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Lessons About Engaged Communication Scholarship:

*I Heard It Through The Grapevine*⁰¹

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^{1&2}The song was originally written by Whitfield & Strong in 1967, but it became a hit after the release by Marvin Gaye in 1968.

Abstract

Everything I know about engaged communication, *I heard through the grapevine*¹—through a thicket of research and critical thinking about applied communication research that goes back to 1968 when Marvin Gaye released his hit single². The fact that applied communication research, which served as the roots of engaged scholarship, surfaced as a new form of communication scholarship in 1968 (Cissna, Eadie & Hickson, 2009), makes perfect sense—the events and social trends of 1968 match the underlying principles of the newly emerged research discipline. Looking back at lessons from 1968 can provide exemplars for understanding engaged communication scholarship, how it is practiced today, and how we can apply these principles in our own research to make a difference in the world. This article explores models, benefits, challenges, and the future of engaged communication scholarship.

♪ “*People say believe half of what you see, son, and none of what you hear.*”

But I can't help bein' confused. If it's true, please tell me dear.” (Whitfield & Strong, 1967)

Introduction

♪ “*Please allow me to introduce myself...*” (The Rolling Stones, 1968, *Sympathy For The Devil*)

I forever have felt born in the wrong generation. The identification of an in-between generation—*Generation Jones* (Pontell, 2000), for those born between 1954 and 1964³—helped orient me somewhat, but I’m still “jonesin” (Pontell, 2000) for a cultural home. I feel the same way about my communication scholarship—“jonesin” to find my rhythm within a broad ensemble of research

³ It traditionally has been accepted that members born during this time fell into one of two generations: Baby Boomers or Generation X. However, the concept of this generational cohort—Generation Jones (Pontell, 2000)—is gaining acceptance, being more widely cited by academics and popular press. This has been popularized more recently because President Obama (born in 1961) can be claimed as a member of Generation Jones.

methods. My lifelong work in social causes and my recommitment to academia collide like two generations out of sync. One era strikes a chord for me and my scholarship—a time from which I have gained lessons on how to harmonize theory with practice, and research with social change.

The movements I yearned for began to come of age in the 60's; in 1968, to be exact—a year known for many things, but most of all for being a time of change, which has been written about extensively across the disciplines⁴. It is also known for its music that recorded through verse the movements of this time. Less celebrated was the emergence (or at least recognition) of a new form of communication scholarship called *applied* communication research (Cissna, Eadie & Hickson, 2009), which was first identified and named in 1968. This article is not intended to be a historical medley of the discipline's development. That massive task was undertaken by Cissna et al. (2009) in their review of “The Development of Applied Communication Research.” Rather, I will focus on the communication scholarship richly practiced today that grew from applied communication research and which was inspired by the sense of social responsibility and social justice that emerged from the same period of time. Because engaged scholarship is misunderstood by many academics, much like the youth of 1968 was misunderstood by other generations (Hupp, 2008; Whittington & Moody, 2008), I will begin with a brief background about the cultural shifts that occurred in 1968 that paralleled the emergence of applied communication research and engaged scholarship. This will provide a framework for understanding the inspiration for this scholarship discipline.

Revolution[♯]

♪ *You say you want a revolution. Well, you know, we all want to change the world...* (The Beatles, 1968)

What made 1968 stand out among other years of that decade was its more “densely compacted parade of events” (Morrow, 1998, ¶80), a time of spontaneous uprisings occurring simultaneously around the world (Random House, 2005). This was the year of protests against a

⁴ Many others who have written about 1968 are cited in the next section.

universally hated war (Kurlansky, 2005), the draft, assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, and political conflict and liberation in countries across the globe. It was “a time when every established norm seemed to be under siege” (Kaiser, 1997, p. x), and it “marked the birth of several cumulative waves of liberation” (Offe, 2002, p. 84). The women’s movement rose up on the heels of civil rights, and it inspired “the birth of gay liberation and modern identity politics” (Berman, 1997). It also was a year of avant-garde theater, movies that “finally started to catch up with what was going on in the culture at large” (Stamberg, 2008), and some of the best music (*author’s opinion*) in rock-and-roll and Motown.

