Scholarship of Engagement and Engaged Scholars: Through the Eyes of Exemplars

Carol E. Kasworm and
Nur Aira B. Abdrahim

Abstract

How do leaders of the scholarship of engagement (SOE) experience and define this field? Although there have been a significant number of reports and national forums, the field continues to experience diversity of understandings and ambiguity in this discourse. To gain insights into these differing understandings of SOE, this study explored the perspectives of a group of elites, exemplars within the field of the scholarship of engagement. Framed in social constructivism, this study explored the exemplars' socially and culturally mediated experiences, beliefs, and symbolic interactions. Key findings suggested that the exemplars' journey and their understandings of SOE were interrelated to their current positionality. Two interrelated but different groups emerged from the data, representing a university-centric enclave and a community engagement-centric enclave. These two groupings suggested that they experienced different defining contexts and experiences as well as valued differing influential key terms and meanings for the work and their understandings of the scholarship of engagement.

Introduction

*H*igher education represents a dynamic societal enterprise that has both embraced and been pressed by internal and external forces, leading to changing expectations, roles, and responsibilities. There have been a number of significant foundational discussions of the service and outreach function of higher education fostered by Boyer *(1996)*, Spanier *(1997)*, and the Kellogg Commission report, *Returning to our Roots* (*Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 2001)*, as well as the more recent Carnegie-Designation for Community-Engaged Universities (*http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/ descriptions/community _engagement.php*). These discussions have presented changing understandings, perhaps typified by Sandmann's *(2008)* conceptual framework suggesting four stages of the contemporary evolution towards the concept of public engagement. Sandmann suggests, "The scholarship of engagement is still emerging from its definitional anarchy" *(p. 101),* and it is

still evolving as an interdisciplinary field for academic research *(Giles, 2008)*. A significant aspect of this variance is the key actors' perceptions of the mission of engagement. For example, O'Meara *(2008)* explored seven delineated motivations for engagement by "exemplar" faculty, identified through their national service-learning awards. In addition, other studies have focused upon faculty and related concerns of rewards and institutional systems that support engagement, service-learning, and community development *(Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; O'Meara, 2002; Vogelgesang, Denson, & Jayakumar, 2010; Ward, 2003)*. Few studies have explored the individual meanings of engagement. One of the few identified studies noted that this third mission held many different meanings for the faculty and staff within institutions. Woods *(2001)* found that engagement was viewed as qualitatively different from other key roles. He suggested that faculty and staff must have personal investment in the philosophical and functional aspects of this mission to "build and maintain the capacity for engagement" *(p. 119)*.

This current study built upon these efforts and focused upon the constructed beliefs of individuals identified as exemplars in the scholarship of engagement (SOE). Through their journey of immersion into engagement roles, this study examined exemplars' key beliefs and experiences, key institutional supports and barriers, and key understandings of engagement. Framed in social constructivism, this study explored the socially and culturally mediated experiences of exemplars as they developed their understandings and contributions to the scholarship of engagement within higher education *(Lave & Wenger, 1991; Twomey Fosnet, 1996)*.

In this study, this enculturation into the discourse and meaning of engagement was socially constructed through specific communities within higher education, the experiential world of colleagues and regional stakeholders, and associational leadership and publications of engagement professionals. As suggested by Sandmann *(2008)*, there is a dialectical interaction between the individual and the evolving sense of the meaning and actions of engagement in higher education. Packer and Goicoechea *(2000)* suggested that one's sense of identity and action in that identity involves becoming a member of a community, constructing knowledge in relation to expertise as a participant (legitimate peripheral participation), and also taking into account the culture of one's community and one's roles as part of participation. Through this dialectical frame, the nature of identity incorporates both the transformation of the person and of their social world; these individuals as exemplars are both actors and constructors of this world of engagement.

Study Design

This study adopted a naturalistic qualitative inquiry process, drawing upon the tradition of qualitative case study research *(Flyvbjerg, 2011; Merriam, 1998)*. The key research question was: What were the experiences of exemplars in the field of engagement regarding their own beliefs, involvements, and key influences? This study sought to identify individual understandings as distinctly unique and subjective, based within the community defined by "engagement exemplars". Thus, the participants were chosen to represent a purposeful sample of elites – individuals who were identified as exemplars, individuals who have made significant contributions and were national leaders and innovators in the field of the scholarship of engagement.

The pool of potential participants for this study was identified by one of two methods. The first group was identified by one of the senior national leaders of the university engagement/community outreach field who nominated individuals known as leaders and innovators, representing a diverse set of backgrounds, roles, and institutions. The second pool of potential participants was identified through snowball sampling. For this second group, the researcher contacted the first group of interviewed participants seeking nominations of individuals they judged to be exemplars in the field of engagement. The final group of participants in this study numbered 16, with a breakdown of eight males and eight females.

As a collective, this group of SOE exemplars came from a variety of backgrounds, academic disciplines, and professional roles in higher education. Each participant was selected based upon their significant leadership, advocacy, educational outreach, service-learning initiatives, community-oriented research, and/or scholarly research in the field of SOE. These participants had engaged in significant collegiate and community endeavors for a lengthy period of time and provided major contributions recognized in the field by their colleagues. The majority of these exemplars were currently in either higher education administrative or faculty roles, with a few holding joint appointments in both administration and faculty. There was also one individual previously had held a higher education administrative position but was currently an adjunct faculty member with active engagement in several non-higher-education communities of practice.

All individuals provided consent for audiotaped telephone interviews. (The study had been reviewed and approved by the

university's IRB prior to its initiation). The interviews lasted from 40-70 minutes. The interview protocol focused upon the individual and their social reality–having them describe their understanding of the term *scholarship of engagement*, their career journey and key influences as they move towards their commitment to engagement as a primary focus of their work, their key supports and barriers, and their beliefs about their contributions. These audiotaped interviews were transcribed, and several interviews were reviewed by the specific interviewee for best representation of the interviewee's responses. Trustworthiness was established through three methods: framing the study in social constructivism; utilization of systematic qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, including collaboration of two researchers during the analysis process; and exploration of researchers' subjectivities and biases.

