THE VERY SEPARATE WORLDS OF ACADEMIC AND PRACTITIONER PERIODICALS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT

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It is hardly news that many organizations do not implement practices that research has shown to be positively associated with employee productivity and firm financial performance (e.g., Hambrick, 1994; Johns, 1993; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). Indeed, the failure to implement research-supported practices has been observed in nearly every field where there is a separation between those who conduct research and those who are in a position to implement research findings (Lewis, 2003; Rogers, 1995; Straus, Richardson, Glasziou, & Haynes, 2005).

The gap between science and practice is so persistent and pervasive that some have despaired of its ever being narrowed. Nevertheless, over the past decade or so, attempts to deal with the problem have evolved in the form of movements toward "evidence-based" practice in such fields as medicine, education, marketing, rehabilitation, and psychology (APA Task Force, 2006; Ford, 2005; Law, 2002; Southworth & Conner, 1999; Straus et al., 2005).

In the field of management, the nascent movement toward evidence-based practice is known as "evidence-based management," or EBM. According to Rousseau, "Evidence-based management means translating principles based on best evidence into organizational practices. Through evidence-based management, practicing managers develop into experts who make organizational decisions informed by social science and organizational research–part of the zeitgeist moving professional decisions away from personal preference and unsystematic experience toward those based on the best available scientific evidence" (2006: 256).

For evidence-based management (EBM) to take root, it is necessary—though far from sufficient— that managers be exposed to, and embrace, scientific evidence. Although this point may seem obvious, it is hardly trivial. For example, unlike medicine, education, or law, management is not truly a profession (Leicht & Fennell, 2001; Trank & Rynes, 2003). As such, there is no requirement that managers be exposed to scientific knowledge about management, that they pass examinations in order to become licensed to practice, or that they pursue continuing education in order to be allowed to maintain their practice. Furthermore, since the first choice of most managers seeking information is to consult other managers (e.g., Brown & Duguid, 2002; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) and since extremely few managers read academic publications (Rynes, Colbert, & Brown, 2002), the question of how to inform managers about scientific evidence is anything but trivial.

One way in which aspiring managers can learn about management-related evidence is through formal education. However, even the acquisition of a formal master's or bachelor's degree in business is no guarantee that a student has learned evidence-based principles. This is because many textbooks do not cover research findings, and many individuals teaching in business schools do not have Ph.D.'s and are unlikely to know about scientific evidence in their field of instruction (Trank & Rynes, 2003). Furthermore, there are millions of managers who do not hold formal degrees in management. How might these managers receive information that is consistent with the best available scientific evidence about how various management practices influence business outcomes?

One possible way is through periodicals aimed at practitioners, either in specialty areas or in general management. For example, in the area of human resource (HR) management, Rynes, Colbert, and Brown (2002) found that by far the most widely read periodical is *HR Magazine,* which is published by HR's major professional association, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and has a circulation of more than 200,000. An-

other HR periodical that is relatively widely read, and that aims specifically to create a bridge between scientists and practitioners of HR, is *Human Resource Management.* Alternatively, in the case of general management, the most highly regarded periodical is the *Harvard Business Review*, which has a circulation of 240,000 and is published in 12 languages. *HBR* is another publication that attempts to bridge the worlds of science and practice and that has at least some readership among HR managers, directors, and vice presidents (Rynes et al., 2002).

In this editorial, we examine the extent to which three important HR-related research findings are being "translated" and "transferred" to practitioners via these three widely read periodicals. We then discuss some implications of our findings for the prospects of EBM in HRM and invite commentaries from other individuals who are in a good position to reflect on our findings. First, however, we explain how we chose our topics of study.

WHAT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE SHOULD WE STUDY?

Because the task of moving toward EBM is so daunting, priorities must be set as to what specific types of scientific evidence are most important to translate and transfer. At the risk of making a somewhat obvious point, Rousseau and McCarthy (2007) argued that scholars should begin EBM by focusing on issues about which there is a *clear scientific consensus on finding*s. In addition, an issue should be *important rather than trivial* (Priem & Rosenstein, 2000). To use a medical analogy, we should focus on "number one killer" issues before moving on to less consequential concerns. Third, we should focus most of our attention on topics for which the scientific findings are *not obvious* to practitioners—that is, on problems that managers, left to their own devices, will likely "solve" by doing something other than what sound research evidence would support (Gordon, Kleiman, & Hanie, 1978; Priem & Rosenstein, 2000).

Studying Practitioners' Views

In the HR area, previous research has already identified a number of clear scientific findings that are not obvious to practitioners. Specifically, Rynes and her colleagues (Rynes et al., 2002) surveyed nearly 1,000 HR vice presidents, directors, and managers to identify which of 35 well-documented research findings HR practitioners widely disbelieve. Their results showed widespread disagreement or lack of knowledge (i.e., more than 50 per-

cent of practitioners actively disagreeing with or not knowing about) the following research findings:[1]

- Intelligence predicts job performance better than conscientiousness (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998).
- Screening for intelligence results in higher job performance than screening for values or values fit (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998).
- Being very intelligent is not a disadvantage for performing well on a "low-skilled" job (Hunter, 1986; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998).
- Personality inventories vary considerably in terms of how well they predict applicants' job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Gardner & Martinko, 1996).
- Integrity tests successfully predict whether someone will steal, be absent, or otherwise take advantage of employers, even though individuals can "fake good" on them (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996).
- Integrity tests do not have adverse impact on racial minorities (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1998).
- Goal setting is more effective for improving performance than is employee participation in decision making (Locke, Feren, McCaleb, Shaw, & Denny, 1980; Locke & Latham, 1990; Wagner, 1994).
- The tendency to make errors in performance appraisal is very difficult to eradicate through training (London, Mone, & Scott, 2004).
- People's actual behavior suggests that pay is much more important to them than they imply in surveys (Rynes, Gerhart, & Parks, 2005; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983).

As these findings show, the two largest areas in which a gap looms between research results and practitioner knowledge or beliefs are (1) the importance of intelligence in predicting job performance and (2) the usefulness of personality and integrity tests for predicting job performance and counterproductive work behaviors. However, Rynes and colleagues (2002) did not determine the extent to which the HR research community regarded each of their 35 items as "important."

Web Survey of HR Researchers

Therefore, to provide this third necessary piece of information for prioritizing research findings for

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[1] See Rynes et al. (2002) for additional documentation regarding these research findings.

EBM, we conducted a Web-based survey of HR research experts. Specifically, we surveyed the editorial board members of four journals: *Personnel Psychology (PP),* the *Journal of Applied Psychology (JAP),* the *Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)*, and *Human Resource Management (HRM).*[2] Each board member was asked the following question, which was answered in an open-ended format: "In your opinion, what are the five most fundamental findings from human resources research that all practicing managers should know? Your answer need not cite specific studies—we are interested in fundamental, generalizable principles." In all, 208 board members were contacted. Usable responses were received from 85 board members, for a 41 percent response rate. Of these, 174 served on one board, 30 on two boards, and four on three boards.

To analyze the results, the first author evaluated the items, sorted them into theme-based categories, and attached tentative names to the categories.[3] The second author was then provided with the category names and asked to independently sort the items. The two raters agreed on 71 percent of the category choices, and the third author resolved the differences.

Table 1 presents our results for the six topics receiving at least ten mentions. This table shows that seven of the nine items identified by Rynes, Colbert, and Brown (2002) as exhibiting large gaps between scientific findings and practitioner beliefs are also regarded as very important findings by researchers: the three items pertaining to intelligence (also known as "general mental ability," or "GMA"), the three items relating to personality, and the item concerning the effectiveness of goal setting for improving performance.[4]

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[2] In the case of *AMJ*, we surveyed only those board members for whom HR was a primary research area. For *HRM,* we surveyed only those board members who were academics.

[3] Items could also be sorted into more than one category, if appropriate. For example, the item, "Cognitive ability and personality tests are valid predictors of performance," was sorted into both the "general mental ability" and "personality" categories.

