EPISTEMOLOGY AND JOURNALISM EDUCATORS’ ACADEMIC WORK

A Thesis in
Mass Communications

by
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This study was designed to examine journalism and mass communication educators’ personal epistemology and its influence on their academic work as educators. A case study was conducted that examined nine journalism and mass communication faculty members from varying educational and background experiences. Three separate categories were used to classify the faculty members: academic, industry, and adjunct. The results identified unique epistemologies for the faculty groups. The faculty members in the academic group commonly illustrated epistemological assumptions grounded in contextual relativism and commitment to relativism, whereas faculty members from the industry and adjunct categories more often demonstrated epistemological assumptions rooted in dualism. The different epistemological assumptions influenced faculty members’ academic work. The implications for journalism and mass communication education are discussed.
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Faculty members’ ways of knowing—their epistemologies—influence their decisions regarding nearly every aspect of their work, including teaching, research, advising, and other interactions with students. This research identifies the presence and influence of epistemology on the work of a group of journalism and mass communication educators with varied backgrounds and educational experiences.

Journalism educators in the United States have debated the appropriateness of an academic versus professional model of journalism education for many years. The professional model of journalism education emphasizes vocational training, which focuses on skill development; the academic model advocates a holistic approach grounded in a liberal arts education.

Although the two approaches to journalism education have different emphases, the accreditation standards adopted in 2003 by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) require institutions to offer curriculum and instruction that incorporate the core of both models. The ACEJMC standards require journalism students to take three-fourths of their coursework in the liberal arts and, in order to graduate, to achieve a mastery of the “core values and competencies” required of professional journalists: well-developed writing and grammar skills, creative and critical thinking abilities, a demonstrated understanding of issues related to ethics and diversity,
and knowledge of First Amendment Theory and the history of journalism (ACEJMC, 2006).

Since the ACEJMC standards clearly communicate that both models of journalism education are necessary for the development of capable journalists, it is time for the debate to focus more precisely on the question of whether journalism programs are actually preparing journalism students to meet the competencies and encompass the core values that are clearly delineated in the accreditation standards. While many important aspects of journalism education need to be investigated, a sound starting point is to better understand the faculty who create the curriculum, provide instruction, and advise journalism students.

In an attempt to satisfy elements of both academic and professional models within journalism education in the United States, colleges and departments have chosen to hire faculty from diverse backgrounds and experiences. According to ACEJMC, faculty should “represent a balance of professional and scholarly experience and expertise kept current through faculty development opportunities, relationships with professional and scholarly associations, and appropriate supplementation of part-time and visiting faculty” (ACEJMC, 2006, Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty section, ¶ 1). Journalism and Mass Communication faculty currently differ widely in their qualifications. Some possess doctorate degrees but have no professional journalism experience, while others have years of professional journalism experience but have not earned graduate degrees.

While a diverse faculty provides a spectrum of perspectives and experiences within a department, the effects of having such a bifurcated journalism and mass communication faculty have not yet been researched. Specifically, it is not known how
different experiences and preparation for the academy uniquely shape faculty scholarship and pedagogical practices of the faculty members who are selected to address specific content or specialized areas.

Accordingly, this research examines one particular aspect of journalism education: the relationship between undergraduate journalism and mass communication educators’ experiences in and preparation for teaching, and the influence epistemology may have on faculty members’ scholarship, creative efforts, and personal views of the domain of their work as professional educators. This research does not attempt to advocate a particular approach to journalism education, but rather seeks to broaden understanding of the effects of epistemology on faculty scholarship and its ultimate effect on journalism education by including faculty from differing educational backgrounds and professional experiences as comparison groups.

In this thesis, first, the definitions of journalism, its role within a democratic society, and its relationship to education are examined. Second, we look at the historical struggle within higher education for agreement between mission and curriculum that originally introduced the debate between the academic and professional models of education. Third, the roots of the communication discipline and the formation of the two approaches within journalism and mass communication education are analyzed. Fourth, epistemology as a construct and its usefulness as a means of assessing the journalism education environment are reviewed, followed by an examination of how epistemology has been investigated. Fifth, the ways in which the investigation of epistemology might elucidate the influence of faculty members, from academic and professional backgrounds, on journalism education are discussed. Finally, we look at the current study, which
investigates the relationship between journalism educators’ experience and preparation with their epistemology and scholarship, and explore the implications of that relationship on journalism education.

Journalism

Journalism is a complex phenomenon that includes a variety of practices, uses, and gratifications, which makes a succinct definition difficult. The activities that have fallen under the umbrella of modern journalism have ranged from broadcast reporting, editing, and photography, to blogging on the Internet. When describing this phenomenon, multiple terms have been used interchangeably: the press, news, and the media. Zelizer (2005) recognized the difficulty of providing a definition for this amorphous concept and identified a broad continuum of definitions for journalism that have been used by both journalists and journalism scholars. She suggested that journalists have viewed journalism as a sixth sense, a container, a mirror (an unbiased reflection of the days’ events), a story, a child in need of nurturing, and a service to the public. In comparison, she claimed scholars have described journalism within the literature as a profession, an institution, a text, people, and a practice.

The broad categorizations of journalism have contributed to the equally difficult task of describing the individuals who engage in these activities: the journalists. Zelizer (2005) noted the “term journalist initially denoted someone who systematically kept a public record of events in a given time frame” (p. 66). With vast changes in the methods and mediums used to present information, however, the term journalist has become increasingly more difficult to define.
In the first comprehensive study of journalists within the United States, Johnstone and his colleagues (1976) provided a description of this population. The study’s sample included “full-time editorial manpower responsible for the informational content of English-language mass communications” (p. 5). Johnstone further clarified the selection of their sample by identifying journalists who prepared, “content for public communication media, which is to say, channels of mass communications targeted at the public at large rather than at private audiences” (p. 5). Johnstone’s study found journalists were predominately young Caucasian males who, for the most part, worked in print media.

Johnstone’s description of journalists has evolved over the last 30 years, as he and others continued to study journalists each decade. Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voaks, and Wilhoit (2007) provided the most recent description of the American journalist. While advancements have been made in hiring both female and other minority journalists, Weaver et al. (2007) reported the majority of journalists continue to be Caucasian males (67%), ranging in age from 25–54, who continue to work predominately in print media. The study also noted that although a set of requirements for entrance into the profession of journalism is not present, it appears a bachelor degree is becoming a standard qualification, with 89% of journalists surveyed indicating they possess a college degree. It is interesting to note that only 36% of journalists holding a college degree majored in journalism, and just over 50% majored in the broader field of communication in which journalism is one of many possible foci.

The studies examining journalists over the last several decades have not only focused on the demographics of this group, but have also focused on the role of
journalists within a democratic society. One of the most influential conversations regarding the press and journalists’ role was generated by a blue-ribbon panel, The Commission on the Freedom of the Press (1947), led by Robert Maynard Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago. The Hutchins Commission was charged with examining “the present state and future prospects of the freedom of the press” (Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947, p. v). The Commission recognized a problematic trend toward a decline in ownership in newspapers and feared a monopoly system of ownership that would harm the open exchange of ideas and democratic discourse. It argued that journalism has a responsibility to make a contribution to democratic society through promotion of a free and diversified press; and that the press should serve the public interests by presenting all information, impartial to any group or individual. The Commission on the Freedom of the Press (1947) provided five requirements for the press, which they felt were necessary for a democratic society:

. . . first, a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning; second, a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; third, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another; fourth, a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society; and fifth, a way of reaching every member of the society by the currents of information, thought, and feeling (pp. 20–21).

The requirements set forth by the Commission challenged journalists to envision their role not merely as public record keepers, but as an important participant in a democratic society in which the press would present honest accounts of events for every
member of that society, and encourage a forum for the exchange of opinions regarding the information.

The importance of journalists’ roles in a democratic society has been recognized throughout journalism’s history. The Founding Fathers of the United States acknowledged the significance of the press as they amended the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law…abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.” The Founders believed that citizens must be able to express their opinions without fear of reprimand, and that the press should be free to publish without government censorship. Thomas Jefferson posited that every member of a democratic society must be informed, and that journalism plays a vital role in serving that informational need. Jefferson (1787) stated:

I am persuaded that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves. The people are the only censors of their governors, and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information of their affairs through the channel of the public papers, and to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people (as cited by Coats, 1995, p. 3).

Jefferson believed the press was a powerful medium that could inform the masses, and that individuals were best served by governing themselves, even though at times they struggled to find truth. Jefferson’s beliefs, however, met both conflict and scrutiny. In
1798 Federalists and Republicans disagreed over the U.S. support of England in its war with France. John Adams, leading the Federalist Party, was successful in his attempts to support England, and the United States entered into a treaty with England. Thomas Jefferson and the majority of the Republicans were outraged and did not support the treaty. The disagreement between the two parties served as a catalyst for the Federalists’ effort to pass the 1798 Sedition Act. The Act prohibited citizens from criticizing the President and government of the United States. The Federalists argued the Sedition Act was needed to ensure the country’s safety when it was so close to engaging in war. Although the Act was found unconstitutional just two years later, over a dozen men were arrested and charged with violations against the Act. When Thomas Jefferson became President, he pardoned all men arrested and convicted of violating the Act.

Walter Lippmann, a Harvard graduate, journalist, and major influence on journalism, public opinion, and national policy in the first half of the 20th century, also disagreed with Jefferson’s belief that citizens have the ability to govern themselves and contribute to public discourse and debate through the papers. Lippmann agreed that journalists should inform citizens. He did not have as much faith as Jefferson, however, in the “good sense” of the people. Lippmann (1922) was uncertain a true democracy could exist in such a complex society. He believed that journalists were charged with assuming the role of experts in informing citizens who, he claimed, were unqualified to obtain and analyze information on their own.

Starr (2004) acknowledged the media’s role in informing the democracy within the United States in his book, The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communication. Starr suggested that the Founding Fathers believed that the press, the
Postal Service (which could disperse newspapers and other vital communication) and education would promote “the ‘diffusion of knowledge’ and the principles of liberty on which the survival of the republic depended” (p. 100). Jefferson’s view, like many of the other Founding Fathers, regarding the importance of a free press and citizens’ struggle for the acquisition of truth, was grounded in the notion of a marketplace model. Jefferson stated that, “[t]he only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary to keep the waters pure” (Jefferson, 1823, ¶4).

John Stuart Mill (1859), in his book *On Liberty*, provided a framework for the notion of the marketplace of ideas. He suggested that there should be an open marketplace of ideas in which citizens can discuss and debate topics of public interest. Although both truth and falsity will be exposed, it is assumed both must be uncovered for truth to be discovered. Having come in contact with public issues and hearing each side of a debate, a citizen is left to formulate an opinion on public issues. Mill (1859) suggested that:

. . . national education, as being, in truth, the peculiar training of a citizen, the practical part of the political education of a free people, taking them out of the narrow circle of personal and family selfishness, and accustoming them to the comprehension of joint concerns—habituating them to act from public or semi-public motives, and guide there conduct by aims which unite instead of isolating them from one another (p. 134).

Alexander Meiclejohn, a philosopher and educator also recognized the necessity for knowledgeable citizens within a self-democracy. He noted:
The voters, therefore, must be made as wise as possible. The welfare of the community requires that those who decide issues shall understand them. They must know what they are voting about. And this, in turn, requires that so far as time allows, all facts and interest relevant to the problem shall be fully and fairly presented to the meeting… As the self-governing community seeks, by the method of voting, to gain wisdom in action, it can find it only in the minds of its individual citizens. If they fail, it fails (Meicklejohn, 1948, p. 26).

As philosophers such as Mill and Meicklejohn developed the groundwork for the theory of the marketplace of ideas, Oliver Wendell Holmes shaped the concept in his dissent of the 1919 Supreme Court Case, *Abrams v. United States*. Jacob Abrams was convicted of the 1918 Espionage Act for throwing leaflets from a building protesting “German militarism and allied capitalism to crush the Russian revolution” (Smolla, 1992, p. 101). The 1918 Espionage Act was the result of a Post-World War I era, in which fear existed among many over the Communist invasion in Russia. The Act made it illegal to criticize the U.S. government, in hopes of deterring anti-American sentiment. Holmes disagreed with the conviction. In his dissent he stated:

> But when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas-that the best of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out. That, at any rate, is the theory of our
Constitution. It is an experiment, as all life is an experiment (*Abrams v. United States* 250 U.S. 616, 630 [1919]).

Holmes suggested the very foundation of our Constitution is based on the notion of a free and open marketplace of ideas, and that this open exchange serves the “ultimate good” of society. The First Amendment of the Constitution acknowledges both the need for individuals to be able to participate in the marketplace free from constraints, and for the press to have the ability to foster and encourage open exchange: discussion, debate, and deliberation.

The importance of the democratic role to be served by the media and journalists has been acknowledged throughout U.S. history. Curran (2005) suggested that a “broad agreement” has been reached regarding how the media can best serve democracy. The methods include: 1) informing the citizenry so that individuals can self-govern; 2) filling the watchdog role (protecting citizens from corruption); 3) providing a platform for debate and discussion to shape public opinion, and 4) providing a voice to the citizenry.

Although the importance of journalism within a democratic society is generally accepted by most journalists and academics (McChesney, 1999; Overholser & Hall Jamieson, 2005; Weaver et al., 2007), current research suggests that there is discord between what journalists believe to be their role, and what their working environments allow. Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001), in their book *Good Work*, explored journalists’ work and their frustrations with the practices of journalism. Gardner and his colleagues interviewed more than 100 journalists and found the majority of journalists held positive attitudes and values toward their own work, but were discouraged by the practices of journalism as a profession. The journalists interviewed did not feel the
environment of the news industry encouraged the same democratic values and goals of informing citizens that the participants personally held.

One of the sources for the unaccommodating working environment was forewarned by the Hutchins Commission as early as 1947. The commission believed that a conglomeration of media into the hands of a few owners would limit the diversity of voices, opinions, and discourse in the public sphere, placing an emphasis on profits. Many today believe the commission’s concerns have come to pass. McChesney (1999) studied the effects of media conglomerates and believed a democratic society must seek to distribute ownership of the media so that the majority of citizens rule rather than an elite few. McChesney stated, “[t]his concentration accentuates the core tendencies of a profit-driven, advertising-supported media system; hypercommercialism and denigration of journalism and public service” (p. 2).

With a media industry forced to focus on profits, journalists are faced with the dilemma of trying to both fulfill a democratic role while satisfying the appetite of corporate interests. These two demands appear often to be incompatible and frequently prompt modern-day journalists to return to the fundamental question of journalism: What is the role of journalists in a democratic society? This examination requires journalists to explore the reality of their work in a changed milieu. Accordingly, journalists also ask: How can journalists fulfill their role in the current profit-driven working environment? What should the job of a journalist entail? At the core of this dilemma resides a specific point of contention for journalists: the ideal of professionalism.
**Professionalism**

The professional debate among journalists questions whether journalism is merely an occupation, or a specialized occupation requiring practitioners to conform to specified standards and codes that provide pre-determined barriers to entry. The idea that journalists are members of a profession was debated as early as the late 1800s (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Zelizer (2005) observed that journalists do not fulfill the standard requirements set for professions such as medicine, law, and architecture. Journalists are not required to complete a test of competency or to undertake licensing procedures. Although a bachelor degree is becoming a common qualification among journalists, an educational degree is not required.

Despite the absence of standard requirements associated with the professions, one group of scholars and practitioners argues that journalists exhibit other characteristics often identified within a profession, including: autonomy over their work, a service orientation, level of skill, and belonging to a professional organization. Similarly, in their recent study of over 1,000 journalists, Weaver et al. (2007) suggested that journalists exhibited professional qualities in that they “shared a core set of values that sought to serve society, that they were trained to regard phenomena with disinterested expertise, [and] that they enjoyed great personal autonomy in determining the nature and outcome of their work” (p.131). Weaver et al. (2007) found that journalists were increasingly participating in professional organizations, as well as reading journal and trade publications within the field. Hallin and Giles (2007) also argued that journalists are members of a profession, because their work is—ideally, at least—objective, fair, and balanced.
In 1988, the Supreme Court was faced with the issue of deciding whether journalists should be classified as professionals. In *Sherwood v. The Washington Post*, 93 reporters, editors, and photographers sued the *Washington Post*. The employees claimed the denial of overtime pay violated the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Fair Labor Standards Act does not require employees to pay overtime pay to employees who are classified as professionals. *The Washington Post* employees argued that they were not professionals since their work was a general product and was overseen by professionals such as editors. After carefully examining the work and responsibilities of the employees, the Court decided in favor of *The Washington Post*. The employees were professionals. The Court concluded:

> [t]hey produce original and creative writing of high quality within the meaning of the regulations; they have far more than general intelligence; they are thoroughly trained before employment; their performance as writers is individual, interpretative and analytical both in the writing itself and in the process by which the writing must be prepared; and their performance is measured and paid accordingly. A special talent is necessary to succeed (p. 570).

The Court decision was based on the interpretation that journalists were professionals because they possessed a special talent. Is a special talent a sufficient criterion to be labeled a professional? Are indicators such as personal autonomy, belonging to professional organizations, and reading journals and trade publications sufficient to categorize an occupation as a profession?

Marvin and Meyer (2005) suggested that journalists are needed who not only possess a knowledge and skill base and the ability to interpret and analyze the wealth of
information provided, but also possess “a moral component.” They posited that applying moral standards will help journalism distinguish itself from entertainment, public relations, and advertising.

Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) provided four criteria for a professional realm: 1) individual practitioners; 2) a domain, consisting of knowledge, skills, rules, and values; 3) a field, including institutions; and 4) other stakeholders, including both corporate stakeholders and the general public. Fischman, Soomon, Greenspan, and Gardner (2004) warned that professionalism should not be defined too narrowly, and provided a more encompassing definition of a profession. They claimed that a profession “encompasses any career in which the worker is awarded a degree of autonomy in return for services to the public that are performed at a high level. According to this definition, it is within the power of the individual worker to behave like a professional, should she or he choose to do so” (p. 12). Gardner et al.’s (2001) findings appear to contradict this definition. Gardner et al. discovered that although journalists were doing good work, they felt their environment—the media industry—did not allow them to fulfill their professional roles.

