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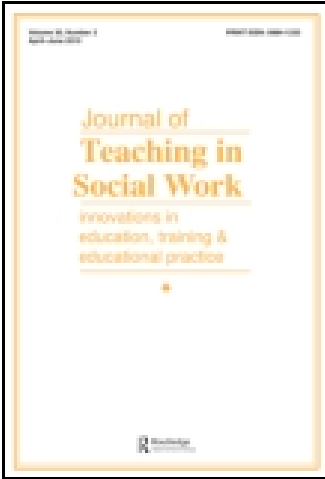
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### Guiding Social Work Doctoral Graduates Through Scholarly Publications and Presentations

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## **Guiding Social Work Doctoral Graduates Through Scholarly Publications and Presentations**

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*Disseminating the work of social work doctoral graduates aligns with the Council on Social Work Education's National Statement on Research Integrity in Social Work publication practices and the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. Publications and presentations are essential to their future success, yet little support is provided to social work doctoral graduates by programs that are not affiliated with research universities. This article fills a gap in the literature by offering faculty a clear guide on how to engage graduates in the scholarly dissemination of their advanced practice skills and dissertation research through publications and presentations.*

*KEYWORDS* *doctoral education, presentation, publication, scholarship*

### **BACKGROUND**

The vast majority of doctoral social work graduates undoubtedly will continue to advance their careers following graduation. One of the most universally effective ways to achieve this goal is through scholarly publications and presentations. Although it may be expected that a PhD graduate

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who attended a research intensive institution (while receiving dissertation research financial support in the form of tuition waivers, research assistantships or fellowships) will engage in these endeavors, we believe the same expectations should exist for all doctoral social work graduates. In fact, the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) convened a Doctor of Social Work (DSW) task force in 2011 and outlined key elements of the DSW degree, including a guideline that each student should “engage in active practice based research and disseminate findings through presentations and publications” (Rittner, Holmes, & Edwards, 2011, p. 11). Similarly, national initiatives to address the “science of social work,” as well as the need to communicate new knowledge to others, have been published elsewhere in relation to the importance of scholarly publication within the profession (Brekke, 2012; Fong, 2013).

The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) Task Force on Quality Guidelines recommends that doctoral programs should encourage students to present at least twice and to have completed two or three sole or co-authored articles in peer-reviewed journals prior to graduation (Harrington, Petr, Black, & Cunningham-Williams, 2013). Research universities often fund doctoral education for candidates and engage in pedagogical practices that allow for these goals to more easily be achieved. Programs that use mentoring models and provide financial support for scholarly development are commended for their provision of supports to cultivate a doctoral-level scholar. Yet the proliferation of professional practice doctoral programs in the United States and abroad (e.g., DSW programs); the plethora of social work programs that are not focused on research; the popularity of part-time, clinically focused PhD programs (e.g., Smith College, the Institute for Clinical Social Work); and the more recent emergence of online, for-profit doctoral degree programs in social work (e.g., Capella University and Walden University) present a quandary. Many of these programs offer exceptional advanced clinical practice and program development training but offer little support or guidance to doctoral students on how to publish and present both as a student and upon graduation.

Doctoral degree programs in social work are not accredited by the CSWE, and therefore uniform comprehensive data on doctoral education in social work is difficult to gather. GADE is commonly recognized in the field as the best source of information. As of January 2014, there were 74 institutional members of GADE in the United States and an additional nine international institutions ([www.gadephd.org](http://www.gadephd.org)). Yet the GADE membership directory is incomplete. Based on information available online, there appears to be at least one additional ground-based degree program (Aurora University) and two online institutions (Capella University and Walden University) in the United States offering the DSW that are not listed in the GADE directory. Additional DSW programs are scheduled to start at Tulane University, St. Catherine University—the University of St. Thomas, and the

**TABLE 1** Doctor of Social Work Programs

University	Location
Aurora University	Aurora, Illinois, USA
Capella University	Online
Cardiff University	Cardiff, Wales, UK
Rutgers University	New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA
St. Catherine University–University of St. Thomas <sup>a</sup>	St. Paul, Minnesota, USA
Tulane University <sup>a</sup>	New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
University of Dundee	Dundee, Scotland, UK
University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
University of Portsmouth	Portsmouth, England, UK
University of Southern California <sup>b</sup>	Online
University of Sussex	Brighton, England, UK
University of Sydney	Sydney, Australia
University of Tennessee	Knoxville, Tennessee, USA
Walden University	Online

<sup>a</sup>Programs scheduled to begin in August 2014. <sup>b</sup>Program scheduled to begin in 2015.