The music, especially, was a distinguishable sign of these times. When we think of 1968, says Gates (2007), we think of the “riots, assassinations, the Vietnam War, the youth revolt, the backlash,” but most of all, we think of “the songs” (§1). Kaiser (1997), author of *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation*, called the music of this year “the most eclectic-electric-wrathful-revolutionary-romantic-soulful-psychedelic music ever played, simultaneously, on every rock-and-roll radio station in the world” (Kaiser, 1997, p. xx). The songs “kept us alive,” says Kaiser, “even a little hopeful, through the most terrifying year of the decade” (p. xx). Many refer to 1968 as a time of cultural revolution, and the music from 1968 marks that revolution in our memories.

Morrow (1998) describes the time as “a tragedy of change, a struggle between generations, to some extent a war between the past and the future, and even, for an entire society, a violent struggle to grow up” (§80). It was the time of “a generation that felt so different and so alienated that it rejected all forms of authority” (Kurlansky, 2005, p. xviii). The cultural struggles of 1968 led us to think differently from two previous postwar decades, “because the movements of 1968 liberated all of us, including the generations born later,” says Offe (2002, p. 84). People of all ages “believed that fundamental change was possible and necessary in America in 1968” (Kaiser, 1997, p. x). There was

a “need to embrace causes larger than ourselves, crusades that would give us the chance to define ourselves as moral people” (p. xviii). Kurlansky (2005) provides a poignant description that reflects the relevance of this time and which matches my fascination with this period:

The thrilling thing about the year 1968 was that it was a time when significant segments of population all over the globe refused to be silent about the many things that were wrong with the world. They could not be silenced. There were too many of them, and if they were given no other opportunity, they would stand in the street and shout about them. And this gave the world a sense of home that it has rarely had, a sense that where there is wrong, there are always people who will expose it and try to change it. (p. 380)

Kurlansky’s description conveys a sentiment that also has seeped into academia, and it serves as a felicitous introduction to applied communication research. What makes applied communication research different from other forms of communication research is the focus on social problems and making a difference in people’s lives, a fitting tribute to the year of its birth. Applied communication research focuses on specific communication contexts or situations (such as in organizations, groups, or community settings) in a manner that provides “insight into the solution of social problems” or “leads to interventions that make a difference in people’s lives” (Cissna, 1995). Because of the social unrest and historical dislocation of 1968, it is harmonious that applied communication research emerged at this time—communication scholars began to realize it was important for their research to really matter, beyond the confines of academia.

Having reviewed some of the social trends of 1968, I will touch on communication research styles that preceded the founding of applied communication research. These forms continue strong today, sometimes to the detriment of applied forms of scholarship. More traditional forms of communication scholarship often begin with a focus on theory, and this raises a debate about the theory-practice divide in communication research.

Think[♫]

♫ *You better think... (Think!) Think about what you're tryin' to do to me. Yeah, yeah, think. (Think, think!) Let your mind go, let yourself be free. (Aretha Franklin, 1968)*

When many people think of research, they think of scholarly work that addresses theoretical problems often driven by intellectual curiosity. In traditional communication research, researchers don't get involved in the practice of what they are studying; rather, they "stand outside the stream of human events and describe, explain, and interpret phenomena" (Frey & Carragee, 2007, p. 209). The new knowledge produced from research then may be put into practice; in fact, the new knowledge may guide, change, and inspire practice. But research and practice don't have to be exclusionary or asynchronous; they can be complementary and synchronal.

Kurt Lewin (1951) has often been quoted for his claim that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (p. 169). There were many scholars to follow who stated the complement: "There is nothing so theoretical as a good practice" (Kor & Mahoney, 2000, p. 110)⁵. Exploring this notion a little further, this approach could be compared to Aristotle's claim that habits and character of excellence are developed through practice. "Moral virtue comes about as a result of habit...none of the moral virtues arise by nature. Neither by nature...do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted to receive them, and are made perfect by habit" (Ross, 2000/350 BC, p. 13). Like virtues that arise through habit, theories arise from practice. So, which is more important, theory or practice?

