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The Scholarship of Discovery

Rod Janzen

Definitions

First a comment about definitional diversity: The way in which Boyer uses the word “discovery” is not the way that academics in the field of education employ the term. Following Jerome Bruner, discovery—in the education literature—is a learning approach that emphasizes active student learning as the optimal way to inspire conceptual development and the ability to solve problems.¹⁰ Discovery in this context is to a considerable extent controlled by teachers, who decide which questions are asked, which methods are followed and often where the problem-solving investigations end up—so that students “discover” whatever it is that teachers want them to discover.

An alternative learning approach referred to as “inquiry” is more generative—and more akin to what Boyer calls discovery—although it does not necessarily focus on original research and is more relevant in some academic disciplines than in others. Inquiry emerges from the motivations and curiosity of students as well as teachers—following John Dewey’s notion of “reflective inquiry”¹¹ and Paulo Freire’s “problem-posing”¹²—and may lead toward the construction of new understandings.

Using these definitions, one might refer to original research as the “scholarship of inquiry.” Nonetheless, for the purpose of discussing scholarship in general using Boyer’s “discovery” definition has become widely accepted.

Original Research

Boyer defines discovery scholarship as original research. It is “a commitment to knowledge for its own sake,” to “freedom of inquiry” and “an investigation to wherever it may lead.”¹³ According to the American Historical Association, this kind of scholarship leads to the “uncovering and exchange of new information,”¹⁴ causing the shape of previous interpretations to be re-assessed and introducing participants to ideas for continuing research in different areas. Discovery is any activity that generates new knowledge in the context of any subject field.

The research process itself is an exciting and meaningful endeavor for those involved. Something new is being sought after, found in some incarnation and thought about. The discovery operation is also consequential for whoever participates in the information-sharing and discussion phase of this venture. Thus it contributes, as Boyer puts it, to “the intellectual climate of a college...”¹⁵

The scholarship of discovery demands collective appraisal by peers at different junctures in the process; perhaps while the research is being done—and perhaps because the project is a team effort. But in any case a critical peer review transaction typically precedes and follows publication or presentation of research findings, whether the latter appear in the form of a book, a journal article or perhaps a museum exhibit or government policy paper. Discovery assumes research that is shared with others in a public setting at some point, in some context.

Original research is the kind of scholarship that is often deemed most important at this country’s most prestigious universities (at times to the detriment of other scholarship forms). But the scholarship of discovery has not been given much support at Fresno Pacific. For example, after I published a book on the Synanon community with The Johns Hopkins University Press in the summer of 2001¹⁶—and

even after it was reviewed in such places as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Journal of American History*, the *L.A. Times*, the *Nation* and *Utopian Societies*—there were no book-signings or public conversations that might have included our own faculty as well as local scholars, former Synanon members, drug rehabilitation experts, American history enthusiasts and the like. Personally, I continued, until three years ago, to be congratulated primarily for teaching, mentoring and performing administrative responsibilities. These are the things that we do well here at Fresno Pacific; that students and constituents talk most glowingly about. And these are the very important functions for which faculty members are most recognized.

The Scholarship of Discovery and History

With regard to the subject field of history specifically, original research typically involves an analysis of both primary and secondary source materials. The two are then appraised formatively or “integratively” (using Boyer’s second scholarship definition).

To write the Synanon book I used a number of original sources, including encounter group (“game”) transcripts, Synanon school assignments, legal depositions, autobiographical accounts, comic books, taped music (including a great song called “Brainwashed,” that includes the lyrics, “I used to make my living by robbing stores... Now I’m brainwashed”: a creative response to concerns brought forward by anti-cult activists).¹⁷ I also interviewed about 150 former members (including one of the men in who placed the infamous rattlesnake in the mailbox, as well as attorney Paul Morantz, who opened up that mailbox only to have a rattlesnake—with its rattles removed—lunge out at him).

It was also necessary, however, to place the Synanon story in the context of California history and society in the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s. It was important to do a considerable amount of background reading in the drug rehabilitation literature. Research in history is usually a mix of the two scholarship types, discovery and integration. And discovery research is often tied to teaching as well. Personally it has even taken me into Boyer’s application category (in 1988, for example, I was chosen as a delegate to the Iowa Democratic Party county, district and state conventions, an unanticipated development precipitated by a case study—a collaborative Foxfire-like¹⁸ discovery effort undertaken with students in an American History class).

