Scholarship as Architecture: Framing and Enhancing Community Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

... the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement.

Ernest Boyer

Embracing Ernest Boyer’s challenge for higher education to “reaffirm its historic commitment to ... the scholarship of engagement” has, over the last decade, led to much work to further the understanding and operation of this movement. Broader conceptualizations of scholarship itself have been accompanied by a stronger integration of faculty research and student learning into the life of communities outside the walls of the academy. Educators who define their work within the scholarship of engagement movement tend to draw from service-learning pedagogy, community-based participatory research, and public scholarship as powerful strategies for collaboratively generating knowledge and practices to alleviate social problems affecting communities.

Within this national movement, the rubric “scholarship of engagement” has been applied to a variety of activities. Therefore, in this article, the phrase “community-engaged scholarship” will be used to describe the scholarly component of the scholarship of engagement. After reviewing the practice of academic scholars through the National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement, conducting many campus consultations, and drawing on the emerging body of literature, it has become apparent to me that community-engaged scholarship is engendering its own distinctive architecture. Such architecture can act as a blueprint for framing, enhancing, and assessing community engagement. This article addresses the conceptualization of community-engaged scholarship, explains how it builds on but differs from traditional scholarship, illustrates an application in physical therapy, and identifies challenges and opportunities for the field.

Principles of Engagement and Standards of Scholarship Result in Community-Engaged Scholarship

Scholarship is a choice of how to live as well as a choice of a career.

C Wright Mills

The experience of engagement will become the pathway to a fresh interpretation of the 21st century. This conception rests on the rethinking of the core of the academy, namely, the nature of scholarship itself.

Judith A Ramaley

Because faculty self-identify as scholars, discussion within the engagement movement centers on the “scholarship” of engagement. Boyer defines scholarship as including practices that span the categories of academic scholarship that he had previously identified (discovery, teaching, application, and integration) and engagement as suggesting a reciprocal, collaborative relationship with partners outside the university. That is, “the scholarship of engagement consists of (1) research, teaching, integration and application types of scholarship that (2) incorporate reciprocal practices of civic engagement into the production of knowledge.”

Although this type of scholarship is referred to in various ways—engaged scholarship, scholarly engagement, community-engaged scholarship, public scholarship, and even outreach, it is clear that the scholarship of engagement is not a renaming of the service category of the traditional tripartite mission of the academy. Holland notes that “the scholarship of engagement and the idea of community partnerships are not about service. They are about extraordinary forms of teaching and research and what happens when they come together.”

Neither does the scholarship of engagement supplant the triad of teaching, research, and service; rather, it broadens it. Barker provides a taxonomy of 5 practices of engaged scholarship—public scholarship, participatory research, community partnerships, public information networks, and civic literacy scholarship—each having its own methodology and underlying core concepts of engagement. He notes that these methods are not
mutually exclusive and often overlap as they are applied in response to particular problems. He concludes that "the growing acceptance of a problem driven approach to the epistemology and methodology of contemporary scholarship helps explain the pluralism evident in the field of engaged scholarship." Whatever the terminology, the scholarship of engagement adheres to the standards of quality scholarship as well as the tenets and values of engagement (Figure 1). It is characterized as scholars working with the community, not merely in or for the community. (Here "community" is more broadly conceptualized as a specific group of people living in the same locality. Although it does include place-related groups of people, it could also include groups of people who may constitute communities of interest or practice.) Therefore, this type of scholarship engages faculty in academically relevant work that simultaneously fulfills the campus mission and goals as well as community needs. Many faculty members, seeing the impact of their scholarship in social good, are embracing and participating in the evolution of the understanding and practice of engaged scholarship.

This conceptualization of the scholarship of engagement continues to emerge and to expand as campuses manifest context-driven characteristics reflecting the correspondence between their notions of scholarship and their individual histories, priorities, circumstances, and locations. It is also informed by the international dialogue that is questioning traditional research—its sources of expertise, its ends, and its audience—and other academics in Great Britain place science policy and scientific knowledge in the context of contemporary society. They call for "multi-sided conversation" between the scholarly community and the practitioner community to widen horizons and improve lives; this conversation could take the form of engaged scholarship that is heterogeneous, multi-directional, collaborative, highly participatory, and of service to multiple audiences.

