academics signal this as a gap. Yet, academics have not successfully integrated their research into one comprehensive and comprehendible whole of use to practitioners. In fact, one could argue that given the number of articles and the penchant for new contributions, any meaningful synthesis is impossible! Even texts, which attempt to integrate findings, are usually not that useful to practitioners since they present the material in a simplified, linear, univariate, topic-oriented way which does not reflect the world in which practitioners operate.

3. Academics are the Only Experts

Academics lament that practitioners do not use their findings, and there is some empirical support for this since only 1% of practitioners report reading academic journals (Rynes, Brown & Colbert, 2002). However, the underlying assumption is that academics are the experts; they know the truth and therefore know what is best for management practitioners. Therefore, the burden of closing the gap lies with the practitioner. However, is this really the case? Who is the expert, the academic or the practicing manager?

The answer to this question is debatable and the question itself could be considered irrelevant. That is, Rousseau (2006) argues that is the quality of the information, not the source, that should be most important. Academics are likely more expert in understanding theory and research methods. Practitioners, on the other hand, are likely better at dealing with the current environment. That is, academics could be considered the experts when it comes to "in theory," while practitioners may be the experts when it comes to "in reality." So, academics are not "the" only experts and practitioners may have the expertise to make sound decisions and run organizations with their current knowledge of academic research. Consider, for example, the well-founded rebuttal by a former Senior Vice President of HR to a research "truth" about the characteristics to look for when hiring (cited in Rynes et al., 2002). Despite what has been published in academic journals, he astutely observed that sometimes conscientiousness might be a more valid selection criterion than intelligence for organizations that hire only highly and homogenously intelligent recruits, and thus experience range restriction along the intelligence construct. He correctly observed that what academics consider a "truth," experience has shown to be a "maybe."

Additional support for the argument that academics are not necessarily the only experts comes from taking an economist's approach to the gap. An economist might argue that if academic research answers were better, then practitioners would adopt them. Economic theory also suggests that popular non-academic trade books are seen as answering practitioner questions since if they didn't managers would not buy them. Although academics may rate such books as unfounded fluff that frequently provides conflicting

[4] This very rough estimate is based on the number of outlets for management related articles listed in Cabell's and assumes two issues per year with five articles per issue.

advice (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006), if managers buy them, academics must ask whether (1) managers are being duped (i.e., academics are the experts), or (2) the books are useful, (i.e., academics do not have the corner on truth, and managers are also the experts and know what they need).

Finally, comparisons of topics published over the last 45 years in industrial-organizational (IO) academic journals with those published in IO-related practitioner-oriented publications found that the academic research that helps generate a body of knowledge meaningfully lags management trends (Aguinis & Cascio 2008). Based on their findings, these researchers conclude that in the future organizational scholars will likely not create nor represent the cutting-edge for practitioners, managers, and public-policy makers.

4. The Current Gap-Closing Recommendations Will Work

For a moment let us accept the assumption that the gap is a serious problem and that it needs to be closed. The final assumption to be addressed is that the very logical recommendations proffered to date and listed above can close the gap. Unfortunately, this is not likely as evidenced by the numbers of years people have been trying to close the gap. Although many may try to close the divide, no permanent meaningful change will ever take place because the recommendations don't address the root of the problem: differing paradigms.

Paradigms

The academic-practitioner gap can best be understood through the concept of paradigms elucidated by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1996).* A paradigm is a view of the world and how it operates. For example, Kuhn discusses the revolution that took place when Ptolemy's paradigm, a geocentric view of the universe was superseded by Copernicus' paradigm, a heliocentric view. In management, this may be akin to when the scientific management view was superseded by the human relations movement.

Kuhn explains that a science typically goes through several phases before entering a mature (paradigm) stage. A science first passes through the pre-paradigm stage where different schools vie for acceptance by attempting to answer relevant questions using different theories and tools. The approach that best answers posed questions becomes dominant and codified in text books. Typically, a paradigm cannot answer all questions posed to it. This may lead to another paradigm becoming dominant.

