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## Main article

# Is accounting an applied discipline? An institutional theory assessment of the value of faculty accounting-related work experience in the academic labor market

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## ABSTRACT

This paper recasts the debate over whether accounting research is relevant to accounting practice by asking the more fundamental question of whether modern academic accounting is an applied discipline. Using an institutional theory template, we argue that academic accounting only purports to be an applied discipline relative to the professional practice of accounting. We study the human capital of personnel inflows into academic accounting in terms of practice work experience. We conclude that pre-academia practice experience is counterproductive to academic success in terms of research productivity and movement in academic labor markets. Implications pertaining to the broadly based schism between “town and gown” in accounting are drawn.

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## 1. Introduction

How academic disciplines are organized and developed has been an enduring field of study (Kuhn, 1970; Lipset, 1994; Rojas, 2003). This type of inquiry is particularly interesting when the discipline shares a domain with professional practice. Here the core problem of coordination across the largely impersonal bureaucracies of constituent organizations has to be consistently performed with different value systems. How expert knowledge is created, curated and deployed in such a setting is worthy of study. With universities trading in symbolic currencies such as reputation and scholarly contributions (Sauder & Espeland, 2009), persistent conflict with the largely financial priorities of practitioners is likely, requiring skillful management to produce harmonious conceptions of value-added opportunities.

Accountancy in the US has been the quintessential vocational pursuit among undergraduate students. Based on little more than an undergraduate major in the subject, students in many states qualify to sit for the profession's major licensing examination. Accounting faculty provide part of a university's undergraduate program delivery effort, rather than being housed in specialized graduate-only environments like those of medicine and law. Efforts to move accounting to the graduate level where more complete control over outcomes could be achieved have fallen short. Nonetheless, the teaching mission to put the best and brightest available students into accounting careers would appear to make accounting among the most applied of academic fields.

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Academic accounting consistently professes an interest in the problems of practice. It persists in the claims that practice contributions are being made and that more would be made with stronger practice support and understanding (e.g., Moehrl et al., 2009). Practice tends to characterize the work of academics as miscast, esoteric and unusable by accounting practitioners (Tucker & Lowe, 2014). Such a radically disparate set of views is difficult to reconcile with the continuing idea that accounting in the university is fundamentally an applied discipline. The contributions of an academic discipline to knowledge constitute the core of its social value, and therefore allow us to define the extent to which a field is applied, where such is contrasted with theoretical. Ideally, that which research discovers should filter into that which is taught because it constitutes relevant and valid information.

Since a strong majority of academic accountants were accounting practitioners earlier in their careers (American Accounting Association (AAA), 2012), the transition of these individuals from one side of the schism (see Bricker & Previts, 1990) to the other becomes uniquely important. In an applied discipline, the work experience capital brought to academe should have great value. This paper, guided by the theoretical template of institutional theory, evaluates the relationship between practice experience and positioning within the academy. This examination bears upon the extent to which practice experience can be leveraged into academic output and, therefore, informs the degree to which accounting is really an applied field. For these purposes, we define accounting-related work experience prior to academia (hereafter, “practice experience”) as full-time (not including internships of less than 6 months) work experience in accounting or accounting-related fields, including public accounting, financial accounting, management accounting and controllership, internal auditing, forensic accounting, cost accounting, consulting in accounting and/or finance, and financial analysis. General business and management experience and any other experience not directly related to accounting or finance are excluded from our measure.

The balance of this paper is organized into five sections. The first provides background on the academic accounting discipline and its relationship to accounting practice. The second summarizes institutional theory in this application. The third section describes the specific questions to be considered. The fourth section describes the conduct of the study and its results. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and their relationships to the broader phenomenon.

## 2. Background

Accounting has had a relatively brief run as an academic subject suitable for study at the modern university. Although accounting practice traces its history back to the ancient empires of Babylon and Greece, with its current form maturing during the 15th century (Sangster, 2017), its presence at the university scarcely precedes the 20th century (Previts & Merino, 1998, p. 142). After a long tradition of learning through apprenticeship, accountants who obtained degrees in the subject did not become commonplace in the US until after the Second World War. Riding the crest of the wave that has recast the purpose of post-secondary education in more vocational terms, accounting has only recently become a popular college major.

Who teaches accounting has undergone parallel changes. In the era of low demand, colleges could staff these courses with a modest number of ex-practitioners, most of whom continued to practice as time allowed (Leslie, 2008). These would be supplemented by adjuncts, whose main occupation was the practice of accounting. These people could teach on a casual basis, usually at night. In this era, academic accounting did not have a distinct identity beyond that of an ancillary activity of some practitioners. Although separate training and credentialing existed, it was rarely expected by colleges and universities, even from those employed as full-time teachers.

The scholarly side of accounting traces its origins back to such points as 1916, when a predecessor to the American Accounting Association was formed, and 1926 when *The Accounting Review* began to be published. However, these initiatives would need decades to obtain prominence as achievement markers for an academic career. Those that taught accounting continued to gravitate toward practice organizations such as the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and practitioner publications such as the *Journal of Accountancy*, until the last few decades of the 20th century (Bricker & Previts, 1990).

The separate identity of accounting academics began to take form in the 1960s and 1970s. A series of related developments, each of which sustained the others, made careers possible that featured teaching and research as primary pursuits and were less dependent upon accounting practice. These developments included the increased production of doctoral-level candidates for teaching positions, the upgrading of the business school as a fully participating academic unit at colleges and universities, and the conversion of *The Accounting Review* to a peer-reviewed publication (Sundem, 2014). The mindset change, often symbolically attributed to the 1968 research done by Ball and Brown (1968) on accounting information and stock prices, incentivized academic accountants to conduct empirical archival research. This research moved accounting closer to the disciplines of finance and financial economics, making research driven by economic theories more valued by tenure and promotion committees in many schools (Bricker, Borokhovich, & Simkins, 2003). For the first time, those who had academic appointments were encouraged to find topics that could be studied with some degree of rigor even if they had no present or vivid representation in the world of accounting practice or presented great difficulty for practitioners to digest (Fogarty, 2008). In this way, academic accounting joined the academics of non-business fields who had long since divided their loyalties, complicated their identities and enhanced their self-determining authority (Haskell, 1996).

The divergences that have grown between practitioners and academics in accounting can be identified mostly through the academic literature. The literature is important because academics judge each other based on their relative contribution to this corpus. Accordingly, academics typically bring their highest and best talents toward this objective. Academics are trained to identify and fill gaps in the literature. Whether these gaps are important to practice is oftentimes a secondary concern. This orientation allows the literature to be a self-sustaining and self-justifying force beyond the control of practice.