Theory, in itself, often is not valued by business practitioners (Mckelvey, 2006, p. 822). As an example, a survey of 100 public relations employers revealed that knowledge of public relations theory was placed last in importance in a list of 11 competencies (Moncur, 2006, p. 96). Part of the disconnect may be a "knowledge transfer problem," explains Mckelvey (2006, p. 823). Theory and

⁵ I'm sure there were many theorists who made this claim: "There is nothing so theoretical as a good practice." It just so happens, and it comes as no surprise, that the source I found was in a management journal (Kor & Mahoney, 2000).

research often are not put into a form that can be applied in practice, thus, practitioners see them as being unrelated to their work. However, as previously stated, theory and practice need not be exclusionary, and research closer to the base of practice can fill an important role, in this regard. Craig (1995) suggests that “disciplinary and applied researchers in a practical discipline need each other in order to justify their work” (p. 155). Another factor that contributes to the disconnect between theory and practice is the university-community divide that pervades many academic institutions. Simpson (2005) describes this as academics being “more ‘rhetorically engaged’ than ‘really engaged’” (p. 260):

For too long...disengagement has been privileged over engagement in the name of ‘objectivity’ and so the reflective and reflexive ways in which theory informs practice and teaching, and in which those experiences in turn shape and inform theory-building have often been written out of scholarship to the point of invisibility. (p. 246)

This heavy, sometimes exclusionary, focus on theory is one reason why academia is sometimes criticized by the public. Here, I will explore other reasons for dissatisfaction with academic practice, followed by an overview of the emergence of applied communication research that counteracts many of these criticisms.

The Fool on the Hill[♫]

♫ *But nobody ever hears him or the sounds he appears to make, and he never seems to notice...* (The Beatles, 1967)

“Criticism of higher education echoes in the popular press and the halls of government, and is heard from the public at large, parents, and students,” say Barge and Shockley-Zalabak (2008, p. 259). Because of pressures in the academy, scholars often feel a need to conduct “traditional” forms of research, and it is often seen that scientific research and practical knowledge are mutually exclusive (Barge et al., 2008; Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008). As a result, this “may sometimes be

at odds with the kinds of questions that organizational members are asking and the problems they need to have resolved” (Barge et al., 2008, p. 250). Ashcraft (2002) explains that “our field remains ambivalent toward practice. In an effort to be more relevant, we have pursued a model of scholarship that prioritizes theory over practice and so, ironically, decreases our relevance” (p. 115). Critics also point to limited accessibility of communication research by the people who need it, such as practitioners and policy makers, and the lack of direct involvement by researchers in the communities and organizations they are studying.

For these and other reasons, regardless of the research methodology, “research studies themselves seldom make a difference,” says Frey (2009, p. 206). This is consistent with Boyer (1990) who said: “Rarely have members of the academy succeeded in discovering the emerging issues and bringing them vividly to the attention of the public” (p. 105). Frey (2009) explains that most research studies are not widely read, even by scholars. In addition, “the esoteric manner in which most research studies are written, and without concern for their practical implications, make them inaccessible to policy makers, practitioners, and (interested/affected segments of) the public” (p. 206). This concurs with Deetz (2008), who noted: “We as a community have often not been good conversational partners. We have used incredible social and economic resources to produce a lot of stuff that is unavailable and unreadable in a time of incredible social need” (p. 290).

Some communication scholars advocate translating our research into language that nonacademics would find engaging and useful (Cheney, Wilhelmsson & Zorn, 2002; Eadie, 1995; Frew & Bernhardt, 2006; Seeger, 2009), and it “represents an important strategy for addressing the issue of making our work relevant to the public” (Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008, pp. 251-252). These scholars suggest we “learn to write and speak for audiences other than ourselves” (Eadie, p. 177), for example, so we can “reach communication practitioners, managers, workers, and policy makers through avenues other than just scholarly journals” (Cheney et al., p. 97). Engaged

communication scholars also recommend we make ourselves available through means such as reporting for local papers and other popular publications, not just prestigious national and academic publications (Eadie, 1995; Hummert, 2009; Seeger, 2009).