Historians do like to think that their approach to research is significantly different from that observed by many scientists since there is no demand in history that verifiable hypotheses be constructed with any power to predict. Historians do not assume behavioral consistency when dealing with people. Instead they rely on a more subjective, what Jean Elshtain has described as “impressionistic,”¹⁹ analysis of causal relationships, since history writing necessitates reflection on difficult-to-evaluate values, biases and emotional preferences.

There is also a divergence in methods of inquiry between history and science. The fundamental distinction (according to American historian John Lewis Gaddis) is between a reductionist and an ecological view of reality.²⁰ Historical events have many antecedents. People do things for a variety of reasons, not always selecting the most obvious or rational pathways; thus the difficulty of predicting the future. Look what happened, for example, between 1989 and 1991 in Eastern Europe. And recall Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk’s on-again, off-again flirtation with different forms of Marxism, including the genocidal Pol Pot regime, in the 1970s.

Historians, as Gaddis notes, reject “the doctrine of immaculate causation which seems to be implied in the idea that one can identify, without reference to all that has preceded it, such a thing as an independent variable” when studying the

past.²¹ Historical research is more qualitative, which places a significant ethical burden on the scholar, for as Michael Patton notes: “the validity and reliability of qualitative data depend to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher.”²²

Still history and science do have things in common: both rely extensively on the recognition of patterns—on the realization that some things are “like” other things. In the case of the Synanon project, the breaking-of-the-will activities that heroin addicts were forced to undergo at Synanon centers were ultimately replicated for non-addict (“square”) members when they were forced to perform jobs they did not want to do or did not know how to do. Jazz musician Ken Elias was told that the community needed a plumber; to quit playing the keyboard and start learning how to fix toilets.

Gaddis has also recently suggested that getting inside other people’s minds (very important in historical research) requires that your own mind is “open to their impressions—their hopes and fears, their beliefs and dreams, their sense of right and wrong, their perception of the world,” not just your own, or society’s.²³ In other words, you have to portray the reality you’ve experienced vicariously—as if being sent back in a time machine—and then you jump back into the present, in order to regain a sense of distance, of autonomy, before you begin to analyze what appears to have happened. What in the Synanon story, for example, caused leader Chuck Dederich, a confirmed alcoholic, to introduce the consumption of alcohol (prohibited previously) in 1978? I assume that recognition of the historical context is what led Merrill Ewert as well to publish an article (five years ago) tangentially supporting affirmative action, basing his argument on Paulo Freire’s reminder that we need to take into consideration that “historical conditions...reinforce feelings of inferiority, destroy self-confidence and produce myths to justify oppressive social structures.”²⁴

There is no single objective standard in history. It is constantly being re-assessed due to the addition of previously overlooked perspectives. We have only in recent times decided that women’s contributions, the impact of disease, the viewpoints of our own Native peoples—to name a few examples—are meaningful variables.

The Scholarship of Discovery at Fresno Pacific University

Note one example of a class discovery-like assignment that, although it does not meet Boyer’s criteria, involves large numbers of students in proto-scholarly activity. Students in the 20th Century America course are asked to do an interview project involving people who have been directly involved in a major movement in recent American history (e.g. Vietnam War veterans, former hippies, white migrants from the Midwest, Japanese-Americans interned during the 1940s, etc.). I too have simultaneously engaged in these discovery-comparable projects, such as one that involved Japanese-Americans whose farms were taken care of by neighbors while they were sent off to the desert.

This assignment caused one student (in a 1998 class) to discover the unique case of a Japanese child who was hidden away (from 1942-1944) by a white family in southern California. Many Japanese-Americans told me that Henry Martens (in Reedley), was the only car dealer who would sell vehicles to them when they returned to the area in late 1944. Martens did this under cover of night and he was heavily criticized for doing it. (A public sign in nearby Orosi read “Don’t Sell to Japs.”)

Another story: Relocation camp veteran Frank Abe said that he and his friend Virgil Goossen were walking home from school one day when they were

approached by a family friend of the Goossen's. He offered a ride home in his truck but then said pointedly, "Not you, Jap" when Frank started getting in alongside Virgil.²⁵ These stories, placed in proper historical context, have meaning beyond the time period within which they are situated and they create new knowledge.

One of the most important benefits of discovery scholarship is the impact that it has on teaching, in terms of encouraging general intellectual and practical honesty (for example, not asking students to do more than we are willing to do ourselves). It is also motivational (for both students and faculty), keeping one passionate and up-to-date about one's subject field. Research helps clarify conceptual foundations and pedagogical approaches and it forces greater attention to detail, to the logical construction of arguments. It demands proper attention to up-to-date sources due to the process of peer review and it promotes the professional exchange of ideas and practices (at times an important corrective). The sharing of research findings also establishes important relationships with the community-at-large.