Academic accounting demonstrates several tendencies that seemingly run counter to the best interests of practice. In keeping with the silo mentality from which an academic disciplinary identity is created, academic accounting eschews the multidisciplinary world from which practice problems are made. Doctoral training tends to be very narrow both in terms of theoretical templates (e.g., economic-based theories and positivist epistemologies) and topics that are deemed worthy of pursuit and journals that are worthy of reading (Fogarty, 2008; Schwartz, Williams, & Williams, 2005). Such a selective array of incentives is likely to be consequential for the course of the literature and the methods used in its development (Gendron, 2015). When research lacking practical implications is the norm rather than the exception (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010), it loses touch with the needs of practice.

The growing rupture between the academic and practice sides of accounting has ironically manifested itself as the doctoral student shortage in the field. While maintaining the position that doctoral training is critical for the permanent faculty, doctoral programs have systematically reduced entering student cohorts (Plumlee & Reckers, 2014). This enables schools to exert more quality control even as they reduce the availability of younger faculty below the point needed to replace those who retire. Despite efforts to blame shortages in graduates on the inadequate number of those who might be attracted to become academics (Kachelmeier, Madeo, Plumlee, Pratt, & Krull, 2005; Plumlee & Reckers, 2014), the research reputation of doctoral programs seems to have triumphed over the public interest, at least as far as this implies an obligation to produce a sufficient number of adequately trained college professors.

In recognition of the public interest dimensions of the academic accounting problems, the US Treasury Department recommended work that led the AAA and AICPA to co-produce the *Pathways Commission Report* (American Accounting Association (AAA), 2012). Among its many recommendations, the Pathways Commission endorsed broadening the means by which academic accountants are trained. This echoed previous suggestions for all business disciplines (Doctoral Faculty Commission, 2003). However, insofar as the consent of elite schools was not sought about this conclusion, its viability going forward is problematic.<sup>1</sup> Because institutional prestige is the oxygen of the academy (Burke, 1988, p. 47), this type of academic program possesses the power to induce change.

Given the departure of a good portion of accounting scholarship from the needs of practice, why does everyone think accounting is an applied discipline if it is not? Put differently, why would academic accounting aspire to be an applied discipline if it is not? Answers to these questions require an unraveling of the origins of those who populate the ranks of the faculty of the discipline. Academic accountants were not born into that status, but generally were practitioners earlier in their career (Evans, 2014). An applied discipline should be marked by the work of those whose deep socialization as practitioners carries over to their subsequent academic pursuits. Since academics carry the culture of the discipline in ways that are either consistent or inconsistent with the practice that they purport to study, we should be concerned with their background. This evaluation requires a theoretical context and an empirical test.

### 3. An institutional theory application

Institutional theory has served as one of the major types of thought in the management studies literature for the last 40 years, usually tracing its origins to Meyer and Rowan (1977). Since that time, it has assisted in our understanding of many accounting phenomenon including budgeting (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1986), peer review (Fogarty, 1996), and governmental auditing (Gupta, Dirsmith, & Fogarty, 1994). Fewer applications have been made to the study of academic accounting (c.f., Tuttle & Dillard, 2007).

The essence of institutional theory involves four inter-connected ideas that can be readily comprehended. (1) Organizations often operate in environments of great concern to their constituents. In such situations, organizations exert considerable effort to demonstrate consistency or allegiance with the core values embedded in such environmental conditions. (2) However, such faithfulness is often a façade that is undercut by a mostly invisible reality that is inconsistent with those demonstrations. (3) Organizations that can successfully manage the tension between what they profess to be and what they are, tend to be rewarded with very circumspect or ceremonial monitoring. (4) The net result of the theory is to demonstrate that legitimacy is a key resource whose pursuit demonstrates that economic rationality is just one form of a more comprehensive organizational objective.

Little doubt exists that academic accounting occupies an important position in today's higher education. Facilitating access into a profession for students with no previous background in it represents a considerable value-added service to today's higher education market, wherein a positive return on investment cannot be assumed (Cassidy, 2015). For purposes of appealing to students (and their parents), close relationships with practice would seem essential.

<sup>1</sup> Elite refers to a small number of agents that control a disproportionate amount of wealth, power or privilege in a society. In education it specifically suggests those schools that are most selective in admissions and faculty hiring. These schools also tend to have the largest endowments.

Many structures exist to demonstrate how academic accounting is, in its essence, practical. One pertains to a semi-official operationalization of academic accounting unit quality. To be accredited, accounting departments stand alone in the business school by needing to demonstrate interaction with the practice community, a mandate that can be fulfilled in a variety of ways but which must be satisfied (AACSB international, 2016). Many accounting departments establish advisory boards filled with practitioners, in part to demonstrate close ties with public accounting and key corporations. The academic department's annual report, often disseminated broadly as a newsletter to constituents, is a key vehicle to reinforce the obvious through applauding the news of this year's support from practice in many forms, including student internships. The celebration of the ongoing success of alumni suggests that this is exactly why the academic accounting discipline exists. Thus, the structures of closeness between academe and practice draw upon the general prescriptions of how success in the domain should occur (Meyer, 2008).

The perception that academic accounting is a highly applied field closely linked to practice is easy to project, but difficult to live. Accounting academics find themselves in a field that imposes alternative values and criteria of success. This situation suggests that the imagery that accounting is an applied field may be effectually undercut by an alternative reality that better describes the day-to-day operations of an academic unit. With the common consensus being that horizontal differentiation from other accounting departments is critical (Stuber, 2011) and that this can only be done through heightened levels of scholarly productivity (Burris, 2004), very little actual work is devoted to the problems of practice. The cultural capital that has been created by outsized contributions to the knowledge base of the field must be protected and extended by some, and emulated by the rest. When relative positioning is made seemingly objective through published rankings, the effort to improve on these terms penetrates decisions about how to use time and talent (Humphrey & Gendron, 2015). Academic research is known to be the production of an output by and for academics. This diversion is best evidenced by the use of citations as the metric of influence (e.g., Brown, 1996). The quest for such an impact feeds a corresponding fascination with journal rankings and with faculty performance systems that exclude and question any connection to practice (Gendron, 2008). In summary, authors typically are not rewarded in the academic community for practice research.

The effective decoupling of academic accounting from the concerns of practicing practice is particularly ironic given the small degree of control each academic unit has over its own reputation. Perceptions in academic circles tend to be "sticky," often unaffected by new evidence (Quiggin, 2015). Failure to achieve on the desired scale is the modal outcome and is designed into the system (Fogarty, Saftner, & Hasselback, 2012; Gendron, 2015). Nonetheless, the idea that practice creates an environment of justification for solid academic work, rather than a marketplace for its consumption, is deeply embedded in the socialization of doctoral students. The leveraging of accounting practice and its resources protects the technical core of academic accounting while incentives designed by some academics discipline the behavior of other academics to actually avoid excessive practice entanglement.

Although institutionalized environments can be dynamic (Powell, 1988; Zucker, 1988) and actions possess a range of responses to changed circumstances (Oliver, 1991), short-run stability can result. Effective decoupling delivers the rewards of legitimacy from important constituents without the corresponding commitments and constraints. Organizations earn the logic of confidence from constituents, primarily because it also is within the interests of most constituents to preserve the status quo.