[4] Illustrative responses for the GMA category included, "Cognitive ability is the single most important predictor of human performance," "Ability tests have high validity," and "General mental ability is a valid predictor of all job performance." Responses for the goal setting category included, "Goals really matter," "Setting specific, difficult attainable goals increases performance," "Specific, difficult goals with feedback are highly effective motivators," and "The power of goal-setting and similar motivational techniques." Responses

TABLE 1
Editorial Board Members' Assessments of the Most Fundamental Findings from Human Resources Research[a]

Finding	Number of Responses
General mental ability is the strongest, or one of the strongest, predictors of performance	22
Setting goals and providing feedback is a highly effective motivational practice	22
HR practices are important to organizational outcomes	21
Structured interviews are more valid than unstructured ones	16
Valid selection practices are very important to performance outcomes	15
Personality is related to performance	11

[a] Findings with ten or more responses on a Web-based survey of board members from a set of academic journals.

Combining the findings from Rynes et al. (2002) and the board member survey reveals that three content areas stand out as both containing clear and important research findings and suffering a gap between HR researchers' and HR practitioners' evaluations of these findings: the importance of *intelligence or GMA* for performance; the importance of *goal setting* and feedback for performance, and the validity of *personality* (of which integrity tests are one representation) for predicting performance. Thus, these became the three content areas examined for coverage in practitioner and bridge journals during the main phase of our research.

Research Questions

Three major questions governed our examination of coverage of these three topics—intelligence, personality, and goal setting—in practitioner and bridge periodicals:

1. *How much coverage* did each of these three topics receive in major practitioner and bridge periodicals between 2000 and 2005?
2. To what extent is the content of coverage in practitioner and bridge journals *consistent or*

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for personality included, "Conscientiousness predicts performance in most jobs," "[We should] hire people on the basis of ability and personality," and "Effect of personality on performance."

inconsistent with peer-reviewed research findings?

3. What *sources of evidence* are presented in each periodical?

METHODS

Sample

To investigate the extent to which the three important HR research findings had received coverage in practitioner and bridge journals since Rynes et al. (2002) collected their data (in 1999), we constructed a database of articles from *HR Magazine, Human Resource Management (HRM)*, and the *Harvard Business Review (HBR)* for the six-year period 2000–05. Each of these periodicals represents a somewhat different slice of the practitioner domain. *HR Magazine* is a specialist periodical, focusing on HR managers. Patterns of both readership and authorship suggest that *HR Magazine* has a very strong practitioner focus. For example, 84.2 percent of the practitioners surveyed by Rynes and her coauthors (Rynes et al., 2002) "usually" or "always" read *HR Magazine*, and very few of its articles have academic authors or coauthors (only 6.6 percent between 2000 and 2005). *HRM* is also a specialist periodical, read by fewer practitioners than *HR Magazine,* but more likely to be read by those with higher education and position levels (Rynes et al., 2002). Between 2000 and 2005, academics authored the majority of *HRM* articles (64%); practitioners authored 20 percent, and mixes of academics and practitioners wrote 16 percent. Finally, *HBR* is the most widely read and most highly respected general management bridge journal for managers. We regard it as more of a "bridging" than "practitioner" journal because it is read by both academics and managers, and because its articles are almost evenly authored by academics and practitioners (from 2000 through 2005, academics authored 41 percent; practitioners, 45 percent; and combinations, 14 percent).[5]

The intent of the content analysis was to seek

coverage of GMA, personality, and goal setting in the three periodicals, with *articles* being the unit of analysis. However, we excluded all articles that were not at least a full page long, as articles of less than a page are quite common in *HR Magazine* and generally do not contain research-relevant information (e.g., book and product reviews, current event updates, awards, or profiles of companies or HR practitioners). In addition, we eliminated the "Forethought" sections of *HBR* (because these pieces are, again, less than a page long), as well as *HBR*'s fictional case studies. Application of these criteria resulted in the coding of 1,490 articles: 785 for *HR Magazine*, 168 for *HRM*, and 537 for *HBR*.

Database

Information about each of the 1,490 articles was gathered from Business Source Premier and entered into a spreadsheet. For each article, we recorded the abstract and the first five keywords listed by Business Source Premier, as well as basic bibliographic information (e.g., authors, journal, volume, and page numbers). In addition, we coded whether the authors were all academics, all practitioners, or a mix of academics and practitioners.

To facilitate article searches on particular topics, we began by creating a master list of the keywords that occurred in *HR Magazine, HRM*, and two top-tier academic journals specializing in HR content (the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Personnel Psychology*).[6] This process resulted in 289 keywords. To reduce this large number of keywords, all three authors jointly used the card sort method to create a smaller set of broader categories. For example, the general category "selection" included the following keywords: "ability—testing," "applications for positions," "assessment centers," "cognitive abilities test," "employee screening," "employee selection," "employment interviewing," "employment tests," "examinations," "interviewing," "interviews," and "personality tests." We placed all keywords that were difficult to classify in a "miscellaneous" category. These steps resulted in 57 initial categories. An advanced graduate student in human resources then performed the same

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[5] We realize there are other practitioner and bridge periodicals that contain HR-related content. However, we believe that the three selected periodicals represent the clearest exemplars of the three genres (specialist practitioner, specialist bridge, and generalist bridge), at least in North America. For example, Deadrick and Gibson (2007) also chose *HR Magazine* and *HRM* as their "professional-oriented" comparison points to two HR academic journals, the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Personnel Psychology,* in their analysis of the HR research-practice gap.

[6] We used two academic journals, a bridge journal, and a practitioner journal in HR in generating keywords in order to make sure that both practitioner and academic concepts of the field of HR management were incorporated. We did not incorporate *HBR* at the keyword generation stage because it is a general management journal with many keywords being clearly outside the range of HR management (e.g., marketing, operations management).

card sort using the author-generated categories, placing 76 percent of the items in the author-generated categories. Discussion between the third author and the graduate student was used to create consensus on the remaining keywords.

To search for articles related to the use of either intelligence/GMA or personality in selection, we initially conducted a broad search by focusing on articles including any of the keywords that reflected either "selection" or "recruiting"[7] (since the two functions often occur simultaneously and are difficult to separate in practice), or any mention of "intelligence," or any personality trait. This search yielded 98 articles from *HR Magazine,* 21 from *HRM*, and 23 from *HBR*. Interrater reliability was not an issue, since the keywords were taken directly from the spreadsheet. However, because some of the keywords were very broad (e.g., "psychological tests," "college students"), not all of the keyword-identified articles truly focused on selection. To deal with this reality, the first and second authors independently reviewed all 142 articles and highlighted those they thought were inappropriately categorized. The few cases of disagreement (less than 10 percent in each of the three categories) were resolved via joint discussion. The omission of non-selection-related articles resulted in a subset of 116 articles: 91 from *HR Magazine*, 20 from *HRM,* and 5 from *HBR.*

Similar steps were followed for goal setting—that is, initial keyword searches (keywords were "feedback," "goals," and "goal setting in personnel management"), followed by examination of abstracts and article content to eliminate irrelevant articles (e.g., ones on 360-degree feedback that did not contain any discussion of goals). These steps produced 12 goal setting articles: 5 from *HR Magazine,* 1 from *HRM,* and 6 from *HBR.*

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Extent of Coverage

Our first search was for articles related to the role of GMA in job performance. Despite the high degree of importance placed by research academics on the findings related to the intelligence-performance link, our search revealed almost no coverage of this topic in the three practitioner and bridge periodicals. Specifically, *HR Magazine* had no articles (of 785 total, 0%) regarding GMA over that time period (see Table 2). *HRM* had two articles (of

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TABLE 2
Percent Coverage of General Mental Ability, Personality, and Goal Setting, by Periodical[a]

Topic	HR Magazine	Human Resource Management	Harvard Business Review
Ability	0.0%	1.2%	0.4%
Personality	0.4	1.2	0.6
Goal setting	0.6	0.6	0.6
Total number of articles	785	168	537

[a] Figures represent the percentages of all full-length articles appearing in each periodical between 2000 and 2005 generated by both keyword and manual searches of article content by two of the three authors (see the text for details). To be included in the table, articles on "personality" had to discuss personality in the context of selection (as opposed to postselection management of different personality types).

168, 1.2%) that discussed the ability-performance link, and *HBR* also had two (of 537, 0.4%).[8]

Results were not much different for personality or goal setting. The role of personality in selection was the topic of three articles (0.4%) in *HR Magazine,* two in *HRM* (1.2%), and three (0.6%) in *HBR.* Similarly, there were five articles (0.6%) on goal setting in *HR Magazine*, one (0.6%) in *HRM*, and three in *HBR* (0.6%).

