Changing the Doctoral Student-Dissertation Chair Relationship Through the Article Dissertation Format

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In this article, we contribute to dialogue about the capstone for most doctoral programs: the dissertation. More specifically, we explore the mentorship between doctoral student and chair and assert that using a nontraditional dissertation format affords more fulfilling relationships for the mentee and mentor. Having recently completed three-article dissertations, we aim to further the discussion of doctoral capstone formats based on our experiences through autoethnographic methods and rooted in a relational mentorship framework (Ragins, 2012). We believe that the article dissertation format provided a vehicle for disrupting the typical power structure between dissertation chair and doctoral student by positioning the student as an expert writing for publication and the chair as a coach, learner, and peer-reviewer. Through sharing our co-constructed and personal narratives, we challenge readers to think about the dissertation format and its role in the critical mentoring relationship between doctoral student and dissertation chair.

Introduction

Historically, dissertations have served as the primary doctoral capstone, and within that model there exists the important relationship between student and dissertation chair. Although typically written in five chapters (Munn, Collins, & Greer, 2014), some have challenged the value of the five-chapter dissertation as the format for the education doctoral student, citing multiple limitations of this "traditional format" (Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994); for example, the lack of its utility beyond degree completion. Despite such challenges, the five-chapter dissertation remains the pinnacle capstone project in the field of education (Archbald, 2008).

The five-chapter format engages doctoral students in writing one single large product, and generally focuses on passing the dissertation defense and not on journal publication (Bowen, 2010; Duke & Beck 1999; Krathwohl, 1994). In contrast, the article dissertation format engages doctoral students in the development of multiple scholarly products with guidance and support from their professors and advisors (Duke & Beck, 1999), and it provides opportunities for faculty to mentor students specifically in the area of writing for publication (Krathwohl, 1994). Here, we present our experiences as doctoral students and dissertation chair using a three-article dissertation format and describe how it enhanced the mentorship process by challenging the traditional roles of doctoral student as "novice" and dissertation chair as "expert." We share our story so that readers might gain meaning through understanding the benefits we experienced and

consider the use of this format to enhance the doctoral student-dissertation chair relationship. We assert that the article format had an impact on the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship, and the lack of literature published connecting dissertation format and mentorship sparked our drive to share our stories. In this article, we explain how we came together to work on article dissertations and later engaged in autoethnography to retrospectively analyze and share our experiences with the nontraditional dissertation format through the lens of relational mentorship.

Literature Review

Problematizing the Traditional Dissertation Format

Duke and Beck (1999) and Krathwohl (1994) challenged the value of the five-chapter dissertation format for education doctoral students, providing multiple limitations for their argument: It does not match the forms of writing typical in the field; drastic modifications are required prior to publishing in journals; the intended audience is usually limited to the committee; dissemination is often restricted to a dissertation warehouse; and it is being replaced in other disciplines. Conversations regarding the preparation of education doctoral students are common within the literature, specifically examining the depth, quality, and types of research training (Labaree, 2003; Levine, 2007). Authors have written about improving doctoral students' writing (Kamler & Thomson, 2007; 2008; Murray & Moore, 2006; Rose & McClafferty, 2001) while others focused on the nature and format of capstone projects (Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994; Shulman, Golde, Conklin Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006; Sims, 2016; Wergin, 2011). These conversations have led to changes in the preparation of doctoral students and shifts in the types of Ed.D. capstone projects such as Dissertation in Practice (DiP) (e.g., Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, 2019; Perry, 2015), however most doctoral programs still use the traditional five-chapter format (Munn et al., 2014).

Sims (2016) points out that "one of the important, ultimate goals of a doctorate is to produce scholars who will continue to contribute to the development of knowledge in our profession" (p. 268) and argues that if this goal is to be achieved, teaching doctoral students how to write a one-time dissertation needs to be replaced with teaching them how to write and publish peer-reviewed articles. "The vast majority of our doctoral graduates will never be expected to write a dissertation—or anything like it—ever again" and most students "will never even attempt the painful process of chopping, dicing, and slicing up the many pages of words they worked so carefully to draft . . . into a 20-some-page manuscript to submit for publication" (Sims, 2016, p. 268). Sims agrees with Duke and Beck (1999) and Krathwohl (1994) that the preparation of journal manuscripts, in place of five chapters, is the most effective way to prepare doctoral students to continue participating in scholarship beyond their degree completion. Table 1 provides an overview of the limitations of the five-chapter format and the benefits of the three-article format as discussed in the literature.

Table 1
Dissertation Format Limitations and Opportunities

Criteria	Limitations of the five-chapter product	Opportunities of three-article product
Format	Utilizes a writing format that students will never use again (Krathwohl, 1994) and differs greatly from publications typical in education journals (Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994)	Requires students to produce a product that matches the format of journal articles (Duke & Beck, 1999; Sims, 2016)
Content	Emphasizes comprehensive review of the literature (Boote & Beile, 2005)	Necessitates succinct writing style focused on relevant literature, results, and findings (Maxwell, 2006)
Audience	Limits the audience to the dissertation committee; focuses the product towards academics or other researchers (Duke & Beck 1999; Krathwohl, 1994)	Allows students to practice writing different types of articles (e.g. conceptual, empirical, applied) and extends the audience (e.g. academics, practitioners, journal editors and peer reviewers) (Duke & Beck, 1999)
Dissemination	Results in limited dissemination of research beyond dissertation databases (Archbald, 2008) due to the arduous process of reworking the five-chapter format into publishable articles (Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994; Thomas, Nelson, & Magill, 1986)	Results in products akin to submissions for journals and therefore promotes students' contributions to the field by reducing the time gap between findings and dissemination (Munn, Collins, & Greer, 2014; Olson & Clark, 2009; Sims, 2016)
Advisor-Student relationship	Engages doctoral students in writing a single large dissertation product; focuses on dissertation defense and not on journal publication (Bowen, 2010; Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994)	Engages doctoral students in the development of multiple scholarly products with guidance and support from their professors and advisors (Duke & Beck, 1999); provides opportunities for faculty to mentor students while writing for publication (Krathwohl, 1994)

