Making Research Usable Beyond Academic Circles: A Relational Model of Public Engagement

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There is a growing recognition among researchers, university administrators, funding agencies, and the broader public that the knowledge produced in academia often remains divorced from impacts and use in real-world contexts. Across a wide range of disciplines, scholars have commonly followed one of two models to take research beyond peer-reviewed publications and contribute to the common good: the "Expert" model of public engagement and the "Community-Engaged" model. We present a relational model of public engagement that builds on strengths of these two existing pathways, but constitutes a distinctive third one. The relational model urges relationship building and mutual learning, as well as partnership during dissemination, while maintaining independence of thought, decision-making, and institutional affiliation during the processes of research design, data collection, and analysis. Researchers can maintain their intellectual and institutional independence while forging relationships of mutual learning with nonacademic audiences, who are not just recipients of knowledge but bring their own interpretations, motivations, and needs in relation to academic knowledge. We clarify the goals, challenges, audience roles, and relations between ethical values and research in the relational model. Researchers can tailor this model to the opportunities and constraints they face, given their specific disciplines, career phases, and individual strengths and proclivities.

There is a growing recognition among researchers, university administrators, funding agencies, and the broader public that the knowledge produced in academia often remains divorced from policy debates, media coverage, public dialogue, practitioner work, and social and political change efforts (Badgett, 2016; Burawoy,

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2005; Hoffman et al., 2017; Kristof, 2014). Across a wide range of disciplines, including those in the natural and social sciences, public health, and the humanities, scholars have typically followed one of two models for scholarly engagement. We refer to the first as an "Expert" model of engagement, where the scholar is presumed to be an expert who, with the aid of communication specialists, can learn how to effectively inform policymakers and other stakeholders of research findings that are relevant to their decision-making (e.g., Fischhoff, 2013). The second is a "Community-Engaged" model of research, where scholars form partnerships with communities, co-create knowledge, explicitly challenge oppression, and help bolster the capacities of communities by drawing on the expertise of their members to address community needs (e.g., Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012).

We propose a third pathway for engaged scholars, what we call the relational model of public engagement. The relational model we advance urges scholars to engage in relationship building and mutual learning, as well as partnership during dissemination, while maintaining independence of thought, decision-making, and institutional affiliation during the processes of research design, data collection, and analysis. The model is grounded in the co-authors' engagement with a range of nonacademic audiences and constituencies, including educators, health professionals, policymakers and policy advocates, journalists, lawyers, community-based organizations, and members of the broader public. The model reflects our work through the UMass Public Engagement Project, which supports and trains academic scholars in using research to promote the public good. We advance a model for academic researchers to maintain intellectual and institutional independence while forging relationships of mutual learning with their nonacademic audiences through which both researchers and audiences can create knowledge that is usable beyond academic circles.

Before elaborating the relational model, we briefly discuss the two common models of engaged scholarship—that of the academic "expert" who disseminates research insights through enhanced communicative capacities, and that of the "community-engaged" academic researcher who co-creates research with communities. Our relational model builds on the strengths of these two existing pathways, but constitutes a clear third pathway, which we believe researchers can tailor to the specific opportunities and constraints they face across disciplines, career phases, and individual strengths and proclivities.[1] Our hope for this article is that by presenting the relational model as one among an array of pathways, academic

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[1] Our discussion of varied approaches to engaged scholarship is not intended to be comprehensive or representative of all such efforts. The perspectives we offer grow from our cumulative experience working in varied capacities with a range of nonacademic audiences and constituencies, including educators, health professionals, policymakers and policy advocates, journalists, lawyers, community-based organizations, and members of the broader public. We recognize that there are likely other instances of engaged scholarship beyond those with which we have experience and expertise—such as in state-sponsored institutions like the military (e.g., Seligman & Fowler, 2011), law enforcement (e.g., Tyler & Wakslak, 2004), and prison systems (e.g., Fine & Torre, 2006)—each of which is likely

researchers who may have less experience as engaged scholars yet seek to engage with public audiences in future work can begin to envision the varied relationships they might cultivate with nonacademic audiences and how those relationships might be structured. We organize our discussion of the relational model around four key features—goals, challenges, the roles of audiences, and ethical values, using some illustrative examples of engagement with nonacademic audiences. We conclude with several suggestions about how universities can support the relational model institutionally.

Academics as "Scientific Experts"

Implicitly or explicitly, many academics have held an "expert" model of public engagement. This is perhaps not surprising, given that our academic training leads us to focus almost exclusively on developing scholarly expertise, and on nurturing the new ideas, discoveries, publications, and reputations of individual researchers; consequently, when we are new to engaging constituencies outside of the academy, we may initially envision engaging with nonacademics as an extension of our individual expertise. Indeed, from the opinion-editorial-writing public intellectual in the social sciences, to the great story-telling natural scientist, one archetype of the publicly engaged scholar is that of the scientific expert reaching wide publics because of his or her extraordinary knowledge and communicative capacities.