Thus, there is a clear gap in the *extent* of coverage of GMA, personality, and goal setting between academic journals on the one hand[9] and practitioner and bridge periodicals on the other. The nearly nonexistent coverage of intelligence, personality, and goal setting by practitioner and bridge journals is consistent with (and may be linked to) Rynes et al.'s (2002) finding that the largest gaps between research findings and practitioner beliefs occur in these areas.

Research Question 2: Research Consistency of Coverage

Beyond this difference in quantity of coverage, it is also interesting to examine the extent to which

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[7] Keywords for "recruiting" were "college students," "employees—recruiting of," and "help-wanted advertising."

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[8] In general, we would not expect *HBR* to provide as much relative coverage of HR issues as the other two periodicals, given that it is a general management (rather than an HR-focused) periodical.

[9] For example, analogous figures in *Journal of Applied Psychology,* a top-tier academic journal in this area, were 3.2 percent for GMA, 5.9 percent for personality, and 2.5 percent for goal setting. Figures for another top-tier academic journal, *Personnel Psychology,* were 6.9 percent for GMA, 6.3 percent for personality, and 4.2 percent for goal setting.

coverage of these topics in practitioner and bridge journals is consistent with research evidence. We discuss each of the three topics in turn.

Intelligence/GMA. No articles on GMA appeared in *HR Magazine* over the relevant time period. However, two articles in *HRM* did deal with the role of GMA in selection. In the first, O'Leary, Lindholm, Whitford, and Freeman (2002) explained the recruitment and selection practices of the U.S. federal government. These practices include the use of a variety of cognitive and noncognitive tests designed to match individuals' abilities, personality, and social skills with the requirements of four different occupational groups (administrative support, professional, managerial, and trades/labor). The authors cited a considerable amount of academic research on both the validity and utility of alternative selection devices and provided descriptions of how research findings guide OPM's internal selection and placement research. In short, the article frequently references the academic literature on GMA and is highly consistent with it.

The other relevant *HRM* article was part of a special issue (Burke, Drasgow, & Edwards, 2004) designed to illustrate how psychology-based research can be usefully applied in HR management. Articles for this issue were authored by academic-practitioner teams in nine areas of HR practice, including recruitment and selection. Because of the special issue's overriding focus on the applicability of psychological research, the article on recruitment and selection (Ryan & Tippins, 2004) is also highly consistent with research evidence. For example, Ryan and Tippins (2004) drew on previous research to compare various selection tools (including GMA tests, integrity tests, and measures of conscientiousness) on validity, costs, and sizes of average group differences in scores (e.g., male versus female, and white versus black, Hispanic, and Asian). In addition, they discussed various selection tools and strategies in terms of both their usefulness for reducing adverse impact and their likely impact on applicants' perceptions (an important aspect in recruitment). Thus, the *HRM* articles on GMA, though not numerous, are highly consistent with research findings.

HBR also published two articles on intelligence during this period. In "Hiring for Smarts," Menkes presented a largely research-consistent argument for assessing intelligence when hiring managers:

> So much has been written about leadership personality and style that hiring managers are in danger of neglecting the most critical factor in executives' success: intelligence. . . . Historically, the only reliable measure of such brainpower has been the standard IQ test which, for good reasons, is rarely used in

business settings. But in rejecting IQ testing altogether, hiring managers have turned their backs on the single most effective assessment of cognitive abilities, simply because there isn't a version that applies to the corporate world. They have dismissed the one method that could help them identify business stars. (2005: 100)

He recommended, as a remedy, *situational interviews* that focus on "cognitive subjects associated with executive work: accomplishing tasks, working with and through others, and judging oneself. The questions shouldn't require specific industry expertise or experience. Any knowledge they call for must be rudimentary and common to all executives" (Menkes, 2005: 102). This recommendation is consistent with a considerable amount of empirical evidence (e.g., Latham & Saari, 1984; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, 2000) and provides a counterpoint to the commonly held (but incorrect) assumption that intelligence can only be assessed with "intelligence tests."

In the second article related to intelligence, "Deep Smarts," Leonard and Swap wrote:

> When a person sizes up a complex situation and comes to a rapid decision that proves to be not just good but brilliant, you think, "That was smart." After you've watched him do this a few times, you realize you're in the presence of something special. It's not raw brainpower, though that helps. It's not emotional intelligence, either, though that, too, is often involved. It's deep smarts, the stuff that produces that mysterious quality, good judgment. (2004: 88)

This article maps less well onto peer-reviewed research findings than does the Menkes (2005) article. For example, what Leonard and Swap call "deep smarts" is what academic researchers call "expert judgment"—a process whereby individuals subconsciously match complex environmental stimuli with some deeply held category, pattern, or feature acquired over many years of experience (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Simon, 1996). As such, the term "deep smarts" contributes to what researchers call "construct proliferation," or creating new labels for phenomena that have already been well-researched under another name.

In addition, by introducing the word "smarts" to indicate a combination of intelligence and experience in a particular type of job or activity, all three constructs (smarts, intelligence, and experience) become muddied. And although it is true that intelligence (what the authors call "raw smarts") is insufficient for producing deep expert knowledge, it will still be the best predictor of it at any given level of experience (i.e., holding experience con-

stant). This is because of what intelligence is and the way it works:

> Intelligence is the ability to grasp and reason correctly with abstractions (concepts) and solve problems. However, perhaps a more useful definition is that intelligence is the ability to learn. Higher intelligence leads to more rapid learning, and the more complex the material to be learned, the more this is true. . . . *Why* does GMA predict job performance? The primary reason is that people who are more intelligent learn more job knowledge and learn it faster. . . . Even when workers have equal job knowledge the more intelligent workers have higher job performance. This is because there are problems that come up on the job that are not covered by previous job knowledge, and GMA is used directly on the job to solve these problems. (Schmidt & Hunter, 2000: 3–5)

More generally, keyword searches in *HBR* turned up a number of additional articles that further "muddy the construct waters" with respect to intelligence and its relationship to job performance. For example, in the period 2000–05, *HBR* contained more articles that covered "emotional intelligence" and "social intelligence" (e.g., Coutu, 2004; Goffee & Jones, 2005; Goleman, 2000, 2004) than articles that covered "intelligence" or "cognitive ability," despite the fact that emotional intelligence and social intelligence have far weaker research bases in top-tier peer-reviewed psychology journals and that some definitions of "emotional intelligence" are so broad as to include nearly all important human traits, including a hefty chunk of GMA (Murphy, 2006).

In sum, of the two periodicals that addressed the usefulness of intelligence in selection, only *HRM* provided research-consistent information. However, *HBR* provided mixed coverage, with the article by Menkes (2005) providing research-consistent information, but articles by Coutu (2004), Goffee and Jones (2005), Goleman (2000, 2004) and Leonard and Swap (2004) providing either research-inconsistent or, at best, only partially research-consistent information.

Personality. The two *HRM* articles that covered GMA in a research-consistent fashion (O'Leary et al., 2002; Ryan & Tippins, 2004) also reviewed the research evidence on the validity of various aspects of personality in selection. As such, although one would not describe *HRM*'s coverage of these issues as "extensive," it is consistent with the best available scientific evidence on personality, as was *HRM*'s coverage of GMA.

Although *HR Magazine* did not cover GMA at all in the relevant period, it did publish three articles on personality assessment as a predictor of various

behaviors: Andrews (2005), Bates (2002), and Krell (2005). Andrews (2005) began with a discussion of personal and business ethics and then asked whether personality tests can help detect those likely to engage in unethical or other counterproductive behaviors. For the most part, she took the research-consistent position that they can, citing a variety of research psychiatrists and psychologists to support the case.

On the other hand, some claims made in the article go far beyond scientifically substantiated evidence. For example, at one point, Andrews cited a senior vice president of HR as saying, "You can pick up a multitude of clues about a person's character by simply having a restaurant meal together. You'll see how they interact with the waiter or the people sitting at adjacent tables. I sometimes say, 'Gee, how much of a tip do you think we should leave?' Then, based on whatever percentage they suggest, I ask why. I want to see how they make those decisions. A lot of it bears on how they view the world in a more general sense" (2005: 56). This type of screening behavior is not supported by research findings. Rather, it is an example of using non-job-related criteria that are likely to reflect a hiring manager's personal predilections more than a candidate's ability to do a job. As such, this quote represents a selection tactic that is low in validity and utility but high in exposure to potential legal liability.