While focused mostly on the product created by doctoral students, and not explicitly addressing the issue of mentorship in their arguments, the literature alludes to the fact that the dissertation format is the vehicle used to prepare doctoral students, which we contend has implications for the relationship between doctoral student and dissertation chair.

Mentorship and the Dissertation Process

Definitions of mentoring vary; however, most center on the relationship between two individuals wherein one individual with more experience supports the learning and development of the less experienced individual (Carpenter, Makhadmeh, & Thornton, 2015; Mertz, 2004). The supportive nature of mentoring relationships typically focuses on the mentee's career or academic development, but can also include emotional, psychological, and psychosocial

development (Bagaka's, Badillo, Bransteter, & Rispinto, 2015; Carpenter et al., 2015). Mentorship can and should be mutually beneficial (Mertz, 2004; Sims, 2016), lead to increased self-confidence for the mentee, and allow the mentor to self-validate his or her efforts and gain a colleague and ally (Bagaka's et al., 2015). Mentorship traditionally includes knowledge and counsel provided by the mentor "intended to facilitate growth transitions [for the mentee], but the connection between individuals can also encompass a strong personal relationship based on trust . . . . It is this dimension of interpersonal closeness that most clearly distinguishes mentoring from mere advising or guidance" (Kalin, Barney, & Irwin, 2009, p. 12). Mentorship in a doctoral program, therefore, should strive to be a multifaceted relationship between a degree-seeking student and a faculty member with intended outcomes that are both concrete and abstract, as well as professional, personal, and intellectual.

We approach the relationship between chair and doctoral candidate operating from a student-centered, process-oriented model where this relationship takes the form of an apprenticeship and emphasizes the journey more than the end product (Zipp, Cahill, & Clark, 2009). We grounded our work in the theory of relational mentoring (Ragins, 2012), which can be described as a mutually beneficial relationship that focuses on the evolving needs of both mentor and mentee and not on a predetermined return (Snoeren, Raaijmakers, Niessen, & Abma, 2016). This perspective places an emphasis on the development of the scholarship skills of both the chair and the doctoral candidate as much as the completion of the dissertation. While some place the onus of developing these skills on mentors (Noy & Ray, 2012), relational mentoring encourages that both the mentor and mentee share the responsibility for developing *each other's* scholarship skills (Snoeren et al., 2016). We also approached relational mentoring in the context of the adult learning perspective of andragogy and maintain that doctoral candidates enter into the chair-student relationship as self-directed learners who bring existing knowledge and skills and operate from a performance-centered or problem-oriented approach to learning (Zipp et al., 2009).Engaging in reciprocal growth ultimately requires the acknowledgement and examination of inherent power structures in the traditional chair-student relationship. The context of dissertation chair-doctoral student mentorship is situated within power hierarchies of academia; Jones and Corner (2012) emphasize the need in relational mentorship to study the context as not only a time and place situation but as a key part of the mentoring relationship itself (in Snoeren et al., 2016). When a mentoring relationship acknowledges and examines these power hierarchies, it provides the opportunity for that relationship to become a transformational experience for both parties (Mertz, 2004; Sims, 2016). We believe that the power dynamics between mentor and mentee directly influence the dissertation process; thus, a shift to a dissertation format that breaks down traditional power structures can facilitate more meaningful mentor and mentee experiences.

There are published debates about dissertation formatting (Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994; Sims 2016) and separately the role of mentorship during the dissertation process (Goodman, 2006; Knox, et.al., 2011), but no literature explicitly exploring the relationship between mentorship and the dissertation format. We intend to contribute to the literature by describing how the article dissertation format enhanced the relational mentorship we experienced and sharing the perspectives of both the doctoral student and dissertation chair through autoethnography.

Generating Our Stories Through Autoethnography

To make sense of our experiences using the three-article format in a way that included both distinct and shared perspectives, we[1] used autoethnography to generate co-constructed and personal narratives through systematic data analysis to better understand the cultural experience of completing this type of dissertation (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). We grounded our work in the theory of relational mentorship (Ragins, 2012; Snoeren et al., 2016), which influenced our shared cultural experience along with our shared context as doctoral students and dissertation advisor at Loyola University Chicago. Before explaining our autoethnographic methods in more detail, we share our personal stories to provide context for our work.

Elizabeth: Doctoral Student

My dissertation work grew out of a project with another doctoral student in my program. Interested in making science learning more engaging for students, she and I collaboratively designed and implemented a high school curriculum. I wanted to study some aspect of this curriculum implementation, but I had not thought about the dissertation format until my chair, Dave, suggested it. After serious consideration, I realized that this format fit very well with the unique needs of my study and would be practical for publishing.

