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The Power of Praxis:

Public Scholarship and the Potential of EdD Dissertations

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ABSTRACT

Higher education is witnessing a shift towards greater public engagement. Public scholarship, research conducted with and for the public, presents a compelling opportunity for doctoral programs in education. This article examines public scholarship and the public scholarship dissertation as a distinctive approach that transcends traditional formats and boundaries. We argue that this format promotes collaboration with the public, enhances research impact, and highlights the dissertation's practical potential. The article explores the nature of the public scholarship dissertation at Rowan University, a public research university, to examine the form, function, and procedures involved in engaging with this approach. We explore the key considerations of a public scholarship dissertation, including the balance between scholarship and public engagement, candidate preparedness, and advising practices. The article concludes with cautions and encouragements for faculty and scholar-practitioners considering ways to communicate doctoral research both to and beyond the academy.

KEYWORDS

public scholarship, dissertation advising, EdD, educational leadership, scholar-practitioners

Higher education has experienced a paradigm shift toward fostering greater engagement between scholars and the public. One example is the emergence of public scholarship, that is, research conducted with and for the public, and deliberately disseminated to public audiences (i.e., beyond academia) (Kezar, 2018; Leavy, 2019). Increasingly, doctoral programs in education are seeking ways to capitalize on this shift by supporting candidates[1] engagement in public scholarship via their dissertation journeys. Public scholarship dissertations are unique research approaches that transcend traditional academic boundaries, where doctoral candidates' outputs explore their research results. This approach has transformative potential in educational leadership doctoral programs, creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration with the public, enhancing the impact of candidates' work, and highlighting the practical potential of the dissertation. However, proponents of this approach must combat a longstanding conservatism in academic circles toward more staid, traditional dissertation approaches, which perpetuate knowledge centralization in the academy and delink the research from potential beneficiaries of the work.

Doctoral programs that endorse the traditional five-chapter dissertation format for students often, perhaps unknowingly, foster several long-standing issues with doctoral research, ultimately hindering research progress and its effective communication. One prominent issue is that its structure is dysfunctional: it forces students to write in a way that they will never engage in again (Krathwohl, 1994). The traditional format often prioritizes written text over other forms of representation, overlooking the potential of multimedia and interactive formats for conveying complex ideas (Davis III et al., 2018; Iloh, 2018). The lengthy nature of traditional dissertations can also lead to delays in disseminating findings, which may become outdated by the time they are published (Asanov et al., 2024). Lastly, the traditional approach may inadvertently perpetuate a hierarchical academic culture and policies, where only certain voices are privileged, potentially excluding marginalized people and perspectives (Duke & Beck, 1999; Kennedy et al., 2018). The focus on very narrow problems can also result in disconnected silos of knowledge, hindering transdisciplinary dialogue and the application of real-world solutions (Gibbons et al., 1994). These challenges have prompted us to reconsider our approach to the dissertation, cultivating an environment that embraces alternative research methods, formats, and dissemination practices that enhance the

[1] In this article we will refer to doctoral students, doctoral candidates, and scholar-practitioners. When we use doctoral student, we are referring to individuals enrolled in the first year of our program. Doctoral candidate refers to students who have passed their comprehensive exam and are moving toward the dissertation. Scholar-practitioner covers the gamut and is used as a term to indicate any individual enrolled in our program.

influence of academic research on pressing issues in educational practice. Public scholarship is one such alternative.

The Carnegie Project on Education (CPED), an organization critical to the movement prompting more meaningful and impactful dissertation research, has articulated a set of six principles with which public scholarship is uniquely aligned. They include a focus on equity, ethics, and social justice; the use of knowledge to bring about positive change; the development of intercultural collaboration and communication skills; field-based inquiry opportunities; a recognition of the value of professional and academic knowledge; and the propagation of professional knowledge and practice (Perry & Zambo, 2018). A public scholarship dissertation is responsive to these principles in that it can be transformative, transdisciplinary, reject knowledge dualisms, democratize knowledge, and meaningfully ally with diverse communities for socially just education.

In this article, we will first address the nature of public scholarship, what it is, why we do it, and our conceptualization of the "public." We will then discuss the form and function of a public scholarship dissertation at Rowan University, a public Carnegie Classified Research II university in southern New Jersey, and its associated procedures. We will consider how a public scholarship dissertation enables scholar-practitioners to extend the impact of their research beyond academia by including formats beyond the standard five-chapter dissertation. Finally, we will review some of the key considerations of a public scholarship dissertation, delving into the balancing act candidates must maintain between scholarship and public scholarship, their readiness to engage in this type of work, and advising practices. Finally, we'll offer some cautions and encouragements for doing a public scholarship dissertation.