Accounting practice is reluctant to challenge the reality of academic accounting's commitment to their needs for a variety of reasons. Higher education is a high status section of society, in part because of the assumption that the sector selflessly pursues the public interest. In addition, since higher education is *the* engine of social mobility, a tendency to mitigate criticism of it exists in many sectors. A serious critique of accounting academic work would prove very costly for these reasons. Accordingly, the practice community demonstrates what Alvesson (2013, p. 22) calls functional stupidity by purposefully not asking big and threatening questions about academic accounting's values and reality.

Accounting practice also may be willing to accept a wayward academic arm because it derives positive benefits from current arrangements. The status of the profession is elevated by a visible association with the more prestigious schools (Fogarty, 1995). To some extent, individual faculty members also can be useful in extending the brand of specific accounting firms. More generally, enabling accounting faculty in their struggle for legitimacy within their school (see Pfeffer & Fong, 2002) made accounting more viable as a subject of interest for the "best and brightest" students, thereby increasing the flow of talent for the accounting profession.

Although accounting research has solved few practice problems, it also has not injured practice. Unlike Veblen (1943), accounting research embraces commercial values and mostly celebrates the role played by accountants in a capitalistic economy. Research that is self-referent and narrow in scope, called "boxed in" (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013), poses little threat to established interests.

#### 4. Hypotheses

Although this research involves several testable hypotheses, these express variations on a single idea. If accounting is an applied discipline, practice experience in accounting should create a valuable form of information/expertise capital that can be converted into academic capital. If such an entry-level condition exists and is valued by the academic community, an advantage would exist for those with first-hand practice involvement that cannot be easily replicated or substituted for

by others. Such a relationship marks the essence of an applied discipline and implies the existence of a distinctive culture that can be reproduced in academic work (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997).

If a positive “return to” practice experience exists, one would expect that more senior people from practice will enter academe.<sup>2</sup> Pursuit of an applied discipline should be an opportunity to study a dynamic field of practice that becomes more difficult to know without a more extensive practice prelude. The first hypothesis evaluates the relationship between the progression of time and the amount of practice experience that faculty tend to possess. As academic accounting matures, we need to know if successful academics have leveraged their practitioner experience more or less exhaustively. The test of the following hypothesis will also allow the opportunity to consider the descriptive information.

### H1. The average level of practice experience for accounting faculty has not changed over time.

Accounting, like almost all academic disciplines, conforms to a “publish or perish” edict. The production of published research is the *sine qua non* for career success. Without this form of scholarly activity, faculty are unlikely to make tenure and to be able to sustain their academic position. A superior publication record translates into personal visibility, high status within the academic community, additional compensation and release from other work duties (Gendron, 2015). *Ceteris paribus*, those with ample practice experience should have an advantage in the discernment of worthwhile research questions in an applied field. The work of these individuals should have strong practical implications that should provide a major “leg up” in the review process. If research requires access, individuals with practice experience should be advantaged by the existence of networks that would enable subjects, resources or even funding to be obtained. On a personal note, practice experience should have taught an individual how to persevere through obstacles, bring the requisite work ethic and maintain a proactive competitiveness about the research process.

On the other hand, if accounting is not the applied field that it purports to be, those with high levels of practice experience may be disadvantaged. If the literature exhibits a preference for narrow and fragmented research, such persons may persist with unpopular holistic and overly-messy research in response to the need to pursue the technical realism of the phenomenon as it has been defined in the literature. “Box-breaking” work of this sort is likely to meet with editorial resistance (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). More generally, the practice-experienced person is likely to have limited tolerance for excessive demands for methodological purity in research, which nonetheless, may have an important message for practice. People with ample practice experience may believe that a transcendent practical reality exists. In order not to prejudge the tastes of the literature, the following hypothesis captures the neutral expectation:

### H2. Accounting faculty with more practice experience will not publish less than accounting faculty with less practice experience.

The ability to publish is not only a reflection of personal attributes and useful prior practice experience. Research is an art that requires strict attention to many diverse elements that are not extant in the conventional wisdom. Success in this endeavor escapes reduction to simple recipes or formulas, but requires the ability to appreciate highly granulated theory borrowed from other disciplines, to statistically analyze quantitative data and to write with some degree of courage and grace *inter alia*. Although training in such matters occurs in all doctoral programs, the quality of such is not a constant. Some doctoral programs possess better faculty supervisors and role models, more talented peers and more abundant resources of all sorts. More competition exists to matriculate in those programs believed to do better at training successful accounting scholars.

In part because of their disproportionate contributions to the knowledge base, top doctoral programs enjoy an elite status within academic accounting. Admission into doctoral training at such a university holds out the promise that one can enter the group that not only possesses more resources but also is enabled to impose preferences and mental schema upon others (Wacquant, 1987). In academia, this is accomplished in many ways but none more visible than in the gatekeeping role of editorial boards (Fogarty & Liao, 2009; Lee, 1997). Performed in a way never lacking in technical justification, a semi-sponsored mobility results that preserves the justification of cultural dominance for elite institutions (Blankley & Ruhl, 1996).

When admitting the doctoral students needed to reproduce the institutional hierarchy, elite schools could use various criteria, under the assumption that many possess the markers that indicate the intellectual ability to do the required work and ultimately earn the degree. Candidates will vary primarily on the extent of their accounting-related practice experience. An applied discipline would recognize the value of such human capital. Such a field would understand how the insights obtained in the world of practice could be effectively leveraged into academic projects that could otherwise not be performed and, perhaps, not even imagined. A field that did not see itself as applied would be, at best, indifferent to practice-experienced capital possessed by a doctoral candidate. Such an academic discipline might instead prioritize the possession of previously earned credentials from elite educational institutions (Fogarty & Zimmerman, 2017). Among other things, such a selection criterion would diminish the importance of practice experience to the effective furthering of the accounting literature. This tension can be captured as follows:

<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that a declining number of practitioners entering academe because pay differences have increased over time. Practitioners might not be willing to work at poor wages for 4–6 years and then get paid an amount less than what they were making. In other words, practitioners may not see a positive return to leaving practice and entering academia, particularly after a longer career in practice. This remains a question for future research.



**H3.** Accounting faculty with more practice experience will have earned their doctoral degrees from schools with equivalent institutional prestige as those accounting faculty with less practice experience.

Doctoral student admission represents a judgment about the potential of a candidate to become a productive member of his/her academy. A rather high attrition rate (AAA/APLG/FSA Doctoral Education Committee, 2008) suggests that focusing attention on potentially more successful graduates might be appropriate. For this purpose, success should not be defined in the narrow sense of having earned a degree, but instead embrace the more expansive dimension of how that graduation is viewed by the labor market. Since the production of doctoral students consumes resources, it can only be viewed as a success if it enhances the reputation of the doctoral program. The hiring networks that are formed by the decision of one school to hire the graduate of another school reveal the prestige hierarchy of a discipline (Burris, 2004). The decisions of the labor market also can be taken as judgments about how well the doctoral-producing school has converted the previous information/expertise capital of the candidate into the academic capital likely to be of value to hiring institutions.

