

## Envisioning Public Scholarship for Our Time

### Models for Higher Education Researchers Book Review

**Christine Harrington, PhD**

Associate Professor and Co-Coordinator  
New Jersey City University  
charrington1@njcu.edu

**Kezar, A., Drivalas, Y., & Kitchen, J. A. *Envisioning Public Scholarship for Our Time: Models for Higher Education Researchers*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2018, 242 pp. Paperback. \$32.50 ISBN 9781620367766; E-book. \$25.99 ISBN 9781620367780**

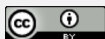
*Envisioning Public Scholarship for Our Time: Models for Higher Education Researchers* is an excellent resource for Ed.D. program faculty and administrators who are committed to developing scholarly practitioners. Doctoral students will benefit from having this book as required reading in their initial research course as it describes the value of scholarship and the significant impact various forms of public scholarship can make in terms of social justice and equity. Kezar et al. (2018) promote activism by sharing numerous examples of public scholarship, including their own, and outlining several paths for how researchers can engage in public scholarship to impact policy and practice in higher education. This book is organized into three main sections. In the first section, the authors describe the context for public scholarship. In the second section, approaches to public scholarship are shared and in the third section, the focus is on encouraging and learning public scholarship.

In part one, the authors emphasize the primary premise of the book which is that researchers need to consider ways to share their research in accessible ways to broader audiences. Kezar et al. (2018) note that:

We as scholars have an inherent responsibility to inform public debates on key policy and practice issues that affect education. It is not enough for those in the field to simply produce research. Because we are the ones who examine the issues in methodologically rigorous and ethical ways, we therefore have the responsibility to bring our findings to those forums wherein the public good is debated. We also have a responsibility to be actors in that public sphere. (p. 9)

To assist readers with understanding the broad context of public scholarship, Kezar shares her personal journey with becoming a public scholar, and identifies numerous types of public scholarship such as media, local and national organization partnerships, and policy forums. Many of the challenges and ethical issues related to this work are addressed. For example, it is noted that the reward structure for faculty is focused almost exclusively on publishing peer-reviewed journal articles and presenting at professional conferences. Engaging in public scholarship may not be rewarded and because of politics and power issues, negative consequences may even occur. Kezar recognizes that public scholarship may be riskier for faculty who do not have or have limited privilege in our society. This is an extremely important point -- so important that it would have been helpful for this issue to be further explored. Faculty using this book will want to have deeper conversations with their doctoral students about the potential negative consequences of being a public scholar and how to navigate the politics in academia. An entire chapter is devoted to ethical mindfulness, which is of particular value given this is uncharted territory for many scholars. Readers are challenged to think about their ethical and moral obligation to engage in public scholarship as Kezar et al. (2018) indicated in the following quote, "I do not want us to consider this to be just another form of scholarship, but instead I suggest that everyone is obligated to the public good and to being a public scholar" (p. 36).

Section two of this book highlights numerous approaches to public scholarship. My doctoral students were especially moved by the chapters in this section. Through rich examples, Kezar et al. (2018) brought to life ways that doctoral students, faculty, and administrators can really make a dif-



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the University Library System of the University of Pittsburgh as part of its D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program and is cosponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press.



impactinged.pitt.edu  
Vol.5 (2020)

This journal is supported by the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate: A Knowledge Forum on the EdD (CPED) [cpedinitiative.org](http://cpedinitiative.org)

ISSN 2472-5889 (online)  
DOI 10.5195/ie.2020.117



ference by using research for the public good. Readers are challenged to think about how scholars can work collaboratively with policy and legal partners and to also inform the wider public audience through forums such as social media and the arts. Powerful examples of how researchers informed national movements such as *Black Data Matter* are shared. One example of research activism related to *Black Data Matter* came after school districts were closing when Michael Brown, a Black teenager, was killed in Ferguson, Missouri. The authors were concerned about the impact of Ferguson-Florissant school district closure on the Black children in that district and as a result, the authors engaged in “a rapid response effort to answer several questions and publicly report our findings” (p. 67). An infographic illustrating that Black children would be more negatively impacted by the school closure than White children was developed and shared widely. This real-world example of activism can serve as a model for Ed.D. programs. Faculty and doctoral students can identify ways that data can inform and impact local and national movements. Although many Ed.D. programs encourage students to focus on problems of practice within their educational setting, faculty and coordinators of doctoral programs may want to also encourage students to address problems of practice that extend beyond their home institution and have the potential to impact social justice and equity in a broader way. Because data and related accessible documents such as Infographics will be needed quickly in these situations, the best place to develop these skills while also making a difference may be in a research course focused on action research or improvement science. Instead of learning research skills in isolation, this approach would give students the opportunity to develop skills while engaging in public scholarship. Students will likely be inspired by these experiences and may opt to address problems of practice at a more macro-level for the dissertation.