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

Discussing public scholarship requires a definition of the term itself, situated in an understanding of why it is essential, and who the public is. Below, we delineate our conceptualizations, particularly in relation to our students as scholar-practitioners. By accounting for scholar-practitioners, we extend the existing literature and establish the foundation of our approach to the EdD dissertation.

Defining Public Scholarship

We define public scholarship as providing important information to relevant publics in a consumable manner to support equity, reduce disparities, and contribute to the public good (Wharton-Michael et al., 2006). We offer this expansive and multifaceted definition of public scholarship, informed by Kezar et al. (2018) and Leavy (2019), which is particularly oriented towards Sam and Gupton's (2018) conceptualization of public scholarship as a process, rather than simply an outcome of research. The concept of public scholarship exists across disciplines under various names, including educational activism, action research, civic engagement, community-based learning, and community engagement (Bartha & Burgett, 2015; Doberneck et al., 2010; Kezar et al., 2018). Notably, much of the delineation of public scholarship centers on research dissemination, its implications and significance for the public (Lanford, 2023; Lanford & Tierney, 2018). However, the focus on writing and dissemination needlessly narrows the scope of the activity. The value of public scholarship lies in the doing: it can lead to greater recognition and opportunities for collaboration, deepen the researcher's understanding of their work, and create a sense of fulfillment and purpose as they see their work contributing directly to societal change and public discourse. Most importantly, public scholarship enables the researcher to view themselves as agents of change.

A broader definition of public scholarship supports EdD students' enactment of this approach to inquiry as they transition from doctoral students to doctoral candidates and ultimately become scholar-practitioners who identify and lead change efforts in their workplace. Doctoral students are often so focused on their coursework and balancing their multiple commitments and roles (Coffman et al., 2016), they do not have the opportunity to consider the practical implications of their research or the skills needed to apply what they learn from their inquiries (Knudson et al., 2011, p. 111). However, EdD programs offer a unique experience, one in which students have progressive opportunities to apply classroom learning to their workplace while developing their leadership skills and engaging in self-reflection. Programs like ours, which are rooted in social justice and the development of scholar-practitioners, are well-positioned to integrate public scholarship into the program's structures, coursework, and dissertation.

Why Engage in Public Scholarship?

Public scholarship is an activity not just of faculty, but rather the hallmark of scholar-practitioners, which includes faculty, policy analysts, practitioners, and doctoral candidates. Although most doctoral programs do not provide training on public scholarship (Lanford, 2018), Kezar et al. (2018) "argue that public scholarship should be the norm" (p. 3) in higher education. We agree that public scholarship should be the norm, particularly for EdD programs. First, the responsibility for addressing relevant local problems through research rests with scholar-practitioners (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Furthermore, as leaders trained in rigorous inquiry, it is incumbent upon scholar-practitioners to further our understanding of persistent problems and approaches to redressing them (Kezar et al., 2018).

To the extent that educational problems are often rooted in educational disparities and social justice issues, public scholarship creates a context that promotes a more democratic society by broadening participation in and use of research (Kezar et al., 2018). Indeed, Giroux (2019) exhorted that education

> cannot be abstracted from how we think about democracy…if it is to translate into meaningful policies and practices [our thinking] must connect equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of social responsibility and the public good. (p. 50)

Reconsidering research as public scholarship (Leavy, 2019) sets the stage for making all research accessible, relevant, and useful. Such framing reinforces the value of research for the public and, in so doing, can address critiques about transparency and accountability (Lanford, 2023).

Defining the "Public"

Today's omnipresent social media implies that the general public is the consumer of public scholarship, while academic discourse highlights the importance of researchers and policymakers; however, neither conceptualization recognizes the local community of practitioners. Returning to our definition of public scholarship, the most immediate audience includes those individuals who were part of the research, as well as practitioners who are part

of the context in which the research took place, and other practitioners who can use the inquiry's findings. These practitioners have been overlooked in prior work that has considered colleagues, participants, policymakers, the public, students, and businesses as specific audiences for whom voices must be tailored (Lincoln et al., 2019); however, educationally based practitioners who are not academics have been previously overlooked as an essential but distinct group.

