



**PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE GRANTS FIELD:
A SOCIOLOGICAL LOOK AT THE FIELD'S MOVEMENT
TOWARD FULL PROFESSIONALIZATION**

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This paper explores the degree to which the grants field has achieved "professionalization" as defined by social scientists for more than a century. The field has most recently noted a paradigm shift in the way its practitioners perceive the role and stature of grantsmanship in the workplace and within society. According to social scientists, this shift represents healthy movement along a continuum toward professionalization. Utilizing a number of sociological models, this paper takes an in-depth look at grantsmanship's current journey from occupation to profession and offers a "blueprint" for moving the field toward full professionalization

In the 19th century, teaching was at first no more than a high-level domestic service, with the teacher often taking over some of the child-rearing responsibilities of the family. As society recognized the need for literacy in a quickly industrializing society, new systems of public education developed and, along with it, the National Union of Teachers. Within time, this occupation once viewed as “most-suited to spinsterhood,” emerged as a profession.

While the grants field can trace its roots to ancient times, it was not until the early 1970s before a noun was “assigned” to it when the introduction of the term “grantsmanship” by The Grantsmanship Center (TGCI). Despite major strides in the identification and legitimization made by TGCI and other educators, the field continues to seek its place as a profession, unsure of its terminology, its framework and its impact. Is the word “grant” a familiar term? Is the term “grantsmanship” a term at all? If one was to ask when and where did the term originate, one might hear any of the following comments. “Huh,” followed by a blank stare. “Oh, a grant writer. I always thought that would be a nice ‘skill’ to acquire.” “So you work on commission.”

Despite its misunderstood quality, grantsmanship is a billion dollar industry. More than 850,000 charities, 500,000 churches, 725,000 nonprofit organizations and 23,000 educational institutions exist in the United States today (GPCI, 2002). And growth continues exponentially. According to the Internal Revenue Service, between 1992 and 2002, the number of public charities grew 76% from 516,554 to 909,574. In tandem, the foundation community has grown in number by 255% in the past twenty years (Wells, 2005, p.6). It is estimated that more than 100,000 individuals serve as “brokers” between grant seekers and grant funders in this billion-

dollar industry. These individuals are most commonly referred to as grant writers. They impact change, impact lives and impact societal perspective on a very large scale.

The statements above beg the question: “If these facts are true, is grantsmanship only a skill-set within a broad-based profession or is it a profession recognized for the role it plays and the power it holds in the advancement of philanthropy and the public good?” As with teaching, dentistry and other occupations that have evolved into recognized professions, has the grants field obtained the recognition and status equivalent to its mandatory knowledge and skills? According to a number of social scientists, these questions are answered by the way the occupation defines itself and by its aspirations and achievements. How well the field defines itself determines the extent to which it has achieved or moved toward “professionalization.”

Definition of Terms

Before a discussion of professionalization can occur, the following terms should be defined. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2000):

Profession: **a.** An occupation or career: **b.** An occupation, such as law, medicine, or engineering that requires considerable training and specialized study. **c.** The body of qualified persons in an occupation or field.

Professional: **a.** A person following a profession, especially a learned profession. **b.** One who earns a living in a given or implied occupation: **c.** A skilled practitioner; an expert.

Occupation: **a.** An activity that serves as one's regular source of livelihood; a vocation. **b.** An activity engaged in especially as a means of passing time; an avocation.

Professionalization: **a.** To make professional. **b.** The social process whereby people come to engage in an activity for pay or as a means of livelihood; "the professionalization of American sports." **c.** A process involved in the formation of groups of persons.

Grantsmanship: **a.** The art of obtaining grants-in-aid.

Grant Professional: No definition found in widely recognized dictionaries. For purposes of this paper: **a.** A person who engages in the art of obtaining grants-in-aid.

Most social scientists often define *profession* and *professionalization* in somewhat similar terms, however distinctions exist between them. According to Reynolds and O’Morrow, a *profession* is born out a societal need to have available certain services that require specialized knowledge and skills (1985, p.6). A *profession* distinguishes itself from other kinds of occupations by the degree of expertise and complexity entailed in the work. *Professionalization*

is the process whereby occupations seek to upgrade their status by adopting organizational and occupational attributes and traits attributed to professions (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997).

Professionalization

Professionalization, or the process by which an occupation evolves into a profession, is framed by several theories dating back to the early 20th century. Despite a large number of theories and approaches, certain basic assumptions exist for all. They include the following.