A second *HR Magazine* article by Bates (2002) is also a mix of research-consistent and questionable claims. For example, in keeping with research evidence, he wrote that "consensus is building in the research community that five factors shape our overall personality" (Bates, 2002: 30). However, the five traits he cited ("need for stability, whether we are solitary or social, whether we strive more for innovation or efficiency, the degree to which we stick to our positions or accept others' ideas, and whether we are more linear or flexible in our approach to goals" [Bates, 2002: 30]) are not entirely consistent with the Big Five that have generally been used in selection research: emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Digman, 1986; McCrae & Costa, 1987). This confusion was exacerbated later in the article, where the five dimensions of a proprietary personality inventory offered by a consulting firm were listed as "need for stability, extraversion, originality, accommodation, and consolidation" (Bates, 2002: 31).

In addition, Bates stated that "there are no 'wrong' answers to personality tests—only results that suggest an individual is better-suited to one

type of work than another" (2002: 30). Although it is true that certain personality traits (such as extraversion) are more predictive of performance in some jobs than others, one of the Big Five traits (conscientiousness) has been found to be a positive predictor of performance in all job types (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In addition, scores on three of the Big Five factors (conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness—the factors that dominate most personality-based integrity tests) have been found to be good predictors of counterproductive behaviors such as fighting, stealing, and absenteeism over all job categories (Ones et al., 1993). Moreover, when employers use personality-based integrity tests, they are certainly counting some answers as "better" than others, regardless of the job in question.

The final personality-related article in *HR Magazine* (Krell, 2005) describes how personality tests are being used for a variety of purposes other than external hiring. These include individual development, team communications, conflict resolution, coaching, and placement. Overall, the article contains a mixture of research-consistent and -inconsistent statements, along with some claims that are difficult to link to any clear research literature.

On the research-consistent side, Krell (2005), like Bates (2002), correctly indicated that most experts believe there are between four and six basic personality dimensions and that acceptance of personality assessment is growing. He also described one company's use of concurrent empirical validation of personality measures (a desirable practice if sufficient sample sizes are available) and referred readers to a variety of online support tools for using personality assessments (including SHRM white papers on test validation and using personality assessments in selection, and a legal report about the use of integrity testing).

On the other hand, the article also discussed a number of practices that do not have clear research foundations and may be problematic. For example, one quoted executive enthused: "The science behind cultural fit is extremely important and goes right to the bottom line" (Krell, 2005: 51). In fact, the "science" of cultural fit suggests that although there are clear relationships between cultural fit and employee satisfaction and retention, results with respect to job or unit performance are much more open to question (e.g., Janis, 1983; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

In another place, Krell quoted a consultant who argued: "Using personality assessments to confirm HR professionals' instincts is a benefit of these tools. . . . You know you like them. . . . Now you can determine exactly why that is and use that

criteria [*sic*] for selection, development, and retention" (2005: 49–50). From a scientific perspective, this suggested use of personality assessments amounts to "capturing" the current decision model of a decision maker. Unfortunately, however, it does *not* demonstrate that an applicant so assessed can do the job or that the decision maker's current model is a valid one. In fact, related research (on employment interviews) suggests that interviews are considerably more valid if managers are not allowed to develop "preconceptions" (e.g., by viewing résumés) prior to conducting interviews (e.g., McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994). As such, this suggested use of personality assessments is more likely to entrench idiosyncratic judgments of hiring managers, providing an aura of scientific respectability to what are merely individual assumptions, predilections, or biases that selection researchers have been arguing against for years.

Overall, then, the few articles appearing in *HR Magazine* on the topic of personality assessment represent a mixture of research-consistent and research-inconsistent information. Although they accurately portray the ascendancy of five (give or take one) dimensions of personality in the research realm and the fact that some of the dimensions are differentially associated with performance on different types of jobs, they do not convey the fact that conscientiousness is a predictor of performance in all jobs, or that a combination of conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness is a good general predictor of counterproductive behaviors across occupations. In addition, they make a number of claims that are inconsistent with existing research findings. The general sense that we were left with after reading these articles was an impression that they overpromised as to what personality assessments can do, underexplained the differences between types of personality assessments, and overreached in terms of their legitimate applications.

Turning to *HBR*, we found 12 articles that contain personality-related keywords and 4 that contain "selection" keywords. However, upon examining the articles, we found that very few of them make any direct references to the use of personality variables in selection. Rather, most focus on the management of individuals with particular (usually "problematic") personality characteristics (Waldroop & Butler, 2000), or discuss how dysfunctional personality characteristics of CEOs can be better managed or self-managed (e.g., Goffee & Jones, 2000; Khurana, 2002; Maccoby, 2000; Tedlow, 2001). Another set of articles focuses on how leaders' relationships with close confidants

(Sulkowicz, 2004), coaches (Berglas, 2002), or followers (Offermann, 2004) can degenerate into psychologically destructive patterns that compromise a leader's effectiveness. Additionally, the four articles about selection in general (Bennis & O'Toole, 2000; Butler & Waldroop, 2004; Sorcher & Brant, 2002; Wetlaufer, 2000) focus mostly on hiring procedures (e.g., agreeing on the job description, creating interview questions, resolving political conflicts) and candidate skills or behaviors rather than personality traits.

However, two of these articles deal at least partly with the evaluation of personality traits in a CEO selection context. In "Don't Hire the Wrong CEO," Bennis and O'Toole (2000: 174–175) warned against "candidates who act like CEOs. . . . Boards often are seduced by articulate, glamorous—dare we say it—charismatic dreamers who send multiple frissons down their collective spines. . . . In fact, (however), many of the greatest corporate leaders come up short on the charisma scale, because charisma typically goes hand-in-hand with inflated ego." Similarly, in "The Curse of the Superstar CEO," Khurana also warned about the dangers of charismatic leaders: "When companies look for new leaders, the one quality they seek above all others is charisma. The result, more often than not, is disappointment—or even disaster" (2002: 60). In other words, the two *HBR* articles that deal with personality in leader selection are essentially warnings against charismatic leaders.

How do these warnings square with academic research on charismatic leadership? In one sense, it is difficult to make comparisons, because the term "charismatic leader" seems to be used differently in the academic and practitioner literatures.[10] In the practitioner literature, "charisma" is a synonym for charm or mysticism. Indeed, Khurana traced the word "charisma" to the various "charisms, or gifts of the Holy Spirit, that Christians may possess" (2002: 60). This use of the word suggests that charisma is "style" rather than "substance." Relatedly, Howell and Shamir wrote, "Theories of charismatic leadership have been accused of promoting a 'heroic leadership' stereotype (Beyer, 1999; Yukl, 1998), which depicts leaders as heroic figures that are single-handedly capable of determining the fate and fortunes of groups and organizations. In this heroic conception, the leader is omnipotent, and followers are submissive to the leader's will and demands" (2005: 96).

In contrast, in the academic literature, charis-

matic leadership tends to be defined much more broadly and is often equated with transformational leadership, especially transformational leadership's visioning and role modeling dimensions. It includes not only having a dynamic, charismatic style, but also communicating a compelling vision and serving as a role model of the values of an organization.

In the academic literature, personalized and socialized charismatic leadership are often distinguished. *Personalized* charismatic leaders tend to be described as self-centered and sometimes even manipulative. They are interested in pursuing their own goals, rather than the goals of a collective:

> In the personalized relationship, followers are confused and disoriented before joining the relationship, and the relationship provides them with a clearer sense of self and greater self confidence. This type of relationship is based mainly on followers' personal identification with the leader, rather than on their identification with or acceptance of the leader's message. (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 100)

In contrast, *socialized* charismatic leaders work for the good of the collective:

> In the socialized relationship, followers have a clear sense of self and a clear set of values, and the charismatic relationship provides them with a means for expressing their important values within the framework of a collective action. Followers in this type of relationship derive their sense of direction and self-expression not from personal identification with the leader but from the leader's message. In this relationship followers place constraints on the leader's influence, play an active role in determining the values expressed by the leader, are less dependent on the leader, and are less open to manipulation by the leader. (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 100)

This distinction helps to explain why the authors in *HBR* see charismatic leadership as generally negative, but academic researchers see it as ambiguous, though generally more positive. Overall, there is "accumulating evidence that demonstrates both the positive and negative outcomes of charismatic leadership" (Howell & Shamir, 2005: 97). However, more of the academic evidence falls on the positive side (Judge & Piccolo, 2004)—a result that is probably due in part to the fact that academics tend to measure charismatic leadership in a way that is consistent with socialized charismatic leadership. In contrast, Khurana (2002) and Bennis and O'Toole (2000) seem to be describing personalized charismatic leadership, or the "dark side" of charismatic leadership.