Analysis was conducted in the first stage with intercoder examination of transcripts for codes, themes, and categories. Because the field of SOE is based in varied practices, contexts, and beliefs, this first stage of analysis supported the study by drawing upon standpoint epistemology. Because this study was anchored in the individual's unique worldview perspective, it was evident in the transcripts that the key meanings of SOE were anchored within individual engagements in relation to their perceived context. Although the term *standpoint epistemology* became prominent through feminist research *(Harding, 1991; Hekman, 1997)*, this study and others have moved beyond the positionality of gender and now also consider the positionality of the other figural roles, often in marginalized contexts. Given past understandings of service and engagement as a sometimes contested enterprise in the world of faculty roles, rewards, and recognition *(Vogelgesang et al., 2010; Woods, 2001)*, those individuals holding positions embedded in engagement also held a unique standpoint that influenced the dynamics of construction of the knowledge of engagement and its position within their social contexts.

Because the first stage of the analysis suggested a more in-depth focus through positional analysis, the second stage of analysis was a comparative inductive examination of codes and themes of meaning structures of individuals between two delineated groups. For these two groups, within-group analysis as well as cross-analysis between groups was conducted, with examination of key themes for similar and differentiated understandings and experiences.

This study has limitations based upon the nature of the qualitative research tradition and its focus on the particularistic meanings

of individuals at one point in time. This study cannot be generalized to other SOE exemplars or professionals within the SOE field. Thus, this study provides insights and understandings of this select elite group in relation to their experiences and their perceived figural meanings of the scholarship of engagement.

Key Findings

Given the past diversity of definitions and understandings of the scholarship of engagement, this study sought to explore each exemplar's beliefs and constructed understandings in order to delineate potential common beliefs and understandings. Each exemplar's constructed meanings were often viewed as an evolving set of understandings. These individuals often suggested that over time they had redefined actions and standards of judgment for this work, as well as experienced forces that shaped and reshaped their understandings. Initially, these elite exemplars suggested that their own individual journeys within engagement were defined by differing terms: engaged scholarship; service-learning; civic or community engagement; civic empowerment; applied action research; public collaborative research; public scholarship, extension, community (public, urban) outreach; and research partnerships. As a collective, these exemplars held no monolithic definition, pathway, or understanding of the scholarship of engagement. Rather, each person's sense of engagement was cultural and positional, actively constructed and evolved from their unique past and current individual sociocultural roles and contexts.

Positional Involvements and Perspective

Positionality and the related worldview of the field were at the heart of participants' constructed meaning for their place and role in the scholarship of engagement. In the analysis, these exemplars represented two broadly defined positional enclaves: university-centric exemplars and community engagement-centric exemplars. Each of these two groupings suggested differing influential enculturation experiences and thus differing emphases of definitions, values, and perceived impacts of SOE in relation to their career contributions.

What is a positional enclave? As noted by Crotty *(1998)*, knowledge and beliefs about the world are developed and transmitted through interactive human communities. Social institutions do influence individual behavior and thinking through a "complex and social process of enculturation" *(p. 79)*. Although all of

these individuals had careers in higher education, their formative career experiences and subsequent subcultures shaped differing worldviews. These individuals were enculturated into their understandings of their SOE through the tools and objects of their specific subcultures. These tools and objects included their products of work and the impact of their practices; their applied, collaborative, or theoretical scholarship; and their leadership, collaboration, and advocacy with others, both within their disciplinary profession and within national, regional, and local communities of practice.

These two enclaves held two different standpoints with certain common interwoven understandings. The university-centric enclave viewed themselves as dominantly anchored in a strong research culture with key expectations for actions related to conducting and disseminating research and with a broader background of understanding and commitment to engagement and outreach. The community engagement-centric enclave was dominantly focused upon working with people and communities, engaged in action connections in relation to scholarship. Their focus was upon a broadly based set of understandings of engagement with varied forms of research that created impact and change in individuals, community, and society (note Table 1 on the breakdown of participants by enclave group and gender).

Table 1. Participant Enclave and Gender

	Male	Female	Total
First enclave: University-centric	6	1	7
Second enclave: Community engagement-centric	2	7	9
Total	8	8	16

The following section provides comparative descriptions on the positionality, career pathways, and definitional understandings of each of the enclaves (note Table 2 on the comparative synopsis of the two enclaves).

Table 2. Key Differences Between University- and Community Engagement-Centric Enclaves

Positional enclaves	University-centric	Community engagement-centric
Positionality	1. Focused in a strong research culture with key expectations for actions related to the conducting and disseminating of research 2. Broad background understanding and commitment to engagement and outreach 3. Exemplars were tenured or tenure-track professors, with a small number in non-tenure-track roles.	1. Focused upon working with people and communities 2. Broad understanding of engagement as varied forms of research that created impact and change in individuals, community, and society 3. Most exemplars in various SOE-related positions, usually higher-level administrative positions in higher education institutions
Differing career pathways to SOE	1. Through specific academic discipline with a clear connection and focus on student learning, a research endeavor, and/or community engagement (problem-solving) 2. Focused on studying the scholarship component of SOE, mostly in the development and substantive aspects of the field and provided publications and conference presentations 3. Transitioned between administrative roles and professorial roles, often seeking a tenured faculty role at a subsequent institution after establishing their initial career contributions through administrative or research-related positions in SOE	1. Developed interest and passion in SOE through early teaching roles and experiences, mainly through involvement in teaching service-learning 2. Involvement in SOE is fostered through active research agendas in relation to engaged research plus job attachment to institutions that provided them with the relevant position and organizational support to ground their research focus into practice. 3. Early attachment in various advocacy roles in promoting a component of SOE (e.g., service-learning, civic engagement) for their respective institutions, which then led into developing their commitment in the field of SOE