Whether intended or not, the expert model often carries the expectation that audiences—policymakers, practitioners, and the media—are waiting ready to receive expert knowledge. But when academics do have the opportunity to speak to such publics—in an interview with a reporter, or a meeting with policymakers or practitioners—they often feel "not heard" or misunderstood. In part, this is likely because academic researchers typically receive scant training or assistance in communicating effectively about the broad relevance of the work as pertaining to concrete situations (Tropp, 2018), in contrast to our professional socialization with its emphasis on theoretical disciplinary debates, methodological specificity, conceptual and theoretical advances, and qualification of claims.

To remedy this problem, many academic disciplines have sought to enhance the communicative capacities of their members, and of academic disciplines as a whole (e.g., Wray, Daniels, & Fetner, 2016). The natural science community has made extensive efforts to bolster the communicative capacities of researchers by teaching them to harness the power of story-telling and emotion, as well as of emerging media technologies (see Baron, 2010). In this science communication tradition, the contribution of scientists to society is sometimes conceptualized as one of "informing people about the benefits, risks, and costs of their decisions,

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to have its own constellation of challenges and opportunities for public engagement (see, e.g., Horgan, 2011; Glaser & Charbonneau, 2018).

thereby allowing them to make sound choices" (Fischhoff, 2013, p. 14033; see also de Bruine & Bostrom, 2013; Pielke, 2007). One challenge of science communication is determining what to include and what to leave out, and what audiences already know and need to know (Fischhoff, 2013). A second is tailoring science communications so that they dovetail with audiences' needs and receptivity to information (Baron, 2010; de Bruin & Bostrom, 2013), and with audiences' understanding of what makes knowledge relevant to their decision-making purview (Haas, 2004).

As a field, science communication research has moved toward a conceptualization of communication as a two-way street, with experts, members of the public, and other stakeholders engaging in dialogue and learning from one another (Nisbet & Markowitz, 2015); we agree that engagement efforts are more successful when there are avenues for two-way communication between researchers and the audiences they seek to reach. In practice, however, scientists often inadvertently veer toward a "deficit model," which conceptualizes audiences primarily as recipients of knowledge (Brossard & Lewenstein, 2009). To the extent that science communication efforts remain grounded in an "expert" model, they offer a limited conception of the roles audiences can play and the nature of knowledge that academic researchers can contribute. Indeed, we would argue, in keeping with the growing sentiment in this field, that, just as important as communication "capacities" are the "relationships" that academic researchers cultivate with nonacademic audiences for whom their research may have value and use.

By focusing on relational dimensions of public engagement, we view our perspective as consistent with Fiske and Dupree (2014), who advocate for a dual emphasis on fostering trust and respect as we communicate scientific research to the public. As Fiske and Dupree (2014) point out, "scientists as communicators have earned audiences' respect, but not necessarily their trust" (p. 13593). We believe that to gain respect for our expertise and trust in our intentions, we must demonstrate interest in, and respect for, the insights and input our audiences may offer us. Indeed, a long tradition of social science research indicates that our credibility as communicators rests in two primary dimensions—"expertise," or the knowledge and accuracy with which we convey scientific information, and "trustworthiness," or the extent to which our intentions and motivations appear to be worthy of others' trust (Cialdini, 2006). Encouraged throughout our academic training, we typically emphasize our scholarly prowess and seek to present ourselves as credible sources of scientific information when we present research findings to others—either within or outside of academia. Yet we must also grant considerable attention to building trusting relationships with the publics we seek to reach, by seeking greater understanding of their perspectives and motivations regarding relevant issues, tailoring how we communicate our scientific information to their concerns, envisioning possibilities for partnership and collaboration, and highlighting ways in which our work can enhance their vision and goals.

Academics as "Community-Engaged" Researchers

In these respects, the relational model of engagement we propose shares certain features of the "Community-Engaged" model of scholarship, which has a long tradition across many fields, including psychology (e.g., Bond & Haynes-Baratz, 2018; Martin-Baro, 1994; Montero, 2012) and anthropology (e.g., Chataway, 2001; Gubrium & Harper, 2016; Hemment, 2007). The "Community-Engaged" model also informs scholarship in disciplines where this approach has been much more marginalized, such as sociology (e.g., Lewis & Embrick, 2016; Muñiz et al., 2020; Warren, Calderón, Kupscznk, Squires, & Su, 2018). Falling under the broader umbrella term of community-engaged research, community-based participatory research has been defined as "a collaborative research approach that is designed to ensure and establish structures for participation by communities affected by the issue being studied . . . . . . that involves co-learning and reciprocal transfer of expertise, . . . shared decision-making power, and mutual ownership of the processes and products of the research enterprise" (Viswanathan et al., 2004).[2] Such research prioritizes the needs and interests of communities, and explicitly aims to empower communities through research partnerships with them (see, e.g., Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012; Trickett, 1996). With the overarching goal of harnessing the power of higher education in service of democratizing processes and raising critical consciousness (Lykes, Lloyd, & Nicholson, 2018; Muñiz et al., 2020; O'Meara, 2011; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012; Watts & Serrano-Garcia, 2003), researchers in this tradition emphasize collaboration, reciprocity, respect for local knowledge, community capacity building, and direct intervention in multiple systems of oppression.