- Professionalization is not acquired but rather a dynamic social process in a continual state of flux (Burbules & Densmore, 1991, p.41), and therefore considered as a continuum with well-recognized and undisputed professions and at the other end, the least skilled and least attractive occupations.” Between these two poles are the “emerging” or “marginal” professions. (Greenwood, 1966, pp. 10-11).
- There are specific criteria or indicators that move an occupation from one end of the spectrum to the other.
- Most often, though, the shift is caused by “market disorder,” or concern on the part of the public (Tseng, 1992, pp.44-45).
- Instead of asking “whether or not any particular group is “really a profession” or not...it is much more fruitful to ask “how professionalized,” or more specifically “how professionalized in certain identifiable respects” a given occupation may be” (Vollmer and Mills, 1966, p.v).
- Not everyone agrees that professionalization is a goal to be sought. Critics often see it as shift from the notions of altruism and service to the pursuit of power and prestige (Witter-Merithew, 2005, p. 40).

History and Theory of Professionalization

A M. Carr-Saunders is considered one of the first social scientists to systematically analyze the transition of occupations to professions. As early as 1928, Carr-Saunders defined professionalism in terms of “specialized skill and training, minimum fees or salaries, formation of professional associations, and codes of ethics governing professional practice,” He noticed that true professional associations are distinguished “by the degree to which they seek to establish minimum qualifications for entrance into professional practice, enforce appropriate rules and norms of conduct among members of the profession and raise the status of the professional group in the larger society” (Vollmer, Mills, 1996).

Theodore Caplow believed that the steps in professionalization are “quite definite, and even the sequence is explicit...” He defines the first step as the *establishment of a professional association*, with definite membership criteria to keep the out the unqualified. Step two involves

a *change of name of the profession*, which serves to reduce identification with the previous occupational status and provides a title which can be monopolized. The third step dictates the development and promulgation of a code of ethics, which asserts “social utility of the occupation and sets up a public welfare rationale, further eliminating the unqualified and unscrupulous.” His last step is described as “prolonged political agitation, whose object it is to obtain the support of public power to create barriers for the previous occupation (Caplow, 1954 pp.139-140.)

H. Wilensky 1964) is credited with defining the five primary structural attributes that define a profession. Similar to those of his colleagues, they include the following:

1. *Creation of a full time occupation.* "This involves performance of functions that may have been performed previously, as well as new functions, and can be viewed as a reaction to the needs in the social structure" (p. 92).
2. *Establishment of a training school.* This stage reflects both the knowledge and the efforts of early leaders to improve the occupation. Wilensky notes that in the more established professions university affiliation occurs before national professional associations.
3. *Formation of a professional association.* Associations serve to develop professional definition and tasks. Along with this, the association may change the occupational title as a way to reduce identification with the previous, less professional occupation.
4. *Support of law.* The profession will lobby for legal recognition of title and/or work activities.
5. *Formation of a code of ethics.* Ethical code concerned with both internal and external relationships.

From the early studies of professionalization, two contemporary theories have emerged: the *trait theory* and the *theory of control* (Mikkelson, 1996). The *trait theory* utilizes most, if not all, of the traits associated with the structural approach attributed to such pioneers as Carr-Saunders, Caplow, Wilensky, Vollmer, and Mills. This theory is most often illustrated by checklists of attributes to determine how far a given occupation has progressed over a continuum.

The *theory of control* expands upon the framework of the trait theory by relating the occupation to its place in the labor market and within society. In the view of these social scientists, the more control practitioners have over their work and the market in which they operate, the more professionalized they are (Tseng, 1992). Tseng further postulates that a profession is defined by the amount of power it wields. “Powerful professions are characterized by powerful associations.” Powerful professions establish alliances with the state. Powerful

professions are ones that are perceived as providing a public benefit service. The more powerful the profession the less regulation exerted upon it” (Tseng, 1992, p.20).

Tseng Model

Joseph Tseng is credited with the development of the *theory of control* model (Mikkelsen, 1996). Tseng uses two descriptive tools: 1) the movement of an occupation through five very explicit phases; and 2) a set of sociological and occupational traits, to illustrate his model.

Phase 1 – Market Disorder:

Market disorder is a concept used in the field of economics to describe those periods of increased uncertainty about the safety and liquidity of the economy arising from a wide range of market variables (Witter-Merithew, 2005, p. 20, Phillips, 1997). During these periods of market disorder, participants look to government regulators to establish public policies and regulatory structures to mitigate the disorder. Market disorder also describes the difficulties a business or profession has in securing and maintaining control over the variables that impact its operations and delivery of goods or services (Witter-Merithew, 2005, p. 20). Practitioners can not keep others from entering the field; they themselves may have started out as “outsiders.” Service recipients have little understanding of what the practitioner does. It is very likely that the public simply does not care about the quality of the service. What matters more in the absence of quality control is price. Those that demand quality services are troubled by the fact that they do not know where to get qualified practitioners (Tseng, 1992, pp. 44-46).