Conceptualizing who the "public" is in public scholarship is crucial because it shapes how research is communicated, ensuring that it resonates with and is relevant to the intended audience. Broadly conceiving of the public in public scholarship can lead to poor outcomes. This lack of precision can result in messages that fail to resonate with anyone, reducing the impact and relevance of the research and the very purpose of public scholarship. Moreover, it risks marginalizing specific communities, leading to missed opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration with diverse audiences. Understanding the particular needs, values, and contexts of different publics allows scholars to tailor their approach, making their work more accessible, impactful, and meaningful.

Doing the Public Scholarship Dissertation

In this section, we delve into the form and function of the public scholarship dissertation in Rowan University's EdD in Educational Leadership program. As scholarly endeavors aimed at engaging audiences both with and beyond academia, these dissertations embody a unique blend of academic rigor and public accessibility. Here, we explore how the form, encompassing structure, content, and presentation, connects to the function of effectively communicating research findings to diverse audiences. We will also briefly address how to prepare students to undertake public scholarship.

Form

Our program provides students with an outline for the public scholarship dissertation, allowing room for deviation where appropriate and encouraging creativity. We present this option in the form of six chapters, where the first two chapters compose the student's proposal (see Figure 1 below). These chapters are the conceptual framework (Chapter 1) and the methodology (Chapter 2). In Chapter 1, candidates frame the problem and identify the context within which the work is situated. They also include a discussion of why they chose the public scholarship model, their positionality in relation to the problem, and a plan for collaboration with the community impacted by the problem. This plan must be more than aspirational, but include details about who the community is, how the candidate will engage with them, and any historical or social issues that might serve as a barrier to or an opportunity for collaboration. To this end, we have candidates engage with Milner's (2007) work on dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen, Brooks et al. (2014) on the ethics of researching up and down in education, and Reeves et al. (2020) on developing collaboration and engagement plans.

The reader will notice a distinct lack of the literature review chapter, a traditional Chapter Two. This is for three reasons: first, we ask the candidate to briefly review the literature in their conceptual framework chapter; second, the candidate will again review the literature relevant to their findings later in the dissertation; and third, traditional dissertation literature reviews are often time-consuming, suffer from selection bias, and are labor intensive, thus compromising quality and detracting from more critical research activities. Consequently, candidates undertaking this model focus on building a comprehensive conceptual framework that provides the foundation for their work without exhaustively exploring the literature in and around their problems.

After the candidate completes these two chapters and defends their work at a proposal defense, they enter the field (after the requisite human subjects approvals). It is essential to note that our program does not require a specific methodological approach to addressing their problems of practice, unlike many programs (commonly improvement science); we encourage diverse research approaches that best address the problem the candidate has conceptualized. We do not view any one form of inquiry as particularly suitable to the public scholarship model.

After the candidate completes data collection and begins to focus on writing up their findings, they prepare Chapter Three, which is an overview of their findings. This is a very brief chapter that presents participant information and answers to the research questions. The candidate presents their analysis in a narrative format, accompanied by a data table that aligns their findings with exemplary excerpts from the collected corpus. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a short, high-level description of the findings of the study, as in-depth descriptions are found in later chapters. We refer to it as the "bridge chapter" in that it connects the first two chapters to the remaining chapters of the dissertation. The candidate also identifies the nature of the following chapters in terms of purpose, output, and audience.

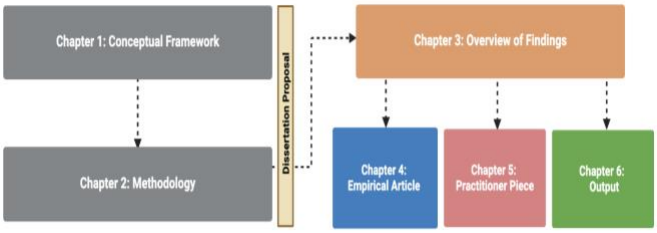
The following three chapters focus on the outputs of the analysis process. Here is where the candidate explores the various conceptions of the "public" in public scholarship. Chapter 4 is an empirical manuscript for publication. The candidate has identified an outlet in collaboration with their chair and prepares an article that will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Here, a more traditional approach to scholarship is at play, demonstrating the candidate's scholarly contribution to their research topic. The next chapter, Chapter 5, is a product of the candidate's choosing. Typically, in this chapter, students will prepare practitioner articles to be published in association magazines or organizational websites. Here, candidates are communicating directly with other practitioners invested in their problems.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, is another output of the candidate's choosing. They may choose more traditional written work, like opinion pieces, proposals at practitioner-relevant conferences, webinars, trainings, press releases, infographics, and presentations to policymakers, or engage in more creative work like public art projects, creative nonfiction, poetry, and filmmaking. For this final piece, students identify ways to communicate effectively with other stakeholders impacted by their problems. The only requirement for these final chapters is that the candidate must develop substantive pieces of work that clearly demonstrate the research-to-practice connection and show reciprocity, originality, and a contribution to public knowledge.

