

## FROM THE EDITORS

### Reflections on Service Orientations, Community, and Professions

When I was a child we used to bake holiday treats for the neighbors. Not just the neighbors on our short dead-end<sup>1</sup> street, but also those on surrounding streets. Once the cookies were baked and wrapped, my brother, sisters, and I would go out, stopping one house at a time to issue good cheer. I remember feeling quite giddy about these deliveries: we were emissaries of the neighborhood in my young mind, the sharers of good tidings and contributors to community spirit. As I grew older, the enchantment began to wear off—until Mr. Santikos moved onto the street. When I went to deliver cookies, he gave me movie tickets in return! Our new neighbor owned movie theatres and suddenly, I wanted to bake for him every week. But when Mr. Santikos wised up and stopped answering his doorbell, the charm of baking for the neighbors was again tarnished; after all, many of these neighbors never baked us anything, and some were downright cranky. I began to protest to my mom that we had delivered holiday cookies to the neighbors for years and hence, done our duty. After I moved out of the house, I forgot all about the practice until I began moving into homes of my own and wondered why I never met any of my neighbors. Where were the cookies? Was there no sense of community?

Expectations of community vary widely from person to person, place to place, and job to job. One aspect of our lives, however, our profession, defines a community and a general sense of obligation to it. Scholars describe the trait-like characteristics that differentiate professions from occupations as: (1) a basis in systematic theory, (2) authority recognized by the clientele of the professional group, (3) broader community sanction and approval of this authority, (4) a code of ethics regulating relations of professional persons with clients and colleagues, and (5) a professional culture sustained by formal professional associations (Greenwood, 1957; Leicht & Fennell, 2001). Our profession as professors, more specifically, management professors, exhibits these classic characteristics. Each discipline and subdiscipline relies on a basis of systematic theory, or system of abstract propositions that describe in

general terms our profession's focus of interest and knowledge claims (Abbott, 1988). Our credentials (e.g., Ph.D.'s) and positions within universities provide us our authority, which society recognizes and sanctions. We have a code of ethics we adhere to (formally and informally), and our professional culture is sustained by several professional associations, most prominently the Academy of Management. But what exactly is a professional culture, and specifically, what is ours? Gaining a better understanding of what a professional culture is can help us better understand our own, the management scholarship culture. Like other cultures, this one has many dimensions, and community is an important one.

Central dimensions of a professional culture are a "commitment to a calling" and a service orientation (Moore, 1970). Commitment to a calling involves accepting the norms of a career and identifying with the profession it represents in its collectivity. Greenwood described a career as a calling, or life devoted to "good works," wherein "professional work is never viewed solely as a means to an end; it is the end itself" (1957: 17). He stated that self-seeking motives figure minimally in the choice of a profession; rather, an affinity for the work is the primary motivation. He went on to note this: "It is this devotion to work which imparts to professional activity the service orientation" and "The absorption in the work is not partial, but complete; it results in a total personal involvement. The work life invades the after-work life, and the sharp demarcation between the work hours and the leisure hours disappears. To the professional person his/her work becomes his life" (Greenwood, 1957: 17). Yet work becoming one's life demands trade-offs, some of which are made explicitly, and others of which are made implicitly.

I would venture that for most of us the motivation to join the profession was more than narrow interest in material rewards or status. Those who entered our profession thinking it would be the path to financial excess or abundant leisure probably quickly departed, one way or the other. Instead, ask amongst your colleagues what their motivations for entering the profession were and you'll likely hear evidence of "calling," such as a desire to positively influence students or the practice of

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<sup>1</sup> Now politically correctly called a "cul-de-sac" so as not to imply the promise of those living on the street is somehow limited.

management. As to the absorbing quality of our work, who among us has not fallen victim to what the French refer to as *déformation professionnelle*, or the incapacity to divest oneself of occupational concerns in other social contexts (Moore, 1970)? Ever listen to management professors at a cocktail party? Ever use the phrase "I posit. . ." when reasoning with your child? And, as a newcomer to the role of associate editor, I can attest that for some of us, the commitment to the calling can erase the lines between work and leisure hours almost entirely!

Beyond commitment to a calling, professional cultures are based on a service orientation. Moore (1970) described a service orientation as a set of three related norms: rules of competence, rules of conscientious performance, and rules of loyalty or service. Competence, Moore explained, is not just the education and credentials that lead to admission into a profession, but also the maintenance and improvement of both individual and collective standards (1970: 14). That is, we strive to keep our profession current by understanding management phenomena and the needs of our constituencies. In doing so we seek to maintain and improve our standards of research and teaching and achieve both individual and collective growth in proficiency, wisdom, and recognition. Several observations support the role of competence in our profession. At the individual level, our system of promotion emphasizes growth and improvement of our knowledge and competence throughout our careers and the outcomes associated with that knowledge and competence. At the collective level, our journals give ample evidence of the progression of our ideas over time.

Professionals are expected to meet criteria for competence but are also expected to take performance and the needs of constituents seriously and to treat them with emotional neutrality. We are expected as professionals to teach every student, measure his/her performance, and exchange knowledge with colleagues without bias. Professionals are characteristically described as a "community of equals" (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). The ethics governing collegial relationships within professional organizations often emphasize cooperation, support, and egalitarian values (see, for example, Johnson's [1944] classic discussion of norms among the dental profession). We share and disseminate advances in theory and practice through our journals and professional associations, and our norms of behavior are highly cooperative, despite the fact that our profession is defined by its autonomy and independence (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). We invest in training doctoral students even though they introduce "competition" into our com-

munity; we often peer-review papers in areas in which we ourselves are working; and we provide developmental help and advice to colleagues as they navigate our departments, colleges, universities, and larger profession. We also subscribe to egalitarian values through our emphasis on research and teaching performance as sources of professional recognition. And we rarely criticize each other openly, unless engaged in an academic debate; and even then, we usually only do so with great deference. Like police officers or physicians, we don't often question each other's professionalism, commitment to the calling, or performance.