Principles of engagement. Within this spectrum of interpretation, evolution, and practice, it is helpful to review the basic principles of engagement as well as the standards of scholarship that come together in the scholarship of engagement. The principles of engagement are captured in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' definition of a publicly engaged institution as one "... fully committed to direct, two-way interaction with communities and other external constituencies through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information and expertise for mutual benefit." In "Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution," the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities enumerated these principles in a 7-part test: the engaged institution shows responsiveness, respect for partners, academic neutrality, accessibility, integration, coordination, and resource partnership. These characteristics, along with similar descriptions commonly found in emerging literature, are fundamentally based on values and norms that involve interactive, collaborative, and respectful community–university partnerships that result in mutually beneficial outcomes and are dedicated to learning with an emphasis on the community, responsibility, and stewardship.

Standards of scholarship. Scholarship, on the other hand, is typically considered original intellectual work communicated and validated by peers. Oregon State University's definition of scholarship states that:

... scholarship may emerge from teaching, research or other responsibilities. Scholarship may take many forms including, but not limited to: research contributing to a body of knowledge, development of new technology, materials, or methods; integration of knowledge or technology leading to new interpretations or applications; creation and interpretation in the arts.

Northern Kentucky University, in an adaptation of the work of Diamond and Glassick, proposes that to qualify as scholarship, the activity or work must:

1. Require a high level of discipline-related or interdisciplinary expertise.
2. Be conducted in a scholarly manner with clear goals and appropriate methodology.
3. Be original and/or innovative.
4. Meet the standards of the discipline for scholarly activity.
5. Be published or presented at an appropriate forum.
6. Be peer reviewed as appropriate to the discipline.
7. Have an impact on the discipline or some community of people.

Community-engaged scholarship. Only when the principles of engagement are coupled with the standards of scholarship is community-engaged scholarship achieved. In other words, not all community-based outreach constitutes engagement—not all is done with the community—and not all community engagement activities by faculty constitute scholarship. The Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions provides an example:

... if a faculty member devotes time to developing a community-based health program, it may be important work and it may advance the service mission of the institution, but unless it includes the other components that define scholarship (e.g., clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique, rigor, and peer review) it would not be considered scholarship.

What, then, is community-engaged scholarship? As described by Cox, the scholarship of engagement has at its core 4 dimensions of scholarship: discovery, integration,
application, and teaching. Within these dimensions, the scholarship of engagement comes into being through its interactive connections with people and places outside the university in the activities of scholarship, such as setting goals, selecting means and methods, applying meaning and methods, and reflecting on and disseminating results. Adding to this understanding, Cox observes that the depths of the connections may vary. "At a less engaged level, the interaction may involve only one dimension of scholarship and one of a limited set of scholarship activities. At the deepest level, the interactions carry through multiple dimensions and across all the scholarship activities." 26

It is this latter point that has been particularly exciting: the recognition that community-engaged scholarship is boundary-crossing scholarship. It crosses disciplinary boundaries. It can manifest itself as engaged scholarship in teaching, engaged scholarship in research, or engaged scholarship in service or outreach. Even more commonly, it is integrated across teaching, research, and service. 27 It is scholarship guided by an engagement ethos that results in work connected in coherent, thematic, and scholarly ways. 28 However, whatever the form and whatever the other components of the endeavor, scholarship stands as the guiding principle of community-engaged scholarship.

Scholarship: Architecture for Community Engagement

Scholarship, therefore, is the architecture for community engagement. It can be the foundation on which the community-based engagement is conceptualized, implemented, assessed, and communicated. Scholarship is what is being done, engaged scholarship is how it is done, and for the common or public good is toward what end it is done. Rather than responding to community needs, interests, problems, and requests in a just-in-time service-oriented mode, faculty can become involved by framing their response as scholarship. 29 Taking this approach to community engagement typically strengthens the work by adding valuable new knowledge about the issue, problem, or process. Drawing from Loyola University's approach of "adding chairs at the research table," Nyden suggests that expanding scholarship teams to include faculty, graduate students, staff, and community partners ensures learning by moving in multiple directions. Engaged scholarship steers away from a model of isolation and socializes graduate students to take on this work. Community partners are consumers before the work even starts. "Adding chairs to the research table" promotes hard-ons interdisciplinary approaches through which innovation is most likely to occur. Nyden describes the process, collectively, as "messy research, neat results."