I first needed to define the curriculum and its key features, establish it within the literature, and distinguish it from existing curricula. Dave and I decided my first article should be a conceptual piece focused on orienting the reader to the curriculum and establishing its validity within science education. Then I wanted to study how the curriculum impacted students' identities, especially related to critical science agency, which would be evidenced when students saw science as a tool for taking action and viewed themselves as scientific thinkers and doers. While the first article argued how the curriculum design promoted this type of identity work, the second article served as an empirical study of the curriculum's ability to do so. When Dave asked about my third article, I knew it should be a piece for practitioners; I wanted my dissertation research to be used by teachers to influence their practices, which would be less likely using a traditional dissertation format. In the third article, I shared select findings from the second article and addressed specific components relevant for teachers, such as the logistics of implementation.

Betsy: Doctoral Student

When I began my dissertation journey, I had recently conducted a pilot study at my school using participatory action research (PAR) as a way for staff members to select a schoolwide issue to target. I witnessed how PAR served as a vehicle for sustainable school improvement and for empowering teachers to use their professional knowledge to drive positive change. While talking about the pilot and planning my dissertation study with Dave, he suggested using the three-article format. After reading a few dissertations that utilized this format, I could see a natural fit for my study. I knew that I wanted to examine the facilitation of PAR from more than one theoretical stance, and the three-article format enabled me to do so.

The first article approached my study from an organizational learning lens, looking at three types of learning afforded by PAR. My second article highlighted ways in which PAR enhanced autonomy and empowerment for participants, specifically calling on feminist and social justice theories. My third article focused on a three-tiered model of reflection: intrapersonal,

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[1] "We" refers to all three authors (Betsy, Dave, and Elizabeth) who had a shared role in the research and writing of this article. When appropriate, individual names are used to highlight individual experiences.

interpersonal, and global. Without the three-article format, I likely would have had to select one overarching theoretical framework, which would have limited my learning.

Dave: Dissertation Chair

While working with faculty developing an alternative capstone project for an Ed.D. cohort of Catholic educators, I suggested using a three-article format that followed the phases of their action research projects: 1) problem identification, 2) solution generation, and 3) implementation. From this discussion, I began to consider bringing the three-article format to doctoral candidates in the Curriculum and Instruction Ed.D. program. I became aware that the three-article format would take a considerable amount of work for both the student and me, though I was not fully aware of how much at the time. Elizabeth and Betsy had proven themselves as strong writers in their coursework and each had conducted research independently—two qualities I thought were important for candidates looking to undertake this format. Additionally, they were willing to take a risk on an idea that had no precedent in their program. As no protocol existed, we had to design and negotiate each dissertation as we moved forward. As a result of their efforts, the article format is now an alternative option in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago, with specific requirements and procedures developed as a result of their work.

Engaging in Autoethnography

The purpose of a co-constructed autoethnography is to systematically document personal experiences for the purpose of understanding and communicating a shared cultural experience (Ellis et al., 2011). Specifically, the three of us used individual memories to examine our mentor and mentee relationship and how it was influenced by the use of a three-article dissertation format. In order to generate co-constructed and personal narratives, we met regularly after the completion of the two dissertations to document the process of using a three-article format and discuss how it influenced us as professionals and scholars. In line with autoethnography, we reflected upon and methodically investigated the power of using this dissertation format after the process was complete (Ellis et al., 2011). After both dissertation defenses, we started meeting to reflect on our dissertation journeys and begin our autoethnographic exploration.

At that point, we began with a co-constructed narrative based in our beliefs that the article dissertation format afforded outcomes that the five-chapter dissertation did not. In order to identify what these outcomes were and how they stemmed from the format itself, we began meeting regularly over the course of a year, first reflecting on and identifying the challenges and opportunities of five-chapter and article dissertation formats. As we continued our reflections together, we wanted to communicate our lived experiences and understandings in a way that consisted of more than an impersonal argument or a simple "how to" guide. To accomplish this, we generated research questions to guide our next phase of meetings: "What are our experiences with the three-article dissertation format?" "What is the value of the three-article dissertation based on our experiences? Which values complement those cited in the literature? What values are not found in the literature?" After engaging in a review of the literature on dissertation formats in order to compare and contrast our lived experiences against published articles (Ellis et al., 2011), we generated three primary themes, recognizing that the article dissertation format enhanced relationships with the dissertation content and with personal, professional, and academic communities, as well as between dissertation chair and doctoral student.

Aware that our co-constructed narrative might overlook important intricacies and unique elements of our individual perspectives, we crafted journal reflection prompts to generate personalized data, which are included in Table 2. The three of us spent several weeks reflecting and writing in response to each of these journal prompts in an effort to retrospectively capture our own *epiphanies* (Ellis et al., 2011) in the form of significant memories and realizations. We intended that generating and sharing personal narratives would enhance our collective understanding of our experiences, including what elements were shared and what made them distinct. Furthermore, we saw this as additional data to triangulate with data generated during our group conversations in order to meet criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Our individual narratives also reveal aspects of ourselves and promote vicarious opportunities for readers to apply our experiences to their own lives (Ellis et al., 2011).

Table 2
Individual Journal Prompts

1. How did the article format influence your relationship to the content of your dissertation (or the advising of the content and/or the understanding of the content of doctoral students' dissertations)?
2. In what ways did the article format influence your relationship with your advisor/doctoral students?
3. How did the article format influence your relationship with the larger academic and professional community?