It is difficult to determine whether either academic or practitioner management is in a pre-paradigm stage or is a mature science. However, this is of less relevance than the fact that the two paradigms are different. Below we outline some major tenets of each paradigm, how there are legitimate reasons for each paradigm, and thus why efforts to bring the two paradigms into union will never work.

The Academic Paradigm

Today's academic paradigm of management is quite different from that of the practitioner's.[5] However, this was not always the case. Prior to about 50 years ago, business schools were viewed as being little more than trade schools. They were criticized

[5] We recognize that there are excellent practitioner publications in which some academics publish, that some academic research focuses on practical issues in real-world settings, and that some academics also work as consultants. However, we none-the-less believe the present narrative represents an accurate description of the academic paradigm.

and looked down upon by faculty in other disciplines for not conducting scientific research. One could argue that at that time, there was a single paradigm where both academicians and practitioners focused on similar problems using similar methods.
In an effort to become "legitimate," business schools adopted the current paradigm where faculty conduct "scientific research" (see Table 1 for a summary of the academic paradigm). According to the AACSB (2008), current business school policies focus on publishing basic research in scholarly journals. Approximately 43% of business school deans report that research is at least if not more important than teaching. The result is almost 1,900 English-language business journals publishing more than 15,000 articles per year! Yet, these articles are typically intended for other academicians trying to advance the knowledge of theory and often give only "lip-service" to the connection with, impact on, and practical use of the research for practitioners (Markides, 2007). This is supported by Bartunek & Rynes' (2010) finding that only 58% of the journals they studied have an implications-for-practice section. Next, as academics developed their paradigm, the topics they investigated and the methods they used diverged further and further from those of interest and relevance to practitioners, e.g., the use of student subjects and the failure to address time and money issues. The academic model and reward structure encouraged research on what was feasible versus what was needed.
The academic paradigm is characterized by insulation through isolation. One infamous term used to describe academia is the "ivory tower." It depicts removal from the world in an elite setting. This occurs as academic employment, raises, and tenure are primarily based on publishing basic research in top academic journals for other academics resulting in a focus on "knowledge" for the sake of knowledge. Consistent with the image of the ivory tower, the academic reward structure typically contains no accountability to practitioners or any rigorous or measured assessment of the academic's contribution to management practice. Thus, consistent with reinforcement theory, there is no extrinsic motivation for academics to close the gap. The "ivory" part of the paradigm is reflected in academicians seeing themselves as the experts, possessing the truth. Academics contend that managers are performing sub-optimally to the extent they are not aware of or are not using their research findings.
The academic paradigm is also characterized by a long-term, delayed focus. This is reflected in academics' career path. Earning a doctorate takes many years. This is followed by a probationary period, typically six years, to gain tenure. Then promotion to full professorship takes at least another five years and is generally based on research output. This long-term focus is also reflected in academic research where it typically takes years to develop ideas, test concepts, and ultimately publish the results. This may explain why the yearly evaluation of research output may cover a multi-year period. The time lag can be so great that by the time research is published, the issue may no longer be relevant, if it ever was. In summary, we are not asserting that the academic paradigm is bad, but that it is inherently different than the practitioner paradigm and that this difference creates the reality of the permanence of the gap.

The Practitioner Paradigm

The practitioner paradigm is characterized by two central imperatives: bottom-line performance and recognition of the importance of time (see Table 1 for a summary of the

practitioner paradigm). Anything that does not directly contribute in a timely manner is seen as having limited value. First, the bottom-line focus reflects concerns for increased productivity, lowered costs, greater market share, and higher earnings. Practitioners need solutions to their organizations' problems and demand actionable answers. They look to those offering solutions for assurances that their recommendations will work. Thus, they latch on to the popular press where consultants provide recommendations, promise success, and share cases where the consultant's ideas have saved the day. In addition, because of their impact on the bottom line, the practitioner is concerned about issues such as initial cost, ease of implementation, resource requirements, payback period, legal issues, etc.—issues that are rarely addressed in the academic literature. Practitioners are evaluated and rewarded for improving productivity and the bottom line since the last quarter, not on the extent to which they are aware of and use academic research.[6]