Doctoral candidates in accounting have routinely observed that amidst a seller's market for their talents that has persisted for decades, academic jobs at the "top" schools are difficult to attain. These candidates recognize the importance of the supportive environment that jobs at "top" schools will offer to them, thus maximizing their chances for successful research careers. Landing at a "top" school provides the freshly minted Ph.D. holder access to the social and intellectual capital of colleagues (see Portes, 2000), who, by hiring a new person, create a collectivized vested interest in that person's success (Caplow & McGee, 1958, p. 207).

Hiring schools wish to select candidates with the best package of attributes predictive of career success. The general finding from the academy that schools hire candidates from schools believed to possess superior prestige (Cartter, 1976; Sopher & Duncan, 1975) has been replicated in accounting (Fogarty et al., 2012; Nikolai & Bazley, 1985). Within this imperative, hiring processes act as a filter or screen capable of second-guessing the decisions made by doctoral producing schools. By selecting some candidates from "top" schools and not others, hiring schools with ample supportive resources open paths to success only for some (McGinnis, Allison, & Long, 1982).

If accounting was an applied academic field, labor market decisions would elevate practice-work experience dimensions. Schools with positions would not only actively consider this personal attribute of candidates, but also would prefer those who had conducted early research that exhibited clear relevance to accounting practice. Beyond research, schools would prefer those who would be more likely to convey the culture of the accounting profession to students. For public relations purposes, schools also would benefit from faculty who were "cut from the same cloth" as their practice constituents. *Ceteris paribus*, candidates with more practice experience would fit this bill.

Hiring institutions that see themselves as not within an applied field would be less mindful of the practice portfolio of position candidates. Such schools might see academic culture as relatively autonomous. Decision-makers in this environment would lean more heavily upon the academic reputation of the doctoral granting program, the research reputation of the candidate's faculty supervisor and the methodological merits of the dissertation research. Thus:

**H4.** Accounting faculty with more practice experience will obtain initial academic appointments at schools with equivalent academic prestige as accounting faculty with less practice experience.

In sum, the four hypotheses together attempt to determine the extent to which practice experience and credentials make positive inroads into academic circles. The purpose of this effort is to ascertain the value function of academic accounting. The inquiry is predicated on the fact that without a focus on people, disciplines are reifications. Recognizing that academic accounting is mostly populated by ex-practitioners (American Accounting Association (AAA), 2012), this study emphasizes the interpenetration of cultures through the labor market. Although this work could be seen as the inevitable fate of substance in the largely symbolic academic world, it be might better conceptualized as a layering of alternative forms of credibility, as would be predicted by institutional theory.

## 5. Research design and hypotheses tests

### 5.1. Data and models

Most of the data for this study was obtained from the curriculum vitas (CVs) of accounting faculty. This source provided information about their practice experience, their Ph.D. program matriculation and their first academic employment.<sup>3</sup> The CVs were collected primarily from all the websites maintained by colleges and universities. These were supplemented by CVs acquired from the AAA's job market activities. In order to match the sample to research productivity and institutional prestige data, CVs from faculty before 1990 and after 2010 were excluded, as were those who had retired or passed away. The information necessary to make these determinations also was obtained from the annual editions of the Accounting Faculty Directory.

We began our sample selection with the 2012–2013 Hasselback directory, identifying faculty with PhD degrees, verified that they were still employed as of 2014, and excluded faculty with non-accounting PhDs. After searching for CV information for the remaining faculty, we came up with a final sample of 1253 faculty with practice experience information, or about 57 percent of accounting faculty with accounting Ph.D. degrees. Table 1 Panel A details our sample determination process.

<sup>3</sup> First academic employer was also verified by way of the Hasselback directories for the year or two after the individual's PhD year.

**Table 1**  
Sample selection and descriptive statistics.

Description	Observations				
<b>Panel A:</b> Sample determination					
2012–2013 Hasselback Accounting Faculty Directory faculty members with PhD terminal degrees earned from 1990 to 2010	2702				
<b>Less:</b>					
Retired or Deceased as of 2014	144				
<b>Final Sample of active accounting faculty members</b>	<b>2558</b>				
<b>Less:</b>					
Faculty with PhD degrees in fields other than accounting	358				
Missing pre-academia practice experience information	947				
<b>Final Sample</b>	<b>1253</b>				
<b>% of Accounting-PhD faculty represented by sample</b>	<b>57%</b>				
Variables	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Panel B:</b> Sample descriptive statistics					
YRSEXP	4.28	3	4.71	0	37
CERT	0.53	1	0.50	0	1
RANKED	0.61	1	0.49	0	1
NUMPUBS	2.77	1	4.11	0	29
FIRSTPRESTIGE	35.72	34	32.98	0	98
FIRSTPHD	0.44	0	0.50	0	1
PHDPRESTIGE	36.15	37	18.37	1	64
HBFOCUS	0.49	0	0.50	0	1
YRSSINCEPHD	13.65	15	6.12	4	24
GENDER	0.38	0	0.48	0	1
INTRNATL	0.24	0	0.43	0	1

Note: Panel A shows the sample determination procedure and Panel B shows the descriptive statistics for the sample of faculty for which all variables are available to run hypotheses tests. See [Appendix](#) for variable definitions.

Practice experience was restricted to full-time accounting-specific engagements clearly listed as such and rounded to whole years. We define accounting-related practice experience prior to academia (*YRSEXP*) as full-time work experience in accounting or accounting-related fields, including public accounting, financial accounting, management accounting and controllership, internal auditing, forensic accounting, cost accounting, consulting in accounting and/or finance, and financial analysis. General business and management experience and any other experience not directly related to accounting or finance are excluded from our measure. Faculty who began their PhD programs right after finishing their bachelor or master's degrees were counted as having no practice experience.

*Faculty research productivity*, a variable involved in  $H_2$ , was measured in two ways as described below. Both measures are taken from the author rankings on the comprehensive rankings website operated by Brigham Young University ([Brigham Young University \(BYU\), 2014](#)). The BYU website provides faculty and school rankings based on the count of publications beginning in 11 major accounting journals.<sup>4</sup> These journals are as follows (listed in alphabetical order):

1. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* (AOS)
2. *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory* (AJPT)
3. *Behavioral Research in Accounting* (BRIA)
4. *Contemporary Accounting Research* (CAR)
5. *Journal of Accounting & Economics* (JAE)
6. *Journal of Accounting Information Systems* (JIS)
7. *Journal of Accounting Research* (JAR)
8. *Journal of Management Accounting Research* (JMAR)
9. *Journal of the American Taxation Association* (JATA)
10. *Review of Accounting Studies* (RAST)
11. *The Accounting Review* (TAR)

The BYU measure is more comprehensive than prior measures of research productivity, which only considered the top 3 or 6 accounting journals and has been used in prior research (e.g., [Coyne, Summers, Williams, & Wood, 2010](#); [Holderness, Myers, Summers, & Wood, 2013](#)). The use of a less comprehensive publication measure reflects the growing tendency in academic accounting to limit the journals in which faculty are incentivized to publish ([Reinstein & Calderon, 2006](#)).