University of Southern California. An informal web search identified dozens of international ground-based PhD in Social Work programs and four international universities offering the DSW that are not listed in the GADE member directory. Table 1 includes a list of known English-speaking DSW programs, only three of which are listed in the GADE directory (Rutgers University, University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Tennessee–Knoxville).

In total, there are more than 100 institutions worldwide that offer a doctoral-level degree in social work. Programs offering doctoral degrees in the United States are classified as doctorate-granting research universities with very high research activity (RU/VH), high research activity, and as doctoral/research universities, based on the Carnegie Foundation Basic Classification framework (McCormick & Zhao, 2005). Very high research activities are indicative of greater expenditures on research and faculty whose primary responsibility is to engage in research (vs. instruction or public service) (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). These programs often offer tuition funding, fellowships, and/or research assistantships to doctoral students engaged in faculty sponsored research. Of the 74 U.S.-based doctoral social work programs identified in the GADE directory, 56.7% ( $n = 42$ ) are offered at institutions classified as RU/VH universities. As such, faculty teaching at the remaining 43.3% of GADE member institutions (plus others not listed in their directory) may have limited resources available to social work doctoral candidates for mentoring research activity, publication, and presentation.

In their most recent 2012 statistical report, CSWE published a survey of doctoral programs in the United States based on responses from 62 GADE member institutions out of a possible 73 members during the year that data were collected. Almost all survey data (96.8%,  $n = 60$ ) were derived from PhD-granting institutions. There were 2,428 students enrolled in these

62 reporting doctoral social work programs in the 2011–2012 academic year. Similar to years past, CSWE reported that 307 students in 2012 received their doctoral degree in social work, with 97.1% ( $n = 298$ ) of the reported degrees being the PhD. The 2012 response rate to this survey, however, was 84.9% ( $n = 62$ ) and included only institutions that were members of GADE. Thus, one can safely assume that the actual numbers of doctoral graduates were even higher given that there were additional institutions not included in the study sample.

The information portal for prospective students posted on the GADE website describes many career paths for doctoral-degree holding social workers (see <http://gadephd.org>). Positions include faculty-research, administration, advanced practice careers, and public policy positions. From the 2012 GADE member survey data, CSWE (2013) reported the following statistics on the employment of PhD graduates, shown in Table 2.

A number of limitations are present in these data. CSWE collected information only from GADE member institutions, which excluded for-profit universities and most of the International DSW advanced practice doctorate programs. As a result, these statistics are heavily weighted toward research-focused PhDs and may not fully capture the full range of doctorates in the profession. In addition, as one can see, the employment status of 17.3% of graduates is unknown. According to Dr. Dorothy Kagehiro (personal communication, January 9, 2014), Research Associate at CSWE, “programs have difficulty tracking what happens to their graduates,” and CSWE does not disaggregate postgraduation items based on the type of degree. In addition,

**TABLE 2** CSWE Report of 2013 Doctoral Graduate Employment Status\*

Employment status	No.	%
Tenure-line faculty position in CSWE-accredited program	143	35.2
Academic research position	30	7.4
Nonacademic administrative position	27	6.7
Non-tenure-line faculty position in CSWE-accredited program	26	6.4
Postdoctoral fellow	25	6.2
Private clinical practice	23	5.7
Academic administrative position	13	3.2
Nonacademic research position	12	3.0
Faculty position in a program not accredited by CSWE	12	3.0
Consulting position	8	2.0
Other	36	8.9
Not employed	13	3.2
Unknown	38	9.4
Total doctoral graduates	406	
Programs reporting	57	

\*Most recent data available at time of publication.

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there is no known database on the number of publications or presentations of doctoral-degree-holding social work graduates, which makes it even more difficult for the profession to highlight the frequency of scholarly work produced by its doctoral graduates. Regardless of these gaps, guidelines published by a GADE Task Force on Quality Guidelines outlined the goals, core expertise, and skills expected of PhD graduates—including the importance of disseminating their dissertation findings.