After sharing and reading each other's journal entries, the three of us continued to meet and engage in conversations that explored trends and unique differences in our experiences, documenting important realizations through detailed meeting notes; sharing our personal narratives in this way added thick description and emic understandings that allowed us to strengthen our co-constructed narrative (Ellis et al., 2011). This collective reflection and analysis during our meetings solidified our three themes and helped us detail specific ways the three-article format influenced each of our relationships in regards to content, the relationship between chair and student, and the relationship with the broader academic community. After collaboratively drafting and reviewing our findings, we realized that the three-article format had the most significant impact on the advisor-doctoral student relationship, and so we began to delve deeper into that connection. In this third phase of our autoethnography, we read literature on mentorship, and then used the specific lens of relational mentoring to examine and revise our co-constructed narrative.

Our findings are presented here as a second-order narrative (Carr, 1997), which, in contrast to a chronological narrative, is the constructed account of our collective experience of engaging in mentorship through the three-article dissertation format. Throughout the findings, we use excerpts from our personal narratives, as told through our journals and meeting minutes. We intend to highlight meaningful aspects of the process and to show the significance of our individual ideas in relation to the whole experience (Elliott, 2005), so the reader might better understand both the distinct and common ways in which the three-article format afforded each of us authentic mentorship.

Attention to Validity and Generalizability

In autoethnography, validity and generalizability rest within the reader, thus making it the writers' task to present detailed descriptions in order to provide the necessary context to find the account reliable and applicable (Kempster & Stewart, 2010; Snoeren et al., 2016). By using data from both our personal journal entries and co-constructed narratives from group meeting minutes, we aim to increase credibility with readers through verisimilitude (Ellis et al., 2011); our honesty and vulnerability intend to produce a reliable account of our experiences that readers can then apply to their own contexts.

Findings on Dissertation Format and Mentorship

From our individual journals and group meeting notes, we found many emergent themes about the benefits of the article dissertation, though the most salient focused on how the increased decision-making involved in negotiating the article format impacted mentorship. While the realistic context of writing for publication initially drew us to the article format, we did not anticipate how it would disrupt the traditional roles of doctoral student and dissertation chair and lead to the development of a more equitable mentor-mentee relationship. The article format created a unique experience for each student, as there were many decisions to make about how each article would be structured and utilized. In the roles of student and advisor, we jointly negotiated the types of articles that would be produced, how the work for each article would proceed, and even how the defense would be structured. This realistic context and increased decision-making broke down the hierarchical relationship between dissertation chair and doctoral student, changed the nature of mentorship, and empowered Betsy and Elizabeth to take on the role of expert at times, with Dave serving in a coaching or learner role.

A Realistic Context for Scholarly Work

Fostering empowerment in students' development as researchers and scholars was a critical part of what Dave wanted to accomplish through the article format. Writing three articles provided a more realistic context for scholarly work, necessitating that Elizabeth and Betsy write in a more authoritative manner than what Dave typically would have expected from a student completing a five-chapter dissertation; because the audience represented the broader academic field, there was a need for the work to reach a level of academic writing present in published journals:

> With a five-chapter dissertation the focus is on one piece of writing and ensuring that the five chapters meet the purpose they are intended [to meet] (introduction, literature review, methods etc.) . . . . However the three-article format's focus was more on relevance rather than comprehensiveness, given that the articles have to fit within the guidelines of an article length . . . . An important area that both Betsy and Elizabeth had to work on was presenting their own voice in their writing. Initial submissions, particularly the literature reviews, were presented with other researchers' voices dominating the writing (e.g. "According to . . ."; "Researchers state . . ."). I wanted them to be more analytical and present their ideas based on their thinking that was supported by the literature. (Dave)

Dave's mentorship of Elizabeth and Betsy included more focus on the process of writing for publication and submitting articles to journals than was the norm for students writing five-chapter dissertations. The context and focal outcome from the beginning was academic scholarship as opposed to product (i.e., dissertation) or degree completion.

Elizabeth and Betsy found one aspect that clearly differentiated the three-article dissertation format from the five-chapter format was aiming to share their findings with the research community. Instead of solely focusing on passing their dissertation defenses, writing three separate publishable articles positioned them as budding scholars:

> I wrote under the assumption that each article would be published and read by its intended target audience. This made what I was doing real scholarly work, rather than just a hoop to jump through to get my degree. (Elizabeth)

The academic and scholarly context in which doctoral student and advisor operated because of the article dissertation format proved to be very meaningful. For Betsy and Elizabeth, the format allowed them to continue on their personal journeys of becoming scholars and contributors to the field. For Dave, the format allowed him to assist the two in finding their own voices and take pride in their development as scholars.

Increased Decision-Making

In addition to providing an authentic context for scholarly work, we found that the three-article format involved increased decision-making and negotiation between doctoral student and chair. In comparison to his experiences advising students completing five-chapter dissertations, Dave found that the three-article format afforded Betsy and Elizabeth enhanced learning experiences with many decisions to be made that he did not originally anticipate, such as the purpose and audience for each article:

> I was familiar with the idea of the three-article dissertation in the bench sciences so I started with that idea in mind that there would be three empirical pieces . . . . However, Elizabeth was concerned [and argued] that she needed to establish [her] curriculum as its own . . . . Based on this she wanted to write a theoretical piece that established [her curriculum] as unique and separate from what was being used in Science education and [discuss] how [it] was designed to meet the call for critical science agency. (Dave)

Elizabeth's need to establish the foundation of her curriculum pushed Dave to reconsider the dissertation as being solely about empirical research. The three-article format offered Elizabeth the opportunity to make decisions about the different types of articles (e.g. theoretical, empirical, and practitioner) that would best help her communicate her ideas to the multiple audiences she wanted to reach.