An explicit commitment to social justice tends to undergird community-based research. Indeed, as one well-established strand within the community-based tradition, critical participatory action research aims to use research to intervene in and where possible, remedy, systemic social inequalities (e.g., Fine, 2019) and to advance progressive activist movements (e.g., Muñiz et al., 2020), including through the research endeavor itself. Research becomes a process of co-creation by researchers and community members, whereby the goal is not only to produce results that advance community needs and interest, but also to have the process of collaborative research itself become a source of empowerment and consciousness raising for those marginalized by existing power inequalities. A fundamental challenge to researchers seeking to co-create and share decision-making with groups who have traditionally been excluded from economic and political power is to build trust across different positionalities—building trusting relationships with community partners and gaining collaborative traction over time, through

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[2] Across disciplines, the terms "community-engaged" and "community-based" research have different meanings.

extensive dialogue, and with a willingness to forego control (see, e.g., Chataway, 2001).

Thus, it goes without saying that community-based researchers have deeply embedded relationships with the communities in which they work. Nonetheless, the relational model we propose here is distinct, in that we do not propose that research itself be a co-creative process in which decisions are shared, data gathered and analyzed, and findings written up in collaboration with community partners. This co-creative model of research is not an optimal approach for all academics, who may confront disciplinary strictures or time constraints inhibiting such collaborations, who may not identify as activists, or who may seek to maintain independence in decision-making and intellectual development. Moreover, the "Community-Engaged" model explicitly seeks to address large differences in power between researchers and communities through power-sharing and trust-building during the inception and execution of research. Our relational model was developed in reference to work with a range of groups with different kinds of power—some of whom have more and some of whom have less prestige than researchers. We have found that even when there are not vast power differences, relationship-building between researcher and audiences is necessary to make research usable beyond academic circles.

We therefore present the relational model as an alternative for academics who seek to maintain scholarly independence in the research process, while also forming trusting relationships of mutual learning to advance the public good. We recognize that there are points of overlap between the relational model we propose and the two existing models of engaged scholarship summarized above. At the same time, we believe there is still value in clearly delineating this third approach. The relational model of public engagement highlights the need for researchers to maintain autonomy throughout the research process, including during the interpretation and theorization of results (see Eagly, 2016, for a related argument), at the same time as it urges researchers to form relationships with audiences and stakeholders outside of academia, and to respect the autonomy and expertise of the communities with whom they engage—which often means trusting "their" instincts, heeding "their" advice, and following "their" lead. In our model, researchers maintain control during design, collection, and analysis, but cede control during the dissemination of research, thus giving it the proverbial legs beyond academic circles.

A Relational Model of Public Engagement

At its core, the relational model we propose recognizes that the sharing of research findings is a process in which both researchers and audiences are knowledgeable participants with significant roles to play. Academic success hinges on establishing individual achievements and reputations, and knowledge transfer

is typically organized through hierarchical relationships—such as in teaching—and through argumentation and competition—such as academic debates in the peer reviewed literature. Success in real-world impact, however, often hinges on establishing relationships among relative equals across different social spaces and institutions. Indeed, those we often refer to as "audiences" are not simply consumers of knowledge, but actors who bring their own interpretations of our research, their own motivations and needs in relation to the knowledge we offer, and their own channels for dissemination. Ideally, and in our experience, relationships between academics and nonacademics—particularly if they are sustained over time—can facilitate the emergence of "intersubjectivity"—an understanding of the situation that incorporates both perspectives. Such gains are far beyond those of a transactional nature: Through meaningful and respectful consideration of the perspectives and needs of intended audiences, researchers and their nonacademic partners can arrive at greater mutual understanding, stimulating the potential for new ideas and points of connection, and new solutions and questions for inquiry. In turn, dialogue, mutual understanding, and the creative interplay of ideas can enhance the efforts and goals of both parties—in essence, helping both researchers and nonacademic partners to do their work better.[3]

In our view, research only becomes maximally usable if, in our dissemination efforts, we recognize the knowledge bases and contributions of both parties to the relationship. When we conceptualize the effective dissemination of research findings in terms of building relationships, we can approach audiences and other stakeholders as partners in dialogue who can teach us about the institutional contexts that inform their perspectives, as well as about the aspects of our research that are most of interest and their practical applications. In doing so, we become better positioned to meet our core challenge, namely, to bridge cultural differences between academics and nonacademics (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2011; Troy & Kietzman, 2016) to offer knowledge that is both relevant to their lives and within the purview of their goals.