The purpose of this article is to offer guidance for faculty working with doctoral students on how to teach candidates to engage in scholarly dissemination of their dissertation research through publications and presentations. Given the demands on full-time faculty to pursue their own scholarship, coupled with the need to attend to currently enrolled doctoral candidates, it is understandable that they may not have time or resources to continue to mentor graduates after they have earned their degree. Nonetheless, this article can be shared with doctoral candidates to offer clear steps to take to meet the expectations of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW; 2008) Code of Ethics that social workers be involved in advancing the integrity of the profession through publications and presentations.

This article draws from a collection of the authors' experiences in higher education, serving on dissertation committees, as well as a PhD in social work graduate from an institution that did not offer research intensive resources, or familiarity with the "publish or perish" expectation placed on individuals who secure employment in tenure-track academic positions. Such expectations further justify the need to help new doctoral graduates succeed in the dissemination of their dissertation findings.

## PUBLISHING THE DISSERTATION

There are many advantages to sharing one's work—both initially as a completed dissertation available in a library or online databases, and taking the dissemination of the dissertation findings one step further with publications or presentations. As faculty members are keenly aware, some of these benefits include the chance to further one's career (Kelsky, 2011), to advance the professional field, gain personal satisfaction, assist other scholars, and build one's reputation as a subject expert (Wood, 2014). Publications and presentations inevitably help graduates who take on academic positions, and are becoming more respected in practice. Disseminating one's work shows initiative and aligns with the CSWE (2006) National Statement on Research Integrity in Social Work publication practices.

Prior to making a decision about publishing or presenting their work, faculty should help doctoral candidates and graduates identify the intended goals of dissemination. Articles are published to influence practitioners, to inform policymakers, to highlight research methods used in the field, and to



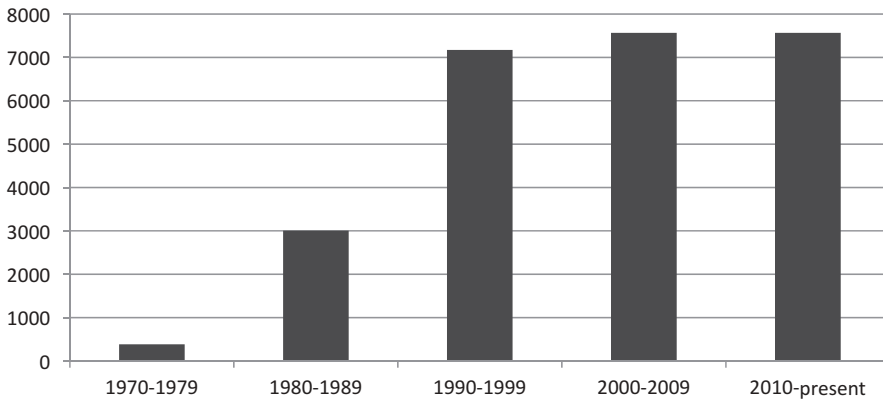
share the discovery of new knowledge. Faculty should consider whether the publication and presentation goals of the doctoral candidate align with the future career aspirations of the graduate, whether it is to secure an academic appointment or to help achieve nonacademic career goals or building one's reputation as a content expert. Each of these goals may suggest a different audience for publication and presentation.

At a minimum, all PhD and DSW graduates should publish their dissertation. The doctoral chairperson often is the point person to guide the new graduate on how to copyright the dissertation, which allows ownership of the material and compensation for infringement. The complexities of copyright laws are beyond the scope of this article (especially with dissertations involving sponsored research; Crews, 2013). Graduates may have their work copyrighted directly through the U.S. Copyright Office at eCo.com, or may use ProQuest Dissertations and Theses/UMI, which will complete the service for them. The copyright is owned by the graduate, not UMI.

Many graduates authorize publication of the dissertation in its original form using UMI Dissertation Publishing, which is a part of ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT). PQDT is accessible at more than 3,000 libraries worldwide. The PQDT/UMI collection noted is a repository of dissertations and theses. Publication with PQDT/UMI allows graduates to electronically submit their dissertations for open access or traditional publishing. There is debate among publishers and academicians about the use of the Internet to publicly disseminate intellectual property online using open access (Djurkovic, 2014). Faculty can instruct graduates on what procedures are permitted and determine if the school may have a policy on these publishing practices.

