

# Reflections from an Award Winner: Being a Holistic Academic

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In the words of Socrates, *the unexamined life is not worth living* as it is only in striving to come to know and understand ourselves that our lives have meaning or value. While not everyone agrees with the need to continually examine one's life, I have long been a fan of reflective practices. In my early professional life, I saw firsthand the power of reflective practice through the works of Professor Bill Torbert at Boston College and his action inquiry initiatives, particularly as related to feedback loops in the MBA consulting projects. As I matured in my professional life, my own reflections became the foundation upon which I have built my career. Philosophically, a good way to capture my thinking is in the words of James (1996, pp. 108-109): "Perception prompts our thought, and thought in turn enriches our perception. The more we see, the more we think; while the more we think, the more we see in our immediate experiences, and the greater grows the detail and the more significant the articulateness of our perception."

According to Raelin (2001, p. 11), "Reflection is the practice of periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning to self and to others in one's immediate environment about what has recently transpired. It illuminates what has been experienced by both self and others, providing a basis for future action." As anyone who has read my Editor's Corners in the *Journal of Marketing Education* can attest, I reflect often by casting backwards to see what has been attained in order to look forward at what might be attained (Yancey, 1998).

Reflecting on my academic career, I used the words "holistic academic" in the title here. Holism is the theory that living matter or reality is made up of organic or unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. The "parts" that comprise my academic career are research, teaching, service, and leadership, and I view each of these parts as interconnected much like the jigsaw puzzles as shown in Figure 1. Importantly, I am truly, and equally, passionate about each of the parts.

**Figure 1**  
**Interrelated Parts of Academic Holism**



I will now discuss each of these parts separately before bringing it all back together in this current reflective process.

## RESEARCH

When I reflect upon my years of research, I believe I have established a record as an effective, accomplished researcher and that my research has had impact in marketing and, importantly, across many functions and disciplines and that it positions me as a holistic educator. Over the course of my academic career, my research has encompassed several major topical areas, resulting in me often referring to myself as an eclectic researcher. As evidenced by its publication in scholarly, practitioner, and educational journals and its acceptance for presentation in refereed international, national, and regional conferences, my research has contributed to the advancement of marketing and management knowledge.

As an academic researcher with a strong preference toward impact on both for-profit and not-for-profit management practice, I have sought a blend of practitioner outlets in conjunction with traditional academic journals that incorporate a wide range of readers and interests. I believe I have targeted appropriate journals for my research results, with outlets ranging largely in the "A" and "B" range journals. However, I feel that journal ranking and acceptance rates are just two measures of scholarly influence and acceptance. An oft-noted critical measure of one's research is the impact on the field as calculated by the number of times other researchers have used the research to build and/or conduct their own research. While acknowledging the achievement related to having papers published in traditionally prestigious outlets, Barnes (2005, p. 110) stated, "If papers are often cited by others, then the contribution to the discipline is obvious and is expounded by the dissemination." Naturally, then, a critical metric for gauging the value of my research is that of a citation analysis. Goldman (1979) suggested that citations constitute a statement as to a work's importance and a means for subsequent authors to anchor their work. My research has been cited in a wide variety of top journals, in textbooks, in graduate theses and dissertations, and in working papers. Additionally, it has also been required reading in the classroom and has been included in various bibliographic listings for particular research topics.

Reflecting on overall impact, Jaffe (1979) suggested that there has been limited cross-fertilization between marketing scholars and those from other disciplines; thus, researchers tend to cite scholars in their own field. Thankfully, my research efforts have been successful in

being noted by disciplines outside of marketing. While the number of citations in the marketing literature is large, the number of citations in non-marketing journals is equally significant. The “reach” of my work has been broad outside of business as well. For example, my cross-functional and marketing strategy research publications have been utilized in the natural resources and agricultural fields, my nonprofit work has extended to areas such as animal research and religion, and my educational scholarship has had an impact in the library field, sports management, and in work conducted by researchers for the U.S. Army.

While I recognize that some scholars are linked inexplicably with a particular functional area and a theoretical orientation, this is not the nature of my research. I have always been a cross-functional, managerially-oriented researcher with a home in the marketing department. Cross-functionality, cross-disciplinary, and a managerial orientation dominated my research as a doctoral student in marketing at the Harvard Business School and continue to do so in my professional career. Importantly, I have always had a passion for educational scholarship, which provides a great overlap with my passion for teaching.

## TEACHING

The importance of the educational process has been a fundamental component of my growth and development. As a low income, first generation college student, as well as the first (and youngest) of eight children to attend college, classroom experiences and contacts with teachers have always been important to me. Thankfully, I beat the odds when it came to first generation college students. As described by Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella, and Nora (1995), first-generation students (1) have lower pre-college critical thinking abilities, (2) are likely to come from low-income families, and (3) are encouraged by teachers (not parents) to attend college. Additionally, only 36 percent aspire to a bachelor’s degree or higher. While the second descriptor was met, my mama and my teachers recognized that I did not meet the first descriptor that provided my early interest in the academic process. As a college student in the mid-1970s, there were not the various programs targeted specifically to low-income, first generation college students. Rather, it was dedicated teachers (at the high school, bachelors, and masters levels) and my mama who motivated me to pursue higher education and advanced degrees. As such, I have always had a strong desire to give back to the profession that put me in that 36 percent grouping. My teaching beliefs, therefore, are built upon the foundation of recognizing, nurturing, and rewarding those students who are willing to work hard and attain “reach” goals.

