

**Who should teach journalism?  
A Scholarly Personal Narrative**

**Doctoral Thesis**

**Submitted by**

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I attest that the doctoral thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences  
Department of Media and Cultural Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa is my work and my  
work alone without plagiarism or other deceptive practices.

  
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## **Abstract**

**In the absence of qualitative research in the field of American journalism education, a case study of a Duke University affiliated documentary tradition program is blended with a Scholarly Personal Narrative to answer the call for innovative journalism education models and to address the decades old debate related to teacher qualifications in journalism education. By blending the study of a particular type of journalism with a particular type of journalism educator, a new model for journalism education is offered for consideration by the journalism education community.**

*To mom, for giving me life, of course, but more importantly,  
for valuing that life by believing in me.*

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## Chapter One

*This is who I am.*

### *Setting the stage for a Scholarly Personal Narrative*

“I don’t see myself ever hiring someone that would allow herself to be in a temporary full time position,” said the new chair of my department. “No credible institution hires people who graduated from that same institution. We’re looking for real scholars.”

She was speaking to me.

I felt betrayed, dismissed, used and invisible.

It took several years before I put two and two together, not because I’m not bright, but because my teaching and research environments didn’t encourage the methodology necessary to answer certain questions in the field of academic journalism. In particular, this question: who should teach journalism?

Some will say it’s an impossible question to answer definitively, particularly in an academic research setting that doesn’t routinely explore questions that cannot be proven quantitatively. Asking “who should” deviates from traditional research questions, and that’s a shame, I think.

As I sat in a small chair halfway across the room from the department chair, who sat behind her desk like the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, I felt small physically, emotionally, academically and vocationally.

Up to that point, the decade’s long debate over the “best” way to teach journalism and who should teach journalism hadn’t really affected me. I never felt a connection to the disciplinary journals, public debate and association priorities. It seemed to me that the dialogue was coming from, and referring to, big “elite” universities, pundits, quantitative researchers with hard numbers but no human application and news organizations with an agenda. I was too busy teaching and practicing journalism to bother with a debate that didn’t seem to know the student body I was teaching, the geographic dynamic of the institutions I was teaching in, or the nature of the programs I was working within.

Then I found myself in a situation I never expected. I was suddenly drawn into the very disciplinary debate I had dismissed for years. I was vocationally homeless because I did not fit

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into the scholarly category preferred by one person who was adhering to the current divisive thinking at the time. Now that person is gone, and I would qualify as an appropriate scholar for that institution, just as I did before she arrived. My story should have had an impact on my department chair's thinking, but she didn't want to hear it. Stories, to her, were irrelevant. She said as much. My colleagues knew my story, and they felt that story was precisely the reason why I should be a member of that institution. In the end, my story both helped me and hurt me. The director thought a personal story had no place in decision making and my colleagues, who had been my first journalism instructors, knew from my story that I would land on my feet no matter what, so it wasn't necessary for them to go out on a limb and jeopardize their tight network of old boys. Some of those boys had made me promises; I chose not to turn on them even though I could have saved my own skin at the expense of theirs.

An exhaustive literature search reveals no journalism educator stories as the basis for research, the methodology of research or just for sheer reading interest. It is somewhat ironic that a discipline based on the telling of stories would be so averse to personal stories. On the other hand, journalism is based on the concept of objectivity, so stories (reporting) are critical components of the democratic process but not the stories of those telling the stories.

I am not here to propose journalism adopt first person reporting as a rule, though citizen journalism does just that; I am proposing that journalism education adopt personal narratives as a valid form of research and I am claiming that teacher stories can play a significant role in the content and tone of disciplinary dialogue which, in turn, has an impact on the discipline as a whole. I am offering myself as data to show that to ignore personal stories is to often deny students access to exceptional educators.

Well known expert on qualitative research, Yvonna S. Lincoln, noted in *The Review of Higher Education* that the criticism of the professorate is “disheartening and demoralizing.” She said criticisms are especially damaging to the professorate because they “tar[s] with a large brush thousands of individuals who have given their lives to teaching, research, academic advising, collegial governance and service (Lincoln 2000, p.241). I share this concern for my own discipline of choice—journalism. When this large brush paints right over people like me,

I am taking the liberty of believing there are others that feel like me. Rather than address criticisms of journalism faculty point by point, I want to address it person by person.

### **Why does my discipline need one teacher's story?**

In July 2002, Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia University, suspended the search for a dean of the highly acclaimed Graduate School of Journalism until a clear vision for the program could be established, reopening a longstanding debate about the nature of journalism education in America. (Arenson 2002) The debate spilled over to other continents (Grinberg 2000; Bromley 2002).

Prior to Bollinger's decision, the debate over approaches to journalism education had been simmering for decades in a variety of forms (Cunningham 2002). The well documented chi-square [theory] and green eyeshade [skills] "camps" comprising journalism education are "sometimes armed or at least at odds over the two underlying philosophies behind what mass communicators do in developing curriculum and teaching (Murray & Moore 2003). Generally speaking, if you believe in a skills-centered approach, then you are cast as a green eyeshade camp member, named after early journalists who wore caps with green shades. If you advocate for a theory or conceptual heavy approach to journalism education, you are considered an intellectual, or chi-square. The terms "green eyeshades" and "chi-squares" now define the issues surrounding journalism education. There is no term used to describe a blended approach or alternative approaches. In the United States, a communications approach which focuses on the study of communication theory, media impact, cultural and critical theory, rhetoric and/or discourse analysis, is usually dubbed "general."

Three seminal works produced in the late 90s fueled the public debate over which way journalism education should go; Bollinger's concerns mirror those already expressed in the public domain for decades. In 1993, from a chi-square perspective, Trinity College professors Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ produced *Media Education and the Liberal Arts: A*



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*blueprint for the new professionalism*, which outlined a curricular model advocating a communication theory approach to media education. They did so from a small liberal arts campus.

In 1996, from a green eyeshade position, American journalism educator Betty Medsger produced *Winds of Change*, a comprehensive assessment of American journalism education, which revealed widespread dissent among diverse stakeholders. The study was funded by the Freedom Forum and leaned heavily in favor of journalism retaining its identity in academic institutions. Editors and media professionals surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with the skill level of journalism school graduates, which was linked to journalism educators and educators expressed frustration with the criticisms of the professionals.

Australian journalism professor Keith Windschuttle ignited debate in 1997 within the academic community worldwide with publication of “The Poverty of Media Theory,” although more in Africa, Europe and Australia, which was critical of the explosion of cultural and media studies programs and their effect on journalism education. Windschuttle’s writings put an international face on the issue of theory versus practical approaches to journalism education.

In the context of these studies, First Amendment scholar and Columbia President Bollinger appointed a task force comprised of journalism educators, journalists and policymakers to provide him with insights and suggestions regarding the road journalism education should take (Shafer 2002). He said he was concerned that Columbia focused too much on skills training and not enough on the broad range of subjects that future journalists need to master. The questions dogging Bollinger at an expensive New York City institution set the agenda for the entire discipline and industry.

Journalism education, both undergraduate and graduate level, since its inception, has had difficulty settling into a disciplinary position with clean boundaries. Historian David Sloan says it still faces the same questions and issues as it did at the onset. He said it is almost “schizophrenic.” He asked, “Should it become primarily professional, or should it be a traditional academic discipline? Possessing a sense of inferiority to both professional journalism and academia, it has tried to prove itself to both” (Sloan 1990, p.4).

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Because journalism education is criticized by both practitioners and academics, it has tried to take two paths at the same time, never really reaching a destination, says Sloan.

There are multiple realities exhibited by the literature (Washington 2003; Merrill 2000; Mencher 2003). The public debate does not reflect an acceptance of multiple realities, however. In Medsger's 1996 study, journalism education was placed in two general categories, though there are many variations on the two:

- The type of vision embodied by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), an evaluation system implemented after World War II. This system calls for a 75 percent to 25 percent ratio of liberal arts to journalism courses respectively. The 25 percent should include a combination of skills, theory and survey courses which includes a combination of basic and advanced skills courses, introduction to mass communication, journalism history, law and ethics and electives. Students are encouraged or required to take a mixture of liberal arts and science courses (Blanchard & Christ 1993, p.6).
- An integrated curriculum, sometimes referred to as "new professionalism," which allows students to take up to 50 percent of their required university credits in journalism or mass communication, reduce the number of writing courses and require that a large portion of their media courses be in the area of communication theory. As most American universities also require a general education core of approximately half of a student's required credits, the difference between these two models is in the type of journalism or mass communication courses a student takes toward their major (*ibid*, p.11). This model was investigated and a curricular model offered in Blanchard and Christ's 1993 publication, and is the usual reference point for discussion in the literature.

Although some believe it is not necessary, or even desirable, to major in journalism, the "reality" is that the majority of news organizations hire those with journalism degrees (Medsger 1996). Based on this fact alone, journalism education both contributes to the current media via its graduates and contributes to the state of the media via its graduates. Individual courses at some journalism schools critique the media critically; however, I am aware of no journalism

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program that openly attempts to influence or change the current state of the media through its undergraduates. A program with this focus may have difficulty placing students in the workplace.

In fact, there is no evidence that the presence of journalism programs on university campuses have had a substantial impact on the course American media has taken in the past 50 years; they simply contribute to the status quo (Sloan 1990, p.4).

There is no assessment device definitively to determine good, bad, right and wrong approaches to journalism education because, as the literature reflects, those concepts are defined differently by individuals; not all professors agree and not all practitioners agree on desired outcomes, the role of the university or the means to the ends. Several researchers have made quantitative attempts to identify what media professionals want from a journalism program and what journalism educators believe is needed (Fedler 1995; Medsger 1996; Dickson & Brandon 2000).

Those who argue for a communications theory approach to journalism education say it is necessary because of technological changes and the blurring of lines between each delivery system. They see journalism as part of the communications field, not as a distinct body of knowledge or area of study. The current information environment requires students to be able to move from one type of communications job to another (Blanchard & Christ, 1993 p.11). Those who argue for a more traditional approach to journalism education say it is the responsibility of the modern university to prepare students for the media workplace. Theory needs to be balanced with practice, they say, and practice is more than pushing a button or interviewing a city councilman.

The public debate is no longer just an issue of skills versus theory; the fundamental point of contention is, should journalism be kept alive as an academic field or should it become part of a broader field of communications? The answer depends on whom you ask.

Lee Bollinger asked a task force of approximately 30, who came from a variety of backgrounds, to explore thoughtfully and deeply the issues surrounding journalism education.

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It is of interest, however, that the panel's diversity still fell within a particular circle of practice and institutions.

The discussion draft resulting from a forum hosted by the task force at Columbia University on the future of journalism education summed up the issue when it noted that "traditional arguments heard among journalism educators – the benefits of theory versus practice, the primacy of communication studies over journalism, or vice versa – are not the most helpful way of looking at the problems of journalism education" (Columbia 2003, p.2).

The draft document proposed that the best and fastest way to accomplish the goals cited by most editors and educators would be to establish one (or more) small experimental schools within existing journalism schools, (*ibid*). This was the first direct public call to the journalism education community to experiment. The forum participants acknowledged that the time had come for new and "fresh" ideas that would address the current state of the media and perhaps a new vision for a new media environment. The task force concluded that a "new type of student and a new type of faculty" might need to be attracted to the field of journalism education (*ibid*, p.6). This mention of faculty quality or type is, to my knowledge, the only reference in the literature to teacher quality, though the task force declined to define the term "quality."

At that point in time, 2004, the goal of my research was to answer the call for the exploration of alternative approaches to journalism education. Blanchard and Christ offered a model for consideration based on their values and beliefs about the role of the university and the need of American society. Because of the rare public call to offer innovative or fresh approaches to journalism education, I chose to explore an existing program that operates from a particular philosophical perspective, that of "the documentary tradition." I wanted to "study" the Center for Documentary Studies in Durham, North Carolina, its practices and its goals, and then consider its potential as a journalism education model.

The unit of case study, the Center for Documentary Studies, was to be observed with an eye for its potential to address the needs of students, the media industry and universities as reflected in the body of literature and the Columbia "all-star" task force. A search of current and completed research in the field of journalism education revealed no relevant case studies of educational programs or best practices. Research in the field of journalism most often takes the

form of surveys designed to bridge the gap between academics and practitioners and/or resolve the issue of teacher qualifications (Dickson & Brandon 2000; Auman & Alderman 1996; Fedler 1995). With a lack of exploratory research available, the need for such an approach appeared not only appropriate, but necessary.

The case study, I believed, would address suggestions and opinions of some of the country's "top" journalism educators, though I challenge the term "top" because it is a subjective description of quality that skews the public debate. It was to be conducted under the assumption that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to educate journalists because, I believe, each group of stakeholders advocates for what is in their best interests. It was also to be conducted under the assumption that there are journalism educators who share similar worldviews and pedagogical views, and that an understanding of the CDS might be useful to that group.

### **The initial research focus**

The CDS is not a journalism program by name or intention; however, I believed it offered a form of education with the potential to produce highly critical, skilled, reflective graduates well suited for a career in journalism as it is currently practiced, as well as being well suited to contribute to change. This hypothesis was based on personal observation in 1996, the program's marketing literature over the period 1993-2003, *Doubletake*, the center's literary magazine from 1995 through 2002, and journalism education literature.

The CDS is "unique" in the US in that it is the only program that approaches education from a Depression era documentary perspective. More particularly, the CDS has taken the issues brought forth by James Agee in his book, *Let us Now Praise Famous Men*, and others involved in government sponsored work in the 1930s, and molded them into an educational framework.

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The American Great Depression of the 1930s gave birth to a movement among artists, authors, social scientists and journalists that documented the impact the Depression was having on the lives of Americans. New forms of documentary expression began to emerge, cutting across traditional lines between different media (Ohrn 1980). For example, painters were hired by the government to paint huge murals on walls and public buildings. A federal theatre project produced plays called “The Living Newspapers.” Authors utilized oral history techniques to collect life histories and narratives as part of the Federal Writer’s Project. A new genre of newsmagazines was also born, devoted to photojournalism. Social scientists moved out of the “laboratory” and into the field, utilizing participant observation techniques. A “new” discipline emerged in America, “American Studies,” that focused on national life and culture. This era of documentary work brought attention to American people, values and cultural trends that were previously either overlooked or devalued as a nation (*ibid*, p.27).

During the early years of the Depression, it was generally felt that the press did not pay proper attention to the impact of the era on American life. Trust in the print media was at an all-time low, allowing radio and new “radical” forms of magazines to move into the mainstream. Some print journalists began to experiment with “reportage,” a method born in Europe, which relied heavily on description and concrete evidence from the mouths of everyday citizens to paint a more realistic picture of the times (Meltzer 1978, p.88)

First person writing took hold and was used increasingly, even by journalists. Nonfiction literature became common, used by social scientists and social workers in book form, and often using photographs in combination with documentary text. Case histories were re-written for a general public. Increasingly, writers attempted to describe their personal reactions to events so readers could experience through their eyes. Social scientists began going “undercover,” spending long periods of time with subjects to gain a better understanding of social groups and trends.

Alfred Kazan has written that the 1930s represented an era in which America was fighting for its life. The war in Europe was growing closer and at home the nation was slowly coming out of a denial of its failure to feed its own. The documentary work of that era became

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“the raw stuff of the contemporary mass record” (Kazin 1956, p.381).

Because there was so little trust in the printed word at that time, the camera and the “idea” of the camera’s ability to objectively record reality, increased in popularity. During the 1930s, photographer Lewis Hine used his camera to document the flow of immigrants to Ellis Island in New York. Hine was a sociologist, not a technical photographer. He used the camera to illustrate pamphlets he wrote and ultimately his work helped pass laws related to child labor. He went on to document the Red Cross’ relief efforts in Europe and to publish his photographs in liberal and reform magazines in America (*ibid*).

Portrait photographer Dorothea Lange was in the midst of her own personal struggle during the 1930s. As she watched food lines grow outside her photography studio, she became increasingly unsettled. She finally walked out into the streets and began slowly and quietly documenting the hungry. She continued to develop a method of documenting, “weaving words and photographs to create documents that would encourage social change” (*ibid*, p.31). Ultimately, Lange and her sociologist husband, Paul Taylor, worked for the Farm Security Administration documenting the effects of the Depression on poor rural farmers.

Picture magazines willing to exhibit in-depth photo essays began to find success in America. *Life* magazine was launched in 1936, followed soon after by *Look* in 1937.

Henry Luce, the publisher of both *Life* magazine and *Time* magazine, recognized early the role photographs could play in American journalism. The photograph, he said, “turns out to be an extraordinary instrument for correcting that really inherent evil in journalism which is its unbalance between the good news and the bad,” (qtd. *ibid*, p.36). Luce’s opinions are relevant because ultimately he would hire a struggling journalist named James Agee.

Dorothea Lange and others, experimenting during the 1930s in America, integrated art, literature, journalism and social science, with social awareness and change as their foundation. Not all photographers can be identified by their photographs; they did not all adhere to exactly the same technical or production style. What places the work of 1930s documentary photographers and writers into a common category called the “documentary tradition” is a combining of journalism, art, education, sociology and history (*ibid*, p.36).

The relationship between documentary workers of the 1930s with their “subjects” was

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also different from previous expressive trends. Unlike journalists, the Depression era documentary workers did not see a conflict between their participation and engagement with a subject and their respect for a factual record. They used a variety of means, words and photographs, to create their records. Because they saw their work as both an immediate tool for social change and as an historic record, documentary workers felt a “deep sense of moral responsibility to their subjects and to future generations, as well as to their contemporary audience” (*ibid*, p.37).

In 1936, at the height of the Depression, a young man from Tennessee, James Agee, was assigned by legendary magazine editor Henry Luce to write a story about sharecroppers in the Deep South for *Fortune* magazine. Agee was initially thrilled. Prior to this assignment, Agee had struggled with his seemingly insignificant journalistic assignments and his desire to investigate and write about something that he felt mattered, and he was happy to have an opportunity to work with photographer Walker Evans, who was at the peak of his documentary photography career (Hershey, Agee 1988). Walker had already spent time photographing rural poor for America’s New Deal’s Resettlement Administration.

Agee and Evans headed to Alabama to find a tenant farm family that could be representative of the issue. The experience had a profound impact on Agee, who was already known to be a highly sensitive and angst-ridden personality as well as a gifted writer. When Agee returned to *Fortune* magazine, he was given a set of parameters that he felt were impossible to work within. He refused to write the piece for *Fortune*, and ultimately left the magazine and signed with an agent to turn the story of the tenant farm families into a book. He did not feel his work, combined with the photographs taken by Evans, would result in the social awareness he wanted because of the limits placed on him by the magazine format. But, even the book form felt restricting to Agee. In one of his now famous letters to his friend, Father Flye, he expressed his frustration with the story. He didn’t feel he was capable of doing the people of Alabama justice; he felt he was actually being asked to write about “the nature of existence,” and he worried that outside forces were constantly trying to dictate the form that exercise should take (*ibid*).



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After three years' work, the publisher wasn't satisfied with Agee's manuscript. Extensive revisions were requested and Agee did not want to comply. The publisher ultimately dropped Agee as a client. Hired by *Time* magazine, Agee started to rebuild his life after allowing it to fall prey to infidelity and drinking. His manuscript was picked up once again by Houghton Mifflin publishers. And, in 1941, five years after Agee met the tenant farmers of Alabama, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was published (Agee 1988, *ibid*, p.xxxvii).

In *Famous Men*, Agee wrote that journalism is a form of lying. His dilemma, then, was how to "try to set truth free in what he saw as the headquarters of lying." Agee fought to overcome the traditional norms of journalism - the who, what, where, when and why - to be able to present "reality" as best he could with all the limits that come with being human. He expressed anger and frustration over the fact that he could only record "the cruel radiance of what is," then sit back and struggle with the inherent tension writers feel when they realize their works can never truly depict another person's reality (*ibid*, p. xxxvii). Agee did then what is now becoming more acceptable; he shared the process of reporting with his audience in a deeply personal way, allowing the flaws of truth seeking to be exposed.