*Traditional publishing* allows for PQDT/UMI to list the dissertation's availability through an electronic subscription database purchased by library affiliates. There currently are more than 2 million entries in the database (ProQuest, n.d.), and more than 22,000 dissertations or theses in the Social Sciences database are filed with a subject heading for social work. PQDT/UMI publication trends indicate a significant increase in the number of social work dissertations entered in the database over the past 30 years, as displayed in Figure 1.

All graduates who choose to publish their work with PQDT/UMI will have their dissertation registered in their name to certify authorship. A copy of the work also will be deposited in the Library of Congress. Publishing the dissertation will automatically provide a publication number so that the work can be referenced with a legitimate citation (instead of as an unpublished manuscript). There are fees associated with each of these services. Faculty should direct graduates to review the PQDT/UMI website for more details and for instructions on how to format the dissertation for publication and printing.



**FIGURE 1** PQDT/UMI social work dissertations and theses publications by date.

*Open access publishing* allows the dissertation to be accessible to the public in an electronic format available as a free download through PQDT Open. Some universities may require this publication format, especially if the dissertation was completed with support from federal funding. On the other hand, some institutions may prohibit or discourage open access publishing, especially if the research material is protected with respect to the study sample or study site. For graduates who choose to make their work available online at no charge to the public, the two most popular options currently are OpenThesis.org and Academia.edu. OpenThesis.org offers authors the opportunity to post their dissertation in a free and centralized online database. Faculty need to be aware of whether their institution has an account with OpenThesis.org to automatically publish the dissertation, or if graduates need to upload their work directly to the site. Similarly, Academia.edu is a popular platform for academics to share their research papers. The site allows users to electronically upload their dissertations (with associated keywords) that will link to Google searches of related information on the Internet. Academia.edu also tracks user analytics, such as how many times the dissertation was reviewed and how it is appearing in searches. Like other open source websites (e.g., Research Gate, PILOTS Database, Creative Commons), Academia.edu does not claim ownership rights to any of the materials posted on their site.

The dissertation is an ideal source for a new doctoral graduate to extract articles for publication under the guidance of experienced faculty. One dissertation study may, in fact, generate several articles and provide a foundation for other research studies associated with the original one. Faculty members therefore may need to direct new graduates to shift their view of the dissertation from a single, cohesive document to one that can be separated out for the purpose of publication.

## GUIDING GRADUATES ON THE TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

Many social work graduates from non-RU/VH institutions do not submit their dissertation research findings for scholarly publication—beyond traditional or open access publication of the dissertation. There are a number of reasons that may contribute to this reality, including the demands of a new job, an experience of fatigue and loss of interest in the research topic, a lack of mentoring on the submission process, and the fear of rejection. Rejection rates for peer-reviewed journals range from 50% to more than 90% (Wagner, 2006), although Hopps and Morris (2007) reported that the average rejection rate for social work journals is lower than for other professions. Faculty members therefore should guide candidates in how to publish and present the dissertation beyond filing the document in its original form. Options include giving presentations; workshops; consulting; and publishing through articles, trade magazines, books, or private companies interested in the work. The most expected and recommended approach to disseminate one's work is through scholarly publication.

Scholarly publications are *peer reviewed* (also known as refereed). Although faculty is familiar with this practice, it may be helpful to clarify the process with graduates considering submission of a manuscript. When an article is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, the editor typically distributes the manuscript to other scholars in the field to gather their opinion of the quality of the scholarship, the relevance to the professional field of practice, and appropriateness for the journal. There are many options available for publication in the field and across disciplines. Hence, thinking about where to publish elements of the dissertation may be an overwhelming experience for many new graduates.

One may wish to ascertain the ranking of a journal when considering where to submit a manuscript. One measure of a journal's ranking is the impact factor, which measures the number of times a journal article has been cited in a year as documented in Google Scholar (i.e., "Cited by #") or by the Journal Citation Report Social Science edition published by Thomson Reuters. For the most up-to-date list of journal rankings, based on impact scores and use, authors can review the Scientific Journal Ranking at [www.scimagojr.com/journalrank](http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank). There are 61 U.S. and international journals listed in this database using a subject area search for "social sciences" and the subject category of "social work." The three highest ranking journals in the field of social work are currently from the United Kingdom: *Child Development*; *Journal of Marriage and Family*; and *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*. In addition, Leung and Cheung (2013) of the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work maintain an up-to-date journal database of social work manuscript submission information and impact factors (including those in the 2012 Journal Citation Report; University of Houston, n.d.). Faculty should share these resources with doctoral graduates.

