

Applying Theory and Research to Practice: The Pedagogical Practices

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ABSTRACT

This essay describes the pedagogical practices and learning activities of an EdD course redesigned to help students develop scholarly practitioner identities by weaving together the program's previously disparate strands of educational leadership, theory, practice, research, and social justice. We particularly focus on how students can learn to apply theories for equity and justice to their leadership practice.

KEYWORDS

doctoral education, instructional design, practitioner research, scholarly practitioners, CPED

I inherited the first course of our research sequence, Applying Theory and Research to Practice in the spring of 2019, as I was concurrently in my first academic year as the program's coordinator and contemplating new directions for our EdD program in educational leadership. I taught research and writing courses in the program since 2016 and supported our students' dissertation research as a chair and methodologist since my hire the previous year.

By this point, I recognized several fundamental problems within our program. First, our research courses were entirely discrete from our leadership courses, meaning that we were teaching research as separate from practice. I wanted my students to learn about research for more than the dissertation. Second, our students floundered in incorporating theory in their dissertations – and their practice. Many began the dissertation process without the opportunity to read or explore theory in their coursework, and they struggled to conceptualize how a theory would frame their dissertation studies. Third, and most important to me, our program was not yet committed to disrupting systemic educational inequities.

In the six months prior to my need to redesign and teach the course, the confluence of several circumstances profoundly changed how I thought about teaching research in our program. Initially, I was the program's qualitative methodologist, and I frequently declared – to my students and myself – that I was not a “leadership person” but instead could teach them the research knowledge and skills that they then could independently apply to their leadership. However, I reconsidered this perspective when our previous program coordinator retired. I was appointed to the role and had to confront questions about my own identity: What did it mean to *not* be a “leadership” person while concurrently leading a leadership program? and Why did I not consider myself a “leadership” person? I felt confident in my capacity to meet the day-to-day administrative needs of the program. I intuitively knew that I would be doing more than coordinating, and I felt intimidated by our cohorts of admirable educational leaders. I listened to the implicit and explicit messages

about my nascent leadership. For instance, when I sought others' perspectives about a dilemma, an older male involved with the program told me, “Heather, as the leader, you need to make the decisions,” as if my desire to hear invested parties' perspectives was an inability to independently make decisions. I struggled in part to self-identify as an educational leader because my belief in collaborative dissensus-seeking leadership clashed with our program's image of leadership as a solo enterprise. Thus, I began to consider the theories that undergirded my own leadership and how I could articulate them.

My dean offered funding for me to attend my first Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) convening that summer. We had been a member institution for several years but had not significantly adopted its guiding principles. While there, I found myself troubling the division I previously established between leadership and research; our research courses equipped our students to conduct dissertation studies but not with the praxis of theory, research, and practice. I was increasingly convinced that our students would need to synthesize research, theory, and leadership to develop scholarly practitioner identities.

The previous design of this course took a traditional approach to research, and its syllabus communicated these purposes: “(1) an overview [of] research purpose, design and practices; (2) applicability of research for the educational practitioners; (3) informed consumption and understanding of peer-reviewed quantitative and qualitative educational research; and (4) to become familiar with introductory principles of research.” Leadership is mentioned once on the syllabus, in a table conveying a dispositional outcome of the course: “Understanding of history, legal policies, ethical standards, and emerging issues to inform leadership in disciplinary area.” The words equity, ethics, and social justice do not appear in the syllabus, and theory is used only once as part of the course title.



