

**Kezar, A., Drivalas, Y., & Kitchen, J. A. (Eds.). (2018).  
*Envisioning public scholarship for our time: Models for  
higher education researchers*. Stylus Publishing. 256 pp.**

Review by David E. Procter



**A**drianna Kezar, Yianna Drivalas, and Joseph A. Kitchen's *Envisioning Public Scholarship for Our Time: Models for Higher Education Researchers* is an important and timely volume for all higher education administrators, faculty, and staff, but especially those working as community-engaged scholars. This text makes a cogent and powerful argument for understanding and promoting public scholarship and seems to be taken from the very news of the day. The authors cast their theoretical and methodological orientation within today's audiences and salient issues. They make a compelling argument for community-engaged scholars who wish their research to be mutually beneficial to the audiences studied and for their scholarship to make a difference around the issues and contexts they study. This edited volume is informative, highly readable, and, at times, quite provocative.

Kezar, Drivalas, and Kitchen's book is divided into three sections. Part 1 defines and describes public scholarship. Part 2 provides a variety of examples of what public scholarship can look like in higher education, and Part 3 offers paths to institutionalize public scholarship in the academy. Throughout the book are roadmaps indicating how to conduct public scholarship and recognitions of the challenges of doing this work.

In the first section of the book, the editors lay the foundation for their perspective by defining public scholarship as scholarship that supports an equitable, diverse democracy through social justice. When I have thought of public scholarship prior to reading this text, I thought of public scholarship as a public product of one's research. I envisioned public scholarship as the way research is presented, as a publicly accessible and public-facing scholarly product. Public scholarship, to my think-

ing, was a fact sheet, a policy document, an infographic, or a white paper written for a public, rather than strictly an academic, audience. When Kezar, Drivalas, and Kitchen describe public scholarship, they speak of a research orientation that should guide faculty work. As they write, "for the editors of this volume, public scholarship is connected and closely related to the words *diverse democracy, equity, and social justice*" (emphasis in original; p. 4). I scanned their introductory chapter looking closely for a nice, clear, succinct definition of public scholarship that incorporated the ideas of diverse democracy, equity, and social justice. I never found it. But after reading their edited volume, which features rich exemplars of faculty writing about how their scholarship promotes a diverse democracy and advocates for equity and social justice, I came to see that the editors envision the process of conducting and publishing public scholarship as service to a diverse democracy and social justice, which are interconnected and necessary to build an equitable society. The authors argue that the entire scholarly enterprise—from conception of the research project, through data collection and analysis, to finally presenting the results of one's research—should support an equitable, diverse democracy and promote social justice. Public scholarship ultimately is an "action" that promotes diverse democracy, equity, and social justice; it is the entire process that results in a product or outcome, rather than merely the outcome itself.

The editors make an interesting distinction between engaged scholarship and public scholarship. After reviewing tenets of engaged scholarship, they conclude that they find that work too narrow. The engaged scholarship movement, they argue, offers particular approaches to research rather than inviting scholars into a broad set of activities that can have a greater impact on policy and practice. The editors argue that

it is a scholar's responsibility to bring their research to the public; it is not their choice but an obligation driven by the mores of equity, social justice, and diverse democracy.

In Chapter 2, Kezar discusses her own journey as a public scholar. She highlights how, over time, her research interests and different points in her career helped her evolve as a public scholar. She acknowledges that serendipity and opportunities presented themselves to her and played important roles in her scholarly evolution. In this chapter she also discusses the importance of listening to the publics one works with, writing for public audiences, and forming partnerships. She then provides examples of the many different ways she has worked as a public scholar.

Kezar acknowledges that working as a public scholar is not without its struggles. She enumerates several challenges, including writing for a general audience, navigating the power and politics of the contexts in which one works, and dealing with the current state of reward structures in the academy. Kezar notes that many working as public scholars believe promotion and tenure policies remain the largest barrier to performing this work. She observes, however, that she never felt constrained in her role as a public scholar because of promotion and tenure concerns. She believes senior faculty often exaggerate the role of promotion and tenure as a barrier paralyzing younger scholars who wish to do this work. At the end of Chapter 2 Kezar argues that she wants to use this volume to make the case for public scholarship agency while also acknowledging the risk for some scholars.

The introductory section of the text concludes with a chapter by Sam and Gupton on cultivating ethical mindfulness. According to the authors, ethical mindfulness is a reflective process that attunes the researcher to the potential ethical decisions that may arise during the public scholarship process. These authors note that the choices we make as public scholars have important consequences. They begin by making a distinction between procedural ethics and ethics in practice. Procedural ethics are formalized external codes of ethics that often involve IRB approvals. Procedural ethics provide a minimum threshold to determine ethical behavior. Ethics in practice, by contrast, focuses on day-to-day decision making

for everyday ethical decisions; it is guided by personal ethical paradigms and principles. Working as a public scholar means there are numerous ethical decision points throughout the research process, and ethical mindfulness provides an epistemological paradigm to guide one's practice of public scholarship. Sam and Gupton identify key elements of ethical mindfulness and then use the remainder of the chapter to flesh out those key ethical components, offering their own research experiences as exemplars of how ethical mindfulness guided their work.

Part 2 highlights public scholarship case studies by scholars at different points in their careers, working at different types of institutions, studying a variety of social and political contexts and audiences, using a variety of research methods and modes of presentation.