Although a peer-reviewed journal that publishes quantitative, empirically based studies is usually the highest ranked, there is a cadre of alternative forms of scholarship the graduate may consider for publication. A *trade publication* for a nonacademic audience is appropriate for topics that apply to the general population and to practitioners in the field. Magazines, newsletters, and blogs for a nonprofit organization offer a way for new graduates to establish themselves in the field and with a target community. These generally are written in a more natural, conversational tone and rarely contain references or statistical tables. These manuscripts can be easy to write and may serve as a confidence booster to the graduate with little or no publication experience. Alternatively, trade publications may be a good choice of publication for scholars who are established in their field of expertise. Some examples of such publications include *The New Social Worker*, *NASW News*, *Social Work Today Magazine*, [www.socialworknews.net](http://www.socialworknews.net), a newsletter for an agency, or a practitioner website.

*Review articles* are a good way for doctoral graduates to make use of the literature covered typically in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. They can include not only a synthesis of articles related to a topic but also the critical analysis, controversies, and gaps in the existing research. Much of the material in such articles is highly consistent with the tenants of a well-written dissertation literature review. Examples can readily be found in social work library database searches by adding the word “review” to a topic query, such as the article “Recovery in Severe Mental Illness: A Literature Review of Recovery Measures” by Scheyett, DeLuca, and Morgan published in the 2013 volume of *Social Work Research*.

*Theoretical articles* are written based on a person’s thoughts. These articles may review an existing theory, offer a new theoretical approach to a topic, or highlight an idea for future research. Theoretical perspectives are greatly valued in academia, and some authors prefer this type of scholarly publication so that their opinions can be shared publicly. A seminal example of this type of article is “The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice: Extensions and Cautions” by Dennis Saleebey (1996).

*Practice articles* offer descriptions or case examples of approaches used in professional practice. Rather than coming from a research perspective, manuscripts are built from practice wisdom and the expertise of the authors, based on their experiences in the field. This article is one example of such a publication. Like theoretical articles, these pieces offer ideas for future research and can be a good fit for clinical PhD or DSW program graduates. The *Clinical Social Work Journal* and the *Journal of Social Work Practice* are leaders in the field for publishing practice articles.

Unlike the aforementioned publication types, *research articles* provide empirical evidence via data that were collected and analyzed by the researcher. They are not based on one’s thoughts, opinions, or a review of others’ works but detail an original, scholarly, research-based contribution to

the field. Almost all social work journals include research-based manuscripts. Such submissions may derive from quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods studies. In addition, some periodicals are specifically geared toward evidence-based practices, participatory action research, or program evaluation methods. These articles frequently are considered the most competitive of scholarly opportunities and may have the greatest impact on the graduate's reputation as a scholar in academia. Examples of empirical articles can be found throughout most journals, including *Social Work*, *Social Service Review*, *British Journal of Social Work*, *Health & Social Work*, *Research on Social Work Practice*, and the *Journal of Social Service Research*.

### GUIDING GRADUATES ON THE PUBLICATION PROCESS

Graduates with limited experience in publication submission need to be coached on how to identify suitable sources for publication. Faculty should encourage graduates not to limit themselves to one discipline. Many journals are multidisciplinary; research and subject topic journals encourage and accept submissions across many professions. Seasoned faculty members can offer expertise on how to target a journal submission for publication. The need for authors to tailor writing and publication style for each journal and the ethical requirement that manuscripts be reviewed only by one journal at a time make it imperative that new authors select the most relevant journal in order to increase their chance for publication success.

Although there have been some efforts in the field of social work to provide guidance on how to choose a journal for manuscript submission (see the Society for Social Work Research Presidential Task Force on Publications Bulletin Board at <http://sswrptfp.wordpress.com/>), choosing where to submit one's work remains a process that each graduate must learn to navigate. Those who submit may have to wait up to a year to find out that their paper has been rejected, and they thus need to find another publisher. However, with mentored guidance from senior faculty, the graduates can learn how the carefully tailored selection of a journal will result in a greater likelihood of having the article accepted for publication.