Why is the issue of professionalism such an important topic when defining and describing journalists? Weaver et al. (2007) stated:

Journalism is an occupation whose survival, more so than most professions, depends on its credibility. Journalists don’t heal sick bodies or keep clients out of prison; they provide information. If their clients no longer trust the information, then the occupation has lost its cache (p.132).
Chapter 2 contains a further examination of the idea of professionalism and its application to journalism and mass communication educators.

Credibility

The field of journalism has increasingly struggled to be viewed as a credible industry by the very public it attempts to inform and protect. The Project for Excellence in Journalism (2006), conducted by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and the Pew Research Center, stated that since the 1980s the U.S. public has found the press to be “less professional, less accurate, less caring and less moral” (¶ 5). In a 2005 study, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 75% of the U.S. public indicated they believed the press was more concerned with attracting large audiences, and only 19% believed the press was concerned with informing the public. They also found a sharp decrease in the public’s perceptions of the believability of their daily newspapers. In 1985, around 84% of respondents indicated that they believed most of what they read in their daily newspaper as compared to only 54% in 2004. It is hardly shocking then to suggest that the public’s trust in the news industry wavers when scandals involving fabricated reporting, such as Jayson Blair’s in The New York Times and Jack Kelley’s in USA Today, have been exposed. Both Blair and Kelley were reporters for a large-scale newspaper considered to be reputable.

The public’s perception of the news media is not, however, the only obstacle the field of journalism has encountered. As journalism has become a profit-driven news industry, increasing pressure has forced newsrooms to focus on profits rather than on allowing journalists to fulfill their roles as professionals by informing the citizenry, serving as a watch-dog, and providing a forum for debate and discussion. News in many
ways has become a form of entertainment rather than an informational tool (Downie & Kaiser, 2002; Postman, 1985). McChesney (1999) argued that a news industry that focuses on profits and exists as a conglomerate “is a poison pill for democracy” (p. 2).

Journalism is a complex phenomenon to define. A variety of activities have fallen under its label; from blogging on the Internet to reporting news events. Scholars and practitioners have identified numerous functions of journalism. These functions have included: gratifying individuals’ needs, providing information, and serving as a form of entertainment. Although functions of the press have varied, an agreed-upon primary role of the press has been identified as informing citizens within a democratic society. Fulfilling this role, however, has proven to be difficult with the profit-driven pressures set forth by the industry. Some journalists struggle to be viewed as credible professionals who serve the public. Journalism is being challenged by the questioning of its ethics, credibility, trustworthiness, and ability to serve a democratic function. It is useful, therefore, to examine the training and educational experiences of the future practitioners who will shape journalism as a profession.

The importance of focusing on journalism education has recently been recognized by many different institutions. In 2005, five leading research universities—Columbia, Northwestern, Berkley, and USC and Harvard—the Carnegie Foundation and The Knight Foundation recognized the difficulties facing journalism and decided to join in a partnership generating over $6 million to examine journalism education. In 1997, The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Mass Communication and the Associated Press Managing Editors examined over 500 U.S. media executives’ perceptions of undergraduate and graduate journalism education. Although multiple studies have and are
currently examining journalism and mass communication education and its effects on the training of future journalists, the effects of journalism and mass communication faculty members’ training, education, and, more specifically, epistemology have not been examined.

The next chapter contains a discussion of journalism education within the United States. The chapter begins with a look at the history of higher education institutions and their missions, providing a foundation for the discussion of academic and professional approaches to education. It briefly examines the history of journalism schools and the introduction of the communication discipline into institutions of higher education. Lastly, the tension between the academic and professional approaches to education within the journalism and mass communication discipline is discussed.
Chapter 2

Journalism Education

Institutions of Higher Education and Their Mission

Journalism and mass communication educators are a bifurcated faculty, possessing different background and educational experiences. Some faculty members possess a Ph.D. and strong academic training, while others have years of professional or industry experience and no academic training, or a combination of both. Differences may exist in the approaches to journalism education among these faculty members. Differences among approaches to journalism education may even emerge among faculty members who have similar credentials, such as a doctorate or industry training, due to the varying cultural influences of different academic programs, institutions, and mentors. It is unclear what effects such a bifurcated faculty will have on students’ learning and journalism education.

Since the development of higher education within the United States, the missions and curricula of the institutions have been debated. The first colleges—Harvard, Yale, and William & Mary—held as their mission the training of ministers and offered a classical model of education focusing on ethics, metaphysics, and natural sciences (Vesey, 1965). In 1753, the classical model was challenged when William Smith, an Anglican priest and incoming president of the University of Pennsylvania, wrote The College of Mirania. Smith believed that a professional track should be offered in addition
to the classical/academic track within higher education. Although Smith did not see a
transformation in his lifetime, his manuscript served as a catalyst for the debate of higher
education’s mission and curriculum.

The University of Virginia, founded by Thomas Jefferson, served as one of the
earliest examples of Smith’s vision. Jefferson believed that education should not only be
available to the elite classes, but to all able citizens. He structured the curriculum at the
University of Virginia to reflect both practical and liberal ideals he thought would serve
to educate a citizenry for participation in a democracy (Geiger, 2000). By the 1820s,
additional institutions questioned the usefulness of the dead languages—languages no
longer used by thriving societies. Educators began to suggest that rather than accepting an
inherent value in knowledge domains, such as dead languages, institutions should teach
students practical skills such as agriculture and engineering. This criticism was a catalyst

The Yale Report of 1828 posited that Yale was laying the groundwork for a
superior education, and that the classic languages were the ideal instruments to bring
about ‘mental discipline’ (Veysey, 1965). The report argued that all other forms of
instruction should be offered at other types of institutions such as vocational schools.
However, Francis Wayland, president of Brown University, argued against liberal
education in his 1850 report, calling instead for a more practical form of learning and
emphasized applied sciences (Veysey, 1965).

Although liberal education was dominant in higher education’s infancy in the
United States, in 1862 practical education finally triumphed with the passing of the
Morrill Land-Grant College Act. The Morrill Act promised federal aid for colleges that
offered both liberal/classical and “practical” forms of education. It is important to note that the Act did not exclude liberal education. The individual responsible for the Morrill Act, Justin Morrill Smith, recognized the importance of the integration of both “practical” and liberal education to shape individuals who were not only good at their trade, but who also became informed and engaged citizens (Ross, 1969).

The debate about the merits of academic versus professional approaches in education continued throughout the twentieth century. Additionally, the trend toward privatization and the need for external funding at the end of the twentieth century produced a new body of interest—stakeholders, external funding organizations, and alumni—that institutions of higher education needed to consider.¹

The Communication Discipline & Journalism Education

To understand academic and professional approaches within journalism education, it is helpful to review the roots of the communication discipline and journalism education. The discipline of communication formed when Wilber Schramm became the director of the School of Journalism at the University of Iowa in 1943 and created the first doctoral program in mass communication (Rogers, 1994). Schramm took an interdisciplinary approach—drawing from theories of sociology, psychology, and English—in developing a discipline that examined human understanding and behavior rooted in social sciences. Schramm envisioned this discipline to encompass speech and journalism departments, which already existed, with his newly formed department of mass communication.

¹ For a more detailed account of the history and development of higher education within the United States, see L. Veysey (1965), The emergence of the American university (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
Two distinct models of journalism education had been implemented in colleges within the United States by the time Schramm became the director of the School of Journalism at Iowa. Walter Williams had developed a strictly practical/vocational curriculum for journalism at the University of Missouri in 1908. He believed that students were best served when they received hands-on training, which taught the skills necessary to function in the newsroom.

The second model of journalism education was created by William Bleyer, who believed that a responsible press could improve U.S. democracy. His vision of journalism was to create professionals who were “trained not only in how to write the news, but also in how to understand society” (Rogers & Chaffee, 1994, p. 14). Bleyer’s curriculum for journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison integrated both skills training and a liberal arts education and placed an emphasis on research.

It is evident from these early models of journalism education that disagreement has persisted over what specific curriculum should be implemented; however, Schramm believed that the two models of journalism education should be integrated, and that communication scholars’ focus should be on an interdisciplinary approach. First, it is important to note that Schramm’s vision was for a communication discipline that would throw out a large net to include a broad spectrum of human interactions, understanding, and behaviors through investigation and study. He did not envision the fragmentation of speech, journalism, and mass communication departments. He believed that journalism education should be interdisciplinary and focus on theory and research. Schramm also said that communication faculty should be academics, possessing Ph.D.s, rather than strictly practitioners who lacked advanced academic training (Schramm, 1997).
Although the communication discipline has flourished with the formation of many journalism colleges and departments, Schramm’s vision for a unified discipline has not been fully embraced by the majority of programs within the United States. A division remains among departments of speech, journalism, mass communication, and telecommunication. Often, each discipline is housed in separate colleges or departments. Division also remains over the decision to utilize an academic or professional approach to curriculum within the discipline. Rogers and Chaffee (1983) believed that this separation threatens the very existence of the communication discipline. They posit that a focus on theory, rather than skills, would be beneficial for students and help unify the communication discipline.

Journalism education continues to generate controversy and disagreement. Which is necessary—academic or professional training? Both? In what proportion? Should the faculty be academic or industry professionals? Can faculty be both, or do the cultures and professional beliefs and knowledge domains of these two professions create tensions that are intractable? This controversy forces journalism educators to consider what journalism education should be, and how faculty trained from two very different approaches will affect journalism education.

*Academic vs. Practical Journalism Education*

As seen through the history of journalism education and higher education, administrators, faculty, and political figures have struggled to agree upon the approach, academic vs. professional, that institutions should adopt to achieve desired outcomes. The debate continues today as separate journalism schools coexist alongside colleges of communication in the United States. Faculty members vary in their preparation for the
academy from those who possess a Ph.D. without professional journalism experience to those who solely possess professional journalism experience. A disagreement among faculty members and administrators persist about the necessary qualifications of journalism educators.

This controversy is evident in a recent email communication (April 2007) sent from an assistant professor of journalism to colleagues from different institutions, asking for their opinions about what skills were necessary of a “new hire” for a position in journalism. He stated that faculty members in his department were falling into two categories regarding the issue: 1) that new hires must have a Ph.D. and that newsroom experience was not necessary, or 2) new hires must have at least two to five years experience and that a Ph.D. was optional, but a master’s degree was required. The response to the professor’s question varied greatly, and the contention regarding the two approaches was evident in the tone of several of the emails. One professor stated, “[the] second option probably is the only one that makes sense. To appease the doctorates-philes who thinks the first option is in any way reasonable, you should be looking at one of the many ‘freshly minted Ph.D.s’ who worked in the biz for several years in the late-90s/early-00s.” Another professor responded:

I’m one of those ‘just a masters’ people. The cards are stacked against people like me when it comes to the academic game – not by my department (well, not by a majority of my department), but certainly up the line where ‘Ph.D.’ is the ticket into the club. I have had some success with teaching, research, creative activity, and the like, but it has been very, very hard work to get past the ‘Ph.D. required’ crowd both here at --- and in the broader academy. I have been ‘looked down
upon’ by journal editors, grant reviewers, etc., simply because of credentials.
Even if ‘just a masters’ is an option, it isn’t a good one for somebody who is
leaving the profession to enter academe. Higher education eats its young. Again, I
strongly urge you to consider a ‘newly minted Ph.D.’ with strong professional
experience – not just for the good of your program and your students, but also for
the good of your candidate.

One professor who spent 22 years in the newsroom noted that the Ph.D. helped
him to be a more complete, thorough, and effective researcher, but he claimed if he must
choose between the degree or experience, he would choose experience. While most
faculty members who responded to the email and the entire list-serve stressed the
importance of experience, others noted the contribution of the Ph.D. to their programs. A
professor stated, “[w]e are, of course, in academia, so it is critically important that we
stress academic credentials above all. The theoretical perspective naturally triumphs over
any grubby, mundane credentials from the workday world.” Another faculty member
pointed out that the discussion had not yet addressed what students’ perceptions of their
teachers might contribute to the conversation. The faculty member believed that students
may prefer faculty members who have experience to relate “real-life” examples.

It is interesting to note that of the email responses sent to the list-serve, the
responses appeared to neglect addressing the direct impact of experience or education on
a candidate’s pedagogy. The majority of the responses focused on credentials rather than
on the notion of scholarship, and implied education was not associated with “real life.”

Cohen (2005) described the contentious disagreement among journalism faculty
members about the approach to journalism education as an “old bugaboo” between the
“green eye shades” and “chi squares.” He characterized green eye shades as “real journalists [who] wore green eye shades to filter out the harsh florescent lighting that hung above the city desk. They were tough, practical souls…they got the job done”; whereas chi squares “lacked useful experience, wore herringbone, and received enlightenment from a slide rule and a t-test” (Cohen, 2005, p. 336). Cohen believed the stereotypes of the two groups reflected a continued dichotomy in journalism and mass communication’s mission between “those who do/those who teach.” Rather than focusing on this dichotomy, Cohen argued that journalism educators should center their attention on “connecting the dots” between research and theory and “enlightened practice.”

In symposiums published in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, several journalism and mass communication scholars and educators have commented on the continued debate between the academic and professional approaches to journalism education. Rakow (2001) said, “the old debate pits skills against theory, specialization against access, advanced practice against amateurism. The old debate conflates journalism and mass communication professions with industries, conflates becoming a professional with getting a job” (p. 12). Rakow argued that in an attempt to apply professional applications in a public realm, often times “professions become industries, free speech becomes commercial speech, communication by the public becomes communication to the public” (p. 14). She said that although journalism and mass communication education is trying to help shape students who “do good work for employers”, it neglects its basic mission: “preparing students to do good” (Rakow, 2001,

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2 *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* is a peer-reviewed journal published by the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
In response to arguments about journalism educators’ role in preparing students to become journalists, Thorson (2005) stated:

[Our job is not the training of the workforce in the current practices of journalism. Our job is to design, execute, and interpret scholarly research on communication in a way that will transform how news is defined, created, and diffused into the citizenry. Students must understand that is our mission, and their job is to become part of the effort. They must come at journalism as scholars, not mechanics (p. 21).

Hansen (2005) noted a “clash” between academic journalism faculty and journalism practitioners. She believed collaboration between the two groups could bring about mutual benefits. She said, “Professionals [could] take advantage of the latest, research-informed thinking about the large issues and the craft concerns that journalism educators (and other academic colleagues) can offer, and journalism schools maintain an up-to-date connection with professionals and a perspective on the challenges the media industries face” (Hansen, 2005, p. 133).

One study that has contributed to the discussion about the appropriateness of academic- versus industry-trained journalism educators was completed by Medsger. In 1995, Medsger conducted a survey funded by the Freedom Forum, which is associated with the Gannett Corporation, to investigate new journalism faculty, newsroom recruiters’ and supervisors’, and experienced journalism educators’ perceptions of journalism education. Additional interviews were also conducted with hundreds of journalists and journalism leaders to compile the report, Winds of Change. In that report, Medsger (1996) reported that the majority of journalism educators and journalists
surveyed believed journalism education should stress professionalism and abandon the idea of integrating its curriculum to create a unified communication discipline. Medsger also claimed that the majority of the participants voiced concern about the idea that individuals could be hired who possess a Ph.D., but no professional training. Furthermore, when new journalists were asked to reflect upon the most influential faculty in their training, participants most often selected a professional faculty member who did not possess a Ph.D. Medsger concluded that institutions of journalism education should focus on a professional approach.

Reese (1999) examined the debate between academic and professional approaches to journalism education, and specifically challenged the results reported in *Winds of Change*. Reese illustrated how multiple findings reported in the study appear to be derived from misinterpretations of the data. For example, Medsger claimed that participants did not feel that a Ph.D. should be a criterion in hiring. On examination of the wording of the question, however, the faculty indicated that they did not believe the doctorate should be a required criterion. Participants may have felt that there are instances in which other academic or professional credentials are sufficient. It does not suggest participants believed candidates with doctorate degrees should not be hired. Reese (1999) illustrated several other similar misinterpretations of the report’s major findings. He believed that faculty members should take an integrated approach toward journalism education rather than creating a dichotomy within the discipline. He noted that: “developing a new professional model must be done collaboratively, with the best intellectual leadership informed by a close knowledge of professional practices and problems” (Reese, 1999, p. 90).
Similar to Reese’s (1999) suggestion about collaboration among approaches, Thomas Kunkle (2003), President of the American Journal Review and Dean of the Phillip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, recognized a need for both academic and professional models. Rather than collaborating, he suggested that academic and professional approaches can coexist side by side. He posited that students should be receiving both the skills training and an understanding of the broader context, such as history, ethics, and law, within which they will perform those skills. Kunkle claimed, “journalism education—certainly at the undergraduate level—should be subordinated to a heavy-duty grounding in the liberal arts. Though we could all perhaps do a better job on this front, our field’s accreditation standards at least guarantee that strong liberal arts exposure” (p. 4).

The accreditation for journalism programs, which Kunkle (1999) referred to, was developed by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). The ACEJMC principles of accreditation outline the professional values and competencies or outcomes that are expected of journalism graduates. When reviewing these outcomes, both professional and academic characteristics emerge (see Table 2.1). An example of an academic outcome is demonstrated as students are able to critically, creatively, and independently evaluate information. A professional outcome would be the students’ ability to “write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve” (ACEJMC, 2004, p. 1).

If journalism education focuses on the agreed-upon outcomes or competencies for students, which appear to be both professional and academic in nature, then the question
becomes: does journalism instruction achieve these goals? It is useless to focus on or encourage a dichotomy between approaches to journalism education when the outcomes desired encompass both professional and academic components. Rather, journalism education should attempt to integrate both professional and academic/liberal education.