Viewed from the vantage point of EBM, it is significant that the *HBR* articles on personality—

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[10] We thank Amy Colbert for help in interpreting the academic and practitioner literatures on leadership.

including those that deal with management and self-management, as well as selection—make no mention whatsoever of the huge scientific discovery of the robust Big Five personality factors. This omission is particularly striking in that the discovery of the Big Five goes back more than 20 years (e.g., Digman, 1986; McCrae & Costa, 1987). As such, none of the excitement that academics have felt about being able to consolidate research evidence on these "meta" factors of personality (as opposed to having to deal with dozens or even hundreds of narrower personality traits) has reached *HBR*'s audience. Similarly, the academic distinction between "personal" and "socialized" charismatic leadership seems to have passed *HBR's* notice, despite the fact that it might help to clear up some of the conflicting views about the merits and shortfalls of charismatic leaders.

Overall, in all three journals, the amount of attention paid to personality is not very great, and certainly smaller than the amount of attention devoted to it in academic journals. However, its coverage in *HRM* tends to be research-consistent, while coverage in *HR Magazine* represents a mixture of research-consistent (e.g., the Big Five and the potential for using personality in selection is clearly there) and non-research-consistent reporting (e.g., occasional recommending of nonbehavioral interview questions or questions that have nothing to do with the predictive dimensions of the Big Five). Finally, treatment of personality in *HBR* seems to be completely divorced from academic research on personality, with no mention of the Big Five, continued discussion of narrow rather than broad personality traits, and no research-based summary of generalizable personality-performance relationships.

Goal setting. Turning next to goal setting, we found that less than 1 percent of the articles in *HR Magazine* focus on the usefulness of goal setting for improving performance. Of the five articles in *HR Magazine* that mentions goal setting, three of them mentions it rather incidentally (i.e., as part of a variable pay system in Frase-Blunt [2001] and Garvey [2000], or as an available feature in an online performance management system in Robb [2004]).

However, in "The Under-management Epidemic," Tulgan (2004) hit the basic findings from goal setting research right on the head. Specifically, he discussed the value of specific, challenging, and meaningful goals; accurate monitoring and documentation of progress toward goals, and specific feedback on performance with guidance for improvement (Latham, 2006). Tulgan went on to say:

In an effort to be hands-off and not become a much-maligned "micro-manager," supervisors have gone to the opposite extreme and completely abdicated their primary role as managers. . . . Under-management is the overwhelming common denominator in most cases of suboptimal workplace performance at all levels. The under-managed worker struggles because his supervisor is not sufficiently engaged to provide the direction and support he needs and, therefore, is unable to help with resources and problem-solving. The manager cannot judge what expectations are reasonable, and he cannot set goals and deadlines that are ambitious but still meaningful. (2004: 119)

In short, Tulgan provided a good explanation of the strong research finding that goal setting with feedback is a far more effective motivator of performance, on average, than is empowerment (Latham, 2006; Locke et al., 1980; Rynes et al., 2002).

In the final article in *HR Magazine* that we examined, Carrison (2003) focuses on a particular form of goal setting: setting deadlines. He describes commonalities in management practices over three large construction projects that all managed to meet ambitious scheduling goals. These commonalities included giving the goals a great deal of publicity, stressing the schedule at all points in the process, holding emergency meetings at the first signs of slippage, holding all managers accountable to each other, getting managers' input on and commitment to the schedule, and celebrating on-time milestones along the way. All these principles are consistent with the results of goal setting research (Latham, 2006). In short, when *HR Magazine* did report on goal setting as the central topic of interest, it tended to do so in a research-consistent fashion.

HBR published six articles that deal at least partly with goals or goal setting. Once again, however, some of the articles are tangential to the issues covered by the well-documented body of goal setting research. For example, one article deals with assessments of individual motivations and competing commitments (Kegan & Lahey, 2001), and another discusses ways to reframe goals to tap into individual differences in motivation (Nicholson, 2003).

However, three articles discuss principles of goal setting that map onto academic research. These articles focus mostly on the principles of frequent feedback with respect to progress toward goals, as well as the importance of goal acceptance. For example, in "Management by Whose Objectives?," Levinson argued that one of the reasons for the failure of "Management by Objectives" is that "unit managers are forced to commit to goals they

don't believe are realistic" (2003: 107).[11] Relatedly, Parcells (2000) focused on the importance of setting goals that permit "small wins," rather than an "ultimate" goal that seems unattainable. In the third article, "Turning Great Strategy into Great Performance," Mankins and Steele (2005) emphasized the importance of communicating strategic goals in simple, concrete language and of clearly identifying priorities. All these recommendations are consistent with goal setting research, although no reference is made to this research, and pieces of the relevant goal setting findings are not emphasized (particularly, the importance of setting *difficult* but attainable goals).

Finally, *HRM* published one highly research-consistent article on goal setting (London et al., 2004). This article was part of the same special issue on applications of psychological research to HR management that was mentioned in previous sections.

In summary, coverage of goal setting in the selected practitioner and bridge publications was quite scarce, particularly when the large effect sizes found in goal setting research are taken into account. Moreover, approximately half of the articles that did mention goal setting did so only peripherally. Of the very small number of all articles that dealt more than incidentally with goal setting, however, the coverage was largely research-consistent (particularly with respect to the importance of goal acceptance).

Summary. Our analysis of Research Question 2 suggests that with respect to the importance of *intelligence* or GMA to job performance, there has been only sporadic (but accurate) transfer of research findings to *HRM,* limited but mostly research-inconsistent transfer to *HBR*, and no transfer to *HR Magazine.* With respect to *personality*, the results for *HRM* mirror those with respect to intelligence—very limited, but research-consistent, coverage. In the case of *HR Magazine,* coverage is also at a very low level ($< 1\%$), and claims are a mix of research-consistent and research-inconsistent. However, on the positive side, *HR Magazine* is at least transmitting information about there being five (or so) basic personality characteristics, which cannot be said of *HBR.* In fact, *HBR* mentioned neither the discovery of the Big Five personality traits, nor the academic literature on charismatic or transformational leadership. With respect to *goal setting*, we found one relevant and research-consistent article in *HRM*; five articles in *HR Magazine*, of which three provided only peripheral coverage and two provided research-consistent information; and

six in *HBR:* three tangential and three research-consistent, although their coverage was partial.

Research Question 3: Sources of Evidence

The preceding analyses suggest little correspondence between what is being published in academic versus practitioner and bridge journals with respect to the three most important findings of HR research (as perceived by researchers). Areas considered to be very important by researchers receive little coverage in practitioner and bridge journals and, when they do receive coverage, it is as likely to be research-inconsistent as research-consistent, except in *HRM.*

This situation makes the question of who, or what, is cited as evidence in practitioner and bridge journals an interesting one. Thus, we examined all 152 articles that dealt with selection/recruitment ($n = 141$) or goal setting ($n = 11$) to examine what sources of evidence each periodical used. These analyses provide some indication as to what sources of information are viewed as most legitimate or credible at each periodical.

HRM. We tallied the evidentiary bases of the three journals in different ways, because the content and format of each periodical differ. Of the three, *HRM* most closely resembles top-tier academic HR journals such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Personnel Psychology.* For example, like articles in academic journals, *HRM* articles tend to cite a fair number of peer-reviewed research articles as sources of evidence (36.7 citations on average, with a standard deviation of 20.2). In addition, journals receiving the most citations in *HRM* are research- rather than practice-oriented. Specifically, the top five journals cited in *HRM* over this period were all peer-reviewed ones: the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (9.8% of all citations), *Personnel Psychology* (6.4%), the *Academy of Management Journal* (5.6%), *HRM* (4.4%), and the *Academy of Management Review* (2.5%). In contrast, *HBR* and *HR Magazine* (neither of which is peer-reviewed) each accounted for only 1.1 percent of *HRM*'s total citations.

Another similarity to top-tier journals is that most *HRM* articles are either original research or literature reviews. For example, of the 21 recruitment, selection, and goal setting articles found between 2000 and 2006, 7 reported the results of survey research (either questionnaire- or interview-based), 6 were based on either single- or multiple-organization case studies, 5 presented literature reviews, 2 reported the results of experiments, and 3 presented typologies or "best practices" based on either cases or qualitative analyses.