*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* became a study of not only Alabama tenant farmers or James Agee the man, but of the very meaning of truth and reality. Agee puts to words much of what other Depression era documentary workers were experiencing. From an occupational perspective, the book became a seminal work in the philosophy of reporting information for an audience. Agee broke all the rules of journalism with his book length view of tenant farmers. *Famous Men* was "partly documentary, partly autobiographical and confessional on very high and sometimes difficult planes" (*ibid*, p.xxix).

Initial reviews of *Famous Men* were harsh. The angry tone and moral questioning didn't sit well with readers. In 1948, the book went out of print, selling only 1,025 copies. Agee's life continued to spiral out of control, and he was dead by the age of 45. The book eventually found its way to the hands of young Civil Rights activists who found a kindred spirit in Agee. John Hershey, a well-known American journalist, who wrote the foreword for the last printing of *Famous Men*, said Agee devised a quirky prose with uneven flow and with surprises and

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“dazzling beauty” to solve “his journalistic riddle” (*ibid* p.xxxviii). He points to the ultimate criteria for whether a journalist has done their job well: did the journalist keep his obligation to his readers, his conscience and his subjects? One of the tenant farmer’s wives, Mrs. Burroughs, said of Agee’s book that she’d read it “plumb through” and everything in it was “true” (*ibid* p.xxxix). To Hershey, this sentiment represented success as a journalist.

From a more intimate perspective, Agee’s partner in the tenant farmer project, Walker Evans, said that the writing “induced” by the tenant farm families is a reflection of Agee’s “resolute, private rebellion.” He said Agee’s rebellion was “unquenchable, self-damaging, deeply principled, infinitely costly and ultimately priceless” (*Ibid*, p.xliv).

In an application for a Guggenheim fellowship, Agee wrote that his approach would be “anti-artistic, anti-scientific and anti-journalistic,” though it would be analytic in both method and attitude. He said he would use some traditional forms of reporting and writing and some other forms such as novel and poetry. There would be “new” forms of writing and observation. He wrote that he wanted to provide a “skeptical study of the nature of reality and of the false nature of re-creation and of communication.” He said he wanted to tell “everything possible as accurately as possible: and to invent nothing” (Madden 1974). Agee wanted to reach an audience, to make a difference in the way the audience saw his subjects. But, he “despised” journalism, the very delivery system he needed to share his work. In *Famous Men* he wrote:

*“It seems to be curious, not to say obscene and thoroughly terrifying, that it could occur to an association of human beings drawn together through need and chance and for profit into a company, an organ of journalism, to pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings, an ignorant and helpless rural family, for the purpose of parading the nakedness, disadvantage and humiliation of these lives before another group of human beings, in the name of science, of ‘honest journalism’ (whatever that paradox may mean), of humanity, of social fearlessness, for money, and for a reputation for crusading and for unbiased which, when skillfully enough qualified, is exchangeable at any bank for money and that these people could be capable of meditating this prospect without the slightest doubt of their qualification to do an ‘honest’ piece of work, and with a conscience better than clear, in the virtual certitude of almost unanimous public approval (Agee 1939, p.7).*

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In effect, Agee threw up his hands. He recognized the impossibility of definitively representing “reality” with words and pictures, so he tried something new—honesty with his audience. His struggle is integral to the story he tells of the lives of Alabama’s poor farmers. What Agee could not do for himself, adequately express the almost mythic nature of the people he met in Alabama, “time has done for him” (Madden 1976). While the “personal, lyrical material undercut the impact of the photographs and of the documentary material” in the 1940s, today those qualities now have a “museum-like, almost Smithsonian aura” (*ibid*). Depression-era workers like Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor did not struggle with the same personal dilemma as Agee because journalism was not their nemesis; they were not working within the framework of a daily or weekly press.

As already noted, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* originally received largely unenthusiastic reviews and was initially a flop. Not until the new edition in 1960 did it become the cult book of a generation searching for alternatives to the values of an aggressive consumer society. The growing cult around James Agee, who died in 1955, also contributed to the late recognition of the book (Brix 1991).

In a different decade, the 1950s, a young American psychiatrist was struggling to understand his own inner conflict, that of being a privileged white man in a profession that treated patients like inanimate objects. His personal dilemma mirrored that of James Agee. Through a series of mentors, including doctor/writer/poet William Carlos Williams, psychiatrist Anna Freud, writer Percy Walker and charity worker Dorothy Day, and based on a wide range of literature including that of James Agee, Robert Coles chose an unconventional life path and way of being in the world. He drew upon the in-depth methods espoused by Agee and devised what he calls “documentary child psychiatry.” Coles was disillusioned with the traditional methods and perspective in the field of psychiatry. “I can claim no definitive conclusions about what any ‘group’ feels or thinks,” he wrote in *The Political Life of Children*. “One can only insist on being as tentative as possible, claiming only impressions, observations, thoughts, reflections, surmises, speculations, and in the end, a ‘way of seeing’” (Coles 1986).

Ultimately, Coles was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for a series of books, *Children in Crisis*,

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in which he used his “listening method” to explore the natural reflective and learning process of children in chaotic surroundings. He is now a professor at Harvard University where he teaches a highly acclaimed course entitled “Literature of Social Reflection,” or “Guilt 105,” depending on whom you ask (McCombs 1986). His view of literature draws heavily on the questions raised by Agee.

In 1995, Coles and photographer Alex Harris received a \$10 million-dollar grant from the Lyndhurst Foundation to start a magazine and create a center for documentary studies in

Durham, North Carolina. In downtown Durham, a small warehouse space had been the home to struggling documentary artists, many of whom operated under a philosophy similar to James Agee. As part of a team with photographer Alex Harris, The Center for Documentary Studies was born. The center had a clear mission and funding that held the center accountable for adhering to an independent status.

The Center for Documentary Studies is not a journalism program by any stretch of the imagination, except mine. It provides an educational setting focused on storytelling with empathy, broad worldview, respect and patience (Center for Documentary Studies 2004). It takes fieldwork techniques such as oral history and produces a product for an audience, albeit narrow and specialized.

It’s important to differentiate between media and journalism for the purpose of this discussion. Journalism herein is referring to gathering information, analyzing it based on “facts,” personal experience and training, and then rendering a reality using words and images. Media refers to the body of information we are exposed to on a daily basis including advertising, the Internet and television entertainment. Although James Agee did not live in this age of unlimited information access and global flow, he asked questions about the media’s responsibility to its audience that I believe are increasingly relevant to the questions being asked about journalism education today.

Alex Harris and Robert Coles translated their beliefs, which were heavily influenced by the questions raised by James Agee, into a facility that would provide shelter to people engaging in the documentary tradition. Over time, the center expanded its mission to include education, or the sharing of its accumulated knowledge with a new generation of documentarians. An in-

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depth look at what the documentary tradition has to offer working journalists had not been undertaken prior to my arrival there. I felt the events of September 11, perhaps even more than Bollinger's actions at Columbia, made an exploration of alternative forms of educating future journalists necessary.

Post September 11 in America, research, polls and surveys showed that the nation's character had changed and continues to change. How the real or perceived changes play out over time remains to be seen, but journalists are being asked to provide a new kind of perspective on global events and nationalism at home (Knickerbocker 2002). Traditional skills-based journalism education may or may not be adequate to address the complexities of this "new world." Conceptual courses, such as Free Expression or Mass Media and Society, offered in conjunction to skills courses may or may not be adequate to prepare new journalists to "make sense" of subtle trends and slow building tensions among people and countries.

John Pilger, a longtime critic of Western media, has said that in the West, we are "trained" to see others only in terms of their usefulness or their potential threat to "us" and that we regard cultural differences as more important than all the political and economic forces by which we judge ourselves. He says journalists are taught early that they must be loyal to institutional and corporate needs. "Self-censorship and censorship by omission are rarely pointed out to practicing journalists and students in media colleges," he says (2002 p.3). The documentary tradition requires practitioners of it to consider these issues in the course of their work.

The CDS purports to support "the active examination of contemporary society." Its structure and mission, then, combine creative skills (photography, writing, and filmmaking) with fieldwork to present "experiences that heighten our historical and cultural awareness" (Center for Documentary Studies 2010).

If a student graduated from the CDS program, and the CDS faculty succeeded in their mission, a student could pursue a journalism career with technical skill and a commitment to historical and cultural awareness based on the journalistic questions posed by James Agee. If skills and this worldview, along with a liberal arts education, were present in a mainstream reporter, would there be a greater chance that stories would empower and heighten the reader's

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sense of awareness over time? The University Of Wisconsin Department Of Education uses James Agee and Walker Evans as the example for the critical paradigm and “research for social justice” (2010). The question to be asked, the department tells students, is what form of curriculum and instruction might mobilize learners to uncover the ways power operates to construct their everyday common sense knowledge and undermine their autonomy? Perhaps an academic journalism department could also consider the work of James Agee as a means to the same end. Perhaps a case study exploring the CDS’ interpretation of James Agee in an academic setting could shed light on this potential, I thought.

The CDS drew from Agee’s concern that in order to represent others or places or feelings or actions, we must consider the very act of representing as a responsibility. Like critical theorists, and constructivist thinkers and even feminist researchers, Agee wanted to enter into documentary work with the “knowledge” on the table that any information gleaned from his work could be considered faulty or refutable because human beings are flawed but that the effort, attempting to give voice to the voiceless, was a lofty calling.

Because CDS founder Robert Coles chose to carry on Agee’s “fight,” the CDS initial structure and mission represented many aspects of Agee’s concerns with the way people represent others. One researcher has termed the type of work performed at the CDS as “personal journalism with moral concern” (Nash 1989). Although Coles is a physician and has not referred to his work as journalism, his publicly expressed philosophy mirrors that of journalists like Agee, George Orwell, and more currently, Bill Moyers.

It is unclear whether Agee was influenced by the work of George Orwell; however, the two have much in common. For the first time, ontological and epistemological issues were explored via journalism. Reporting on the Spanish Civil War in *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell made it clear to the reader that he did not know if his observations or analysis of the war were “correct.” He told readers that he could see only one small part of the war and this might distort the picture he had painted with words. “It is difficult to be certain about anything except

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what you have seen with your own eyes, and consciously or unconsciously everyone writes as a partisan,” he wrote (*ibid*, p.15). Orwell, like Agee, had a degree of disdain for “traditional” journalism. He went so far as to call journalism a “lying profession” (*ibid*, p.75) just as Agee did years later (Agee 1939).

What writers like Orwell and Agee asked themselves is now referred to as reflexivity. They struggled with a definition of “truth” because they realized they held truths different than those they were writing about. Their goal became finding ways to represent others’ truths while acknowledging the information was filtered through their own truths.

The “new journalists” of the 1960s did adopt a more personal voice; however, they did not adopt a moral concern. Theirs was literary experimentation which, unlike Agee and Orwell’s documentary style observing and writing, did achieve commercial success.

First the government, then individual writers and photographers, used documentary methods to shine a light on issues in such a way as to engage Americans in the democratic process. Although much has changed since the 1930s in America, particularly the apathetic nature of news consumers due to information overload and desensitization, the media is still charged with engaging Americans in the democratic process by acting as its information source. I believed the documentary tradition, which requires its practitioners to develop an empathetic worldview, might be able to contribute to a “new” type of reporting process in response to the events of September 11 and the quickly changing media technology landscape before us.

Robert Coles’ and Alex Harris brought this type of “empathetic journalistic” endeavor to the CDS. An in-depth look at Coles’ writings on the documentary tradition will appear later on these pages. Generally speaking here, the concerns James Agee expressed in the 30s, 40s and 50s are still concerns at the CDS. Even with the departure of Robert Coles, the CDS artists, teachers, staff and students explore philosophical questions while at the same time utilizing technological tools and writing skills to represent the lives of others. Traditional journalism education, for the most part, takes the opposite approach: students are taught skills and this instruction is separated from philosophical questions in the curricula. Once in the workplace, students are expected to connect their liberal arts studies to their journalistic skill and apply it in

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an environment not based on moral concern but on profit. It isn't their fault; that's the market we send them into.

My intention was to conduct a case study of the CDS to answer this research question: How does the CDS translate Agee-type questions and concerns of the “documentary tradition” into an educational setting? The goal of the research was to explore *the potential* for the documentary tradition to form the foundation for a journalism education curriculum, albeit one on the fringe of current thinking, perhaps encouraging some journalism programs to infuse an alternative track into their existing programs or create a curriculum based on the documentary tradition.

But, events in my personal life caused me to stop dead in my tracks, look around, look inward and change research directions. I started to ask myself why I was attracted to the questions Agee raised and the mission of the CDS because many of the academics I came in contact with thought his was a strange type of educational model to connect with the tenets of journalism.

I noticed that I had much in common with the instructors at the CDS and little in common with the literature representing my chosen discipline of journalism. Both involved storytelling and representation, but there was little in common when it came to purpose, product and audience.

I believe the reason we do not ask the personal “why” questions often enough or deep enough is because we would be forced to reflect on the reasons for our own actions. Why do we continue to talk about curriculum development without first understanding why certain people want the discipline to go in one direction and certain people want to see it developed in a different direction, and yet others want to see journalism develop in yet another direction, I wondered. Who is right? Is there a right? Why does the disciplinary literature not acknowledge the possibility that human beings, for the most part, act in their own best interests? It is unlikely that a journalist/scholar is going to advocate for a heavily theoretic generic communications program. It is highly unlikely that a scholar in the field of advertising is going to advocate for a greater skills oriented program. A Tier One research institution is more likely



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to prefer a curriculum much different than a small school in a semi-rural area. A college with a blue-collar student body will undoubtedly implement a program different in quality than a university with a student body that does not have an urgent need to work while attending school. Predominantly commuter schools versus predominantly residential schools will have a different dynamic on their campuses. Accreditation has failed to serve as a key hiring criteria, as media outlets do not appear to prefer students from accredited institutions over a student from a non-accredited program. College leadership preferences also must be considered if we assume humans are fallible and true objectivity not possible.

I thought a case study with a personal theoretical lens might prompt journalism educators to stop for a moment and investigate the human factor, And, I theorized, it might not be possible to continue with “business as usual.”

If we see educators, scholars and academic leaders as human rather than controversial elements of institutional entities, we could all collectively exhale and focus on nurturing institutional strengths by way of faculty strengths and weaknesses. We might not feel pressured to make educators conform to a role that creates moral tension in their lives. Maybe we could develop schools with clearly defined “character zones” just as municipalities use them for long range urban planning.

It was my impression that the CDS practitioners and researchers were intimately involved with their subject matter and the process of self-reflection was an integral part of their work. It appealed to me in a deeply personal way, though at the time I didn’t understand why.

As my story unfolds, it will become clear why I was, and am, attracted to the documentary tradition and why I believe others are not. This same principle can then be applied to journalism education: why do some educators want to focus on theory or media criticism and why do some remain committed to skills-oriented programs? Is it the principles underlying those approaches, or is it because their preferences are directly related to their own experience?

It is my hope that journalism educators will relate to some of my logic, life events and choices. They, in turn, might look at their own “inner landscape,” and redirect the discourse in their own schools of journalism. To move the reader from Point A (a hypothesis involving a

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journalism education curriculum based on the documentary tradition) to Point B (a working model), Chapter Two will start the journey with explanation of a mixed-genre research methodology which will be applied to a detailed literature review in the fields of journalism and documentary arts in Chapters Three and Four.

The anchor for this thesis is Chapter Five: My Story. This is the “personal” in Scholarly Personal Narrative. My story connects the life of a teacher to the life in the classroom and connects the literature to the method to the case study to the conclusions drawn. Chapter Five is neatly situated in the middle of the nine chapters of the thesis. Chapters Six through Eight detail the activities and teacher philosophies and courses found at the Duke Center for Documentary Studies and these details are interpreted in the context of the literature and my story.

In Chapter Nine I will offer a model for journalism education based on the current debate in the academic community, what we know about the Duke Center for Documentary

Studies and my observations based on personal experience. . This model chooses neither practice nor theory as its focal point; it is based on worldview and it sits at the center of the academic disciplines as a resource to all students, not just traditional journalism students. Chapter 10 brings the reader full circle by describing the attempt to implement the proposed model at a small liberal arts faith-based college. And lastly, Chapter 11 gives you, the reader, to glimpse of my first attempt at implementing the Story Center model.

## Chapter Two

### Methods and “madness”

Today, we have the opportunity to work within a postmodern research environment with a long list of approaches to knowing, learning and reporting our understandings (Richardson 2000, Denzin 1986, 1991; Lehman 1991; Lather 1991). In fact, researcher Laurel Richardson has given multi-genre analytic practices a name - creative analytic practices (CAP) - because she feels a postmodern and poststructuralist approach to writing is, in itself, a method of inquiry, not just a method of reporting (2000). She can list no less than 40 types of blurred genre modes of inquiry related to a postmodern and poststructural research environment (2000, p.930). On the heels of this type of mixed-genre research, researcher Robert J. Nash has slowly developed a new research method that can be applied to professional schools in an age of increasingly job-oriented higher education. He calls this method Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) (2004, p.5). It is a work in progress, one that draws upon a variety of qualitative methods. The SPN method will be used to wrap around a case study, giving that study personal context.

Postmodernism places all information in “doubt,” at least suspect to a universal claim of “right” or “true.” Post structuralism connects language to meaning, not reflecting social reality but actually creating social reality. Although I do not believe language or social interaction alone create reality, I believe they play a part in the process of “knowing” in differing degrees among different groups or individuals. Knowing the self intimately and knowing about a subject become intertwined in the writing process. This allows writers to reflect and write about localized knowledge and not attempt to “say everything at once to everyone” (Richardson 2000 p.929). The writing process itself becomes part of the research process.

At the core of postmodernism is a doubt that any mode of thinking can lay claim to absolute rightness. It was born out of a desire to challenge the assumptions of modernism such as the reliance on metaphysical concepts and views of the subject, its adherence to science and technology (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). A postmodern view of the world and research allows for a shift from Westernized science to a nuanced understanding of the complexity of individual views and actions (*ibid*, p.115). Qualitative research must take into account the complex history of world thinking. A general description of qualitative research conducted in a

postmodern environment is offered by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln:

*“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (2000, p.3)*

This description, however, does not speak to the many epistemological and ontological beliefs of the interpreters. The authors make reference to this by saying, “the meanings people bring to them,” and it is those “meanings” that require researchers to present with a clear understanding of the underlying beliefs by which they were derived. Postmodernism does not describe the multitude of belief systems currently espoused in the research environment; it simply describes the move away from adherence to a positivist viewpoint.

Postructuralism plays a part in my research because I define it as Lather does: “the working out of [those] shifts within the arenas of academic theory” (1991, p.4) and as Richardson does: “It directs us to understand ourselves reflectively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; and second, it frees us from trying to write a single text in which we say everything at once to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of science writing on our consciousness, as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche. Writing is validated as a method of knowing” (2000, p.929). Considering postmodernism and postructuralism in this way affects my research in that I consider it my duty to view the world holistically, which includes researching researchers. A postmodern research environment gives me permission to deeply explore my own history and how that affects my research, educational practice and personal life choices, which in turn gives others, pause to consider how their stories have an impact on their pedagogical practices.

### **Major philosophical belief systems**

To place my mixed-method approach in context, I will briefly categorize belief systems into positivism, interpretivism/constructivism and critical theory, while at the same recognizing there are dozens of variants within each paradigm.

If inquiry, or research, is a process of “creating knowledge,” because knowledge is a product of human activity, we can separate approaches to knowledge into categories of discovery, interpretation and criticism which correspond to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory (Littlejohn 1992, p.11).