Shulman (1999) recognized the continuing confrontation between academic/liberal learning and professional/practical learning, and suggested that the two notions not be viewed as in competition, but instead as ways to make liberal learning more professional. He suggested that education should “profess the liberal arts.” Specifically, he believed that professionals of liberal learning should: 1) serve the public who does not possess a specialized body of knowledge and skill; 2) possess a body of knowledge that is continually being tested and challenged; 3) put theories and knowledge to practice; 4) apply judgment and accept moral responsibility; 5) learn from experience; and 6) recognize a responsibility to the public that they serve.

Reese and Cohen (2000) supported Shulman’s notion of professing the liberal arts, as they specifically addressed the “professionalism of scholarship” within journalism and mass communication education. They argued that as the field of journalism and mass communication becomes more commercialized and industry-driven, educators must focus on the social responsibility of shaping future journalists to become professionals who are “citizens rather than consumers, and thoughtful professionals rather than interchangeable cogs in a labor force” (p. 225). If the focus in journalism and mass communication education is shifted by the ideal of the professionalism of scholarship, and professional and academic/liberal education are to be integrated, journalism programs need to question
the effects of a bifurcated faculty’s influence on student learning and the field of journalism.

Although two broad categories—academic and industry—have been used in the past to identify the bifurcated journalism faculty members, additional subcategories have been recognized. In Media Education and the Liberal Arts: A Blueprint for the New Professionalism, Blanchard and Christ (1993) identified five different types of educators hired by journalism and mass communication programs: 1) those with extensive professional experience but very little academic experience; 2) those with both extensive professional and academic experience; 3) those with a year or two of professional experience who possess a master’s degree or have completed their doctoral coursework, but not their dissertation; 4) those with strong academic experience but little or no professional experience; and 5) those who have both a moderate amount of professional and academic experience. In an annual survey of journalism and mass communication programs, Becker et al. (2006) found that only 7.5% of the programs had a full-time faculty who all had doctorates. Twenty-one percent of the programs reported that three-quarters or fewer of their faculty had doctorates. The study also found that over 46% of the programs indicated being likely or very likely to hire full-time faculty without doctorate degrees in the future.

Faculty members, who may possess academic degrees, industry training, or a combination of the two, approach journalism education with specific frameworks in mind. The education and experiences they have endured will shape their ways of knowing, priorities, values, and academic work. The academic training and/or professional/industry training they receive will expose them to distinct cultures.
Herskovits (1948) described culture as “essentially a construct that describes the
total body of belief, behavior, knowledge, sanctions, values, and goals that mark the way
of life of any people. That is, though a culture may be treated by the student as capable of
objective description, in the final analysis it comprises the things that people have, the
things they do, and what they think” (p. 625). Journalism educators entrenched in an
academic or industry culture has their perceptions, actions, and beliefs shaped by that
culture. Their opinions regarding journalism’s role, responsibilities and duties will be
shaped by that culture. And lastly, how they decide to approach pedagogy and teach
future journalists will be shaped by that culture.

For example, Cohen (1997) examined journalism and mass communication,
doctorate-granting research institutions, and the preparation they offered doctoral
candidates for teaching in the communication discipline. Even within an academic
approach, differences were found in the culture and perceptions of the importance of
teaching as scholarship within the communication discipline. Only three of 24 doctoral
programs indicated students were required to take a course in teaching theory and
practice. Additionally, 19 of the 24 programs indicated doctoral candidates who served as
teaching assistants in a classroom had not received any type of formal preparation. A
follow-up study conducted two years later (Cohen, Barton, & Fast, 2000) revealed an
increase in the number of doctoral programs, an additional eight programs, which
recognize the importance of the scholarship of teaching by ensuring that their students
take some coursework in teaching theory. Cohen et al. (2000) also found that only four of
the 28 programs surveyed exhibited a focus on “domains of knowledge related directly to
teaching and learning” and only two programs stressed the importance of disciplinarity within the scholarship of teaching.

Differences in approaches to journalism and mass communication education have been evident throughout its history. As the debate regarding the appropriateness of academic and professional approaches to journalism education has persisted among faculty members, the debate appears ineffective as the accreditation standards set forth by ACEJMC require elements of both approaches in the stated desired outcomes.

This research is not interested in arguing an academic or professional approach as one being more appropriate than the other, or that an integration of the two might be acceptable. Instead, it is important to understand the impact of such a bifurcated faculty on journalism education, which will have implications for desired outcomes (as illustrated in Table 2.1).

Epistemology provides a useful means for examining the similarities and differences in faculty work among journalism educators from varying educational and background experiences. Epistemology is an individual’s understanding of the ways and processes of knowing (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002). A faculty member’s epistemology is shaped by their culture, education, and experiences. Journalism faculty members rely upon their epistemology, consciously or unconsciously, to make decisions regarding their scholarship. By examining journalism faculty members’ epistemology, a clearer understanding may emerge of the ways in which journalism educators perceive knowledge and the process of discovering knowledge.
In chapter three, epistemology as a construct is discussed. The chapter reviews how epistemology has been defined, operationalized, and examined in previous research. Lastly, it examines how epistemology influences faculty work.
Epistemology serves as a useful construct when investigating the similarities and differences among the bifurcated faculty within journalism education. A faculty member’s epistemology influences their decisions regarding their academic work; therefore, understanding the similarities and differences of epistemologies that exist among this group will help clarify the impact of a bifurcated faculty on journalism and mass communication education.

Epistemology Defined

Epistemology is the study of individuals’ ways of knowing. The term epistemology is derived from the Greek work *episteme*, which means knowledge. It refers to the nature of what individuals know and the process of coming to that knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002). Hetherington (1996) defined epistemology as the “theory of knowledge,” and notes that there are multiple theories. He believed the reason for examining epistemology is to explain and understand knowledge. Titus (1964) claimed there are three central questions in the investigation of epistemology: 1) what are the sources of knowledge; 2) what is the nature of knowledge; and 3) is our knowledge valid?
Review of Epistemological Research

Two models of research have investigated the effects of epistemology as these have emerged over the last thirty years: developmental, and a system of beliefs. The majority of research has focused on developmental models of epistemology.

Developmental

Perry conducted the initial study that many educators identify as laying the groundwork for understanding individuals’, specifically college students’, epistemology. Perry (1970) studied Harvard freshmen students in the 1950s and 1960s in an attempt to understand why students had varying responses to the college experience. Perry asked students to fill out an instrument he created, the Checklist of Educational Values (CLEV), in order to determine which students he would select for an interview for his study. The instrument was derived from earlier studies (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950; Stern, 1953), which posited that an individual’s personality shaped their understanding of the relativistic world. After completing the instrument, Perry conducted initial interviews with 31 students.

Perry expected to find personality differences as a contributing factor, which would explain students’ different college experiences; rather, he found the differences were explained by students’ cognitive developmental process through nine positions/stages of epistemology. These positions were grouped into four main categories: dualism, multiplicity, contextual relativism, and commitment within relativism (Moore, 1994). Students who were categorized within dualism viewed truth as
black or white, right or wrong. They believed authority figures deemed what was right (e.g. teacher, parent, the church). Those from the multiplicity perspective began to experience some uncertainty regarding truth. They still believed in the possibility of a right way, but they felt it was not always easy to discover it. Those students Perry (1970) found to be experiencing contextual relativism became aware of their role in creating meaning; truth became contextually bound, and they perceived a limited amount of things to be deemed right or wrong. The last stage, commitment within relativism, emphasized a shift to ethical concerns. This category focused on an individual’s ability to recognize their responsibility in shaping who they were to become. Perry (1970) acknowledged that few students achieved the level of commitment within relativism (positions 7–9); thus, the final positions were generated theoretically.

Perry did not design his study to capture the essence of students’ epistemology; therefore, his work was not directed by either theoretical or operational definitions of epistemology. Instead, Perry’s understanding of epistemology emerged from the qualitative interviews he conducted with students. The interview protocol Perry used within his study was quite simple. Each interview began with this question to students, “Why don’t you start with whatever stands out for you about the year?” (Perry, 1970, p. 19). Perry did not provide any further clarification of the question for students, even though it caused long pauses as students struggled to answer the question. Reportedly, students discussed their past educational experiences for an hour. These interviews were conducted in each student’s freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years, utilizing the same protocol. Perry’s work generated a developmental model of viewing an individual’s epistemology, which was a catalyst for future investigations of epistemology.
Although Perry’s work served as a model for epistemological study, a major criticism of the research was Perry’s use of a predominately male sample (only two females were included in his study). In response, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) conducted a study that employed extensive interviews to investigate women’s educational experiences, self-concepts, relationships, and ways of knowing. The research investigated a diverse group of women (n=135) studying at community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and social agencies thought to fill an invisible college role.

The qualitative study utilized an extensive interview process. The study reported that the interviews lasted between two and five hours. The interviews began similarly to Perry’s (1970) investigation by asking what experiences stood out for individuals over the past year. The interview protocol was divided into nine categories with one section specifically addressing ways of knowing. In order to measure/understand epistemology, two sections of questions were used. If participants attended invisible colleges (i.e., social agencies, which promoted learning), they were asked the following questions:

1. When learning about something you want to know (for example, how to bring up children, deciding who to vote for, and so on), do you rely on experts?
2. If not, who or what do you rely on? If so, what do you do when the experts disagree?
3. How do you know someone is an expert?
4. If experts disagree on something today, do you think that someday they will be able to come to some agreement?
5. How do you know what is right/true?
If participants indicated they were in a school setting, they were asked a different set of questions regarding their ways of knowing. They were given two or more cards with statements that in some way reflected an opinion of knowledge/truth. They were asked to read the cards and then comment on it. One example of a statement card is the following:

Statement A: “In areas where the right answers are known, I think the experts should tell us what is right. But in areas where there is no right answer, I think anybody’s opinion is a good as another” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 234). Interviewers followed the participants’ comments by probing with additional questions. For example, they used the questions listed for participants who attended invisible colleges to clarify their statements.

While understanding the ways of knowing was not the group’s initial focus, they became increasingly aware of the impact of epistemology on all other factors as the research progressed. Relying upon Perry’s (1970) scheme of epistemic development, Belenky et al. (1986) generated five perspectives from which the women in the study viewed knowledge or truth: 1) silence; 2) received knowing; 3) subjectivism; 4) procedural knowledge; and 5) constructed knowing.

The first perspective, silence, refers to women who were not experiencing epistemological development. Women in this category made derogatory remarks concerning their own abilities to speak and listen. These women were participants in the invisible colleges (Belenky et al., 2003).

The second perspective, received knowing, is very similar to Perry’s (1970) dualism. Women holding this perspective were like sponges waiting to soak up all of the
truth that authority figures provided. Similar to dualism, received knowers viewed knowledge claims as either right or wrong, and relied upon an authority figure to distinguish between the two.

The progression from received knowing into the third perspective, subjectivism, was quite substantial. Unlike received knowing, a woman from the subjectivism perspective relies upon herself and her personal experience rather than on an expert/authoritarian to provide the truth. She is identified as looking internally to discover the truth (Belenky et al., 2003).

The fourth perspective, procedural knowing, suggests that women perceive truth as being something not easily obtained. Instead, a detailed process or procedures must be implemented to discover what is true. Even when truth is being unveiled, there is no guarantee that there will be a single correct answer. Belenky et al. (1986) described two specific types of procedures for gaining knowledge: separate and connected. While both procedures attempt to be objective, their approaches differ. Separate knowers attempt to achieve objectivity through detaching themselves from the object or claim, becoming neutral. Connected knowers, however, attempt objectivity by having a better understanding of others. They do not pretend nor do they view objects or claims without bias; rather, they acknowledge their self, and relate it to others and the context.

The fifth perspective, constructed knowledge, is the least supported by Belenky et al. (1986) as few of the participants had reached this perspective. Constructed knowledge is similar to Perry’s fifth stage of contextual relativism in that they recognize the individual as an important part of constructing the knowledge. It is unlike procedural
knowledge that follows a linear process to arrive at truth; instead, it is a complex process that is somewhat ambiguous and relies upon the individual more holistically.

Baxter Magolda (1992) also investigated the effects of personal epistemology on college students. She was intrigued by both Perry’s (1970) and Belenky et al.’s (1986) studies, and of the gender differences that seemed to occur. Baxter Magolda (1992) conducted a five-year longitudinal study with 101 randomly selected participants (70 completed the study). She constructed open-ended interviews to conduct annually throughout the student’s college experience. The first-year interview addressed six areas of epistemological development: roles of learner, instructors, peers, and evaluation in learning; the nature of knowledge; and decision-making. As the interviews were conducted, the interview protocols were adjusted for following years. The interviews through the second and fifth years additionally addressed: the nature of knowledge, out-of-class learning, and student changes in response to learning experiences.

In addition to the interviews, students were asked to fill out the Measure of Epistemological Reflections (MER) questionnaire. This questionnaire measured epistemology by focusing on the same areas of development the first interview addressed: roles of learner, instructors, peers, and evaluation in learning; the nature of knowledge; and decision-making. The questionnaire employed a series of open-ended questions that attempted to elicit students’ perceptions of how and why they hold particular views, rather than understand what they knew. Baxter Magolda (1992) scored the MER by categorizing students’ responses into Perry’s (1970) positions 1–5. She also took into consideration students’ reasoning regarding their selection of certain perspectives. These categories were called reasoning structures. Each participant was awarded a score that
placed them into an epistemological level and reasoning structure for each of the six
domains. Baxter Magolda (1992) compared the MER and interview data to strengthen the
reliability of their results (i.e., triangulation). She found consistency between the coded
interview data and the scored MER results.

Baxter Magolda’s (1992) study revealed four main categories of epistemological
development among participants: absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent
knowing, and contextual knowing. Participants who reflected absolute knowing believed
that right and wrong exists and authorities know truth. Within the second category,
transitional knowledge, some uncertainty of truth is introduced. Two patterns emerged
within this category: interpersonal and impersonal. Interpersonal patterns existed mainly
among women. Participants in this pattern enjoyed uncertainty areas and looked
internally to render decisions; whereas impersonal patterns, exhibited mainly by males,
reflected individuals’ tendency to try to use logic when approaching uncertainty or
staying clear of the subject.

A third category of epistemological development reported by Baxter Magolda
(1992) is independent knowing. This category posits most knowledge in uncertain.
Again, within this position two patterns emerged to highlight gender differences:
interindivdual and individual. Female participants were more likely to display
interindividul pattern, where individuals are likely to accept other opinions and change
their own when uncertainty exists. Male participants, however, displayed individual
patterns, in which they were less likely to abandon their own view and consider others
when faced with uncertainty. The last category within Baxter Magolda’s (1992) findings
was contextual knowing. This category posits that individuals create knowledge within a
specific context. King and Kitchener (1994, 1981) were also interested in investigating epistemology among students. Their specific focus was the effects of individual thinking and reasoning processes on individual epistemology. They suggested that the development of individuals’ epistemology is strongly related to reflective judgment and their understanding of *ill-structured problems*.

King and Kitchener (1994) utilized a reflective judgment model based on a ten-year longitudinal study and data from over 1,700 participants who completed the Reflective Judgment Interview. The Reflective Judgment Interview is a protocol for a structured one-hour interview that addresses five (initially four) ill-structured problems. The problems address how the pyramids were built, the safety of chemical additives in food, the objectivity of news reporting, the issue of creation and evolution, and the safety of nuclear energy. After having read each problem, participants were asked to “state and justify their own point of view about the issue, and respond to [follow-up questions]” (King & Kitchener, 1994, p. 263).

King and Kitchener measured epistemological assumptions by using trained raters to score the transcripts from the Reflective Judgment Interviews. Each transcript was rated by two certified individuals who used a three-round process for reliability. Inter-rater reliability coefficients averaged in the high .70s. Raters provided scores within seven stages, for each problem. The scores were divided into two main sections: the nature of knowledge and nature of justification. The nature of knowledge was subdivided into view of knowledge, right versus wrong knowledge, and legitimacy in different viewpoints. The nature of justification was also broken into three subdivisions: concepts
of justification, use of evidence, and role of authority in making judgment. A mean score was given to each participant based on the results from the two raters.

King and Kitchener’s findings of epistemological development can be broken into three main categories: pre-reflective reasoning, quasi-reflective reasoning, and the reflective. Individuals who are in the pre-reflective reasoning category rely on authority figures to deem right and wrong. They believe that there are absolute truths that cannot be questioned. When individuals pass into the quasi-reflective category, however, they believe in a level of uncertainty. Although something might be true, these individuals acknowledge a level of uncertainty typically due to perceived missing evidence. Finally, when an individual reaches the reflective category, their ways of perceiving knowledge is based on a belief that no-one cannot be certain to hold the truth. Rather, at this level the individual becomes comfortable making educated claims regarding truth, and acknowledges his/her ability to transform based on context and expertise. King and Kitchener’s findings are significant in adding to individuals’ epistemological assumptions higher levels of development. Although Perry (1970) and others theorized about the epistemological assumptions that might exist in higher levels of development, they, unlike King and Kitchener (1994), did not find students who represented these categories.

System of Beliefs

The second model used to investigate individuals’ personal epistemology is a system of beliefs model. Schommer (1990, 1993; Schommer et al., 1992) challenged the notion that epistemology develops through fixed stages, and believed that epistemology should be viewed as a set of belief systems that can be independent of each other. She operationalized epistemological belief systems through the use of five dimensions:
structure, certainty, source of knowledge, and control and speed of knowledge acquisition. Additionally, Schommer investigated this set of belief systems by employing quantitative measures, rather than taking the qualitative approach selected by her predecessors.

Schommer (1990) investigated 266 college students’ epistemological belief systems. She developed a questionnaire containing 63 items that characterized epistemological beliefs. Two or more subsets of statements were provided for each of the five proposed dimensions of the belief system. The items were placed into 12 subsets. Using a five point Likert-scale, participants were asked to rate short statements that were phrased in negative or positive extremes. Using factor analysis, four factors loaded for 55.2% of the variance. These factors were fixed ability (i.e., ability to learn is innate), quick learning (i.e., learning is quick or not at all), simple knowledge (i.e., knowledge is discrete and unambiguous), and certain knowledge (i.e., knowledge is certain).