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[11] *HBR* originally published this article in 1970.

HR Magazine. This periodical was analyzed in a rather different way in order to reflect the typical content of its articles. Most articles in *HR Magazine* are produced by staff writers, consultants, or freelance journalists who present multiple viewpoints on some current topic of interest. In the process of reporting, *HR Magazine* authors generally interview a variety of people about the selected topic. Following a quick review of the 96 articles on recruitment, selection, or goal setting, we devised a coding scheme to capture most of the evidentiary sources used in *HR Magazine.*

At the broadest level of analysis, two coders independently recorded the number of times an article cited evidence from each of the following four categories: people, quantitative data or surveys, laws or regulations, and case law or legal settlements. At the next-lower level of analysis, types of people were further subclassified as (1) professionals, managers, or employees of companies, (2) consultants or vendors, (3) attorneys, (4) authors, (5) academics, (6) professional or trade association representatives, (7) applicants, or (8) psychologists and psychiatrists. In addition, quantitative data or surveys were characterized by the following sources: (1) individual companies, (2) professional or trade associations, (3) government, (4) consulting firms, and (5) academia. Detailed coding instructions for each category were given to both coders and are available upon request from the authors.

We initially assessed reliability by counting the percentage of times that the two coders (the second author and an undergraduate student) reached exactly the same tally for a source of evidence. This initial analysis showed agreement of 79 percent or better on all but three categories: professionals, managers, or company employees; consultants or vendors; and company data and surveys. The first author then independently coded specific cases of disagreement ($n = 116$, or 8.4 percent of total cases) in these three categories; she agreed with one of the first two coders in 82 of the cases. For these 82 cases, the majority coding was used; for the remaining 33 items (2.4 percent of all coded categories), the median figure was used.

Table 3 reveals that only 15 percent of the articles in *HR Magazine* on the investigated topics cited quantitative data as a form of evidence. Instead, *HR Magazine* offers evidence primarily in the form of quotes from various categories of people (78 percent of cited evidence), with 39 percent of such quotes coming from practicing professionals, managers, and employees, 36 percent coming from consultants or vendors, and 4 percent coming from academics. Thus, overall, there are few links to

TABLE 3
Types of Evidence Cited in Recruitment, Selection, and Goal Setting Articles in HR Magazine[a]

Type of Evidence	Percentage of Total Evidence Cited	Percentage within Category
People	78	
Professionals/managers/employees		39
Consultants/vendors		36
Academics		4
Attorneys		4
Authors/publishers		4
Professional/trade association representatives		4
Applicants		3
Psychologists/psychiatrists		1
Other		5
Quantitative data/surveys	15	
Consulting firms		26
Individual companies		24
Professional/trade associations		24
Government		17
Academia		3
Other		6
Laws/legal regulations	4	
Case law/legal settlements	4	

[a] Analysis is based on *HR Magazine* articles (2000–05) containing at least one selection or recruitment keyword ($n = 98$) and surviving a subsequent check for relevant content by the first two authors ($n = 91$).

either academics or quantitative data (from any source) in *HR Magazine.*

HBR. Because of the diversity in the types of articles it publishes, *HBR* required yet another type of coding scheme. Generally, our 30-article subset contained three types of *HBR* articles. In the first ($n = 14$; 47%), individuals (usually academics) presented their own research findings. In the second type of article ($n = 13$; 43%), individuals (usually consultants) offered advice or assessment on a topic based on their own (or their interviewees' or clients') expertise. In the third and smallest ($n = 3$) set, *HBR* staffers presented articles on rather disparate topics (e.g., managing millionaires, the quality of "resilience," and working as a room service waiter at the Ritz Carlton).

In these three types of articles, *HBR,* like *HR Magazine,* did not include much quantitative data as evidence. Specifically, only 8 (27%) of the articles cited any quantitative data, with more than two-thirds of these cases coming from academic-authored articles.

Similarly, most *HBR* articles (24; 80%) did not

include formal research documentation, either within or at the end of an article. Of the six that did, three were authored by academics, two by consultants, and one by an *HBR* staffer. Across articles, 20 percent of the citations made were to other *HBR* articles; 20 percent were to academic articles, and the rest were to other types of sources (mainly books). However, the main source of "evidence" in *HBR* is the anecdote. One hundred percent of the *HBR* articles in our sample used anecdotes or "stories" to make their cases.

Summary. Overall, *HRM* presents evidence in a way that is quite similar to that of academic journals: academic works are cited and referenced, methods are described (although not in as much detail), and either original data or a literature review figures in most articles. In contrast, *HR Magazine* gets the vast majority of its information or evidence from interviews with practicing managers or consultants. Neither academics nor peer-reviewed research play an important role in the typical *HR Magazine* article. Finally, *HBR* falls somewhat in between, presenting little quantitative data and few research citations. However, approximately 50 percent of *HBR*'s articles are academically authored or coauthored, suggesting that relevant research data and quantitative evidence may play some behind-the-scenes role in the construction of those articles.

DISCUSSION

Our most striking finding is that bridge and practitioner journals have barely covered topics that HR researchers believe to be among their most important findings. In other words, our results suggest a very significant failure of academic research to transfer to important practitioner sources of information. The fact that practitioner-oriented periodicals provide so little coverage of these topics and that, when they do, their messages are often quite different from the ones transmitted by academic journals, may be more than coincidentally linked to Rynes et al.'s (2002) finding that in all three areas, practitioner beliefs diverge considerably from research findings.

In presenting this evidence, we are well aware that our study is not without limitations. For example, we have not reviewed several types of alternative media that practitioners may use to get information about HR practices, such as informational Web sites provided by professional associations (e.g., SHRM or the Human Resource Planning Society), business books (Furnham, 2000), and business dailies (e.g., *Wall St. Journal*, *Financial Times*) and weeklies (e.g., *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*). Nor

have we examined the most frequently used source of information for HR practitioners—other HR practitioners. However, earlier evidence suggests that on average, information provided by HR peers about intelligence, personality, and goal setting is more likely to be inaccurate than accurate (Rynes et al., 2002).

Another limitation is that, of the many HR-related periodicals, we only examined one practitioner and two bridging periodicals. Thus, we left out other practitioner outlets with smaller circulations than *HR Magazine* (e.g., *HR Executive*), some HR bridging journals with narrower content than *HRM* (e.g., *HR Planning Journal)*, and some general management periodicals with smaller circulations than *HBR* (e.g., the *MIT Sloan Management Review* and *California Management Review*). However, we believe we selected the most appropriate exemplars in each of these three important classes of periodicals; note that Deadrick and Gibson (2007) also picked *HR Magazine* and *HRM* as counterpoints to the HR academic journals they examined (specifically, the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Personnel Psychology)*.

Despite these limitations, we believe our results raise serious questions for both research and practice in HR. For the remainder of this article, we speculate about the potential implications of our findings, first for HR researchers, and then for HR periodicals and the future of HR as a profession. Finally, we place our results in the broader context of science-practice gaps over a whole range of disciplines.

Questions and Challenges for Researchers

For some time now, academic management researchers have been losing ground to consultants (and more recently, journalists [e.g., Friedman, 2006]) as sources of ideas and advice for practitioners and policy makers (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2001; Bartlett, 2007; Rigby, 2001). Unfortunately, this decline is occurring at the same time that academics' dependence on practitioners for resources is increasing (Trank & Rynes, 2003) and global competition and growth are increasing the need for both more effective and more sustainable organizations (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2001; Bansal & Gao, 2006). Some believe that our failure to "matter more" (Hambrick, 1994) is approaching a crisis stage (e.g., Bartlett, 2007).

The decline of academic influence in the world of policy and practice raises a number of questions. Perhaps the first one is, *Are our major research findings truly unimportant to policy and practice?* Certainly, meta-analytic findings of effect sizes for

the relationships between intelligence, personality, and goal setting on the one hand and individual or unit performance on the other, suggest otherwise (Latham, 2006; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). If these findings are not in fact unimportant, then why do they receive so little positive coverage among practitioner and bridge publications? In the case of intelligence, it seems that the reasons reflect some combination of socio-political, legal, and ego-protective factors (Boehm, 1982; Gould, 1996; Pinker, 2002). However, the explanations for goal setting and personality are more mysterious.