It is important to tease out the differences between Chapters 4, 5, and 6. While the findings and recommendations communicated in each piece arise from the same data corpus and analysis procedures, the difference is in the *telling*, meaning how the work is conveyed to the reader. A candidate may also choose to focus on one research question in one chapter and a different one in the next. However, at no point do the pieces replicate each other. Each output

is for a different audience. Candidates define these audiences, provide a rationale for their focus, identify the most relevant findings to be shared with each audience, and determine the most appropriate way to share them. This is discussed by the candidate, as noted, at the end of Chapter 3, the "bridge" chapter.

Figure 1. Public Scholarship Dissertation Format Flow



Form in Practice

Candidates have explored many different topics under the aegis of the public scholarship model: service dog policies at universities, resistance to curriculum diversification in rural districts, first-generation student use of the university library (Matthews & Johnson, 2024), culturally responsive pedagogy practices in math education, nursing faculty shortages (Ross & Kerrigan, 2020), among others. Here we provide examples of two candidates' projects to illustrate the diversity of their work. Candidate 1 is a state-level education professional interested in how whiteness manifests in school improvement policies. She conducted a critical policy analysis of state and local-level documents. She prepared an empirical article for a policy journal, a practitioner piece for a school professional association's magazine, and a proposal for a conference focused on access attended by education professionals from across the country. Candidate 2 is an adjunct faculty member at a university undergoing a significant transformation. She conducted a heuristic inquiry, through a feminist lens, of women adjuncts at that institution and their experiences of burnout during this transition. She prepared an article for a journal on women in higher education to appeal to scholars who study gender, a practitioner piece for her union's magazine to connect to her fellow adjuncts, and a short article for the university's student-led newspaper to raise awareness on campus regarding the pressure adjuncts are under at the institution. While our public scholarship model is still in its infancy, we continue to encourage students to explore new and innovative ways to step outside traditional dissemination pathways and reach critical audiences with their work.

Public Scholarship Dissertation as a Dissertation in Practice

This type of dissertation both aligns with and deviates from the notion of the "dissertation in practice" (Perry et al., 2020). Candidates are encouraged to engage with complex problems of practice that are consistent, contextualized, and specific to their experiences as practitioners, in order to make their work relevant to both local and educational audiences. Candidates also view the problem as part of a nested system in education, seeking to situate it in a much broader context, considering the connections between educational institutions and complex social issues. Lastly, candidates are asked to identify those networked communities with which to share in the work: either through collaboration during the research, co-creating the research findings, soliciting feedback on findings and/or recommendations, sharing authorship in the outputs, or co-presenting the work to the community, to other practitioners, or to relevant stakeholders.

However, the concept of the "dissertation in practice" as envisioned by CPED is also not immune to becoming what some might term a "dusty dissertation," meaning that on its own, it makes no impact beyond the work done in the professional context. So, the dissertation literally sits on a shelf, collecting dust (Auerbach, 2011). The knowledge gained by addressing the problem of practice never makes it past the specific context. It is important to recognize that such dissertations, whether traditional or innovative, can still inadvertently contribute to the centralization of knowledge and academic hierarchies.

Function

To review, the purpose of this approach is to broaden the reach of the dissertation, functioning as both a piece of scholarship and a communication tool aimed at bridging the gap between educational stakeholders and the academy. It elevates the status of the scholar-practitioner from learner to that of advanced scholar and activist deeply engaged with questions of practice through original and impactful inquiry. It is worth considering each of these functions separately and in more depth in order to prepare both the student and the faculty member for undertaking a public scholarship dissertation.