The second key characteristic of the practitioner paradigm is that they are more likely to consider the impact of time-frame on a decision. This results in managers having a time horizon that is shorter than the academic ideal. Even when a practitioner takes a long term perspective, the time frame is likely to be specified. According to Zacarro and Banks (2004) mid-level executives shift between a "long-term" time frame between two and five years and a "short-term" time frame between one and two years while lower level managers have a time frame between one week and a year. The common reality is that practitioners, especially those at the lower and mid levels, have problems that need to be solved now (or, at least within a specified time period). This situation is reflected in the analogy of the farmer who is not able to drain the swamp (long term) because he is up to the neck in alligators (short term). In fact, the long term perspective of top management advocated by academics may be viewed with disdain by a mid- or lower-level manager who must solve today's problems now.

Two Diverging Paradigms

Paradigm conflict is evident throughout society. For example, Republicans and Democrats are political parties and both deal with governing; but they have differing views, values, and philosophies which put limits on the extent to which as a country, we will ever be able to "reach across the aisle." We contend that the same thing is true for management. Both academics and practitioners are concerned with management, but they have separate and often opposing paradigms. However, unlike politicians, management practitioners and academicians do not have to work together.

Although they have used different terms, e.g., perspective, others have hinted at the existence of differing paradigms (Rynes et al., 2002 ; Ford et al., 2003).[7] Johns (1993) stated that the two groups have different frames of reference in making sense of the world of work; and others have noted that the types of information believed to constitute valid

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[6] This is not to say that all firms ignore academic research or that all practitioners do not interact with or engage in joint work with academicians. Furthermore, we recognize that practicing managers could benefit from learning and using management principles, and that some academics are capable of helping a firm improve its management practices. Rather, we are making general statements about the paradigm.

[7] As we discuss later, many researchers have alluded to the differences between academics and practitioners by saying they have different "perspectives." A paradigm is more encompassing than a perspective in that a perspective describes the current viewpoint while a paradigm also addresses the past (how and why the perspective developed) and the future (how and why the perspective may change).

bases for action are different (Beyer &Trice, 1982; Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984). Others have also noted that academics and practitioners have different goals and values (Powell & Owen-Smith, 1998) along with different external communities that provide validation (Beyer & Trice, 1982). For example, academics have each other and the AACSB; whereas, practitioners have owners and stockholders. Even many academic administrators acknowledge the differences. An AACSB (2008) survey found that 63.7% of deans claim that each group (academics and practice) has its own distinct standards, priorities, and guiding principles. All of these observations coalesce to support our assertion of differing paradigms. Thus, we conclude that because of the differences in the two paradigms, academicians and practitioners have little in common except that they are concerned with "management." In conclusion, while the differences between academics and practitioners have been noted, we believe there has been little recognition of their irreconcilability.

These differing perspectives help explain the $15 billion, U.S. consulting industry, part of which can be seen as an attempt to close the gap (Ford et. al., 2003). Another billion dollars is spent each year by managers on business books—very few of which are written by academicians. For example, in 2001 and 2002, only 10 percent of *Business Week's* "Top Business Books" was authored by academics (Ford et. al., 2003). One reason for the large consulting and trade book markets is that whereas academics state things in timid, careful, tentative ways that do not inspire confidence, consultants state their opinions in powerful, certain, guaranteeing ways. Even if there may be little empirical support behind their assertions, they "prove it" with examples where their ideas were responsible for amazing success. There are even differences in basic vocabulary between academics and practitioners (Rousseau & McCarthy, 2007). For example, academics use the word *theory* to mean a general statement of causal conditions underlying a phenomenon that can be subject to test. Practitioners, however, use the word theory to mean an abstraction not directly tied to the real world.