Phase 2 and 3: Consensus Regarding Professional Aspirations and Formation of Professional Association

Phase 2 occurs when a body of individuals recognize the need to consolidate the field and move away from the a prevailing practice of defining an occupation as a “pot” of scatted job tasks that meet the immediate needs of a particular employer. During Phase 2, individuals come together to share concerns and ideas, identify patterns and abuses and “develop” a consensus of professional aspirations. According to Tseng, and the great majority of his colleagues, the formation of a professional association is a key factor in process of professionalization.

Phase 4 and 5: Formulation of Ethical Standards and Control of Admission to the Profession

Proponents of professionalization believe strongly that the development and enforcement of a code of ethics is crucial because, as Tseng notes,” it functions externally as one of the

bargaining chips to earn public trust and internally as an indispensable tool for internal control” (Tseng, 1992, p.49). According to Mikkelson (1996), “As professional associations become more influential, their codes of ethics become more sophisticated and are more strictly enforced; but if the enforcement is weak, the associations cannot be powerful and function properly.”


Professionalization Applied to the Field of Grantsmanship

To answer the question, “is grantsmanship only a skill-set or a bone-a-fide profession,” the author synthesized the professionalization characteristics identified by the social scientists into a slate of twelve primary “traits,” listed in Table 1. Each trait represents an action needing to occur be done by the field in order to move the occupation closer to a profession. Recognizing that the move toward professionalization is fluid, the author sought to determine how far grantsmanship had already progressed along the professionalization continuum. To this end, the author conducted two informal focus groups representing approximately 35 grant professionals. The first group was comprised of the attendees at a workshop presentation at the Sixth Annual AAGP Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona (2005). The second group included the 2006 AAGP Board of Directors at a presentation in Las Vegas, Nevada (2006).

TABLE 1: Traits

Trait	Definition
Creation of Full time Occupation	Move toward discreet profession
Systematic Theory	Abstract Concepts
Establishment of Training School	Formal procedures to transmit knowledge
Formation of Association	Including name change
Code of Ethics	Public statement of duty
Credentials	Academic/professional recognition
Induction	Transitioning new professionals
Compensation	Range of salary and benefits
Continuing Professional Development	Ongoing availability
Authority	Influence in policy making
Community Sanction	Public recognition of standards
Culture	Collective identity via networks

Each participant was exposed to the continuum concept illustrated in Table 2. At the end of the exercise, respondents were guided back to this continuum and asked to place “grantsmanship” somewhere on the continuum, based upon the number of traits it had successfully completed.

Table 2: Continuum Concept		
Marginalized	Emerging	Fully
Occupations	Profession	Professionalized
		
0-4 traits	4-8 traits	9 plus traits

With an understanding of the continuum, the group was then exposed to each trait and asked to compare it against a “litmus test” of questions designed to determine how successfully the trait had been achieved. The group was then asked to come to consensus and speak as “one voice” as to where each trait fell on an individual trait continuum. The results of this exercise are described below. The responses described below for each trait represents the combined groups.

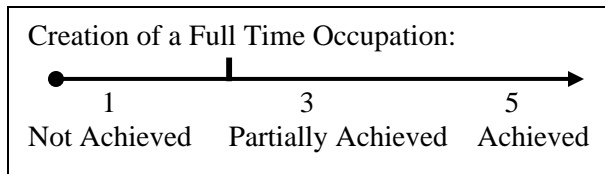
Trait 1: Creation of a Full Time Occupation

This trait involves activities defined in Tseng’s *Phase 2*. According to Tseng, professionalization occurs when the field moves away from the prevailing practice of defining an occupation as a “pot” of scatted job tasks that meet the immediate needs of a particular employer.

Litmus Test 1: Which one of these statements is true?

- Most grants professionals perform grant-related functions on a full time basis.
- Most grants professionals perform more than 50% of the duties on grant-related functions.
- Most grant professionals spend less than 50% of their duties on grant-related functions.
- There is no grant professional, only skills in grant writing.

Without solid psychometric data, respondents could only provide experiential responses, which resulted in little or no consensus. Forced to speak in one voice they agreed that most grant professionals perform more that 50% but less than 100% of their duties on grant-related functions. However, there was consensus that this trend was changing and that full time grant work was more prevalent in government and education.



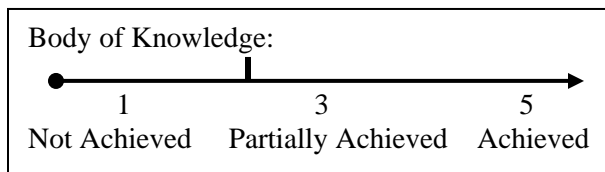
Trait 2: Recognition of Systematic Body of Knowledge Exclusive to the Profession

A *systematic body of knowledge* refers a set of abstract concepts that describe the professional service. All fully developed professions have an established body of knowledge that is learned by the profession’s students, passed along through formal processes and expanded upon in scholarly publications (Witter-Merithew, et al, 2004, p. 24). Without an approved or recognized set of competencies and skills, it is impossible to identify the body of knowledge needed to impart to both students and general public.