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THE ROLE THEORY PLAYS IN EDD PROGRAMS

One of CPED's (2021) guiding principles for program design states that EdD programs should be "grounded in and [develop] a professional knowledge base that integrates both practical and research knowledge, *that links theory with systemic and systematic inquiry*" (emphasis added, para. 5). We have longstanding questions about who needs theory and for what. Shulman et al. (2006) argued that PhD students' research, particularly dissertations, is "expected to be more theoretical than for the EdD" (p. 26). The incorporation of theory in an EdD student's knowledge base interrupts the common misconception that theory is for ivory tower scholars or useful primarily to frame dissertations. Perry (2012) argued that "students of education – whether they're receiving an Education Doctorate (EdD) or a Doctorate of Philosophy in Education (PhD) – rarely apply theoretical knowledge to practice settings" (p. 41). Similarly, a participant in Bista and Cox (2014) griped, "The theory courses were my least favorite. I like relevancy and most of the courses were relevant and motivated me to grow as a leader" (pp. 12-13), implying that this student does not see theory as relevant to their leadership practice.

We do not have extensive literature from EdD programs demonstrating how we are guiding our students to understand and transform practice through the application of theory. Buss et al. (2013) indicate that action research was useful "to turn theory into practice" (p. 66), a phrase used throughout the literature about EdD programs without further elucidation. Harrington et al. (2021) suggest that "curriculum in an online program can be designed to provide students with practical opportunities to put theory and research into action" (p. 10). Porfilio et al. (2019) briefly introduce two EdD courses that incorporate leadership theories and critical theories. However, the literature lacks specific examples of the pedagogy used to help EdD students "bridge the divide between research, theory, and practice" (Kennedy et al., 2018, p. 6). The most specific example is within Clark et al. (2021): the teaching team guided students to read certain theorists' works based on the students' inquiries but primarily for the students' action research projects rather than their broader practice.

CONTEXTUAL PROGRAM DETAILS

Our EdD program in educational leadership utilizes a cohort model with students who primarily work in PK12 and higher education, although our students also work for nonprofits, the government sector, and for-profit corporations. Our students are highly diverse in their backgrounds, race/ethnicities, work and geographic contexts, and ages.

My first iteration of this course was for the small 2018 cohort of ten students. Our program at that point in time was campus-based with some hybrid courses, but we were early in the stages of transitioning to a fully online modality for the 2020 cohort. This fifteen-week course was initially designed as hybrid, alternating between a week of a 2.5-hour session on-campus and a week of an asynchronous module. Students take the course during their third semester of the ten-semester program.

REVISED COURSE DESIGN

With the multiple tensions described above in mind, I desired for this redesigned course to be a space in which we braided together the strands of educational leadership, scholarly practitioner identity development, theory, research, and practice. I conceptualize these as a braided bread: the strands are separate at first but rise and become baked together, served from the framework of social justice and equity.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



As is true for most of my courses, I brought an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) to my redesign of the course framed by essential questions:

- Who am I as a scholarly practitioner?
- How do I design research studies that are applicable to my practice as an educational leader?
- How can I hear, listen to, and incorporate diverse perspectives in my work as an educational leader and scholarly practitioner?

The syllabus includes a description of my course design, partially quoted here:

CPED suggests that scholarly practitioners "blend practical wisdom with professional skills and knowledge to name, frame, and solve problems of practice. They use practical research and applied theories as tools for change." I imagine this course to be something of a laboratory in which we experiment with the application of different theories and research to our problems of practice. Your assignments in this course are designed to help your experimentation with different theories and empirical research, both that which you consume and that which you create. The questions embedded in these assignments are merely prompts to begin your thinking, but you should explore the questions that you yourself are asking.



The “laboratory” reference connotes the CPED (2021) framework, which describes “Laboratories of Practice” as “settings where theory and practice inform and enrich each other” and “where ideas... can be implemented, measured, and analyzed” (para. 9). I wanted to incorporate the concept of experimentation: not yet knowing, trying to figure out, and (seemingly) unsuccessful initial attempts. The students are thus invited to engage in their unique and significant inquiries, and the learning activities are flexible enough to allow students “space to take up your own questions as I grow your ability to ‘gather, organize, judge, aggregate, and analyze situations, literature, and data with a critical lens’ (CPED, 2021, para. 8)”, as quoted from the course syllabus.

I encourage students in this design statement to remember that “our deepest learning occurs when we take risks and venture into the unknown. New knowledge can sometimes feel uncomfortable, but like a new pair of shoes, sometimes we need to persist through a breaking-in period before we reject the knowledge outright”, also quoted from the course syllabus.