Why the Gap Will Remain

Some academics (and we) believe the academic-practitioner gap may never be eliminated (see Rynes et al., 2001) because of the irreconcilable differences separating the two groups. Perhaps, the numerous attempts to close the gap just serve to comfort academics and give them a feeling that at least they are doing something. However, once one understands and accepts the reality of the conflicting paradigms, it becomes clear why none of the typical suggestions discussed above will work. We share several brief examples to illustrate this. First, if academics' goal was to educate practitioners, then they would change what they research and how they communicate their findings to "target" practitioner outlets. Yet, despite the fact that HR Magazine has a huge circulation of over 250 thousand, there are strong institutional factors penalizing writing for this publication. Specifically, practitioner publications are not highly ranked (if at all) and therefore typically are not given much weight for tenure and pay raise purposes. Despite any desire to close the gap, the academic paradigm contains little incentive for doing so. Thus, consistent with reinforcement theory predictions (if a behavior is not rewarded it will not be done), most academics shun practitioner outlets. Motivational theories also explain why so few books useful to practicing managers have been written by academics (Ford et al., 2003). Although trade

books written by academics may, in fact, be better, and even though they might educate practitioners, because these books do not represent rigorous, peer-reviewed research, they do not count in raise, tenure, and promotion decisions no matter how many practitioners read them. So unless the underlying reward structure changes, academic "knowledge" will not make it to the masses.

Second, academics aren't rewarded for developing a body of knowledge, but only for developing new theories as opposed to replications and applications of old ones (Eden, 2002). This emphasis on new may preclude a sufficient body of knowledge from developing as academics move from one new theory to the next. As a side note, this is an interesting paradoxical self-indictment of academics' criticism of consultants, who they claim constantly hop from one fad to the next. Third, academics are too vested in their current paradigm because so many academic careers are based on it. As such, meaningful changes won't take place unless an anomaly occurs to shake the paradigm's foundation (e.g., a scathing government report or a significant drop in enrollments).

What to Do

Only a meaningful, systematic change can bring about any permanent results; the current paradigms are too comfortable and too entrenched for anything less (Markides, 2007). Too many are happy with the status quo and believe that a paradigm shift would create unfavorable consequences. Given the reality of the two opposing paradigms and the lack of success so far in closing the gap, what then is to be done? We share the following two options.

Option one is to ignore the gap. This can be done by accepting the gap's existence or attributing little importance to it. This option would let academics and practitioners pursue their own paths by accepting differences as natural and legitimate. To whatever extent they collaborated, learned from, or influenced one another, would be fine.

Option two involves the establishment of a third paradigm that would span the two existing paradigms…a pracademic or applied academic paradigm (see Figure 1).[8] Here, pracademicians would focus their attention and efforts on applying theory to help solve real organizational problems. The pracademic paradigm represents a return to the original purpose of land grant universities, i.e., provide upper level education to the masses and generate knowledge to address questions and problems of society. This original mission is why academicians teach, do research, and engage in service, i.e., use expertise to help solve communities' problems (Van De Ven, 2007).

The foundation for this third paradigm is to view business schools as professional schools (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). The mandate of this paradigm then would be to help students apply theoretical knowledge and develop skill sets (versus acquiring information per se) and to personally help organizations improve (versus create or expound on theory). Thus, rather than aligning research methodologies with sciences like chemistry or geology, management faculty would follow approaches used in medicine or law. For example, in both medicine and law, many who write journal articles also practice or directly consult those who do. This means that although those who adopt this third paradigm may use their theoretical background to do traditional academic research, the primary focus would be

[8] This idea is not new, but the label is. In fact, some academics and institutions use this paradigm. Yet, we feel that a label is required to encourage further discussion and legitimization.

solving real-world problems.
This approach would also help close the "knowing-doing" gap and force faculty to stay current in their field (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006). It would also foster the use of evidence-based management since only those theories that have been scientifically tested that are of practical value to practitioners would be considered.
This third paradigm recognizes the fact that academicians have two target markets: other academicians and practitioners. Thus far, they have been meeting the needs of the first group, providing ideas and references for other academic projects. With respect to practitioners, however, academics have generally ignored the needs of the market and simply produced the product they wanted to produce and expected the practitioner to "buy it." The third paradigm, however, focuses on the practitioner target market.
Pracadamicians, using their theoretical knowledge, would evaluate and determine what the practitioner wants and needs, and then, using advanced knowledge and scientific research, seek to provide it.