Cultural and positional context	Four different cultural and positional contexts to define roles and work expectations. Individuals were either (a) in academic units with strong research environments and mixed negotiations for promotion and tenure, (b) housed in education units with a traditional research focus on scholarship of SOE, (c) research-focused non-tenure-track people in strong research-oriented institutions, or (d) problematic-situated or faculty who did either traditional scholarship and then SOE later or left initial institution for favorable SOE environment.	Most individuals had clearly defined roles and work expectations for engagement work. Thus, for many of them, work context was based in a commitment to SOE work. However, several individuals needed to meet the differing demands of their dual role as both SOE administrator and faculty member.
Definitional understandings and constructed meanings of SOE	Identified four themes representing their particular understandings and actions within SOE. These terms included: 1. Scholarship with engagement 2. Reciprocity with community 3. Research and generation of knowledge 4. Scholarly contributions	Constructed beliefs and meaning of SOE through five essential understandings: 1. SOE versus engaged scholarship 2. Community collaboration/partnerships 3. Meeting the needs of public goods 4. Teaching, service, and research missions 5. The "scholarship" component in SOE

First Enclave: University-Centric Exemplars

The university-centric exemplars suggested three early influences in their journey in the scholarship of engagement. Most of the exemplars had been influenced by a major project or activity through engagement-related teaching, research, or service in their early adult years, by their early commitments to social justice, or by their earlier work in an academic discipline that also represented aspects of SOE. Thus, they viewed themselves as part of two professional fields, reflecting their earlier grounding in that specialty academic field as well as their membership in this emerging field of SOE.

Three career pathways for SOE university-centric exemplars. As these exemplars shared their career journeys, they suggested one of three paths to their current senior status in SOE. The first subgroup of individuals defined their SOE work through their specific academic discipline with a clear connection to and focus on student learning, a research endeavor, and/or community engagement (problem-solving). Their commitments to SOE were based in their beliefs about the impact and value of their disciplinary work in relation to engagement. In particular, these university-centric exemplars noted key figural experiences based upon previous negotiations of SOE work with their department chairs and deans as well as the SOE-related expectations of institutional promotion and tenure standards in relation to scholarship of engagement. Some experienced supportive understandings of SOE; for other exemplars, the products of SOE were not initially viewed as representing acceptable quality scholarship and impact.

A second subgroup in this enclave defined themselves as individuals who focused upon the scholarship of SOE. They viewed themselves as individuals who studied the field and practice of SOE rather than being in the day-to-day world of doing engaged work with a community of practice. These individuals studied the development and substantive aspects of the field and provided publications and conference presentations. Housed in schools or colleges of education, they focused upon the professional and scholarly developments of the field of higher education. Several members of this group identified the significant impact of financial support from external organizations, as well as the value of the National Forum on Higher Education and the Public Good (and specifically the Kellogg Forum; *http://thenationalforum.org/)* and the AERA preconference for emerging scholars.

The third subgroup in the university-centric enclave suggested they transitioned between administrative roles and professorial roles, often seeking a tenured faculty role at a subsequent institution after establishing their initial career contributions through administrative or faculty research-oriented positions. From an initial administrative role, one part of this subgroup often moved into a research institution after establishing their national reputation and thus, as suggested by one exemplar, "[I] gained tenure on my own terms." Another variation of this subgroup was represented by several faculty who initially found that the research standards of their institution forced them to produce traditional scholarship to survive. They suggested that they had planned to focus on an SOE research agenda after tenure and often identified a different

institution with a more supportive SOE environment that they could transition toward in the future. Many also noted that they subsequently ended up in leadership or administrative positions with an anchor in SOE.

In this university-centric enclave, these individuals assessed their career pathways in relation to the cultural context of their institution; through the research-focus of their work and through their teaching/educative efforts, their disseminated projects or research through conferences and written forums; and their leadership/service either within their institution or to their colleagues within their field. At their later career stages (status at the time of this interview), the majority of these university-centric individuals held a tenured faculty position, with a few individuals holding an administrative leadership role focused on outreach, field studies (community outreach research), or student engagement. Of those university-centric individuals who held tenured positions, approximately half were also in administrative roles representing engagement, outreach, and/or service-learning. All of these exemplars reported ongoing generative endeavors through published research and writing, advocacy, mentoring, professional development outreach, or "reform [of] academic work systems to better support faculty community engagement."

The cultural and positional context for the university-centric enclave. Most of the university-centric exemplars focused their key career decisions and scholarly contributions within the context of their institutional culture and the cultural role expectations for their particular career. All desired to be true to their passion about the importance and impact of the scholarship of engagement while also recognizing the standards of their institution and the related expectations of promotion and tenure for tenure-track faculty roles or key expected outcomes for their particular administrative/non-tenure-track role. Because most of these individuals were in research universities, the beliefs and expectations of this environment regarding research and the dissemination of research were figural. For example, one tenure-track scholar believed the culture of his environment included a "traditional focus on promotion and tenure as quality and quantity of publications in nationally ranked journals and the gaining of major grants." Another individual in a nontenure role noted the importance for him of publishing and presenting in national forums as a key marker of being valued within this institutional research culture, as well as within his specific institutional leadership context. Thus, whether these exemplars were in a tenure-track position or in a non-tenure-

track role, the explicit cultural context focusing on promotion and tenure standards and the implicit expectations focusing on institutionally-valued research strongly influenced these individuals' decisions regarding the nature of their SOE involvement.

There were four differing subgroupings within this university-centric enclave regarding their understandings and actions within the institutional culture and their positional commitment to SOE. One subgroup of exemplars faced a mixed-support faculty environment for SOE by key institutional leaders (department chairs and deans) as well as colleagues who either valued or questioned the role of engagement as a viable contribution. These exemplars represented various academic disciplines (excluding education). Most of these individuals noted the significant influence of a key university person (an institutional leader of outreach, civic engagement, or service-learning who was outside their department). These leaders were perceived to be pivotal for the growth and success of these exemplars; they provided invaluable mentoring, validated the significance of the exemplar's work in SOE, and in some cases provided in-kind or financial support for their work. Some of these mentors were within the academic research culture, and other mentors were within the university engagement culture. As stated by one person, "To work with [this person]—they provided sort-of a template of understanding for me, to think about what engagement is about and what is this mutually beneficial reciprocal partnership."