Bridging the Gap

> The problems facing humanity are enormous, complex, and diffuse. Some of the greatest challenges include the environmental crisis, sustainability, epidemic health problems (such as cancer), violence (in many forms), gender inequality, starkly inequitable development (and other economic inequalities), educational crises (including inequalities in education and other social inequalities), to name but a few. No one discipline has met or can meet the challenges of contemporary society. (Leavy, 2019, p. 29)

The public scholarship dissertation functions to bridge several critical gaps in academic research. The first is that of disciplinarity. Considering the nature of educational problems, it is critical that research in our field connects to relevant work in other fields. Education is inherently interdisciplinary, but not always intentionally so, and can thus result in knowledge silos. The public scholarship dissertation requires intentionality beyond that of connecting to relevant fields, toward transcending disciplinary interactions toward more effective solutions to real world problems (Leavy, 2019). Drawing on Gibbons' (1994) work, transdisciplinarity isn't just about connecting scholarship across borders, but drawing on tacit, informal knowledge produced outside of the academy, diverging from the "piety of conventional thought" characteristic of much academic research (Gibbons, 1991, p. 97). As a result, knowledge production is unbound by rigid organizational hierarchies, restrictive epistemologies, and outmoded disciplinary cultures.

A public scholarship dissertation must address a problem of critical consequence to the community (be it the educational organization or the profession) *with* the community. To this end, candidates, regardless of research approach, must clearly define their positionalities in the project (Chapter 1) and design a plan for collaboration and dissemination (Chapters 1 & 3), as noted earlier. This might result in a jointly defined research question, co-created

protocols, shared authorships, among other ways to involve the tacit knowledge and experience of the community. Unlike much dissertation research, candidates choosing this approach are intentionally building in complexity to explore and understand complex problems.

The next gap the public scholarship dissertation can bridge is between the academy and professional practice. While a cliché at this point, the research-to-practice gap is still an important one to educational researchers and practitioners; however, the values and goals of both are often at odds. Educational researchers seek outputs that will contribute to their professional success, and practitioners seek advancements that will address their everyday problems, sometimes pitting purposes against each other. As Carmine (1997) stated, "the chasm widens, and an 'us vs. them' mentality inhibits research that contributes meaningfully to practical applications" (p. 513). This persistent gap is the raison d'etre of EdD programs, created to bridge the gap and intent on addressing educational problems through research. Students are conceptualized as scholar-practitioners, drawing on their experiences and engaging in research to solve educational problems. However, the nature of the dissertation models used in EdD programs is such that these solutions may remain localized, never designed or conceived of as transferable to other contexts nor widely disseminated beyond the organization. The public scholarship dissertation can be an antidote to that.

Our approach to the public scholarship dissertation is founded on the "inquiry as stance" worldview formulated by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) that asserted

> a way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across educational context and various points in one's professional career and that links individuals to larger groups and social movements intended to challenge inequities perpetuated by the educational status quo. (p. viii)

Inquiry, from this perspective, is more than research intended to solve a time or place-bound problem, as much student research is, but positions all types of practitioners as knowledge producers situated in communities of practice seeking educational and social transformation. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) identified four central dimensions to inquiry as stance: 1) rejection of the academic knowledge-practitioner knowledge dualism, 2) an expanded view of who counts as a practitioner and ways to connect to and ally with communities, 3) inquiry is a collaborative process, and 4) inquiry should create a more democratic and just society. Scholar-practitioners undertaking the public scholarship dissertation employ collaborative, responsive research approaches characterized by cultural and epistemological pluralism, acknowledgement of how traditional research approaches often suppress other ways of knowing and privilege elite and academic knowledge, reject the idea that research is/should be neutral, and assert that research's purpose should be in support of social justice and the democratization of knowledge.

Enhancing Positionality

Undertaking a public scholarship dissertation enriches a candidate's expertise by enhancing their communication and public engagement abilities, expanding their professional network, and deepening their leadership skills. The public scholarship dissertation is an opportunity to grow scholar-practitioners into public intellectuals, or as novices offering powerful counterpoints to the solipsism of the academy (Nichols, 2010). These enhanced skills and experiences position candidates for a wide range of career opportunities both within and outside of academia. Moreover, candidates can begin to cultivate both personal and professional identities that place them to positively influence education more widely.