Betsy decided to use the format to write three empirical articles, each using a different theoretical framework, and her "dissertation was taking on a level of complexity that I think far exceeded what students who completed a five-chapter dissertation faced. Betsy was examining multiple theoretical frameworks and literature bases for three separate studies" (Dave). Unlike a five-chapter dissertation that typically uses one theoretical framework, the article format gave Betsy the opportunity to engage with multiple frameworks after thoughtful research and decision-making.

Disrupting the Hierarchy by Taking on New Roles

The increased decision-making involved with the article format allowed for the disruption of traditional hierarchical roles; Elizabeth and Betsy led all decision-making by presenting their ideas and arguments, while Dave listened and offered clarity and guidance, challenging his students' thinking in positive and productive ways. This afforded Elizabeth and Betsy opportunities to move into expert roles about chosen topics, with Dave as the student at times.

> As [Elizabeth and Betsy] moved along the process, their confidence in bringing their own voices forward grew. It was exciting to see the progress in their voices as researchers; they took a strong lead in the decisions involved in their work, deciding on the nature of the articles they would write, which were the main results and conclusions to present in their articles to the external audience [to whom] they would direct their writing. (Dave)

The relationship that developed was one of mutual respect, learning, and understanding. Elizabeth and Betsy were positioned as experts and gained a sense of empowerment and confidence as they took charge of each article, making decisions about the focus and intended audiences for dissemination, and writing with authority; doctoral student and dissertation chair stood on equal ground, moving in and out of the role of teacher and learner, expert and novice. Betsy and Elizabeth summarize the nature of the relationship as follows:

> [T]he three-article format affected our advisor-student relationship because Dave positioned himself as a learner, because there was no way for him to be an expert on all of the components I considered for my study, and because we were thought partners in decision-making. (Betsy)

> The opportunities to position myself in the way I did were available because of using the three-article format. I became the colleague of my advisor, no longer his novice doc[toral] student. (Elizabeth)

In order for the process to work, we had to recognize that traditional roles in academia would impede our work rather than facilitate it. Once in non-traditional roles, Dave became more of a coach and thought partner to Elizabeth and Betsy and was able to mentor them through the process of writing articles for publication. While more controlling personalities may struggle with giving doctoral students so much autonomy, Dave's confidence in his students' abilities, along with his productive collaboration with both students, allowed for this process to proceed smoothly.

Enhanced Mentorship Through Equitable Relationships

The new roles brought on by the three-article format empowered Elizabeth and Betsy as scholars. The need for them to negotiate their articles with Dave required that they see themselves as researchers and experts rather than doctoral students. This empowerment was enhanced since they often knew more about their topics or theoretical frameworks than Dave.

For example, Elizabeth remembered teaching Dave about her conceptualization of identity work as it pertained to science education. As Dave had no experience teaching science or studying identity work, she was positioned as the expert which put extra pressure on her:

> Because [Dave] wasn't an expert in [science] identity work or [critical science agency], I had to introduce him to these ideas and teach him about them. This positioned me very differently as a doctoral student and put a great responsibility on me to know my stuff and teach my advisor about complex concepts. It was great to have him as an outsider with expertise in different areas because he approached ideas from different angles and helped me construct more complex understandings of the concepts . . . . We were able to fervently debate different perspectives, which increased my confidence and view of myself as a scholar who could engage in these sorts of debates. And in the end, it helped me develop more robust understandings of the concepts, like identity work, because I was able to incorporate ideas from multiple perspectives. (Elizabeth)

In this case, Dave and Elizabeth's differing expertise allowed for productive debates, which positioned Elizabeth as the key decision maker who had to articulate and defend her thinking.

For Betsy, the knowledge gap with Dave was around theoretical frameworks. Dave was the expert on organizational learning theory (used in her first article), but the theories Betsy chose for the second and third articles were less familiar to him. Betsy appreciated Dave's willingness to admit what he did not know, and his excitement to learn from her:

> [Dave] admitted to not knowing a lot about some of the theoretical frameworks that I chose, but that he looked forward to learning through my work . . . . I really appreciated having an advisor who was eager to learn like I was. (Betsy)

This opened the door for the student-advisor relationship, and therefore the nature of the mentorship, to change and fostered Betsy's confidence as a researcher. With Betsy positioned as the expert, her relationship with Dave became more equitable; she and Dave were learning from and being challenged by one another which created more rigor in the mentorship process and shaped her view of herself as a scholar:

> I felt like he was more of a coach to me compared to most professor-student relationships. He often responded to my ideas for my study with questions, which really charged me to justify *why* I wanted to add/subtract/modify some component of my research plan. He also helped me start to internalize those questions, and eventually he helped me get to a place where I doubted myself less and grew more confident as a researcher. (Betsy)

Her experience highlights her power as the decision maker, and how the nontraditional positioning in the mentor-mentee relationship afforded her growth as an expert in her chosen theoretical frameworks and increased her confidence as a researcher.