With respect to goal setting, one possible explanation is that its positive effects have been known for so long that they are no longer "news." However, our review of *Personnel Psychology* and the *Journal of Applied Psychology* over 2000–05 suggests that goal setting is still a vibrant area of research. In addition, the fact that thousands of new individuals enter the HR profession every year suggests that information about the sizable effects of goal setting might well be "news" to a lot of practitioners. Furthermore, for-profit organizations nearly all live by financial goals, which receive intense scrutiny and emphasis (some would argue overemphasis) on at least a quarterly basis. And finally, executive pay is increasingly a function of meeting explicit goals. Given all this, why is goal setting research nearly absent from the practitioner literature?

With respect to personality, restricted coverage of the Big Five dimensions is also a bit puzzling. Clearly, personality is an area of great interest among the general public, and managers commonly stress the importance of personality-job or personality-organization fit in hiring (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Moreover, the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator is still widely used in business, with managers often identifying themselves as "an ESFP" or "an INTJ" (two Myers-Briggs "types") as a way of explaining their behavior. And our examination of *HBR* revealed at least some degree of fascination with the personality flaws of employees, particularly managers. So, we are puzzled: Why is there so little coverage of the really big scientific discovery of the Big Five?

Let us for a moment make the reasonable assumption (see Latham, 2006; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, 2000) that the research findings in these three areas *are* truly important to managers.[12] Further questions thus arise, such as: *Is the lack of coverage*

in practitioner and bridge periodicals a result of academics' reluctance to publish in such outlets? Many researchers believe that this is at least partially the case, arguing that there are insufficient incentives for academics to publish in practitioner outlets (e.g., Shapiro, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007; Vermeulen, 2007). However, academics at the most prestigious schools (e.g., Harvard; Stanford; MIT; UC, Berkeley; the University of Pennsylvania) do not seem reluctant to publish in *HBR* or other university-sponsored publications that are specifically designed to bridge the gaps between research and practice (e.g., the *California Management Review* and *MIT Sloan Management Review).* Similarly, academics are strongly represented in the bridge publication *HRM.* Finally, the fact that they are poorly represented in *HR Magazine* seems to be as much a result of editorial policy as academics' lack of interest in publishing there.[13]

Still, it seems clear that the underlying incentive structures in business schools, along with many academics' limited interest in producing articles for practitioner or bridge publications, are a substantial part of the problem. In addition, however, some who have studied the problem believe that some academics are not so much uninterested as *fearful* of attempting to move from purely academic publishing domains to those that are more oriented toward practitioners. For example, Vermeulen (2007) noted that for many seasoned academics, it is actually much harder to write bridge or practitioner articles than academic ones. Although this may not be true for everyone, there is little doubt that different skills are involved and that they take time and effort to develop (e.g., Staw, 1995). Carrying the argument somewhat further, Markides worried "that by attempting to develop incentives and systems that encourage both academic and managerially relevant research, we may get ourselves 'stuck in the middle'" (2007: 763)—for example, by presenting an inconsistent image to others or by failing to master the trade-offs inherent in not only different, but in some ways incompatible, activities. To the extent that fearfulness is a factor to be reckoned with, academics might benefit from more explicit activities designed to develop the "craft" of being simultaneously rigorous and relevant (e.g., Shapiro et al., 2007; Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007; Vermeulen, 2007).

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[12] For example, with respect to intelligence, Schmidt and Hunter say: "No other trait—not even conscientiousness—predicts so many important real-world outcomes so well. In this sense, intelligence is the most important

trait or construct in all of psychology, and the most 'successful' trait in *applied* psychology (2000: 4).

[13] An electronic mail communication from the editor of *HR Magazine* on December 13, 2000, to the first author suggests this policy.

Another important question to ask is the following: *Even if we assume that the research results examined in this paper are important for practitioners, are HR academics producing work with an optimal mix of research topics?* Research on the utility of using valid selection systems leaves little doubt that getting the right people into the right organizations and the right jobs can make a big difference (Schmidt & Hunter, 1981; Tenopyr, 1981). Popular business publications have delivered a similar message regarding selection—in the bestseller *Good to Great*, for example, Collins (2001) wrote about the importance of "getting the right people on the bus"—yet most practitioners still aren't aware of some of the most important findings from selection research. Given this, is it fruitful for HR researchers to continue to pursue ever-more specialized knowledge on selection techniques?

We believe it is time for a serious discussion about whether the academic marketplace for ideas is producing an optimal solution with respect to academic HR research. First, a case can be made that scholars have already gathered most of the "low-hanging fruit" that is likely to make a big difference to selection outcomes (e.g., generalizable validity of intelligence, conscientiousness, and structured interviews). As such, additional effort might be more profitably expended on better disseminating this research, or on studying some of the areas that Deadrick and Gibson (2007) found to be of far greater interest to practitioners (e.g., compensation and rewards).

Second, there is at least some evidence that both the academic and practitioner markets are calling for a rebalancing of HR research. For example, one consultancy survey presented at the 2006 Academy of Management meetings suggested that the top five research needs of HR vice presidents were executive compensation, compensation and benefits, special skills development, leadership development, and outsourcing (Fay, 2007). Similarly, in our own survey of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology*, *HRM*, and *AMJ* editorial boards, we asked, "What are five fundamental questions that HR researchers have yet to answer?" A first-pass sort of the responses into categories yielded the following five major themes:

- How can/should HR systems be aligned with strategy and how can they be made internally consistent?
- How do HR practices affect firm performance (e.g., processes and causal directions)?

- What are the most important contingencies or contextual moderators of HR practice-performance relationships?
- What are the trade-offs involved in various HR policy decisions (e.g., validity versus diversity, fit versus flexibility, personalized treatment versus fairness)?
- Why does HR have such low status in organizations, and what can be done about it?

A few thoughts come to mind in looking at this list. First, these seem to be very "big picture" questions. (In saying this, though, we should point out that the individual items comprising some of the categories were often much more micro; for instance, individuals wondered about *specific* policy trade-offs or *particular* contingencies.) Second, the questions seem to be framed mostly at the organizational, rather than individual, level of analysis, linking to the types of "strategic HR" issues discussed by Becker and Gerhart (1996) and Becker and Huselid (2006). Third, they are questions that would seem to be of great interest to practitioners as well as academics. Indeed, Becker and Huselid (2006) argued that the growth of strategic HR research has increased managerial interest in HR's academic findings. Moreover, they suggested that strategic HR was of broad interest inside the academy as well, pointing to the fact that among all articles published in *AMJ* since 1990, three of the ten most highly cited articles were in the area of strategic HR: Becker and Gerhart (1996), Delery and Doty (1996), and Huselid (1995).

However, the number of "unresolved issues" that are related to contingencies, nonlinearities, trade-offs and so on also seems to raise some steep challenges for evidence-based management. Although meta-analysis holds the promise of identifying "main" or "average" effects that can provide a basis for managerial action (Rousseau, 2006), concepts such as contingencies, configurations, complexity, "equifinality," and trade-offs all raise questions about the extent to which "average" findings can be usefully generalized (e.g., Benbya & McKelvey, 2007; Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Doty, Glick, & Huber, 1993). Thus, another challenge for HR academics is this: *Is the existence of configural, contingent, or path-dependent effects sufficiently extensive as to make evidence-based management (or "management as science") impractical?*

Finally, a somewhat related question is this: *Given that scientific findings change—and sometimes even reverse themselves—over time, how do we (or even, should we) persuade managers to use our "best available scientific evidence?"* This issue is certainly not unique to HR management, as a

glance at a recent news story ("Study Now Says Estrogen Is Safe") shows:

> Nearly five years after government scientists told women that taking estrogen replacement therapy increased their risk of heart attacks and strokes, researchers have concluded that the drugs are beneficial for many after all. Continuing analysis of the original data indicates that the researchers raised a false alarm for most women and that, if women begin taking the hormones shortly after menopause, the drugs do not raise the risk of heart disease and, in fact, might lower it. The latest piece of evidence, in today's *New England Journal of Medicine,* shows that taking estrogen for seven years or more after menopause reduces calcification of the arteries—one of the key indicators of atherosclerosis—by as much as 60%. (*Washington Post/LA Times,* 2007: 1A)

Similar examples of "flip-flopping" are readily identifiable in HR. For example, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, HR underwent a dramatic shift from the reigning dogma of "situational specificity" to one of "broad generalizability" for many phenomena, but most notably, for the role of intelligence in job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1981). Similarly, the "old" notion that personality was a poor predictor of performance has been replaced with the "new" notion that conscientiousness is a generalizable predictor of performance and that other Big Five traits also predict performance in certain broad classes of jobs (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991). Similarly, the old notion that satisfaction and performance are virtually unrelated has been replaced with the "new" finding that "the true mean correlation between satisfaction and performance is .30" (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patten, 2001). Finally, even the meta-analytic finding that structured interviews are more valid than unstructured ones (e.g., McDaniel et al., 1994) has recently been challenged (Oh, Postlethwaite, Schmidt, & McDaniel, 2007). Given the apparent instability of some of the major scientific HR findings, what are the implications for our role as potential advisors to practice?