In the case of an exemplar in engineering, the individual noted, "My case was going to be a test case as to the validity of service-learning as a scholarly endeavor." The individual shared that in this context, there was "a lack of understanding of what the scholarship of engagement was perhaps, or just the fact that I was different, or that my scholarly record looks a little bit different." As this person faced this promotion and tenure journey, there were negotiations (sometimes supportive and sometimes problematic regarding viable accomplishments) with three successive department heads. The final review for promotion and tenure was favorable, in part due to a dean who was more supportive and receptive to SOE. Many individuals suggested that the research university was set up for one track of productivity focused upon federal grants and traditional forms of research publications in top-tier journals. However, as noted by another exemplar pursuing promotion and tenure:

> But luckily he [department head] was open minded and
> could see that some of the scholarship of engagement
> was…not only having impact but bringing a lot of pub-
> licity to the department, college, to the university, and
> so he actually turned out to be a pretty strong champion
> after we had a fairly decent long negotiation process.

A second subgroup of university-centric exemplars were
housed in schools or colleges of education with strong tradi-
tional scholarship culture and expectations of a research univer-
sity. Although education was considered an applied profession,
these individuals found that they needed to perform "traditional
scholarship," that it was a significant gamble for their professional
future to conduct community partnership scholarship of engage-
ment. Most of this subgroup suggested that they conformed to the
perceived standards and expectations of traditional scholarship for
their institutional context; thus, unlike the first subgroup, they did
not suggest a major involvement in negotiations with their admin-
istrative leaders regarding promotion and tenure standards. Rather,
these individuals accepted the expectations and standards for tra-
ditional research scholarship and focused upon the examination
of the current documented scholarship and practice of SOE. In
addition, several of these exemplars also did focus a portion of
their research on SOE-related topics. One individual noted that
his initial institution was so "resistant to scholarship of engage-
ment and civic engagement work…so I went somewhere with a
good institutional fit." Another person noted, "When I was seeking
tenure – in part the work of doing [it] in the community – it was
contested at that time. But I was probably a little naive and willing
to take some risk and was fortunate to have certain people in cer-
tain places who were willing to be behind this." Several individuals
focused strategic attention and energies regarding their conduct
of research and publications. For example, one individual shared
that during both the third-year review and tenure consideration,
"I had to sort-of make the case for different audiences that I was
trying to speak through and speak to with my scholarship. Some
of them are my disciplinary field… but I've other audiences such
as practitioners and members of the community… so I think that's
how I sort of negotiated it."

A third subset of exemplars were in non-tenure-track roles.
They were part of this university-centric enclave because they
held strong beliefs and had made major commitments to con-
duct research, publish, and present in national forums. One of

these individuals in a non-tenure-track role noted that he eventually chose to seek out a tenure-track position and promotion and tenure. Having faced earlier issues in his non-tenure-track world, this individual was an advocate at his new institution for the intellectual quality of scholarship of engagement and conducted a collegial debate for its recognition among senior faculty.

There was a final subset of tenure-track faculty who saw themselves as part of the SOE movement, but they also judged that they could not survive in their institutional culture with a dominant SOE research agenda. They realized early in their careers that they would be unable to work with the community as a partner and to conduct "mainstream forms of SOE" as tenure-track assistant professors in research universities. Some conducted traditional forms of scholarship at their research university (with later post-tenure work in SOE), and a few sought out a multimission-focused institution that was supportive of SOE scholarship. For example, one person moved from a more traditional culture to a supportive SOE institution. He then focused upon the scholarship of engaged scholarship, "creating knowledge around promising practice…and at developing theory and practice [of] how to actually help leaders do this kind of stuff."

Second Enclave: The Community Engagement-Centric Exemplars

The community engagement-centric individuals highlighted their early SOE career as being formed through key roles in working with people and/or communities and through service-learning, as well as involvements through the land-grant mission of their institution and/or through extension and outreach efforts. Many of these individuals spoke of their initial influential involvement in education (either from K-12, higher education, or extension outreach). Although they noted these formative experiences in SOE, most of these individuals suggested that their pursuit of postgraduate degrees and the related intellectual curiosity fostered through that experience were formative. This intellectual engagement either helped lay the foundation to refine their perspectives or helped influence their stance in defining and acting upon the scholarship of engagement. As their journey continued, most of these individuals found career homes in institutions that fostered and valued their engagement practices. Differing from the university-centric group, most of the community engagement-centric exemplars, with the exception of one individual, were currently in positions (half time or more) in administrative centers/

units within higher education institutions. Although several held a faculty appointment as part of their dual roles, their views and commitment to SOE were dominantly influenced by their administrative appointment within an organizational context/unit targeted to specific constituencies.

Three pathways for SOE community engagement-centric exemplars. Within this group of community engagement-centric exemplars, there were three different pathways. The first group described their journey in SOE through their teaching roles in public and boarding schools or in higher education institutions as a teaching assistant, then as a faculty member. In particular, these individuals described how their involvement with service-learning initially spurred their interest in SOE; they valued the experiences of teaching the service-learning courses and/or using the service-learning methods and strategies in their teaching. As their interest in SOE was influenced through their teaching, these exemplars described how their graduate studies in related fields (e.g., public health) were foundational in adding the component of "scholarship" into their work beyond their initial teaching roles. Another exemplar described the connection she made with other faculty on campus who were also teaching in service-learning and how her active participation in an on-campus engagement support center eventually led her to an appointment as the director of the same center. Exemplars in this group mostly credited the support of their academic advisers, leaders, and peers, as well as being part of SOE associations as instrumental in formatively leading them to their current administrative and/or leadership roles in SOE.