Translating our communication scholarship important because “it has tremendous potential to influence people’s communicative practices,” says Frey (2009, p. 209). However, this “is a post hoc way of making a difference after research has been conducted—that is, it seeks to make a difference *from* research” (p. 209). Communication scholars suggest an alternative approach—to make a difference *through* our research. Engaged scholars suggest we focus on research questions that address real challenges faced by practitioners (Milofsky, 2006; Simpson & Seibold, 2008; Seeger, 2009), especially “those agencies, community groups, and organizations that are seeking to address social problems” (Seeger, 2009, p. 17). In addition, it’s vital to involve those practitioners in identifying and constructing research that matters most to them. As Condit (2009) says:

Communication is really a unique and powerful force, and we won’t be able to comprehend it in ways that enable us to make substantial social changes until we develop a disciplinary paradigm that fits the contours of the phenomenon we want to study and improve. (p. 11)

One such paradigm shift can be achieved by involving practitioners in our research. Barge and Shockley-Zalabak (2008) explain that “we are more likely to ask and address important questions that are of interest to them and develop more robust analyses and theories that will have greater relevance and practical import to the public” (p. 253). Many communication researchers are doing exactly this through engaged communication scholarship. I begin an overview with my personal introduction to this scholarship approach by a scholar who engages in one of the most interventionist forms of engaged scholarship, communication activism.

Street Fighting Man[♯]

♪ ...*Cause summer’s here, and the time is right for fighting in the street, boy.* (The Rolling Stones, 1968)

Only a couple semesters into my Ph.D. program, I was frustrated. I formerly was one of those practitioners who found little use for theory or academic research. I felt awkward and lost in the academic side of the communication discipline, unsure where I fit and how I could conduct research that would make a difference—the type of difference that really mattered. Yet again, I was “jonesin” for a literal fix to my doctoral studies. In one of my classes, I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Larry Frey, now a professor of communication at the University of Colorado at Boulder, whose general scholarship focus is group communication and applied communication. Frey was the first person I heard use the term *social justice* research, a concept that immediately engaged me. According to Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz and Murphy (1996), social justice:

weaves together several strands of intellectual, moral, and social traditions. At a minimum, a social justice sensibility: (1) foregrounds ethical concerns; (2) commits to structural analyses of ethical problems; (3) adopts an activist orientation; and (4) seeks identification with others. (p. 111)

Frey’s research “seeks to understand how participation (especially by those who are underresourced and marginalized) in collective communicative practices makes a difference in people’s individual, relational, and collective lives” (2000, ¶1). Frey is most known for his work in communication activism, in which communication scholars immerse “themselves in the stream of human life, taking direct vigorous action in support of or opposition to a controversial issue for the purpose of promoting social change and justice” (Frey & Carragee, 2007, p. 10).

Some of Frey’s earlier work (Adelman & Frey, 1994) focused on communicative practices and communal life within a residential setting for people with AIDS. He has edited several books that feature social justice research and communication activism with various underresourced groups including women prisoners (Novek & Sanford, 2007), gay and lesbian communities (Cagle, 2007), sexual assault victims (Crabtree & Ford, 2007; Rich & Rodríguez, 2007), victims of domestic

violence (Cunningham & Curry, 2007), and youth gangs in the streets of Chicago (Conquergood, 1994). Like his colleagues immersed in their research environments in ways that will make a difference, Frey has been fighting in the streets of academia, paving the way for engaged communication scholarship.

I agree with Frey et al. (1996) that there is a “neglect of those individuals and groups who are most underresourced and in need of advocacy” (p. 114). I believe there is room, and indeed an obligation, for scholars to focus our research on and for those “in our society who are economically, socially, politically, and/or culturally underresourced,” (p. 110), and to do so in ways that do good, as well as transform our communities and the communication discipline. One way to accomplish this is through engaged scholarship. Frey and many other scholars (who are cited throughout this article) have added extensively to our discipline’s understanding and acceptance of engaged scholarship, through discussions that began at the Engaged Scholarship Conference that takes place annually in Aspen Colorado. Started in 2001 as a means to bring engaged organizational communication scholars together, this conference continues to “explore and advance the role of engaged scholarship in our discipline” and to “understand how communication shapes the world we live in” (University of Colorado, 2009). Many of the articles cited in this article emerged from this conference (see Simpson & Shockley-Zalabak’s, 2005).