A Case Study of the Relational Approach

Schalet was trained as a sociologist in a department where public engagement received no curricular attention and was looked at askance, much as is the case in most sociology departments at research-intensive universities today. While motivated, in large part, by a desire to help parents and other authority figures respond with less fear to teenage sexuality, her international comparative study of teenage sexuality in the family (Schalet, 2011c) was initially framed largely

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[3] We recognize that in the tradition of community-engaged scholarship, a great deal of attention has been given to the transformative power and mutual learning that can emerge from meaningful dialogue between researchers and audiences and stakeholders (see for instance, Burawoy, 2005; Fine, 2019; Muñiz et al., 2020).

in terms of intradisciplinary scholarly debates. Through happenstance, Schalet landed a postdoctoral fellowship at a medical school. From there, she began to engage medical professionals, sexual health advocates, policymakers, and other practitioner and lay audiences. Through ongoing conversations, typically around a presentation of the research, Schalet learned about the needs and concerns, as well as leeway to effect change of her nonacademic partners. These iterative dialogues enabled Schalet and her partners in healthcare, education, advocacy, and policy to together develop usable knowledge in form of articles, presentations, and educational tools that were tailored to clinical and other applied contexts, integrating both sets of expertise (e.g., ARSHEP, n.d.; Gibson, 2016; Santelli & Schalet, 2009; Schalet, 2011a, 2011b).

Unlike community-based projects, Schalet's research on the management of teenage sexuality in White middle-class families sprang not from the needs and interests of clinicians, or from those of the more sociodemographically diverse patient populations the clinicians served. Hence, she was unable to draw on familiarity with the real-life contexts in which the clinicians, advocates, educators, and policymakers were working, or the specific cultures that guide them. However, through the iterative dialogues, numerous joint presentations with clinician partners, and other collaborative endeavors, Schalet was nevertheless able to gain a deep understanding of the constraints, practical dilemmas, as well as the purview for action of each of her audiences. She also learned what metric and formats made the work salient to audiences. Above all, she learned how to relate research to the practical dilemmas her audiences faced—whether that be how to get a patient to disclose intimate partner violence in a 15-minute patient visit, or how to advocate for positive sexuality education in a contentious political climate—and to suggest new conceptual frameworks for thinking about possible solutions to those practical dilemmas. The ABDC paradigm for adolescent sexuality, which guided her engagement with practitioners, parents, and journalists, grew directly out of the questions her clinical partners asked, requiring her to move from Sociology's problem-centered focus (Lewis & Embrick, 2016) to solutions.

Although Schalet's initial contact with new audiences arose from her role as an "expert," with each new audience, she embraced the opportunity to be a student as well as a teacher, resulting in an approach that is quite distinct from that of the "expert" model of engagement. Engagement itself thus became an extension of the research, with clinicians, policymakers, and advocates offering new angles on the shared overarching question of how adults—whether in families, clinics, schools, the government, or the media—can support adolescent development. Moreover, audiences often came up with their own ways to apply the research, including taking down the posters with fear-based messaging and replacing them with more affirmative messages.

The core findings and arguments Schalet communicated remained unchanged. However, new aspects of the research also became salient in different institutional

Table 1. Three Working Models of Public Engagement

	Relational model	Scientific expert model	Community-engaged model
Goals	Making research usable beyond academic circles	Informing decision-making with the relevant science	Empowering communities and intervening in inequalities
Core challenges	Bridging cultures between academics and nonacademics	Discerning relevant science and tailoring it for accessibility	Building trust between scholars and communities
Audience roles	Partners in dialogue who use research to advance their goals	Recipients of information to become better decision makers	Drivers of research agenda and collaborators in inquiry
Ethical values	Forge common ground with nonacademic audiences	Separate from scientific inquiry and public engagement	Inform inquiry, methods, and assessment

cultural contexts, particularly given that in each practice setting, the groups she engaged had different purviews for action—whether in clinical care, in advocacy efforts, the classroom, or within the home. Finally, far from a barrier to engagement, ethical values were one basis for her collaboration with partners in adolescent health around adolescents' rights to sexual education that is medically accurate and free from gender, racial, and sexuality stereotyping (Santelli et al., 2017; Schalet et al., 2014).

Below we discuss in greater details the goals, challenges, and audience roles associated with the relational model. Finally, we illuminate the role of ethical values in facilitating relationships across cultural differences, but also in requiring us to maintain our intellectual independence. We then draw distinctions between our model and the other two summarized previously, while also acknowledging points of connection between our work and that of other engaged scholars (Table 1).