Leadership isn't positional, but a disposition, an oft-echoed refrain in EdD programs. Engaging in public scholarship can cultivate this disposition by developing expertise. This expertise is exhibited by passion for the problem, a willingness to engage in the problem's debates, an acknowledgment of those influencing their thinking, and an understanding of one's contribution to the conversation. Beyond that, it is exhibited by the doing - engaging in the research process and uncovering findings that may improve education for all. These activities reflect, in different ways, leadership competencies: showing a consciousness of the broader social, cultural, and political contexts of educational organizations, a willingness to interrogate policy and practice, a commitment to the genuine enactment of democratic principles, and a resolve to move from rhetoric to action (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Leadership development rests not only on the knowledge of the professional, but on their abilities to engage in the inquiry process and act on the results.

The public scholarship dissertation also provides an opportunity to raise consciousness more broadly, invoking new pedagogical approaches to counter anti-democratic power relations. Considering the various crises American education is facing, Giroux (2019) asserted that educators need a new language by which to educate:

> Such a language needs to be political without being dogmatic and needs to recognize that pedagogy is always political because it is connected to the acquisition of and struggle over agency, values, social relations, and some notion of the future. (p. 42)

The public scholarship model requires viewing both education and the research process as forms of civic engagement. Candidates engaging this approach preserve their professional agency and integrity, making choices about what they value and are accountable to those choices. "Whatever you decide, you will aim to make yours a purposeful, morally committed practice, that is, praxis" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011, p. 29). These beliefs, capabilities, and *praxis* are part of claiming a public intellectual identity. Regarding this identity, Becker and Goodman (2006) wrote that educational scholars who view themselves in this manner are not only involved in reform within the organization but also outside of it, actively seeking to purposefully entangle their scholarship with community involvement. From this public intellectual perspective, knowledge creation is not enough; research must be paired with pedagogical action. The public scholarship dissertation builds in ways for candidates to cultivate this identity and engage meaningfully in the struggle for social justice.

Preparation

Undertaking a public scholarship dissertation requires preparation in both its construction and the effective enactment of its purpose. There are ways in which programs can develop student preparedness: early skills building, creating a culture of inquiry where students develop their research readiness, and actively valuing the democratization of knowledge and knowledge generation.

Developing Public Scholarship Skills

First and foremost, students should be made aware of the different dissertation models they may use from day one. They may

not understand it, but repetition is a critical pedagogical activity; therefore, students need to be presented with information that will make them “dissertation ready” early and often. Unlike many EdD programs, students in our program do not begin their dissertations upon matriculation. In our program, the first place students encounter the public scholarship dissertation model is in our Leader-Scholar Community course at the end of year one where they begin to conceptualize their problems of practice as dissertation topics. Next, they develop public scholarship skills in inquiry courses. For example, in our policy analysis course, students prepare an OpEd as the final assignment to submit for publication. We recommend, though, more opportunities for students to present, publish, and intentionally engage should be woven into the coursework.

Relying on traditional written assignments and discussion boards in coursework does not lend itself to public scholarship skill cultivation if not created with intentionality. For example, having students respond to discussion boards in non-technical language while displaying their understanding of course concepts develops the ability to communicate with lay audiences. This extends to creating graded assignments that are meaningful to students, like the editorial mentioned earlier, but this could also look like reporting out results to organizational stakeholders, creating or advocating for a program to address critical institutional needs, writing a letter to a public official, or preparing comments for a municipal board of commissioners meeting. Such activities underscore their agency as professionals and members of their communities, preparing them for a public scholarship dissertation.

Creating a Culture of Inquiry

It is absolutely critical to create a culture of inquiry in a doctoral program that will excite students about public scholarship. One approach is through monthly proseminars that provide our students with additional learning opportunities. The proseminars feature lectures, discussions, and other engagement strategies to challenge, motivate, and support students on their doctoral journey. These sessions are held at night and online to accommodate our students' convenience. We have covered such topics as Academic Writing, The Scholar-Practitioner Identity, From Doctoral Student to Doctoral Candidate, Writing Groups, Preparing Conference Proposals, Using Critical Theory, Translating the Problem of Practice into a Dissertation Topic, Dissertation Models, and Designing Quality Research Studies, among others. We also host an annual Research Showcase, where students transitioning into the dissertation phase present their conceptual framework as a research poster. All of these activities foster a culture of inquiry by developing the skills necessary to conduct and discuss academic work with diverse audiences.