Course Texts

I selected two texts for the course: *Organizational Theory for Equity and Diversity: Leading Integrated, Socially Just Education* by Colleen Capper (2019) and *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* by Patricia Leavy (2017). The first was published mere months before my course redesign and was a serendipitous find (Hurst, 2023). I selected Leavy’s (2017) text primarily based on the approachability of her writing and her incorporation of non-traditional but equity-oriented research designs like arts-based and participatory research.

Course Assessments

The course assessments are divided into five categories:

- Participation (15%)
- Case study (25%)
- Theoretical book read (25%)
- Two-pagers and other assignments (15%)
- Research abstract (20%)

I provide an overview of these categories here and describe the assessments in greater detail in the week-by-week descriptions of the course.

Case Study

The case study category consists of four discrete assignments: (1) development of case study, (2) case study analysis, (3) case study group project part one (applied research), and (4) case study group project part two (original research).

Theoretical Book Read

The syllabus explains, “Approximately a third of the way into the course, through consultation with your course instructor, you will choose a full-length text about a major theory in social science to read. This theory should be of interest to you and relevant to your work as an educational leader and practitioner-scholar.” This category also consists of four assignments: (1) summary of text, (2) article evaluation, (3) reflection on leadership statement, and (4) meaning for your work.

Research Abstract

This assignment is the summative assessment for the course and encourages students to integrate the topic of study, theory, research design, and specific research methods on a small scale.

Course Schedule

Module One

Before beginning the course, students write a personal leadership statement that serves as a benchmark for their thinking for the remainder of the semester, as described in the assignment. The students are encouraged to explore questions like, What types of actions do you try to take as a leader and Who do you lead, and how do you think about those whom you lead? I introduce the terms ontology, epistemology, and paradigm and suggest that not all conflicts present in their professional lives are “personality” conflicts; sometimes, they arise from differences in worldviews and theoretical framing. I differentiate between dominant paradigms: postpositivism, interpretive/constructivist, critical, transformative, pragmatic, and arts-based. Students work in small groups to identify the epistemological framing within sample research abstracts from educational research articles. We discuss the dominant paradigms in our educational contexts and what other paradigms might look like in our contexts. Students situate their personal reasons to conduct research in a paradigm. They sometimes realize through this reflection that a different paradigm feels more aligned with their personal values. Students reread and analyze their personal leadership statements, highlighting each sentence with a different color to differentiate between belief statements, legacy statements, anecdotal evidence, empirical evidence, and references to diversity or inequity. Most students find that their leadership statements are “very blue,” as they describe them, indicating many belief statements. They consider how the leadership statement reflected their values for their own leadership and what factors influenced their composition of their leadership statements. We conclude the class session with some freewriting on these prompts:

- When was the last time you felt fearful or anxious as a learner?
- What was at the heart of your fear or anxiety? In other words, why were you afraid? Why were you anxious?
- In what ways did you grow through the experience?
- What did you learn from the experience? Gunther Kress (2003) describes learning as a change in an individual. What changes did you see in yourself?
- Could anyone have done anything to ameliorate your fear/anxiety? What might have been gained/lost from their intervention?

These questions serve to demonstrate my awareness of the uncertainty that they might experience throughout the semester and to highlight the relationships between uncertainty, fear, and learning.

Module Two

Students read the first two chapters of Capper’s (2019) text, which focus on dominant theories in educational organizations. We explore the connections between epistemologies and educational leadership – and why these connections matter for educational equity. I share the tables of contents of two books about leadership,

and small groups of students explore these to evaluate Capper's (2019) claims about what most leadership texts do and don't address. Students compose a two-page case study about "a situation that's unresolved for you, something that's still eating at you" (Capper, 2019, p. 30). We later discuss how these case studies serve as problems of practice (PoP), but the case study phrasing frees students from worrying about the magnitude of the Dissertation in Practice at this stage.