As a contrast to Littlejohn’s categorization, philosopher Jurgen Habermas said knowledge is constructed (not created) based on three types of human interest: technical, practical and emancipatory (1972). I believe humans construct knowledge and a belief in reality based on their experiences and interpretations and some, like me, operate at times under each of these interest categories and at times, these categories overlap without contradicting the basic principles associated with radical constructivism. I believe that identifying with several philosophical paradigms at once and utilizing methods associated with different paradigms *is caused* by holding a radical constructivist worldview.

### **Positivism, discovery and/or practical interest**

The discovery approach, or positivistic approach, assumes there is “knowledge” out there waiting to be discovered. This naturally assumes that a “real world” exists out there apart from our minds (Guba 2000.) Positivism as a paradigm was born out of a desire to challenge religious explanations for the way society “was.” Rather than studying society based on religious beliefs, it was felt that society could be studied based on scientific objectivity. Positivism evolved from that of French philosopher Auguste Comte’s version to Social Darwinism, Marxism’s conflict theory and class studies, ultimately to a point, in which researchers determined society could not always or best be understood by scientific methods (Babbie 1995,) positivistically conducted researches a language of objectivity, distance and

control because it is believed these are the tools of “real” social science (Greenwood & Levin 2000, p.92).

Habermas’ view of practical interest, as well as Littlejohn’s view of discovering knowledge, would mean that you either believe you can “discover” knowledge, or you believe knowledge is constructed because you either believe there is a tangible discoverable world out there or you believe reality is a construct of individual minds. I adhere to the latter, though I believe there is such a thing as useful knowledge to be learned.

### **Critical theory**

Feminist Patti Lather interprets Habermas’ categories of human interest by renaming them Predict, Understand, Emancipate, and she adds Deconstruct (1996, p.7) Lather says she places herself within the emancipatory paradigm; however, she has “great fascination with the implications of deconstruction for the research and teaching” she does in the name of “liberation” (1991, p.7). Lather is one example of a researcher working within the critical paradigm who keeps her eye on the implications of other types of research as well.

Just as the interpretivist paradigm serves as an umbrella for various streams of belief systems, the critical paradigm has grown to encompass an equal array of belief systems. For critical theorists, issues of values, power, ideology and change sit at the forefront of their research. Although there are several “strands” of critical theory, they all generally share three elements in common. firstly, critical social scientists believe it is important to understand the lived experience of real people in context. Because of this, critical social scientists often adopt some of the ideas and methodologies of interpretive theories. The difference between interpretive work and critical work is that critical theorists interpret society’s behaviors in an effort to understand the way that certain groups are oppressed. Secondly, critical theorists attempt to bring hidden oppressive structures to light. They often borrow from structuralism to do this. Third, critical researchers attempt to fuse theory with action (Littlejohn, p.239).

Critical theory is concerned with the way certain groups dominate others, with issues of justice and the way that the “economy, matters of race, class, gender, ideologies, discourses,

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education, religion and other social institutions interact to construct a social system” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.281). Or, as Geuss states (1980), critical theory not only identifies situations of domination and/or oppression, it attempts to “convince” those oppressed to see their plight and move toward liberation.

In this light, I am concerned with the way in which journalism curricula serve the status quo rather than attempting to educate broadly for ultimate change in American media products. It is my contention that curricular development often reflects the interests of those involved in the development rather than the interests of students and society. Privileged groups, such as faculty, often have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages; the dynamics of such efforts often become a central focus of critical research” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.281). However, it is not possible for me to adhere entirely to a critical framework, only to the emancipatory concerns of critical theory.

Criticalists Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren summarize the key features of criticalist researchers this way:

*“We are defining a criticalist as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions; that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable; that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g. class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; and, finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997).*

### **Social Constructivism/Radical Constructivism**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was concern that the human sciences could not be studied using the same methods as social sciences. That is, to understand human nature it was not plausible to reduce it to quantitative methods or a positivistic worldview. To grasp the causes of actions, you need to understand “meanings” which requires a view of the world much different than that of a positivist. It requires interpretation of others and interpretation is a highly subjective activity which will be affected by values and beliefs. Therefore, research in the human sciences could not be value-free (Schwandt 2000, p.191).

As noted above, if you believe reality is constructed in the mind of an individual, then to understand the “realities” of others in an effort to understand phenomena, you must use methods to interpret the actions of others. This places constructivist ontology and epistemology in a family with interpretivism (*ibid*, p.193). Constructivism, generally speaking, asserts that we don’t find or discover knowledge; we construct it or make it based on our environment and experiences (*ibid*, p.189). Constructivists look for meaning from the inside out and ways to narrate that meaning (Nash 2004, p.19). Constructivists assert that knowledge and reality cannot be reduced to something of absolute value. Von Glaserfeld, the father of radical constructivism, contends that we don’t match reality to truth. Instead, he says, we construct reality based on its usefulness or “viability” (1995, p.7).

Based on my life experience, including academic experience, I align myself with the constructivist paradigm even though I don’t wholeheartedly accept the concept of “paradigm,” which will be discussed further in this thesis. Because my beliefs also fall within an interpretivist general framework, it is necessary to attempt to frame the interpretive project in such a way as to render it useful to relevant stakeholders. As noted earlier, within the interpretivist paradigm, there are many different views. However, generally speaking, interpretivists do have some beliefs in common. They are critical of “scientism” and reject research methods that disengage the knower from the known. They don’t believe foundationalist epistemology will lead to an understanding of complex “others” (Guba & Lincoln, 2000, p.201.). Qualitative inquirers, or “new paradigm” inquirers, are generally united in their opposition to a strict positivistic approach to research. This leaves the door wide open for different ways of thinking about



reality and truth and knowledge despite the common rejection of a well-defined world “out there” with information to be “discovered” leading to an absolute truth. I believe this issue is best placed in general categories using the terms “foundational” and “anti-foundational.”

If a person believes there is a “real” world outside of the human mind and that world can be approached and/or discovered by using particular research methods, she is adhering to foundationalist criteria and realist ontology (Guba & Lincoln 2000, p.176). Nonfoundationalists usually feel there are no ultimate criteria by which to judge truth or reality; we just agree on certain criteria at a given point in time or we negotiate criteria as a matter of social compromise. Under this simplistic explanation, most foundationalists are realists and many anti or nonfoundationalists are relativists (*ibid*). My research is conducted from a nonfoundational point of view, although I believe there are benefits to positivist research methods.

Critical theorists tend to believe there is a world out there beyond human existence. Their focus is on equalizing power structures and exposing unequal power structures. Constructivists do not generally agree there are unvarying standards by which we can know the truth on a universal basis (*ibid*, p.177). If this is true, it would seem that a researcher could not engage with multiple paradigms at that same time without contradicting herself ontologically. However, if you see the world as radical constructivists do, it is easier to understand how intention and beliefs could land you in the middle of several different modes of thinking at the same time.

For the purpose of research choices and design, credibility and reliability, researchers align themselves with philosophical paradigms that are based on historical evolution and group acceptance that provide parameters for evaluating research foundations. Though not every researcher can “see” herself only within the confines of one particular paradigm, it is possible to associate yourself with the leanings of a general philosophical tradition (Guba 1993). I most closely relate to a radical constructivist point of view about the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge and learning. Radical constructivism is sometimes seen as dangerously relativistic because it holds that you cannot represent your views or research findings as true, only that they come from an experience-based perspective and that they may be considered viable and credible

if they are useful to someone, though not necessarily all ( Margolis 1991).

It is also difficult for a radical constructivist to ‘argue’ the merits of her philosophical stance because to do so assumes a rightness, which would be “perjury” for a radical constructivist (von Glaserfeld 1990, p.1). Instead of “right” or “wrong” or “true” or even “representation,” von Glaserfeld says we need to find a way of “relating knowledge to reality that does not imply anything like match or correspondence” (*ibid*). For a theory to be taken seriously, says Von Glaserfeld, it has to show that it sets itself apart from other theories of knowledge. Traditional constructivists look for ways in which reality and knowledge “match.” Radical constructivism, on the other hand, uses the term “fit” in place of “match.” He likens this philosophy to a lock that can only be opened by a key that fits (1984, p.3).

Von Glaserfeld offers a view of radical constructivism as rooted in the age of the Sceptics, evolving as a philosophy through the work of Plato and Locke, Descartes and Berkeley, Hume and Kant, all of whom sought to “demolish” realism (1984). When Kant suggested that concepts of space and time were not “characteristics of the universe,” but rather “necessary forms of human experience,” we were left with questions about whether we can even “imagine” the real structure of the world (*ibid*).

The concepts underlying radical constructivism challenge the idea of knowledge, says von Glaserfeld, because they argue against the two requirements associated popularly with epistemology. First, “true knowledge” has been considered that which exists independent of the knower. Second, the knowledge can only be taken seriously if it claims to represent a world of “things-in-themselves,” a world out there that absolutely exists. Although we do not claim absolute truths, we believe there is such a thing as useful knowledge (1990, p.3). Radical constructivism is a theory of personal responsibility (Vuyk 1981). The current understanding, which is a work in progress, of radical constructivism is that a “theory of knowing” highlights the knower’s responsibility for what the knower constructs. (von Glaserfeld 1984, p.22).

Just as critical theory has many “streams,” constructivism is not a monolithic entity. Constructivism has been referred to by many names from radical to social, physical, evolutionary to postmodern (Steffe & Gale 1995; Prawat 1996; Heylighen 1993). Von Glaserfeld accepts that there are as many varieties of constructivism as there are researchers

(1995, p.459). Radical constructivism is considered “radical” because it “breaks with convention and develops a theory of knowledge in which knowledge does not reflect an objective, ontological reality but exclusively an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience,” (von Glaserfeld 1984, p.24).

Von Glaserfeld, in acknowledging critics, distinguishes radical constructivism from other theories of knowledge by referring to it as a “theory of knowing.” He says that critics want to understand how radical constructivism can make truth claims, yet to do this, would be to violate the tenets of radical constructivism which does not adhere to a traditional form of Truth. (von Glaserfeld 1988). In effect, radical constructivism acknowledges there is such a thing as useful knowledge but not absolute Truth derived from an absolute “world out there.” Radical constructivism starts from an assumption that we construct meaning based on our own experience. We have no way of “knowing” if our experiences are the same. This leads critics to claim that radical constructivism is dangerously relativistic (1995, p.1).

Based on Piaget’s genetic epistemology, von Glaserfeld defines radical constructivist thought this way: 1) knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication; knowledge is actively built up by the cognizing subject. 2) The function of cognition is adaptive, in the biological sense of the term, tending towards fit or viability. Cognition serves the subject’s organization of the experiential world, not the discovery of an objective ontological reality. (1995, p.18). On a first glance, radical constructivism appears to be a relativist venture, allowing cognizing subjects to create any reality they like. Von Glaserfeld addresses this important question by arguing that radical constructivism does not allow a researcher to lapse into solipsism. Radical constructivism is “subject to constraints” he says. (1990, p.6). It is normal, and acceptable, he says, to refer to objects and events as if they have ontological status in our everyday lives. It is when we let our everyday discourse “turn into belief” and begin to see it as “unquestionable dogma,” that we get ourselves into trouble. Radical constructivists do not claim to have found an ontological truth; it proposes a hypothetical model “that may turn out to be a useful one” (*ibid*).

Von Glaserfeld’s “theory of knowing” is one of personal responsibility, a concept that forms the foundation of my being in this world.

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“If the view is adopted that ‘knowledge’ is the conceptual means to make sense of experience, rather than a ‘representation’ of something that is supposed to lie beyond it, this shift of perspective brings with it an important corollary,” says von Glaserfeld. “The concepts and relations in terms of which we perceive and conceive the experiential world we live in are necessarily generated by ourselves” (1995, p.19).

This means, we are responsible for the world we are experiencing. Radical constructivism does not propose that we can create anything we like, but it does claim that “within the constraints that limit our construction, there is room for infinity of alternatives. This suggests that von Glaserfeld’s “theory of knowing” paints a picture of a world in which the knower has responsibility for what the knower constructs.

My research, in light of radical constructivism, was conducted in an effort to “understand” the way in which a James Agee-based documentary tradition played out in an educational setting. The very choice of the unit of study is based on the reality I have constructed, and a curricular need based on that reality, which may resonate with other journalism education scholars of similar construction. Or, the research findings based, on a certain experience based construction may offer insights that prove useful to existing journalism program developers and/or journalism faculty.

Using Habermas’ critical theory of human interest (Mezirow 1981) as a guide, which elucidates three areas of human interest: technical, practical and emancipatory, “emancipation” and change are my key ideological concerns, but the case study was performed not to “emancipate” or “liberate” those involved in the study or groups engaging in documentary work; the goal of the study was to understand a particular type of curriculum in the hopes that it might have something to offer those involved in journalism education. Privileged groups, such as faculty, often have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages; the dynamics of such efforts often become a central focus of critical research,” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p.281) However, it is not possible for me to adhere entirely to a critical framework because I place myself ontologically and epistemologically within the constructivist paradigm. And, in terms of ontology, radical constructivists make no truth claims ontologically.

Having discussed academic concepts related to reality and knowledge, I must confess

that if given the freedom to discuss my “actual” beliefs, I would choose not to depend on these concepts as the foundation for research at all. This belief of mine closely resembles the dilemma writer James Agee had when he questioned our ability to ever do justice to truth with human fallibilities, and should we even be trying? Like Agee, who felt his work could not fit into the boundaries dictated by the industry, many researchers don’t feel their research fits into the boundaries dictated by the institution. This is not to condemn traditional research or ways of defining reality, it is to say that I don’t personally connect with any of them because as a Christian, all of my beliefs and values and actions are formed by God and the salvation we have been afforded by Jesus’ death. To wander off on a discussion about the role Christianity plays in the secular academy would not further understanding of my research goals; I just felt that in the interest of full disclosure, I should note that my faith is my paradigm and each person’s faith is different. This issue will be discussed further in this chapter.

### **Mixed Genre Methods**

The question this research endeavor hopes to answer, “who should teach journalism?” cannot be “answered” using traditional research methods. The question has not been asked in journalism education, rather, decisions have been made for the discipline as a whole without this basic question addressed. I am proposing that journalism education, as an academic discipline, engage in new and innovative research methods to re-frame and re-direct the discipline’s public discourse, hiring practices and curriculum development. As noted on previous pages, I believe we first need to understand who is teaching journalism so that we have at least one teacher story to use as a contextual tool for future research.

Just as journalists attempt to use every tool available to understand the many layers of truth, I have used multiple methods to provide the reader with multiple pictures that may be useful to the reader. To make judgment about who should teach journalism, I am providing the personal story of one journalism teacher who is attracted to a particular style of practice and product. As an example of the “particular” style of practice and product, the Center for Documentary Studies has been viewed from all angles using many of the codified practices for

traditional case study research.

When I began my teaching career, I had the good fortune to be a member of what is referred to as a “premier teaching institution,” not a research-oriented institution. While I was at that private liberal arts college, I was able to focus on teaching. I was able to be innovative and not deemed irrelevant because I did not hold a doctoral degree. I was under no pressure to pursue a doctorate.

While I was satisfied at one time to specialize in curricular models for journalism education, I found that interest slipping down my priority list no matter how hard I tried to keep it at the top. In its place arose the issue of human decency, hardly a topic on the national academic journalism agenda. I am fascinated by the concept of integrity and the role it plays in academic journalism education and personal lives. My life story explains this fascination. This fascination is the single most important element I bring to the classroom, above practice and above theory.

The reason for this fascination and the role it plays in my research interests will become evident on pages to follow. This is a critical issue if we agree that one goal of education is to instill in students a worldview that will result in productive and compassionate members of society, i.e. active participants in community life. Can we instill integrity in our students if we do not possess it ourselves? In the hiring process, how would integrity be measured? Should daily newsroom experience trump integrity? What research method and philosophical framework would best answer these questions and how would we land on an acceptable definition of integrity? Educator Walt Harrington, in the introduction to his book “Intimate Journalism,” warned journalists not to divulge their softness in the newsroom lest they be dubbed kooky by their editors and their peers (1997, p.xix). In the doctoral process, generally speaking, “soft” science is considered just that, soft. In the past decade, “soft” methodologies have gained a strong foothold, its merits increasingly making their way to the forefront of disciplinary discussion and program development.

All researchers “approach” the data collection, analysis and interpretation differently. Some research projects are designed to test theory, others designed to create theory and yet others designed to explore new areas of knowledge or ask questions not previously asked in a particular field. Regardless of the goal of the research, it must be framed within a philosophical, theoretical or conceptual lens (Creswell, 1998, p.73). The lens may be broad, such as epistemological or ontological in nature or they may be ideological such as postmodern, poststructuralist or critical. Or, the lens might be more narrow in nature, a set of propositions or hypotheses that reside in theories of the social and human sciences (Flinders & Mills, 1993).

The purpose of my initial research was to explore and then describe a particular way of seeing and a particular method of representing with that particular perspective in an educational setting, my intention was twofold: first, to gather information via a limited case study which would inform a formal research design. A second stage was planned to gather more data and subject it to grounded theory methods, allowing theory to emerge. However, to be honest, the original motivation for the choice of research project was personal and the research path was continually redirected by my unwillingness to ignore my intuition.

Often qualitative researchers write, and then decide what they are writing about (Geertz, 1989). And, often qualitative researchers discover while they are writing (Richardson in Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Advancing theoretical knowledge is not a condition of qualitative research.

Wolcott suggests that theory be placed into the qualitative report at the point in which the theory actually became relevant or appropriate or “discovered” (Wolcott, 2001, p.77). In some types of research activities, particularly descriptive, relying on “too much theory” prior to data collection may defeat the very purpose of the effort. Wolcott advises that descriptive research theory “is a way of asking (inquiring) that is guided by a reasonable answer” (*Ibid*, p. 81). Whether you call this theoretical, he says, is up to the researcher or the demands placed upon them. In the summing up stage, Wolcott says it is appropriate to draw in theory what is implicated by your findings (*Ibid*).

Through the writing process, which has been ongoing for a period of six years since the original data collection occurred, new insights emerged which changed the course of my thesis. I desperately wanted to conduct research in an authoritative distant voice with a codified set of research methods with neat and tidy boundaries because I felt this would make me appear

scholarly, intellectual and worthy of admittance to the academy. I wanted to draw upon “big” social theory and use highly theoretical language. I wanted to employ parenthetical referencing although the practice conflicts with the epistemological and ontological tenets of journalism as I understand it and which will be discussed in later chapters. On subsequent pages, the term “I wanted” will be turned on its head.

Through the writing process, reflection and revision process, I have gained the courage to take a research position that honors and respects my particular way of thinking and expression. It also honors my academic discipline. I consider myself fortunate to enter the research field at a time of expanded definitions. I am fortunate a name has been given to the positions I feel compelled to take. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, just two of many qualitative researchers investigating the relationship of self to research process, refer to “reflective ethnography” as the use of personal experience to illuminate and/or illustrate the rationale for research choices and methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.741).

This type of reflexivity and reflexive writing, says Tedlock (1991) is due to a change that occurred in the 1970s. The emphasis from participant observation moved to “an observation of participation” and an emphasis on the process of writing and its role in inquiry. Adler and Adler have identified and elaborated on complete-member researchers which they describe as someone who either begins to identify with the “other” being studied or feels “converted” to the process under observation (1987). As I have explored in the data presentation, I started the research process with a “favorable” bias toward the work conducted at the Center for Documentary Studies. I made every attempt to conduct the data collection, analysis and interpretation under a journalistically “objective” framework. However, as the research process continued, I did feel increasingly enamored and supportive of the documentary tradition.

If the choice of research is based in large part on what I perceive is needed in contemporary journalism education, then I believe it is necessary to combine the personal narrative with the narrative of the findings. I am backed up by the work of Ellis and Bocher as they investigate the growing trend of more personal, intimate and self-conscious writing. The use of a less anonymous, more personal writing is paralleled in the social sciences by the field of journalism (2001, p.744).