Schommer’s (1990, 1993; Schommer et al., 1992) work provides a significant contribution to the inquiry of epistemology by: 1) defining the construct as a system of beliefs, independent of each other; and 2) providing a quantitative research design, which employs the use of written instruments. Her research, however, is limited in several areas. First, the fifth dimension, source of knowledge, has not been validated throughout the research. Schommer uses two subsets for this dimension: don’t criticize authority, and depend on authority. Hofer and Pintrich (1997) attempted to explain this failure, noting, “sources of knowing may be more complex and multidimensional …including not only views of authority but the role of the self as knower” (p. 109).
Additionally, Schommer’s rationale for inclusion of quick learning as a dimension of epistemological beliefs is unclear. Understanding what knowledge is or how one goes about discovering knowledge is not the same as understanding the amount of time required to discover knowledge. As Hofer and Pintrich (1997) noted, “[i]t seems that quick learning is a perception of the difficulty of the task of learning and a general expectation or goal regarding learning”, rather than knowledge (p. 109).

Lastly, a major critique of Schommer’s (1990, 1993) work is that the factor analysis employed only loaded the subset of 12 factors identified from the 63 items. Therefore, it is uncertain how the full 63 items would have loaded on the four or five proposed dimensions.

Schraw, Bendixen and Dunkle (2002) attempted to investigate the effectiveness of Schommer’s instrument by comparing it (referred to as EQ) to a second instrument they developed, the Epistemic Belief Inventory (EBI). The EBI was generated based on questions from the EQ, but attempted to provide a shorter instrument that presented better construct validity. The EBI was operationalized through 28 statement items that were to correspond with one of the five hypothesized epistemic dimensions outlined by Schommer (1990). Some examples of the statements include: “what is true is a matter of opinion;” “people shouldn’t question authority;” and “instructors should focus on facts instead of theories” (Schraw et al., 2002, p. 275).

Schraw et al. administered both instruments to 160 undergraduate students. The EQ factored all 63 items, rather than subsets. Factor analysis revealed that the EBI explained a greater amount of variation (60% compared to 35.5%), demonstrated better test-retest reliability, and loaded five factors similar to those hypothesized by Schommer
in comparison to the EQ. Schraw et al.’s (2002) findings suggest that the EBI serves as a superior and more precise instrument than the EQ.

**Standard View**

Although multiple ways of viewing knowledge and the process of creating knowledge exist, Feldman (2003) suggested a basic understanding or ‘standard view’ can be used to frame an understanding of epistemology. Feldman believed that common, but not universal, ideas are held about the ways individuals form a standard view of epistemology. He said that individuals gain knowledge in eleven different categories: immediate environment, thoughts and feelings, common sense facts of the world, scientific facts, the mental states of others, the past, conceptual truths, morality, the future, and religion. From these eleven categories, individuals rely upon six different sources to obtain their knowledge: perception, memory, testimony, introspection, reasoning, and rational insight.

Feldman (2003) noted several categories of views that challenge the standard view. First, theories that align with the skeptical view posit that individuals are unable to know from all eleven categories using the six groups of sources suggested by the standard view. For example, an individual from the skeptical perspective may argue what individuals think to be true might be a dream, or something hypothetically generated in the mind. Second, the natural view differs from the standard view by emphasizing the use of empirical or scientific methods to discover knowledge. According to the natural view, the knowledge people claim to have can sometimes be systematically disproved. Lastly, the relativistic view challenges the standard view, claiming individuals differ in what they believe to be true morally, politically, and religiously. The standard view does not
allow room for differing opinions to be true, whereas the relativistic view allows for “reasonable disagreement.”

Another approach to understanding and identifying an individual’s personal epistemology is objectivity and solidarity (Rorty, 1979, 1991). McAffee (2000) applied these two approaches to understanding individuals’ political ways of knowing. Individuals who were classified in the objectivity approach viewed knowledge as containing unchanging, universal truths. This approach posits that knowledge is obtained by being objective, disinterested, and unbiased to achieve expert status. The solidarity approach, however, posits that truth can be determined based on one’s own experiences. Individuals holding to the solidarity approach would use their history, culture, and experiences as sources of knowledge. McAffee (2000) believed, in the context of political ways of knowing, that individuals following the objective approach might claim that elite and unbiased individuals should discern truth and govern without consulting a public, since a public at large remains biased. McAffee (2000) posited that individuals from a solidarity approach might feel a community or group of individuals should discern truth through interpretation and deliberation using history, customs, values, and experiences as sources of their knowledge.

McAffee’s (2000) application of objectivity and solidarity to political ways of knowing could be useful when thinking about higher education faculty members’ ways of knowing. For example, those faculty members who view knowledge as being absolute and determined by an expert who is unbiased and objective would be taking the objectivity approach. Faculty members in this group might rely upon two of Feldman’s (2003) six sources: perceptions and reasoning. Whereas faculty members whose
epistemology is grounded in the solidarity approach might not claim to be objective and unbiased observers, they would search for knowledge using individuals’ experiences, cultures, history, and values, relying upon all six sources of the standard view.

The comparison of these two approaches (i.e., objectivity vs. solidarity) closely parallels the quantitative vs. qualitative approaches within academia. The two approaches are driven by differing views of ways to ascertain knowledge. They ask different types of questions and rely upon different sources in the discovery of knowledge. Without promoting one type of approach to knowing over another, it is important to note that the way in which one understands ways of knowing and the process of coming to that knowledge will shape the way they approach scholarship. The way in which individuals understand the creation of knowledge will shape the sources they select in discerning knowledge. Ways of knowing will also influence the way individuals see others as learners. Epistemology serves as the foundation of many components of a faculty member’s work. Their ways of knowing and their understanding of the process of ways of knowing influence the way they perceive themselves as teachers, scholars, and learners.
Epistemology and Faculty Work

In order to understand how epistemology influences journalism faculty’s scholarship, it is important to recognize areas of faculty work. A faculty member’s teaching philosophy, choice of curricula, interaction with students, and research are each significant components of their academic work.

Teaching Philosophy

A teaching philosophy is a “highly personal and individual document, representing [teachers’] basic beliefs about teaching and how [one] acts upon them” (Enerson et al., 1997, p. 146). Montell (2003) posited the existence of basic questions that should be considered by faculty members as they create statements about teaching philosophies. For example:

- What do you believe about teaching?
- What do you believe about learning? Why?
- How is that played out in your classroom?
- How does student identity and background make a difference in how you teach?
- What do you still struggle with in terms of teaching and student learning?

These questions are just several of those that faculty members encounter when considering their personal teaching philosophies. In order to develop answers to these questions, faculty must rely upon (consciously or unconsciously) their ways of knowing and their beliefs about the knowledge creation process. For example, for a teacher to explain what he or she believes about learning, the individual will construct a philosophy based on their notions of truth/knowledge and the process or way they believe truth can be obtained. If one believes that an individual can possess absolute truths, he/she might
posit that student learning involves memorization of facts and so respond by utilizing lectures. On the other hand, an individual who believes knowledge is complex and uncertain may stress the importance of context and individual interpretation, and might argue that learning involves an ability to critically evaluate concepts/issues, taking into consideration multiple factors and utilizing case-based methods.

A recent study conducted by Bain (2004) investigated effective college teachers and their practices. Bain’s investigation, although solely focused on effective teachers, provides some insight into the possible effects of faculty members’ epistemology on teaching philosophy. Bain interviewed more than 60 faculty members at two dozen universities about their experiences. He operationalized effective college teachers using multiple criteria, including teaching awards and honors, student ratings, results on comprehensive exams, and other instructional materials. When narrowing the selection of candidates, Bain required them to have: 1) evidence that revealed they highly motivated students to learn and to continue learning; and 2) evidence that students’ learning went beyond recognition of discipline content in that students were able to apply knowledge in a broad context using critical thinking and problem solving.

Bain’s study suggested that effective faculty have a strong understanding of their discipline’s knowledge, and teach students to work through complex problems and issues, rather than simply bestowing their knowledge upon them. Although the faculty appeared to still recognize the importance of knowledge-based expertise and a base of knowledge, they placed a greater emphasis on allowing students to construct their knowledge through a struggle to apply course materials. They did not view students as
sponges ready to soak up their knowledge (supporting received knowing). They perceived knowledge as constructed, not received.

Bain’s study also suggested that effective faculty members prepare for teaching by asking broad questions regarding learning objectives, rather than narrow questions on logistics (e.g., how many students will I have, what materials do I need to include on the syllabus, etc.). Bain referred to this technique as moving backwards. The faculty members began at the end by asking what they expected students to learn, be able to accomplish, and understand when leaving the course.

Faculty members “played out” their teaching philosophy in the classroom by creating “natural critical learning environments.” Bain posited that effective college teachers used multiple methods (i.e., lectures, problem-based learning, and group projects) to create this environment. He stated that:

. . . in that environment, people learn by confronting intriguing, beautiful, or important problems, authentic tasks that will challenge them to grapple with ideas, rethink their assumptions, and examine their mental models of reality. These are challenging yet supportive conditions in which learners feel a sense of control over their education; work collaboratively with others; believe that their work will be considered fairly and honestly and try, fail, and receive feedback from expert learners in advance of and separate from any summative judgment of their efforts (Bain, 2004, p. 18).

While it is difficult to identify the epistemology of the faculty in Bain’s
study (since it was not specifically investigated), a general sense of faculty members’ perceptions of knowledge and the complex process of creating knowledge emerge and appear to affect their view of teaching and learning.

*Curriculum*

Faculty members’ epistemology is also likely to influence their decisions about curriculum. Curriculum is defined as:

. . . the process and substance of an educational program, comprising the purpose, design, conduct and evaluation of educational experiences. It gives shape to an institution’s particular intellectual beliefs and aspirations, negotiated by faculty in light of their specialized knowledge and in the context of social expectation and students’ needs, and manifested in a body of courses that present the knowledge, principles, values, and skills intended as consequences of an undergraduate education (Gaff & Ratcliff, 1997, p. 709).

Posner (2004) said that curriculum is composed of seven common concepts: scope and sequence, syllabus, content outline, standards, textbooks, course of study, and planned experiences. He suggested that a faculty member’s or institution’s perspective of curriculum influences these concepts. Posner (2004) claimed that there are five general perspectives of curriculum: traditional, experiential, structure of the discipline, behavioral, and constructivist. The traditional perspective focuses on the belief that cultural heritage shapes curriculum according to what individuals feel should be preserved from that heritage and transmitted to new generations. This perspective
suggests the presence of absolute truths, and that authority figures pass on what truth has been discovered.

The second perspective, experiential, emphasized the importance of experiences and their influence on students’ understanding of reality. John Dewey was influential in shaping this perspective of curriculum. Dewey (1916/1940) believed that truth/knowledge could be determined through individuals’ experiences. Unlike the traditional perspective, the experiential perspective suggests that truth is not absolute, but rather is constructed through individuals’ experiences. This perspective suggests that curriculum should be generated as broadly as possible to incorporate individual differences.

The third perspective focuses on the structure of disciplines of knowledge when generating a curriculum. This perspective focuses on the subject matter and the ways in which scholars, within disciplines, understand their structure. Posner (2004) summarized three elements of this perspective (developed by Jeremy Bruner): 1) subject matter is dynamic and evolving; 2) each discipline conducts its own inquiry uniquely; and 3) education’s goal should be to develop multiple modes of inquiry within students.

The fourth perspective of curriculum development is behavioral. According to the behavioral perspective, a curriculum should not focus solely on subject matter, but on what teachers want students to be able to do when they complete the course/study. It suggests that a curriculum should focus on how behaviors are acquired, and concentrate on “the conditions of learning” (Posner, 2004, p. 58).

Lastly, the constructivist perspective argues that curriculum should focus on how individuals make sense of the world, and encourage students to think more creatively.
This perspective views knowledge as being constructed within learners’ minds. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to obtain knowledge rather than using methods of rote learning.

Posner (2004) claimed that teachers approach curriculum development from one of these five perspectives. Each is specifically generated from ways of knowing and beliefs regarding the process of knowledge discovery. Therefore, faculty’s epistemology will directly influence their development of a curriculum.

*Student Interaction*

Faculty members’ epistemology is also likely to affect their interactions with students. Just as faculty approach the development of curriculum and teaching philosophies with prior ways of knowing, they also step into classrooms with existing epistemological assumptions. These assumptions will shape the faculty’s views of students as learners. They must choose how they will interact with students. For example, if they view knowledge as absolute and a student as a received knower, they will most likely act as an “expert” who imparts knowledge, holding an authoritarian position. On the other hand, a faculty member who believes knowledge is uncertain and constructed might engage students as colleagues who are co-constructors of knowledge. For example, in Bain’s (2004) study, effective college teachers interacted with their students in an open fashion. They were honest about their own failures and knowledge discoveries. They were not hesitant about allowing students to see that the expert also struggles in the pursuit of discovering truth. In their interactions with students, these faculty members did
not present themselves as distant and authoritarian, but rather interacted with students openly and included them in the generation of knowledge.

Additionally, Murray (1997) investigated the effects of teaching behaviors in the college classroom, including teacher-student interactions. Murray questioned the limitations of previous studies of faculty members’ interactions with students (primarily in lecture-based classes). His main concern was that initial studies had students rate both their like or dislike of the instructors and their teaching effectiveness. He argued that although students can report their like or dislike of an instructor, their ratings of learning and teaching effectiveness could be influenced by these reports (thereby providing an inaccurate measurement of effectiveness).

Murray (1983a, 1983b, 1985) conducted several studies that involved trained observers, rather than students, in rating the effectiveness of faculty members’ interactions with students. He used different measures to operationalize student satisfaction (i.e., student’s course rating & instructor rating), student motivation (i.e., hours of studying per week, frequency of enrollment in higher-level courses within the discipline), and student learning (i.e., performance on final comprehensive exam, and self-report measures of learning). Murray (1997) consistently found enthusiasm/expressiveness and task orientation (e.g., “states teaching objectives,” “provides example exam questions”) to be significantly related to students’ ratings of instructors and teaching effectiveness. Murray (1997) suggested that while the connections are not always clear or simple between faculty interactions and students’ liking ratings and their teaching effectiveness, a relationship does exist between outcome measures and instructor’s behavior. Murray also believed that while this relationship has been
examined, the influence of faculty members’ “thought process” and decision to select “certain classroom behaviors and ignore others” should be investigated (1997, p. 201).

As Murray suggested, faculty already possess certain ways of thinking and knowing when they walk into a classroom. Their “thought process,” as referred to by Murray, influences their decisions regarding their behaviors and interactions with students. This influence (of epistemology), however, has not directly been examined in the context of seeking an understanding of the significance of its impact on teacher-student interactions.

Research

Personal epistemology may also affect a faculty member’s research. As defined previously, epistemology refers to ways of knowing, and the process of coming to that knowledge. Faculty research is synonymous with this very process, which is directed by their perceptions of ways of knowing.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that faculty approach research from different ways of knowing: positivist and constructivist. The positivist approach is similar to the objectivity approach described by Rorty (1979, 1991) and McAffee (2000). This approach emphasizes an objective and unbiased stance toward the discovery of knowledge. Knowledge is perceived as attainable through scientific methods such as experimentation and survey. Internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity serve as the major indicators of quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The constructivist approach, however, emphasizes the belief that knowledge is contextually bound and uncertain, and is similar to Rorty’s (1979, 1991) solidarity
approach in relying upon multiple sources—history, culture, and testimony—in the
discovery of knowledge. Meaningfulness, transferability (i.e., naturalistic
generalizations), dependability, and confirmability (i.e., invites critiques) are the
indicators used to measure quality in this approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Again, these
approaches parallel the quantitative and qualitative approaches used within academia.

Although epistemology will affect how faculty conduct their research, it is not
simply a question of whether their ways of knowing place them in the quantitative vs.
qualitative camp. Too often, individuals are quickly placed in neat categories that ignore
any overlap. Rather, a more detailed examination of faculty members’ research should be
conducted to highlight the different sources of knowledge relied upon by individuals.

Another way in which a faculty member’s research could be influenced by
epistemology is through the individuals with whom faculty members choose to engage in
the process of research creation. For example, if a faculty member values local
knowledge (i.e., knowledge created outside the walls of academia within another
community), they will most likely conduct research in coordination with community
members. While some might argue that this type of work might be categorized as service,
it could also be theorized that faculty members who value local knowledge view
community involvement as an indispensable component of their research.

Bowley (2003) investigated 38 civic engagement experiences and found that the
quality of the work was strongly influenced by faculty members who acknowledged the
value of local knowledge in generating knowledge. Therefore, faculty members may be
more motivated to engage in research that involves external partners from communities if
their epistemology is aligned with the solidarity or constructivist approach, which values a variety of sources of knowledge.

While each of the components of faculty work listed above has been investigated, previous research has not specifically examined how epistemology influences faculty work. Although similar concepts (i.e., paradigms, worldviews, frameworks, etc.) have been investigated within the context of academic work, an examination of faculty member’s personal epistemology may be beneficial in clarifying its effects on faculty work, and also expanding understanding of individuals’ epistemology.

A review of the research, which has focused on epistemology and ways of knowing, presents several challenges when searching for a model to use in investigating journalism and mass communication faculty members’ epistemology. First, the majority of research has used both secondary and undergraduate students in the samples. Questions used in both qualitative and quantitative research are framed so that students’ educational experiences are taken into account. Also, students are often asked about experts, instructors, and other individuals in authoritative positions that may not be relevant for faculty members. Therefore, current interview protocols and questionnaires appear directed toward a student sample.

A second challenge presented from a review of the research is the few explorations of the higher levels of epistemological assumptions. Most studies did not include students who possessed higher-level assumptions. As a result, investigators often theorized (particularly in qualitative studies) about the epistemological levels that existed beyond their findings. It is possible that among a sample of educators from varying
backgrounds, participants could hold more complex and multidimensional epistemological assumptions than previously discussed.