Betsy described the change in the nature of the mentorship, showing a shift towards a more equitable relationship, which afforded a more rigorous learning experience for both parties:

> The planning process for the dissertation was full of options and uncertainty, and it took a lot of coaching on [Dave's] part to help me make sense of my own ideas and develop a research plan. That process was a long, complex dialogue—and it was truly a two-way dialogue. But with the three-article process and the increased decision-making about what and how to study (three times), I quickly learned that the decision-making mostly rested on me, and that Dave was there to help me clarify my ideas and to coach me. (Betsy)

Betsy described the two-way dialogue as an indication of equality with her advisor; the power to make decisions about the articles lay with her, and Dave's role was to help and support rather than to make final decisions on her work.

Elizabeth also highlighted the more equitable mentor-mentee relationship that the nontraditional format promoted:

> The three-article format influenced how I saw myself in relationship to my advisor. As we worked over time to create, revise, and finalize the three articles, I shifted from seeing myself as his novice student to his colleague, peer, and fellow academic. Again, having this different format made this shift possible. If I just had the five chapters to complete, I know we would have still debated some ideas, but I could see it easily be more of me drafting, bringing my writing to Dave and then basically having him "correct" it and

> telling me what to change. Instead, we were negotiating the three-article process together and collectively deciding what the three articles would be, what would be required of each, and how they would be separate, yet complementary. (Elizabeth)

Through both student and advisor reflection and discussion, it was clear that the nature of the mentorship in which we were engaged changed as a result of using the three-article dissertation format. Because this format provided a more realistic context for engaging in scholarly work and involved increased decision-making which had to be negotiated by both parties, it positioned us in different ways, and allowed for the disruption of traditional hierarchical roles of student and advisor.

For Dave, the context of writing for publication, rather than degree completion, caused him to shift his thinking about his role and responsibilities as a chair. Since each article stood as a separate academic piece, the nature of reviewing Betsy and Elizabeth's work changed:

> Although [my] main philosophy or approach to working with doctoral students did not change, the nature of the work did change during the three-article format . . . . I decided to position myself as a peer reviewer for a journal each time I read their work. When I would meet to discuss their work it was . . . as a colleague thinking about how I would help another academic revise their work for submission. (Dave)

The authoritative role of chair—involving guidance, decision making, and control—lessened as Dave's focus shifted to assisting Elizabeth and Betsy with developing quality pieces of scholarship that would be accepted by the larger academic community.

We all experienced an increasingly rigorous and equitable mentoring relationship, as we were learning from and challenging one another throughout the dissertation process. While Dave, as the chair, always had more expertise about the act of conducting and publishing education research, Elizabeth and Betsy often had more expertise about their chosen topics and the minutia for each of their articles. Recognizing that both mentee and mentor brought strengths to the table allowed us to embody a student-centered model of mentorship (Zipp et al., 2009) while also bringing to life the mutual influence and respect of relational mentoring (Snoeren et al., 2016). It is clear our enhanced and mutual mentorship was made possible by using the three-article dissertation format.

Implications of Equitable Mentorship

Once power dynamics shifted and the doctoral student was positioned as the expert and key decision maker with the dissertation chair as a coach, peer reviewer, and colleague, our data revealed two major implications: more robust understanding of dissertation content and greater participation in the research community. These findings align with outcomes of relational mentorship: "learning and personal development, increased relational competence, inspiration, self-confidence, empowered action and the desire for more and deeper connections" (Snoeren et al., 2016, p. 5). While it is possible to achieve these outcomes through traditional dissertation formats, we feel strongly that the realistic context of writing for publication and increased decision-making cultivated more equitable mentorship, which then afforded intensified understanding of each dissertation's contents and more confidence in presenting at conferences and writing for publication before and after graduation.

Deepened Understanding of Content

Using the three-article format, Elizabeth and Betsy worked with Dave to decide the focus, purpose, and audience of each article. Without a set structure (e.g. Chapter 1 = overview of the problem, Chapter 2 = review of the literature, Chapter 3 = methodology, etc.), Betsy and Elizbeth needed to understand their content and related theories in robust ways to determine the best methods for organizing and communicating their thinking across the three articles. Dave had to be willing to step aside while Betsy and Elizabeth made these decisions, and act as a critical friend by asking questions and offer guidance in these areas when asked.

Advising Betsy and Elizabeth's dissertation work broadened Dave's conceptualization around what this format can offer doctoral students:

> Without working with Betsy and Elizabeth doing a three-article format I may not have seen how the doctoral education can change based on the experiences candidates have with their capstone projects. Elizabeth was writing three different types of articles with separate purposes and audience foci and Betsy was exploring multiple theoretical frameworks across three separate articles. This is not what the typical five-chapter dissertation requires of a student. (Dave)

Through the process of advising three-article dissertations, Dave's perspective of rigor shifted according to the work being done by the students in each article. Instead of thinking about rigor in a fixed manner, "the quality of the work and each article needed to be measured on its own rigor based on the type, purpose, and audience focus; this conceptualization of rigor more accurately represented the world of peer-reviewed publishing" (Dave). Creating independent pieces of scholarship forced Dave to redefine rigor according to the content and audience of each article and shaped his mentorship of Elizabeth and Betsy.

Writing each single article became a process and an opportunity for more deeply engaging with content; for example, Elizabeth had to develop three completely different organizational structures each article (i.e. conceptual, empirical, and practitioner-focused). Elizabeth described how developing the structure for her conceptual article deepened her understanding of the theories and concepts needed to defend her claims:

> Having to write the first conceptual article on [the curriculum] pushed me to really define what the curriculum was, as well as ground it in the literature and examples that informed its design. Writing a conceptual article was a complex process that was very difficult, as I had to develop my argument and the entire organization of the article, with the guidance of Dave. There was no formula for doing this, so I had to clearly understand the concepts I was discussing and be able to communicate my understanding in a way that would be comprehensible to an outside audience. (Elizabeth)

Deciding how to organize and communicate information became a continuous dialogue between doctoral student and advisor as Elizabeth's understanding of and confidence with her content and argument deepened.