There are critics of the use of stories and reflexivity as part of the social science process. Atkinson is perhaps one of the most vocal. He says that any work that focuses on story analysis is not research. The claims that stories can generate knowledge should not be taken seriously, he says (2006). But, Ellis and Bochner passionately defend those of us whose ontological and epistemologic positions require us to consider the self-part of the construction of meaning along with the writing process and empirical data. To do this, Ellis and Bochner expand the meaning of social inquiry. They ask, as do I:

“Why should caring and empathy be secondary to controlling and knowing? Why must academics be conditioned to believe that a text is important only to the extent it moves beyond the merely personal? We need to question our assumptions, the metarules that govern the institutional workings of social science—arguments over feelings, theories over stories, abstractions over concrete events, sophisticated jargon over accessible prose. Why should we be ashamed if our work has therapeutic or personal values? Besides, haven’t our personal stories always been embedded in our research monographs? The question is whether we should express our vulnerability and subjectivity openly in the text or hide them behind ‘social analysis.’” (2001, p.756) I don’t believe it is a coincidence that discussions such as this about the role of the journalist in the reporting process are also taking place in the journalism community. If we are deconstructing the public perception of the concept of objectivity, then we must also consider what this means to our narrative options. Why must the front page six inch story about the city council meeting be written in an impersonal inverted pyramid style? Breaking that tradition, even discussing that kind of “radical” change is as “controversial” as the introduction of blurred edges to research methods as seen in qualitative inquiry.

### **Blurring the Edges: Case study, writing as inquiry, scholarly personal narrative**

The research design plan was devised to address the research goal. I wanted to look at the Center for Documentary Studies’ activities up close and “learn” as much as possible about the structure in place and the staff. But, I also felt compelled to then explore the reasons why I could not be objective. I wanted full disclosure and in the process of writing, I realized that the people

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at the Center for Documentary Studies were as important as the concept driving the center. I also realized that my connection to the people and the work at the CDS was as important as the case study itself.

Prior to arriving on site to observe the center staff at work, the web site and printed materials were my only real sources of information. I did not want to assume that these sources were accurate; I wanted to see if the “actual” matched the theoretical.

I did not want to just observe classes in session. I wanted to understand how the center was structured, how it maneuvered around its many projects and goals ranging from community programs to art exhibits, lectures, courses, grant implementation and book publishing. I wanted to know how it had transitioned from a non-profit entity supporting professionals to a university affiliated educational center.

I had very little but gut instinct on which to base my theory that the type of language used to describe itself seemed to mirror language used to describe critical thinking and empathy, two of the key goals of journalism education as I see it. The descriptors spoke of a center dedicated to exploring the experiences of others and to allowing fieldwork to evolve naturally. It appeared from the web site, publishing selections and publicity literature that the center valued the process of collecting images and information and valued the people who contribute to our knowledge of others.

While the center does not engage in the production of a mass medium, I wondered how the philosophy behind the center’s work might manifest itself in a mainstream environment. I was not, and am not, interested in relegating all new ideas to the alternative media formats where a narrow niche audience might be reached. My personal interests lie in mass communication, reaching as many people as possible at the same time. Documentary work is a specialized field offered to a narrow audience.

There was no way to know if my vision could or should be realized. That was not the goal. I set research goals that focused on simply exploring the possible educational outcomes of the center’s activities.

To assess the center’s activities, I arranged for on-site access for a period of two months, the first two months of Duke University’s fall semester. I asked for, and was granted, classroom

observation rights. I was granted permission to interview staff, current students and former students. The only restriction placed on me was that I would not be given access to financial records. The wording on responses from the center made it clear to me that it welcomed the opportunity to be observed by an “outsider,” but it did not want to engage in an evaluative process. I sensed that the center was in a fragile transition period after the departure of one of its founders, Dr. Robert Coles, and the center’s magazine, *Doubletake*, which left with Dr. Coles.

As noted in Chapter One, and detailed in Chapter Five, I initially chose to study the Center for Documentary Studies in Durham, North Carolina. My research story sets the context for the final research methodology utilized; however, the initial research design was in the form of a traditional case study. Although I chose to retrace my efforts and explore the Scholarly Personal Narrative method, I think it is insightful to the reader to see the evolution of this research effort. The following is the explanation of the case study methodology written in 2004 with no editing to reflect the new direction I took. This information will take on added significance when it is considered in the context of my personal research journey. The radical shift from traditional academic case study to highly exploratory Scholarly Personal Narrative is a direct result of the changing nature of my academic affiliations and the state of journalism in higher education over half a decade from the beginning of the research project to the end. At the end of the day, the SPN incorporates all aspects of the formal case study; it just wraps the case study in a personal narrative that allows the reader an opportunity to view a particular subject through personal and qualitative eyes. Ultimately, a mixed-method approach was chosen to best address the research question: who should teach journalism?

### **Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN)**

What you are about to read is a Scholarly Personal Narrative as defined by researcher/educator Robert J. Nash at the University of Vermont. Nash has made the argument often and well that narrative based knowledge and inquiry has scholarly merit. He is supported by notable scholars whose credentials are impeccable (Witherall 2004; Behar 2004; Hart 2004) He recognizes that not all scholars will accept the merit criteria he has set forth. Engaging in

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such a research activity is a risk, but those who take the risk say that the rewards far outweigh the skeptics. The SPN is a methodology with a particular theoretical framework (2008 p.4).

In the field of journalism in particular, there is little in the literature related to reflexive inquiry, teacher formation or pedagogy. Journalism scholar Barbie Zelizer, in her book “Taking journalism seriously: News and the Academy,” says that her personal story offers concrete evidence that many teachers suffer from the contentious public dialogue. The field of academic journalism resembles “a territory at war with itself,” (2004 p.3) The current study of journalism in the academy has divided journalism scholars from each other and the rest of the academy (*Ibid* p.4) Zelizer’s publications have contributed a new type of voice to the academic discourse. She acknowledges the debate over teacher qualifications and shares my opinion that “an equalization of voices is a necessary precondition to engaging in new inquiry into journalism”. What makes this a difficult task, says Seizer, is that within the academy there is debate over who is best qualified to make claims about knowledge, which brings us right back to square one. What determines the definition of “qualified?” (*ibid*, p.6)

Nash has taken the entire body of literature related to research styles and fused many of the qualitative personal aspects to create credible criteria for scholarly personal narratives necessary for acceptance in the academy.

- 1) SPN writers intentionally organize their essays around themes, issues, constructs and concepts that carry larger, more universalizable meanings for readers
- 2) Truth in SPNs is both problematic and simple depending on the opinion of the reader.
- 3) In the spirit of postmodern truth criteria, SPNs must include open endedness, plausibility, vulnerability, narrative creativity, interpretive ingenuity, coherence, generalizability, trustworthiness caution and personal honesty. (*Ibid*, p.41)

Although the SPN method is “evolving,” Nash has considered the needs of the academy in determining a researcher’s abilities. An SPN must show competence in writing, telling a story and applying the knowledge gained from the writing process to the academic environment.

- 1) Clear constructs, hooks and questions, evocative questions, a device to draw readers in

- 2) Move from particular to general and back
- 3) Try to draw larger implications from your personal stories
- 4) Draw from your vast store of formal background knowledge
- 5) Always try to tell a good story
- 6) Show passion
- 7) Tell your story in an open ended way
- 8) Remember that writing is both a craft and an art
- 9) Use citations when appropriate
- 10) Love and respect eloquent clear language (*ibid*, p.57)

My personal narrative is written in the context of a changing landscape of higher education in America. It is written in an age of experimentation with qualitative research methods. It is written in an age mired in debate about how to define faculty quality and how we should go about nurturing teacher formation. Research, in this context, needs to address questions of why and how which cannot always be answered by quantitative research methods. In fact, if quantitative methods answered these questions, we would not still have the same dueling discourses in the journalism discipline.

The SPN, says Nash, can inspire others in a significant way. “If it enlarges, rather than undermines, the conventional canons of scholarship it is, in my opinion, to transform the academy and the world,” writes Nash (*ibid*, p.4). Personal narratives are particularly important to educators and other helping professions. It is through the sharing of stories that professionals and scholars are able to meet clients and students where they actually are in their lives” (*ibid* p.17). The radical introspection and storytelling in scholarly writing have dual value to disciplines; they have particular application and are universalizable. At its best, a scholar’s self-interrogation can find a way to use insights discovered through the process to draw larger conclusions, even challenge and reconstruct old narratives. (*ibid* p.18).

SPN’s address new thinking in higher education. The Carnegie Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning has proposed shifting from a goal of critical thinking to practical reasoning. (Rosin & Sullivan, 2008 p.xvii). The goal of SPNs is to point students in the direction of public intellectual rather than just scholar; Nash proposes that both can be attained

through personal narrative research (2004 p.40).

Colleges and universities increasingly find themselves not in the business of graduating intellectuals. Rather, they find themselves charged with graduating students for the job market. For this reason, the Carnegie Institute also suggests that higher education focus on preparing students for the “life of the mind for practice.”

According to the Institute, the life of the mind for practice means that reflection and criticism, as advised by critical thinking advocates, does not promote these activities and concepts for the sake of reflecting and criticizing alone. Rather, the goal of such reflection and criticism is to teach students how to “deliberate about their possibilities for a life well lived, including their responsibility to contribute to the life of their times.” (Sullivan & Rosin 2008, p.xvi)

By blending critical intelligence and knowledge with practical skills and moral commitment through action is the hallmark of the value added by the pedagogy of practical reason,” (*ibid* p.153).

In the case of journalism, the new thinking circulating through higher education circles has application at many levels. As researchers, we are being asked to think, act, research and teach with goals redefined for the current era. Concepts like “the life of the mind for practice” and “public intellectual” relate to actual students, individual students, and because of that, it is my contention that researchers must also engage in the same radical introspection these concepts require of students in the modern educational environment.

One of the reasons Nash doggedly pursued a “new” research method is because he wanted to a bridge built between academicians and the lay public as well as between academicians themselves (2004 p.9). This dilemma, dueling discourses, is at the heart of the contention in journalism education. Without personal stories to act as data by which to apply to the dueling discourses, the discipline dialogue will not be accurate because both sides of the discourse generalize to such a degree that “reality” is hidden.

“Journalism is not physics,” says Jack Hart in *The Quill Magazine*. “We’re kidding ourselves when we argue that it’s suitable for the kind of quantitative research and refereed journal publications that work so well for the physics (1989, p.32).” To this point, reflective

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research has been nonexistent in the field of journalism. Perhaps because reflection is antithetical to the acceptance of objectivity as a key tenet in the practice of journalism (*ibid*). I am not advocating here that objectivity be eliminated from the practice; I am, however, uncovering the obvious; journalists are people and teachers are people and no person is value free.

Nash says he has drawn from some of the most accomplished researchers in America to provide justification for the SPN method such as Ruth Behar, Jerome Bruner, Kieran Egan, Tom Wolcott, Carol Witherall, Richard Rorty, Madeline Grumet and Jane Tompkins and Laurel Richardson to name just a few.

Ruth Behar has referred to herself as a “guerilla disciplinarian” because, as an anthropologist, she came to believe that researchers are “vulnerable observers.” P49. She says that researchers should look at their discipline remembering always that you come to know others by knowing yourself. (Nash 2004, p.49)

The SPN method is appropriate for a thesis in the field of journalism because journalism is a democratic effort. Journalists have an obligation to report for a general audience which means synthesizing complex information and expressing it in language that the masses can understand. For many researchers, such as myself, the tenets of journalism are in direct conflict with some of the academy’s traditional views of scholarship. Dense language and parenthetical referencing directly conflict with journalism as it is practiced and taught. Choosing methods of investigation is also antithetical to journalism; a journalist must use every method available to her to get as close to the truth as possible. It will become clear on pages that follow that particular types of people are drawn to particular types of research and types of journalistic practice based on life experiences. It is no coincidence that the philosophy that forms the foundation for SPNs and the philosophy underlying documentary journalism and the life I have led are perfectly matched.

Journalists are taught that you must use whatever means are available to in pursuit of “the truth.” No journalist is restricted to just one method, as to do so would be a purposeful attempt to create a false “truth.” Journalism as a well codified research method may be far from the proposal stage; however, I want to be truthful when speaking about my own research methodology. The SPN methodology does not confirm to journalistic standards with the

exception of pursuit of “the truth,” but it is one appropriate method to use when looking at a question involving the self, which is personal. It utilizes narrative, which is what journalists use as storytellers every day. It is scholarly because it allows researchers to add to the body of knowledge in a given field. In this thesis, the SPN is used in addition to a site specific observation period, literature reviews and results in an educational model for others to consider.

When it comes to claims to truth, Nash has a simplistic yet “real” answer that resonates with people like me. Where is the truth in an SPN? “Who knows,” he says. “Find a person’s narrative and you’ll find that person’s perception of truth. Find my story, compare it to your own and decide for yourself.” (2004 p.33) But, he adds, an SPN is not valid if it carries no explicitly intended meaning for readers (*ibid* p.21).

Stories, and SPN’s in particular, can have a profound effect on the public discourse in any given discipline because it doesn’t claim more than one person’s truth; it is intended to have meaning, however, what that meaning is will differ from person to person. My story represents the story of many other journalism educators and even educators with similar life experiences will translate those experiences differently in the classroom.

In the past ten years, University of Vermont education professor Robert J. Nash has molded a research methodology that incorporates narrative methods present in sociology, anthropology and social sciences. He refers to this methodology, and methods, as Scholarly Personal Narrative. When I began my doctoral journey, his “new” research framework had not been utilized and codified and published enough for me to argue for its merits. I can only consider my difficult personal journey as a blessing now because it ate up so much time that it gave Nash and other academic supporters time to fine tune definitions and practices.

A personal narrative has the capacity to “provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathetically into worlds of experience different from their own and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered (p.749)

I want you, the reader, to consider my story in light of your own. Everyone has a story. That story is reflected in your teaching. It is reflected in your departmental participation and it is reflected in the curriculum you help build. There is no credible argument disproving this



assumption. Stories put a human face on the term “education.” They help disprove generalities.

Colleges and universities increasingly find themselves not in the business of graduating intellectuals. Rather, they find themselves charged with graduating students for the job market. For this reason, the Carnegie Institute also suggests that higher education focus on preparing students for the “life of the mind for practice.”

According to the Institute, the life of the mind for practice means that reflection and criticism, as advised by critical thinking advocates, does not promote these activities and concepts for the sake of reflecting and criticizing alone. Rather, the goal of such reflection and criticism is to teach students how to “deliberate about their possibilities for a life well lived, including their responsibility to contribute to the life of their times.” (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008, p.xvi)

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One of the reasons Nash doggedly pursued a “new” research method is because he wanted to a bridge built between academicians and the lay public as well as between academicians themselves (p9). This dilemma, dueling discourses, is at the heart of the contention in journalism education. Without personal stories to act as data by which to apply to the dueling discourses, the discipline dialogue will not be accurate because both sides of the discourse generalize to such a degree that “reality” is hidden.

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One of these notable scholars, Ruth Behar, has referred to herself as a “guerilla disciplinarian” because, as an anthropologist, she came to believe that researchers are “vulnerable observers.” (1993, p.13) She says that researchers should look at their discipline remembering always that you come to know others by knowing yourself (*ibid*).

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### **Theoretical framework guiding the study**

The theoretical foundation guiding my narrative is the work of education activist Parker J. Palmer. He is just one man. He does not attempt to place himself on a spectrum of codified

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paradigms. He is a maverick. I am one, too, which is probably why I am drawn to his work and that of the documentary tradition. My thinking and research, reflection and writing are guided by two simple principles that Palmer has explored for the past 20 years. His work is based on the works of many others in a variety of disciplines from sociology to management.

Palmer is a former professor of education at the progressive liberal University of California at Berkeley and a community organizer in Washington, D.C. He spent 10 years at Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania working on curricula that foster community. He is the founder of The Courage To Teach teacher formation program with the Fetzer Institute which provides workshops for teachers across the country.

Parker has become a highly sought after consultant in the field of educational change in all forms and levels of institutional life. Although Palmer has conceded to some demands of the academy, namely, placing himself someplace on the paradigm spectrum, he is still quite clear about the origins of his beliefs about reality and gaining knowledge. Palmer is a Christian first, scholar second. Christians can also place themselves on a spectrum of beliefs. It has been disheartening to find little in the way of information for Christian scholars and the conflict between their Christian self and their scholar self. In Palmer's case, he waited until after he received his doctorate to broach this topic. Now, he says, he feels free to make the case for Christianity as a research paradigm, though he uses the term "spiritual" (1998, p.111.) An entire doctorate could be written on this subject alone. I broach it here because this is a personal narrative and this is a personal issue.

Because the academy does want scholars to at least place themselves somewhere on the philosophical paradigm, I would follow Palmer's lead, allowing myself to be aligned with a constructivist paradigm. I prefer, however, to focus on theoretical frameworks other than ontology and epistemology. Parker's theory could be placed in the constructivist category on the paradigm spectrum, if one wanted to choose a place for it to sit. Palmer is unashamed of the origin of his educational philosophy or his ontologic or epistemologic beliefs. He has written books intended for a general audience and books for academic audiences (1980, 1983, 1998). In the former, Palmer freely discusses the paradox that exists for some members of academic communities. To be asked to adopt a particular philosophy on the nature of learning and the

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nature of reality goes against certain Christian's beliefs that we cannot "know" the nature of learning or reality because it is God that is the origin of our beliefs.

First, Palmer says "we teach who we are," (1998, p.1) It is a simple premise, but its impact is transforming when adopted by educators. In essence, Palmer is saying that once the notion of pure objectivity started to crumble in academic institutions, the door was opened for a new discourse focused on reflection, honesty and courage. If we believe that nothing is value-free, then we must confess that our teaching is not value-free. Why do I teach the way I do? That is the question Palmer asks teachers to ask themselves. If we "teach who we are," it stands to reason we must know who we are first. Why do I support this type of curriculum or that type of program? If we recognize the stories of educators as data in a qualitative research friendly environment, then we are free to create programs and curricula that can actually be implemented with rigor and passion; the people must match the program and there is room for different types of programs from which students, faculty and employers can choose. If we recognize that the people don't match the program, at least we know where tension originates.

The second simple yet profound principle that guides my narrative is Palmer's call to live an "undivided life" (1998, p.167; 2009 p.9). Palmer, who has studied the elements of transformation and social change, theorizes that "only in the face of opposition" can social change be achieved. If you agree that journalism in the academy has made little progress over the past several decades in terms of satisfying the job market or having a significant impact on media development, then you would agree that some kind of movement is needed to break the gridlock and traditional arguments. After studying the elements of the Civil Rights Movement and other movements fighting for freedom and voice, Palmer isolated four ideal stages:

Stage 1) Isolated individuals made an inward decision to live "divided no more," finding a center for their lives outside of institutions.

Stage 2) These individuals begin to discover one another and form "communities of congruence" that offer mutual support and opportunities to develop a shared vision."

Stage 3) These communities start going public, learning to convert their private concerns into the public issues they are and receiving vital critiques in the process.

Stage 4) A system of alternative rewards emerges to sustain the movement's vision and to

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put pressure for change on the standard institutional reward system (1998, p.166).

Clearly, Stage 4 cannot occur without Stage 1. I am offering my personal narrative as data to clear the way for Stage 4 to occur in journalism education. I am not arrogant enough to believe that my story alone carries such power as to spark an educational movement. It is my greatest hope, now, that my narrative and the educational model that emanates from it, will play a part in a movement that will reframe the way we think, speak and plan in this academic discipline.

When I began my teaching career, I had the good fortune to be a member of what is referred to as a “premier teaching institution,” not a research-oriented institution. While I was at that private liberal arts college, I was able to focus on teaching. I was able to be innovative and not deemed irrelevant because I did not hold a doctoral degree. I was under no pressure to pursue a doctorate.