Both the qualitative and quantitative models used to investigate individuals’ epistemology possess both strengths and limitations. The qualitative approaches attempt to capture thick descriptions of a complex construct. Limitations of this approach include cost, extensive time, and small sample sizes; whereas the quantitative approaches can include larger samples sizes to create generalizations within the field. A limitation, however, of the quantitative approach within this research has been the question of construct validity. Researchers have questioned the effectiveness of the operationalizations of epistemological beliefs (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Schraw et al., 2002) and the degree to which it taps into the theoretical meaning of epistemology.

Therefore, the current study seeks not only to investigate journalism faculty and their epistemology, but also to provide a greater understanding of epistemology that might lead to better measurement instruments for the study of this concept.

Chapter four contains a discussion of the current study. Specific foci include the design of the study, the sample, and methodology employed. The conceptual map used to guide the research process is also addressed.
Chapter 4

Methodology

The Study

This study examined journalism and mass communication educators’ personal epistemology and its potential influence on their work as educators. It was guided by the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 4.1, which proposes that a faculty member’s epistemology is at the very core of each of his or her academic decisions.

This research was based on three related assumptions. The first assumption is that journalism faculty members differ in their educational and work experiences. Second, it is understood that educational institutions and institutions within the news industry possess unique cultures that influence their members. As noted previously, Herskovits (1948) described culture as “essentially a construct that describes the total body of belief, behavior, knowledge, sanctions, values, and goals that mark the way of life of any people” (p. 625). Finally, this research assumed that journalism educators’ cultural exposure from their various educational backgrounds and industry experiences affects their perceptions, actions, and beliefs, and therefore shapes their epistemologies.

This research was therefore designed to examine the following research question:

RQ1: For journalism educators, what is the relationship between epistemology and academic work?
It is important to understand the influence a journalism educator’s epistemology may have on his or her academic work. A nationwide bifurcated journalism faculty has been identified in the journalism literature\(^3\). The dichotomy exists because some journalism faculty members have been acculturated primarily within an academic cultural framework, while others have been acculturated primarily through industrial institutions. The education and experiences obtained by journalism faculty members from these different cultures will impact the epistemologies on which they will rely when making decisions regarding their academic work.

In order to understand the impact of journalism faculty members on journalism students and on the field of journalism, it is important to understand the similarities and differences that may exist among journalism educators’ epistemologies and their approaches to their academic work. For example, a faculty member creates a unique cultural experience for his or her students when he or she teaches students about the goals, values, beliefs, and behaviors of journalists. Additionally, the faculty member provides both educational and formative experiences that in return shape students’ epistemologies and eventually the way in which they approach their work. The students influenced by journalism educators may graduate from the university and begin working within journalism and mass communication industries, or perhaps even become journalism educators themselves. Therefore, gaining a clearer understanding of a

journalism educator’s epistemology and its influence on his or her work will help elucidate the impact of a bifurcated faculty on journalism education, journalism students, and the field of journalism.

**Sample**

The participants in this study were nine journalism and mass communication faculty members from different doctorate-granting research universities. Four of the participants were female faculty members, and five were male. The majority of the participants taught news writing and reporting methods to undergraduate students. Pseudonyms for each participant were used in the research documentation in order to protect the identity of each participant. Three separate categories were used to classify the faculty members, and each category contained three faculty members.

The first category was the “academic” group. Each faculty member in this group possessed a doctorate and had published extensively in their research area. The first participant in this category, Sam, was a professor in a department of journalism, and served as the director for the department’s center for research on journalism and mass communication issues. Sam earned his Ph.D. in mass communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and previously served as a faculty member at two other research institutions. He also served as a visiting and guest lecturer for two universities outside of the United States, and as the interim director of a school of journalism at a large research university. Sam’s teaching specialties included news reporting, science writing and

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4 Connie, a participant in the academic group did not teach news writing or reporting; rather, she taught media and society, media and diversity, and other courses to undergraduate journalism and mass communication students. Connie more commonly worked with graduate students than undergraduates.
reporting and mass communication research methods. In addition, he has taught beginning news writing and reporting classes. He also worked for three years as a reporter before beginning his doctoral training.

The second participant in the academic group, Connie, was a tenured associate professor in a school of communication, and also served as a research affiliate within the school’s center for research on mass communication issues. Connie received her Ph.D. training in mass communication from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and previously served as the chair of the communication department and director of the doctoral and master’s programs for the university in which she was currently employed. She also served as a faculty member at two other large state universities and was the director of graduate studies at one of the two programs. Her teaching areas included media and diversity, media and sociology, communication theory, and research methods. Connie has also served on several committees for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. In addition, she served as an editor for a university’s newspaper.

The last participant in the academic group, Sally, was a professor in a school of journalism and mass communication, and has served as director of that program. She has also served as an associate dean in the graduate school, a head of a center for environmental communication, and as a chair for an environmental studies program at that institution. She earned her Ph.D. in mass communication at Indiana University. Sally also taught at three other large institutions. Sally’s teaching areas included: reporting and writing, communication and public opinion, mass communication theory and methodology, risk communication and mass media science, and environmental reporting.
The second category is the “industry” group. Faculty members placed into this category possessed a B.A. or M.A. degree, and had extensive experience in the news industry. Tony was the first participant in this category. Tony was a lecturer in a college of journalism and mass communication. He received his bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and completed his coursework toward his master’s degree in history. Tony worked for The New York Times for almost a decade, where he served as News Design Editor and as the liaison between the newsroom and production and advertising departments. He previously worked at the paper as Deputy News Design Editor and News Designer. Before working for The New York Times, Tony worked for a total of 20 years at five different newspapers. His titles included, but were not limited to: General Manager, Co-publisher, Features Editor, Graphics Editor, Editor, Executive News Editor, and Copy-editor. Tony received several honors for his news stories, and has been a guest speaker at different conferences and functions. Tony teaches at a large research university and his teaching areas included: visual literacy, beginning reporting, magazine editing and design, page design, and depth reporting.

The second participant in the industry category was Craig, a Distinguished Professor of Broadcast Journalism. Craig earned his bachelor’s degree in journalism at San Diego State University. He served as a local and national television reporter for over 20 years. For four years he served as an international correspondent for NBC News. Before serving as a television reporter, Craig worked in public affairs and as a newspaper reporter and columnist. He received numerous awards for his work, including two regional Emmy awards for reports. Craig co-published a book on electronic media, and numerous book chapters and essays. He teaches at a large research university. His
courses included: reporting, advanced television news, international journalism, mass
media and society, issues in media criticism, and information gathering.

The third participant in the industry category, Todd, was an assistant professor in
a school of journalism and mass communication. He received his bachelor’s degree in
history and journalism at Auburn University and a master’s degree in mass
communication from the University of Florida. Todd worked in the news industry for
over 18 years. He worked at several different newspapers serving in the following
positions: Columnist, Contributing Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Business Writer,
Correspondent, and Staff Writer. Todd continues to serve as a columnist for a publication
of the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. Todd teaches courses in
newswriting, economic reporting, business reporting, business and the media, and
specialized reporting. He published articles in academic peer-reviewed journals within
the discipline of journalism and mass communication, and many articles in industry-
related publications.

The third and final category was the “adjunct” group. The faculty members in this
category served as adjunct faculty for a college of journalism or mass communication.
The adjunct group served as a subset of the industry group. Adjunct faculty members’
work varied from teaching courses in conjunction with other full-time work as
journalists, to teaching after a long career within the news industry.

Kim was the first participant in the adjunct category. Kim not only worked at a
large research university as an adjunct faculty member within a school of journalism, but
as a Contributing Editor and Writer for *The New York Times*. Before taking on these
roles, Kim worked for nearly ten years at other newspapers. She served as a general
assignment reporter specializing in computer-assisted projects. Kim earned her bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. She teaches newswriting and computer-assisted reporting.

The second participant in this category was Diane, who was an adjunct instructor for a department of journalism and mass communication at a large research university. Although her position is adjunct instructor, Diane carried a full teaching load each semester. Unlike Kim, she did not maintain a second part-time job. Diane was employed in the print news industry for nearly 20 years. Some examples of her job titles during that time include: Projects Editor, Enterprise Editor, and Writing Coach. She also worked for three years as a media writing consultant. Diane earned her Bachelor of Science degree in journalism from the University of Florida. She teaches news reporting and writing. She previously served as an adjunct instructor of journalism at another large state university, teaching media writing.

The last participant in the adjunct group, Jake, served as an adjunct faculty in a department of journalism. Jake received his bachelor’s degree in journalism from a large research university. Jake differs from the other two participants in the adjunct category in considering himself to be at the end of his professional career, and decided to teach as he entered retirement. Jake worked in the news industry for over 36 years. He began at a large metro daily, and then moved to another newspaper where he worked for 33 years. Jake was employed by the paper as a reporter, copy editor, business editor, assistant metro editor, entertainment editor, universal desk coordinator, special sections editor, mentor to college interns, and page designer. After retiring from the newspaper, Jake
became an adjunct instructor of copy editing, newswriting, advanced reporting, history of journalism, and ethics of journalism. He typically teaches one course per semester.

**Method**

A qualitative research approach was utilized in examining the effects of epistemology on journalism and mass communication faculty members’ approaches to education. The construct validity limitations found in current quantitative research suggests that research must be conducted to allow for the emergence of thick description for the construct. Additionally, epistemology, the construct of interest in this research, has primarily been investigated in samples of young college-aged students. Higher levels of reasoning may emerge with older, more experienced, and more educated individuals within the sample. A qualitative approach allows these levels to emerge. The current study utilized a case study approach. Faculty interviews and a review of teaching and research materials are used to understand the similarities and differences in how educators understand knowledge and the process of generating knowledge.

Both the quantitative and qualitative approaches have offered operationalizations or measurements of epistemology. In the current investigation of educators’ ways of knowing, epistemology is operationalized as: 1) the individuals’ understanding of the nature of knowledge; and 2) the individuals’ understanding of the process of discovery of knowledge. This operationalization of epistemological assumptions guided the creation of the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Specifically, the interview protocol addresses journalism educators’ perceptions of academic work and scholarship. The questions posed to participants address faculty members’ goals, beliefs, and experiences regarding their work.
Through participants’ descriptions of their work, the study attempted to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of the nature and generation of knowledge. The interview process was guided by Seidman’s (1998) suggestion that three separate interviews be conducted to gather participants’ history, experience of interests, and reflection of the dialogue. Since the study sample consisted of experts within the field, the interviews were conducted in two different sessions rather than three. Rossman and Rallis (2003) noted the difficulty of accessing an expert population for research and suggested limiting the time typically allotted for gathering data, recommending that researchers adapt their data-gathering procedures to that reality.

Lastly, participants were asked to provide copies of documents that demonstrate their academic work—teaching, research, advising, and service. These documents include course syllabi, published research, class projects/assignments and a variety of other teaching materials. These were used to assess the reliability of the data gathered through interviews.

**Research Quality**

This study approached research quality by addressing Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four indicators of research quality: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

First, the study implemented the strategy of triangulation to improve the research credibility. The research design consisted of interviews and document analysis of teaching materials and research/publications. The method of collecting data from three sources was utilized to strengthen the credibility of the results. Additionally, the technique of member checking was utilized. Member checking is when “data, analytic
categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of the stakeholding
groups from whom the data were originally collected” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

The study also addressed the concern about transferability, which is the process of
achieving naturalistic generalization (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, for example,
the investigator would not hope to generalize findings to different disciplines or
experiences. Instead, naturalistic generalizations allow audiences to transfer findings to
specific context and times. Transferability can be obtained by providing thick
descriptions of educators’ experiences and acquisition of knowledge.

Dependability is also an indicator of quality. This indicator seeks to ensure
instruments and procedures are sufficiently discriminating, discerning, and robust to
account for changing conditions and contexts. Lastly, the principle of confirmability
questions whether procedures allow for critiques and feedback. In order to ensure both
the dependability and confirmability of the proposed study, an auditor was utilized to
review the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This research examined journalism educators’ personal epistemology and its
influence on their work. Investigating journalism educators from varying backgrounds
and experiences may reveal patterns that allow a better understanding of the knowledge
that affects their scholarship in different ways. Understanding the similarities and
differences that emerge among educators will help administrators and educators assess
the impact of a bifurcated faculty within journalism education.
Chapter 5

Results

The data analysis revealed several emergent themes in journalism faculty members’ personal epistemology and academic work. The categories resembled Perry’s (1970) categories—dualism, multiplicity, contextual relativism, and commitment to relativism. The results described here are offered according to Perry’s terminology. As proposed in the conceptual framework, unique epistemologies that reflect the varied cultural experiences of the three journalism and mass communication groups—academic, industry and adjunct—were identified. The faculty members in the academic group commonly illustrated epistemological assumptions grounded in contextual relativism and commitment to relativism; faculty members in the industry and adjunct categories more often demonstrated epistemological assumptions rooted in dualism. The adjunct and industry faculty members differed in that two of the industry faculty members’ research revealed patterns of commitment to relativism.

Academic Group

The academic group of faculty members most commonly revealed patterns of contextual relativism within their epistemology. They believed knowledge to be complex, and that truth cannot be viewed in black-and-white terms. They appeared to be aware of

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5 Truth is defined in this study according to Webster’s Dictionary as, “conformity to knowledge, fact, actuality or logic; reality; actuality.” Knowledge is defined in this study according to Webster’s Dictionary as, “the state or fact of knowing; familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study.”
their role in creating meaning, and acknowledged the contextual boundaries of knowledge.

Sam stated:

We should want to offer our students opportunities to learn specific skills that they’ll use in various communication occupations. We should want to provide them with opportunities to learn the context in which those occupational skills are applied: the social context, legal context, historical context. I think we want to talk about journalism in a context… an ethical context.

The academic faculty members acknowledged the complexity of knowledge and stressed the importance of “advancing knowledge.” Each faculty member believed that they had a responsibility to “knowledge itself.” According to Connie, “I feel I have to be true to the process of research and not violate the integrity of the process.”

Research

The academics’ view of the complexity of discovering knowledge was apparent throughout their interviews and in the examination of their research documents. The academic’s research process typically began with literature reviews and examination of theory, and progressed to the formation of hypotheses, which they tested empirically. The academics routinely concluded their studies by reflecting upon the results and discussing the implications for their findings. Sally described a current interaction with students and colleagues:

. . . . during the past year we met weekly to brainstorm concepts, brainstorm theoretical linkages, [and] develop hypotheses. We’re now at the stage where
we’ve got a coding instrument and we met today to talk about the excruciating long term problem of figuring out how to get reliable coding.

The faculty members also discussed the acquisition of knowledge in terms of identifying or exploring relationships. Sam said, “I like trying to untangle something, trying to figure out in some ways how [something] works, what the relationships are.” Sally described the research process as “unpacking relationships.” The academic faculty members relied upon multiple sources for knowledge gain. They took into consideration historical contexts, theoretical literature, interviews, observations, and cultural and demographic influences. Each academic member indicated that the sources for their research often came from personal experience or interest.

An additional characteristic of the academic faculty group’s research was their emphasis on their responsibility to advance knowledge that would have an impact on society. Sam stated:

Ultimately I think I feel an obligation to make some contribution to society or at least do no harm. Maybe the latter is sometimes the best we can hope for. But, I would hope the things that I do have some long-term consequences in terms of the performance of the media and the betterment of society.

Connie said, “I think, in a sense, mass communication scholars don’t do enough sort of social work and making a difference with their research, and I think we should be doing more of it.”

The academic faculty approached their research from a constructivist perspective. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined constructivist epistemology as viewing knowledge as contextually bound and uncertain. These faculty members acknowledged the individual
role in creating meaning. Each member worked with other colleagues and students to gain additional perspectives and interpretations. Sam described his interaction with international collaborators on a project as follows: “We value the contributions that they’ve made to our institution and our perspectives, our teaching, [and] our scholarship.”

Teaching

The academic faculty members’ epistemology also influenced their teaching and interaction with students. The academics preferred not to take a dualistic approach to pedagogy. They did not view students as ‘received knowers’ who viewed knowledge claims as either right or wrong, and relied upon authority figures to distinguish between the two. Connie stated:

I always tell students the first day of class is that we’re here to learn from each other, and I’m the professor and I’m responsible for giving you the materials and leading you through it, but you are not going to just be a sponge and you know; we are going to interact; we’re going to discuss the material…. I’m not big on regurgitation at either the undergrad or the grad level.

According to Sam, “I like interacting with students, learning from them, being inspired by their enthusiasm, their curiosity.”

One prevalent theme in academic faculty members’ approach to pedagogy was their constructivist approach to the curriculum. They encouraged students to think creatively and critically to obtain knowledge rather than using methods of rote learning.

Sam discussed his desired outcomes for students:

I’d like them to leave being willing to challenge the way things are done, try to find better ways of doing them. I’d like them to gain knowledge about particular
things, like how to do interviews, how to rate stories…. I want them to learn broad skill sets that aid them regardless of which occupation they move into: ability to analyze the world, to raise questions about the world, to see it critically, to ask questions about relationships, and to have some of the skills that they need to answer those questions.

Two of the three academic faculty members specifically mentioned choosing not to take a behavioral or vocational approach toward a specific set of behaviors expected of students upon completion of a course. Sally claimed that:

What [students] really want you to do is prepare them for their first job. I try very hard to convince them that that’s not my job. That what I’m trying to do is to help them understand the business, help them see what kind of role they can play in it, help them think critically about it, so that if they do go into the business, they can go in with their eyes open and perhaps with plans to modify the way the business works. I’m not interested in training people for that entry-level job. Although we are all actively engaged in helping students learn skills, and helping them get internships and all the things that do matter. But I want students to care about larger issues of how journalism works, where the field is going, what journalism’s role is in the larger society, and whether or not the way it’s currently configured it actually plays that role in any useful way.

Sam also indicated that he does not support the narrow “occupational focus” of the curriculum that has been adopted by other journalism programs.