Finally, professional cultures include a service orientation, which entail a commitment to community rather than self (Barber, 1963; Ritzer, 1973). Commitment to the community within our specific professional culture is more commonly referred to as academic service. While academic service can be directed at the business community, or at the university community and its colleges and departments, I'll narrow my discussion here to commitment to the professional community. We support our professional community by mentoring, training, and investing in our doctoral students so that they can become active contributors to our profession. We support the activities of the Academy of Management, such as the annual meeting, by submitting papers for presentation, reviewing submitted papers, serving as discussants or chairs, and attending or coordinating workshops and sessions. Many of us also serve in leadership positions within our divisions or the Academy as a whole. We also support our professional community through our journals—by submitting papers for review, reviewing submissions, serving on editorial boards, and serving as editors or associate editors. But you know all this. How does this relate to cookie deliveries?

Our professional culture, like any other profession or organization, is not codified in detail. We don't hand out a manual of the things that constitute our service orientation and how often you should engage in them. And a service orientation is not to be confused with individual "altruism." Goode noted that "professionals seek their own gain as much as any occupational group" (1966: 37). Rather, he contended, professional communities rely on socialization of norms and controls that ensure each member is rewarded more for her or his pursuit of collective aims than for pursuit of individual aims. With regard to academics specifically, Lewis argued that "it is commonly believed that academicians adhere to a puritan ethic founded on self-discipline, austerity and hard work. It is said that the best way for an academic to

advance their career is to advance their discipline" (1971: 269). Thus again, the emphasis lies in the collective. Yet Lewis went on to state that this romanticized characterization of academics had been rarely questioned. Should it be?

Coming back to cookie deliveries, how many of us share an enthusiasm for service to the profession because "it's the right thing to do"? Clearly some do. These are the colleagues who never say it's a bad time to bounce an idea off them, who are never too busy for a doctoral student, or too busy to do a peer review, or to review for a journal. These are the colleagues who take on leadership because it is a way to help the community. You get the sense that when these colleagues say thank you for the opportunity to discuss ideas with you, or to do a review, or to serve, they really mean it and have a great time doing everything they do for their profession. Maybe as their careers progress the giddiness of community wears off a bit, but their motivation to keep on delivering those cookies rarely wanes, and our community benefits enormously from this service orientation and commitment to the calling.

On the other hand, how many of us prefer to deliver cookies only in exchange for movie tickets? Clearly some do—it's not uncommon to hear colleagues discussing a "quid pro quo" orientation with regards to service to our profession. These are the colleagues who mentor only the doctoral students whose areas are of special interest or who offer coauthorship; who peer-review only when they anticipate needing peer review in return or feel obligated by their own previous requests for review; and who review for journals only as editorial board members or in the hope of publishing in them. Some colleagues implicitly consider conflict between the profession and their employing university, which Harries-Jenkins called "two distinct, irreconcilable systems" (1970: 53), when making service contributions. You hear evidence of this when colleagues describe their universities as places where doing journal reviews or other forms of service "don't count," so they choose not to do them. Don't get me wrong here: the cookie-for-movies exchange is a powerful motivator, and exchange results in a win-win situation; it wouldn't take place otherwise. And sometimes university or department norms, such as requiring faculty to publish with doctoral students to get tenure, are complementary to the profession's service orientation. Granted, some trade-offs need to be made—after all, you can't deliver cookies to a whole city—but where do you draw the line? Our profession is served by cookies for movie tickets, but what about those neighbors who don't own movie theatres and

the moms who don't think it's important to deliver cookies?

Unfortunately, many of us also can identify with the "been there, done that" attitude toward cookie delivery. Because the lines between our work and leisure lives as professionals are so often blurred, service to the community can be overwhelming, and you can feel as if you've done enough. Perhaps you began delivering cookies to build and contribute to the community or with hopes of some cookies, friendships, or movie tickets in exchange, but now you're just tired of it. But as a result, new neighbors move in and are not welcomed into the community or socialized. When you lock yourself out, they call the police because they've never seen you before and think you are a thief. Doctoral students, like all new entrants to a profession, need to choose role models (Mok, 1971). We study the effects of socialization and role models on organizational behavior, so we know the results of a lack of positive role models. We also know the effects of positive role models and positive collective identities, such as the colleagues who despite multiple decades in the profession are still coming to and presenting at the Academy meetings, still actively mentoring multiple doctoral students, still reviewing or serving on editorial boards even after holding editorial positions—those whose enthusiasm for delivering cookies never wanes. And, while we study business organizations, it is always important to remember that our profession is unlike the occupations we study: being in a profession means a commitment to community and a service orientation.

In closing, while I will openly admit that I'm no JFK, I will blatantly steal and modify his famous quote. "Ask not what your profession can do for you, but what you can do for your profession" seems apt for the lives we have chosen. And, when you adopt this philosophy yourself, a nice neighbor might welcome you sometime when you're new with a big batch of brownies.

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