Bailey, Saporito, Kressel, Christensen, and Hooijberg (1997) and Bailey (2006) argued that not only are teaching and research complementary, they are also so intermeshed that they become functionally identical and could both be treated as reflective practices. I am a scholar who does not believe that

there has to be a trade-off between research and teaching. Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997) suggested that excellence in teaching requires more than just the act of teaching—it also requires educators to explore new approaches to student learning and to share the details of such explorations publicly so as to facilitate peer review and reflection. I believe that my teaching accomplishes what these researchers suggest: (1) I am successful in the classroom as exhibited by the comments and evaluations of my students, (2) I explore new approaches for student learning, exemplified by the different classroom projects and programs I have developed and implemented, and (3) I continually share these new approaches and teaching efforts with my colleagues via peer reviewed journal publications and educational presentations, as well as by sharing my business interactions with students and colleagues via teaching cases and textbook material. Being an educator means that I am a teacher, and my educational scholarship shows that I make a difference in my students’ lives and in the professional aspects of my larger community of colleagues—in essence, what I do has been shown to make a difference.

## SERVICE

I also believe firmly in giving back to my community. I have been an active member in the marketing academy as a whole, and I believe that my image and impact in the field have contributed to the reputations of both Babson College and Boston College. I have been especially involved in the Academy of Marketing Science and the American Marketing Association and have begun more recently to engage with the Marketing Educators’ Association and the Marketing Management Association.

A service role for which I am extremely honored to hold as it merges my research and teaching interests so nicely is that of editor of the *Journal of Marketing Education* (JME). Retrospective reflection (Raelin, 2001) enables me to look back on my recent experiences as editor of JME and see how much I am learning about educational scholarship. Much like this current reflection, writing the Editor’s Corner for each issue has become a wonderful reflective practice for me.

I believe that service is critical to an individual’s cultivation of a professional network useful for faculty recruiting, course and program development, and research opportunities. As such, I have been heavily involved in professional leadership as a high level of professional leadership is essential to the national and international reputation of both a scholar and an institution.

## LEADERSHIP

While many will link service and leadership together, I see them as two interrelated, yet different, constructs. For example, a look at my CV would show that I have stayed very busy with service to my profession

throughout my career. Sometimes that busy-ness has progressed to leadership roles, and other times it has not. As a busy educator, I have never been shy at taking on new leadership roles. The foundation of my leadership style lies with the people with whom I work. Thus, I am a big believer in having a diverse group of people on my team (i.e., I don't want everyone to think, act, or look like me). It is only through the inclusion of all that we, as a group, ensure every voice is represented. My leadership roles have been evident in my positions as department chair at Babson College and Boston College (for a total of 15 years), Chair of the full-time MBA at Boston College, and the various leadership positions I have been in with our professional associations.

However, as any scholar studying leadership will attest, there are the institutional positions of leadership and there are the positions of leadership which deal with the work of academics such as teaching, research, and service (Juntrasook, 2013). While I can reflect objectively on the institutional positions of leadership, I will have to leave it to those for whom I have had an impact to attest to my overall professional leadership.

For me, being a leader is an essential part of reflective practice. In the words of Polanyi (1967, p. 4): "We know more than we can tell." There is so much that I have learned throughout my career that I cannot always articulate. As such, I try to lead by doing.

### **Passionate Academic Holism**

Recently, my JME Editor's Corner focused on awards. In that editorial (Crittenden, 2021), I dug into the literature on academic awards and found that

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recognition is a powerful motivator in academia (Boyle, 2018). A finding that particularly resonated with me was in research by Hesli and Lee (2013, p. 340) who stated, "Job satisfaction tends to be higher among those who feel valued and have received awards and recognition from their peers and institutions."

According to Gemser, Leenders, and Wijnberg (2008), awards serve as a signaling device. The receipt of an award is a signal to the community that enhances the reputation of the award recipient. Thus, receiving both the AMA Higher Ed SIG Lifetime Achievement Award and the AMS CUTCO/Vector Distinguished Marketing Educator Award in 2021 gave me pause in the midst of my actions to recall the words of philosopher Donald Schön (1987): "...thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing in action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome." Receiving one of these awards was definitely unexpected, so the shock and awe at receiving both within mere weeks of each other was, no doubt, the pinnacle of my academic career.

Johns (2009) said that reflection was like a mirror for viewing and focusing one's self within the context of a particular experience. I would add that, for me, reflection entails a lot of looking not just in any mirror but, more precisely, the rearview mirror. I have done the casting backwards to plan ahead throughout my career. As Raelin (2001, p. 11) noted, "It [reflection] constitutes the ability to uncover and make explicit to oneself and to one's colleagues what one has planned, observed, and achieved in practice."

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