- Litmus Test 1: Which one of these statements is true?
- There is a universally recognized name for the grants field.
 - There is ambiguity over the terms used to describe a person who works in the grants field.

- Litmus Test 2: The field has a scholarly publication.
- Yes
 - No

Respondents recognized the work of the Grantsmanship Center and other bone-a-fide training programs as providing the field with a set of abstract concepts. They further identified the AAGP Journal as providing the field with its scholarly publication, as well as the standards currently being validated as further establishing a body of knowledge. However, alarming was the lack of consensus regarding the name of the field that represents grants and the term used to describe the individual who prepares grants. The term “grantsmanship” was discussed but not universally accepted. The terms “grant writer,” “grant developer,” and “grant planner” were identified but not agreed upon. Consequently, it was unanimously agreed that there is ambiguity over the terms used to describe a person who works in the grants field.



Trait 3: Establishment of a Training School

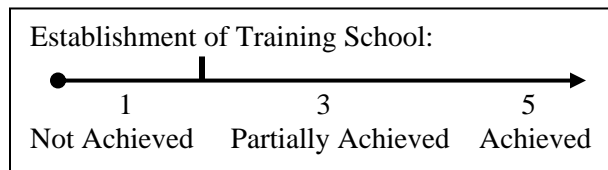
An emerging profession will promote formal procedures to transmit the essential body of knowledge to all recognized practitioners before and during their career (e.g., academic coursework, etc.). Wilensky notes that in the more established professions, university affiliation occurs before establishment of national professional associations (Wilinski, 1964).

- Litmus test 1: Which one of these statements is true?
- There are established training schools in grantsmanship that affiliate with universities or colleges.
 - There are established long-term training (more than two-weeks) programs in grantsmanship not affiliated with universities or colleges.
 - There are established short-term workshop venues available in grantsmanship.
 - There is no training available for grants professionals.

- Litmus Test 2: Most grants professionals obtain their training:
- Through formal training of any kind.
 - On the job training or school of hard knocks.

The literature reveals a plethora of short-term training programs, dating back to the early 1970's with the establishment of the Grantsmanship Center in Los Angeles. A quick "google" search today yields hundreds of short-term training opportunities generating from independent consultants, training centers, academic institutions and politicians. A survey of existing degree-based grant education programs in the United States, conducted by P. Renninger in 2004, further reveals a noticeable absence of any degree-based program specific to the grant field.

Given this data, it is not surprising that the respondents believed that: 1) there are established short-term workshop venues available in grantsmanship; 2) most grants professionals obtain training on the job; and 3) the current method of training is inadequate. However, respondents felt that this trend was changing.



Trait 4: Formation of a Professional Association

A professional association: 1) seeks to establish minimum qualifications for entrance into professional practice; 2) enforces appropriate rules and norms of conduct among members; and 3) raises the status of the professional group within society. It is the first step in the process of

professionalization. It develops a professional definition, delineates tasks and establishes membership criteria “designed to keep out the unqualified” (Caplow, 1966, p.20). One of the first items of business for the association is often the change of the occupational title as a way to reduce identification with the previous, less professional occupation.

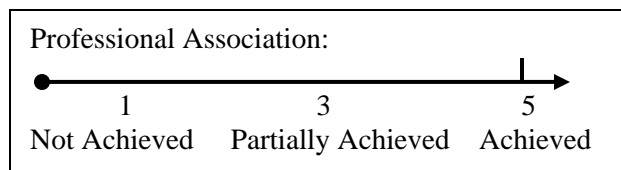
Litmus test 1: The field of grantsmanship has a professional association.

- Yes
- No

Litmus test 2: The association has changed the occupational title.

- Yes
- No

There was unanimously agreement that the grants field had an established professional association, AAGP, and that the association had created a name change from “grant writer” to “grant professional.”



Trait 5: Formation of a Code of Ethics

A *Code of Ethics* is a public statement that speaks to the association’s culture, values and norms. It defines its service mission within a framework or duty owned by the profession and reflects the profession’s commitment to uphold the ideals and standards. According to social scientists, it must be enforceable with an accessible grievance procedure. A profession’s Code of Ethics addresses the expected relationships both internally within the association, as well the expectations of its members’ professional relationship to the general public.

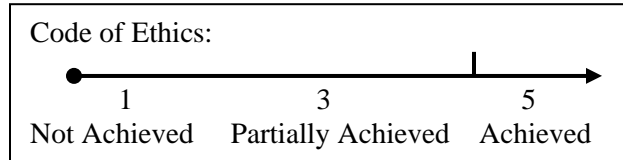
Litmus test 1: The profession has a formalized code of ethics.

- Yes
- No

Litmus test 2: The Code is enforceable and has mechanisms for remedy.

