



GROUP FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN SOCIAL WORK



RCDC Research Roots & Wings Roundtable: Spreading Wings through Alternative Dissertations

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Overview

Traditional Dissertations

Shifting toward Alternative Dissertations

- Three Paper Dissertations
 - Overview of GADE Members' Policies
 - Experiences from Two Schools
- Other Dissertation Formats
- Alternative Dissimination

Handouts on:

www.GADEPhD.Org

Open Discussion



The Doctoral Dissertation: A Brief History

The Doctoral Dissertation in the US is a German Import from the 1800s

The AAU standardized doctorates in **1900 (3,500 PhDs conferred in the US in 1900)**

- two years beyond a BA
- “one main subject” and “one subsidiary subject”
- “oral and/or written exams”
- “elaborate thesis” aka dissertation

Currently **50,000** PhD dissertations completed a year in the US

- Roughly 350 PhD Dissertations in Social Work



Johann Carl Heinrich
von Zobel

Some Famous Dissertations

Marie Curie's "*Research on Radioactive Substances*" (1903)

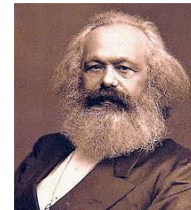


Emile' Durkheim's "*The Division of Labor in Society*" (1886)



John Nash's "*Non-Cooperative Games*" (1950)

Karl Marx's "*Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*" (1941)



Kate Milet's "*Sexual Politics*" (1970)



Ludwig Wittgenstein's "*Logical-Philosophical Treatise*" (1921)



http://dissertation.com/top_dissertations.php

Purpose of the Dissertation?

To develop new knowledge and share publically?

To learn research skills?

To display expertise in content?

To demonstrate that one can create original work?

To prove that one has mastery of the conventions and tools of the discipline?

To serve as a signal from moving from private to public?


To meet the needs of the audience (committee, land grant institution)?

Monograph Length Dissertation

Strengths

- In-depth immersion into a research project
- Managing large and complex projects
- Independent research
- Time to develop new ideas

Limitations

- Doesn't prepare for real-world research careers
 - Collaboration/Team Science
 - Social Work Focuses on Articles
 - Article Page Limits
 - Most dissertations are never read
 - Takes too long (Time to Degree Issues)
 - Only time students will EVER do a project like this
 - Hazing
- 

Shift Toward Alternative Dissertations

- Council on Graduate Studies
 - <http://cgsnet.org/future-doctoral-dissertation>
 - #DissFwd
- Sciences and Social Sciences
 - Three Paper Dissertation
- Humanities
 - “Very” Alternative Dissertations!

Three Paper Dissertations in Social Work

- Overview
 - Beverly Black, University of Texas at Arlington
- Two “Case Studies”
 - Peter Maramaldi, Simmons College
 - Sydney Hans, University of Chicago

Sample Three Paper Dissertation Policies
<http://www.GADEPhD.Org>

Overview of 3 article dissertation policies

Focus

- All require a single research theme and a cohesive body of work.

Timing of Article Submission

- Articles submitted before the defense; articles to be submitted after the defense.

Formatting

- Meet journal guidelines; some permit formatting to vary by chapter. Meet university guidelines.

Committee decides:

- Multi-article dissertation is appropriate.
- Articles are publishable and targeted journals.
- Authorship.

Defense

- Students have one dissertation defense.
- 

Dissertations follow similar format

Introduction

- Definition of problem; rationale/significance, context of the issue, theoretical framework guiding the dissertation.
 - Some include research questions and method used to answer research questions in the introduction.
 - Some include a literature overview

3 Articles

- One may be conceptual, a literature review or systematic review of the literature. Two articles must be data-based.

Discussion

- Synthesis of the findings, linkages between the articles, strengths and limitations, implications
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Authorship

- Students sole author on all articles.
- Students first author on all three manuscripts.
- Student sole author on at least one manuscript.
- Very controversial issue.
- Needs a great deal of open discussion among faculty.

SIMMONS



Culture change: Dissertations reflected program shift

Useful tools: Behavior change theory, implementation science, and political/symbolic frame

Benchmark report: Four month process reviewed 20+ programs' dissertation options, included informal survey of **students** and faculty

Authorship was greatest barrier: Looked to our celebrated neighbors at Harvard University

Findings presented to faculty, framed three paper as “**option**” and win-win-win for students, faculty, school

Resolution of Authorship Controversy

Student MUST be first author

ICMJE guidelines: Roughly followed International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; Authorship requires:

- Substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data
- Drafting or revising the article critically for important intellectual concern

Core format of TAD

- I. Introduction
 - I. Background and significance of topic
 - II. Collection of three related studies (option for one to be conceptual)
- II. Conceptual framework
 - I. Constructs, theoretical models, how theory guided study
- III. Methodology: Overall Approach
 - I. For each **study A, B, & C must comply to journal guidelines and include:**
 - I. Research approach
 - II. Sites/population/sampling/subjects/ participants
 - III. Instruments/measures/sources of data
 - IV. Procedures
 - V. Data analysis
 - VI. Trustworthiness and credibility (for quantitative)



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

DEFINING PROBLEMS. SHAPING SOLUTIONS.

SSA's "sort of" 3-paper dissertation model

Issues requiring consideration:

- Diversity of academic disciplines within faculty
- Committee oversight of the dissertation process
- University dissertation policy
- Avoiding copyright problems

Alternative Dissertations on the Horizon?

Digital Dissertations

- Media formats
- Curated dissertation
- Mapping Dissertations

Dissertations for Public Consumption

- Documentary Film
- Photo/Art exhibit from a CBPR project
- Video Game
- Comic Book
- Annotated Text

Collaborative Dissertations

- Several students working on a larger project?
 - Blog with comments and other contributors?
- 

WE ROCK LONG DISTANCE

We Rock Long Distance: M.anifest and the Diasporic Media Currents of Transnational Hip-Hop (Justin Schell – University of Minnesota – PhD in Cultural Studies)

[Traditional Version \(no media\)](#)

[Online Version \(with media\)](#)

[Documentary Version](#)

Led to [video with performances](#)



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Alternative Dissemination

[of dissertations]


Should students have to broadcast their findings?

- community forum, video, infographic, op-ed, etc.

Values-based rationale:

- Knowledge generation is a public service and knowledge is a public good.

Self/profession/institution-serving rationale:

- Control over findings
 - Mastery of emerging media
 - Heightened impact, engagement, & profile
- 

Questions to Ponder

What is the purpose of the “dissertation” in social work PhD programs?

- Dissertation as a PROCESS
- Dissertation as a PRODUCT

How have Schools, faculty and students **supported** and/or **resisted** moving toward alternative dissertations?

How do alternative dissertations potentially affect **rigor**?

How do alternative dissertations fit with **new trends in social work research**, such as the Grand Challenges Initiative or the calls by the IOM for more Evidence Based Practice?

Are some types of alternative dissertations (e.g. portfolios) appropriate for professional doctorates (DSW), while others for research doctorates?

Do skills gained in a dissertation support both academic and non-academic career goals? Should the dissertation be purely instrumental?

Thanks!



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THE OHIO STATE
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