Betsy described the challenge of using multiple theoretical frameworks in her articles, which complemented one another but provided distinct contributions to her study by examining participatory action research (PAR) from various perspectives:

> Through each of the three approaches, I got to challenge myself to become a student of each theoretical framework, meaning that I got to research many different theories and

> look for intersections of ideas that related to my study. In each article, I decided to bring together two or more theories to articulate my own lens through which I could structure my study and analyze my data . . . . It was not a *carte blanche* to call upon any theory I could find, but really it was a charge to become a self-directed researcher who was knowledgeable on a variety of research practices and theories before deciding which theories to use. (Betsy)

Being able to study her chosen paradigm through three theoretical lenses led Betsy to gain a much deeper understanding of participatory action research; seeing how different theories emphasized certain elements of PAR challenged her to explore unifying and unique features of each theory.

Additionally, Elizabeth and Betsy both had the experience of writing for multiple audiences, which allowed them to explore different dimensions of their topics and communicate to various stakeholders. For example, Elizabeth described her struggles with switching audiences when communicating findings to either researchers or teachers:

> Strangely enough, the piece I thought would be easiest to write, Article 3 written for practitioners/teachers, turned out to be one of the most difficult to write. I was so far into "academic writing mode" that it was challenging to switch gears and think about the practical implications of my work and communicate those clearly. I refined my understanding of the concepts and learned to look at my research through the various lenses of curriculum developer, researcher, and teacher. (Elizabeth)

The article format gave Elizabeth and Betsy the opportunity to deepen their understanding of content as they wrote for various journals and audiences with Dave's support; having their advisor's guidance while learning to engage in many types of writing for publication was a large benefit of the article dissertation format. For Dave, the inclusion of practitioner articles within the three-article format helped to reaffirm the importance of disseminating scholarship to practitioners in a manner that is useful and accessible.

Because the three-article format gave Elizabeth and Betsy the freedom to explore multiple structures, theoretical frameworks, and audiences, it prompted them to think about chosen concepts from different perspectives, develop expertise in more than one area, and increase the complexity and rigor of their work. With traditional five-chapter dissertations, students usually have one guiding theoretical framework, one methodology, and one set of findings and analyses. The article dissertation, however, offered them choices in how to use each article as a unique learning opportunity. As Betsy stated:

> The three-article format gave me so much freedom . . . . I really got to take my dissertation to a whole new level . . . . It is almost like I got to write three smaller dissertations due to this freedom, and the amount of growth that I got to experience as a researcher, student, teacher, and person from the freedom of choice is immeasurable. (Betsy)

The understanding and confidence expressed in their journaling is indicative of how the format facilitated deepened relationships between student and content. Elizabeth noticed stark evidence of her growth when preparing for her dissertation defense:

> Mastering the content in the way I did also shifted the view I had of myself in relationship to these ideas. I remember at my proposal defense I had a plethora of notes

> both on my PowerPoint slides and in front of me . . . . I used the notes I had written as a crutch to sound like I knew what I was talking about, and this phrasing was greatly taken from others I had read. In contrast, at my final defense, I actually revisited those initial slides to modify and use . . . . I immediately removed a ton of text and reworded things in my own words. That was a pivotal moment when I realized how the content no longer intimidated me and made me feel like I was inept or not smart enough to talk about these ideas. Instead, I owned these ideas as I had deepened my understanding of the content and put my own spin on how they related to my curriculum and research. (Elizabeth)

The decision-making around three separate-yet-coherent articles necessitated expertise in chosen theories, frameworks, and methodologies and led to enhanced understanding of content. Deepened understandings also increased students' confidence levels with presenting and submitting their research to journals and conferences.

Active Participation in Academic and Professional Communities

Organizing the dissertation into separate, self-contained manuscripts also allowed Elizabeth and Betsy the opportunity to submit articles for publication and for conference presentations prior to program completion. The three-article format facilitated their development as scholars, which gave Elizabeth and Betsy more confidence to submit proposals to present their work at conferences. In addition, the format itself provided a natural way to share dissertation work with the larger research community because it was organized in an analogous manner to publication requirements: "I presented each article at professional conferences, some before and some after my defense. I did this independently without my advisor and with each successful presentation, it increased my confidence and furthered my identity work as a scholar" (Elizabeth). For Elizabeth, the practice with presentations and manuscript submissions during the dissertation process also enabled her to secure a tenure-track university position immediately following graduation. Betsy also presented each of her articles at conferences and has manuscripts published and under review: "I want to publish and present more, not because I am checking off some boxes to work towards something like tenure, but because I really believe in my work and I have three unique lenses to share with the Action Research community" (Betsy). Although we do not think that publication should be required in order to complete a doctorate degree due to publication timelines, we think that opportunities to publish and present dissertation research prior to graduation is an important benefit of the three-article dissertation format.