Research and the *Fresno Pacific Idea*

The scholarship of discovery fits the *Fresno Pacific Idea*, the school's ethos definition, in a number of ways. (The *Idea* statement itself is found in the Appendix.) The Christian angle in much research is central. It is hard to think about history, for example, without thinking in moral terms. Questions of foundational meaning are basic, as George Marsden notes in his book *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.²⁶ Similar issues are discussed by a number of writers in a recent book edited by Andrea Sterk (*Religion, Scholarship and Higher Education*).²⁷ Christian academics have a particular responsibility to look at nonviolent alternatives in different social situations,²⁸ always maintaining a sense of deep humility while doing so. Note the following cautionary excerpt from the Di Brandt poem, "Non-resistance or love, Mennonite-style":

"turn the other cheek when your brother
hits you & your best friend tells fibs
about you & the teacher punishes you
unfairly if someone steals your shirt
give him your coat to boot this will
heap coals of fire on his head & let him
know how greatly superior you are
while he & his cronies dicker & bargain
their way to hell you can hold your
head up that is down humbly knowing
you're bound for the better place....."²⁹

Christian perspectives determined to some extent what was included in the Synanon book. Most of one chapter evaluated the way in which this drug rehabilitation commune re-defined itself as a religion in 1974 (and was given letters of support from such luminaries as the theologians Gordon Kaufman and Richard Quebedeaux).³⁰ Perhaps even more important was the opportunity to reflect on a basically secular communal group from the perspective of previous research on Christian communities. Christian values impacted reflection as well on Synanon's decision in 1975 to ask all males over the age of 21 to have vasectomies.

Research, as noted above, involves a community of learners. As the *Idea* statement puts it: "... learning takes place through dialogue and discourse between people who have different experiences and perspectives...."³¹ Collaborative projects in particular fit this emphasis, both those that involve more than one faculty member

and those that involve students as research colleagues or assistants. One thinks here of anthropology professor Katrina Poetker's collaborative work with Bryant Leman, Alan Thompson's supervision of research conducted by Pulkit Sawroop, Merrill Ewert's idea for community-based projects and education professors Denise Rea and Sandra Mercuri's collaborative book project (in process). Research can also lead to prophetic commentary and action, as elucidated by the Japanese-American interview project, which brought forth strong personal indictments of past beliefs, policies and practices.

The “Scholarship of Discovery” at Fresno Pacific: a Possible Definition

How therefore should we define discovery scholarship at Fresno Pacific University? Consider the following:

“In most subject matter areas, discovery scholarship is original research that is published in peer-reviewed academic journals, bulletins, monographs or books. In the fine arts, discovery scholarship incorporates newly-created and publicly exhibited and/or performed works that undergo a peer-review process.”

This definition includes a mix of peer-reviewed publications, art exhibits, music compositions, etc., all of which bring forth new knowledge, new interpretations and new understandings in particular subject matter areas. Some of these projects might be undertaken by individual faculty members, working essentially on their own, while others might involve other FPU faculty, or perhaps represent a combined effort that includes colleagues from other institutions.

We might also encourage our students, particularly at the graduate level, to be involved in even more collaborative research projects with professors (as assistants), as well as to consider the possibility of publishing their own particularly strong papers or theses, as recently happened when Doug Noll, a graduate of the conflict and peacemaking management program, published his master's degree thesis as *Peacemaking at the Intersection of Law and Human Relations*.³² Beyond this, I believe that we should recognize those who are involved in a variety of in-class proto-discovery projects even though these research endeavors do not usually go through an external, outside-of-class review process.

When the various professional organizations were asked by the American Association of Higher Education to define the “scholarship of discovery,” they did not reach full agreement. There were too many differences in terms of subject matter specific work modes. The American Academy of Religion went on record opposed to the very notion of broadening the scholarship definitional categories: “We are not sanguine that redefining the word scholarship to cover teaching or other professional activities now not normally considered as such, is particularly useful or appropriate. Indeed it could well appear disingenuous, seemingly to stretch the categories like this in an attempt to gain what might otherwise be a worthy end”³³ (i.e. to recognize the importance of teaching and community involvement).