Goals: Making Research Usable Beyond Academic Circles

Ultimately, the goal of the relational model is to make academic research usable beyond academic circles to a multitude of nonacademic groups, ranging from practitioners to advocates, policymakers, and lay individuals who might benefit from that knowledge.[4] Although academic research often has the potential to benefit the public good, the products we create in the course of our normal

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[4] The terms "usable knowledge" and "usable science" have been employed in reference to research that has the necessary features, including the most useful metrics, to make it usable by decision makers in policy circles (see, e.g., Dilling & Lemos, 2011). In this article, we discuss the process of making research usable for a wider range of potential nonacademic audiences (see also Fine & Barreras, 2001).

professional careers as academics—conference presentations, peer-reviewed pub-
lications, and lesson plans—rarely, in and of themselves, have practical value for
audiences outside of academic contexts. To move from potential relevance and
utility to real salience and practical value to nonacademic audiences, we need to
be willing to ask ourselves critical questions, such as *What about our research is
likely to be of most interest to the audiences we seek to reach? How might those
audiences use our research to further their own aims?* and *How can audiences
use the research we share to do their jobs better or with greater ease?*

Asking the questions outlined above will generally require us to shed many
of the trappings of scientific writing—such as focusing principally on how our
research contributes to disciplinary, methodological, and theoretical debates. Im-
portantly, these questions also encourage us to think beyond what we and other
researchers find most compelling about our results, to consider how they might
be used to accomplish changes in the world. Through this process, we may learn
that "what most interests our audience about our research could well be different
from what most interests us about it at any given moment." Seeking answers to
questions about audiences' interests in our research will also enable us to get
at the crux of what—in many situations—makes knowledge stick, namely, how
audiences might "use" our research: educators to educate better, physicians and
nurses to provide better health care, advocates to better advocate, policymakers to
develop better policy, reporters to tell more informed stories, and parents to better
guide their teenage children.

Just as important as pivoting from what "we" find most interesting to what "our
audiences" find most interesting about the research is shifting our understanding
of its "purpose." Engaging nonacademic audiences, one of the most startling ques-
tions we may be asked is "What should we do?" Struggling to provide satisfactory
answers, we may find critique and specification—the thrusts of most academic
writing—inadequate meta-narratives to communicate with broader publics who
must apply those critiques and specifications to actions in their respective spheres.
Editors considering whether to accept an opinion-editorial seek not only the anal-
yses at which scholars excel, but normative arguments to address what "should"
be done. Practitioner groups assess academic analyses to discern implications for
their professional practices; policymakers need to find positive solutions, not just
diagnoses of problems (see Troy & Kietzman, 2016); and business leaders want
to know how to combine doing good with doing well.

Our goal to share our research broadly with multiple nonacademic
audiences—and in doing so, to pivot from our perspective on research to theirs—
distinguishes itself from the other two models in several respects. First, we do not
assume to know, as many working in the expert model do, either the decisions or
the research that may be most salient to our nonacademic audiences. Instead, we
commit to engaging in the relational process through which we can learn what
our audiences' relevant decision points are, and to sharing our research in such a

dialogical way that our nonacademic partners can discern how to apply it to the pursuit of their own goals. Second, unlike the community-engaged model, we are not approaching the research process itself as a vehicle through which to empower communities and counteract inequalities, although such goals may certainly be among the ones we pursue as we partner in disseminating research. Moreover, our relational work has not been bound to communities within a given geographic location, as community-engaged work tends to be, but has rather spanned several countries.

Challenges: Bridging Cultural Differences between Academics and Nonacademics

One challenge to engaging audiences who might wish to use our research involves the set of cultural rules and conventions governing the usability of knowledge in different institutional contexts. The relational model addresses this challenge by seeking to create and share knowledge that can bridge between different institutional cultures. For whether we are engaging with members of the media, policy, advocacy, education, or business communities, we are dealing with worlds that have their own rules, norms, languages, reference points, and constraints. Just as we cannot escape the demands of academia—the tempo of research and of the peer-review process, or the need to establish oneself before tenure as an expert with a unique contribution to a particular discipline—so too do our audiences remain anchored in the rules and norms of their institutions and their cultures. As such, health care providers will assess knowledge from the perspective of its use in a patient visit (e.g., ARSHEP, n.d.; Gibson, 2016). Similarly, policymakers will seek to relate research to the features and needs of their constituents, and the mandates of their committees and bills (Troy & Kietzman, 2016); and reporters must relate research to the angle and timetable of their stories (Schalet, 2018). We will be more successful in engaging potential new audiences for our research when we can understand and take into consideration those distinct contexts, cultures, goals, and environmental demands of different audiences (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2011).

At the heart of the cultural knowledge we must acquire is an understanding of how to present research in such a way that audiences will recognize it as relevant to them and their professional or personal responsibilities to act. Highlighting such relevance is easier to do when we understand the metrics and narratives for communication that have currency in a given context and that often vary across such contexts (Haas, 2004; Troy & Kietzman, 2016). Indeed, effectively bridging institutional cultures often means presenting research in different "formats" than one is accustomed to—a one-page memo with bullets, a colorful PowerPoint presentation, an executive summary, or a white paper. Finally, to communicate effectively across institutional cultures, it may also be necessary to cross some

intra- and interdisciplinary lines. For the knowledge we have to be useful outside of our own narrow disciplinary frames of reference, we may need to refer both to our specific research findings and to the general consensus in our field of study and allied disciplines (Ehrenreich, 2007).