- Yes
- No

AAGP' public commitment to a Code of Ethics clearly allowed all respondents to unanimously agree that the field did have formalized code of ethics. The group also agreed that in 2006 the profession's code of conduct was not yet enforceable and therefore still emerging.



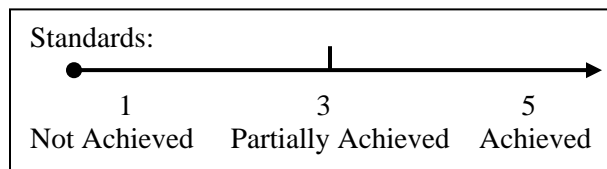
Trait 6: Acquisition of Academic and Professional Recognition to Satisfy Established Standards

According to Witter-Merithew, professionals require credentials. She notes that there are two ways in which a professional can and should demonstrate their mastery of “systematic theory of knowledge” and the standards set by the profession and the professional association. They include: 1) academic coursework; and 2) satisfying the criteria of a psychometrically-sound professional credential. She believes that “the absence of an agreed-upon academic and credentialing standard has significant implications for further professionalization...” (Witter-Merithew, 2004, p. 28). Levine (1998) and Darling Hammond (1987) further postulate that the existence of agreed-upon standards of professional practice, which are shaped by practitioners, is an essential element in the professionalization of an occupation.

Litmus test 1: Grantsmanship has a recognized professional credential.

- Yes
- No

In 2000, AAGP began the arduous task of developing the field's first psychometrically sound professional credential. Designed in accordance with the standards set for psychometric testing by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, AAGP established the Grants Professional Certification Institute (GPCI) to develop and administer a certification program that reflects an individual's ability to provide quality grant-related services within an ethical framework. Due to AAGP' public support of credentialing, all respondents were aware of the efforts of GPCI but also recognized that the testing tool had not yet been launched. Consequently, respondents agreed that an academic or professional credential was not currently available but was on the way to achievement and, as such, gave it a rating of “3.”



Trait 7: Authority

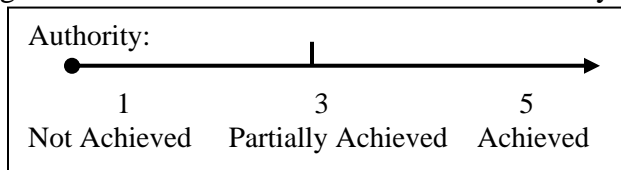
Authority is the extent of influence practitioners have over policy making and practice. The greater the degree of influence over policy-making, the greater the degree of individual autonomy afforded the practitioner. Professionals with a high degree of authority establish strong alliances with government and are able to exert authority and expertise to define public policy. According to Wilding (1982), the stronger the profession the more likely it will be self-regulated.

Authority evolves only when a body of systematic knowledge has been adopted by the profession, academic and professional credentials are recognized and the profession has created a high degree of specialization that distinguishes it from the uninitiated. (Witter-Merithew, 2005).

Litmus test 1: There is a mechanism or body in place for practitioners to affect public policy and policy making at the organizational level.

- Yes
- No

With recognition that standards are only now being put in place, both groups agreed that there is no mechanism or body in place for practitioners to affect public policy. Until grantsmanship has agreed-upon standards to define competency, it wields only limited impact on policymaking and slows down forward progress toward full professionalization. Again, all respondents recognized that efforts to this end were on their way to completion.



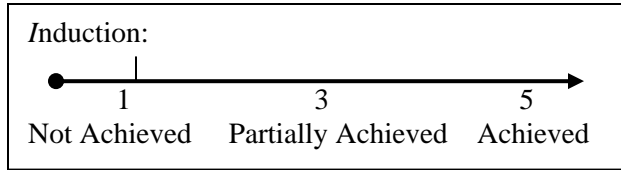
Trait 8: Induction

Induction is process of transitioning new practitioners into the profession through mentorship, supervision and direct guidance. In order to become a self-governing profession, an occupation must have a structured induction experience (Levine, 1998). Witter-Merithew notes that the “lack of direct supervision and an induction process devalues the complexities and importance of the work being performed...and potentially marginalizes the field (Witter-Merithew, 2005, p. 32).

Litmus test 1: Grantsmanship has mechanisms in place to transition new practitioners into the profession.

- Yes
- No

It was widely agreed upon by all respondents that the field of grantsmanship did not have an induction process for its new practitioners. One explanation for this gap was the field's lack of academic credential and the internship or practicum practice often associated with it.



Trait 9: Compensation

Compensation refers to the range of salary and benefit that enables practitioners to maintain gainful employment.

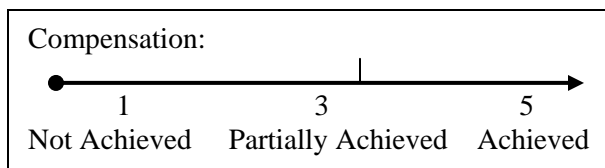
Litmus test 1: The current range of salary and benefits is consistent with other professionals of similar systematic theory, authority and credential.