Module Three

We explore structural functionalism and interpretivism as the dominant theories framing educational organizations based on chapters three and four of Capper's (2019) text. Students share what they see as benefits and limitations of structural functionalism, and they engage in a reflective activity from Capper's (2019) text that guides them to consider how structural functionalism is present in their own leadership practices and their organization's response to difference/diversity. Guided by Capper's (2019) extensive and thoughtful questions, students analyze their case studies through either the structural functionalist or interpretivist theoretical lenses. For instance, for structural functionalism, students can consider questions like, "To what extent is your situation a problem with strategy or goals (e.g., too many, too few, unclear, disagreement over?)" (Capper, 2019, p. 49) and "To what extent is your situation a problem that people are unclear about their responsibilities or uncommitted to them, or are too accommodating?" (Capper, 2019, p. 50). Although students initially tend to think of their cases as individual problems, this analysis and video feedback they receive from me illustrate systemic and organizational issues.

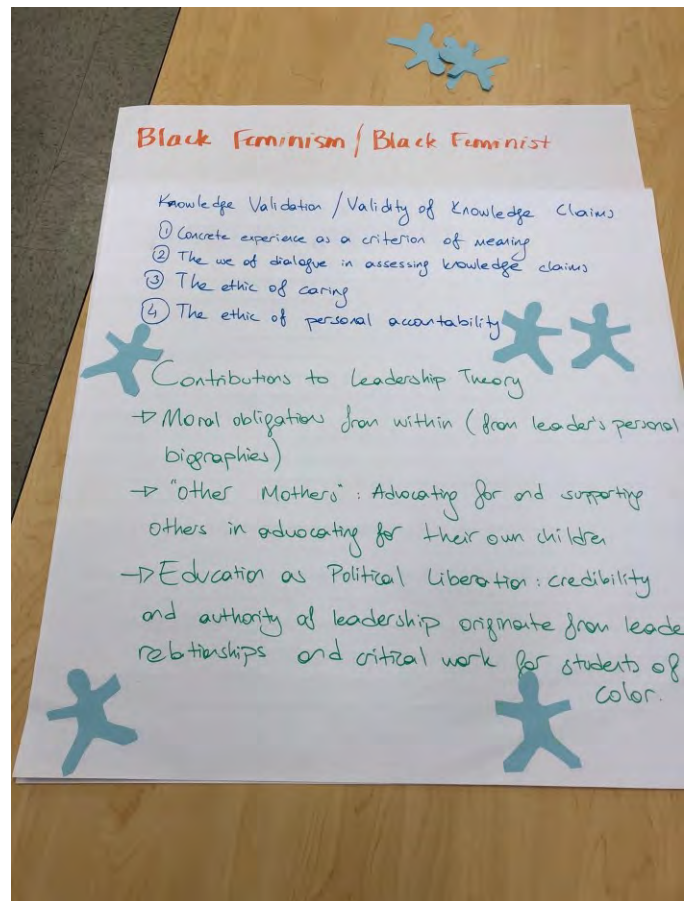
Module Four

We begin to explore how to integrate theory and leadership in this module based on chapters five through ten of Capper's (2019) text. These chapters explore theories oriented toward social justice, such as Black feminism and disability theory. Each student chooses two other chapters to read based on their interests, and we all read chapter six: Feminist, Poststructural, and Feminist Poststructural Epistemologies. In small groups, students create diagrams that demonstrated their conceptualizations of how power operates. We discuss poststructural conceptualizations of power, and I share a timeline of my own morning, followed by a quote from Capper's (2019) text: "...the strongest power comes not from oppressive rules and regulations, per se, but from commonsense, natural activities and beliefs that sanction our bodies, souls, desire, and day-to-day living" (p. 85). We discuss how my decisions regarding my morning may have been prompted by "common sense" and beliefs, and we explore the concept of "common sense" and how it can prevent us from hearing, believing, trusting, and honoring different worldviews and experiences. We additionally discuss several prompts about power:

- To what extent do I recognize that power is everywhere and that it can emanate from many different points?
- To what extent do I recognize that I have the potential for power, that it can come from anyone, and that all people can exert normalizing power over others, but that some people have access to channels or power that others do not?
- To what extent do I recognize that power is operating on me in ways I may not expect or realize, governing my desire, needs, and my physical body?