After obtaining the 2014 BYU research rankings, we converted the rankings for universities, faculty, and PhD programs into the raw publication numbers on which the rankings are based. We made this conversion to calculate our research pro-

<sup>4</sup> In 2015, BYU added Accounting Horizons to the list, making the 2015 rankings based on 12 journals. The 2014 and prior rankings are based on 11 journals.

ductivity and institutional prestige measure so that our measures were increasing in research productivity since the rankings have an inverse relation (the lower the ranking, the more publications). *NUMPUBS* represents a faculty member's research productivity based on the number of publications in the 2014 BYU top 11 accounting journals from 1990 to 2014. It is the dependent variable used to test our second hypothesis. As an alternate measure of faculty research productivity, we also use the variable *RANKED*, which equals 1 if the faculty has published at least once in these top 11 journals in 1990–2014, and 0 otherwise. This is dichotomous rather than continuous measure represented by *NUMPUBS* and analyzes the odds of publication in these journals.

In our model of faculty research productivity as a function of pre-academic practice experience, we control for PhD program prestige and the type of first employer the faculty member placed at, since more elite PhD programs and more research-focused employers, particularly doctoral programs, incentivize and even require publication in the top accounting journals for tenure and promotion. Controlling for these factors allows us to properly compare faculty from more versus less research-oriented schools.

We utilize two measures of first employer prestige: *FIRSTPHD*, an indicator variable for whether the employer has a doctoral program or not, and *FIRSTPRESTIGE*, the number of publications in the BYU top 11 journals from 1990 to 2014 published by the faculty of the individual's first employer school. The second measure recognizes that successful research activity is not the exclusive vector of prestige. The variable *FIRSTPRESTIGE* is also used as the dependent variable to test our third hypothesis, utilizing the same control variables as used to test hypothesis 2. Finally, *PHDPRESTIGE* represents the prestige of the PhD program from which the faculty matriculated, measured as the number of publications used to calculate the program's 2014 BYU PhD program ranking. This variable is used as a control in the Hypothesis 2 and 3 models and as a dependent variable in the test of Hypothesis 4. We also used rankings developed by Fogarty and Markarian (2007) in our supplementary untabulated analyses. Rankings offered by Fogarty and Markarian (2007) weight publication heavily but combine this ranking with those of several other sources of merit.<sup>5</sup>

Several control variables were also introduced for the tests of H<sub>2</sub>–H<sub>4</sub>. Most importantly, a time measure was constructed by calculating the number of years that had elapsed since the completion of a faculty member's doctoral degree to distinguish how long he/she had to demonstrate research productivity (*YRSSINCEPHD*). Results are substantially the same if year fixed effects for the faculty's PhD year are used instead of *YRSSINCEPHD*. Also, gender (*GENDER*) and research sub-disciplines (*HBFOCUS* equals 1 if the first research/teaching focus listed in the Hasselback directory is financial accounting) were used as controls. Gender was determined from manual coding of the first names of individuals. This occasionally required consultation with others. However, because gender was found to be insignificant in all models, we removed it in the final tabulations of the results. The latter recognizes the special advantage that the pursuit of the financial accounting area has achieved in the literature.

In summary, univariate *t*-test analyses are conducted to test H<sub>1</sub> regarding the trend in practice experience across time and the following regression models are used to test H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, and H<sub>4</sub>, respectively:

$$H_2 : \text{Research Productivity}(\text{NUMPUBS and RANKED}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{YRSEXP} + \beta_2 \text{FIRSTPRESTIGE}(\text{FIRSTPHD}) \\ + \beta_3 \text{PHDPRESTIGE} + \beta_4 \text{YRSSINCEPHD} + \beta_5 \text{HBFOCUS} + \varepsilon$$

$$H_3 : \text{PHDPRESTIGE} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{YRSEXP} + \beta_2 \text{YRSSINCEPHD} + \beta_3 \text{HBFOCUS} + \varepsilon$$

$$H_4 : \text{FIRSTPRESTIGE} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{YRSEXP} + \beta_2 \text{PHDPRESTIGE} + \beta_3 \text{YRSSINCEPHD} + \beta_4 \text{HBFOCUS} + \varepsilon$$

## 5.2. Sample information and hypothesis test results

Along with the details of our sample determination procedures, Table 1 (Panel B) also displays the sample descriptive statistics. Approximately 38 percent of the sample is female and approximately one quarter of the sample faculty have an international background (obtained bachelor degrees outside of the U.S.). Fig. 1 depicts the total practice experience of the sample. For the group, the absence of any practice experience is the modal result. The top five other categories by frequency would be two years, three years, four years and one year of experience. People with high levels of practice experience are under-represented in the data, especially those with more than 10 years of experience.

The first hypothesis extends the opportunity to describe the distribution of practice experience across academic accounting. Although the most important barometer of change is that which occurs through time for the entire data set of faculty, years of practice experience can be examined for subsets of the sample in order to detect any otherwise submerged trajectories.

Since the data in the sample comprises graduations over 20 years, partitions involving an ample number of years are possible. The first entailed approximately a median split contrasting the first 11 years (1990–2000) with the last 10 years (2001–2010). As reported on Table 2 Panel A, total practice experience has declined from a mean of 4.48 years in the earlier period to 4.09 years in the latter period. However, the decline does not reach statistical significance at conventional levels ( $t = -1.41$ ,  $p < 0.16$ ). More insight about this declining trend can be observed when the data is divided into three seven-year groups. Results shown in Panel B, identify declines between the middle period of 1997–2003 and the last period (2004–2010), when the mean practice experience level dropped from 4.99 years to 3.91 years ( $t = -3.07$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

<sup>5</sup> These include citations, editorial board membership and subjective reputational rankings published by the mainstream media.