While I was satisfied at one time to specialize in curricular models for journalism education, I found that interest slipping down my priority list no matter how hard I tried to keep it at the top. In its place arose the issue of human decency, hardly a topic on the national academic journalism agenda. I am fascinated by the concept of integrity and the role it plays in academic journalism education and personal lives. My life story explains this fascination. This fascination is the single most important element I bring to the classroom, above practice and above theory.

The reason for this fascination and the role it plays in my research interests will become evident on pages to follow. This is a critical issue if we agree that one goal of education is to instill in students a worldview that will result in productive and compassionate members of society, i.e. active participants in community life. Can we instill integrity in our students if we do not possess it ourselves? In the hiring process, how would integrity be measured? Should daily newsroom experience trump integrity? What research method and philosophical framework would best answer these questions and how would we land on an acceptable definition of integrity?

Educator Walt Harrington, in the introduction to his book “Intimate Journalism,” warned journalists not to divulge their softness in the newsroom lest they be dubbed kooky by their

editors and their peers (1997). In the doctoral process, generally speaking, “soft” science is considered just that, soft. In the past decade, “soft” methodologies have gained a strong foothold, its merits increasingly making their way to the forefront of disciplinary discussion and program development (*ibid*).

All researchers “approach” the data collection, analysis and interpretation differently. Some research projects are designed to test theory, others designed to create theory and yet others designed to explore new areas of knowledge or ask questions not previously asked in a particular field. Regardless of the goal of the research, it must be framed within a philosophical, theoretical or conceptual lens (Creswell, 1998, p. 73). The lens may be broad, such as epistemological or ontological in nature or they may be ideological such as postmodern, poststructuralist or critical. Or, the lens might be more narrow in nature, a set of propositions or hypotheses that reside in theories of the social and human sciences (Flinders and Mills, 1993).

My research is the result of a theoretical framework best described by education activist Parker J. Palmer. This framework is based on the theory that we teach who we are and that many educators, who have not directed reflection toward their “inner landscape,” often live what he calls “divided lives,” which in turn has a devastating impact on the curricular and program decisions we make. His is a spiritual worldview, one that does not require others to share his worldview. Like Palmer, I believe objectivity has outlived its usefulness as the predominant paradigm (1998, p.119).

The purpose of my initial research was to explore and then describe a particular way of seeing and a particular method of representing with that particular perspective in an educational setting, my intention was twofold: first, to gather information via a limited case study which would inform a formal research design. A second stage was planned to gather more data and subject it to grounded theory methods, allowing theory to emerge. However, to be honest, the original motivation for the choice of research project was personal and the research path was continually redirected by my unwillingness to ignore my intuition.

Through the writing process, which has been ongoing for a period of four years since the original data collection occurred, new insights emerged which changed the course of my thesis. I desperately wanted to conduct research in an authoritative distant voice with a codified set of

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research methods with neat and tidy boundaries because I felt this would make me appear scholarly, intellectual and worthy of admittance to the academy. I wanted to draw upon “big” social theory and use highly theoretical language. I wanted to employ parenthetical referencing although the practice conflicts with the epistemological and ontological tenets of journalism as I understand it and which will be discussed in later chapters. On subsequent pages, the term “I wanted” will be turned on its head.

Through the writing process, reflection and revision process, I have gained the courage to take a research position that honors and respects my particular way of thinking and expression. It also honors my academic discipline. I consider myself fortunate to enter the research field at a time of expanded definitions. I am fortunate a name has been given to the positions I feel compelled to take. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, just two of many qualitative researchers investigating the relationship of self to research process, refer to “reflective ethnography” as the use of personal experience to illuminate and/or illustrate the rationale for research choices and methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.741).

This type of reflexivity and reflexive writing, says Tedlock (1991) is due to a change that occurred in the 1970s. The emphasis from participant observation moved to “an observation of participation” and an emphasis on the process of writing and its role in inquiry. Adler and Adler have identified and elaborated on complete-member researchers which they describe as someone who either begins to identify with the “other” being studied or feels “converted” to the process under observation (1987). As I have explored in the data presentation, I started the research process with a “favorable” bias toward the work conducted at the Center for Documentary Studies. I made every attempt to conduct the data collection, analysis and interpretation under a journalistically “objective” framework. However, as the research process continued, I did feel increasingly enamored and supportive of the documentary tradition.

If the choice of research is based in large part on what I perceive is needed in contemporary journalism education, then I believe it is necessary to combine the personal narrative with the narrative of the findings. I am backed up by the work of Ellis and Bocher as they investigate the growing trend of more personal, intimate and self-conscious writing. The use of a less anonymous, more personal writing is paralleled in the social sciences by the field

of journalism (2001, p. 744).

There are critics of the use of stories and reflexivity as part of the social science process. Atkinson is perhaps one of the most vocal. He says that any work that does not focus on story analysis is not research. The claims that stories can generate knowledge should not be taken seriously, he says. But, Ellis and Bochner passionately defend those of us whose ontological and epistemological positions require us to consider the self part of the construction of meaning along with the writing process and empirical data. To do this, Ellis and Bochner expand the meaning of social inquiry. They ask, as do I:

“Why should caring and empathy be secondary to controlling and knowing? Why must academics be conditioned to believe that a text is important only to the extent it moves beyond the merely personal? We need to question our assumptions, the metarules that govern the institutional workings of social science—arguments over feelings, theories over stories, abstractions over concrete events, sophisticated jargon over accessible prose. Why should we be ashamed if our work has therapeutic or personal values? Besides, haven’t our personal stories always been embedded in our research monographs? The question is whether we should express our vulnerability and subjectivity openly in the text or hide them behind ‘social analysis.’” (2001, p. 756)



### Chapter Three

#### Interpretive Literature Review

Journalism education is defined by the literature (Brandon, 2002, p.59) as broken, in crisis, irrelevant, intellectually weak and responsible for a media environment that is sensational, driven by greed and damaging to democracy everywhere.

A thorough review of literature, noted in this chapter, however, reveals no proof that any of these labels are accurate, unless you consider personal essays to be adequate proof. In 1995, educator Fred Fedler attempted to confirm or refute some of the most cited criticisms of journalism education. Fedler's exploration of the data reveals that criticisms made by news editors and media managers are not based on even rudimentary understanding of the academic mission or environment. Fedler said he felt critics of journalism schools "overestimate journalism schools' ability to reform universities" (*ibid*, p.64). He said critics make an assumption that the challenges facing journalism schools are somehow unique. Any discipline with a connection to a professional industry faces the same criticism from those outside academia.

Perhaps the most important observation made by Fedler is that neither side, academic nor professional, has gathered the evidence needed to make sweeping generalizations. Even worse, said Fedler, some "continue to repeat impressions that have been proven inaccurate" (*ibid*, p.64).

The entire body of literature then is based on assumptions, personal experience, surveys and acceptance of opinion as fact. In a 100-year period, the discussion has changed little. That fact alone is evidence that a new approach to the public dialogue is needed.

Fedler called the generalization of journalism education "as silly as generalities about the nation's daily newspapers." (*ibid*, p.65) The media industry has been reduced to a single entity for the purpose of conversation. "The media" is as diverse as "journalism education." Neither deserves to bear the brunt of criticisms that may be applicable to only a few.

In the spirit of Fedler, for example, *Winds of Change*, the comprehensive study of journalism education conducted by Betty Medsger in 1996, was conducted under the premise that "too many educators view the teaching of traditional journalism as a second-rate

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undertaking (p.4) Charles L. Overby's words on behalf of the study's sponsor, The Freedom Forum, are indicative of the philosophical underpinning most journalism education literature. The introduction sets up the study as a response to a perception, not a proven, that journalism education is broken.

In his introduction to Medsger's *Winds of Change*, Overby also stated that "too many journalists view educators as out of touch with the profession (1996, p.2) He said that if journalism education is to survive, a partnership between journalists and educators will *have to be* (emphasis mine) strengthened.

So, the single most comprehensive study related to journalism education conducted since the Oregon Report in 1987 was undertaken with a set of assumptions that are personal, perhaps political, based on anecdotal evidence for the most part and not "provable."

- "Too many" journalism educators do not believe traditional skills are the priority
- "Too many" journalists feel educators are out of touch with the profession. If it is to survive, a partnership between the two sides *must* be closer. (Medsger, 1996)

A critical reader will ask what is too many and who decides? Who said journalism education is near death? What are survey respondents basing their responses on? What criteria determine near death? And, does the Freedom Forum, an arm of Gannett, have anything to gain from a survey based on the premise that education is the cause of media criticism?

We would, or should, fail our students if they interpreted survey data or anecdotes in this manner. Neither Overby nor Felix Gutierrez, senior vice president of The Freedom Forum at the time of the study, seems to consider the possibility that the state of journalism may not be directly related to the education of journalists. Gutierrez said he hoped the report would spark "spirited and lively debate" on the future of journalism education (Anderson 1997 p.3). That, to me, is the best one can hope for when it comes to assessing the broad range of literature on journalism education.

Like any family divided, we have to sometimes agree to disagree because we are debating gray areas that have no hard boundaries. We have to acknowledge the existence of well-entrenched camps and work toward respecting what each has to offer. The overall tone and perspective of

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the *Winds of Change* report, I believe, is one of defense of the green eyeshade position. Survey questions and interpretation show a consistent bond with a traditional approach to journalism education, one that takes a “versus” approach to defining issues.

Journalism education is seen here through the eyes of someone who believes the only thing “wrong” with journalism education is an apparent unwillingness to acknowledge that journalism education originated from divergent goals and its existence depends on its ability, even desire, to embrace diverse views.

I don’t believe the majority of literature addresses “realities.” No two programs are the same. No two newspapers or radio stations are the same. No two publishers interpret their responsibility the same. No two students explore report or write with the same heart. And no two journalism educators come to the classroom with the same history, talents or intentions. A teacher with 20 years professional experience may lack basic teaching skills, causing more harm than good. A teacher with one year of professional experience may be a gifted educator. Accountability for and definition of quality in the literature is non-existent.

I believe the subject of journalism education should be viewed through the words of Thomas Kunkel, former president of the American Journalism Review. He reminded us that journalism education is not a “monolithic entity” (2003, p.4).

Perhaps the greatest generalization out there, and the greatest obstacle to improvement, is that journalism education is responsible for the state of the media and the state of the media is not good.

There simply is no data or literature available that directly addresses the connection between the state of the media and journalism education. The fact that journalism program graduates filter into the workplace does not mean the education of those graduates is responsible for what many see as “wrong” with some media outlets.

It does seem ironic that the bulk of public debate centers around a rift between what editors want in a journalism education graduate and what educators say they want in a curriculum. It is ironic because there is no research (quantitative or qualitative) available to warrant even the discussion focus. There is a gap represented by survey results; however, it has

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not been determined that a gap is necessarily a bad thing nor has research set out to determine the origin of responses. And, most surveys are conducted using association membership lists that do not provide an adequate sampling base for generalization.

The generality of the journalism education literature can be compared to journalistic principles and technique for the purpose of determining veracity of the literature and research.

For example:

- The president feels conflicted about sending Americans to war.
- It appears that the president feels conflicted about his decision to send Americans to war.
- The president said he feels conflicted about his decision to send Americans to war.

In the classroom setting, we would tell our students that choice “c” is the only acceptable statement. We don’t know what statement “a” is based on. We know that statement “b” is the writer’s interpretation. Statement “c” is the only statement providing the reader with the information necessary to judge the accuracy or credibility of the words. If 99 percent of all presidents have expressed feeling conflicted when sending troops to war, then statement “a” is credible. Without that data, you can’t make the claim that you know what someone thinks.

We have learned as a society to place our trust in journalists. News consumers expect generalizations to be based on good judgment, based in turn on a synthesis of adequate, relevant information. What happens when we find that generalizations are without merit? We lose trust in journalists. The same should be said of researchers and educators.

Journalism education literature should, at the very least, adhere to the tenets of journalism. Researchers/authors, like the reporter, must be trusted to use their talents to synthesize and paraphrase in such a way as to show the reader what is common knowledge, what is absolute fact, what is an interpretation, what is another’s reality, interpretation, opinion or fact, what is relevant to the “story” or research, what isn’t relevant, what is not known and finally, to speak “for” others in such a way as not to misrepresent, unnecessarily harm or purposely skew for an unexposed agenda. Simply using the first person to acknowledge personal experience as the basis for comments would reduce the amount of hostility in the

literature. In short, there is a difference between the front page news and the editorial page commentary.

It is easy to be disheartened when the literature paints a picture of the discipline as home to feuding family members who can't sit at the dinner table without a food fight ensuing. Just as the public loses faith in "all media" based on the unethical or sloppy practices of a "few," it is easy to lose faith in a discipline that does not consistently fight back against unverifiable claims against it.

Having said that, what is offered here is a qualitative exploration of journalism education literature based on the personal experience, opinion and interpretations of one person. Following established guidelines does not mean this offering should be accepted as fact.

**Drawing a comparison:  
The damage caused by incomplete histories**

Renowned communications scholar James Carey has made similar observations with regard to theories derived from incomplete information.

"Strictly speaking, there is no history of mass communication research," he wrote in 1996. Instead, a "motley collection of books, essays, speeches, memoirs, autobiographies, political interventions and ideological tracts hardly constituted a history of the mass media or even the materials necessary to an understanding of such institutions" (Munson, p.14).

Often politically motivated, the "history" reached "textual status" in the 1950s, said Carey. Once this history had jelled, it reached "boilerplate" status and was repeated over and over until, "on any given academic day," it served as a standard introduction in classrooms across the nation (*ibid*, p.15).

After World War I, concerns over the effects of propaganda lead to theorizing about the power of the mass media. The conclusion was that the mass media could shape the beliefs of ordinary men and women. The problem with this theory is that it was supported by "speculation, conjecture, anecdotal evidence and ideological axe grinding," a description that could easily

refer to journalism education theories. Huge leaps from opinion to history cast in stone were made; a line was drawn from cause to effect without evidence” (*ibid*, p.14).

New research, empirically based, turned the previous theory on its head. Studies showed that citizens were somewhat protected from media propaganda by their tendency to interpret based on ideologies already held. With a nice neat packaged theory in place, research turned to investigating the ways in which people use media as opposed to what media does to people. The result was a new declaration; the media was in line with democracy, not an obstacle to democracy (*ibid*, p.17).

With divergent philosophies comprising the history of mass communication, the only real winners were those in the media professions. Carey felt the history was viewed in a black and white manner, leaving it incomplete and misleading. He wanted to include the work associated with the Chicago School because he said it offered an alternative path, away from the “question of communication effects and toward that of cultural struggle” (*ibid*, p.32). The expansive view painted a picture of the media of communication as part of a “ceaseless temporal process of change (rather than a static snapshot of having or not having an effect), making the view an “important but forgotten episode” in the history of mass communication research (*ibid*, p.33).

In my view, the history of journalism education has also reached a textual form which needs to be recast because to repeat it is to skew the dialogue agenda. Several well known journalism educators have offered alternative interpretations of journalism education’s history; however, they appear to be based on the accepted standard interpretation as well. That standard interpretation being, journalism education is inadequate which harms the product which harms democracy. Challenging the accepted discourse whenever possible provides a reality check for all of those interested in continual assessment, adaptation and change.

### **Diversity starts at home: One conference, many views**

One of the best ways to visualize the effects of misplaced and misleading discourse is to investigate a single event with a variety of perspectives. It is virtually impossible, I believe, to

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review all the literature and break it down into specific issues because each piece of literature is comprised of layers of ideology, opinion, facts and issues. Writing in journalistic format rather than academic parenthetical referencing also prohibits the use of all sources as it would be a mass of attribution and unintelligible to the average reader.

There are literally scores of personal essays on the subject of journalism education out there. One is based on another, which is based on opinion. The few surveys conducted with limited samples and, in most cases, an agenda, serve as a foundation for more opinion. I belabor the point because I believe it is the single greatest obstacle standing in the way of continual reassessment of journalism education.

A critical reader approaches the literature this way: apply points argued to what you know and believe, process ways in which certain points would or could apply to your situation, and make decisions about possible actions.

I want to offer up as an example of this strategy using a scene from American journalism education. In 1996, Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) held a conference entitled “Journalism Education, the First Amendment Imperative, and the Changing Media Marketplace.” The conference introduction referred to the issue at hand as “change.”

Deryl Leming, then dean of MTSU’s College of Mass Communication, described the conference’s theme this way:

*Most journalism educators I know have a hard time getting a clear glimpse of the future. We are not at all comfortable making hard, fast decisions about what courses we should be offering students. We are overwhelmed by technological advancements and how they impact on the political and economic forces that shape education. We are dispirited by the lack of support for higher education by our political leaders and the public at large. We see change coming at us as it never has before. We don't have ready answers for many disturbing questions. We feel a need to act, but we are uncertain, and uncertainty can be both painful and paralyzing. It is with this backdrop that the planners of the 1996 Seigenthaler Conference decided to invite some of the best thinkers in our field to share their ideas about Journalism Education, the First Amendment Imperative, and the Changing Media Marketplace. While most of us came away from the conference with few concrete answers, we were energized.*

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*The future remains elusive and mysterious. Yet we feel there are answers out there. We can find them if only we remain diligent in our pursuit of what lies ahead.*

*We feel a need for bold and imaginative change. We need to be reminded that, as Alvin and Heidi Toffler point out in *Creating a New Civilization*, "Unless we are bold and imaginative, we, too, could find ourselves in the 'dustbin of history.'"*

*Trying to plan for the future remains tormenting. Yet, it is something we must endure. What we become has always depended to some extent on planning. In these times this is especially true. There's never been so much at stake (1996).*

This is the tone and character I consider appropriate and necessary for change. There is no mention of right and wrong. No mention of us and them, just a recognition that our world is changing so we must thoughtfully consider new ideas and methods for meeting the challenge. Leming's words are in direct contrast to what much of the literature says editors feel about journalism educators. If we are to believe this literature, media professionals see educators as self-absorbed, interested in irrelevant research and unwilling to consider the media marketplace. This description is true of some, but certainly not true of all.

As James Carey noted, several strains of history reside at any given time. If we look at the myriad of interpretations presented at just one conference, we see how accepted notions can always be challenged.

Leaders in the field of journalism education were invited to address the state of the marketplace, its affect on the discipline and ideas for dealing with change.

James Carey's offering was founded in his love for cities. He asked the audience to consider the idea that journalism education began humbly, striving to turn journalists into intellectually sound sense-makers; the early curricula at Columbia were based on understanding cities and their peoples. He's enamored with the sociological work performed at the University of Chicago because it, too, was grounded in social theory. Throughout his career as an educator, Carey came to understand journalism as a discipline using the following axioms:



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- Journalism and journalism education *is* a distinct social practice set far apart from advertising, communications, media studies, public relations or broadcasting.
- Journalism *is* a distinct social practice that *should not* be confused with media or communication
- Media are organizations and communications *is* a general social process.
- Journalism *is* another name for democracy.

Using these axioms as a guide, Carey says journalism belongs in the humanities but the humanities do not embrace journalism. So, journalism gravitates toward the sciences of “impact, determination and control”. Unfortunately, the science of communication has helped derail journalism education from its rightful place as sociology of humans “struggling to create a common life within conflict and division” (*ibid*).

Journalism educator Ellen Wartella then took issue with Carey’s interpretation of the misdirection of journalism education.

“Implicit in Professor Carey’s argument is a suggestion that traditional forms of journalism formed in the nineteenth century and refined in the early twentieth century are necessary and sufficient for the larger project of enabling journalism to play its role in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century democracy,” she said. “I am not sure it is so” (Wartella 1996).

Trying to build a curricula based on theory is more difficult than devising theories, Wartella said. “It is in the particulars that the grand narrative gets messy. And it is in the particulars that journalism education is today being re-examined” (*ibid*).