The second group focused upon their researcher roles as influential in shaping their pathway into SOE. Two of these individuals were engaged as researchers in K-12 environments, where they worked closely with teachers and students and studied the impact of engagement in K-12 teaching and learning. For these individuals, their research had profoundly influenced them into more in-depth commitment to SOE. Through this research, they began to see the value of engagement in uniquely impacting the community. One exemplar described how he began with a research interest in examining the different ways to engage students in the K-12 learning process. He cited a report by a teacher who told him about the "empty waste basket" story where the students who were taught using service-learning methods in a classroom began to value and take more pride in their work. As the story goes, "Now the waste paper baskets are empty because the students take their work home, they show it to their parents,…they really see the meaning

in the work that they're doing." This exemplar then was further drawn to investigate the service-learning approach and studied it as part of his dissertation work. In the case of another exemplar, she described how she carefully selected a niche area in science education and focused her research interest in studying the impact of engagement among K-12 students and teachers through her outreach position appointment. Another individual, who began as a faculty member, had more varied experiences, but pointed out how "unplanned life experiences" had progressively led him into the SOE pathway through his various research efforts, from a research-based daycare to national-scale community outreach programs. For this second group, the most potent support was the attachment to institutions that provided them with the relevant position and organizational support to ground their research focus in practice.

Lastly, the third group described how their administrative roles led them into their commitment to SOE. These individuals held advocacy roles in promoting a component of SOE (e.g., service-learning, civic engagement, extension) for their home institution and viewed their job responsibilities as part of evolving opportunities that fostered their dedication in SOE. One individual described how she was initially driven by a strong desire to elevate the legitimacy of service-learning and civic engagement in her university's appointment, promotion, and tenure process and continued to perform her advocacy roles in promoting recognition of a broader scholarship of engagement within her institution and nationally through her administrative role. In particular, individuals in this group were highly encouraged by the supportive culture and the mentorship of their key institutional executive leaders. Influenced by the passion and commitment shown by their leaders, these exemplars continued to dedicate their focus in the SOE arena and acted upon their advocacy roles through their administrative positions.

The cultural context and positionality of community engagement-centric exemplars. In comparison to the university-centric individuals, most of the community engagement-centric individuals worked in a different cultural context. In their respective positions, these individuals had clearly defined roles and expectations for engagement work. Most of them currently held administrative appointments in various SOE-related positions, usually higher-level administrative positions in higher education institutions. Examples of these positions included county extension manager; director of community engagement; and various administrative positions at community, public engagement, or service-learning

offices. Thus, for many of them, commitment to SOE work did not create a source of negotiation or of conflict between the individual and his/her superiors regarding particular work activities. As one individual described his role, he did not see a problem in his involvement with SOE and his institution "because my work is on engagement." Thus, work negotiations reflected a balancing and allotting of time between various roles and responsibilities assigned under their administrative job position. As one person suggested, "The negotiation has been [about] the percentage of time that I would devote to this versus to do it or not to do it." Another individual spoke of split roles in her job position, where half of the job was focused on assessment of learning outcomes and the other half was devoted to working with other faculty on integrating service-learning and civic engagement into the curriculum. Although most viewed their roles as full-time administrators, several community engagement-centric individuals also held dual-roles as both faculty member and administrator. For example, one individual spoke of a 75% appointment in an engagement position and a 25% appointment as a faculty member. He kept his research and publication agenda active in order to fulfill his 25% appointment as a faculty member.

Although most individuals suggested common understandings of their job focus, there was a small subgroup among these community engagement-centric individuals indicated some struggles in upholding their work in SOE. Like their university-centric counterparts, these individuals had encountered challenges related to promotion and tenure. For one individual, the conflicts were due to differing views on what contributions were counted as traditional extension work. For another individual, the struggle was about producing both traditional scholarship and scholarship of engagement in order to meet the demands of this person's dual responsibilities in an engagement role as well as in a faculty role. Both individuals described a fairly lengthy negotiation process with their superiors as a result of these conflicts.

In many regards, the community engagement-centric contributions were uniquely shaped by their job positionalities as advocates of engagement work. Several noted their instrumental roles in organizing national SOE conferences, engagement scholar workshops, campus-community partnerships, professional engagement services, faculty development programs, and new campus curriculum incorporating components of engagement.

Many of the community engagement-centric individuals also spoke of their contributions in terms of research and publications,

including books and chapters, handbooks, and journal articles. For those individuals who held dual roles in engagement and faculty positions, their publications were considered essential to keeping their research active and ongoing. Meanwhile, for those individuals whose job positions did not require them to publish and conduct research pursued these types of contributions as part of the "scholarship" aspect of their SOE work.

Definitional Understandings and Constructed Meanings

University-Centric Exemplars Beliefs and Meanings

These exemplars identified six key terms representing their particular understandings and actions within SOE: *scholarship with engagement, generation of knowledge, reciprocity, scholarly contributions, research, and community*. As these individuals delineated these key terms and meanings in relation to their place within SOE, they often linked their understandings of the terms to specific national discourses that impacted their beliefs and actions.

Scholarship with engagement. For most of the university-centric exemplars, this particular term was often used to define their SOE role, representing specific focal points of activity such as community-engaged scholarship, civic engagement, service-learning, community development, extension outreach, or the scholarship of "the scholarship of engagement." (A few noted the evolution and preferred terms for their particular sector and role within the university in relation to the term "scholarship with engagement.") Lastly, as noted by one individual, the frame of scholarship with engagement represented an "epistemology shift occurring in universities community is important to our ways of knowing, and thus engaged knowledge is an important way to advance that knowing." Thus, many viewed this term within SOE as reflecting a more holistic understanding of their actions and of connections between generating knowledge and both the improvement of the learning of students and of the community.

Significant for this discussion, a number of the exemplars spoke to the particular complex development of the term and actions of "engagement" upon the varied constructs of "scholarship." Many noted their own significant contributions to the development of a definition and negotiated understandings of the scholarship of engagement and of service-learning both at the national level and

at their own institutional level. Many spoke to advocacy and leadership in professional development in this arena. They defined their current roles in advocating and aiding both their own and other institutions to develop definitional policies, institutional understandings, and action plans for enhancement of the scholarship of engagement.