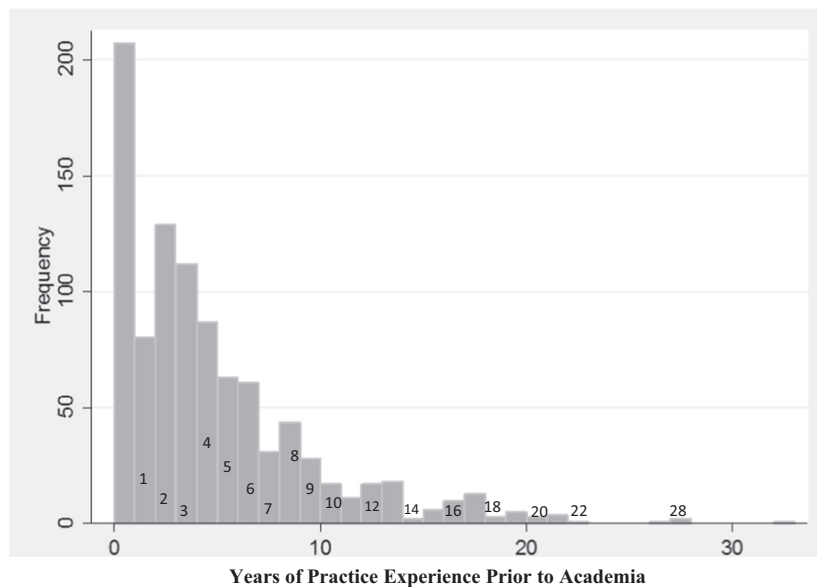


Fig. 1. Histogram of the frequency of sample accounting faculty by years of pre-academia practice experience.

Table 2

Test of H1: Analysis of faculty years of practice experience over time by research/teaching focus categories.

Focus	Mean Years of Exp. (N) 1990–2000		Mean Years of Exp. (N) 2001–2010		T statistic (2 tailed p-value)	
<b>Panel A:</b> Univariate analysis splitting the sample into two time periods						
Financial	<b>4.03 (286)</b>		<b>3.36 (326)</b>		<b>–1.88 (0.059)</b>	
Audit	5.26 (106)		5.18 (84)		–0.11 (0.916)	
Managerial/Cost	3.67 (113)		5.38 (66)		1.96 (0.53)	
Tax	5.69 (61)		5.08 (36)		–0.64 (0.523)	
Other	5.15 (93)		4.44 (82)		–0.88 (0.381)	
Total	4.48 (659)		4.09 (594)		–1.41 (0.158)	
Non-Financial Total (Audit/Managerial/Cost/Tax/Other)	4.82 (373)		5.05 (265)		0.52 (0.605)	
Time period	1990–1996		1997–2003		2004–2010	
Period #	1		2		3	
Focus	Mean Yrs of Exp (N)	T stat Group 2–1 (p value)	Mean Yrs of Exp (N)	T stat Group 3–2 (p value)	Mean Yrs of Exp (N)	T stat Group 3–1 (p value)
<b>Panel B:</b> Univariate analysis splitting the sample into three time periods						
Financial	3.57 (174)	<b>1.96 (0.05)</b>	4.54 (166)	<b>–2.89 (0.004)</b>	3.21 (272)	–0.91 (0.36)
Audit	4.91 (64)	0.92 (0.36)	5.57 (58)	–0.32 (0.74)	5.23 (68)	0.34 (0.73)
Managerial/Cost	3.59 (71)	1.50 (0.14)	4.80 (59)	–0.06 (0.95)	4.73 (49)	1.11 (0.27)
Tax	5.55 (42)	0.72 (0.47)	6.38 (29)	<b>–1.78 (0.08)</b>	4.31 (26)	–1.27 (0.21)
Other	4.59 (61)	0.605 (0.54)	5.18 (55)	–0.43 (0.66)	4.71 (59)	–0.13 (0.89)
Total	4.14 (412)	<b>2.56 (0.011)</b>	4.99 (367)	<b>–3.07 (0.002)</b>	3.91 (474)	–0.74 (0.46)
Non-Financial Total	4.55 (238)	<b>1.81 (0.07)</b>	5.35 (201)	–0.79 (0.42)	4.91 (199)	0.72 (0.47)

Surprisingly, distinct and sometimes significant increases in practice experience levels occurred between the first and second periods. Throughout, we observe that practice experience tends to be less intensive in academic accounting now than it was before.

Table 2 also shows the change in practice experience over time when faculty members are partitioned based on accounting discipline sub-fields. While the variation across the sub-fields in the average amount of practice experience is interesting, change over time is the focus of the hypothesis. As shown in Panel A, declines in practice experience are most prevalent in the financial accounting research/teaching area with the mean experience from 1990–2000 to the period 2001–2010 declining by 0.67 years (significant at  $p = 0.059$ ). Although the mean experience for the managerial/cost area increased by 1.71 years between the two sub-periods, the difference is not statistically significant. Changes in practice experience by sub-discipline between the three time periods are shown in Panel B. All sub-disciplines show increases in the mean practice experience from the period 1990–1996 to the period 1997–2003, however, only the change in financial accounting is significant ( $p = 0.05$ ). All sub-disciplines showed decreases in practice experience between the period 1997–2003 to the period

**Table 3**

Test of H2: Association between practice experience and research productivity.

<i>Faculty Research Productivity = <math>\beta_0 + \beta_1 YRSEXP + \beta_2 FIRSTPRESTIGE (FIRSTPHD) + \beta_3 PHDPRESTIGE + \beta_4 YRSINCEPHD + \beta_5 HBFOCUS + \varepsilon</math></i>				
Dependent Variable:	OLS Regression (number of publications)		Logistic Regression (odds of publishing at least once)	
	NUMPUBS Coefficient (t-statistic)		RANKED = 1 Coefficient [Odds Ratio] (z-statistic)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Prestige measure of first employer used in regression model				
<i>YRSEXP</i>	−0.023 (−1.13)	Employer has PhD program = 1, else 0 −0.042** (−1.96)	Prestige score of first employer −0.032*** [0.968] (−2.30)	Employer has PhD program = 1, else 0 −0.040*** [0.961] (−2.89)
<i>FIRSTPRESTIGE</i>	0.058*** (16.64)		0.030*** (11.04)	
<i>FIRSTPHD</i>		2.407*** (10.69)		1.310*** (9.01)
<i>PHDPRESTIGE</i>	0.029*** −4.77	0.057*** (9.34)	0.022*** (5.34)	0.033*** (8.41)
<i>YRSINCEPHD</i>	0.150** (9.68)	0.139*** (8.51)	−0.007 (−0.61)	−0.012 (−1.11)
<i>HBFOCUS</i>	−0.159 (−0.81)	−0.044 (−0.21)	−0.190 (−1.38)	−0.155 (−1.15)
Intercept	−2.224*** (−6.62)	−2.050*** (−5.77)	−0.898*** (−3.91)	−0.774*** (−3.46)
N	1253	1253	1253	1253
F statistic	125***	85***		
Likelihood ratio			339***	281***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.331</b>	<b>0.252</b>	<b>0.203</b>	<b>0.169</b>
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>				

This table shows OLS and logistic regression models examining the relation between accounting faculty years of accounting-related practice experience and research productivity. Faculty research productivity refers to research productivity in the top accounting journals and is measured by the number of publications between 1990 and 2014 in the 11 major accounting journals tracked by the BYU research rankings.

Column (1) Uses *FIRSTPRESTIGE* and (2) uses *FIRSTPHD* as a proxy for first employer institutional prestige.