- Yes
- No

Litmus test 2: Grantsmanship has a profession-wide agreed upon system for compensation.

- Yes
- No

Despite recognition that the field of grantsmanship is still emerging, and without standards, authority and a credential, the respondents were nevertheless unanimous in their belief that most grant professionals receive a salary and benefits consistent with other professionals with similar systematic theory, authority and credential. Consensus was unanimous that there was no profession-wide agreed upon system for compensation.



Trait 10: Continuing Professional Development

According to Witter-Merithew, *continuing professional development* refers to the “availability and extent of participation in learning events that promote acquisition of contemporary knowledge, application of current best practices and availability of sponsorship for qualified applicants” (Witter-Merithew, 2005, p.34).

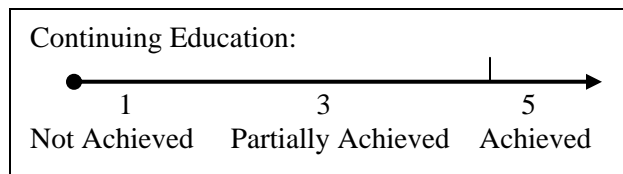
Litmus test 1: Grantsmanship has continuing professional development opportunities available to it.

- Yes
- No

Litmus test 2: Grantsmanship has a mechanism for maintaining continuing education maintenance records.

- Yes
- No

With the inception of AAGP and the plethora of short-term training opportunities, there was unanimous agreement that the field has clearly met the criteria for this trait. However, the field lacks a recognized mechanism for promoting and maintaining continuing education maintenance records specific to the grants field. This gap was not surprising as the granting of a “CEU” is often tied to a professional credential.



Trait 11: Community Sanction

Community sanction refers to the public acknowledgement of the professional standards, most often recognized through accreditation of educational programs and by the community’s (e.g., employers, government) utilization of the standards (e.g., credentialing).

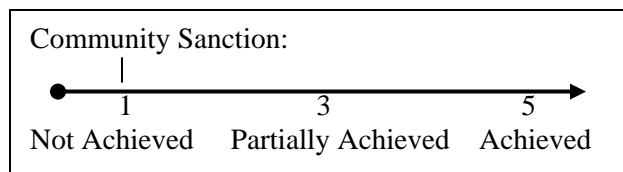
Litmus test 1: Grantsmanship has public/community recognition of professional standards.

- Yes
- No

Litmus test 2: Grantsmanship has sanctions as it relates to accreditation of training programs.

- Yes
- No

Given the fact that there are no degree programs in grantsmanship, or a credentialing program in place to allow recognition and sanctions, respondents agreed the criteria for this trait was not met.

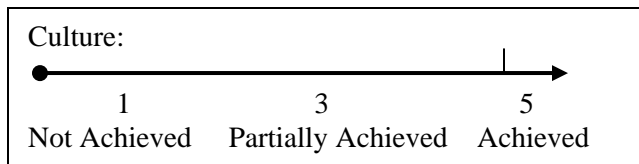


Trait 12: Culture

Culture looks at the nature of community within the profession, as evidenced by formal and informal networks of practitioners (e.g., associations, chapters, etc.). These networks are essential to the professionalization process, creating a platform or community in which the emerging professionals can gather, whether face-to-face or virtually, to promote those activities that move the field toward greater professionalization.

Litmus test 1: Grantsmanship has developed a systematic network and associations.
 Yes
 No

Despite weakness in other areas, the respondents unanimously agreed that the field of grantsmanship has strong established local and statewide networks and association chapters under the auspices of AAGP.