These communication scholars have blended theory and practice through various methods of engaged scholarship that allow us to break down the university-community divide and to make a difference through our research. This has resulted in a variety of methods and models that have enriched approaches to engaged scholarship. To help illustrate these engaged scholarship models, I sketched several flow charts that portray the elements of each form of scholarship and how they fit together (see Appendix). Figure 1 represents a linear depiction of these scholarship forms. This is followed by a more comprehensive flow chart with brief descriptors of each form (Figure 2). These

charts and descriptors take the place of a lengthy narrative. As I'll demonstrate, these models of engaged scholarship are being recognized for making meaningful contributions to the field, as well as enhancing the lives of everyday people.

Everyday People^d

♪ *I am no better and neither are you. We are the same whatever we do.* (Sly & The Family Stone, 1968)

Engagement makes us equals, says Deetz (2008, p. 296). Engaged scholarship levels the playing field between academic expertise and community and practitioner knowledge. “What is said rather than who said it becomes more important” (Deetz, 2008, p. 296). Milofsky (2006) describes his form of engagement, called the social catalyst approach, as being “built on a nonhierarchical relationship between scholars and community professionals and other citizens” (p. 478):

Our community partners are peers to those of us in the academy because their professional knowledge is as strong as our disciplinary learning. Our projects work because we link talented people, create exchange networks, provide settings for effective partnerships, and support the value of craft knowledge among our partners. (pp. 478-479).

Engagement with other communities also organizes scholarship “around [incredible social] needs rather than our literatures and preferred topics of study” (Deetz, 2008, p. 290). This matches Boyer’s (1996a) claim that “the work of the academy ultimately must be directed toward larger, more humane ends.” (p. 17). “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...the scholarship of engagement,” says Boyer (1996a, p. 13). “At one level, the scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems...” (p. 19).

Similarly, DeWine (2005) explains that “calls for scholarship of engagement...are calls for higher education to be a better citizen” (p. 199). Scholarship of engagement asks “faculty to make a

commitment to solving more of society's problems and enhancing lived experience" (p. 199). Deetz (2008) concurs: "Engaged scholarship announces our willingness to be in the world rather than about the world" (p. 290). Certainly, for a socially conscious communication scholar, this sounds like academic nirvana. However, being an engaged scholar comes with many challenges, including becoming vulnerable, putting our research at risk and sometimes putting our research agendas aside. These and other challenges are explored next.

Magic Carpet Ride⁴

♪ *Well, you don't know what we could find...* (Steppenwolf, 1968)

Working in relationship with practitioners and community groups presents a set of challenges difficult for engaged scholars to overcome, including some of the following imperatives: having a great degree of flexibility in our research, embracing the interdisciplinary nature of engaged scholarship, and managing increased workloads involved in being engaged scholars.

First, practicing engaged scholarship with community groups or organizations may require a scholar to adapt his or her research agendas to the interests and needs of others. This "requires some degree of flexibility," says Seeger (2009), including "a willingness to take risks, and a capacity to reach beyond familiar methods and approaches (p. 17). "Engaged scholarship," explains Deetz (2008), "like good conversation, puts us and our knowledge at risk. If we are open to the other, we do not know where the conversation is going; we do not know how they and we will change" (p. 290). Additionally, Seeger (2009) explains, "These groups, though hungry for research and the associated insights, are likely to impose limitations on the scholar" (p. 17). As a result, engaged scholarship can be more demanding, "because scholars do not have the option of substituting simpler questions if they cannot solve real-life problems" (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 816).

This leads to another factor that dissuades faculty from engaged scholarship—simply that the nature of engaged research often requires extensive time and energy. This may include logistical

research hurdles, difficult timelines for institutional review board approvals, and challenges studying real-time phenomena. As a result, many researchers end up conducting retrospective case studies (Seeger, 2009). In addition, because traditional research and publication will hold its ground in decisions about tenure and promotion, engaged scholarship often results in an expanded workload rather than replacing activities (DeWine, 2005).

Another reason engaged scholarship can consume more effort is because it often requires scholars to be experts in multiple disciplines, including understanding “theoretical perspectives and research literature beyond our own discipline” (Seibold, 2005, p. 20). For example, scholars studying communication in certain organizations, in government, in community settings, and the like, need to be versed on the subject matter important to those groups: business practices, public administration, governance, and the myriad of current events and issues impacting these groups. Communication scholars need to “build their research on relevant theories in other disciplines in addition to communication,” says Hummert (p. 221). “Those programs that are most successful are interdisciplinary in their approach to theory, methods, and publication venues” (p. 222).