Faculty may want to ensure that new authors are aware of some of the statistics associated with a publication when choosing where to submit. These features typically include the subscription rate, type of readers, acceptance rate, whether it is refereed, length of time for a decision, submission requirements, and length of runway before publishing after acceptance. One of the most important of these features is the acceptance rate. Journal acceptance rates can range from 1% to 50% (Wagner, 2006). Some of the more prestigious and competitive first-tier journals, such as *Qualitative Inquiry* and the *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, have acceptance rates at the lowest levels of less than 10% (Walker, 2010). However, graduates need

to understand that acceptance rates for a publication are not always the same at any given time and may vary, depending on the backlog of articles, which can range from a few months to a few years. An editor-in-chief may invite submissions in the form of a Call for Papers and may be more likely to accept a manuscript if the topic is related to the preselected focus, such as a special issue. (In the case of this article, for example, the authors responded to a call for papers for a special issue exclusively on doctoral education.)

New authors may not be aware that most peer-reviewed journals have websites to explain their submission process. Once a potential source is identified, the doctoral graduate should go to the website to determine whether the journal is a good fit with respect to the mission of the publication, style, and expectations. (The Society for Social Work Research Presidential Task Force on Publications, 2008, recommended that all publishers of social work journals should have publicly available information on the specific requirements of their journal.) Most professional periodicals provide instructions to authors, which is an outline of the guidelines and expectations for manuscript submissions. For example, the journal *Social Work* has an Information for Authors page that includes the history of the publication, topics of interest, desired length of articles, types of articles accepted, and a link to the editor's formatting requirements. Journal editors generally will also include writing guidelines with regard to spacing, margin settings, headings, subheadings, references, and formatting for figures and tables. In ideal situations, the journal will include a recommended checklist for authors to guide the process (Holosko, 2006).

Faculty may need to explain the blind review process used by most refereed journals. Once the editor-in-chief receives a manuscript submission, the author's name and organizational affiliation are removed, and the manuscript is sent to two or three undisclosed peer reviewers, without identifying information. Reviewers are given the submitted manuscript, an evaluation form, and a date when the reviewed manuscript is to be returned to the editor. Most manuscript evaluation forms will have several closed-ended questions with a Likert-style scale, a rubric, and open-ended questions. Some of the typical closed-ended questions include the following:

- Is the manuscript scholarly?
- Is the content specifically relevant to the journal's audience?
- Is the manuscript well organized and clearly written?
- Are the contents and references accurate and current?
- Are the format and structural mechanics clear?
- Is the manuscript easy to read and does it hold interest?
- Is the length appropriate for the journal?
- Are the conclusions relevant and clearly drawn?
- Do the reference citations conform to publication style?

- Are the literature review and methodology sections adequate?
- Does the manuscript represent a contribution to the field?

The evaluation form may also have one or more open-ended questions that allow the reviewers to include specific comments about the article. In some cases, the editor shares these comments (anonymously) with the author. Such feedback can be useful for future submissions or revision of the article. Typical open-ended questions include information regarding the strength of the manuscript and areas in need of improvement. Options for reviewers may include accept, accept pending minor revisions, option to resubmit with major revisions, or reject. The turnaround time for a decision may be as little as two to four months but can take much longer at first-tier journals. It is imperative for faculty to explain and prepare new authors for the fact that it is very rare for editors to accept an article without revisions. Faculty should coach graduates that a resubmission request is often a good sign that the manuscript may have a better chance of being accepted during the second review.