Summary Data

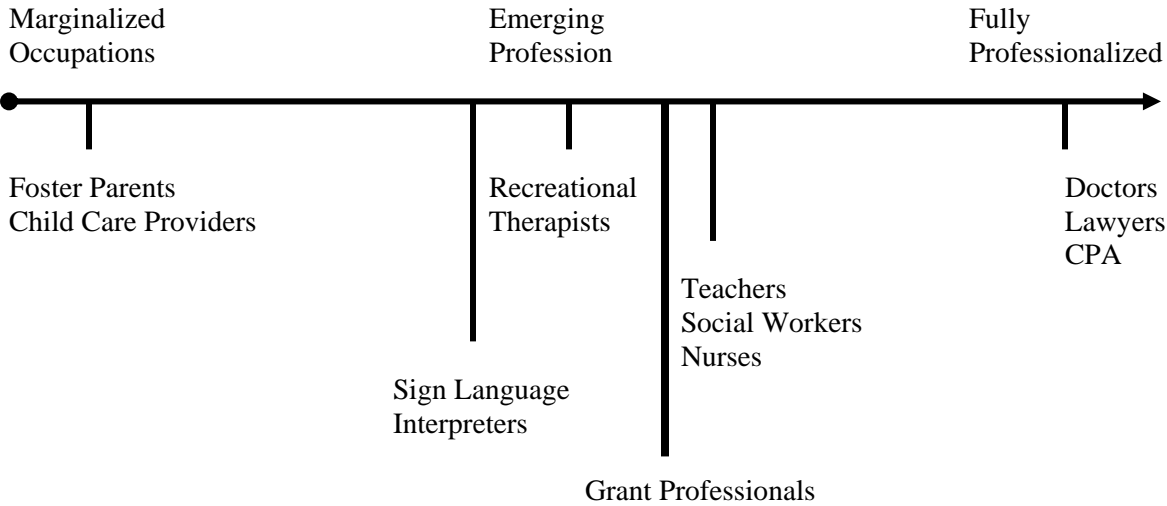
As noted above, both focus groups were in close agreement. Upon completion of the exercise that looked at each trait individually, each group was then asked to assign a number from “1” to “5,” with “1” representing no action by the field, “3” representing emerging or actively in process, and “5” representing an action fully completed, to each trait. The combined results of both groups are noted in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Results	
Trait	“1” to “5” Scale
Creation of Full time Occupation	3
Systematic Theory	3
Establishment of Training School	2
Formation of Association	5
Code of Ethics	4
Credentials	3
Induction	1

Trait	“1” to “5” Scale
Compensation	3
Continuing Professional Development	4
Authority	2
Community Sanction	1
Culture	5

Based upon the opinions of 35 grants professionals, the grants field is clearly emerging as a profession. It is no longer viewed as simply as a set of skills associated within an occupation. However, it has yet to achieve full professionalization. Table 4 illustrates how grantsmanship may compare to other professions.

Table 4: Grant Filed Compared to Other Professions



The field’s practitioners agree that grantsmanship is emerging as a profession. But how quickly can it move along the continuum? Tseng’s *theory of control* phases may provide one answer to this question. Tseng postulates that an occupation must successfully complete five phases in order to move toward professionalization. With this tenet understood, how successfully has the field navigated each of Tseng’s five phases?

Phase 1: Market Disorder – Has the field experienced Market Disorder?

Is the grants field suffering from market disorder? Market disorder emerges when negative reactions to prevailing practices, perceptions and attitudes on the part of the public and the practitioner become evident. There is currently a public perception of shrinking philanthropic dollars and greater competition for those shrinking dollars. With perceived high demand and low supply follows an increase in unethical practices as individuals, both unscrupulous and/or naively ignorant, come forward to serve this market segment of funding seekers.

Without an authoritative body to assure grant seekers and funders of performance and ethical practices, nonprofits are at the mercy of any individual proclaiming to be a grant developer. As a result, midnight infomercials espousing that anyone can “get free money,” grant training programs advertising the opportunity to find a new profession and become a “certified” grant writer in a week, and “hired-gun” grant writers proclaiming convoluted 95% to 100% success rates are more prevalent than ever. With community-based organizations spending millions of dollars unsuccessfully seeking funds and funders receiving proposals with no merit, it is not surprising that these practices have caught the eye of government and a move toward government regulation. A real sign of market disorder in the grants field: in the past five years, more than half of the states in the Union have adopted some form of licensure or regulation (Renninger & Stinson, 2006).

Most importantly, though, recognition by the field’s practitioners that market disorder exists is the best indicator that the field has begun the process of professionalization and ready to enter Tseng’s next phase of professionalization.

Phases 2 and 3: Practitioners’ Aspirations and the Formation of Professional Association

Phase 2 for the grants field began in late 1997, when Randall Givens, Director of Grants and Program Development at York College in Nebraska began asking “relevant questions” and others responded-in-kind. The professionalization pioneers at that time were VC League (CA), Iris Coffin (IA), Mike Brock (MI), Phyllis Renninger (FL), Rachel Sherard (SD) and Bradley Knudson (SD). In 1998, the first organizational meeting was held to discuss the development of a professional association and, while unknown to them at the time, begin *Phase 3*, the formation of AAGP as a professional association (Givens, 2003, p. 30). AAGP would become the cornerstone of the professionalization of the grants field.

Was the field of grantsmanship, fueled only by perceived market disorder and the aspirations of a very small group of individuals, ready and postured for a professional association? One need only look to AAGP' history -- AAGP began in 1997 with six volunteers; today, more than 1,500 individuals have joined AAGP. In 1998, seven participants attended the first annual conference; today, more than 500 attend the annual event. Clearly, the field was not only postured to enter this phase, it passed through it rapidly. And while it did rename terms in the field, definitive recognition of those terms though, has not yet occurred.