In addition to being interdisciplinary in knowledge, engaged scholars have to be interdisciplinary in practice, being actively involved in the community, in multiple venues. The lack of such involvement is “one reason university people are less effective working with community groups,” says Milofsky (2006, p. 477); “they are not enduring parts of local networks and they do not participate in the community.” Milofsky (2006) and Seibold (2005) both discuss the importance of long-term involvement beyond a specific research project. Ongoing involvement and relationship building are important to establish bonds of trust as well as to build a pool of resources and connections, for what Milofsky (2006) calls “a rich fund of social capital” (p. 476). “When we work in a community or an organization,” says Milofsky, “we are building relationships that will endure” (p. 477). Similarly, in his relationships with organizations, Seibold (2005) points out that research was

seldom his primary goal (p. 18), rather, the interactions may have been opportunities to assist organizations in meeting some specific need. In many cases, “the same amount of effort was in engaged service work of no overt to immediate scholarly value,” says Seibold (p. 19). Because of his relationship building efforts, community members were “in turn willing to let their experiences be reported to a scholarly audience” (p. 19).

I, personally, experience many of the challenges previously discussed. Because of my professional background, I naturally embrace an interdisciplinary approach to my research, often in areas of nonprofit management and organizational communication, and I accept the flexibility required to work in the community and to share my research agenda with practitioner peers. I further concur with Milofsky (2006), who advocates that “longevity in the community is critical” (p. 477), and I strive to make my relationships with community partners trusting and long-lasting. As a result, the mutual benefits are great and continue to grow. My greatest challenge, however, goes back to feeling like the misunderstood generation of 1968, because I find some my peers in academia do not understand engaged scholarship and do not regard it with the same value as traditional research. Despite the extensive workload and rigor required for engaged communication scholarship, the tremendous benefits to the community, and the rich accounts that can result from such research, engaged scholarship sometimes lacks credibility in academia, especially when a scholar is facing decisions about tenure and promotion. Here I will explore the tenure and promotion challenges surrounding engaged communication scholarship and suggestions for how scholars and their institutions can work through the conflict to equitably evaluate engaged scholarship.

We Can Work It Out[♫]

♫ While you see it your way, there's a chance that we may fall apart before too long. We can work it out.

We can work it out. (The Beatles, 1966)

Pressure related to tenure and promotion is another significant barrier to engaged

scholarship. Regardless of effort and soundness of approach, engaged scholarship often is not weighted equitably in comparison to traditional research in tenure and promotion decisions. Many academic institutions base their tenure and promotion decisions on some combination of research, teaching and service (*Adams, 2003*). More specifically, many institutions follow guidelines proposed by Ernest Boyer (1990) in his work, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Boyer outlined four forms of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching. Just before his death in 1995, Boyer made a presentation at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on “The Scholarship of Engagement.” In his speech (1996b), he reintroduced the four forms of scholarship, but his principal focus was on the “scholarship of engagement.” Boyer stressed the importance of faculty and universities contributing their expertise and resources to “our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems” (p. 32). Ultimately, explained Boyer (1996b) “the scholarship of engagement also means creating a special climate in which the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other...enriching the quality of life for us all” (p. 33). Despite his emphasis on the scholarship of engagement just before his death, scholarship of discovery remains a top-weighted factor in tenure and promotions decision (see *Adams, 2003*; *Braxton, Luckey & Helland, 2000, 2006*; *DeFleur, 2007*). “However scholarship is defined,” says *DeFleur (2007)*, “it always translates to publications” (p. 111), and “numerous publications within relatively short time frames,” adds *Seeger (2009, p. 16)*. *Seeger* further points out that the emphasis is on “highly selective peer reviewed journal articles” (p. 16).

Further compounding the problem, many institutions blend Boyer’s concept of “engagement” with the scholarship of application, and application is usually interpreted by academic institutions to mean “service.” But tenure and promotion committees “draw rigid lines between service and research” (*Seeger, 2009, p. 16*). “To be considered scholarship,” says *Boyer (1990)*, “service activities must be tied directly to one’s special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow

directly out of, this professional activity” (p. 22). This type of service, Boyer explains, “is serious, demanding work, requiring rigor—the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities” (1990, p. 22). Regardless of these facts, “at tenure and promotion time, the harsh truth is that *service* is hardly mentioned,” says Boyer (1996a), and “faculty who do spend time with so-called applied projects frequently jeopardize their careers” (p. 13).