Social work faculty need to guide graduates on how to make the transition from dissertation writing to publication. New authors must be aware that journal articles are written for journal readership. The purpose of a journal article is not to convince a dissertation committee of the soundness of a research study, or to demonstrate doctoral competency in research methods, but rather to offer information to an audience of peers on what has been found and why it matters to the field (Grant & Tomal, 2013). Some graduates will try to convert the entire dissertation into a 15- to 20-page journal article. This is possible, as there are similarities in the organization of the five-chapter model dissertation and a typical research article. Each will have an abstract, an introduction, a review of the literature, a section on research methods, results, and a discussion. Dissertations designed by the committee as “with distinction” may be the most likely to achieve success with this option. However, the challenges of compressing a dissertation into one article are great and may not sit well with reviewers. Graduates who make this attempt face significant challenges in regard to the content, format, and length of converting the dissertation to a single article. For example, one may find that overinterpretation of results is a common problem with authors who attempt to transfer a dissertation in its entirety to a journal article (Thomas & Skinner, 2012). Recommended reference texts for beginning social work scholars include *The Columbia Guide to Social Work Writing* (Green & Simon, 2012) and *Professional Writing for Social Work Practice* (Weisman & Zornado, 2012).

Social work faculty supervising the dissertation may want to consider co-authoring an article with the recent graduate. An experienced co-author may help the new graduate develop a paper that is more likely to be accepted. Coauthoring also offers a way for the new scholar to give back to the

chairperson for his or her contributions to the dissertation process and is an excellent opportunity for tenure-track faculty to highlight their involvement with emerging doctoral scholars.

## PRESENTING THE DISSERTATION AT CONFERENCES

Although publication of the dissertation is a valuable way to disseminate findings to the public, there is also great value for graduates to present their dissertation research at a conference, workshop, or colloquium. Conference presentations, moreover, are one way for social workers to “promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession,” as called for in Standard 5.01 of the NASW (2008) Code of Ethics. Conference presentations offer exigent networking benefits for the new graduate and may have higher acceptance rates (in comparison to peer-reviewed journals). Nevertheless, in recent years some conferences have become as competitive as journals. For example, the 2013 SSWR annual conference had a 36% acceptance rate (E. Uehara, personal communication, June 27, 2014), and the *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research* had an identical 36% acceptance rate during the same year (D. Wyant, personal communication, June 25, 2014).

National or regional meetings of professional organizations such as NASW, CSWE, and SSWR often post a call for proposals in advance of their conferences. Faculty should encourage social work graduates to be on appropriate e-mail listservs and to join organizations that are consistent with their specialization. Doctoral scholars should review trade publications and journals and check websites regularly for request for proposals (known as RFPs) in their areas of interest. Examples of such organizations include The School Social Work Association of America, The Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, Clinical Social Work Association, and the Society for Leadership in Health Care. Submission deadlines usually are many months in advance of a conference, so it is important for doctoral candidates to review presentation guidelines prior to graduation.

Conference proposal requirements vary greatly. Some conferences require only a paragraph or two describing what will be presented; others require online submission of a completed paper of significant substance with American Psychological Association–formatted references. Faculty can review the proposal requirements carefully with doctoral candidates and new graduates to ensure the submitted presentation meets the theme of the conference, the format and criteria for the specific presentation, and the conference’s overall objectives. In most cases conference organizers review a proposal submission anonymously and a decision is made fairly quickly.

Conference presentations take on multiple formats, each of which will have their own policies and guidelines. The least preparation (and easiest



way to gain entry) might include “lightning sessions” and poster presentations. On the other end of the spectrum, research paper presentations with proceedings deposited into the organization’s repository of papers represent a more advanced and more competitive opportunity. Faculty members who have experience attending the conference where a doctoral graduate is applying may be able to offer guidance on how to choose the type of session to submit for a presentation.

*Lightning sessions* or *demonstrations* allow presenters a very short time (often just 10–20 min) to present findings or ideas to an audience. The Ontario Association of Social Workers and some state-level social work chapter organizations offer such types of sessions. Presenters are grouped together around similar topics and may use multimedia to show their work, idea, or product. *Poster presentations* utilize a bulletin board display (often with accompanying handouts) to discuss a completed research project or one that is still under way. This forum allows presenters to actively engage in informal discussions with other conference attendees and serves the function of allowing doctoral candidates and new graduates to network. Student poster presentations currently are very popular at national social work organizational conferences and at university seminars. In addition, international conferences such as the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development have begun offering *e-poster presentations* that are accessible to a wide audience online. *Roundtable discussions* situate small groups for conversations that are intended to advance, enhance, or share information about similar topics. Working papers often are distributed for discussion in the small group so that attendees may gather ideas and resources to inform subsequent research or practice. All of the aforementioned sessions offer an opportunity for dialogue, networking, and refinement of ideas.