This architecture for engaged scholarship differs significantly from that of traditional academic scholarship. Although traditional scholarship in the community is an appropriate approach for some types of inquiry, its procedures and findings are often limited to the academy, with research as the primary paradigm, separate from other forms of scholarship. This isolation has led to the community distancing itself because of a resentment or fear of being "studied." Additionally, it has led a legacy of detrimental processes or policies that community members require of any researchers wishing to carry out scholarship in their environments. Scholarship, however, can take the form of an engaged pedagogy that is contextual and social, that is problem-based and collaborative, and that draws on local and cosmopolitan knowledge. 30 As noted earlier, the key is engaging with the community. Therefore, although the questions involved in planning, implementing, and assessing are the same in traditional scholarship and in community-engaged scholarship, the answers are different because the 2 types of inquiry are constructed through different approaches. The following discussion examines each structural element underlying the practice of scholarship and contrasts the expression of those elements in traditional scholarship and in community-engaged scholarship. Each comparison is followed by an example of community-engaged scholarship as applied in the Mercy Circle of Care initiative, a collaboration of citizens, health care providers, social services, and universities that is featured in the article in this issue by Johnson, Maritz, and Lefever. 31 Scholarship is an integral part of the structure of the partnership.

Purpose of scholarship. The typically expressed purpose of traditional scholarship is to advance the discipline by creating new knowledge, adding to the knowledge base, supporting theory development, or testing or disputing other research. It also serves to advance the scholar through publication in respected peer-reviewed journals, a result linked directly to faculty rewards.

In contrast, the purposes of community-engaged scholarship are to address the needs of communities, to respond to current issues, and ultimately to affect societal concerns through means appropriate to the mission of higher education. Accomplishing these goals usually involves an application or decision-making aspect that builds on the co-created knowledge.

For example, nested in a broad-based, multi-institutional community collaboration, now called the Mercy Circle of Care, is a community-engaged scholarship initiative. The purpose of the overall collaboration is to address the lack of health insurance, under-resourced hospital management programs in the Philadelphia area. This effort includes providing physical therapy services to uninsured and under-insured residents. However, who are these clients? What are their needs? While struggling with the issues of funding, staffing, and developing clinic services and operations for pro bono physical therapy clinics, members of the collaboration need such information for program planning and policy positioning.

Questions driving scholarship. Questions that drive traditional scholarship are classically guided by the researcher's discipline to advance that knowledge base or by faculty identifying gaps in the academic literature. Responding to these questions can take the form of hypothesis testing or the identification of emerging grounded theory.

A basic tenet of engaged scholarship is collaborative planning. Therefore, questions driving engaged scholarship are raised in collaboration with community partners. Dialogue and negotiation may be required in order to clarify or define the community request, question, or issue. The process of identifying the driving intellectual question(s) seeks to match community concerns and needs with the expertise and interests of academic partners in a manner congruent with departmental missions and priorities.

For example, the staff of Mercy Rehab Associates and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and the facility and students of the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, Drexel University, and Temple University, all members of the Mercy Circle of Care coalition, were presented with many daunting questions. However, they decided to pursue a timely issue, one that they were particularly well situated to explore: Can a theoretical underpinning be constructed to better understand uninsured or uninsured physical therapy patients/clients? Who are these patients in terms of age, race, and gender? How do they compare with insured patients? Are their conditions more chronic? Is treatment of their musculoskeletal dysfunction more expensive due to delayed care? What are the behaviors of this population relative to care? Do these patients value the service? What is their nonattendance rate?

Design of scholarship. The design of much of traditional scholarship occurs under labo-
ratory conditions and strict controls. When traditional research is community based, community participants are the subjects; however, the context remains laboratory-like. Many times this design creates hardships for community members. Large numbers of subjects are desirable.

There is greater flexibility in the design of community-engaged scholarship. A particular design is chosen and conducted in collaboration with community partners. Consequently, the design tends to be more personal (partisan or ethnography) and emergent (constructivist), with smaller numbers of subjects, in contexts that are more local and intimate.

For example, the Mercy Circle of Care project incorporated scholarship from its foundation. While designing the clinical sites, the referral network, and the workforce for the clinics and planning the core curriculum for students in physical therapist education programs associated with the collaboration, coalition members also were embedding in their operations ways in which to collect information about patients to unsubtaneously ethically pursue their descriptive study. This effort was coordinated by a project oversight committee composed of representatives from all collaborating organizations as well as a data collection subcommittee made up of nonproviders and local providers.

Data analysis of scholarship. Data analysis in traditional scholarship is done by the scholar and is typically not a public process. In engaged scholarship, the data are made visible and public, with community partners assisting in data analysis. Consequently, both the data and the analysis process must be understandable to nonacademics. The research design and sample size typical in community-engaged scholarship have led to an increase in the use of qualitative approaches. Quantitative methods, if applied, are often part of a mixed-methods format. Another feature of engaged scholarship is that it allows taking time for collaborative, critical reflection, not only on the data and findings but also on the partnership process.