Some exemplars suggested that they were in the middle of a contested arena, facing the complex understandings, activities, and structures of SOE. This continued diversity of meanings presented difficulty in delineating just one common understanding for the multifaceted cultural and political roles of SOE within universities and higher education.   As reported by one individual, "The battle [in the landscape of higher education] is changing from structures and programs… to [a changing] culture and to epistemologies. And with that shift in the battle… [the concern is] what [are the] norms…?" Thus, many of these university-centric exemplars saw themselves as part of a cohort of advocates and leaders who were in the middle of this changing landscape in higher education.

Reciprocity with community. For these university-centric exemplars, the term *reciprocity with community* had a potent connection in describing the relationship of the scholar to the work. Often these individuals would speak to the reciprocal flow of knowledge and expertise in partnerships. Many focused upon their interests in community-based assets, research with the community as partners, and valuing the community as an important contributor to these endeavors. As noted by one exemplar, it is doing research "with the community, rather than doing research on the community." Another individual noted that SOE was "working with the community on real world problems…the importance of marrying scholarship or scholarly expertise together with local knowledge."

Beyond the description of this relationship, many also noted a certain standard for reciprocity. Thus, SOE wasn't just the relationship or partnership; it was also a set of actions that brought high impact, usefulness of knowledge, sustainability, and relevance. As one exemplar suggested, SOE was having "high impact for the community partners. There is usefulness to the knowledge that is created in the scholarship of engagement… towards reciprocity of the relationship."

Many of the university-centric exemplars also viewed the nature of scholarship as focused upon both local and scientific

knowledge, viewing knowledge as a mutually shared power base for action and understanding. As suggested by one exemplar:

> [It] is often interdisciplinary and rests on the democratic partnership, participation by the public and the community partners. Trying to advance the common good… Universities were founded on that social charter…doing it for the public, rather than doing it to the public.

Research and generation of knowledge. All of the university-centric exemplars spoke to aspects of research and generation of knowledge in their definitions of SOE. Many focused upon the faculty role of research and the importance of generation of new knowledge through research at a research university. Others were focused upon civic/community engagement and the nature of knowledge generation in partnership with community for impact:

> Scholarship of engagement connect[s] faculty and academic knowledge with local or community [knowledge]... so that it's not just the application of academic knowledge to solve a problem, but it's also the use of community or local knowledge to understand the issue and to create a solution.

Drawing upon the historic roots in action research or community-based research, a subset of exemplars expressed a more nuanced understanding, suggesting that research within SOE is based upon a framed understanding of methodology. One individual noted that research in SOE was "methodology of how you could construct a study in partnership with community, creating questions together, looking at work methods that are appropriate, interpreting findings together, and then looking at solutions together." A few individuals also suggested the notion of research through an analytic lens, conducting research on the scholarship/research and practice of the scholarship of engagement. These individuals valued and understood direct partnership and involvement in the community, yet their work was defined in a more circumscribed manner of synthesis and theorizing of evidence in the field of SOE.

Scholarly contributions. Most of these exemplars felt a particular tug toward defining SOE in relation to its outcomes: They focused upon scholarly products or impact, as opposed to community impact. There were three figural understandings of scholarly

contributions within the university-centric exemplar group. One subgrouping was specifically focused upon products of generated knowledge that were publicly disseminated and peer reviewed. Another subgroup also acknowledged the first understanding, but were more focused upon the scholarly outcome of the community partnership of engagement. These individuals focused upon the delineated outcomes of community-generated knowledge and expertise as well as sustainable products from these efforts. Lastly, there was a subgroup focused upon service-learning in relation to scholarly contributions. Their interests were targeted to faculty class-based research for improved student learning, engaging students in learning in different ways, and impact upon the quality and nature of learning outcomes. As noted by one exemplar:

> …to help students learn course content of the discipline much more deeply and effectively. Also develop [in the students] a discipline and sense of responsibility and bunch of skills they develop through community relationship that doesn't happen in the traditional classroom.

Community Engagement-Centric Exemplars' Beliefs and Meanings

The community engagement-centric individuals also presented varied meanings and definitions of scholarship of engagement. Further, their perspectives were constructed through their specific institutional positions within higher education and influenced by their organizational key leaders. Some also reflected the influences of their educational background or prior work experience in certain areas related to SOE such as public health and service-learning. University-centric exemplars noted the influence of varied national written discourse about SOE, but only one of the community engagement-centric exemplars mentioned influences of scholarly writings in their constructed meanings of SOE *(Boyer, 1990, 1996)*. Although the term the SOE was the key focal umbrella, this group include *engaged scholarship, community engagement, public scholarship*, and *research partnership*.

Scholarship of engagement versus engaged scholarship. These exemplars strongly focused upon the term, *scholarship of engagement* and the complexities of its subcomponents (scholarship, engagement) and how it connects to other related terms (engaged scholarship, community engagement). Each of them constructed their own SOE meanings based on the context of their

work. In particular, a subgroup of these individuals was exacting about distinguishing characteristics of the definition of scholarship of engagement as compared to engaged scholarship. As noted by one of the exemplars:

> We're starting to differentiate between work that's being done in collaboration with a community partner [engaged scholarship] and work that is being done to study how the community partnership works and how they are successful in that kind of thing [scholarship of engagement].

Engaged scholarship was viewed as an understanding of engagement performed through teaching or research approaches that were considered participatory, applied, or community-based. Examples cited by these individuals included teaching using service-learning and conducting participatory research among teachers at schools.

Thus, the term "*scholarship of engagement*" was used to refer to the action of studying the process of engagement and its impact on the larger community. For example, one individual shared his work in SOE:

> It's been about studying the impacts of community engagement on higher education system…it's really about the role of engagement in education more than it is about using an engaged paradigm in the research... My field is education, so I study the role of engagement in education.