Elizabeth and Betsy also found that the focus on publishing and participating in the larger research community throughout the dissertation process notably positioned them differently than peers who used the five-chapter format. They experienced agency and control by discussing publication and presentation opportunities with Dave during their dissertation studies, not just at the very end or at the defense. They were positioned as scholars who could and wanted to share findings with research communities:

> The three-article format influenced how I saw myself in relationship to the larger academic and professional community, probably because of how it shifted my view of myself in relationship to the content and to my advisor. Because I felt more mastery over the content and saw myself as someone who could understand and communicate complex concepts to others, as well as debate seasoned scholars and go toe-to-toe with them to make my case, I felt more adept to be able to do this within the larger academic and professional community. (Elizabeth)

The confidence to independently present and submit research-in-progress was likely a result of relational mentoring and being positioned as scholars who designed their own studies and uses of the three-article format, while discussing ways to participate in the research community throughout their dissertation journeys.

For Dave, becoming a proponent of the article dissertation format influenced his work with School of Education faculty members. Although he was supported by some colleagues, others questioned the rigor of the format and did not receive the idea as well. "[T]hose who opposed it did so mostly on the notion that the three-article [dissertation] would not be as rigorous. But their argument of rigor focused mostly on the format [and] not the content or the nature of the work involved" (Dave). As we have presented here, we would argue that writing three articles for publication, using journal criteria and expectations, could be considered more rigorous than writing five chapters that often do not get disseminated beyond the dissertation database (Sims, 2016). Dave was able to convince colleagues to add the article format as an official option for School of Education (SOE) students: "out of this work, the three-article format was officially accepted as one of the formats for dissertations in the SOE, and I was involved in writing the guidelines for this format" (Dave). Also of note is the fact that Elizabeth's outside reader from another university proposed the article format to her colleagues, as well.

We believe the end goal of the article format more explicitly aimed to engage Elizabeth and Betsy as scholars and professionals who could use their research, and they still feel that commitment and motivation years after graduation. Much of the confidence they felt as budding researchers stemmed from the positionality as scholars that was afforded them by the three-article format and their positioning with and support from Dave. Dave, too, experienced professional growth through the process; while acting as advisor on multiple three-article dissertations, Dave was able to lead an effort to expand his colleagues' thinking about the form and function of the dissertation and craft a new department policy on the article dissertation format.

Closing Thoughts

The three-article format greatly influenced our doctoral mentor-mentee relationships. More specifically, the article format shifted roles between the chair and student, enhanced learning of chosen content, and shaped relationships with broader professional contexts. The three-article format provided the context for engaging in a more equitable mentorship during the dissertation process, as Betsy and Elizabeth took on roles as experts writing for publication.

The positioning experienced by using the article format from a relational mentoring stance disrupted traditional roles and challenged the hierarchy that usually exists between doctoral students and advisors, and all parties benefited. The theoretical foundation supported our belief that both dissertation chair and doctoral student should be positioned as teachers and learners, and that both parties should "enter the relationship expecting to grow, learn, and be changed by the relationship, and both feel a responsibility and a desire to contribute to the growth and development of their partner" (Ragins, 2012, p. 521). Our experiences highlight how the article format afforded heightened decision-making for students within a realistic context, which offered Elizabeth and Betsy opportunities to act as independent researchers and scholars with the coaching and guidance of their advisor, Dave.

The opportunities to write for different audiences in various styles under the tutelage of a dissertation chair was invaluable; such guidance is usually not explicitly taught in doctoral

programs (Bowen, 2010), and the three of us feel that the article dissertation truly prepares students to write for publication (Duke & Beck, 1999). Additionally, the variety of research methodologies and theoretical frameworks afforded by the article format challenged Elizabeth and Betsy to become multifaceted experts, which then impacted their views of themselves as researchers and scholars. It is important to note that the act of designing, implementing, and writing one's dissertation has the potential to shape how a doctoral student perceives his or her capabilities within the world of academia. Kamler and Thomson (2008) write that "texts and identities are formed together, in, and through, writing. The practices of doctoral writing simultaneously produce not only a dissertation but also a doctoral scholar" (p. 508). Elizabeth and Betsy felt empowered by the mentorship they experienced while writing a three-article dissertation, and it facilitated their transitions from students to scholars. Dave was a colleague and peer reviewer, which further developed Elizabeth and Betsy's views of themselves as his peers and true researchers who could participate in the broader academic community.

For many doctoral students, the process of converting a five-chapter dissertation into publishable articles takes a long time and can result in research findings never being shared beyond the dissertation database (Archbald, 2008; Duke & Beck, 1999; Krathwohl, 1994; Sims, 2016). With article dissertations, Elizabeth and Betsy were able to present research at conferences and submit manuscripts before completing their programs; these participatory activities were also done independently from Dave, as they had gained valuable experience and expertise through the design and execution of their separate articles. After working with Elizabeth and Betsy, Dave advocated for the article format to his colleagues and informed a School of Education policy around nontraditional dissertation formats for Loyola University Chicago. Thus, the format was a vehicle for Dave to participate differently in his academic and professional settings as well.

Reflecting upon our experiences, we encourage readers to rethink the typical dissertation format as a starting point for challenging the traditional power hierarchy that can impact doctoral student-advisor mentorship and, instead, explore formats like the three-article dissertation as a vehicle that positions the student as an author writing for publication and the chair as a mentor and coach. Such an approach emphasizes the process of being a researcher and scholar rather than the creation of one single product. Although we expect the dissertation to continue its role as a final capstone, we want to draw attention to the power dynamic that can come with the traditional format by providing evidence that using an alternate format can enhance mentorship and promote the professional growth of both the student and the chair within the research community.

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