Now we have two opinions to consider: 1) Journalism education must turn around and reconstruct itself in the image of the good old days when the social processes creating community were rooted in the cities. 2) We need to consider how our theories will actually manifest themselves in the classroom.

Educator Leo Bogart’s conference offering takes us back to the problems of accepted generalizations and history.

“Whether you define journalism as an art, a craft, a trade, a profession, or a business, you will probably agree that it is a job and that the function of journalism education is to provide students with the skills required to enter the job market,” he said.

What happens if you do not embrace Bogart’s version of the function of a journalism education? He has decided that a journalism education’s function is to prepare a student for the job market.

However, Bogart’s initial questions relate to the future of mass media in this globalized, instant information society. If we fear newspapers will not survive, he says, then journalism education must “undergo radical surgery” (Bogart 1996).

The theme of the conference included the changing media marketplace, so Bogart’s statements were relevant. A comprehensive synthesis of the possible future of mass media leads Bogart to conclude that despite technology, the need for journalists will continue and the need for reporters will also continue. Journalists, he says, will need to have the ability to understand urban life and the changes to it as well as make sense of information for people who do not want the facts, or data entry, offered by reporters. His is a balanced view that allows individuals within departments to decide whether they want to educate journalists or train reporters.

Responding to Bogart’s vision for journalism education in light of the changing marketplace, educator Joseph Turow expands on Bogart’s theory by naming the two conflicting types of media: segment-making (reporters) and society-making (journalists.)

There is the potential for these two divergent roles to come together to provide a “rich and diverse sense of an overarching connection—the essence of a vibrant society,” said Turow. Unfortunately, he also said he sees the potential “eroding” because these segmented media also reflect the increase in American communities segmenting, isolating themselves from others (Turow 1996).

Lee Becker, a researcher involved in enrollment surveys, said the data backs up Bogart’s concerns over reporter vs. journalist training. Becker says the data shows that if you use Bogart’s definitions, journalism programs tend to train reporters, not journalists. The proliferation of public relations and advertising programs is seen as one reason for the data. On

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the other hand, Becker's studies have shown that many journalism students do not plan to seek traditional journalism careers.

Newspaper editors seem unaware of the numbers. Some 430 journalism programs in the United States are graduating too many students for the available journalism jobs, he said.

If we reduced the number of programs, people would be out of work and a great deal of money would be saved, said Becker. But, this statement assumes that journalism education's function is to train workers just for traditional newspaper jobs and that the teaching of reporting skills is what defines us. He disagrees.

"I don't think it is all of it," said Becker. "And I don't think it should be" (1996).

So far, we have one conference and six distinct views of journalism education and no "details" offered for implementation.

Add to this mix the words of educator Lana Rakow. Her opinion: "All university curricula are political" (1996). Lakow asserted that curricula are broken because they rely on "outdated" assumptions and are heavily reliant on service to the industry (*ibid*). There are current trends that make the issue of curricula relevant, she says. Everything from budget cuts, changing institutions and technology to compatible sequences to ferment in the field.

Lakow's observations closely mirror my own when she says "given the inevitable political nature of what we do, we need to ask ourselves some tough questions about the purpose of our curricula" (*ibid*).

Lakow said she felt we design curricula without real reflection. We cater to the possible career outcomes assuming they will be hired. We connect our success to our students' careers and the satisfaction of the industry. This skews the public discussion when we fail to talk about some challenges for fear of alienating the industry. And this cycle prevents us from experimenting with alternative practices.

"Our curricula are based in frameworks that are both individualistic and unethical," Lakow said. "We have catered to the individual needs of students without regard to a larger social good. We have catered to the needs of media institutions without regard to our critical responsibility, as part of a university, to raise questions and challenge established thinking...Our students are lessened by our devotion to reproducing the way things are done rather than our enthusiasm for the way things could be" (*ibid*).

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It is necessary to note here that although Lakow uses the possessive noun “we,” I am not bothered by it because it resonates with my experience. This is a hypocritical act on my part, but a human act nonetheless, and I do not believe I am alone in this behavior. With an excess of personal opinion and dearth of bonifide research, it becomes even more important for readers to translate all nouns into “I” because no proof is offered to speak for all.

Lakow further recommends that “we” focus on the greater social good because she believes the critical purpose of the university is to “explore and understand the human condition.” This is in direct conflict with the data brought forth by Becker’s surveys.

And finally, Lakow offered the conference a glimpse of a best practice for consideration: Whether you agree with the curricula devised by Lakow and her colleagues at the North Dakota School of Communication or not, at least the institution attempted to reach a consensus at that site and build a curriculum that served the vision and mission. Clearly, North Dakota’s faculty and administrators decided that educating via communication issues is far better than narrowly educating for journalism. It resulted in what Lakow calls a program with “more explicit and thoughtful politics and a deeper contribution to our students’ professional education” (*ibid*).

As I critique the literature, I categorize the underlying philosophy and then work from that point of view, considering the points, but not necessarily agreeing. Although I often disagree with some of Betty Medsger’s interpretations and insights, I equally as often find her thinking right on the mark.

Medsger’s conference comments responded to the “New professionalism” type of solution offered by Robert O. Blanchard and William Christ, but her comments actually respond to the comments of Lakow as well.

“As the twenty-first century approaches,” said Medsger, “it seems an appropriate time for journalism educators together and within their own programs to take stock of both the right and wrong turns that shaped the field’s history and decide together how to shape its future” (1996). It is up to each journalism department, Medsger said, to decide what it believes, where its weaknesses lie and who it intends to serve.

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The belief that there is nothing inherently wrong with differing visions and curricula is often criticized for its relativistic nature. But, as Dana Lakow pointed out, the “devil is in the details” and the details relate to individual teachers, individual classrooms, individual programs and individual courses.

To complicate matters further, there is the proposition made by educator Karen F. Brown. That is, the curricula is not the problem, it’s the teaching. According to Brown, “we” are missing three important elements in “our” teaching: 1) The purpose of journalism 2) the people (practitioners) 3) the passion (1996). Of the published conference comments, Brown’s is the only one directed at teaching quality.

And so, the MTSU conference provides a clear example of the disjointed and conflicted type of dialogue related to journalism education. There are at least 19 separate arguments or declarations made here, yet they all are based on at least one of several philosophies:

- Journalism education is broken.
- Journalism education is not a monolithic entity: quality resides in the program details.
- The media marketplace dictates journalism education.
- Journalism education’s role is not to service the industry.
- The public discussion is fear-based (fear of upsetting industry or our jobs). Poor quality teaching is the problem.

In one conference, we have views on all points of the spectrum with no “proof” that any of them are “verifiable.” Because they cannot be verified, each reader will attach levels of credibility to the statements based on the philosophy he/she holds. I adhere to this philosophy: journalism education is not broken. It is not a monolithic entity to break. Quality resides in program details. The media marketplace does affect the manner in which we build our educational programs. Journalism education’s role is not to service the industry; it serves democracy first. The public discussion is fear based. And, poor quality teaching is a problem, a big problem, but not “the” problem because there is no “it.”

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The fact that I devoted several pages to one argument indicates the importance I place on the honesty and authenticity of public debate. “Political” does not have to mean a dishonest or hidden agenda, though some would argue that point.

I would like to offer a series of questions as a foundation for discussion of the literature.

- Do we know anything for certain?
- Should public debate be based on uncertainties?
- Should we be judged based on generalizations?
- How can we use generalizations productively?
- Where does reality end and relativism begin?

Some questions, clearly, are easier to answer than others. But they are important because they highlight the difficult task facing journalism educators, something I strongly believe media managers and practitioners do not understand well.

If you are a journalism teacher, you probably agree that general discussion does not apply to our daily realities.

Education activist Parker Palmer, whose work heavily informs my own, has noted many times that no amount of general discussion is going to lead to improved academic environments unless individual teachers face their own realities.

“Teacher bashing has become a popular sport,” he writes in his landmark book *The Courage to Teach* (1998). While my thinking is unique to me, Palmer gives voice to many of my thoughts and those of educators worldwide.

“Who is the self that teaches?” asks Palmer. This is the question, he says, that is the most fundamental question we can ask about teaching and those who teach, for the sake of learning and for those who learned (*ibid*, p.7). And, I would add, for those affected by the learning of others. However, the body of journalism education literature does not acknowledge the self that teaches.

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“I travel the country talking with faculty about the reform of teaching and learning,” Palmer has written. “I meet many people who care about the subject and who have compelling visions for change. But after we have talked awhile, our conversations take an almost inevitable turn. ‘These are wonderful ideas,’ someone will say, ‘but every last one of them will be defeated by the conditions of academic life’” (*ibid*, p.163).

Palmer relates that these claims are usually followed by a litany of impediments to institutional reform: teaching has low status in the academy, tenure decisions favor those who publish, and scarce dollars will always go to research (or to administration, or to bricks and mortar), and so on. No matter how hopeful our previous conversation has been, he says, “reminders of institutional gridlock create a mood of resignation, even despair and the game feels lost before play has begun” (*ibid*, p.164).

This, I believe, is where journalism education sits at the moment. Fred Fedler’s studies do more than play with the criticisms against journalism education programs. His studies can shake us into “reality” (1998). Critics of journalism education are not taken seriously if they do not show an understanding of academic life. In fact, one of the criticisms most heard from practitioners is that journalism faculty do not have a thorough understanding of the newsroom. If we have to compare the merits of this argument, it’s safe to say that more professors have served as journalists than journalists have served as professors.

The issue of professional experience in the journalism classroom has topped the public discussion agenda for almost 100 years.

Fedler’s study set out to determine if there is data to back up the claim that journalism educators in the United States do not have “enough” professional experience.

Answer: No. And, depending on which study you refer to, there is actually evidence to prove the opposite. There is also evidence showing that experience levels differ depending on the type of courses taught.

Is there data to back up the claim that journalism students are less qualified than their predecessors?

Answer: No. In fact, there is evidence that shows the opposite.

Is there data to support the claim that journalism schools lack rigor because of the lack of professionals in the classroom?

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Answer: No. There is evidence, however, that shows professionals tend to offer students higher grades than “regular” faculty members.

Is there data to address the claim that journalism students do not take enough liberal arts courses?

Answer: No. Accredited schools require students to take 75 percent of their courses outside the journalism curriculum. And, no two journalism programs adhere to the same institutional and individual requirements.

Is there any data to support the claim that journalism students do not pursue careers in journalism because of something that happens in journalism schools?

Answer: No. Studies do show, however, that low salaries, irregular hours, stress, unpleasant assignments and lack of advancement opportunities help to deter students from pursuing careers in journalism.

Fedler’s interpretations are in keeping with Palmer’s philosophies because of his strong opinions on the dangers of generalization:

*“People understand the complexities of their own lives and realize that there are few simple solutions to their problems. Yet people try to impose simple solutions upon others.[Professionals]...survey one another, then report their impressions as fact....Neither the professionals criticizing journalism schools nor have the faculty members defending them gathered the evidence needed to prove their impressions are accurate. Worse, some continue to repeat impressions that have been proven inaccurate. Everyone wants better students, better teachers, higher salaries, better equipment and better buildings. Everyone also wants journalism schools to enjoy more autonomy—and to be fairer and more flexible in their procedures for hiring, evaluating and rewarding their best faculty members. The acrimonious debate between professionals and faculty members will not help either group to attain its goals. The first step may be to acknowledge the growing body of evidence gathered during the last 20 years. The second step may be to abandon unsubstantiated generalities—or to gather the evidence needed to prove them” (ibid).*



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Fedler attempts to help us determine which generalities are unsubstantiated by telling us what the data does not corroborate. Some of what we don't know is:

- How many of American journalism schools limit their enrollments, and what requirements have they established for applicants? How do those requirements affect the quality of today's students?
- Do journalism's best students enroll in news/editorial sequences and go to work for newspapers after graduation? If not, why?
- Are today's journalism students inferior to those in past generations?
- Does research make the faculty members in journalism schools better teachers? If so, how? If not, why not? Does the research conducted in journalism schools merit the time and resources devoted to it?
- Is it true that faculty members in other departments believe that journalism belongs in trade schools? If so, what are the consequences? (Or, researchers might hypothesize that, because of rising enrollments, journalism schools are growing in prestige and power (*ibid*).

And, relevant to my research and educational interests, we also do not know:

- How many journalism programs experiment with new models of production? In what form?
- Are there any experimental programs within programs?
- What stance do journalism programs take on the status quo?
- What philosophical frameworks do journalism teachers operate from?
- What happens when a diversity of frameworks is at play and not exposed and contested?
- Do journalism teachers routinely consider pedagogy and praxis?
- Do journalism programs consider worldview when developing curricula?

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After Medsger's 1996 study, Fedler took another look at the issue of faculty qualifications. Along with colleagues Tim Counts, Arlen Carey and Maria Christina Santana, Fedler attempted to better quantify the issue.

"Four empirical studies conducted over the past two decades now suggest that faculty members have more professional experience than recognized by critics," reported Fedler (1998a, p.3).

His survey showed that when you break down faculty experience into fields of teaching, you find that most of those teaching skills courses have more than 10 years' professional experience.

Once again, Fedler and his colleagues point out what we still don't know.

- How much experience is enough?
- Does the type or quality of experience matter?
- Does it matter if a faculty member's experience is recent?
- What are a faculty member's ideal qualifications as schools are reorganized; curricula change and all the media begin to use new electronic technologies, blurring traditional distinctions between them? (*ibid* p.3).

More recently, surveys have shown that the gap between journalism educators and working journalists is not really as wide as it appears in the public debate.

A 2000 study by Tom Dickson and Wanda Brandon made another attempt at understanding the alleged "rift" between the industry and academia.

Citing no less than nine prior studies, the authors attempted to connect the dots from the studies to the gap:

- 1987 The Roper Organization's Electronic Media Career Preparation Study reported that broadcast education was not adequate in providing knowledge for the real world environment.
- 1990 The Associated Press Managing Editors Association survey reported that half of the 1,900 educators surveyed felt there was a rift between themselves and the press.
- 1994 The Associated Press Managing Editors surveyed its members and concluded that an agenda for journalism education would include thinking analytically, presenting

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- information well, understanding numbers in the news, listening to readers and writing concisely.
- 1994 AEJMC Vision Task Force 2000 said it may not be a bad thing if educational units detached themselves from the industry.
- 1996 Freedom Forum sponsored study by Betty Medsger reported that journalism was at risk because educators were disconnecting from the industry.
- 1996 Jane Pauley's Task Force on Mass Communication Education stated directly that "something is wrong" (Dickson & Brandon 2000).
- 1997 The Project on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education survey found that media organization managers were not happy with the state of journalism education but still felt it should exist.

Based on what these studies tell us, what do we know? I would argue, very little and a great deal. We know a great deal about what people think, and that can never be a bad thing.

We know very little about why they hold the opinions they do, and that cannot be a good thing. We just need to keep in mind how much we don't know and how much we are claiming to know. The questions I have put forth guide my thinking, in particular, how can generalities be used effectively for individual programs? With that in mind, the history of journalism education is a good place to start.

### **Versions of the history of journalism education**

No matter whose version of journalism education history you explore, one thing is clear. Journalism education began with divergent views, its development has occurred in a fractured environment and in this fast changing world; its future will inevitably be ever changing.

Rather than viewing its history as proof that it is unwanted, I view its history as proof that it is a dynamic and exciting field, one that presents great challenges and great satisfactions. If it were not a discipline of great import, the debate surrounding it would not be so contentious.

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We owe a debt of gratitude to scholars who have documented the discipline's history in both an objective and subjective manner. Journalism education history is perhaps the single greatest tool we have in our desire to strengthen the discipline and adapt to continual changes in the media environment because it gives us permission to embrace two distinct ways of thinking about the academic discipline which sets the stage for exploring the gray area in between.

What is clear from reviewing the literature on the history of journalism education is that from the beginning, a tension has existed between the industry and academic institutions.

As far back as 1878 when Robert E. Lee advocated a program for printers, the reaction to teaching journalism in higher education has been mixed.

“Inherently absurd” is the way Augustus Maverick referred to journalist reactions to an academic program at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). He also said journalists “knew the impossibility of learning the lessons of journalism within the walls of a collegiate institution” (Sloan 1990, p. xi). This singular statement in the late 1800s is enough to move the public dialogue out of its never ending cycle of finger pointing and self-righteous arguments. Simply, from the beginning, some have felt journalism education is necessary and important and some have felt it is unnecessary and even damaging to democracy.

Perhaps in 1878, Maverick's argument could hold water. After all, newspaper editors were willing to take on apprentices and mentor fresh recruits. This is not the case today. No amount of debate is going to change the fact that media organizations are heard criticizing the quality of journalism education on the one hand and hiring only journalism program graduates in the next breath. If we could be certain that large and small media organizations would invest in the skills training needed in the workplace, higher education would be left to diligently focus on intellectual development. We see from the discipline's history, however, that the media environment has changed dramatically since 1878 causing the academic environment also to change dramatically along the way.

### **“Makers of the media mind”**

William David Sloan's approach to understanding journalism education is to explore the writings of “giants” in the field. An attempt was made to choose educators who have contributed “importance and originality” to the “intellectual vitality” of the field (Sloan 1990).

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He is referring to the field of media, not journalism education.

Sloan did not necessarily intend for his categorization to help explain journalism education's history. His intent, he said, was to present the thinking of a variety of people who have contributed to our understanding of journalism in some way. The title, *Makers of the Media Mind*, then, is misleading because Sloan does not connect the philosophies of the "giants" to the "media mind."

It is Sloan's introduction to journalism education, and particularly his thoughts on the role of history and historians, that I find relevant to my research goals.

Sloan says that journalism education has made little contribution to the quality of the media in America. This is a contradictory concept that needs reconciliation before the tone and rhetoric of journalism education can change. If, in fact, journalism education has little influence over the state of the media, why is the general debate centered on the idea that it is responsible for the state of the media?

"Education therefore primarily has contributed to the status quo, including its problems, rather than to changing or elevating the practices of journalism," Sloan writes (*ibid*, p.5).

From the halls of Washington College in 1878 to the halls of Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania in 1875, the development of journalism education was experimental and spotty. Early curricula were comprised of heavy doses of liberal arts with a dose of skills training.

It wasn't until 1888, however, that Cornell University offered courses through its English department. Those courses were offered for only two years, and then dropped.

In 1893, the University of Pennsylvania, under the supervision of journalist Joseph French Johnson, began to offer courses in journalism. The curriculum, however, was still heavily laden with liberal arts.

The 1890s were a time of fast growth for journalism education thanks to the efforts of publisher Joseph Pulitzer, the state press association of Missouri and Willard Bleyer at the University of Wisconsin.

It took some time for Pulitzer to convince Columbia University to take his \$2 million to start a graduate program in journalism. His motives were suspect because of his participation in

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yellow journalism, though eventually the university conceded. Pulitzer's model curriculum was designed to raise the credibility of journalists and to strengthen democracy with a better educated press corp.

In contrast to the democratic ideals at Columbia, the Missouri Press Association led the way toward the development of the first craft oriented journalism program. By 1906, the University of Illinois was offering a four-year program and the University of Wisconsin embarked on a two-year program.

Leading the way in Wisconsin was Willard Bleyer. His curriculum drew inspiration from a variety of places. He developed a plan for graduating students with skills but also a deep understanding of the role of the press in democracy building. He saw the student as a scholar in addition to a potential journalist.

And so, the late 1890s and early 1900s were a time of tinkering. Journalism programs popped up across the country. By 1928, there were approximately 300 colleges offering journalism courses and 45 of those offered distinct schools or departments of journalism (Sloan, 1990, p.11).

Sloan's interpretation of the shift of the 1930s is relevant to current research. He concludes that journalism education chose the wrong fork in the road, heading down the press defender path rather than the press critic path. At a time of depression, the country needed a press that would support social causes. Instead, newspaper owners stuck to the financial bottom line. The public criticized the press for its loyalty to profit, seeing it as part of big business.