For example, group interpretation of data was particularly helpful for members of the Mercy Circle of Care initiative. Some data on the patterns of participation of uninsured or uninsured people were surprising and did not seem correct. Discussion among members of the data collection subcommittee and faculty collaborators helped to make sense of the data and resulted in new insights.

Dissemination of scholarship. The foremost aim of traditional scholarship is to have an impact on the discipline. Therefore, results are expressed in academic language, through peer-reviewed articles or at conferences at which the critique and the discussion are confined to the discipline. Communication seldom occurs in a format or within a forum accessible to the subjects.

To meet the variety of stakeholders' needs, community-engaged scholarship uses a variety of dissemination vehicles and products. Academic publications, including interdisciplinary journals, are only the beginning. Results may be shared through public technical reports, policy briefs, public forums, popular media, and other means.

For example, different partners have different needs; therefore, the Mercy Circle of Care collaboration produces the results of engaged scholarship in a variety of formats. Information disseminated through the local newspaper and other media outlets serves two purposes. It benefits local providers, who want to continue the program, by providing information that can influence policy makers and funding sources. It also serves to inform the general population about the characteristics and health status of uninsured or underinsured people in their own community. Academics are writing articles targeted toward scholarly publications, including Health Affairs: The Policy Journal of the Health Sphere and the Journal of the American Medical Association. In addition, student participation has resulted in many completed master's degree applied projects and theses.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When Donald Schön wrote that "the new scholarship requires a new epistemology," he observed that Boyer's reconsideration of scholarship opened the door to a reconsideration of what constitutes legitimate knowledge in the academy. Making comparisons between traditional scholarship and community-engaged scholarship can oversimplify and dichotomize the differences between diverse, complex, and often messy processes. However, examining parallels in the structures of community-engaged scholarship and traditional scholarship illustrates how both of these methodologies frame scholarly inquiry and generate legitimate knowledge. The aims of community-engaged scholarship differ from those of traditional scholarship, but community-engaged scholarship is likewise a productive architecture, one in which community participants act as co-architects and co-researchers. As the Mercy Circle of Care experience illustrates, using community-engaged scholarship as the architecture for community-based physical therapy can enhance both theory and practice in the field.

Community-engaged scholarship is gradually coming into its own as a model of inquiry. However, it still faces challenges that can be overcome only when academic changes in ways that support some of its essential differences from traditional scholarship. First, higher education must provide for the development of "an apprentice" archetypes of community-engaged scholarship. In addition to disciplinary expertise and foundational research skills, graduate students and new faculty need support for the cultivation and development of traits such as the following:

1. Having a fundamental belief system about the role of the university as a partner engaged with the community in scholarly ways.
2. Seeing scholarship as the defining structure when beginning a collaborative project with the community.
3. Being open to interdisciplinary ways of thinking and framing scholarship.
4. Having skills necessary for partnership, collaboration, and facilitation, as well as being a good listener, adaptable, and patient.

Second, there must be consolidation of institutional leadership and support for this type of architecture. Without such centralized support, community-engaged scholarship may be driven by the interests of particular faculty members; its focus and, thus, its effectiveness become diffused. Substantive support would be evidenced by an institution's mission, strategic priorities, and appropriately aligned resource allocations. Ideally, it would be espoused and enacted by the academic leadership and reflected in institutional communications and publications. It would be embedded in the curriculum and in faculty roles and reward systems. Evidence of institutional change would include affirmative hiring of engaged scholars and adding positions to promote further engagement. Institutions would create incentives such as funding and international collaborations to attract faculty interested in taking on engagement. All of these steps would build organizational support for the integration of pedagogy, scholarship, and community engagement. This process would lead to rich and rewarding collaborations that would tie scholarship to the "particularities of place."

Yet another challenge is working with community partners so that they also understand and appreciate scholarship as the scaffold of the collaboration. As noted earlier, community members are often wary of being subjected to traditional scholarly research. However, community-engaged scholarship allows for a collaborative, engaged partner-
ship of the university and the community. A growing body of literature indicates the promise that this type of collaboration holds, and increased institutional support will give scholars a stronger foundation for framing their work in ways that make community members participants rather than subjects. Disseminating the results of such work to the community can create a constructive feedback circle to support further collaboration.

Finally, there is great opportunity for those in the field of physical therapy education to continue to contribute to this architecture of community-engaged scholarship. As the Mercy Circle of Care project illustrates, data collection and analysis can consist with service, teaching, and learning. Framing an endeavor as collaboration between community and academy creates the potential for a richer, more multifaceted experience for all participants than is possible through traditional scholarship alone.

REFERENCES