Students break into small groups based on one of the chapters that they chose to read. On a large sheet of paper, the students in the group outline the key tenets of their theory. Students walk around the room to review all of the theories. They receive paper cutouts of a figure and a slash mark; I instruct them to affix the figure onto any theory that resonates with them and the slash mark onto any theory that seems contradictory to their worldview. The activity helps us get a baseline understanding of each theory presented in Capper (2019) and to identify theories that we might want to explore further; it also helps us see patterns among the theories that seem most resonant, and we discuss why those patterns might exist. Additionally, it helps students realize that theories from perspectives other than those of their own identities sometimes resonate with their existing or aspirational worldviews. For instance, although only two cohort members openly identify as LGBTQIA+, a number of students placed figures on queer theory.

Figure 2. Sample Student Poster for Black Feminist Theory



This module's assessment presents students with a variety of options, and I ask students to select one that they believe aligns with their "current interests/curiosities/learning needs." Beyond the options I provide, I also encourage students to contact me to imagine an alternative activity. The assignment creates some space for students to make explicit connections between these theories and their leadership. Sample prompts include:

- Write your mission statement. What is it that you want to do with your leadership? This statement is in many ways related to your leadership statement from the

beginning of the course but is unique in that it becomes your grounding point, what you consult before you take on new projects or commitments to assess if they align with your personal mission. Consider your epistemological framework(s) as you write your mission statement.

- Reflect again on your leadership statement from one or more of the epistemologies you've read about in Capper's (2019) text. She offers many questions that you could draw on for your reflection - for instance, she offers questions about language, change, decision-making, and power at the end of chapter six.
- Consider rewriting your leadership statement now that you have gained some epistemological awareness. What might you want to change to situate yourself in your epistemologies? Some text might be deleted, added, or revised. You might find some kind of creative way (a Powtoon?) of representing those changes.

I also meet individually with students to help them identify a full-length theoretical text to read and work with throughout the remainder of the semester. Students come to these conferences with a sense of which theories resonated with them from the overview in Capper's (2019) text. Students choose texts like *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (Jagose, 1996), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), and *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Dweck, 2006), although this list is far from exhaustive. Many – but not all – students select a theory related to equity and justice. Some students also switch texts after beginning one and finding it either too dense, too disconnected from their practice, or not well aligned with their own worldview.

Module Five

Module five transitions from considering how theory guides our practice to considering how theory guides our research. We collaboratively review an empirical article and discuss where and how to identify the epistemology and theory in the article. We also describe how the theoretical framework advises the methodological choices the researchers made. We discuss how the article would be different if the topic were framed by a different epistemological lens. We consider how the reference list conveys where an author is situating themselves and how they are valuing diverse perspectives and including (or not) women and people of color.

Module Six

This module explores ethics in research. I placed this exploration at this point in the course so that ethics are not implicitly suggested to be secondary to research design but instead a primary and ongoing concern. Students read chapter two of Leavy's (2017) text. In a discussion board, I role play three different vignettes (each about 90 seconds) of researchers proposing different studies. I ask students to identify the ethical issues in the mock studies I pretend to be proposing, and the ensuing discussions have been robust and rich.