The academic faculty also believed that structured experiences were an added benefit to the curriculum. Sally encouraged students to reflect upon experiences. For
example, in her science writing course she required students to write, as short memos, their reflections upon their information sources, their methods of gathering and evaluating evidence, and their explanation of their story. Sam described experiences he created in the classroom that enabled students to engage in the acquisition of knowledge, and discover knowledge by exploring phenomena.

Lastly, the academic faculty member group was the only group to mention taking into consideration students’ different learning styles. Sam gave an example of teaching a research methods course. He described having students utilize SPSS software, with some expressing discomfort in using the software so quickly in the course. He said:

I think one of the challenges for anybody who teaches is to try to understand that not everybody learns the same way and particularly that not everybody learns the way that you learn. Let me just give you an example. You know, in a writing class, you are trying to get people to acquire a style of writing that’s at odds…. In a news writing class, it’s at odds with what they have learned probably for the most part to that point in their careers. It’s backwards, you know. So, often, you know, we are inclined to say, “Give it a try and I’ll critique it.” And for some people that challenge of trying something and then getting critical feedback is acceptable, but for other people who are really fearful of failure and learn better by modeling, that’s a very ineffective way of teaching. On the other hand, the people who accept the challenge of trying something and then dealing with the critique are probably going to be bored with the mimicking approach, the constant examples before one goes off and tries it on one’s own. So, you know, you have
to try to figure out how to accommodate different ways of learning. So, that’s a big challenge.

Advising

Faculty members’ epistemology also appeared to influence student advising. The academic faculty indicated performing both formal and informal advising. While the members stated that they provided some job-focused advising, they also advised students about their role and responsibility to society. Connie claimed:

I want my students doing interesting work. I want them doing valid work. I’m one of the faculty around here who rant against quick and dirty research. I’m really big on the ‘so what’ question, the research significance question and so I want my students doing research that matters in some way and that they have a passion for.

Connie referred to her advising as ‘informal mentoring.’ The academic faculty noted the importance of mentoring, especially at the graduate level.

Goals

The academic faculty members’ goals for students were evident throughout their academic work. A common theme was the faculty’s belief that students should have a certain knowledge base, be able to conceptualize a meaningful role for themselves in society, and be able to evaluate and critically analyze their world. As Connie stated, students must be able to answer the ‘so what’ question. Sam argued that students should be able to “analyze the world, to raise questions about the world, to see it critically, to ask questions about relationships, and to have some of the skills that they need to answer
those questions.” Sally also offered as a personal goal, the ability to ‘advance knowledge’.

**Responsibility**

Epistemological traits of commitment with relativism emerged during the identification of individuals for whom the faculty members felt responsible. Perry (1970) defined commitment to relativism as the ability to recognize responsibility in shaping knowledge and future identity. The category of commitment to relativism differs from that of contextual relativism in not only acknowledging one’s role in creating meaning and believing that knowledge is contextually bound, but also in recognizing individual responsibility for discovering and challenging knowledge. The academic group understood knowledge to be complex and evolving and discussed their responsibility for advancing knowledge throughout their academic work. Sam described his responsibility for advancing knowledge in order to contribute to the university, the state, and society. Sally claimed that her responsibility was to “knowledge itself” and to some degree the public that it informs. Connie said she felt responsible to the students, society, and the process of inquiry. The student goals also revealed patterns of commitment to relativism, as the academic group encouraged students to challenge knowledge, to “analyze the world” and to look at relationships and effects.

**Industry Group**

The industry group of faculty members was unique in that one of the faculty members, Craig, revealed epistemological traits similar to those of the academic group, whereas the other two members, Tony and Todd, most commonly revealed patterns of dualism within their epistemology. That is, they viewed knowledge as black and white.
Since their epistemologies differ, Tony and Todd’s patterns are discussed here as the “industry group”. Additional results discussed next have to do with Craig’s patterns.

The industry group most commonly demonstrated dualistic traits in their epistemology. For the most part, they viewed truth as something obtainable. They acknowledged their role as experts based upon their “real world” experience, and believed it was their responsibility to make certain students obtained the industry-based knowledge that they possessed as teachers preparing students for journalism careers.

Research

The industry group’s approach to the acquisition of knowledge differed from that of the academic group. The majority of the industry faculty members’ research focused on narratives. The industry group referred to many of their research projects as “histories of …” In this case, history referred to documented chronological accounts of past phenomena. The faculty members relied upon primary documents, observations, and interviews as their main sources in the research process. In discussing his business journalism textbook, Todd stated:

Students interested in a career in business journalism need to be taught the same way they’re taught how to cover a city council meeting or the school board—by finding the public records that are pertinent to their story and using that information to then go interview corporate executives. In addition, this book gives students new to business an overview of how Corporate America works.

Tony relied on similar sources for a biography he was writing at the time. Although the majority of Tony’s research and pedagogical approach appeared to be dualistic in nature, one piece of research revealed patterns of contextual relativism. He
acknowledged the role of the individual in creating meaning, and that knowledge is contextually bound. In his research, Tony stated, “It may be time for newspapers to learn from literary theorists, who have known for decades that the interaction between the reader and what is read is central to meaning.” Additionally, Tony discussed how he was taking courses in anthropology and English to inform a biography he was writing. Although Tony demonstrated patterns of contextual relativism in several of his articles, he approached the majority of his academic work with dualistic assumptions.

The industry group did not appear to take the same approach as the academics to acquiring knowledge. For example, they did not utilize theory, formulate hypotheses, and attempt to study phenomena empirically; rather, they looked at past events and hoped to describe what had taken or was currently taking place. Rather than asking questions about relationships and effects, the industry group was more likely to provide accounts of truths, or look to provide a picture of how things work. Beyond newspaper and magazine articles, the industry group’s primary research projects were textbooks and biographies.

Teaching

The industry faculty members’ epistemology also influenced their teaching and interaction with students. They took a dualistic approach to pedagogy, viewing students as ‘received knowers’ who view knowledge claims as right or wrong. The faculty believed they served as authority figures who entered the classroom with “real life” experiences to related in assisting students to gain knowledge. Todd described how he first structured courses when teaching. He used one basic concept as a guideline; that is, he asked himself, “What do I wish I had known in my first reporting job?” He then structured the course around that knowledge. He admitted that it worked very well, but
that he has also included instruction on general skills such as, “sentence structure, and subject-verb agreement, and noun-pronoun agreement and real basic things.” Further, he spoke about the importance of factual knowledge. Todd stated:

Through the coursework is fairly prescribed, I place a heavy emphasis on fact checking and AP style in teaching this class in addition to developing students’ writing talents. I strongly believe that these are skills that they will use in all fields of mass communication.

The industry group viewed students as sponges waiting to soak up knowledge. In describing an interaction with a student, Tony stated, “she has soaked up more about the business than almost any other student that I’ve had.”

A salient theme in both Todd’s and Tony’s teaching was the use of behavioral and experiential curricula. A behavioral curriculum emphasis was revealed when both Todd and Tony indicated behaviors they wanted students to be able to emulate when they completed the course. When discussing goals for students, Todd said:

I want to make them a better writer. And I want to make them more curious about the world. If I see improvement in their writing by the end of the semester: their writing style, their usage of grammar and punctuation, and spelling words correctly, and a nice flow and organization to their stories… then that’s when I get the most satisfaction out of seeing the light bulbs go off above their heads.

The behavioral emphasis was also apparent in the industry group’s syllabi. Tony wrote as the objective in one course:

By the end of the semester you will be expected to have acquired basic
reporting and news writing skills, to have gained at least an introductory understanding of news judgment and journalistic ethics, to have improved your grammar and to have become intimately familiar with Associated Press style, the foundation for style at most newspapers.

Todd commented in his teaching philosophy, “I’m preparing them for the real world. Students like that. I’ve discovered they actually prefer skills courses that challenge them.”

The industry group also utilized an experiential approach to curriculum. They believed knowledge was obtainable through experiences. Tony stated:

I have found that what seems to work the best is as soon as possible, get the students producing… I teach some design, I teach some reporting, some editing… get them to do something and then critique their work and show those critiques to the whole class.

Todd discussed how a portion of his course was devoted to writing and practice. The industry group felt these experiences helped students learn and gain basic skills. When discussing students’ learning, Tony claimed, “I think it’s [journalism] somewhat instinctive and it’s probably also just a whole lot of training and experience.”

The industry group’s dualistic and objective approach to pedagogy was also evident in their description and criteria for grading. One of Tony’s syllabi pointed out that grammar, spelling, accuracy, organization, freshness of perspective, strength of writing and how interesting the story was, would all factor into grading. Todd discussed the grading of a final project description, saying that grades were based on students’ “ability to gather materials and facts about your company [the students were assigned
coverage of commercial business or corporations] and the topic and put them into a coherent story that explains the plusses and minuses of such a corporate strategy.” He described the grading in an economics reporting class:

> because economics writing involves number and names, each fact error in a story will result in an automatic F, and each misspelled word will lower a grade by one letter. AP style errors will count a half-letter grade, or 5 points.

Lastly, one teaching technique that deserves to be mentioned was demonstrated by Todd. He utilized humor in his courses to engage students in the learning process. For example:

> I like to have fun in class. So, if I’m in my news writing class and the lecture for the day is obituaries, by God we’re going to kill off a professor! And we’re going to write an obituary about a professor in the Journalism school that they know. If the assignment is, we’re going to talk about ‘person on the street’ stories, where they have to out and interview a dozen people about a topic… You know, the topic is not going to be something serious, like “Should the Israeli’s stop bombing Hezbollah?” It’s going to be, “Who’s faster? Wile E. Coyote or Speedy Gonzales and why?” I guess what I’m trying to say is I’m trying to teach my classes in a way that the students can relate to why this is important, why they should care, but I’m trying to do it in a humorous way because I think I discovered pretty early on they respond better to humor than anything else.

**Advising**

The industry faculty members indicated performing both formal and informal advising. The industry group claimed the majority of the advising was focused on job and
internship opportunities, and meeting class requirements. The importance of being “experts” because of their “real world” experience surfaced again in discussing their role as advisors. Tony stated:

And I find in advising that [experience in the field] gives us a great deal of credibility with students. So that when they know you worked for Newsday, you worked for the New York Times, and, “I think maybe you should take this class or I think this is the internship that you should try to get…” I think it gives you a certain amount of credibility because they think, “Well, he must know, having been through this himself.”

Goals

The industry group faculty members’ goals for journalism students and themselves varied. Tony wanted to produce “well rounded journalists.” He said:

[I]t’s not just knowing how to report, how to write, how to edit, how to design pages and take photographs and things. You know, you have to have some understanding about what it is that you’re actually creating the journalism about. So, I think what I’d like to do sort of more… I don’t want all of my students to end up at the New York Times or… that’s not my goal. But my goal is to, as best that I can, to create these well-rounded, interesting students.

Tony was leery of the heavy focus on sports and entertainment writing among students. He felt it was important to help students understand their contributions. He said:

. . . we need to try to make the point that whether you choose to or not, what you do in journalism causes change and you know, it’s more than the fact that it just matters, but if you choose today to write a lighthearted, inconsequential story and
your newspaper publishes it, that’s your decision made not to do something more consequential with your time or that space or that newspaper.

Todd also discussed his goals for students, which included wanting to make them better writers and “more curious about the world.” He felt that if the students were better educated, the profession of journalism would be “better off.” One personal goal was to improve what the profession was “doing now and how the profession is thinking.” For example, Todd thought that research in the field of journalism and mass communication on “where journalism and mass communication should be headed in the future” was being conducted poorly. He suggested that the field look at research that focused on “blogs and internet websites for newspapers, TV stations, or radio stations, or how many people would prefer to listen to their news on the internet or to watch web casts or pod casts.” Lastly, Todd discussed his goals for increasing the number of internships in his program and getting tenure.

Responsibility

The industry faculty group felt a responsibility to students. Tony believed his responsibility was “entirely to the students.” He said that although it may sound simplistic, his decisions about his academic work always focused on what was best for the students. Todd, as discussed in his goals, indicated that he too felt a responsibility to students: to make them better writers and better educated journalists. He also believed that he had a responsibility to his profession, the university, and society.

Industry—Unique Case

Craig is a unique case in the industry group. Rather than exhibiting patterns that reflected a dualistic epistemology, Craig’s patterns revealed contextual relativism and
occasionally commitment to relativism. He was aware of his role in creating meaning and recognized knowledge was contextually bound. He also recognized his responsibility in shaping who he was to become. He did not view knowledge dualistically, and he acknowledged that he is viewed as having expertise but lacked knowledge in several areas, stating:

. . . many times I’ll just come in to the students and just confess, “Hey, it took me an extra hour to look through things and yeah, you think your prof should have known that in advance, but he knew when he didn’t know something and so here’s what he found out.” Knowing when you don’t know and being interested in going after it is a big part of being a student and also being a successful person, I think.

Research

Similarly to the academic group, Craig’s research followed a constructivist approach and acknowledged different perspectives and interpretations. He was interested in relationships and media effects. He was curious about “how things work[ed] and why and what their effects might be.” He noted that knowledge was contextually bound, and often referred to looking for the “wide shot”, whether it was in his own research or in helping students. Craig stated:

. . . in teaching and in scholarship, and even in service, I will try to step back from the situation at hand and step completely out of the broadcast news environment or whatever and say, “Let’s look at why this is going on. Look at the context and let’s see if we can, by taking the so called wide shot as I put it, if we can get some
clues to the tight shot. And so, that’s sort of a standard basis for me. Almost automatic now.

In his acquisition of knowledge, he relied upon other disciplinary knowledge. Craig described one research project on individuals’ reactions to catastrophic events:

I went into psychology, I went around to other schools’ libraries and into the common pool and found things I didn’t know about how even I react to the human body and what happens to it.

The project, which was published in a local paper, focused on the news coverage of recent airplane crashes and the effect of dramatic and “overzealous” coverage on audiences.

Additionally, Craig utilized techniques similar to those used by academics in process of inquiry. He relied upon theory and extensive literature reviews to inform his hypotheses in his research. He then utilized empirical methods to acquire data that would, after analysis, provide support for his hypotheses. Lastly, he reflected upon the meaning and implications for his findings. Craig also noted his collaborations with other colleagues and their value in providing additional perspectives. Lastly, as with the academic group, Craig stressed the importance of obtaining knowledge that will impact the public.

*Teaching*

Craig’s epistemology of viewing knowledge as constructivist was apparent throughout his teaching philosophies and curricula. Craig felt classes should have a “sense of openness and intimacy”, where students were encouraged to join in the discussion. He did not refer to his classes as lectures; rather he stated that his “classes are
conversations.” Craig also stressed to students the importance of not only gaining skills but being able to challenge and question knowledge. He gave an example of typical questions he asks students and what lessons those questions lead to:

“Why has this happened? How does that kind of thing get loose in an organization.” Or “How does this kind of person get promoted?” or “Why would they fold? The only good sized paper in a town…” and that often gives me a wedge into the things you need to know to be not just a journalist, not just a scholar, but a good citizen. A person who can make decisions. I mean that’s really a lot of it with the undergrads. How do we make sound decisions? And that takes me down the road of think about that as you go through college and think about whether if you do only the skills areas and you don’t think a lot about the rest of the world, then maybe you won’t be ready to make decisions anywhere but back in that logging town. Let’s see what we can do here.

Craig’s constructivist curriculum was also apparent in his desired outcomes and goals for students (described below).

*Advising*

Craig conducted both formal and informal advising. He spoke of a wide range of advising, from the personal to academic levels. He advised students on internship and job opportunities, and said he guided and “coached” students “to do things that were admirable.” Just as Craig relied on different disciplines to inform his knowledge base, he talked about how he advised students to do the same. He said:

I advise students about graduate school, most of the time, if they’ve been journalism majors, I advise them to go off and, I am sure my peers do this too, to
do something wildly different, first of all, and they want to take a year off or six months and get their wind back. And so, they might want to go off and study political science, or anthropology, or the environment or some other thing. And fill their brain on things they can report on when they go to the news business. That’s how you get a good combination. So, I’m trying to lead these folks toward an opening of their minds to new things to embrace.

He argued that journalism education needs more “breadth.” He felt students needed to get out of journalism schools and “to find something else to become fascinated with even if it means some heavy academic lifting.” His goal was to move students “beyond the mere sort of newsroom crafts.”

Goals

Craig’s constructivist approach was evident in his stated goals for students and in his personal goals. Craig believed students should know how to do the job [journalism], be able to connect “definitional work…observations of past journalistic products, current issues and situations in society,” and understand ethical daily concerns. Personally, he wanted to advance knowledge in a fashion that would contribute to society. He acknowledged the complexity of knowledge and the process of untangling it from multiple influences. Craig claimed:

I’ve got to separate out the part that’s industry-driven by an established industry with its profit motives and so on and so on and it’s ways of working and it’s ways of viewing the work it has to do every morning. I’ve got to separate that out from the impulses and motivations of the journalists involved and that could be quite different from one to another as well as from one job category to another…
and so, the discipline entails really sort of taking a broad view of the lit searches you really need to do. To put it that directly. And to be concerned that it’s never over. It’s not ever going to be over. I will never have the time on earth to explore all of the aspects of broadcast news itself, if nothing else, as I would like to do. And mainly on it’s social effects, but you know, that’s not really the point. Where can I possibly make a difference? Where can I find pressure points? Partly with working well with my students, that might yield a little bit.

*Responsibility*

When discussing to whom Craig felt responsible in his academic work, he said, “the public,” and reiterated the importance of making a useful impact via academic work. Because significantly different patterns of epistemology emerged between the other industry faculty members and Craig, an additional interview was conducted to discuss possible influences on his epistemology. He mentioned several possible experiences in his life that could have influenced his epistemological development. These included his work as an international broadcast reporter for a large television network. His international experience encouraged his desire to tell the story “more fully” and from a larger perspective. He encourages students to “step out of yourself, out of your town…and give the viewer a wider perspective.” He also mentioned the influence of the Cold War, and how such a turbulent time encouraged him to ask the “why” question.

