

STTI Scholarship Defined

The mission of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI), is advancing world health and celebrating nursing excellence in scholarship, leadership, and service. Nurses in all settings develop and use scientific evidence to advance health. Sigma Theta Tau International has promoted the development of and shared definitions and resources related to clinical scholarship (Dreher, 1999) and the scholarship of reflective practice (Freshwater, Horton-Deutsch, Sherwood & Taylor, 2005). Over the past decade, understanding of the nature of scholarship has expanded to embrace implementation and translation sciences, the harnessing of large sets of clinical data to provide evidence for practice increasingly in real time, the potential of social media to provide leading indicators of population health status, and additional focus on health outcomes related to health care policy. For that reason, STTI is building on the work of Dreher and of Freshwater et al. to provide an expanded understanding of scholarship to inform not only the development of, but also the translation of scientific evidence in all aspects of nursing practice.

Clinical scholarship is described by Dreher (1999) as an intellectual endeavor that entails systematic inquiry and scrutiny of practice in an effort to continually improve nursing practice. Clinical scholarship is informed by and inspires research. It enhances the development of nursing knowledge by testing clinical realities against theories in varied settings with diverse populations. Dreher describes clinical scholarship as entailing observation, analysis, synthesis, application, and dissemination. She also describes clinical scholarship as being characterized by the fact that it is value-driven, autonomous, and creative.

Adding to this description, reflection in clinical practice was described by Freshwater, Horton-Deutsch, Sherwood and Taylor (2005) as a way in which professionals bridge the theory-practice gap, as they comprehend their work in theoretical ways and think about their clinical experiences within conceptual frameworks. In this way reflection allows nurses to be make changes in practice that are experientially as well as theoretically informed.

These constructs are congruent with the definition of the essential and interconnected functions of scholarship that were proposed by Ernest Boyer (1990; 1996) to include the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. Boyer (1996) described the scholarship of discovery as research, or the generation of new knowledge. He regarded the scholarship of integration as interdisciplinary dialogue intended to place discoveries in contexts larger than their own disciplines. He purported that knowledge must be shared for it to be meaningful, and the scholarship of sharing knowledge encompasses presentation, publication as well as teaching. The application of knowledge, according to Boyer, is what makes knowledge relevant. Moreover, Boyer connected the scholarship of application to practice that is reflective. Here he connected not only theory to practice, but also practice to theory as practitioners evaluate knowledge against their experience and thus validate theory (Starr- Glass, 2011).

Near the end of his life, Boyer identified an additional function of scholarship, the scholarship of engagement (1996). He believed the scholarship of engagement to be the larger purpose of channeling the resources of academia toward the solution of society's greatest and most difficult problems in a comprehensive, transdisciplinary way. Starr-Glass (2011) posits that each aspect of scholarship provides connections that create synergy for engaging communities of interest and creating engagement. Barker (2004) characterized the scholarship of engagement as a mandate that research organizations be civically engaged in partnership with communities for the solution of complex problems.

Within the discipline of nursing, Boyer's 1990 definition of scholarship has broad acceptance. An expansion of the definition to include the scholarship of engagement acknowledges nurses' longstanding roles and responsibilities as advocates and their engagement in addressing broad societal issues. Examples include promoting access to health care to underserved, vulnerable populations; participating in the re-modeling of health care away from an episodic model toward a comprehensive model that promotes health and the restoration of health in a coordinated way over time; planning for rapid and appropriate responses to epidemics and natural disasters; planning to address future health care labor force needs of changing and growing populations; and being actively engaged in the development of sound healthcare policy and advocacy. Furthermore, nurses are engaged in the integration of rapidly evolving, appropriate technologies in the delivery of safe, high quality care in widely varying settings around the world.

As a result of this evolution in nursing scholarship, Burrange, Shattel, and Habermann (2005) proposed that the scholarship of engagement serve as an additional model of nursing scholarship. This evolution responds to the shift in emphasis toward community-based research and healthcare delivery worldwide. Burrange et al. observed that the scholarship of engagement, based on the concept of the reflective practitioner articulated by Schön (1987), demands a balance of theory and practice. This is demonstrated through engaged pedagogy with students participating as active learners within the social context of communities; community-based research with collaboration between researchers and community members to solve problems identified as priorities by members of the community; and collaborative practice using interdisciplinary, collaborative action to address community-based issues.

The scholarship of engagement brings to fruition Boyer's (1996) understanding that the generation of knowledge must be a fully collaborative enterprise among experts and consumers in order to have relevance and value. When nurses embrace the scholarship of engagement, there is greater potential to bring nursing expertise to bear in the search for solutions to real-world health problems of priority concern to communities and populations. This broader definition of scholarship also advances nursing's disciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship.

Sigma Theta Tau International's position is that all aspects of scholarship as described by Boyer (1996), and expanded upon by others, contribute to advancing world health. Relevant nursing scholarship emanates from all types of settings and encompasses a wide and growing

array of basic research methods; dissemination, implementation and translation sciences; interdisciplinary teams working with the communities whom they serve; quality improvement; harnessing of large data sets; health policy research, and the ongoing evaluation of evidence-based practice.

Tara Hulseley, PhD, RN, CNE, FAAN
Laurie Nagelsmith, PhD, RN, CNE
Nancy C. Sharts-Hopko, PhD, RN, FAAN

Approved by the 2013-2015 STTI BOD – 14 February 2015

References

- Barker, D. (2004). The scholarship of engagement: a taxonomy of five emerging practices. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 9*(2), 123-137.
- Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: The 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.
- Burrage, J., Shattel, M., & Habermann, B. (2005). The scholarship of engagement in nursing. *Nursing Outlook, 53*, 220-223.
- Clinical Scholarship Task Force (1999). Clinical scholarship resource paper: knowledge work, in service of care, based on evidence. Indianapolis IN: Sigma Theta Tau International
Retrieved from:
http://www.nursingsociety.org/aboutus/PositionPapers/Documents/clinical_scholarship_paper.pdf
- Freshwater, D., Horton-Deutsch, S., Sherwood, G. & Taylor, B. (2005). The scholarship of reflective practice. Indianapolis IN: Sigma Theta Tau International. Retrieved from:
http://www.nursingsociety.org/aboutus/PositionPapers/Documents/resource_reflective.pdf
- Schön, D.A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Starr-Glass, D. (2011). Reconsidering Boyer's reconsideration: Paradigms, sharing, and engagement. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 5*(2), 1-9.