For instance, in one vignette, I pretend to be a graduate student conducting my first research study. (Each I statement that follows in this paragraph refers to my hypothetical and problematic vignette.) I am interested in how new parents navigate the demands on their time, but because I was worried about finding enough participants, I asked my friends to participate because I knew they'd agree, and I

told them the interviews would only last 30 minutes although many actually lasted an hour or longer. To avoid perceived bias, I remained impassive during the interviews, and then I sent the interviews to another friend to transcribe. In the subsequent discussion, students questioned if my friends felt coerced to participate based on our existing relationship, and they noted that I did not mention a process of informed consent. They thoughtfully considered how new parents might be a vulnerable population, even if not formally defined as such by Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations. They worried that participants did not know I would ask another friend to transcribe the data and that I was thus breaching confidentiality. They raised questions of privacy in the data that I collected of the children themselves, such as pictures of the infants, and of the consequences of my impassivity on participants' emotional states during the interview. Beyond the immediate ethical concerns, they also wondered if my friends comprised a diverse sample. One student concluded, "How did this study ever get through the IRB process?"

Module Seven

Students read chapter one from Patel's (2016) *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*. We explore the topics of research problems and research questions, and Patel's (2016) text helps students problematize some of their taken-for-granted assumptions about educational research. I extrapolated several key quotes from her chapter and use these to frame the discussion. Students are randomly assigned a quote from the text to discuss with peers, as in this example:

- How does "the genre of research... facilitate certain kinds of meaning through what is written, received, and positioned favorably" (Patel, 2016, p. 20)?
 - What does this quote mean?
 - Looking at a research article, how are certain kinds of meaning privileged? What is favorable about how it is written, received, and positioned?

In the subsequent discussion to this prompt, students explore how researchers' identities influence the studies that they design and the impact of colonialism on educational research. They realize the limited perspectives present in the history of American educational research; they are "often white, often male," as Michelle (a pseudonym) wrote in her response. Jane (a pseudonym) considered the implications of a research article and concluded that the researcher had "certain views of what 'success' looks like for African Americans" that were biased.

Students read chapter three of Leavy (2017), and they find an empirical article on a topic of interest. They locate its research questions and highlight the participants, variables, and verbs within them. They consider which broad research design best aligns with the questions as currently written.

Students select their small groups for the first case study project. They identify one group member's case study to use and consider together what the fundamental problems or unresolved questions are. They find recent peer-reviewed empirical research conducted on those problems and evaluate the research: how relevant is the research to the PoP in the case study? They summarize these studies and explain the affordances and limitations of the existing research. Finally, they develop an action plan to respond to the case study's PoP based on the research. Through this collaboration, they



learn explicit skills in locating and evaluating empirical literature and applying it to their practice through actionable steps.

Modules Eight through Twelve

In these modules, we explore each of the research designs presented in Leavy's (2017) text: qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research. I ask for a student to volunteer to share their case study and distribute the student's manuscript. We collectively enumerate all of the PoP we see in the case study and imagine that we are going to design a research project to investigate those. We discuss the significance of a research study on these problems: who would need to know more, what would they need to know, and for what would the knowledge be used? We draft research questions that would align with the design featured in that module. We list data sources that might be useful for answering those questions.

For example, we explored a student's case study about disparities in Advanced Placement (AP) test scores across his district's high schools. Students posed the research question, "How are students admitted into AP classes within the school district?" to investigate root causes to the problem of practice (PoP). They decided that useful qualitative data sources might include interviews with guidance counselors, students, families, and teachers, content analysis of policies, and observations of class scheduling procedures/meetings. This iterative activity immediately aligns research designs with students' PoP and demonstrates how a PoP can serve as the basis for research studies.

For the second case study group project, students work with their groups to design a research study based on a case study. The assignment description highlights the collaborative nature of this work: "Our collective brainstorming, thinking, working, and discussing takes us in a direction where none of us could have gone individually." The team provides the overview of a potential study: an introduction/problem statement, research questions, theoretical perspective, brief literature review, research design statement and justification, and details regarding data collection and analysis.

I take a different tack in my introduction to arts-based research given how novel this approach is for many students. I incorporate non-traditional texts, like an excerpt about ideas and inspiration from Elizabeth Gilbert's (2015) *Big Magic*. I suggest that the resistance some of us might initially have to arts-based research comes from the struggles many of us have in identifying ourselves as artists. I encourage students to focus not on the quality of their art but instead on the process of creating and explain how we can use art to learn about others (and ourselves). We discuss art through the lenses of the organizational theory in Capper's (2019) text. Art resists the impulses of structural functionalism. It is not efficient, but that doesn't mean that it is not worthwhile.