Most teachers at Fresno Pacific, who do not engage in the scholarship of discovery, likely do engage in significant personal research simply by the way in which they prepare for classes. Some of this research is, I suspect, not a lot different from what others have done in published studies and articles. Perhaps much of the latter is also of the same, if not higher, quality. This stuff is just not being reviewed by peers in the field. And it is hard for members of the academic community to be aware of what is happening when the sharing of such “research” does not leave the classroom.

Response from David Alan Thompson

As with historical research, scientific research poses an unanswered question (for example, a testable hypothesis regarding a natural phenomenon) with the goal of generating new and original knowledge. Most scientists lean toward the reductionist approach Janzen refers to. Here, issues of falsifiability and reproducibility—not as obviously applicable in historical research—are paramount.

However, while the scientific investigator may use existing data to accumulate a body of evidence germane to the question posed, the investigator may also generate the data via experimentation or observation. A further contrast lies in an intense focus on the use of logic and reason to move from the evidence to a conclusion regarding the hypothesis. As with historical research, the quality of the evidence, and of the logic used in reaching a conclusion, is generally subject to peer review prior to publication. Although there are concerns with respect to the quality of peer review in some disciplines, scientific research is notable not only for the occasional ethical lapse but also for intellectual moorings, such as falsifiable hypotheses, which convey a self-correcting character to the field.

Loewen's description of the "provisional nature of knowledge" is especially relevant. Scientific research enlivens academia not only through the generation of new knowledge, but also from the overturning of old paradigms (witness the conflict between Newtonian and quantum mechanical views of the physical world). Boyer points out that this process "contributes not only to a stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university."³⁴ Furthermore, most scientific research is of a collaborative nature, resonating well with the *Fresno Pacific Idea*.

One may envision how other aspects of scientific research fall within the framework of the *Idea* as well. Paradigms of Christian thought can influence the choice of research subjects, for example. While the results from such a study may contribute to prophetic commentary, the outcome of scientific research conducted without an intentional choice of subject can also inform dialogue in the academic community. For example, quantum theory has made a substantial contribution to the discussion regarding the materialistic/mechanistic view of human beings.³⁵ Or, to take another example from physics, consider the current theoretical prediction that over 90 percent of the universe consists of "dark matter" (mass and energy) that "we can't see and don't really understand."³⁶ Certainly such observations have great potential to contribute to dialogue, resonating with a biblical perspective (for example, I Corinthians 2:16; Romans 11: 33-34 and Isaiah 55:9) as they remind us of our finite, limited natures.

Scientific research does present a contrast to much of the research in other disciplines since it generally uses people with varying degrees of technical expertise as well as sophisticated equipment and infrastructure. Because of these resource demands, much scientific research is a collaborative effort funded largely through extramural support.³⁷ While the costs of scientific endeavors such as space exploration are obviously prohibitive in a university, even "big biology" projects such as the human genome sequencing effort can consume millions of dollars per annum. Although this amount is larger than the research budget of the typical science research laboratory, even an average health sciences laboratory budget is hundreds of thousands of dollars per annum.³⁸

It is important, therefore, to examine the larger resource/reward structure in which research activities take place: the measures the university takes to facilitate research as well as the reward structure the university provides. With respect to resources, it may be worth evaluating whether faculty have sufficient resources to

conduct research. If material and monetary resources are available, do faculty have sufficient time to conduct research and compete for extramural grant funding? The implications of teaching load reductions for junior faculty and of positions such as the Fresno Pacific “Distinguished Scholar” position might be considered.

Research and teaching both consume time. This reality may be reflected in the lighter teaching loads at four-year doctoral institutions, larger classes and greater use of graduate students and lecturers. It has been estimated that the average full professor in a four-year doctoral institution spends 5.9 hours per week in instruction in the undergraduate classroom, while thirteen hours per week were spent by the average professor in a non-doctoral institution without a tenure system. Furthermore, it has been estimated that 57 percent of full-time faculty provided undergraduate credit instruction at four-year doctoral institutions, while 86 percent of full-time faculty did the same at four-year non-doctoral institutions.³⁹

A second aspect worth examining is the reward structure provided by the university. The “publish or perish” mentality has dominated the research university in recent decades: “...few professors ever receive tenure in a major university unless they are strongly motivated to work hard at their research.”⁴⁰ J.P. Hafler and F. H. Lovejoy indicate the culture at Harvard Medical School (HMS) has shifted from promotion based solely on publication (original scholarship) to promotion based on a “a broad array of educational contributions.”⁴¹ While their conclusion is debatable, HMS faculty now prepare portfolios that include not only original research, but a “broad array of educational contributions” such as teaching and committee service. Without incentives, a tenured professor may spend much of his/her time gardening.