See Appendix for variable definitions.

\*\*\*, \*\*, \* indicates significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively, 2-tailed except for *YRSEXP*, which is 1-tailed.

2004–2010, however, only the changes in financial and tax sub-disciplines are significant ( $p = 0.004$  and  $p = 0.08$ , respectively). Comparing the earliest period (1990–1996) to the latest period (2004–2010), the mean values of practice experience for financial and tax sub-disciplines decreased while the mean values of practice experience for managerial/cost and audit increased. Although the directionality of these sub-discipline changes in practice experience between the earliest and latest time periods are interesting, none of these changes are statistically significant. Overall the changes in the financial sub-discipline are driving the total changes observed.

The second hypothesis considers the relationship between practice experience and research productivity. Contrary to the null hypothesis, Table 3 summarizes results that show that more practice experience is associated with lower research productivity in the top accounting journals. In the OLS regression seeking to explain the number of publications in top journals, practice experience is significant at  $p < 0.10$ . In the other columns of the table, this significant negative relationship is strengthened using a logistic regression model that is based upon the calculated odds of publishing at least a single article in the top 11 accounting journals. This relationship is significant at  $p < 0.01$ . Practice experience, instead of being a factor that benefits research success, appears to actually hinder it.

To supplement our linear regression analysis, we perform a closer examination of the data (untabulated), which shows the highly monotonic nature of the Hypothesis 2 data. The most successful publishers are the accounting faculty with little practice experience. We calculated the average research productivity of faculty with 0–10 years of experience (each) and buckets of greater experience. We see a decreasing trend in research productivity year by year after 1–2 years of experience. The percentage of accounting faculty with some success within the top 11 journals diminishes with each successive increment of practice experience (untabulated). The data suggests that approximately one year of practice experience yields the highest research productivity (highest BYU ranking or greatest number of publications) in the top journals. Consequently, the null Hypothesis 2 is not supported. Those with more practice experience are less likely to be successful publishers in the top journals as academics.

The third hypothesis pertains to the extent those with more practice experience were able to obtain admission to consensus “better” doctoral programs as students. Table 4 shows that those with higher levels of practice experience are less likely to matriculate at higher prestige doctoral programs. This relationship is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level. The additional significance of the area of focus control variable does suggest some within sample variation. In results not shown, high levels of practice experience are much less likely for financial accounting graduates of higher prestige schools.

**Table 4**

Test of H3: The association between faculty years of practice experience and PhD program institutional prestige.

$PHDPRESTIGE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 YRSEXP + \beta_2 YRSSINCEPHD + \beta_3 HBFOCUS + \varepsilon$		
	coefficient (t-statistic)	Significance
YRSEXP	<b>-0.636</b> (-5.97)	p < 0.01
YRSSINCEPHD	0.111 (1.35)	Not significant
HBFOCUS	4.543 (4.40)	p < 0.01
Intercept	35.139 (23.74)	p < 0.01
N	1253	
F statistic	22	P < 0.01
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.046</b>	

This table shows the results of OLS regression predicting the prestige of a faculty member's PhD program prestige as a function of years of accounting-related practice experience and controlling for time cohort and research/teaching focus. PhD program prestige is measured by the number of publications produced by graduates of the PhD Program since 1990 in the BYU 11 major accounting journals according to the 2014 BYU PhD Program Rankings.

See [Appendix](#) for variable definitions.

Significance levels are one-tailed for years of practice experience and two-tailed for control variables.

The results in [Table 4](#) utilize the BYU accounting program rankings as the prestige scale for doctoral programs. When the alternative measure ([Fogarty & Markarian, 2007](#)) is used, a similar conclusion is produced from the results. Those with more practice experience are less likely to be trained at the top programs in academic accounting. Hypothesis 3 cannot be supported because of this robust inverse association.

The fourth hypothesis extends the logic of the third hypothesis with a more direct view of the marketplace for academic talent. Evidence pertaining to the association between practice experience and first academic appointment prestige can be found in [Table 5](#). The results indicate that those doctoral candidates with more extensive practice experience tend to take positions in the less prestigious sectors of the academy,  $p < 0.01$ .

The regression used to test the relationship between academic placement and work experience includes another variable capturing the prestige of the doctoral program, which also is significant at  $p < 0.01$ . Thus, the preference for doctoral graduates with *less* work experience is an incremental factor for the job market outcomes. Again the substitution of the [Fogarty](#)

**Table 5**

Test of H4: Association between faculty years of practice experience and first post-PhD employer institutional prestige.

$FIRSTPRESTIGE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 YRSEXP + \beta_2 PHDPRESTIGE + \beta_3 YRSSINCEPHD + \beta_4 HBFOCUS + \varepsilon$		
	coefficient (t-statistic)	Significance
YRSEXP	<b>-0.662</b> (-4.01)	p < 0.01
PHDPRESTIGE	0.909 (21.06)	p < 0.01
YRSSINCEPHD	-0.478 (-3.81)	p < 0.01
HBFOCUS	5.617 (3.54)	p < 0.01
Intercept	9.459 (3.48)	p < 0.01
N	1253	
F statistic	120	p < 0.01
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.312</b>	

This table shows the results of an OLS regression predicting the prestige of a faculty member's first placement institution as a function of years of accounting-related practice experience and controlling for PhD program prestige, years elapsed since their PhD, and research/teaching focus. First employer prestige is measured by the number of publications produced by the school's faculty since 1990 in the BYU 11 major accounting journals according to the 2014 BYU University Rankings.

See [Appendix](#) for variable definitions.

Significance levels are one-tailed for years of practice experience and two-tailed for control variables.

and Markarian (2007) program rankings do not result in different conclusions. The market for academic accounting talent does not seem to differentially reward previous practice experience. In fact, the marketplace seems to prefer those without high levels of practice experience. Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

### 5.3. Additional analyses

Practice experience was configured in this research as that which increased linearly with time. Another reasonable view of it would render it as binary, contrasting those who had invested in a practice career from those that had not. This distinction could be created by contrasting those with and without practice credentials (e.g., CPA, CMA). Since such credentials usually require examination and experience, they represent a serious commitment to practice that many less committed accounting majors and entry-level staff do not make. Using this view of practice experience fails to change the reported results for any of the hypotheses. Those with practice credentials obtained poorer results in the academy (i.e., less publication as well as less prestigious institutional associations). This result is consistent with findings by Fogarty and Black (2014) who show faster and stronger declines in certification among accounting faculty in more prestigious schools.

Since accounting-related professional certifications, such as CPA, CMA, and CIA, typically require at least 1 year of work experience, certification (*CERT*), a dichotomous variable for whether or not one of these certifications is held, whether active or inactive) may serve as a proxy for years of work experience. The advantage of using certification as such a proxy is that unlike years of experience, which could only be populated for the subset of faculty members whose vitae could be located, certification data is available for all faculty members in the Hasselback directory. We reran our models using *CERT* in place of *YRSEXP* and obtained qualitatively similar results.