Consistent with the text's orientation, Kezar, Drivalas, and Kitchen assembled a number of case studies that focus on issues of equity, diverse democracy, and social justice. The case studies presented in this text are extremely relevant and timely to our academic, social, and political lives. They illustrate how public scholars are making differences in public policy, political movements, higher education, and social issues. For example, several chapters speak to the impact public scholarship can have with vulnerable populations. In Chapter 4, Hurtado writes about her work in legal arenas. She offers the example of her work documenting the argument for diversity in the academy. In Chapter 5, Davis et al. demonstrate how public scholarship can contribute to vulnerable populations resisting various forms of state violence. Specifically, these authors illustrate how their research critically informed and shifted the discourse about the Movement for Black Lives. In Chapter 6, Bensimon highlights her work to create awareness of racial inequality in higher education and to build educators' capacity to adopt racial equity as a norm in classrooms, departments, curricula, hiring practices, evaluations, and accountability systems. In Chapter 8, Dache-Gerbino writes from a position of faculty activism about the importance of creating knowledge in the service of liberation and public good. She argues that public scholarship must come from organizing and planning alongside and on behalf of the working class, the homeless, the targets of the police state, the marginalized, and the forgotten.

Three additional case studies highlight research with a range of audiences and public scholarship products. Nehls et al. offer a case study that highlights an institution's commitment to providing an infrastructure and incentives for faculty to create knowledge for the public policy arena. For these authors, the target audience is legislators and the products are policy white papers. In Chapter 11, Drivalas and Kezar write about arts-based research, arguing that the arts have the ability to provide data, audiences, and a mode of communicating public scholarship research results. Chapter 9 is particularly relevant, as it is a general discussion of the Cooperative Extension System and its long-standing commitment to public scholarship. I liked this chapter, as it provided a history of Extension and its record of engaging a wide variety of adult learners. One common critique of Extension has been that it tends to be organized to disseminate prepackaged information to audiences, rather than working with them to understand challenges and collaborate on solutions. Mull et al., in this chapter, provide examples from the University of Georgia where community partners helped form research questions, collect data, and disseminate research results. The authors conclude their chapter arguing that Extension exemplifies public scholarship and community engagement by offering higher education a model for building partnerships and collaboratively creating knowledge bases around salient local issues.

The final case study chapter, by Hoh, explores using social media as public scholarship. I appreciated this chapter, as it was written consistent with the orientation of the text. That is, Hoh argues that using social media helps dismantle structures that limit public scholarship, democratizes knowledge, and supports underrepresented scholars. She points out how social media can be used at all points in the research process: identifying research opportunities, collecting data, and disseminating research results. Hoh also discusses how social media can help build community, cultivate academic identity, and provide information outlets for minority faculty. I found this chapter very illuminating, providing useful information about social media itself as well as strategies for using social media in the service of public scholarship.

In Section 3 of the text, the editors included contributed chapters that describe ways to

institutionalize and integrate public scholarship into higher education. Three of the concluding chapters talk about graduate student education and socialization. Lanford and Tierney, in Chapter 12, argue that graduate-level training needs to be reenvisioned specifically to stress publicly accessible research reporting. They urge that graduate students be taught not only writing for academic, peer-reviewed journals, but also for other outlets—magazine articles, newspaper opinion pieces, policy papers. In Chapter 13, Clark-Taylor et al. discuss graduate student training and socialization through participation in community-engaged scholarship. The authors argue that community-engaged faculty should model and mentor research and classroom teaching opportunities for graduate students that illustrate relationship-building strategies among stakeholders, other faculty, and students. In their view, these educational experiences help cultivate graduate student identities as public scholars. In Chapter 15, McBain urges new and established public scholars to consider working with higher education nonprofits and professional associations. She focuses much of her chapter on emerging scholars and graduate students, whom she encourages to think beyond the traditional, tenure-track academic path. She advocates that emerging scholars get public scholarship experience while in graduate school, seek interdisciplinary experiences, and expand their writing capacities for addressing audiences beyond those of peer-reviewed journals.

The volume concludes with Lester and Horton's chapter on how faculty might pursue and sustain public scholarship across the stages of their academic career and Kezar, Corwin, et al.'s final chapter of reflections on lessons learned from their work and from the scholarship presented in the text. Both chapters serve as roadmaps for public scholars and discuss the importance for public scholars to identify, understand, and engage with audiences and stakeholders. Lester and Horton note that attending to these tasks is especially important for faculty early in their careers, as it will help scholars set their research agendas and establish the groundwork for potential practical and policy impacts. Kezar, Corwin, et al. argue that public scholars should also capitalize on their strengths. This may mean building research agendas with audiences or organizations with which one is familiar or has a connection. It may mean

capitalizing on strengths of communication, whether that be social media, infographics, policy writing, or more traditional academic writing. It could mean drawing and building on research methodologies with which one is familiar.

I strongly urge faculty and graduate students interested in community-engaged scholarship to explore this text. I have reported on the high points of this edited volume. There is, however, much more for readers to dig into. Each chapter offers both emerging and established public scholars' insights, directions, and cautions for conducting this work.

As Kezar, Corwin, et al. conclude, For researchers who want to engage in public scholarship, this book offers advice on how to identify stakeholders, different modes for engaging stakeholders, varying methodologies, ways to collaborate with colleagues, approaches to tangible and intangible research products, and ways to learn the skills of public scholarship. (p. 232)

I invite you to engage this public scholarship text.



### **About the Reviewer**

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