According to Sloan, the role of status quo defender was cast in stone, a trend that would grow over the next seven decades.

The press, at a time of increasing criticism, changed tunes and reached out to journalism programs. Newspapers began to financially support programs as well. While educators and the press were reaching out to each other, the curriculum also took a turn toward the practical. It is felt that catering to the industry created a tension between a highly trade oriented discipline and the scholarly intentions of the academy that still exist today; though literature is not available that documents the thoughts of scholars outside the discipline of journalism.

“Stated in a historical sense,” says Sloan, “schools have adopted the Missouri model of education rather than the Pulitzer-Bleyer philosophy (*ibid*, p.15). This means that generally speaking, journalism programs attempt to serve the industry as opposed to serving society.

Those programs advocating liberal education are said to be the cause of criticisms by the industry. These programs are accused of making education irrelevant to practice, as if one excludes the other. Those programs heavy on practice are seen as the cause for journalism’s lack of acceptance into the scholarly academy, as if one excludes the other.

Teacher qualifications and research requirements made their way into the public debates. According to Sloan, graduate programs started to offer courses in theory and research which had a trickle up effect to the teaching at the undergraduate level. As programs ventured into Ph.D. territory, the issue of practice vs. theory became more contentious. As journalism programs began to enter the Ph.D. market, they veered off the technical track and into the terrain of theory in graduate programs. With increased emphasis on research, extensive professional experience was moved down on the hiring criteria list. The literature is rife with nasty rhetoric on this issue. Today, it still tops the list of complaints from the industry: Too much emphasis on scholarly respect and not enough respect for professional experience.

Sloan says he believes journalism history suffers from superficiality (*ibid*, p.65). History should not, he says, be judged on present-mindedness. It needs to be considered in light of its time for a genuine understanding to occur. This is what makes the summaries of Albert Sutton and Paul Dressler so compelling; they provide deep understanding of history because there is more veracity to works written in light of their time.

### **Albert Sutton: A 1945 glimpse into journalism education**

In 1945, Albert Sutton wrote from a position of immediacy in *Education for Journalism*. He was writing at a time when soldiers were set to return from war, looking for training that might lead to quick employment.

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“Education for journalism will have to adjust itself to a new era,” Sutton wrote. “In meeting the problems that will arise, those charged with the responsibility of directing its course will need to draw heavily upon experiences of the past in shaping plans for the future” (Sutton 1945, p.x).

Sutton said editors were looking for more employees than the universities could provide, leading to a speeding up of the curricula to meet the demand. It is interesting that this interpretation of a shift in journalism education is not repeated in other book length explorations. Sutton’s 1945 views are closer to the events and should be considered as valid as the theory that the Missouri Press Association was the greatest influence on a skills-based curriculum.

Sutton’s study appears to be the first attempt to classify journalism programs and track graduates and placement rates. Unlike surveys today, Sutton classified programs according to their offerings: 1) professional schools and departments of journalism belonging to the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism 2) Other schools and departments of journalism offering degrees or majors in journalism 3) Other divisions of journalism—usually within English Departments offering combined English-Journalism majors or strong journalism minors, representing substantial programs in journalism and 4) Limited programs offering from one to seven courses in journalism, usually carried as English department courses, in most cases being counted on the English major but not constituting an independent minor (*ibid* p.3).

To justify his study, Sutton noted previous partial attempts at quantifying or tracking the growth and methods of journalism education. In reference to a thesis written by Vernon Nash in 1928, Sutton noted that it was based “chiefly or entirely on observations, impressions and judgments,” which resulted “naturally in many generalizations regarding the fundamental problems involved” (*ibid* p.5). Sutton said he wanted to base observations on facts collected from all institutions under consideration.

Somewhere along the line, data collection has either broken down or we have so many varieties of programs now that they are too difficult to track. I do believe it would take a full time office to properly track, categorize and evaluate journalism programs in the United States based solely on the type of curricula and “success” rate of graduates within these types. It would



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be a worthy effort and could help focus the public debate on best practices, not damaging generalizations. At present, surveys tend to only represent accredited journalism programs which skew the public debate.

Not much has changed since 1944 in one regard: data collection. “Much confusion regarding the purposes and desired results of [such] instruction naturally has arisen,” wrote Sutton. “A lack of proper facilities and inadequate teaching staffs has been distinct handicaps in many instances. Such conditions have resulted in inferior programs, and as a consequence, the end-products have not always measured up to the expectations of the profession” (*ibid*, p.1).

In the early days of journalism education, newspapermen were not terribly interested in formal journalism education. As the number of programs grew and newspapers were expected to “absorb” the graduates, their interest in the type of education offered grew. Naturally, the relationship between the industry and academia grew closer, says Sutton.

In 1940, as journalism programs were popping up at a fast pace, many questions remained unanswered with regard to the “exact number of institutions giving instruction in journalism or on the character of that instruction,” said Sutton. It was felt “quite general[ly]” that young men and women were not receiving the type of training necessary to prepare them adequately for careers in journalism” (*ibid*, p. ix).

I can’t help but be struck by the comparison to today’s public discourse. Fast forward 64 years and you find the exact same discussion with one important exception. Sutton talks of the “character” of journalism instruction, something you rarely see in contemporary literature. I define character to mean the type and quality of instruction. Current literature would define character as “professional” or “skills-based” or “theory” or “communications.”

To begin an assessment of journalism education in 1945, Sutton set out to collect a variety of data: a list of the programs in journalism, the nature and content of the curriculum being offered, requirements for graduation and degree granted, the size and preparation of the staff of instruction, the amount and kind of laboratory equipment available for instructional purposes, the number of graduates turned out annually, the percentage of placements and their distribution within the profession. A total of 901 institutions were surveyed with a 99.4 percent response rate.

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The annual enrollment and graduate surveys conducted by The Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication provides useful data for recognizing enrollment and employment trends; however, it does not attempt to identify and list every program providing journalism instruction nor does it attempt to evaluate or list types, or the character, of curricula. It draws respondents from the AEJMC directory and the Dow Jones Fund listing. Any program not listed with these entities is not counted.

To my knowledge, there is no mechanism in place intended to help differentiate between types of programs. The American accreditation process, then, is the only system in place that helps classify journalism programs, i.e. if you submit yourself to accreditation; you are one type of program.

Considering the fact that journalism education's beginnings were fractious, based on divergent philosophies as evidenced by Joseph Pulitzer and Harvard President Charles W. Eliot, it seems prudent to remind critics of journalism education that divergent views are necessary in the continual development of curricula.

Even in 1945, researchers were focused on the tension that exists in journalism education. Sutton bounces back and forth in his synthesis of philosophies guiding curriculum development long before higher education made a dramatic shift to embrace professional education. From 1869 to 1908, there was a "growing value" placed on journalism instruction. From 1908 to 1940, journalism instruction grew rapidly.

In 1929, a report published in *Journalism Quarterly* carried prophetic comments regarding rapid expansion of journalism programs: "The problem is more difficult than that of getting large classes. It's a problem of improving the schools and their products...Improvement properly considered, lies along the lines of higher standards and carefully guarded enrollment" (*ibid*, p.17).

In 2004, the same tensions are present. However, in 1936, it was felt that the "battle" had been won. Educators wrote of the path journalism education had taken to get to a place of peaceful co-existence with traditional disciplines and acceptance by the industry.

In 1931, Ralph Casey, chairman of journalism at the University of Minnesota, summarized the stages of journalism education development in three parts: experimental and focused on winning the respect of the academy; winning the respect of newspapermen; editors

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and educators coming together to find common ground (*ibid.* qtd. in Sutton, p. 22).

In 1936, Grant Hyde of the University of Wisconsin further clarified journalism education's path. He said that at first, teachers tried to merely teach writing and the tricks of the trade, and then they recognized the value of integrating social sciences. They soon found, however, that social science courses divorced from journalism did not serve the student, so courses were developed that incorporated sociology, political studies, psychology and so on, and journalism.

"We are admittedly becoming 'theorists,'" and we are proud of it," said Hyde. "Our function is not to use university time to teach young people the things they can learn just as well in a newspaper office, but to direct their attention to necessary things they cannot—probably will not—learn in a newspaper office" (*ibid.*, p.22).

Clearly the world has changed dramatically since the 1930s, but much has remained the same. Norval Luxon's study of curricular trends in journalism in 1937 and Vernon Nash's curricular study in 1928 provide a fascinating overview of journalism education's evolution while at the same time painting a picture of a discipline that has not learned from the past.

In 1917, the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism (a precursor to accreditation) was formed. That body adopted a set of regulations for its members. In 1930, a call was made by the American Society of Newspaper Editors for journalism programs to be classified. And further, Gannet Newspaper's M.V. Atwood acknowledged that the apprentice system had broken down in newsrooms. He suggested a two-tiered system, one that would bring experienced newsmen in to teach skills courses and scholars to teach theory courses (*ibid.*, p.30).

As president of the AASDJ in 1938, Medill School of Journalism Dean Kenneth Olsen offered these prophetic thoughts:

"I believe that one of our greatest needs right now is to educate newspaper critics as to what we are doing," he said in reference to the growing criticism of journalism schools by practicing journalists (*ibid.* 1938, p.32).

Creating and enforcing higher standards to weed out average students and keep the labor pool small was felt to be the best way to satisfy all parties involved. Keep in mind, Sutton's study used four categories to differentiate between types of programs, a practice that is not used

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today. This practice made it clear to newspaper organizations what type of system a prospective employee had been trained under. It recognized that not all programs were equal nor did they attempt to be equal.

As society is complex and constantly changing, journalism curricula will need to constantly change, said Sutton. To address these changes, it was felt that the following recommendations were necessary:

- The group A schools adequately supplies the market with trained graduates, therefore, only schools in group B should be encouraged to strive to meet the admission standards for accreditation.
- Schools in group B should be encouraged to increase the instruction in social sciences to balance the technical training.
- All schools offering journalism instruction should be encouraged to work together toward the common goal.
- A qualitative study should be undertaken to assess group A and group B curricula, pedagogy and staff.

To my knowledge, no qualitative study has ever been performed to assess different types of curricula, pedagogy and staff. And, I do not believe all schools offering journalism instruction have worked together toward a common goal because there is much disagreement with regard to the goal. Using Sutton's depiction of journalism education in 1940, it seems clear that history has not proved to be a great source of improvement.

### **De Forest Odell's 1935 journalism history rendition**

In De Forest Odell's 1935 summary of journalism education history, the author noted that journalism education "is the result of natural social action."

"In its [journalism education] development, no one piloted it consciously along a set course," wrote O'Dell (1935, p.5).

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Just as Sloan chose to frame a discussion of journalism education with categories of particular people and their philosophies, O'Dell viewed journalism education through two distinct lenses: that of pioneers and philosophies. Those that reacted to the evolving social order which included a press reacting to political, social and economic forces and those who developed curricula along philosophical lines. At times these categories overlap. Sloan referred to these lenses as Developmental and Progressive historical views.

“Journalism education came into being in response to a social need. It has changed its form from time to time in accordance with society’s demand that it continually keep itself a malleable institution, ever aware of the service it must provide the nation no matter how difficult may be the labors at hand. Journalism education will prosper in the future only in accordance with the manner in which it continues to serve a changing society,” wrote O’Dell (*ibid*, p.46).

O’Dell’s version of journalism education’s beginnings fall under Sutton’s classification of “Developmental history.” That is, the Penny Press caused some to become disillusioned with the journalism of the day. According to O’Dell, in 1840 a “moral war” was waged against the Penny Press version of reporting. There were calls for reform, even from some Penny Press editors. When magazines came on board, the war gained credibility and there was victory in the form of a journalism course at Washington College.

O’Dell wrote that a swirling conglomeration of forces and the natural evolution of society lead to a new type of journalism, so naturally a new type of journalism education evolved. But the press needed to be controlled, according to O’Dell. Since “reform” was the buzzword of the day, it was “only natural, in view of the examples at hand, [law, medicine, engineering] for education to be chosen as society’s means of control over a rebellious organism” (*ibid*, p.5).

O’Dell threw out loose theories without much logic behind them. He said it was journalistic practices and ultimately a desire to reform those practices that lead to journalism education. In the next breath, he described the American scene at the time General Lee took over his duties at Washington College. That scene, he surmised, was the impetus for the general’s interest in professional education, so much so that he proposed a new professional proposal year after year (*ibid*, p.13).

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Journalism education came into existence in large part because the press was felt to be damaging society and democracy during the Penny Press era of the 1830s and 1840s. A different type of journalism format was needed (*ibid*, p.2).

Professional education in the late 1800s and early 1900s was comprised of such disciplines as law, theology, engineering and medicine. These were disciplines that intended to provide specific skills for a specific outcome. Joseph Pulitzer, it is said, wanted to raise journalism to the same respectable level of other professions. The history summaries of Sutton, O'Dell and DeForest offer contemporary educators “ammunition” for justifying journalism as equal to traditional disciplines if only because great minds have debated and given careful thought to the role of journalism education in an evolving democracy and an evolving capitalist system. The tensions present since General Lee first proposed a course in journalism still exist.

It does appear that contemporary arguments are not moving the discipline forward because they do not reflect knowledge of the origins of contentious issues.

Found in Joseph Pulitzer's private library papers is a pamphlet written by Dr. George W. Hosmer arguing the merits of “making” a journalist. No date is listed on the pamphlet, but it is a remarkably timely document.

“And the press, at first a mere chronicle of small events, has grown to us to be an institution more potent than congresses, courts or armies in government of the nation,” Hosmer wrote. “For the United States public opinion is sovereign and the newspapers focus and culminate public opinions. Is it not time that this institution [Columbia University], of such vast power in the life of the nation, should be developed on the higher plane of enlarged and enlightened study?” (*ibid*, p.4).

There are other more subjective interpretations of journalism education's history, like that of educator Jim Carey's, however, because the tone of the public debate doesn't change, it appears that history is not serving as an effective teaching tool.

*“Versus”: Journalism education’s worst enemy*

It is easy to list the challenges and problems related to journalism education. It is not so easy to solve them. For the purpose of discussion, it’s best to separate them although they overlap at times and in the classroom they are often concurrent issues.

The challenges are most often expressed in terms of versus, either or, black and white, even though we all know life is quite gray.

The literature is fraught with versus arguments, so much so that to review it is somewhat like a ping pong match; the perspectives are bounced back and forth, endlessly, with no winner.

For example:

- Professional versus liberal arts in the academy
- Teaching qualifications (practice versus terminal degree)
- Practice versus theory
- Traditional versus critical (media/cultural studies)
- Editors versus educators (Green eyeshades versus chi-squares)
- Accredited versus non-accredited
- Tracks versus generic communication curricula
- Press defender versus press critic

There are also a few exemplar studies and events that have spawned specific debates and discussions:

- The University of Oregon’s “ 1984 report on the state of journalism education
- Media Education and the Liberal Arts: A Blueprint for the New Professionalism
- The University of Wisconsin’s journalism school curriculum overhaul
- The Winds of Change: Challenges Facing Journalism Education, a 1996 study funded by The Freedom Forum.
- Columbia University’s search for a new dean and the resultant debate that ensued.

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Some studies, such as *Winds of Change*, separate the issues into distinct categories. I believe they are connected, layered and all based on ideological differences. And so, I choose to look at the entire subject of journalism education from two corners: 1) The role of the university and 2) Personal value systems.

### **The role of the university**

“You can’t write if you can’t think.”

*Melvin Mencher 1999*

The opinions on the role of the university and journalism’s place in it are as diverse as the number of people you ask. A discussion of this topic is just that, a discussion, with no resolution in sight. Is it the role of today’s university to prepare a student for a specific workplace, a general working career, life as a good citizen or a combination? An overall definitive answer is nowhere in sight but answers within individual programs are not that hard to find.

At Trinity University, it appears that educators Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ have decided to adopt a liberal arts and general communication curriculum. The University of Montana at Missoula appears to abide by a cultural diversity and hit-the-ground-running J-school philosophy. Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee has designed a new program based on a convergence philosophy. These strategies will succeed or fail based on the unity or lack of agreement of the faculty and the interest of students.

National studies have attempted to address the changing nature of higher education from the good old days of classical education to a twenty-first century capitalism driven environment. While these studies are interesting, they have not lead to a legislative mandate.

I could list the arguments for and against a professional skills curriculum. I could list the arguments for and against a classical liberal arts curriculum. And, I could list the arguments for and against a general communications curriculum. But, it would be just that, a list. What I will do is discuss key studies related to the debate.



### **The Carnegie Corporation: 1975**

Despite the fact that journalism education is usually discussed in a “versus” format, some studies have at least attempted to understand the benefits and/or drawbacks to different types of journalism curricula.

In an effort to evaluate the impact professional programs had on liberal arts education in the 1960s, the Carnegie Corporation supplied funds to the Institute of Higher Education to carry out a comprehensive study. Journalism was one of eight disciplines incorporated into the study.

It was felt at the time, says Paul Dressel, author of *Liberal Education and Journalism*, that no matter how much advocates of liberal arts education wanted to retreat into purist curricula, the number of occupations requiring specialized training and the number of students pursuing specialized training could not be ignored. “There are many issues in this merging of two sets of educational objectives which deserve thoughtful analysis on the basis of which systematic planning can take place,” he reported (1952, p.3).

As far back as 1960, then, issues of balance between liberal arts and professional courses topped the agenda. The literature reflects little progress in this regard for more than 40 years. Dressel reports that the researchers and funders did not intend to reach a conclusion; rather, they were striving for a thorough and thoughtful analysis of literature and programs to reach a better understanding of the role higher education would play in the years to come.

Bickering about the merits of one over the other (liberal arts vs. professional) serves no one, said Dressel. Professional schools are here to stay. He conceded to that fact early in his report. The important question, he said, is how the offerings of professional schools can be devised so as to meet the needs of students with a short term occupational goal while at the same time educating students to “act as intelligently in the broader contexts of life as in their own work”(*ibid*, p.5).

There are three distinct goals of higher education according to Dressel: 1) Inculcate the skills and characteristics of the desired profession; 2) Educate students to become effective citizens; and 3) Helping students to gain “self-understanding, a moral grounding and a consistent view of the world” (*ibid*, p.6-7).

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In a 1952 edition of *The Quill*, Leslie G. Moeller revised these three goals specifically for journalism education: 1) “It should fit the student for being an effective citizen. It should fit him for living a useful, full, satisfying life. 3) It should provide basic preparation for work in journalism” (Dressel, p.7).

There does not appear to be much difference between the intent of liberal arts education and journalism education, or nursing education for that matter. The question, repeatedly, is one of balance and pedagogy.

In Dressel’s view, a four-year period of time is not felt to be long enough to do justice to both goals. That view needs to be contested.

“Undergraduate instruction can be expected to do no more than acquaint him with the vocabulary and the basic principles of a broad field such as pharmacy, engineering or nursing, and cultivate the intellectual skills by means of which new knowledge can be acquired and applied to the infinitely varying problems of day-to-day practice,” reported Dressel in his 1958 study (*ibid*, p.15).

Is there a way to definitely say that an undergraduate education can provide instruction to satisfy the needs of all critics? If you believe the literature, it would appear impossible. It is reported routinely that some editors say they want students with sound reporting skills and excellent grammar. Some say they prefer students with a breadth and depth of knowledge as well as the ability to adapt to new circumstances quickly. What we don’t know is this: is there any program that adequately addresses all expressed desires to the satisfaction of all critics or stakeholders? If we don’t know this, why would we continue to debate the issue as if we know there is no way to educate students appropriately for the workplace and for life?

For example, Dressel reported that “highly specialized undergraduate instruction fails to reach its reputed goal because each set of circumstances in professional life has its own peculiar structure” (*ibid*, p.15).

He says that a student’s “bag of tricks” will be hopelessly inadequate when he or she reaches the workplace. The student will then realize that by focusing narrowly on a specialized knowledge base, he/she has not developed the ability or personality to deal with an ever changing set of obstacles and situations (*ibid*, p.15).