Similarly, DeWine (2005) points out that faculty conducting forms of applied research “have been told that their research does not ‘count’ in any significant way and that they should abandon such lines of research if they want to achieve tenure” (p. 192). “The fact remains that the scholarship of engagement is still ignored by a large percentage of higher education,” says DeWine (2005, p. 191). DeWine further explains that “when it comes to awarding tenure most faculty and administrators at universities will accept this type of scholarship as evidence of productivity only as long as there is ‘enough’ traditional research activity as well” (p. 191-192).

DeWine (2005) suggests that “in an environment that should welcome diversity of thought and method, a certain amount of engaged scholarship should be encouraged, if not required, to broaden our perspectives” (p. 193). “Even for faculty and administrators willing to support the significance of engaged scholarship, issues remain,” say Barge and Shockley-Zalabak (2008, p. 260). Barge and Shockley-Zalabak list a range of questions related to methods for evaluating engaged scholarship, outlets for engaged work, issues of assessment and accreditation, needs for faculty development to support engaged work, resources required, and other questions (p. 260). Frey and Carragee (2007) concur: “If we truly want communication research to make a difference, making a difference ought to become a criterion for evaluating communication research, just as it is in judging teaching, when students essentially are asked what difference a teacher/course made” (p. 210).

Methods of evaluation should go beyond traditional measures, such as publication, to examine the community-based outcomes of the engaged scholarship effort, such as better

collaboration and increased awareness of specific project outcomes (DeWine, 2005). DeWine and others also advocate for a broader definition of prestigious research that includes engaged scholarship, and some academic institutions are doing exactly that. When academic institutions periodically review tenure and promotion criteria, “engaged scholarship can become an increasing part of these documents,” suggests Barge and Shockley-Zalabak (2008). “Specific criteria for tenure can embrace multi-disciplinary, engaged work and curriculum transformation” (pp. 260-261).

Revolution – Part 2^d

♪ *You tell me it's the institution, well, you know, you better free your mind instead.* (The Beatles, 1968)

The field of engaged communication scholarship has grown since applied communication research first was introduced in 1968. Similar to what Kurlansky (2005) said about 1968, engaged scholarship gives many communication academics “a sense of home” that we have rarely had—“a sense that where there is wrong, there are always people who will expose it and try to change it” (Kurlansky, 2005, p. 380). The communication discipline has been strengthened from the legacies of this era, including having a rich and expanded discipline of communication scholarship in which I have found a home. As an engaged scholar, I strive to make my work meaningful to both the community and my peers. Keeping a foot in multiple research realms, I practice applied communication research at numerous points along the engaged scholarship continuum.

Engaged scholarship is the part of the applied research continuum in which I am most comfortable. It gives me tremendous satisfaction to see my scholarship make a difference in the community, for example, working with organizations to study group communication practices in a way that strengthens cross-system coordination, improves services, and creates meaningful systemic change. As Stohl (2005) says, such “scholarly engagement transforms our lives, the lives of others, and the organizations in which we work and study” (p. 204). I also agree with Stohl’s statement that the “issue isn’t whether or not to do engaged scholarship; engagement is not a choice. By virtue of

being in the academy, whenever we are teaching, advising, consulting, or researching, we are engaged scholars” (p. 204). As I mentioned in the introduction, what draws me to the late 1960’s is the focus on social responsibility and social justice. For me, engagement is not a choice. It is what I am called to do as a scholar to contribute to the community in a way that advances knowledge for myself, my community peers, and academic discipline.