A *panel discussion* usually involves four or five invited speakers (sometimes proposed by the panelists themselves) who share a time slot to discuss similar issues. Panelists typically are seated in front of an audience that will also engage in the presentation. *Special interest groups* (SIGs) involve short meetings (or a minisession) of individuals who gather for a similar purpose of discussion. SIGs may sponsor roundtables or panel discussions and provide a chance for scholars to introduce themselves to an organization and to get to know others interested in a specific field of inquiry. SSWR, the European Conference for Social Work, and the Association of Oncology Social Workers all offer SIG sessions. Faculty who belong to a SIG may want to invite graduates with similar interests to join them.

*Paper sessions* offer an occasion for authors to present their work-in-progress. Presenters may be thematically grouped together for 15- to 30-min presentations of each of their papers, or present alone for up to an hour. When a group of colleagues present separate papers on a common topic or theme, this is usually referred to as a colloquium. Although all conferences typically have paper sessions, research colloquia and workshops tend to be

more common at the university level as part of a lecture series. Paper presentations may have a respondent who will give commentary on the presenter's work. The presenter will then be given time to respond to the comments. These scholarly papers generally do not present research methods and findings, but rather offer theoretical or conceptual talking points on a topic of interest. Some DSW graduates may find that their dissertation topics are well suited for this type of presentation.

Like the research article published in a peer-reviewed journal, the most prestigious conference presentations usually are its *research paper* presentations. The demonstration of a research paper offers formal public introduction to the results of a quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, participatory action research, or sometimes even a program evaluation study. The five-chapter model used for most social work dissertations is ideal for this type of offering. Research paper presentation allows the graduate to share findings more comprehensively than other conference formats might allow.

It is becoming more common today for conferences to be offered both virtually and in person, although there remains some ambivalence among members of the social work profession in terms of acceptance of the use of online learning for professional development. Some states (e.g., Illinois and Michigan) have begun to limit the number of continuing education units that social workers can earn online. *Virtual presentations* or online *webinars* deliver content via the Internet in a format that is more affordable and often more convenient for many professionals (Oualha & Matula, 2009). *Teleconferences* delivered over the phone are also still in use by agencies and professional organizations, including NASW. Such presentations can be synchronous (i.e., with participants and the presenter attending in real time) or asynchronous (i.e., prerecorded information that can be reviewed online at any time). Social Work Resource, NASW, the Australian Association of Social Workers, and the National Council for Behavioral Health are all organizations that regularly offer virtual webinars or conferences.

Some of the advantages of virtual conference presentations are the increased number of participants, an opportunity to engage individuals across cultures and geography, and the chance to reach those who are on the job and unable to afford or attend in person conferences (Young, 2009). Disadvantages include the lack of interactivity of participants (especially when there is a large number), a risk of participants leaving the session, and lack of technology skills among presenters. Nonetheless, this format for delivering a presentation is growing in quality and quantity in the field and is another scholarly option for disseminating one's work.

It is becoming more common for conference presenters to be asked to share their work in an online database associated with the conference or to submit papers to a journal affiliated with the sponsoring organization. In fact, Perron and colleagues (2011) found that 43% of SSWR conference

presentations ultimately were published in a peer-reviewed journal at a later date regardless of the type of presentation. Social work organizations in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia all offer these opportunities. Interdisciplinary conferences also encourage uploading documents to their websites for public access.

## CONCLUSIONS

Faculty of both PhD and DSW programs are encouraged to work with social work doctoral candidates and graduates to lead them on how to present and publish from their dissertations in order to disseminate findings to the profession and society. Social science doctoral program candidates spend an average of 2 years working on their dissertation (Rudestam & Newton, 2007), but the guidance provided by faculty should not end with its completion. A doctoral faculty has an obligation to aid graduates in the distribution of newly acquired knowledge and to encourage them to market and network their strengths, expertise, and knowledge. Many postdoctoral scholars use their dissertation as a springboard for future research and employment. The dissertation topic of inquiry may set the stage for a research agenda that can be pursued in the field. Doctoral social work faculty should provide ongoing guidance to ensure that graduates know of the numerous possibilities for further scholarship and see mentoring of candidates and graduates as part of their pedagogical responsibility.

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