Another aspect of Craig’s life that influenced his epistemology was his children’s attendance of his university’s journalism program. He thought about the “inner life of students,” and what the program needed to do in order to help students turn out to be “critical, conscientious, why oriented journalists.”
He admitted that earlier in his experiences as a journalist, he wanted to ask the “why” question in his reporting and follow up stories with analysis, but that the structure of the news industry did not allow in-depth analysis. He said:

The mechanisms for getting out daily news are tyrannical…[once the] ‘holy shit’ story breaks it galvanizes all of the attention. Every duck in the flock turns his or her head at once to look at their story and spends the day on it. The problem is at what point do you turn back and gaggle and gavel at what just happened.

His way to “get real” was to go home and discuss it with his family. He wished to look at “extensions” of his work but, like other journalists, had to “verify, verify, verify,” which left little time for analysis. He reported that as he got older he asked himself, “what else is there?” He “welcomed” the opportunity to work in academia as a way to explore the “why’s” and answer some of his “wide shot” questions.

Adjunct Group

The adjunct group of faculty members most commonly revealed patterns of dualism within their epistemology. They believed truth was obtainable and could be viewed as black and white. They felt that authority figures decided what was right, and believed they served as an authority figure/expert in journalism education. They took an objective approach to acquiring knowledge, attempting to be objective, disinterested, and unbiased in their search for facts. The terms fact and accuracy were utilized heavily by the adjuncts throughout the discussion of their academic work. When describing journalism and journalism education, Diane stated:

. . . . when you’re a journalist, basically you’re writing the first chapter of history.

And that’s why it’s so important that we do it accurately and as objectively as
possible because the world will depend on what we do today in looking back hundreds of years.

Kim stressed the importance of discovering and discussing facts when asked about her grading philosophy. She asked students:

Can you look at a group of raw facts and come up with a reasonable story?...You know, looking at how thorough was their research other than crunching numbers? What was the quality of their thinking, in terms of taking a set of facts and producing a conclusion and a story idea?

Diane also pointed out the problems students often have with reporting facts and being accurate. When referring to students and grading problems, she said students have:

. . . a lot of problems with fact errors. I find that students...young people... again, they I mean, it’s sort of a known truism in the world that journalism is based on fact, but accuracy is not something that they’ve been really held to, to such a serious extent.

Research

Each of the adjunct faculty members followed a dualistic epistemology in their research. They pointed out that they were not responsible for producing the same type of research expected of tenured or full-time faculty. They did not refer to their acquisition of knowledge as research; rather, they referred to their “writing” or “story.” They indicated their writing to be objective and accurate. When reflecting upon his experience as a reporter, for example, Jake stated:

My role as a reporter was to present all those views objectively and it was a challenge. I had my own personal views on the topic, but I shot right down the
middle as far as fair and balance and all that kind of stuff. That’s the kind of thing that I think I feel real good about. Nobody could accuse me of putting my viewpoint into those stories.

The adjuncts exhibited the positivists’ traits as categorized by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They approached their writing and acquisition of knowledge in the hope of being objective and unbiased. When discussing the research process, the adjuncts most commonly relied on interviews, observation, and review of data in writing their stories. Kim described a piece she worked on about a new technique for selling homes in California. She interviewed individuals involved with the sales, and market and housing analysts. Also, she set up appointment and walked through the sale process, and reviewed the home data and media trend information to create the story. The other adjuncts described similar processes of obtaining information/knowledge.

Teaching

The adjunct faculty members’ epistemology also influenced their teaching and interaction with students. They took a dualistic approach to pedagogy. Two of the adjunct faculty, Kim and Diane, viewed students as received knowers who could ‘soak up’ knowledge. In discussing a particular course, Diane said:

It’s really a fun class to teach because there’s so much they soak up in such a short time and it’s really those skills that are going to help them in all those other writing classes that are to come…My goal is to imbue in them the fundamentals and high standards of journalism.

The adjunct faculty members recognized their role as experts in providing students with knowledge. They discussed how they passed knowledge on to students.
Although Jake recognized his expertise, he also mentioned his ability to learn from students. As an example, he noted how much he learned from the required student presentations.

The adjunct faculty members utilized a behavioral curriculum in which courses were structured around what the faculty members wanted students to be able to do upon completion of the course. They often referred to the “skills” they wanted students to possess as an outcome of their course. Kim discussed wanting students to be able to leave her course with the ability “to pitch.” Diane said:

I look upon Journalism as… a craft… and I’m teaching the necessary skills to do that craft. It’s not the more intellectual point of view…. The students should come out with these sets of senses of skills, abilities to do things, a sense of, again… those kinds of things that I was talking about. Those attributes of journalism at its finest, being accuracy, clarity, conciseness, those kinds of things.

Jake utilized both behavioral and experiential curricula. Although he structured his courses on skill acquisition, he also used experiential techniques to help students learn those skills. Jake said:

I’m a throw them into the water and let them swim kind of person. So, it’s hands on. I want them to make mistakes. I want them to experience that. And mostly, to find the answers themselves. So, I kind of expect them to discover what went wrong and what works and what doesn’t on their own.

Both Diane and Kim also used experiences in the classroom as a way to gain knowledge.
Jake and Diane discussed the importance of bringing in other “experts” for students. They believed students benefited from these “real-world” accounts and experiences. Each of the adjunct faculty members stressed the importance of “real-world” experiences. Diane pointed out how much students appreciate faculty who are “close to the field” and the “real-world” advantage that adjunct faculty members bring to a program.

Lastly, like the industry group, the adjunct faculty members’ dualistic and objective approach to knowledge was also salient in the creation of their syllabi and grading of coursework. Heavy emphasis was placed on accuracy, clarity, fact selection, source-number, news judgment, etc. Kim cautioned in her news writing syllabi, “While many rules of new media are still being written, the principles behind presenting truthful representations of the facts remain the same.”

**Advising**

The adjunct faculty members differed from the academic and industry groups in not having to engage in informal advising. Each adjunct faculty member, however, reported involvement in informal advising. This advising was primarily job-related. Students asked each adjunct faculty member for their opinions regarding job and internship opportunities. One faculty member also mentioned being asked for a reference.

**Goals**

The adjunct faculty members’ goals for students were also behavioral in nature. Kim’s personal goal was to be active in writing. Her goal for students was to prepare them to “hit the ground running” and prepare accurate information for the public. She stated:
The goal is by the time they’re done, they are able to produce a perfect story; perfect in style, grammar… that they will get the lead four times out of five, that they are basically, if they go into a small newsroom that they are ready to hit the ground running. That they will come in and not need a lot of hand holding from editors who are not paid to do handholding. I think that’s the fundamental goal. It’s a very vocational view of it.

Diane held similar goals for her students. She wanted students to be “very objective” and “well-skilled.” She said:

I want my students also to be well-skilled for the world of journalism and also have the right make up of respect for the profession, respect for the facts, and respect for the audience and their intelligence and what they need and always thinking about the audience and keeping what they do in tuned to that.

Diane also wanted to “imbue” in students the “fundamental and high standards of journalism.”

Jake indicated that his goal for students was to discover their strengths and weaknesses. After struggling in a course, he wanted students to ask themselves if “they really want to stay in journalism, or a particular aspect of journalism.” He liked to create a “real-world setting” in which students find out “what works and what doesn’t.”

Responsibility

The adjunct faculty provided a variety of responses when asked to whom they felt responsible in their academic work. Kim reported feeling responsible to the story. Jake indicated a sense of responsibility to his university. Diane said that she felt loyal or responsible to her students.
[I try] to imbue them with the knowledge that they have a great responsibility to
the truth and a lot of the students don’t realize that when they come into the
classroom. That’s why it’s fifty points off for a major fact error.

The adjunct faculty members indicated both a responsibility and commitment to
producing students who could “hit the ground running.”

The System

Although the study did not specifically examine faculty members’ opinions about
the tension between academia and industry, discussions with one faculty member should
be noted, given the context of the study. When one of the participants was contacted
about participating in the study, the faculty member questioned whether he/she would be
appropriate for the sample, saying, “I’m really little more than a glorified consultant. I’m
just a reporter with a side gig at a university when it comes down to it.” The adjunct
participant claimed that they were not an “academic person” or a “researcher,” but a
reporter. This participant talked about changes that were made in the curriculum at their
university and about not being part of the decision process.

It’s like don’t think for a minute that you’re part of the team, because you’re
not…I’m already outside the system and what happened was a product of the
system which I am not part of. It’s just a purely institutional phenomenon.

The participant’s comments illustrated the tension between industry faculty and
academics at many institutions.

Summary

As proposed in the conceptual framework, unique epistemologies were identified
for each of the journalism and mass communication faculty groups. The final chapter
contains a discussion of the implications of these findings for journalism and journalism education.
Chapter 6

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between journalism and mass communication educators’ epistemology and academic work. Specifically, journalism educators from academic and industry backgrounds were examined. A subset of industry faculty were identified, adjuncts, presenting three participant groups. The data analysis revealed support for Tier 1 of the proposed conceptual framework, suggesting that journalism educators’ experiences and education will influence their epistemologies, which in turn will affect their academic work. Different epistemological patterns emerged among the academic, industry, and adjunct groups. The academic faculty members’ epistemological assumptions were rooted in contextual relativism and commitment to relativism. The industry faculty members, with the exception of a unique case, most commonly exhibited dualistic patterns of epistemology, and occasionally illustrated contextual relativism within their reasoning. Lastly, the adjunct group predominantly exhibited dualistic patterns of epistemology. This chapter contains a discussion of the implications of these findings.

Epistemology

The academics’ most commonly revealed epistemological assumptions were contextual relativism and commitment to relativism. The academic faculty members viewed knowledge as complex and contextually bound. Throughout their process of inquiry the academics took multiple factors—historical contexts, theoretical literature, interviews, observations, data, and cultural and demographic influences—into
consideration. The academic faculty members stressed the importance of their responsibility to advance knowledge and to assist students in engaging in the discovery of and ability to challenge knowledge. Additionally, the academics validated knowledge through a peer review process. Craig, the unique industry case, revealed similar epistemological assumptions to those of the academic group. He acknowledged the complexity of knowledge and contextual boundaries. He also discussed the importance of ethics for journalists and journalism students. Further, he validated knowledge through the peer-review process.

Patterns of dualistic epistemology emerged within the industry group. In general, they viewed truth as something obtainable. They acknowledged their roles as experts, and emphasized the importance of “teaching them [students] what they should know”. The industry faculty viewed students as ‘received knowers’ who soaked up the information/truth provided to them. The industry faculty members discussed the importance of teaching students “fact checking” and the need for “accuracy” in their work. Although the industry faculty revealed dualistic patterns of epistemology, patterns of contextual relativism surfaced in several of their research documents. The industry faculty members, for the most part, relied upon editors to validate their work (e.g., biographies and textbooks, and articles produced while in the news industry). Although formal peer review processes were not used to validate industry faculty members’ work, they did acknowledge the contribution of colleagues’ advice on their research.

The adjunct group revealed distinct patterns of dualistic epistemology. Throughout their discussion of their academic work they continued to use words such as “fact,” “accuracy,” and “truth.” Diane said that it is a, “known truism in the world that
journalism is based on fact.” The adjuncts appeared to structure their academic work around this “known truism.” They stressed the importance of remaining unbiased and staying objective. Since truth was viewed as a concrete concept and obtainable through objective methods, the adjunct faculty members did not engage in the same validation process used by academics. They believed they could obtain the truth and present an accurate account of the truth to the public. They did not discuss how truth or knowledge could be validated. They relied upon editors to check their work to ensure that it was “clean,” but did not discuss editors as a source of validation.

Research

The epistemological differences among academic, industry, and adjunct faculty members encouraged faculty to take varying approaches to their research. The academics’ process of inquiry began with a research question, followed by conducting literature reviews, examining theoretical linkages, forming hypotheses, and engaging in empirical testing. The academics claimed that they were looking for relationships among phenomena and for effects. Although the academic participants in this study conducted research that utilized quantitative methods, they did not discuss the process of inquiry as objective; nor did they refer to themselves as unbiased. The results indicated that it is inaccurate to say that a faculty member is a positivist or a constructivist simply because they utilize quantitative or qualitative methods. For example, the academic participants in this study rely on quantitative methods; however, they exhibit constructivist characteristics—acknowledging knowledge to be contextually bound and uncertain. There is an attempt to gain a level of objectivity in their research, but the academics do
not discuss their findings in dualistic terms. The academics validated their findings/knowledge through a peer review process.

The adjuncts’ approach to their research/writing was very different from that of the academics. They repeatedly emphasized their objective approach to discovering the facts and “truth.” They exhibited positivists’ traits, claiming to be unbiased in their accounts of the facts. The adjuncts relied on interviews, observation, and review of empirical data to discover the “truth.”

The industry faculty members relied heavily upon “historical” accounts and testimony in their research. The main documents created by the industry faculty that were examined for this study were textbooks and biographies. The term “historical” had different meaning for the industry faculty. Todd discussed his research as looking at the “history” of business journalism. Todd’s research and textbooks presented a narrative account of past events, and a report of ‘how things work.’ Tony, however, took a different approach to historical analyses, describing enrollment in anthropology and English classes to inform a biography he was writing. He took the anthropology course to gain a better understanding of a certain cultural group and the English course to gain a deeper understanding of poetry, since the biography was of a poet. Tony demonstrated contextual relativist thinking in several of his research documents. For example, in one document Tony suggested that newspaper readers create their own meaning of stories. Although the majority of Tony’s pedagogy took a dualistic approach, his research indicated patterns of contextual relativism, demonstrating that faculty can exhibit different categories of epistemological reasoning.
Craig’s approach to research was similar to that of the academic groups. He took a constructivist approach. He commonly pointed out the importance of asking “why?” in his research and looked for the effects of his findings. He discussed his need to take the “wide shot,” and place his work in a larger context. In his acquisition of knowledge, he also pointed out the significance of taking into consideration other disciplinary knowledge.

The epistemological patterns within research were similar for the academics and Craig, and also for the industry group and the adjunct group. The academics and Craig utilized a research process that allowed them to test hypotheses; whereas the industry and adjunct faculty members typically relied upon interviews and observation to obtain “the truth.” The academics and Craig commonly collaborated on their research, indicating a respect for other perspectives toward their work. The industry and adjunct faculty, however, rarely collaborated with others. This occurrence could be due to the procedures in industry publications that typically lead to the publication of stories by sole authors.

Teaching

A salient theme that emerged in examining group differences in teaching was the choice of curriculum by faculty. The academics and Craig selected a constructivist approach. They encouraged students to think creatively and to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to obtain knowledge rather than using methods of rote learning. The academic group was the only group to discuss the need for students to “critically” evaluate their worlds. While the academic faculty noted the importance of skills training,

6 Todd did publish several books with co-authors.
two of the academic faculty members specifically rejected a behavioral approach. In reference to preparing students for their first job, Sally claimed, “that’s not my job.” She argued instead that she wanted to help students care about “larger issues of how journalism works…and what journalism’s role is in the larger society.” Sam acknowledged the “occupational focus” exhibited by many faculty and departments, and said he does not support such a narrow focus. Instead, the academic faculty members discussed the importance of teaching skills that students will be able to use in different contexts, and encouraging students to analyze their world, evaluate information, and challenge knowledge.

The industry and adjunct faculty members took both a behavioral and experiential approach to curriculum. A behavioral curriculum focuses on what a faculty member wants students to be able to do when they have completed their course. This approach was the most salient among the adjuncts. The adjuncts repeatedly addressed the importance of ensuring that students possessed certain skills when they completed their courses. They wanted students to be able to “produce the perfect story” and to “hit the ground running.” When asked about goals for students, Kim responded that she took a “very vocational view.” She expected students to be perfect in “style” and “grammar” and “that they will get the lead four times out of five.” Todd, from the industry group, wanted students to be “better writers.” The behavioral approach was reinforced by a “rigidly objective” grading system for the industry and adjunct groups. They informed students that they would be heavily graded in grammar, spelling, and accuracy.

In conjunction with the behavioral approach, the industry and adjunct groups utilized experiential curricula. They believed truth/knowledge could be obtained through
experiences, and engaged students in experiences that would help them learn the appropriate skills—writing stories, copy-editing others’ work, etc. Tony likened the experiences to training a muscle. He said, “you repeat an activity so many times that you actually do it faster than you can think about doing it….to some extent it’s similar to that except the muscle you’re using is your brain.” The academics also mentioned the importance of experiences in the learning process; however, the academic faculty placed a greater focus on the process of the experience and what students learn from struggling to acquire knowledge. Additionally, the academics noted the importance of reflection on the experience. For example, Sally (academic group) required students to write memos for each of their stories, forcing them to think about the process of obtaining and evaluating information, and structuring the story. Each group used experiences in the classroom, but with very different emphases.

Goals & Responsibility

Stated goals and individual responsibility to identified groups were similar in nature within each group, but varied between groups. Within each group, faculty members indicated feeling responsible to the students. The academics believed that they were responsible for helping students learn and gain skills that would assist them in understanding their role as journalists, analyze their worlds, evaluate information, recognize the importance of context, and become informed citizens. The industry faculty also wanted to help students by teaching them skills—how to “become better writers” and “well rounded journalists.” The adjuncts’ prevailing goal was to provide students with the necessary skills “to hit the ground running.”
In addition to feeling responsible to students, the adjunct faculty also indicated feeling responsible to “the story” and the “school of journalism.” The industry faculty members also indicated feeling responsible to the school of journalism and the university. The academic group believed they not only had a responsibility to the university and to the student, but also to “knowledge itself” and to the process of inquiry.

**Conceptual Framework**

A summary of the findings revealed support for Tier 1 of the conceptual framework. The culture of journalism educators provides experiences and education that influence journalism and mass communication faculty members’ epistemology, which in turn affects their academic work. The academic group were each acculturated to understanding knowledge as complex and validated through a process of inquiry that is reviewed by peers. One goal the academic group was to be able to assist students in approaching knowledge in a fashion that resembled their own approach. They wanted students to discover, analyze, and evaluate their worlds, develop critical thinking skills, and become thoughtful, engaged citizens.