Questions and Challenges for HR Periodicals

Although the current findings raise serious questions for HR academics, they also provide challenges for HR periodicals. One of the first questions that comes to mind is this: *Are practitioner and bridge journals doing enough to educate their readers about how to evaluate the strength of various claims?* One of the patterns we observed in both *HBR* and *HR Magazine* was the overwhelming tendency to focus on claims and testimonials from individuals that were unsupported by any references to empirical evidence. In the absence of such evidence, readers are left completely to their own devices in choosing how to decide among competing claims. Evidence suggests that under such circumstances, people are likely to choose the claims that most closely conform with their prior beliefs (e.g., Tetlock, 2000). As a result, the odds that anyone will actually learn something new or change his or her behavior as a result of reading such periodicals would seem to be quite small.[14]

Once again, this issue is hardly restricted to coverage of HR research. Indeed, issues of the relative credibility of competing scientific claims have become part of the national political conversation (e.g., Begley, Conant, Stein, Clift, & Philips, 2007; Gore, 2007; Mooney, 2006; Sarnoff, 2001). As science becomes more and more subject to manipulation by commercial and political interests, people become increasingly accustomed to the idea that you can find an expert who will argue anything and that no one's point of view is more valuable than anyone else's (Gutek, 1997). However, as Carl Sagan once said, "If all ideas have equal validity then you are lost, because then, it seems to me, no ideas have any validity at all" (quoted in Shermer, 2002: vi).

Thus, it seems to us that any periodical that aspires to be educational has a social obligation to find ways of differentiating among the strengths of alternative claims. Moreover, we think this obligation is particularly important for periodicals that are associated with educational institutions or professional associations, since both types of institutions are important in privileging certain lines of thought and delegitimizing others (e.g., Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002). In the absence of empirical evidence, the only clues of credibility offered to readers are the presumed status of the speakers, as indicated by titles and/or short biographies. Thus, like Abrahamson and Eisenman (2001), we believe that it is necessary to educate practitioners about how to better evaluate claims, evidence, and research findings. This, of course, is not just a challenge for periodicals alone, but also for researchers themselves, to use as many means as possible (teaching, consulting, and "translations" for practitioner and bridge journals).

In addition, we wonder whether practitioner and bridge journals might do more to *professionalize practitioners through increased coverage of ab-*

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[14] Of course, the likelihood of behavioral change is often quite small even when strong evidence is provided (e.g., Sherman, Nelson, & Steele, 2000).

stract knowledge and guidelines for its application. One of the most central distinguishing features of a profession is the accumulation of a body of knowledge that cannot be easily acquired without intensive study and extensive practical application (Abbott, 1988). Moreover, the crucial point about professional knowledge is that it is *abstract*: based on a *system* of constructs, principles, and relationships, rather than on disconnected series of discrete claims or presumed facts (Abbott, 1988; Rousseau, 2006). The abstract and generalized nature of professional knowledge provides the basis from which professionals can adapt to a wide range of situations, including changes in the underlying knowledge base of a profession. Thus, for example, once readers understand what general intelligence *is* and *why* it affects job performance, they will be better equipped to design selection procedures to assess it (there are many ways besides straight "intelligence tests" [e.g., Menkes, 2005; Schmidt & Hunter, 2000]), as well as to decide under what circumstances its assessment is most important. Again, however, HR periodicals will probably need to work jointly with academics (and perhaps practitioners as well) to move toward this higher level of sophistication.

Along similar lines, *we wonder whether periodicals (including purely "academic" ones) are doing enough to synthesize the knowledge we* do *have.* At present, the main methodology for synthesizing knowledge is performing qualitative or quantitative (i.e., meta-analytic) literature reviews. Although these are surely both helpful (Rousseau & McCarthy, 2007) and influential (e.g., Judge, Cable, Colbert, & Rynes, 2007), particular meta-analyses are often "islands unto themselves." For example, competing meta-analyses are available that claim to show that (1) extrinsic rewards interfere with intrinsic motivation (e.g., Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1991) and that (2) on average, extrinsic rewards have beneficial effects, and the conditions under which extrinsic rewards interfere with intrinsic motivation are fairly rare in the workplace and easily avoided (e.g., Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996).

In an attempt to engage such controversies more directly, some periodicals (e.g., *HBR, Academy of Management Perspectives)* occasionally or routinely present "debates" or "point-counterpoint" features. Such forums force participants to address competing claims in a more direct way than is typical in the normal peer review process, yet they nevertheless still leave readers in a situation of filtering all the evidence and choosing what to believe in the end. Thus, it seems to us that a useful alternative might be to ask partisans to first present their individual views and then produce some sort of synthesis between views, summarizing points of both disagreement *and* agreement. Such invitations might also facilitate more frequent occurrences of the extremely rare occasions when researchers with different positions (or researchers and practitioners) actually collaborate to design crucial empirical tests to elaborate the boundary conditions of each of their positions, as was done in an award-winning collaboration by Latham, Erez, and Locke (1988). Such crucial tests are almost never designed within the "normal" process for generating ideas, but they might be stimulated by encouraging explicit engagement of opposing positions for the ultimate purpose of synthesis (e.g., Leavitt, 1996; Platt, 1964). Therefore, perhaps practitioner, bridge, and academic journals alike could invite such syntheses and collaborations and make them highlighted features—such as this Editors' Forum on the Research-Practice Gap in Human Resource Management. More generally, both academic and practitioner journals and organizations could explore moves to new territory, such as the new journal being piloted by the Society of Industrial and Organization Psychology that will feature "articles on topics of interest to all SIOP members and include commentaries by individuals who bring diverse perspectives (e.g., empirical research, professional practice, theory, public policy, ethics, etc.)" (McHenry, 2007: 9).

Finally, we would like to explore ways in which academics might begin to have a stronger presence in *HR Magazine.* In saying this, we are well aware that academic research has a solid place in other venues associated with the Society for Human Resource Management, such as the SHRM Web site and SHRM's white paper and video series (see Cohen, 2007). Still, because *HR Magazine* is so much more widely read than other HR-related periodicals (especially by those who are new to the profession), we would like to find ways of collaborating more prominently with the *Magazine.* One possibility would be to have a special feature each month in which an academic produces an update of research in a particular area. Another might be for the staff writers (as opposed to freelance writers) to create a small "stable" of academics they can call for quotes and evidence regarding a topic at hand. Of course, implementing either of these suggestions requires that academics be willing to engage in such activities, even though they may not be very highly valued by their employing institutions (Vermeulen, 2007). In order to successfully bridge this gap, we all must do our part.

Conclusion

In this study, we developed a methodology that we believe those in other management subdisciplines might use to examine the specifics of the academic-practice gap. Specifically, we (1) identified areas where research findings seemed to be clearest, (2) surveyed practitioners to determine which findings they did or didn't believe, (3) determined which of these findings academics believed to be most important, and (4) examined coverage of these issues in practitioner and bridge journals. Our results suggest that: (1) practitioner and bridge journals provide little coverage of some of the research findings deemed most important by HR researchers and (2) when they do offer coverage, the messages they transmit are sometimes very different from the ones a reader would find in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Although we did not study the "reverse" gap (whether the issues of the greatest importance to practitioners receive commensurate coverage by researchers), Deadrick and Gibson (2007) recently addressed this topic. Not surprisingly, they found that the gap is equally large in the opposite direction. Specifically, the issues of greatest importance to HR practitioners—particularly those involving compensation—are only sporadically investigated by HR researchers. Thus, the gap between academic and practitioner publications is very large in both directions. To reduce it will require desire, and effort, from both sides of the divide.

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