Phase 4 and 5: Formulation of Ethical Standards and Control of Admission to the Profession

AAGP moved swiftly through *Phase 4* because its founders inherently understood the importance of ethics to professionalization. By October 1998, only six months from the first conference call, the AAGP founders arranged for its first face-to-face professional development event at Drake University. Two presentations were given: "The Credibility of Ethics" and "The Role of Ethics in the Grant Process." By April 1999, the group had already readied its first draft of the Code of Ethics for membership approval. In keeping with the process of professionalization, the AAGP Board of Directors expanded, strengthened, and renamed the original code to the *Code of Professional Practice in 2005*, and laid down stringent ethical standards to be upheld by the Board of Directors. In 2006, the arduous task of developing enforcement-related policies and procedures is being tackled by the organization. So, while *Phase 4* was embraced with the passion and speed as each phase before it, until enforcement is a public reality, *Phase 4* remains slightly unfinished.

Phase 5, or *control of admission to the field*, unfortunately, has been more elusive to the field. Wilensky (1984) suggests that although many occupations have sought professional status, few have attained all of the described attributes and accompanying recognition ascribed to highly regarded professionals. Most occupations function on the fringe. What is missing most often is systematic theory, authority, credentialing and social/community sanction, or those traits associated with *Phase 5, control of admission to the field*. It is in these areas that the grants field must now focus its efforts.

What Is Still Needed?

Carbone, in a survey of fundraisers, concluded that one obstacle to professionalization is the "sharing of expertise with amateurs, which considerably weakens the occupation's power to define its work and establish jurisdictional control and legitimacy" (Carbone, 1998, p 105). As

long as individuals can enter the field without professional education or governance control, the field is powerless to affect change.

Academic and professional credentials protect the interests of the public, or in the case of grantsmanship, protect society's philanthropic interests. It assures the field's beneficiaries that the grant professional has demonstrated knowledge and skills at a level that has been agreed upon by the profession as a whole. Before a credential or academic program can be developed, the field's standards must be identified and adopted through a systematic and valid approach. Shortly, AAGP will publish a psychometrically validated slate of competencies and skills for use by academic institutions and the credentialing initiative. From these "comps" and skills, the grant field will have their professional standards.

Ultimately, a credential serves the purpose of establishing control over who can enter the field and creates a valid and reliable standard for the philanthropic community to use as it carries out its own mission. With this tenet recognized, the field must promote and embrace a credentialing program in order to move the field along the continuum.

AAGP actively seeks remedy to the field's lack of a credential. In 2000, the membership mandated that the organization develop a psychometrically sound professional credential. At the time of this publication, a bone-a-fide, psychometrically sound credentialing program, developed by AAGP's affiliate, GPCI, is expected to launch in late 2007.

However, a recognized curricula and advanced degree requirement continue to elude the field. Until the time when entrance into the field demands an academic degree and a professional credential, grantsmanship will never achieve full professionalization. The community of grants professionals has invested a significant amount of time, money and energy to professionalize the field. With desire, aspirations and momentum behind it, it is very likely that this trait will be addressed in the near future. What is important, though, is that the field satisfies this trait by promulgating only the highest standards as its minimum requirements. Simple training programs should not take the place of advanced degrees. Minimum degree levels should clearly correspond to the skills needed to do all aspects of the job.

Lastly, the field has yet to address continuing education. As mentioned earlier, without a regulatory body mandating continuing education, there is little motivation to seek these units. However, with the implementation of a credentialing program, continuing education will have

“its turn” to move grantsmanship along the continuum. In fact, AAGP has begun the process of discovery as it pertains to continuing education.

What still needs to be done? As a field, we need to reconcile the difference in standards set by the profession and those set by the marketplace. Today, practitioners can and do work without a credential or academic degree and the definition of who is qualified to perform the task is subject to a wide range of views and standards. The marketplace defines our name and our boundaries.

In keeping with the social science of professionalization, we must turn our efforts to greater stakeholder education to employers, government officials, educators and funders about the role grant professionals play in the accomplishment of their own missions. We must promulgate the now-validated competencies and skills, future academic degrees and the credentialing initiative. We must be prepared to develop a continuing education maintenance program, and complete the policies and procedures that will enforce of the field’s professional code of conduct. These tasks are not daunting but simply evolutionary. With these actions completed, the final traits of *authority* and *social/community sanction* will fall into place and, along with it, professionalization.

In 1994, Roda Roberts, in her work with foreign language interpreters, challenged the field of interpretation to adopt a body of knowledge that: “1) clarifies terminology (e.g., agreeing on a clear definition and universally recognized name for the occupation; 2) agrees upon minimum academic qualifications; 3) agrees upon academic standards and corresponding curricula; and 4) recognizes accreditation standards (Roberts, 1994, pp. 133-136). It appears that this same challenge faces the field of grantsmanship. This author believes the field will meet these challenges and move swiftly along the continuum towards full professionalization.

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