**Don't Exclude Practitioners, but Don't Let Us Limit Research:
A Comment on Nisar's "Standing in the right corner: From practitioner-centric to public-centered public administration"**

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Nisar (2020) asserted that the public administration research community is obsessed with serving an idealized image of public administration practitioners. He suggested that public administration researchers should stop trying to serve the imaginary practitioner, and instead engage directly with the public.

I commented on Nisar's paper, making a different suggestion; that public administration researchers in academia should engage with real practitioners, rather than imaginary ones. (Reed 2021) Nisar has responded to my comment (Nisar 2021), and this paper addresses his response.

Nisar's response distinguishes three models of public administration research: academy-centered, practitioner-centered, and public-centered. Nisar characterizes me as desiring practitioner-centered public administration. He is right that I want research to be more practitioner-centered than it currently is. But Nisar says the practitioner-centric ideal "considers practitioners as *the* normative audience for the public administration community." [emphasis added] I do not want practitioners to be the only normative audience for public administration research. Nisar explains one reason why we should not be.

Nisar writes, "When practitioner concerns serve as the guiding force in the discipline, certain issues, like citizen resistance and administrative burden, will be deprioritized." Of course, practitioners do not all have the same concerns. Some practitioners prioritize the very issues Nisar gives as examples, and risk their careers to act on these issues. (O'Leary 2019) But public sector jobs, like all jobs, create pressures to conform with the employer's interests. (Miles 1978) So Nisar's concern is valid. If public administration research was limited to studies that are supported by practitioners in general, or by the practitioners with power to steer funding and preferment to academics, then research that could disrupt those currently in power would be deprioritized.

Compare this to medical research. Researchers should be allowed to make findings that dispute the usefulness of treatments that are broadly accepted and lucrative to medical practitioners. (Huang and Rosenthal 2015) I agree with Nisar that public administration researchers should also be able to conduct research that is disruptive to practitioners.

I am concerned that Nisar's concept of public-centric public administration may be used to blur the line between research and advocacy. He gives the example of the Occupy movements in the United States, and says a public-centered public administration researcher may "communicate that without a fundamental reorganization of our administrative machinery, these protests would not (and should not) cease." Whether the protests *should* cease depends in part on normative judgements such as the proper basis for distribution of wealth, the balance of individual liberty versus obligations to society, and the morality of competing groups' claims for power and resources. It is proper for a researcher, or anybody else, to communicate their views on such normative issues. But if a conclusion that depends on the researcher's normative judgements is presented as a research finding, that would depart from the ideal of scientific objectivity. (Reiss and Sprenger 2020)

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