This subset of individuals shared these distinctions mainly because they had made a shift in their work from conducting engaged research to examining the role of engagement in the community and how these views influenced the way they defined the SOE. One particular individual, however, had a strong preference for the term *community engagement* as opposed to SOE. For him, SOE was the work of "the people who study the process of engaging people and community." He found the term SOE too limiting to describe the whole process of engagement. In his view, a comprehensive engagement process should embrace both the general principles of SOE and of engaged scholarship; it should be inclusive as both a scholarly endeavor and a means of engaging the community.

Community collaboration/partnership. Across the board, all of the community engagement-centric individuals spoke to some

form of community collaboration and partnership as a central component in their definition of SOE. Similar to their university-centric counterparts, this group perceived the community as a major source of knowledge, as research partners, and as important resources for all engagement-based work. As one individual noted, it was a "two-way street of reciprocity" where "the development of academic resources, energy, and expertise [is] in addressing issues of importance to communities but also doing it in a way that benefits the scholarship as well as the community."

Meeting the needs of the community and for the public good. These exemplars also talked about how SOE should be designed to meet community needs and public purposes. In their views, SOE was not just about the process of engaging with the community, but should also include a purpose to benefit and address critical community needs. One scholar stated:

> You can have a reciprocal partnership in which you're valuing each other's expertise, resources, time, skills, and being truly reciprocal, but you could be doing that for a private interest. …With the scholarship of engagement, there's that expressed assumption that work is being done for a public good to improving the environment, societal concerns.

Several exemplars mentioned that it was also essential not only to provide scholarly contributions to their own work and institution but to disseminate and share the knowledge with the community partners. As expressed by another exemplar, "They [faculty] really need to communicate and talk with and engage, if you will, the community into what they're doing— not just use the community for their research interest."

Teaching, research, and service missions. Several exemplars also discussed their definitions of SOE from the triadic lens of the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. Engagement has traditionally been viewed as a strategy to fulfill the university's service mission. However, the work of SOE has evolved so that several exemplars now view it as the strategic approach to fulfill the three components of the university's mission. One exemplar deliberated:

> Part of the engagement piece for higher education, and it's not just about fulfilling public service outreach mission, but it's also about fulfilling the research mission,

of doing significant research…And then, we also want to do quality teaching and engaging students with the external environment of outside the academy.

This individual and others further touched on how the engagement approach could increase the impact of research and teaching that contribute to scholarship. For example, one exemplar described "working with the community—where the community assets are brought to bear…the community participants can help us actually, help us do better research because of their expertise and knowledge and the assets that they bring." Another exemplar also talked about engaged teaching and its impact to broaden her initial understandings of SOE. She stated:

When I first came into looking at service-learning, I was really focused on my students and what sort of change methods that I can use to enhance their understanding…And as I did more research on the issues, I just came to see that this scholarship of engagement is something much broader than what happens between students and teachers and, of course, classrooms.

Another exemplar suggested connections across all the different components of SOE as:

a type of scholarship that relates to teaching, research, work, service, or outreach, and it occurs when faculty are collaborating or in inquiry with community partners and are working on issues relevant to the community and that meets the mission of the university, however that's defined.

The "scholarship" in SOE. Although some exemplars associated the notion of scholarship with systematic research methodology and written publications, they also suggested an understanding of a more community-oriented scholarship in their definitions. In their views, the product or outcomes of the scholarship of engagement must also produce impact or be useful to the community in order to be considered "scholarship". For example, one exemplar nested her view of scholarship both within her scholarly work and within several facets of the community of engagement. She noted:

> So I would say one product of my scholarship is a play-
> ground. Another product might be a presentation, a
> chapter in a book, or a refereed journal article. But I also
> think that the community also produces scholarship…
> We're using our knowledge together…to try to address
> the critical community needs together.

Other views of scholarship by these community outcome-centric exemplars included outcomes that could create meaningful learning outcomes that were openly accessible, open to critique, could be used as a foundation for others, and were based in peer validation by the community partners.

Conclusions and Implications

Although there has been significant and varied discourse defining the scholarship of engagement, this study explored the constructed meanings from a group of elite leaders and researchers in the field. We performed this examination thinking that these individuals might share a more focused and unified definition of SOE. However it soon became apparent that exemplars held differing worldviews according to their cultural contexts. Using a frame of standpoint epistemology for this study, we sought to investigate the positionality of the individual in relation to his or her experiences within the field as well as the key individual meanings of the scholarship of engagement. The study findings suggested that the key constructed meanings of SOE were represented in two enclaves of these exemplars: university-centric and community engagement-centric. These two enclaves represented differing dynamics in the construction of individual beliefs and knowledge regarding the nature and specific elements of the scholarship of engagement within institutions of higher education.

The university-centric enclave was significantly influenced by the research tradition and particularly through the expectations embedded within the promotion and tenure guidelines of their university regarding scholarship. Although each exemplar in this group met the expectations for their role within a specific institution, each chose a particular path in that environment. Many followed a traditional research path, sometimes facing a conflictual or circuitous journey to their current position and place. Some of these individuals chose to move to a different institutional culture during their initial career, and others focused upon administrative and engagement advocacy roles with some involvement with research as part of a split role commitment in both administra-

tion and faculty. Although all noted many influences in their participation in SOE, most of the university-centric actors specifically identified the importance of key mentors and supporters (often in supervisory roles) in their early careers.

On the other hand, the community engagement-centric enclave was significantly influenced through their work focused upon engagement activities and collaborative partnerships, with research most often as an auxiliary role. Their actions and understandings were more often based in their specific institutional culture and expectations for engagement within their unit and/or institution and their own sense of the scholarship of engagement. These individuals did note their involvement in research and acknowledged its importance, but they negotiated their understandings of scholarship and of research from their own place and cultural context of engagement practices. These individuals also valued key leaders as supporters of their efforts but spoke to their institution, division, or unit's focus upon engagement and its support.