Notes

¹ Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990).

² Ernest Boyer, 15-25.

³ Charles Glassick, Mary Taylor Huber, Gene Maeroff, *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

⁴ Robert Diamond and Bronwyn Adam, eds., *The Disciplines Speak: Rewarding the Scholarly, Professional and Creative Work of Faculty* (Washington D.C., The American Association for Higher Education, 1995), and Robert Diamond and Bronwyn Adam, eds., *Disciplines Speak: More Statements on Rewarding the Scholarly, Professional and Creative Work of Faculty* (Washington, D.C., The American Association for Higher Education, 2000).

⁵ Robert Diamond and Bronwyn Adam, eds. (1995), 14.

⁶ Howard Loewen, “A Manifesto for Educational Research at Fresno Pacific College” (unpublished manuscript, 1995).

⁷ Howard Loewen, 1.

⁸ Fresno Pacific University, eds., *The Fresno Pacific IDEA* (Fresno, CA: Fresno Pacific University, 1995).

⁹ Douglas V. Henry and Bob R. Agee, eds., *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarly Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003). Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, eds., *Scholarship & Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Jerome Bruner, *On Knowing* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1963).

¹¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1916). Bruner’s and Dewey’s discovery and inquiry positions are reviewed in Rod Janzen, “The Social Studies Conceptual Dilemma: Six Contemporary Approaches,” *The Social Studies* (May/June, 1995), 136.

¹² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 67, 68.

¹³ Ernest Boyer, 17.

- ¹⁴ Robert Diamond and Bronwyn Adam, eds. (1995), 29.
- ¹⁵ Ernest Boyer, 17.
- ¹⁶ Rod Janzen, *The Rise and Fall of Synanon: A California Utopia* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
- ¹⁷ “Sounds of Synanon Live in Concert at the Stew Temple,” audiotope (April 27, 1979, Ken Elias Synanon Collection).
- ¹⁸ The Foxfire approach is outlined in Elliot Wigginton, *Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience* (Garden City, Anchor, 1986).
- ¹⁹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Does, or Should, Teaching Reflect the Religious Perspective of the Teacher?” in Andrea Sterk, ed., *Religion, Scholarship & Higher Education: Perspectives, Models, and Future Prospects* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 195.
- ²⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). 54.
- ²¹ John Lewis Gaddis, 55.
- ²² Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990).
- ²³ John Lewis Gaddis, 124.
- ²⁴ D. Merrill Ewert, “Proverbs, parables and metaphors: applying Freire’s concept of codification to Africa” *Wajibu: A Journal of Social & Religious Concern* 13 (1998). 2.
- ²⁵ Details of the latter two stories were confirmed by Stan Martens (son of the late Henry Martens) and by Virgil Goossen.
- ²⁶ George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- ²⁷ Andrea Sterk, ed.
- ²⁸ See, for example, James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2001).
- ²⁹ Di Brandt, *Agnes in the Sky* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1990), 38.
- ³⁰ Rod Janzen, *The Rise and Fall of Synanon*, 168.
- ³¹ “The Fresno Pacific University Idea,” Fresno Pacific University Catalog (2003-2004).
- ³² Doug Noll, *Peacemaking at the Intersection of Law and Human Relations* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2003).
- ³³ Robert Diamond and Bronwyn Adam, eds. (1995), 17, 18.
- ³⁴ Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 17.
- ³⁵ S. M. Barr, “Retelling the story of science,” *First Things* 131 (2003), 16-25.
- ³⁶ L. Rowan and R. Coontz, “Welcome to the dark side: delighted to see you,” *Science* 300 (2003), 1893.
- ³⁷ J. Cohen, “Scientists who fund themselves,” *Science* 279 (1998), 178-181. Most scientific research is supported in part by private foundations, industry grants, and federal funding agencies although some research is done in full or partial independence of these sources.
- ³⁸ <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/awards/award.htm> (July 9, 2003). The average NIH R01 grant in 2002 was approximately \$326,000.
- ³⁹ X. Chen and L.J. Zimbley, *Teaching undergraduates in U.S. postsecondary Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998).
- ⁴⁰ Derek Bok, *The Commercialization of Higher Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 22.
- ⁴¹ J.P. Hafler and F.H. Lovejoy, “Scholarly Activities Recorded in the Portfolios of Teacher-Clinician Faculty,” *Academic Medicine* 75 (2000). 649-652.