Specific Suggestions For the Pracademic Paradigm

Clearly, this third paradigm could only be developed and succeed with sufficient validation and reinforcement at various levels. At the academic level, there needs to be a paradigm anomaly, something like a Carnegie or Ford foundation report that takes academia to task for ignoring crucial, real-world problems and that mandates the establishment of and thereby providing legitimization to the pracademic paradigm. It was the 1959 foundation reports, in the first place, that caused the monumental shift in the academic paradigm in business schools that still exists today (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005).[9] Next, there needs to be the legitimization of the paradigm by the AACSB or another accrediting body. In their "2008 Impact of Research" task force report, the AACSB does stress the need for research to help solve real world problems (AACSB, 2008); however, we believe that their recommendations do not go nearly far enough to support the establishment of the pracademic paradigm.

Third, at the individual business school level, pracademic achievements would need to be seen, evaluated, and rewarded similar to academic contributions. Thus, part of the job description and expectations for evaluation would be professionally "getting out into the community"—perhaps through business consulting (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). By extension, part of the external review for promotion and tenure would include practitioners.

Also, at the business school level, universities must be willing to change the nature of undergraduate instruction if they want to adopt the pracademic paradigm. This change in instruction should help close the undergraduate's knowing-doing gap. Traditional Ph.D. training emphasizes "knowing" often at the expense of "doing." So, too often undergraduates do not have the opportunity "to do" since the focus is on knowing. This isn't surprising given that most texts represent the traditional academic paradigm. In a pracadamican's classroom using a pracademic text, students would use theory to solve problems. This implies that student learning would revolve around projects and

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[9] Unfortunately, the 1990 report by Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate,* which took a more inclusive view of scholarship, didn't have the same impact as the 1959 report.

simulations. That is, they would be taught how to deploy evidence-based management.

Next, to facilitate the adoption of the third paradigm, it would be important to intervene at the point of paradigm indoctrination—the doctoral program. Doctoral students who want to become pracademics would receive a modified education to appropriately orient and train them in the pracademic paradigm. One option for doing this may already exist...the Doctorate of Management (D.M.). The D.M. degree is an applied, professional doctorate based on an interdisciplinary program. Much of the coursework is the same or similar to a Ph.D., but the program stresses the application of management theory and research to real-world situations. Graduates from such programs could succeed in either academia or in practice.

Some academics have concerns regarding the level of rigor of D.M. programs and refer to such professional degrees as a "Ph.D. Lite." This is not surprising since the pracademician represents a paradigm shift and potential threat. Of course, to ensure rigor and quality, the AACSB or some other group would need to set standards for and accredit these programs, as is done in the UK (Neumann, 2005). Along with appropriate standards, the role of the degree would need to be clarified and new curricula would need to be developed. There exists an evolving body of research on the role and form of these programs that would be helpful in this process (Neumann, 2005).

The professional doctorate is meeting otherwise unmet needs as evidenced by the fact that not only have these programs developed alongside traditional Ph.D.s (Bourner, Katz, &Watson, 2000), but they have been growing in popularity in both the UK and Australia over the past 20 years (Neumann, 2005). One reason may be that D.M.-minted faculty have a greater application-oriented teaching format which meets the needs of MBA students. There has been some concern that current research oriented faculty are not providing MBA students with an education that will help them survive and contribute in the real world (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). A pracademic could help overcome this knowing-doing gap.

Our use of the term "practitioner" suggests a homogeneous group. However, this is not true since there are many practitioner groups. That is, managers' needs vary by industry, organizational size, and manager position and the pracademic would have to address these differences. For example, "HR practitioner" could refer to the HR VP at Ford or the HR manager at Joe's Hardware Emporium. The Ford VP likely has an MBA and is in an organizational context that would allow for a long-term perspective. Thus, this person may be interested in more strategic initiatives; whereas, the HR manager at Joe's is worried about how to get enough cashiers for the Christmas season. Unfortunately, the fact that the practitioner market is multi-segmented is something that seems to be ignored by most research to date.