Several research and practical implications can be drawn from this study. First of all, it was found that there is no one common standard definition of SOE either from the national discourse or from an institutional policy perspective. Rather, these exemplars offered multiple definitions and understandings in constructed meanings and actions within SOE, selectively shaped by their institutional cultures, their individual roles, and their biography. They further noted their changing understandings and definitions over time with the evolution of the field of SOE as well as their own involvements in scholarship and practice. Thus, the complex and nuanced positionality and culture for each actor was reflected in each individual's understandings and beliefs about the meaning of the scholarship of engagement. Given the diversity of understandings, future research should explore and explicate the figural definitions, supportive pathways, and key markers for each of these two enclave cultures and positionalities. It was often apparent that the evolution of understandings of SOE also created additional multilayered understandings within institutional subcultures. Thus, future research and theory could explore how diverse SOE institutional subcultures strengthen or diversify the understandings and actions towards particular aspects of SOE.

In this study, it was evident that these two groups, university-centric exemplar sand community engagement-centric exemplars, noted major influences from specific institutional contexts in relation to their key work roles, through key influentials in the university as well as in their professional associations. However, there

has been a lack of substantive research on the specific supports and mentoring provided by key leaders, institutional units, and professional communities that nurture both the individual and the cultural community of the scholarship of engagement. Thus, it would be invaluable for future research to study the forms and impact of influential contributions (mentoring, support, and financial assistance) by individuals and communities in shaping future leaders in the scholarship of engagement.

There are also a number of implications for practice focused upon significant experiences which may have supported and sharpened the ways the exemplars constructed their meanings of SOE. These exemplars often implicitly suggested that there was no one definition of SOE or path to conducting the research and the practice of the scholarship of engagement. However, the support of their key supervisors, key engagement leaders in the university, and colleagues in their institutional unit was often pivotal. In addition, many noted the impact of the literature and research as well as the key professional organizations and gatherings focused upon the scholarship of engagement. Because the early years of their careers were often pivotal, it would be invaluable to explicate the best practices for effective mentoring, collegial exchange, and support, as well as providing alternative forms of national recognition of key initial contributions in the early years of a career in SOE.

The final implication of this study is focused upon policy, which often reflects a particular constructed meaning of SOE— whether it is on the national level or within an academic institution, sometimes within a particular academic or working unit. More often the university-centric enclave parsed specific meanings for SOE, often anchored in figural terms based in institutional standards for research and scholarship. On the other hand, the community engagement-centric enclave drew upon figural terms in relation to engaging within a specific community; their commitments to the triad of teaching, research, and service of a public institution; and their belief that engagement makes a difference in the lives of students and the community. Both of these enclaves, at times, also reported potential differences of understandings and subsequent judgments about their role and their SOE contributions by supervisors of their work and by their cultural leaders. Thus, although there was a "stated policy," there were a variety of forces that pulled and pushed individuals towards differing arenas and specifically differing understandings and expectations within the field. This study suggests the importance of creating SOE policies and practices based in consensus understandings of and support

for the scholarship of engagement. These exemplars demonstrated that they valued culturally supported SOE policies and practices based in the institution at large as well as within their specific sub-cultural work unit. Thus, clarity of policy and practices would be invaluable. Many of these individuals noted the continuing importance for advocacy to impact policy and practice within institutions and across all of higher education. Thus, institutions should continue to support key engagement leadership in providing the voice of both advocacy and of fostering continued evolution of this field of the scholarship of engagement.

This study presented the diverse understandings of SOE as explicated by the exemplars from two different enclave standpoints: university-centric and community engagement-centric. Based on these dynamic findings, this study highlighted the importance of recognizing multifaceted understandings within the SOE community in shaping future research and practices for this field.

References

Antonio, A., Astin, H., & Cress, C. (2000). Community service in higher education: A look at the nation's faculty. *Review of Higher Education, 23*(4), 373-398.

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate.* Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Boyer, E. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach, 1*(1), 11-20.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 301-316). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Giles, D. (2008). Understanding an emerging field of scholarship: Toward a research agenda for engaged, public scholarship. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12*(2), 97-106.

Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Hekman, S. (1997). Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*, 341–365.

Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities. (2001). *Returning to our roots: Executive summaries of the reports from the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant universities* Retrieved from http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document. Doc?id=187

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

O'Meara, K. (2002). Uncovering the values in faculty evaluation of service as scholarship. *Review of Higher Education, 26*(1), 57-80.

O'Meara, K. (2008). Motivation for faculty community engagement: Learning from exemplars. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12*(1), 7-29.

Packer, M. J., & Goicoechea, J. (2000). Sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning: Ontology, not just epistemology. *Educational Psychologist, 35*(4), 227-241.

Sandmann, L. (2008). Conceptualization of the scholarship of engagement in higher education: A strategic review, 1996–2006. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12*(1), 91-104.

Spanier, G. B. (1997). Enhancing the capacity for outreach. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach, 2*(3), 7-11.

Twomey Fosnet, C. (Ed.). (1996). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Vogelgesang, L., Denson, N., & Jayakumar, U. (2010). What determines faculty-engaged scholarship? *Review of Higher Education, 33*(4), 437-472. doi: 10.1353/rhe.0.0175

Woods, M. (2001). *An analysis of institutional engagement: Perceptions of faculty, staff, and administration in the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University.* Digital Dissertation Abstracts International (UMI no. ATT 30032 80).

About the Authors:

Carol E. Kasworm is the W. Dallas Herring Emerita Professor of Adult and Community College Education in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. She received her doctorate in adult education at the University of Georgia and has held previous academic and administrative roles at University of Tennessee-Knoxville, University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Texas-Austin, and University of South Florida.

Nur Aira Abdrahim is a doctoral student in the adult education program at North Carolina State University. She is currently completing her dissertation on exploring the self-regulated learning strategies of adult undergraduates in online learning courses. She is also affiliated with University Putra Malaysia, a higher education institution in her home country, to which she will return to serve as a faculty member upon completion of her doctoral work.