Democratizing Knowledge

We must emphasize the importance of democratizing knowledge and empowering students to see themselves as knowledge creators, which means fostering an environment where knowledge sharing and accessibility are valued and promoted. Such an environment includes using open educational resources, for example, instead of relying on expensive textbooks. We must also include materials that represent diverse perspectives, cultures, and disciplines, demonstrating that valuable knowledge is generated from many sources. This environment also requires developing critical thinking and information literacy among students by having them evaluate ideas and sources and create a culture of questioning and curiosity. Effective use of technology, beyond the learning management system and Microsoft Office products, can demonstrate different ways of communicating ideas. Ultimately, knowledge sharing necessitates reflection and dialogue that extend beyond the classroom. This involves creating opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions, both online and offline, where they can share insights, reflect on their learning, and engage with different viewpoints.

CONSIDERATIONS OF A PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP DISSERTATION

While this approach to the dissertation process can increase the self-efficacy of scholar-practitioners and widen the reach of their work, public scholarship dissertations do have their challenges. One primary challenge is maintaining rigorous academic standards while ensuring accessibility. Balancing scholarly depth and public engagement requires careful consideration and skillful execution. Moreover, research readiness requires the development of a researcher identity among students, an area in which many scholar-practitioners lack confidence. Additionally, the roles of faculty committee members may look somewhat different under this model and require a deeper engagement with the candidate and the research process.

Balancing Act

Rather than frame scholarly depth and public engagement as opposites, we highlight their shared foundations. Rigorous scholarship and publicly accessible writing both require recognizing and responding to one’s audience, a thorough understanding of the research process, findings, and implications, and thoughtful and clear writing. Two strategies aid in these processes: writing and research readiness.

Writing Readiness

Skillful writing is well-reasoned and supported, clear, and succinct. Although styles shift depending on the audience and the medium, we eschew any notion of academic writing as dense and incomprehensible; instead, our coursework promotes clarity and succinctness regardless of the assignment. Students write traditional term papers and discussion posts in coursework, as well as an editorial and a program evaluation proposal. In doing so, they not only practice identifying relevant audiences and stakeholders, but also writing succinctly with purpose. We incorporate peer review throughout writing assignments to promote learning from peers while habituating students to giving and receiving critical feedback. These approaches contrast with traditional approaches to doctoral writing that prioritize dense writing for academic journals in a competitive context.

Research Readiness

As we note above, public scholarship is not just about dissemination, but also the entire research process. A strong foundation is necessary, one that includes an understanding of research as systematic inquiry with standards for design and rigor that are grounded in an existing body of literature and more recent developments in expectations for practitioner research, while recognizing the knowledge that practitioners bring to problems of practice. These are not the research expectations of PhD programs, rather this exploration of inquiry reflects Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s

(2009) inquiry as outcome, an orientation towards questioning as a practitioner working with complex problems.

However, we must also engage in developing a researcher identity among students, a concept that has been given short shrift in education doctorates. We see the practitioner identity as fertile ground and "emphasize the importance of practitioner-focused and non-traditional forms of research, *alongside* but not replacing discussions that focus on specific research techniques or steps in the research process" (Ross et al., 2017, p. 83). Research readiness requires not only instruction in research design, but also developing an understanding of what it means to be a researcher and how to connect that productively with practice.

Advising Relationship

We must recognize that not all faculty will be interested in, willing to, or able to work with students through the public scholarship process. It is intensive work, requiring a great deal of mentorship. It also requires openness to new ideas and curiosity about students' passions. Here, we consider two strategies for developing a productive advising relationship associated with the public scholarship approach: committee contributions and horizontal collaboration.

Committee Contributions

The public scholarship dissertation *requires* a significantly stronger relationship between the scholar-practitioner and their faculty advisor. Working together on research projects, publications, or presentations enables faculty advisors to shape outcomes in line with the purpose of the public scholarship dissertation and to develop a pedagogical relationship that transcends the written work. This close collaboration can help scholar-practitioners develop critical thinking, research skills, and professional competencies while fostering a deeper, more personal connection with their advisors.

While the advisor may do much of the heavy lifting, committee members play an essential role in the development of the public scholarship dissertation. First, committee members in EdD programs are commonly professionals with relevant experience in educational leadership. They may be currently employed in leadership roles or may have left such roles to join the academy as faculty. These individuals may be best positioned to help the student identify the community with which they want to communicate. Doctoral candidates who are not in senior leadership positions may have a limited ability to envision the community and its component parts stemming from the boundaries these strata (in)advertently erect. Committee members with a more holistic view of the educational community can bring their perspectives to many parts of the public scholarship dissertation process, such as 1) helping students to consider how to elicit collaboration with a networked community, 2) determining who those community members are or should be and unseen/unforeseen gaps, 3) identifying relevant outlets for practitioner-focused outputs, and 4) translating the work of the dissertation into leadership skills needed for future roles or positions.