Effective bridging across cultures requires us to not only learn a new culture, but also to become more aware and stretch beyond some of the limitations of our own professional culture. Faced with the question of "what should we do?" many researchers come up short, because we assume, incorrectly, that the implications of our research are obvious, or that when audiences actually comprehend the research, they will act as we researchers might wish them to. Moreover, our professional socialization often includes a search for general—or even universally applicable— principles and theories, as well as admonitions against making predictions or drawing out practical implications; such tendencies leave us ill-equipped and unaccustomed to speaking about the significance and implications of our research in concrete ways. However, in many public contexts, the usability of information will hinge on the extent to which it addresses specific concerns in particular contexts, or in particular time frames (Haas, 2004). And hence audiences will want to know "given what we know, what can or should be done here?" Through adopting a relational approach, researchers can continue to apply scholarly rules for reasonable extrapolations, while also learning the language, metrics, and concrete examples that can make their knowledge both recognizable and useful in the everyday lives of their audiences.

One of the most important ways to show knowledge of an institutional culture is to use a format that has currency. In many contexts, our journal articles and books, while valuable as credentials, are not effective vehicles for transmitting scholarly knowledge. Instead, the most powerful vehicle for transmitting knowledge may be PowerPoint presentations with only a few graphs, and several visceral illustration of concepts, which Schalet discovered in her work with medical providers, and which many of her clinician collaborators used for their own outreach and education efforts (ARSHEP, n.d.). Likewise, journalists look out for their own equivalent of gold—a succinct usable quote from an expert (Ehrenreich, 2007), a format researchers can master to advance their own arguments (Schalet, 2018). Finally, a useful format to reach parents and professionals, such as social workers, who cater to them, is a blog post with questions and answers about common problems parents face.

Like the "expert" model of engagement, the relational model includes a focus on discerning which findings, among the many possible academic insights and arguments to be shared, should be communicated and how they should be tailored to meet audience concerns and needs. However, in the relational model, researchers and audiences engage in communication with each other to figure out the answers to these questions. Moreover, in sharing their perspectives, expertise, and suggestions for possible application, audiences and stakeholders may become

"our" teachers, helping us to understand the contexts in which they might apply our research, as well as the new directions and dilemmas practical application of the research raises.

Unlike community-engaged scholars, who benefit from the collaborative work leading up to release of research findings, we are not always cognizant of the contexts in which our nonacademic audiences and other stakeholders operate, nor of the contributions they could make. Consequently, the above dialogical processes are needed to effectively engage nonacademics.

Moreover, although the community-engaged model rightly focuses the challenge of building the trust that does not come easily when partnering across differential access to power and privilege, our model address the challenges of crossing cultural divides even when researchers and audiences are relatively equal, but lack a mutual understanding due to professional differences.

Audience Roles

From our relational lens, we view audiences as partners whom we engage in a two-way dialogue during the dissemination process to conceptualize the full scope of our projects, and to interpret and usefully apply research findings to specific contexts and situations. As noted, it is through such dialogue that researchers can learn the language, metrics, and examples that allow them to make their research relevant to their audiences. And it is through mutual dialogue that researchers can gain insight into the institutional contexts and requirements their audiences negotiate, which shape how they may be able to use the research. Audiences also bring their unique expertise with regard to the issues at stake, contributing key pieces to solving the puzzle. Indeed, researchers may find that their dialogues with audiences about how to think about the research findings and analyses and apply them to specific situations become a form of informal data gathering that informs theory development and their subsequent lines of inquiry.

By engaging deeply with our intended audiences, we can enhance our understanding and practical value of the research we conduct. Because of the unique positions and insights of audiences then, the specifics of how to apply or implement research are often best discovered through dialogue. Audiences are often subject to institutional and cultural constraints that may not be obvious from the outside. At the same time, their vantage points may make them privy to opportunities for change and implementation that we are rarely able to anticipate from our position as researchers. Our audiences' knowledge of institutional constraints as well as of opportunities for change and implementation is key component in learning how the knowledge we have to offer may become usable in the world at large (Fine & Barreras, 2001; Troy & Kietzman, 2016). Indeed, there can be a proliferation effect, far beyond what we may have ever envisioned, when our audiences find ways to use the knowledge we offer for their own ends.