At first glance, the pracadamician sounds like a consultant. While a pracadimician will probably consult, he isn't a consultant because the pracadimician tries to practice evidence-based management while the consultant tries to sell services. Although the example might not be representative, Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) present a rather unflattering view of consultants. We quote, ". . . a senior partner in a large consulting firm commented that the business process reengineering work his firm had done was one of the best things that had ever happened. First the firm made a lot of money doing the

reengineering consulting; then it made even more money from the same clients because it turned out that many of the "unnecessary" people removed during reengineering efforts had in fact been doing necessary work. The result was that his own consultants were then hired to do that same work—of course, at a far higher wage rate than the people they replaced."

Summary & Conclusion

We believe our contribution is two-fold. First, we believe there is value in questioning some of the assumptions surrounding the academic-practitioner gap. We have questioned whether (1) The gap matters since both academics and practitioners have survived and can survive (or even thrive) without each other, (2) There is a body of knowledge for practitioners to acquire, (3) Academics have the corner on truth, and (4) The recommendations to close the gap will work. Second, we believe there is value in giving a name to an approach, alluded to in the literature, that will not only address the academic-practitioner gap, but also address the knowing-doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999) and help move toward evidence-based management . . . the pracademician.

In the absence of developing and legitimizing the pracademic paradigm what will happen in the future? The answer is most likely nothing (i.e., the first option by default). Most academic research will still be irrelevant to practitioners and most faculty will not use an application-oriented teaching format.

Neglecting the pracademic paradigm may prove dangerous for the academy. Most students today do not go to college for knowledge, but to be "certified" as ready and able to perform an occupational function. As such, schools operating from the traditional academic paradigm may face fierce competition from for-profit institutions whose curriculum is (advertised to be) relevant to the real world. Such institutions advertise faculty with real-world experience and claim that the relevant knowledge conveyed will help students get better jobs, increase their earning potential, and be more successful in the workplace. Should this lead to a decrease in enrollment at traditional universities, they may be forced to include the pracademic paradigm into their model to survive.

Closing the academic-practitioner gap involves changes by one or both parties. Decades of attempts has shown that closing the gap is virtually impossible because of the divergent paradigms. The pracademic paradigm avoids the problem because it attempts to bridge the gap, not close it.

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Table 1- A Paradigm Comparison[10]

	Academic	**Pracademic**	**Practice**
Knowing/Doing Orientation	Knowing is important. Understanding the theoretical basis of a problem has value even if no solution is forthcoming.	Knowledge should lead to an understanding of the problem and an effective, theoretically based decision.	Action is important. It may not be based on a through identification of problem or sound theory.

[10] This table is provided to facilitate comparisons. The general and stereotypical nature of the table is realized.

Time Focus	Longer-term	As Appropriate	Shorter-term
Truth	Finding the truth is very important. Sound theoretical development and statistical significance will lead to truth. Real-world benefit is not important.	Evidence based ideas are used where possible but truth may be non-existent. Satisficing is acceptable.	May not be relevant. Truth is determined by popularity or what has worked (or not done too much harm) in the past.
Consequences for Failing	Tenure provides job security. Failure means not publishing as opposed to not helping solve real-world problems.	Failure results in not be rehired so may have to find new client.	Failure may result in being fired.
Rewards	Mostly intrinsic rewards. Recognition by peers for having new theory published in top-tier journal.	A combination of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Satisfaction from solving a problem using sound theory and additional consulting opportunities.	Mostly extrinsic rewards. Substantial financial rewards for reaching goals, especially if a pay-for-performance system is used.
Contribution	New knowledge or refining old knowledge.	Adds to body of evidenced based knowledge and helps client be more productive	Increased efficiency, productivity, profits, etc.

Figure 1. The Pracademic Paradigm