We brainstorm categories of art and specific examples of that art. For instance, we might name "painting" and then different examples of painting to broaden our thinking: "children's books," "murals," "pottery," and "landscapes" might all be painted.

I ask students to explore the following question in an art form of their choosing: What has your experience of becoming a scholarly practitioner been like? I suggest that, as Leavy (2017) writes, "The medium should be selected for its ability to generate and represent the content and speak to the audience(s) of interest" (p. 212). Students have created an incredible gallery of products: from

interpretive dances to mixed media boxes to videos to digital cartoons.

Module Thirteen

Students can share the art that they have created. We use these to engage in an analytical process: despite the great variance in the genres of art, what themes can we see across the cohort about how they are experiencing the process of becoming scholarly practitioners? This activity illustrates how art can serve as a data source and builds a sense of community as students see aspects of their own scholarly practitioner identity development reflected in their peers' art. We also use this module to discuss the concepts of logic mapping for research studies and social justice leadership identity development.

HOW THE COURSE HAS EVOLVED

We have now taught the revised course to six cohorts and continually make changes and improvements to the course. Through my participation in an antiracist action group, a colleague and I analyzed this course syllabus (Laughter & Hurst, 2022). We developed a tool, Critical AntiRacist Discourse Analysis (CARDA), to identify instances of racism and antiracism in the syllabus, both in terms of the content of the course and the policies embedded in the course. This study uncovered ways in which antiracism could be made more explicit in the syllabus, and I have revised it for future iterations of the course. This research itself models the application of theory and research to practice.

When possible, this course is co-taught by two instructors, one with a qualitative background and one with a quantitative background. As we wrote in the syllabus,

We [co-teach] this course primarily to demonstrate two different ideological stances toward research and theory. Although we share fundamental commitments to equity-based education, we differ in the types of problems of practice that we see, the theories that we bring to these problems, and the research designs that resonate with us. To have just one of us teach the course means that you might be led to assume that one perspective is better, right, or "more natural," but by having two perspectives, you might begin to see the multiplicity of perspectives that we could take when applying theory and research to practice.

Although I have not been able to teach it for recent cohorts due to scheduling conflicts, my former co-teacher has continued to evolve the course. She condensed the four theoretical text assignments into one longer paper that includes a summary of the text, an article evaluation through the lens of the theoretical text, and a reflection on the student's leadership statement. This synthesized assignment reduces redundancy across the previous four shorter papers, mitigates the paper load on the instructor, and helps the student make immediate connections between applications of the theory to research and practice.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This conceptual essay describes the instructional design of a course designed to help EdD students applying theory and research to their practice as educational leaders. The course outline is intended to elucidate how we scaffold learning about theory and



guide our students to think theoretically about their practice and to spark the imagination of other EdD faculty. I cannot include every detail of the fifteen-week course in this essay but have developed a website in which I share the full syllabus, a complete sample module, examples of students' responses to a discussion prompt, and full assignments: <http://applyingtheoryandresearchtopractice.wordpress.com>.

I share so much of my own personal narrative not simply to frame the redesign but because I wonder how much of the struggle to transform research within the professional practice doctorate might be related to similar issues of identity within its faculty. Academia creates siloed identities: for me, I owned the identities of literacy researcher and classroom teacher prior to my work in the EdD program. In that capacity, I felt comfortable applying theory to research. However, it has taken some time for me to identify as an educational leader, yet I could not have designed a course that integrates theory, research, practice, social justice, and leadership without that identification. But we all, as poet Walt Whitman (1855/1961) suggests, "contain multitudes" and are so much more than these narrowly focused areas of expertise, and the professional practice doctorate – for students and for faculty – might become spaces where our full selves are welcomed to show up.

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