Finally, we performed analyses to determine whether or not accounting faculty who have not published in the 11 major journals have published in other outlets. Of the subset of faculty for which years of work experience was available, several hundred had not published in the 11 major accounting journals through 2014. We selected a random sample of about 10 percent of this group, 42 faculty members, using a random number generator. For each of the faculty members in this sample of 42, we carefully reviewed the CV, background profiles on the employing school's website, and/or did a search using Google Scholar/Google to identify their publications. We found that 8 out of these 42, or 19 percent did not have any peer-reviewed academic publications. Four of these 8 individuals graduated from their Ph.D. programs after 2007 and had working papers but no publications. The remaining 4 had graduated from their Ph.D. programs prior to 2008 and either did not have any publications or only had practitioner, non-peer reviewed publications. In summary, 81 percent of our subsample of unranked faculty had academic peer-reviewed publications, just not in the 11 major accounting journals.

## 6. Conclusion and discussion

The paper presents historical, theoretical and empirical arguments which suggest that accounting is not the applied discipline that many believe it is. This paper has been premised on the notion that a prelude to self-discovery is a rejection of the identity that others have chosen for us. Our argument that accounting is not a genuinely applied discipline opposes those that argue that accounting's applied nature is currently misunderstood, or that accounting research is accounting practice's long-term investment. Accounting academia has mostly rejected its obligation to be useful in most ways that practitioners would define this term. Led by an elite who have mostly escaped any external accountability, an alternative worldview has been constructed.

In the first portion of the paper, the two sides of accounting were portrayed as somewhat at odds, each with varying expectations and perspectives. Placed into an institutional theory platform, we identified the need for academic accounting to appear applied and yet not be truly committed to practice, and a practice community that benefitted from such a situation. The third and final phase of the paper undertook to reveal a primary mechanism of the decoupling of institutional theory wherein people with practice credibility are brought into the academy but then marginalized by the field's idiosyncratic social organization.

Academic accounting seems to have been mostly successful in constructing a form of academic capital that exists mostly beyond the ability of accounting practice to appreciate. Central to this currency is an individual's contribution to the academic literature. Tightly controlled by elites and always justified by claims of the rigors of true science, this literature does not leave much space for pragmatic service to others. The primary purpose may be to maintain and improve the position of those that have made these contributions. Practice credibility is a counterfeit currency in this symbolic, self-referential world (see Bennis & O'Toole, 2005).

Can we afford this sort of schism in accounting? As argued above, accounting practice may not need applied accounting research as much as it needs to bemoan the result that it is not getting any value for its monetary contributions. In beneficent times, society can afford a small community of scholars from elite institutions who sincerely believe that they are producing a valuable research product which ought to be the prototype for all academic labor, but that practice generally just does not understand. This view allows elites in academe to merely invest in the rituals of competence through research published in the top journals so that they can avoid being questioned the surplus that they consume. The pretense that accounting is an applied discipline in service to students that enlist and to alumni who pay back may be a harmless untruth that we have all

bought into and would be difficult to fully unwind. Academe possesses considerable normative power in general and accounting itself is intricately intertwined with the dominant discourse of how organizations manage change.

Recent developments have attested to the recognition that academic accounting has drifted from its applied status. The Accounting Doctoral Scholars (ADS) program, funded mostly by the large public accounting firms, took people with public accounting firm audit and tax work experience and subsidized their transition into the accounting academy. This exists as a counterweight against the tide of people with no experience. The theme of the 2017 AAA Annual Meeting questioned the relevance of mainstream research to accounting practice. Although it is too soon to tell if these developments will change the long run movement of the discipline away from applied status, it represents distinct first steps.

This paper has not explicitly considered the economic consequences of switching from a practice career to that of a doctoral student. This sacrifice is relevant to this paper because those longer in practice will *ceteris paribus* be more highly compensated, and therefore will have to endure a larger cost to re-train as an academic. This feature, together with other forms of continuance commitment may explain some of the low frequency of academics with higher levels of practice experience. However, it fails to interfere with any of the hypotheses which all concern the *relative* success of those with high practice experience.

When discussing academic accounting as a discipline, this paper focuses upon the knowledge that it creates through its research. Within that research, we have narrowed our empirical analysis to that work that is so highly rewarded that it will make a clear difference to careers. Future research will be necessary to determine if those with practice experience are more likely to contribute an alternative body of work that at least garners some reward. This paper's results also do not bear upon the teaching mission of academic accounting. Ironically enough, we suspect that teaching in the field is highly applied, especially insofar as it is not materially affected by this discipline's most celebrated research.

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### Appendix A. Variable definitions

<i>CERT</i>	A dichotomous variable that equals one if according to the 2012–2013 Hasselback Accounting Faculty Directory the faculty member holds one of the following professional certifications and zero otherwise: CPA, CGA, CA, CMA, RIA, or CIA
<i>FIRSTPHD</i>	A dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the faculty member's first employer was an accounting PhD-granting institution and 0 otherwise
<i>FIRSTPRESTIGE</i>	The number of publications in the 11 major accounting journals per the BYU research rankings database produced since 1990 by faculty of the school at which the faculty member was first employed. To determine this number, we converted the BYU research ranking for the school to the number of publications
<i>FIRSTRANK</i>	The 2014 BYU All ranking for the faculty member's first employer for all years since 1990. If the first employer is not ranked by BYU, a value higher than the highest BYU ranking is assigned to this variable
<i>GENDER</i>	An indicator variable that equals 1 if the faculty is a female and 0 if male
<i>INTERNATL</i>	An indicator variables that equals 1 if the faculty earned their bachelor degree(s) outside of the U.S. and 0 otherwise
<i>NUMPUBS</i>	The number of publications the faculty member has had in the 11 major accounting journals (1990–2014) per the BYU research rankings database. It equals 0 if none
<i>PHDPRESTIGE</i>	The number of publications in the 11 major accounting journals per the 2014 BYU research rankings database produced since 1990 by graduates of the PhD program. To determine this number, we converted the <a href="#">Brigham Young University (BYU), 2014</a> research ranking for the PhD school to the number of publications
<i>PHDRANK</i>	The 2014 BYU PhD Programs All ranking for the faculty member's PhD program for all years since 1990. If the program is not ranked by BYU, a value higher than the highest BYU ranking is assigned to this variable
<i>RANKED</i>	A dichotomous variable that equals 1 if the faculty member has at least one publication in the journals tracked by the 2014 BYU rankings and 0 otherwise
<i>YRSEXP</i>	The number of years of accounting-related practice experience prior to obtaining the PhD degree according to the faculty member's curriculum vitae
<i>YRSSINCEPHD</i>	Years since the faculty member obtained his or her PhD degree according to the Hasselback Accounting Faculty Directory (2014 – PhD year)



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