Thus, although it is essential for academics to articulate in broad terms the implications of their research, actual solutions informed by research often require a two-way dialogue, in which audiences and stakeholders bring their respective knowledge, skills, and areas of expertise. A researcher might discover when she has the ear of her state legislator, that he or she can suggest opportunities to partner around introducing a new bill. Healthcare professionals may be able to think creatively about how the findings of a given research project should guide patient intake or waiting room ambiance and design. State or federal government administrators, who understand the intricacies of rules and regulations, may be best positioned to indicate where and when there is leeway to adjust those rules to reflect new research. Thus, although it is essential for academics to articulate in broad terms the implications of their research, actual solutions informed by research often require a two-way dialogue, in which both academics and public audiences bring their respective knowledge, skills, and areas of expertise.

When we take our audiences' leads, we may discover that they can do both less and more than we might have initially hoped. We might have imagined our audiences, particularly when they belong to high-status groups, such as medical specialists or policymakers, as more powerful than they are, and seeing their world from the inside means getting to know the constraints they face. But our audiences also have knowledge and networks we might have no way of accessing otherwise. Forming meaningful relationships with them, we may become privy to such knowledge—for instance, about a policy decision that has not yet become public. Or we may gain access to their networks for influence—for instance, when partnering with an advocacy group with working relationships with high-ranking government officials or other interest groups.

Even groups and organizations without access to high-profile bastions of political power, such as decision makers within government, can nonetheless have a great deal of influence, for instance through their own channels for communication and implementation. Indeed, educators, healthcare professionals, lawyers, nonprofits, and advocacy groups typically disseminate information relevant to their charges through brochures, professional literature, new and traditional media, and continued professional education. Partnering with groups and organizations can help communicate research to practitioners in the aforementioned formats that are most useful to them. Working with allies in health, education, or law may also help researchers reach media outlets they cannot access themselves, as these groups and organizations often have their own, more developed networks and channels for reaching out to journalists or for connecting relevant research to various other decision makers.

Ethical Values

The fruitful and creative dialogue and partnership we have described above is, in our experience, most likely to occur when researchers seek to engage nonacademic partners with whom they share natural affinities by virtue of their topic of research—whether in adolescent sexual health, the relations among different racial, ethnic, and religious groups, or in nutrition and health. Synergies with audiences such as policymakers and the media are especially likely to emerge when we connect with those individuals who make policy in, or report on, areas that are related to our research. More broadly, there is also a vast array of professional, practitioner, nonprofit, and advocacy organizations whose missions might make them logical and receptive audiences and partners. The benefit of reaching out to groups and organizations whose work is directly related to the topic of one's work is that researchers are likely to encounter audiences who have engaged deeply with similar questions, and who are motivated to effect change.

Advocacy and activist groups who explicitly seek social and political change constitute a particular case apart. Many scientific experts have been trained to think of the scientific process as an enterprise that must be kept separate from one's value commitments as an individual. Those commitments must not shape one's participation in scientific research, so the thinking goes, because they could compromise our capacity for scientific objectivity and hence the integrity of the scientific process. Correspondingly, experts may be advised to clearly distinguish between scientific facts and their personal values in their public engagements, and to highlight such distinctions in communication with the broader public—to maintain a dichotomy between scholarship and ethical values. By contrast, among community-engaged researchers, value commitments such as democratic participation, social justice, and consciousness-raising about exploitation and oppression can be paramount (Burawoy, 2005; Campbell & Morris, 2017; Torre et al., 2012). Indeed, ethical values, including explicit aims to change relations of power, may be built into the research agenda, including the selection of topic, the research questions, and the participating investigators. The pursuit of knowledge and ethics may go hand-in-hand, such that reciprocity between researchers and research populations, joint ownership of products, and research impact on communities (O'Meara, 2011), or even political change (Torre & Fine, 2011) become criteria by which to access the success and the quality of the scholarship.

Unlike those who would claim that explicit commitment to ethical values undermines the objectivity of the research enterprise, we believe it is possible for researchers to combine a commitment to ethical values with adherence to the rigor of the scientific process. Indeed, when we partner with groups that have an affinity for our research topic, that affinity will often be, in part, the result of a joint commitment to long-term goals informed by one's values: the promotion of adolescent health, the reduction of racial inequality, or the conservation of the

environment, to name a few. We always bring a certain level of our subjectivity to our research—what we are interested in and care about informs the research questions we ask, the populations we study, and the theories we develop to interpret and explain our findings (e.g., Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). Our subjectivity is part of what animates our powers of observation and creativity. There is no inherent reason why science, understood as the systematic pursuit of knowledge (Pielke, 2007), which is grounded in the use of rigorous measures and procedures to discover whether or not our assumptions and theories are supported, cannot coexists with a commitment to ethical values. Indeed, many disciplines— including public health and many social sciences—have missions that combine a commitment to the improvement of people's lives with a commitment to discovery through rigorous systematic inquiry.[5]