The industry and adjunct faculty members were acculturated to understanding knowledge in dualistic terms. The news industry presents truth as obtainable through disinterested, unbiased, and objective research. The news industry views knowledge in black-and-white terms, encouraging its participants to search for facts that either are or are not true. This dualistic approach is used predominantly by both the industry and adjunct groups, with the exception of the deviant case, within this study. In addition to the deviant case, Tony did illustrate patterns of commitment to relativism in his research, illustrating that individuals are not necessarily fixed in one category of epistemology.
One participant did emerge as a unique case in the industry category. Craig has a career in journalism, like the other two participants in the industry category, yet he exhibited patterns of contextual relativism and commitment to relativism throughout his academic work. His case demonstrates that it is not simply membership in a category—academic, industry, or adjunct—that influences your epistemology. Similar to the other two industry faculty members, Craig experienced the news culture, but something about his education or experiences shaped his epistemology differently. Craig suggested that it was perhaps his international broadcasting experiences that helped him desire to take the “wide shot” and put things into a larger perspective. He also mentioned the experience of having his children attend the journalism program where he taught, and how it made him think about what students need to know to be critical and conscientious. Craig also mentioned the influence of the Cold War, and how such a turbulent time encouraged him to ask the “why” question. He suggested that other faculty who revealed patterns of dualistic epistemology really did want to ask the “why” question, or to look at “extensions” of their work, but because of the mechanism of producing the news, they were unable to do so. Although the structure of the news industry might explain why faculty may want to take a behavioral approach to curriculum development to ensure that students are prepared for the “real world”, it does not explain why industry and academic faculty discuss their own research, teaching philosophies, and student interactions in dualistic terms. The industry and adjunct faculty members perceive themselves as “real world” experts who “imbue” knowledge into the students. Even if the “mechanism” for getting out the news demands that knowledge/truth be presented as black and white and students must emulate those practices, it does not mean journalism educators must
embrace dualistic epistemology or teach students to understand knowledge in the same terms.

As different patterns of epistemology and approaches to academic work emerge, it becomes important to reflect on the implications for journalism and journalism education. Although it is not investigated in this study, Tier 2 of the conceptual framework suggests how both journalism and journalism education could be affected by these findings.

Implications

A bifurcated faculty of academic- and industry-trained educators have been identified within journalism education. This research attempted to examine the possible influence of different industry and academic cultures on journalism educators’ work by looking at faculty members’ epistemology.

The study found that academic and industry faculty members (including the subset of adjunct faculty) viewed knowledge using different epistemological assumptions. The academics viewed knowledge as contextually relative and with a commitment to relativism. That is, they believed that knowledge was complex, and that they had a responsibility to knowledge itself. The industry and adjunct faculty viewed knowledge as dualistic, and believed knowledge was obtainable through objective and unbiased methods. The industry and adjunct faculty members believed that they could separate themselves from the truth in order to accurately report information. Although Tony revealed patterns of contextual relativism in his research, the industry and adjunct groups predominately disregarded the importance of contextual relativism within their academic work.
The findings illustrated how these different categories of epistemological assumptions affected the faculty members’ academic work. One of the areas affected by epistemology was the faculty members’ teaching and interaction with students. Students are influenced by faculty members’ epistemology via the culture that faculty create within their classroom. They create experiences for students, and make decisions regarding how they will interact with students as learners. The academic faculty and Craig recognize the contribution that students’ perspectives bring to the classroom. Craig described his classroom as “conversations” with students. The academics discussed working with students to discover knowledge. They insisted that students need to learn skills that could be applied in multiple contexts, and be able to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and challenge knowledge. They also encouraged students to understand their responsibility to engage in the process of inquiry. The industry and adjunct faculty believed students were received knowers, sponges, who needed to be taught “what they needed to know”—skills. They viewed themselves as experts who had experience in the “real-world,” as opposed to academics with “just a Ph.D.” The industry and adjunct faculty members often referred to the “real-world” advantage; the “real-world” was something that was concrete and revealed “how things work.” The concept of “real-world” was dualistic in nature, illustrating how things do and do not work. The journalism and mass communication educators created a culture of learning and experiences for students within their classrooms. This culture can in turn influence students’ epistemology and their choices regarding their work.

Todd noted that students actually “prefer skills courses.” Students might indicate that they prefer skills courses due to their dualistic nature. Students are typically taught
from elementary and high school that they are received knowers who should “soak up” the knowledge being bestowed by the expert or authoritarian in front of them. They are comfortable with dualistic epistemology because they do not have to grapple with the notion that knowledge is complex and contextually relative.

One argument that may be presented by journalism educators and administrators in response to this finding is that both academic and industry (including adjuncts) faculty members are hired within journalism departments. The combination should expose students to both skills training, rooted in dualistic assumptions, and an academic approach, which emphasizes the importance of discovering and evaluating knowledge. Similarly, the argument could be made that accreditation standards require 75% of students’ coursework in the liberal arts to ensure that students are exposed to a variety of ways of knowing and understanding. How will students’ epistemologies be influenced by exposure to such varying epistemologies? How should students view a curriculum that exhibits conflicting epistemological assumptions? If students’ core journalism courses are taught by faculty members who possess dualistic assumptions of knowledge, will they approach their work in a similarly dualistic pattern? Students are being taught that they must emulate dualistic assumptions in their work to be successful in the “real world,” and that academia does not equate to the “real world.” A narrow vocational/occupational focus subverts the academese’s educational mission. Dualistic assumptions allow students to believe they can view truth as black and white, and obtain truth objectively. A dualistic approach teaches students to believe that knowledge/information can be obtained and distributed to the public to create a knowledgeable populace. There is a difference,
however, between being an informed student or citizen and being an educated student or citizen. The difference is discussed in the democratic implications below.

Democracy

The study results have implications for democracy. In 1947, the Hutchins Commission argued that journalism has a responsibility to make a contribution to a democratic society through promotion of a free and diversified press. The commission claimed the press should present “a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning” (p. 20). Faculty members who take a dualistic approach may provide truthful and comprehensive accounts; however, they do not acknowledge the context that gives the accounts meaning. The academics acknowledged the importance of context. Their research illustrated that the public has a context, and that there are implications for different contexts.

Another way in which journalism educators’ epistemology influences democracy can be seen through the faculty members’ goals. The academic faculty specifically stated that they wanted students to become educated citizens who recognized their role and responsibility in society. They wanted students to use critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate their worlds. One of the main goals for the industry and adjunct faculty members was to help students become good journalists who could “produce the perfect story.” The academics attempted to help students become educated; while the industry and adjunct faculty members hoped to inform students of the necessary skills to be a journalist.

A sustainable democracy requires an educated citizenry. It is not enough to inform students/individuals about the events of the day. They need to be able to
understand information within a particular context. They must be capable of not only gaining information but also be able to analyze, interpret, and evaluate it. The academic faculty members’ epistemology supports this form of knowing and education approach.

*Professionalism*

The epistemological differences among journalism educators also have implications for the notion of professionalism among journalists. The professional status of journalists has been the subject of debate. Journalists are not required to meet specified standards and licensing procedures that provide pre-determined barriers to entry, which are common among most professionals. However, they do exhibit several characteristics of professionals—autonomy over their work, a service orientation, and a level of skill. A closer examination of journalism educators’ academic work reveals that the epistemological assumptions of faculty members could influence their professional status. For example, the industry and adjunct members emphasized the “skills” students needed to learn to “do the job.” Several of the adjunct faculty described the learning of such skills as a very “vocational” view, not very “intellectual.” The vocational and non-intellectual view contradicts a defining characteristic of a professional—the possession of a type of knowledge that is not accessible to a layperson.

Shulman (1997) believed professionals should: 1) serve the public who does not possess a specialized body of knowledge and skill; 2) possess a body of knowledge that is continually being tested and challenged; 3) put theories and knowledge to practice; 4) apply judgment and accept moral responsibility; 5) learn from experience; and 6) recognize a responsibility to the public whom they serve. The academic faculty, through patterns of contextual relativism and commitment to relativism, fulfilled each of the
characteristics prescribed by Shulman, and encouraged their students to do the same. Industry and adjunct faculty who demonstrated dualistic patterns of epistemology did not view knowledge as complex and continue to test and challenge what they learned. They viewed knowledge as concrete. The industry and adjunct members recognized a responsibility to inform the public of the information/truth they obtained; however, they did not discuss a moral or ethical responsibility to the public.

In comparison to other forms of professional education, journalism education differs in the relationship between academics and practitioners in their process of inquiry. For example, in the medical field, the practices of the medical school and of the profession are closely related. Clinicians and academics work closely together. Academics’ research influences doctors’ choices in their work, and clinicians’ practices influence what academics choose to study. Clinicians are required to take “continuing education units” to stay abreast of the most current medical findings. Often clinicians are able to discuss findings and practices with academics in the process of obtaining their continuing education units. There is no direct connection in journalism between the media industry and the academy. The news industry does not require practitioners to be knowledgeable about current findings or to change practices based on the findings of academics.

Industry-trained faculty members teach students the rules of what they do; they provide them with the necessary skills to be a journalist—copy edit, write a lead, etc. This vocational approach does not attain a professional status. The academic-trained

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7 Several of the syllabi from the industry and adjunct faculty members indicated that they would discuss ethics and “news judgment” in a course.
faculty members teach students the skills needed to critically evaluate their worlds and recognize that knowledge is contextual and relative, and has implications for the public. Students who approach journalism with epistemological assumptions similar to those of the academic faculty could be viewed as professionals, according to Shulman’s classification.

Reese and Cohen (2000) agreed with Shulman’s classifications of professionalism and addressed the notion of “professionalism of scholarship” within journalism and mass communication education. They argued that educators must focus on the social responsibility of shaping future journalists to become professionals who are “citizens rather than consumers, and thoughtful professionals rather than interchangeable cogs in a labor force” (p. 225). The academic faculty who demonstrate epistemological patterns of contextual relativism and commitment to relativism engaged in practices in their academic work that supported “professionalism of scholarship.” They believed they had a responsibility to help students understand the complexities of knowledge, and be able to critically evaluate information; whether it was in the context of working as a journalist and providing information to the public or simply as an information consumer. Dualistic epistemology does not allow students to take contextual and ethical concerns into consideration. It does not allow students the ability to see a responsibility to the public beyond providing information. Dualistic epistemology does not support the underpinning characteristics of professionalism.

Limitations

The current study held several limitations. While the qualitative approach captured thick descriptions of a complex construct, the fact that a small sample size was
used prevents the findings from being generalized to a larger population. Also, because the sample was a national sample, the expense was too great to allow for observations of the faculty members, which could have served as an additional source in triangulation. Lastly, one participant in the industry category, Todd, was unable to participate in two interviews. Instead, the entire interview protocol was completed in one lengthy interview. Therefore, the investigator was unable to reflect upon the first interview data and conduct a second interview.

**Future Research**

Future research should address several issues. First, conducting observations in conjunction with interviews and document analysis could provide additional insight into how faculty members view knowledge. Observations would allow researchers to see how faculty members’ epistemology “plays out” in their academic work.

Second, the current study investigated Tier 1 of the conceptual framework—how faculty members’ personal epistemology influences their work. The second tier of the conceptual framework hypothesizes how, in turn, the experiences and education provided by faculty members to students will affect students’ epistemology, students’ work, and the field of journalism. This research did not examine whether the difference in journalism educators’ epistemology makes a difference for students. Future research should examine how the learning culture created by journalism faculty members influences students’ epistemology.

**Conclusion**

The current findings suggest that journalism educators, from varying backgrounds and experiences, possess different epistemological assumptions that guide their academic
work. Academic institutions hire journalism faculty members who possess either a Ph.D., industry experience, or a combination of both. The debate about necessary qualifications for journalism educators continues. Current best practices suggest a minimum of five years of professional experience, and the desire for a Ph.D.; however, there is little evidence beyond intuition that students are best served by exposure to faculty members from both academic and industry cultures.

The current research raises a counterintuitive point in suggesting that faculty members who have been acculturated within the news industry exhibit a dualistic epistemology. They believe knowledge can be obtained by being unbiased and objective. The current findings suggest that industry and adjunct faculty members do approach their academic work with dualistic assumptions. They view students as ‘received knowers’ who soak up their expert knowledge. Although several of their research documents illustrated contextual relativism, the majority of the industry and adjuncts’ research took a dualistic approach, presenting “facts” and chronological accounts.

A unique case within the industry group demonstrated epistemological assumptions in contextual relativism and commitment to relativism. The case illustrates that epistemology is not determined simply by membership in a group. Different educational, work, and life experiences may be influential in shaping an individual’s epistemology. The unique case offered several possible reasons for why this case may differ from those of others who have been acculturated in the news industry. However, the scope of the study did not allow for further examination of the factors that influenced the deviant case.
Universities claim as their mission the education of students who will become citizens engaging in the discovery of knowledge, capable of challenging knowledge. A dualistic approach that supports ‘received knowing’ is incompatible with the contextual relativism and commitment to relativism epistemologies that the university hopes to influence in students. Journalism educators with a Ph.D., however, are acculturated within the academy and encouraged to view knowledge as complex and contextually relative. In their process of inquiry they utilize a scientific method of generating questions and hypotheses and empirically investigating phenomena. They are professionals engaged in scholarship who possess a specialized body of knowledge and skill that they continually test and challenge. They must use that knowledge base to make informed judgments and to engage in practice. Lastly, they reveal a commitment to relativism by acknowledging a responsibility to knowledge itself.

A dualistic approach violates the notion of the professionalism of scholarship. Dualistic thinking allows information to be viewed as accurate or inaccurate. It does not allow for analyses and the evaluation of knowledge. Dualistic thinking suggests that knowledge can be discovered objectively; because knowledge is concrete, there is no need to challenge it.

The university needs to look at the effects of a bifurcated faculty’s influence on students. Does the balance between academic and industry faculty members negate the university’s mission to influence students to become thoughtful, engaged citizens who are able to critically evaluate their worlds? What effects do the different learning cultures created by this bifurcated faculty have on students; in turn, what effects do the learning cultures create for the field of journalism?
Figure 4.1: Conceptual Framework
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Academic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.</td>
<td>Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.</td>
<td>Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communication profession in which they work.</td>
<td>Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think critically, creatively, and independently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AEJMC (2000). *AEJM*J principles of accreditation; Professional values and competencies (Publication Info).
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Appendix

Debriefing Statement and Interview Protocol

**Research Question:**

RQ1: For journalism educator, what is the relationship between training and experience and academic work?

RQ2: For journalism educators, what is the relationship between epistemology and academic work?

**Debriefing Statement:**

I would like to start by thanking you for agreeing to participate in this study. As we talked about before, the purpose of this study is to understand journalism faculty member’s academic work and scholarship. So in order to do this I would like to talk with you for an hour regarding your experience with your academic work and scholarship. But before we begin, I know that you have read and signed the informed consent form. I want to remind you that you have given your permission for the phone interview to be recorded, and I will begin to record the conversation now. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Research Protocol/Questions:

*(Background)*

1. So just to begin please give me a little bit of background information about yourself?

   NOTE: Make sure that the following are addressed.

   - Education: BA, MA, PhD
   - Working Experience
   - Religion
   - Occupation
   - Ethnicity
   - Age
   - Family

*(Academic work & knowledge generation)*

2. If I asked you to describe what your work entails, how would you describe it?

   - Student Component- Describe interaction with students
   - Scholarship
   - Work experience
   - Are there any experiences that stand out for you from the past year?

3. What kind of things are you trying to accomplish in your work or scholarship right now?

   - Could you describe the process?
   - How do you validate your work/scholarship?

4. What piece of work or scholarship are you most proud of?
Could you describe the process from its conception to completion?
What sources of information did you rely upon?
What methods were used?
May I have a copy of this work?

5. In your work or scholarship, to what or to whom do you feel responsible or loyal?

(Goals)

6. Is there a goal in your work that gives meaning to what you do that is essential to making your work worthwhile?

- What is it?
- Why is this goal important?
- Are there comparable ones?
- How do you now when they have been met?

6b. Are there goals that your discipline (journalism) presents that shape your work?

6c. As a journalism educator, what are your goals for students?

- How do you encourage the adoption of these goals?
- What methods do you use?
- Can you give me an example of or describe your ideal learning environment for students?

(Beliefs & Values)

7. Are there specific qualities that have contributed to your achievements?

(qualities = attributes; e.g. determination, persistence)

- Qualities that hinder achievement?
8. Which of your personal beliefs contribute to your achievement?

(beliefs = worldview: e.g. beliefs in truth, justice, fairness)

- Personal beliefs that hinder your achievement?

9. What directions do you see for the future of your area of scholarship and academic work?

Closing - I want to thank you for sharing your experiences with me. I appreciate your honesty and that you have been so open with me. What you have told me is very helpful in documenting your experiences. Is there anything else you would like to add? Please remember that I will be contacting you to set up a final short interview to review what we have already gone over, and ask for any clarity that may be needed after reviewing our conversation. Also, after the research has been completed, I would like to send you a copy of the results so that you can review the findings and give me your feedback. Thanks.
VITA
Patty J. Wharton-Michael

Education

2007 Ph.D. in Mass Communications, College of Communications, Penn State University
Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Cohen
Concentration: Communication Theory, Research and Methodology, Communication Curriculum and Pedagogy
2002 M.A. in Media Studies, College of Communications, Penn State University
2000 B.A. in Communication, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown

Professional Experience

2006-Present Assistant Professor, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
2001-2006 Research Assistant, Dr. Jeremy Cohen, Penn State University
2003-2006 Co-Editor, Graduate Teaching Academy, Journalism & Mass Communication Educator
2005-2006 Research Analyst, Pennsylvania Department of Education
2005 Instructor, Mass Media & Society, Pennsylvania State University
2005 Consulting, T3 Consulting.
2004 Kettering: Robert Chollar 2004 Summer Research Fellowship
2002-2006 Instructor, Summer Courses, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, Lock Haven University

Publications