Kezar et al. (2018) skillfully address how public scholarship impacts equity throughout the book, but articulate some particularly powerful messages about these connections in the social media chapter. In addition to discussing how sharing scholarship via social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn increases access to many audiences that would not otherwise be privy to research, the positive impact on the professional growth and development for faculty and administrators in higher education is also emphasized. For example, the authors note that:

Social media also provides an intellectual and professional community that is often not available for scholars of color, particularly those with limited social capital and formal connections. The ivory tower can often be a lonely place for faculty of color. (p. 141)

The authors emphasize how professionals can gain a sense of belonging to a community of scholars through social media. Although negative and sometimes hostile responses were identified as a challenge of using social media as a public scholarship platform, these issues need to be more deeply explored. Faculty using this book may need to explore additional resources that provide models of public scholarship via social media and will also want to help students learn how to professionally handle negative and sometimes antagonistic responses as the book does not provide detailed support in this area.

The third section is particularly valuable to Ed.D. faculty and coordinators of doctoral programs as it focuses on how to prepare graduate students to be public scholars as well. Ed.D. faculty and coordinators are challenged to review curriculum and determine how disseminating research and writing for a wider, more public audience can be incorporated into graduate course work. Rather than only developing academic writing skills needed for publication in peer-reviewed journals, faculty can also require doctoral students to create more accessible products for the public. For example, students can be encouraged to write blogs, policy briefs, and executive summaries.

Kezar et al. (2018) also perceive it is critical that as faculty we model this work, noting, “It is important for graduate students to see community-engaged scholars at work” (p. 184). They also emphasize how public scholarship can take on different shapes and sizes throughout one’s career. Faculty are encouraged to partner with local and national organizations and encourage doctoral students to conduct and share research that will shape policies and practices. The authors hope that readers:

...are able to engage in public scholarship by altering how they teach writing in their graduate courses, adding community members to research teams, involving and aligning themselves with current social movements, working in partnership with policy organizations, or taking another approach that best suits their research. (p. 219)



Overall, *Envisioning Public Scholarship for Our Time: Models for Higher Education Researchers* is an inspiring fresh look at how scholars can use their talents for the greater good. It challenges faculty, administrators, and students to become an activist through public scholarship. The rich, meaningful examples shared throughout the book are sure to provide readers with many suggestions and ideas about how to engage in public scholarship. Two areas that were addressed, but need further attention, are how can colleges and universities modify reward structures so that public scholarship is highly valued, and what strategies will assist faculty and students who face challenges when shifting toward a more public scholarship framework.

I would strongly recommend that faculty use this as a primary text in the first research course in doctoral programs, especially programs committed to the scholarly practitioner framework. *Envisioning Public Scholarship for Our Time: Models for Higher Education Researchers* is a perfect fit for CPED influenced programs that have a strong commitment to social justice and equity issues. The call to action for public scholarship and related strategies outlined in this book align well to the mission of Ed.D. programs that aim to develop scholarly practitioners. To develop public scholars, Ed.D. faculty have two primary tasks. First, faculty need to make the case for public scholarship. As Ed.D. faculty help students understand how Ed.D. programs differ from traditional Ph.D. programs, emphasizing the skills needed by practitioners, they can empower students to see how the skills they will learn throughout the program will position them to be public scholars and activists. Assigning this book is an excellent first step at creating a sense of urgency and obligation for students to use research skills to make a difference. In my class, students worked in small groups and created brief presentations for their classmates on the different chapters. A meaningful and moving online discussion about the various faces of public scholarship then took place. The second task of Ed.D. faculty is to assist students with developing the skills needed to be an effective public scholar. According to the authors, this requires students to write in different genres for different audiences and peer-review processes that include individuals outside of academia. Writing for the public is different from academic writing. Students will need practice in both arenas. Teaching students how to present data visually using Infographics will also be important. In the Scholarly Practitioner Class that I am teaching this semester, the final project is a blog on the problem of practice identified. In addition to requiring students to engage in peer-review process with classmates, students were also encouraged to share their draft blog with friends and colleagues outside of academia. For most students, this is their first experience writing for a public audience but they are embracing the opportunity and some are even seeking out ways to share their final blog publicly. Faculty and students who read this book will undoubtedly be moved and compelled to engage in public scholarship.