At the same time, in partnering with others whose objectives we may share, we believe it is not only essential to cultivate respect for the capacities and insights offered by both parties, but that researchers should remain firmly anchored in their academic identities, beholden to the rules and conventions of their disciplines. This is particularly important when partnering with advocacy and activist groups, whose primary objective is social and political change. We believe that partnering with such groups does not, by definition, undermine our capacity for scientific rigor, or make us beholden to knowledge that supports our political preferences. At the same time, in our experience, such researcher–advocacy partnerships do require the necessary autonomy for independent decision-making and judgement, including the ability to strongly disagree. As such, our view may diverge from the community-engaged model, in that we propose maintaining a certain degree of autonomy between academic researchers and partners, in light of the unique demands and needs of advocacy, community, and academic entities, each with their own complex set of social and organizational aims. At some point, researchers are likely to encounter moments when an organization's aims or strategies may conflict with researcher's insights or may not be fully supported by research evidence. In such instances, having well-established and trusting relationships with partners is all the more important, so that researchers and partners can openly discuss points of contention and critique, and where necessary, let those disagreements stand, given that such differences may reflect their different roles and priorities.

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[5] The discipline of Public Health, for instance, describes its mission as to "improve the health of the public and achieve equity in health status" (https://www.apha.org/about-apha/our-mission). The American Sociological Association describes itself in less targeted terms, but nevertheless as "dedicated to advancing sociology as a scientific discipline and profession serving the public good" (http://www.asanet.org/about/mission.cfm). Similarly, the American Psychological Association states that its mission "is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives" (http://www.apa.org/about/index.aspx).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we propose a relational model of public engagement to overcome the chasms that often emerge between the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge to the multitude of groups and individuals who might benefit from that knowledge. We build on the many strengths of the two most well-known models for engagement, that of researcher as expert information provider, and the community-engaged scholar. However, we believe that these two pathways are not sufficient to support all those who seek to use research to contribute to the public good. Our relational model constitutes a third pathway, one which urges relationship building and mutual learning, as well as partnership during dissemination, but independence of thought, choices, and institutional affiliation during the design, data collection, and analysis. We see our relational model as one that all university-based researchers could use, though they may differ in how much time and resources they commit to relationship building and partnership.

University-based researchers who wish to make their research maximally usable among those for who it may have value, must, we argue, build relationships with those who have an affinity for the issues their research addresses. Learning to communicate effectively about research does not simply involve clear communication of findings; it involves situating one's knowledge in the context of the concerns, needs, and perspectives of potential audiences who will recognize the knowledge as pertinent to them. Relationships and reciprocal dialogue enable researchers to share their research in ways that can make it easier for audiences to use the work to reach their own goals. These relationships with potential nonacademic audiences can become vehicles through which researchers can learn how to move between different institutional cultures. Public audiences may also become partners in conceptualizing and implementing research-based solutions, and in disseminating research through their own professional networks.

Of course, there are limitations to our relational model. We have outlined a relational model we have found to work successfully. However, we anticipate that the generalizability of this model of largely cross-professional collaborations may depend on specifiable conditions for success. For instance, researchers may need the capacity to engage emotionally, including empathetically, with their partners, much as interdisciplinary scholars have shown that successful interdisciplinary collaborations have a significant emotional dimension (Boix, Mansilla, Lamont, & Soto, 2016; see also Smith-Doerr, Croissant, Vardi, & Sacco, 2016). Second, we are aware that our model does not include built-in checks to prioritize the interests of nonacademic audiences when the latter have significantly less access to social privileges and power. When engaging with marginalized populations, especially those with historical legacies of oppression, it is likely necessary to adopt additional trust building processes, such as those developed in the extensive community-engaged scholarship.

Finally, in proposing this relational model, we are not elevating real-world impacts over disciplinary ones. We need scholarship that is primarily aimed at making theoretical and methodological contributions, while providing researchers with the intellectual autonomy to pursue innovation and discovery for their own sake. Yet, although both disciplinary and real-world impacts have their place and value, we must be clear that neither can be reduced to the other. As researchers, we must be honest with ourselves and recognize that research pursued primarily in relation to disciplinary advancement will not automatically find its way to others who can put the research to good use. Currently, universities and disciplines have extensive infrastructures to support research that has primarily disciplinary impact, but lack equivalent investments for public impact. Likewise, administrators and disciplines must provide infrastructures and incentives to support researchers in devoting their resources to relationship building and real-world impacts.

Our model addresses specifically what researchers can do to follow through on their commitments to the value of making research accessible, usable, and valuable beyond academic circles by building and sustaining relationships with nonacademics. More broadly, underlying the relational model is our view that researchers need not do this work of disseminating their research in isolation. Rather, in line with the adage "it-takes-a-village," researchers can and should pursue opportunities to learn from their audiences about the concerns, conventions, and opportunities for change that operate across different institutional spheres. Such relationships benefit us, infusing passion and comradery, and increasing our knowledge base and influence. Equally important, as a result, academic scholars and institutions of higher learning can enact their responsibility of contributing to the public good—not only in our teaching and service roles, but also in our sharing of research with publics outside the academy.

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