Horizontal Collaboration

There is a vast body of literature on the nature of the advisor-advisee relationship, which we will not belabor here. However, much of it conceptualizes the advising relationship as vertical, with the advisor functioning as a supervisor and the student as the supervised. This approach is problematic in that it can reproduce the hidden curriculum, a covert pattern of socialization (Giroux & Penna, 1979), that can be detrimental to doctoral student success. Harding-DeKam et al. (2012) asserted that advisors are not always aware of the types of power they exert that can be damaging to the advising relationship: "The doctoral advisor-advisee relationship is a delicate organism that must be mutually crafted with articulated, explicit expectations" (p. 13). Furthermore, this structure fails to recognize the significant expertise practitioners enrolled in an EdD possess. We maintain that these expectations must be mutually negotiated in the public scholarship dissertation process. We were also inspired by Kennedy et al. (2018) who distinguished between the hierarchical supervisor/supervised model and the "interdependent pursuit of a commonly identified problem of practice among multiple stakeholders who systematically study and address that problem," (p. 6) or rather *horizontal collaboration*. From the latter perspective, the dissertation must evidence a co-constructed, interdependent relationship between the faculty member and the candidate.

In this approach to advising, horizontal collaboration is strategized through complex considerations: the psychosocial, the practical, and the philosophical. The first of these is psychosocial in nature: 1) Self-disclosure, care, and friendship, 2) Honesty and transparency, and 3) Trust. The second set of considerations is practical: 1) Clear articulation of the nature of the advising relationship, 2) Explicit outlining of advisor *and* advisee expectations of the process, and 3) A faithful co-construction of the problem, framework, design, and outputs of the dissertation. Finally, the last set of considerations, those more philosophical in nature, include: 1) Lively explorations of the tensions between epistemological assumptions, 2) A mutual agreement on the importance of the democratization of knowledge, and 3) A shared belief in how research and its dissemination can inform and promote social justice in education. By cultivating strong psychosocial connections, establishing clear practical frameworks, and engaging in reasoned dialogue, horizontal collaboration can result in a supportive and intellectually enriching advising relationship.

CONCLUSION: CAUTIONS & ENCOURAGEMENTS

Undertaking a public scholarship dissertation is not for the faint of heart. As noted above, it requires a significant amount of commitment, collaboration, and careful planning on the part of both the faculty committee and the doctoral candidate. Below, we present some cautions to consider as programs develop public scholarship procedures, along with encouragement for engaging in this important and meaningful work. We conclude by inviting readers to take up the challenge of democratizing knowledge and knowledge production.

The greatest caution we offer is the need to acknowledge that this model contrasts with traditional dissertation models. Thus, interested programs are likely to encounter challenges from colleagues and institutional structures, as well as possible discomfort and distrust at the research site. As we noted above, colleagues, as well as potential research sites and participants who were trained in traditional doctoral programs, may not be familiar with this model and therefore may be unprepared to support it. Institutional structures such as Institutional Review Board requirements may also respond to public scholarship with trepidation as the research plans, collaboration and co-creation of research documents, and the expected products may be unfamiliar to those reviewing IRB materials. Nonetheless, the cautions are familiar to other CPED programs that have made progress in revising their EdD program

consistent with CPED principles. These prior experiences lay the groundwork for the conversations and negotiations that public scholarship necessitates. Non-CPED programs can learn from CPED programs that have already made these transitions.

Programs seeking to expand their dissertation model repertoire are encouraged to develop their approaches to public scholarship design. We offer some considerations here, but each program should assess its goals and its faculty members' capacity to mentor this process. The public scholarship model does not require candidates to spend longer completing it, but it does necessitate considerable faculty involvement and a willingness on the part of students to put themselves out there. The publication process can be time-consuming and is typically undertaken by students and their advisors after graduation. Consequently, this approach facilitates the development of long-term research partnerships between faculty and scholar-practitioners. Furthermore, new doctors often draw on their experience and continue to publish, encouraging their colleagues to conduct research and publish, and establishing cultures of inquiry in their workplaces. This is just one more way educational leadership programs can broaden their reach and positively impact educational communities and complex educational problems.

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