Figure 1. Continuum of Applied Communication Research Methodologies

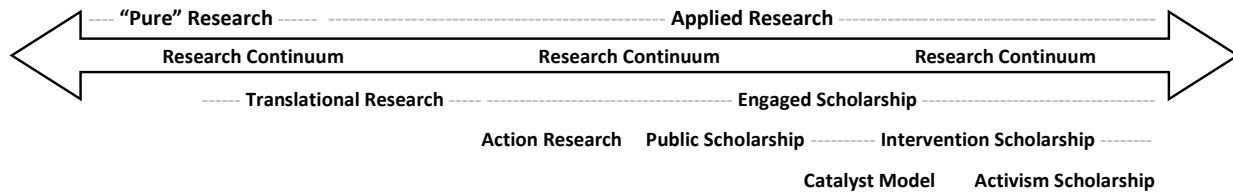
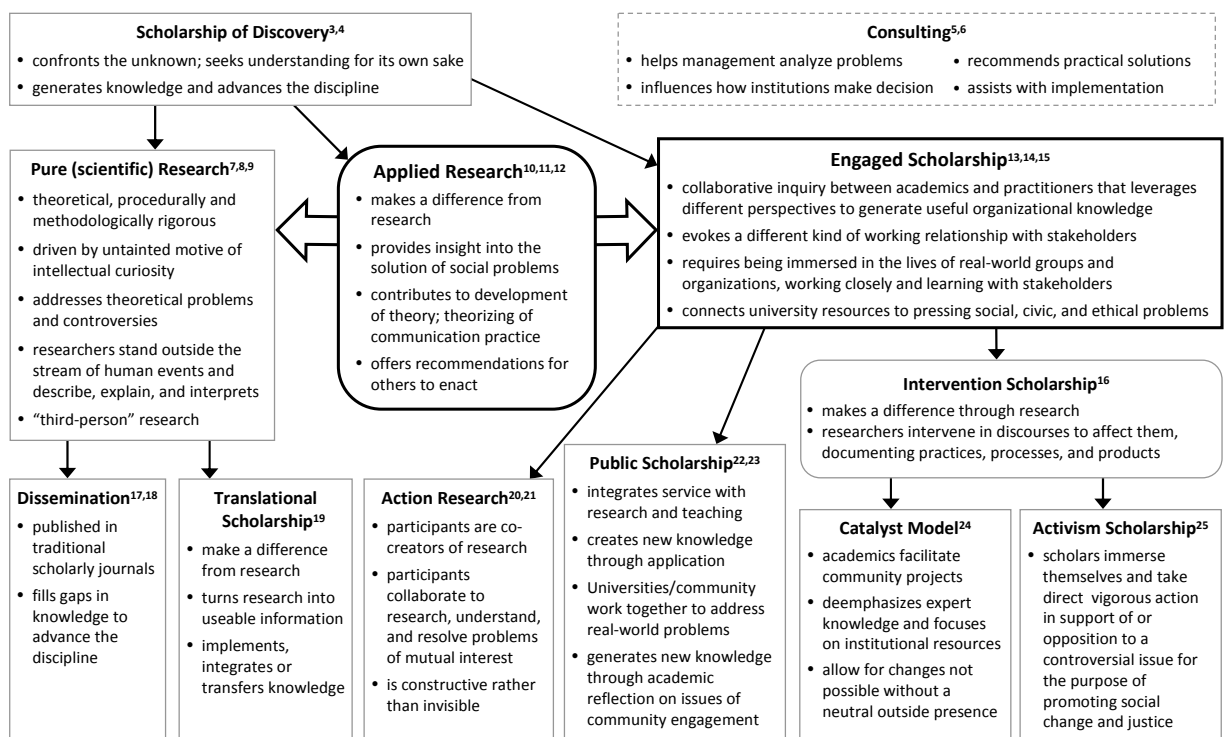


Figure 2. Flow Chart of Applied Communication Research Methodologies



Sources: ³Boyer, 1990; ⁴Craig, 1995; ⁵Association of Management, no date; ⁶Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008; ⁷Miller, 1995; ⁸Craig, 1995; ⁹Frey, 2009; ¹⁰ibid.; ¹¹Cissna, 1995; ¹²Seeger, 2009; ¹³Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008; ¹⁴Seibold, 2005; ¹⁵Boyer, 1996a; ¹⁶Frey, 2009; ¹⁷Seeger, 2009; ¹⁸Craig, 1995; ¹⁹Frey, 2009; ²⁰Greenwood & Levin, 2006; ²¹Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001; ²²Colbeck & Michael, 2006; ²³Yapa, 2006; ²⁴Milofsky, 2006; ²⁵Frey & Carragee, 2007

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