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I believe that Dressel does, in fact, offer up issues for serious consideration with regard to professional school curriculum development. I just want to point out, repeatedly, that it might be more productive to encourage literature that shares experimentation, curricula, practices, philosophies and structures, rather than declaring improvement impossible. By Dressler's definition, education will always be inadequate because we cannot control the number of variables "out there" in the world.

In that vein, Dressel highlights one of the issues facing professional schools. His observations were made in 1958, yet they seem timeless. He said professional schools need to consider the ways students are encouraged to see their undergraduate education as just the first step in a lifetime of growth. If they don't, says Dressel, students and teachers are likely to see that period as a "learn it now or never" experience which results in a curricula "swollen with masses of dispensable facts." The classroom will take on a "hurried" feel rather than "reflective analysis and the orderly expansion of the mind" (*ibid*, p.15).

Dressel's point, I believe, is that higher education should strive to motivate students to strive for excellence throughout their lives. But, this has little to do with curricula or even institutional issues; this is an issue of people.

Dressel concedes, finally, that educating for a responsible and full life as a private citizen and a member of an occupational group is "an ambitious undertaking" but not an "unrealistic goal" (*ibid*, p.16). Challenging the quality or worth of superficial liberal arts courses has still not been adequately researched; however, Dressel investigated this issue fully in 1950 and his observations at the height of journalism's expansion are insightful.

He said it was not known how many educators wanted to challenge the liberal arts courses for their quality and usefulness to journalism, but he surmised that many educators did not want to rock the boat because the relationship between journalism and some liberal arts was already rocky. Some teachers, he said, were just indifferent, believing that liberal arts were just a necessary element to be tolerated.

One way of addressing the disconnect is to integrate, allowing journalism courses to serve as "catalytic agents" by giving "unity, meaning and reality to the liberal arts courses while the latter bring increased depth and substance to journalism" (Swindler 1960, p.28).

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There were further arguments in the 1950s regarding the difference between liberal arts courses and journalism courses. Swindler said that the type of student and the type of teacher influenced the type of course regardless of the title used. A typography course, for example, properly taught, could become a fine arts course. A course in reporting could be a seminar in applied social sciences (*ibid*, p.30).

A study undertaken by Dressel to evaluate journalism school curricula was a multi-method effort. Unfortunately, no studies of this nature to my knowledge have been repeated since 1959. Dressel visited six journalism schools and interviewed faculty and administrators in addition to studying catalogs and transcripts from institutions. He did not set out to evaluate these programs, but rather attempted to break down the ways in which programs were interpreting liberal arts and how they were building their curricula around that interpretation (1959).

He evaluated the liberal arts requirements outside the professional program and from within the professional program. Depending on the institution's overall policy, journalism programs interpreted liberal arts in many ways and their policies reflected varied philosophies. Dressel found that most professional courses also incorporated elements of liberal arts. The liberal element in a professional course, he concluded, has much to do with the level of liberal education of the faculty (*ibid*, p.53).

While the content of Dressel's study centers on liberal arts and their connection to journalism, equally of interest is Dressler's tone and interpretations when compared to current studies such as Medsger's. Something has occurred between 1960 and 2010. I don't believe it is any one event, but a gradual dumbing down of the public debate, a recycling of old arguments, rather than recognition of diversity of philosophies, curricular options and need for continual adaptation.

Dressler and others such as Albert Sutton and Robert O'Dell, writing about journalism education in the 1930s through the 1960s, are even keeled, balanced and curious in their reporting. Later in this chapter I will elaborate more on current debates, but it is important to note the widening gap of understanding in the field of journalism education. The "versus" thinking does not appear to be effective.

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Dressler used the survey sponsored by the Institute of Higher Education to better understand professional faculties' attitudes toward liberal arts.

“The term ‘attitude’ as used here is not definable in any very precise terms,” said Dressler. “In addition to knowledge of verifiable facts, and sometimes in spite of it, the behavior of individuals is determined by a complex and interacting array of feelings, beliefs, opinions, prejudices, hopes, fears and ideals. Sometimes one, sometimes another is the predominant determiner of the position or behavior taken by an individual on a particular issue” (*ibid*, p.63).

When interviewing journalism educators, Dressler found that few of them believed the ideal had been achieved, the ideal intended by the accrediting agency or the ideal declared by journalism schools in their mission statements and catalogs. It is this acknowledgement of a reality different than the theoretical solutions proposed by external forces that gives the issue a hopeful glow as opposed to the cloud of doom seen in contemporary literature.

Dressler mastered the art of the interview and earned the trust of a reading “public” the way a journalist should. If not objective, his is a balanced view of the day to day life of a teacher. He concluded the following:

- Strong leadership is needed to bring faculty together to define their mission, talents and intentions.
- An independent faculty appears to be the best scenario for journalism programs
- Faculty who believe a liberal education is a necessity, appear to be on the decline. The quality of the liberal education depends greatly on the liberal education of the teacher. “Contact with the liberal arts can be invoked by rules, but a liberal education cannot be legislated.”
- Many journalism educators frown upon specialized interests in traditional liberal arts courses but they tend to do the same in their own courses.
- Collaboration between journalism and liberal arts faculty is needed, though would be resisted by both parties at this time.
- Liberal arts education of journalism students is too superficial.

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- Curricula needs to be pruned, attempting to insure depth and quality in courses and making sure each sequence is actually justified by the uniqueness of its format and offerings.
- Speech, business administration and journalism curricula tend to overlap, wasting valuable resources.
- The 25 to 75 percent ratio of professional to liberal arts is only met by a few institutions.
- A sequential integrative approach to higher division journalism programs is inadequate at present, making a clear bridge between skills courses and liberal arts.
- Student newspapers run only by journalism majors do not provide a realistic experience.
- Journalism students are not taking advantage of extracurricular, culturally rich offerings of the university (*ibid*, p.98-101).

And finally, Dressler expressed his faith that journalism education could become the model by which liberal and professional education is synthesized rather than a “juxtaposition of professional and liberal education now characteristic of most journalism programs and even to a greater extent of other professional and technical programs” (*ibid*, p.102).

The exact percentage of journalism programs subjecting themselves to the accreditation process is unknown, so, we do not know the percentage of programs adhering to a 25:75 percent ratio of liberal arts to professional courses. It is safe to say that the ratio is widely accepted as the norm in American journalism program curricula. For the most part, public debate now centers on professional courses versus theory courses, not liberal arts versus professional.

### **University of Iowa Mass Communication curriculum experiment**

Oddly, the literature does not routinely include the story of the University Of Iowa School Of Journalism that was embroiled in a curricular controversy; the scarce literature reveals a situation that caused untold damage and resulted in the academic ruin of a program and a man. The controversy? The audacity to experiment. Despite being relegated to the vault of literature, it is an instructive and useful period of history.

In 1967, Malcolm S. MacLean was named director of the School of Journalism at the University of Iowa. In 1972, he resigned as director in the face of intense criticism from colleagues, alumni, journalists, media organizations and even the Iowa legislature (Manca & Pieper 2001, p.3). Two years later, MacLean died at the age of 53. Like Robert Coles and Alex Harris at the CDS, and like Pamela Wood, founder of the Salt Center, and like James Agee, journalist turned ranter, and like Laurel Richardson, brave defender of writing as a method of inquiry, and like Parker Palmer, education activist, Malcolm MacLean has become one of my idols. What happened in Iowa is another example of the stagnation of the academic dialogue. We are having the same conversation, sometimes arguments, that Iowa dealt with in 1967.

Apparently, MacLean was a self-proclaimed heretic and he wanted to educate future heretics. He was not a journalism teacher though he did have some experience reporting and shooting. He was a communication researcher, the very type of person represented in the “chi-square” camp, except for the fact that MacLean loathed the chi-square and green eyeshade argument with a passion. Instead, he took on a topic that amplified the debate regarding theory vs. practice.

MacLean wanted to take the traditional journalism program at the University of Iowa and turn it into a laboratory, not just for skills training, but for actual experimentation with reactions to pressing media questions. In short, he wanted to educate students who would become heretics like him. MacLean’s description of the ideal graduate: *“I suggest we journalism teachers might reach our great impact by developing our journalism schools’ programs to make heretical, subversive infiltrators of our graduates. What might be the nature of such a heretic? For one thing, he is at least as competent as our graduates today in basic communicative skills,*

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*and I emphasize the plural. That means he can write well and appropriately. He can use a camera effectively, produce pictures which say something. He can film and knows how to handle video and audio tape and other tools of broadcasting. And he knows how to put these together in a package which makes real differences to his intended audience.*

*Our heretic is deeply concerned and thoughtful about the human condition. He cares about the consequences of his work—not just the immediate results, but especially the long run. He has high purpose. He lives for much more than just to bide time and make a buck or two between birth and death. He becomes careful in observation, creative and rigorous in analysis, bright in interpretation and synthesis, thorough in follow through. He feels keenly his responsibility to his fellow man.*

*Our heretic knows how to work well with people. He learns to shape the role he plays and to test its limits. He grasps well the nature and processes of the system he works in and the functions of that enterprise within its community. He invents. He thinks creatively about what could be and moves toward those alternatives he believes should be. He watches opportunities to encourage change in those directions. Given a chance, he hires or urges the hiring of other heretics and supports their efforts.*

*Our heretic has courage and patience, and, in battle, a tough skin. He knows that any basic change makes waves. Biologists tell us that irritability is a basic sign of life. A successful heretic will find lots of signs of life. He becomes a troublemaker. If nobody bitches about what he's doing, he probably isn't doing much (Manca & Piper 2001, p.88).*

Knowing this is the kind of graduate MacLean wanted, the route he took to get there shouldn't seem surprising. It was bold as only a heretic could propose. He “risked everything to implement his holistic vision of communication science” (Self 2001, p.137)

In February 1968, *Time* magazine ran a cover story entitled “Journalism schools are improving these days because they are teaching less journalism.” MacLean took this concept literally, even more so than the accreditation body requiring 75 percent of courses be taken outside a journalism program. He saw the Iowa program to be weighed down by more than 80 courses and eight specialty tracks. The undergraduates outnumbered the graduate students by a 4:1 ratio which to MacLean meant they were predominantly training students who wanted to be



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journalists (Smith 2001, p.16). MacLean wanted to radically shift the foundation of the program from job-oriented training to “open ended inquiry” (*ibid* p.17).

The heretic researcher turned administrator met resistance from many camps. The program was home to several distinct types of teachers and scholars and rather than seeing this as a healthy melting pot, MacLean found a situation in which “egos were unmelttable” (*ibid* p.18).

MacLean’s new program, referred to as a Simulation Laboratory, offered a third model to offset the traditional two: the professional program offered by the University of Missouri and the social science based programs at Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin. The latter model moved journalism in a direction aligned with democracy and the role of the press. MacLean’s academic career was steeped in the development of research methods that could measure social process, such as audience impact. Ultimately, he became widely associated with Q methodology which addressed the impact of the media (Beliveau 2001, p.25).

But, when MacLean was given the reigns of the Iowa program, his focus shifted to curriculum design. The program was well respected, so that was not MacLean’s gripe. In his “manifesto” detailing the changes he wanted to make, MacLean said he felt the college was “miserably caught in the traps of our traditional courses and curricular structures and our foggy dichotomies: skills versus broad background, humanities versus social science, research versus teaching, theory versus practice, basic versus applied, quantitative versus qualitative, you name it.” (MacLean 1966).

MacLean wanted to do more than educate “hacks” as he called them. And, he felt the program’s structure was to blame for the production of hacks rather than “quality people” (*Ibid*). By adhering to the accreditation standards, MacLean felt they were doing their students a disservice. “Teaching specific topics or skills without making clear their context in the broader fundamental structure of a field of knowledge is uneconomical in several deep senses: 1) it makes it very hard for the students to generalize from things he meets now to those he meets later; 2) It provides little reward in terms of intellectual excitement since the power to generalize

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helps make things worth knowing; 3) Knowledge without cohesive structure is easily forgotten (*ibid*).

Segregating liberal arts course work from journalism schools served no one, said MacLean. This left journalism to be seen as a discipline with no intellectual substance. Perhaps the most important belief of MacLean's as it relates to this thesis was his belief that faculty were polarizing the curriculum development process. As a heretic, he used characters to critique people without using names, though his thinking was clearly not well received in his own department. He separated faculty into groups called Academic Bum, Bootstrap Sam and Scientific Virgin. The Academic Bum represented faculty that were "refugees" from the professional world. Bootstrap Sam had retired to a tenured position and his favorite topic was telling students war stories about how hard life really is out in the big world. And, Scientific Virgin is a master at accumulating Brownie points by emulating other Scientific Scholars (Beliveau 2001, p.26).

MacLean wanted to reform Iowa's program based on the critique of journalism practice. Unlike the more current debate of practice vs. theory which centers around media theory, MacLean's reforms centered on communication research in conjunction with practiced, not separated from practice.

The Mass Communication Laboratory, the model MacLean and his colleagues finally settled on, had clear intentions. It became an "open-system simulation" that assumed students would learn if the following elements were present in the laboratory: 1) the learning environment is designed for discovery and invention; 2) the environment is complex and rich enough to permit a wide variety of anticipated and unanticipated learning; 3) the learning environment includes personal "stakes" for each participant must live with the consequences of his or her decisions (Talbot 2001, p.256)

The lab director, Albert Talbot, describes the lab as a place where students experiment and solve communication, mass communication and journalism problems. In the lab, there were competing "enterprises" which produced different media products (Talbot 2001, p.258). The lab was intended to act as a bridge between theory and practice. The program required that Iowa drop all of its other courses, not a popular idea where personalities and egos live.

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From the outside looking in, the laboratory experiment posed logistical challenges as well as political challenges. It had a complicated structure that did not fit well with the university's existing structure. It was an island unto itself, regardless of how well intended the experiment was. It was based on earning points and progression through the program from point A to point B. Adding to the criticism was MacLean's views on quality faculty. To run his laboratory, new faculty would have to be hired. The program would require "fine specialists in the production and research methods area plus communication generalists who are neither media nor specialty bound. It is very hard to find individuals that have both these attributes, but we would need to take both into account in building our faculty. In selecting new faculty, I believe, we must put a very high premium on broad background, scholarship, imagination, intelligence and ability not simply to lecture but to communicate, to educate. Our present emphasis on number of years' experience in the media would, in general, not bring us the kind of people who could handle either the special or the general aspects of the new program" (MacLean 1967).

Undaunted by the resistance he knew he would experience, MacLean moved ahead with implementation of the communication laboratory. The program, he said, would take a lot of energy. "It will challenge our creativity, it will tax our ingenuity, it will test our own ability to absorb uncertainty, and it will most certainly try our patience. It will demand a great deal from us all in the way of research and constant revision of content and approach, for such a program will rapidly produce students who will be able to challenge our own intellects on an equal footing. It will be exhaustingly exhilarating" Budd, R. & MacLean, M. 1967). In 1970, three years after arriving at the University of Iowa, criticism of MacLean's changes reached fever pitch. "Are we having problems? We certainly are," he said during a speech to alumni. "Some are repercussions from anxieties I have been unable to calm very well—anxieties of alumni and publishers who believed rumors that I would turn the school into a research school, whatever that is, and destroy the *Daily Iowan*. One wonderful old publisher in Iowa, an alumnus, fond of the school, died hating my guts" (*ibid*).

In retrospect, 30 plus years after his death, Malcolm MacLean is reaching cult status much in the same way James Agee was discovered long after his death. MacLean was ahead of his time, perhaps. He believed that theory and practice cannot be separated, that communicate

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is what journalists do, that experimentation is necessary to have an impact on the weak areas of the media and that education of journalists is layered and complex. He believed that journalism education has been harmed, damaged, by its inability to accept diversity in programming and faculty.

When the University of Iowa School of Journalism was denied accreditation, MacLean's career as an administrator was hard to hold on to. It wasn't so much the actual initiative as it was an inability to deal with external and internal sniping. MacLean's failings as an administrator in the bureaucratic thing called a university, outweighed his contributions to the discipline's history at that time (Niemcek 2001, p.369). The late 60s and early 70s were burdened with Vietnam and American political drama. It was not the era for academic change (*Ibid*).

Like James Agee, MacLean had little patience for the bickering in the journalism education community. "He attacked basic precepts of newsgathering. He challenged the notion that journalists, mostly white, mostly male, mostly middle class could objectively interpret many of society's needs in a culturally diverse world. He clearly punctured some pretensions held by journalism's leading lights, at least those in Iowa" (*ibid* p.371).

MacLean resigned as the director of the school of journalism in 1972. Ironically, his obsession with the education of journalists and his ideas about how to produce change agents, are now being rediscovered based on the efforts of dozens of former colleagues, students and current researchers and teachers.

Luigi Manca and Gail Pieper, editors of the book that revisits MacLean's life and career in one place, provide ideas and theories that may be reinterpreted by those of us now in a position to experiment with curriculum and program development.

"For us and all who helped make this book a reality, the experiments were vital—not just for the J-School, but also for the whole field of journalism education and research in the United States," Manca & Pieper wrote (2001).

The laboratory MacLean created was based on a deeply held belief that journalism education had to change course to allow students an opportunity to grapple with real world situations and be challenged to come up with solutions they could advocate once employed. It is his "heretical vision of journalism" that is still important today (2001, p. 4). New technology

and social networking that create a globalized media world have also shined a light on the haves and have-nots. MacLean wanted journalism schools to develop journalists more than how to use technology; he wanted students to understand, and help the public understand, the roots of these divisions (*ibid*).

Known for his contributions to Q Methodology and the Iowa experiment, MacLean's singular hope can get lost. He said it best: "I see an implied demand that our communicators need to know deeply, emphatically, and at the same time to be able to analyze objectively and communicate what it means to be poor among the rich, to be hungry among the well-fed, to be black among the white, to be degraded among the smug, to be sick among the healthy, to be unheard, unheard—in a society noisy with messages" (Berlo, 2001, p.5).

### **Liberal arts vs. professional education Blanchard and Christ style**

Just as Fedler et al offered a list of studies designed to assess the state of journalism education, educators Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ offered a list of studies designed to assess the relationship between the goals of higher education and professional programs (Blanchard 1993).

- National Institute of Education's (NIE) Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education produced its findings in "Involvement in Learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education," published in the Chronicle of Higher Education.
- 1985 The Association of American Colleges conducted the Project on Redefining the Meaning and Purpose of Baccalaureate Degrees issued a report declaring that a bachelor's degree no longer had a clear meaning.
- 1987 The Carnegie Foundation's president, Ernest L. Boyer, produced a report entitled "College: The Undergraduate Experience in America."
- 1987 Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*.

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- 1988 The Professional Preparation project produced its findings as “Strengthening the ties that bind: Integrating Undergraduate Liberal and Professional Study.” The study was conducted by the University of Michigan and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education.
- 1988 The Syracuse Project resulted in “Contesting the Boundaries of Liberal and Professional Education: The Syracuse Experiment.”

The above is a short list of literature focusing on reform and/or the connection between professional programs and the liberal arts. Blanchard and Christ viewed the reform literature through the eyes of communication educators at a small liberal arts college. Their exhaustive synthesis of current thinking on this issue is a service to educators whether you agree with them or not.

It is a service to me because their summary bolsters my argument that the first order of business is to challenge many of the assumptions we base our teaching and research on.

Many of those studies conducted during the late 1980s attempted to first challenge the assumptions, then redefine the liberal arts for today’s world and today’s student. They point out two prevalent myths: One is that professional programs are the “antithesis” to liberal education and have no real role to play in liberal education. The other myth is that professionally oriented programs may have to be tolerated because of their popularity but they should be kept separate from liberal arts.

There is a tendency, Blanchard and Christ noted, for the liberal arts to point a finger at professional programs to avoid looking at the lack of relevance in their own programs to a changing world. On the other hand, some believe that assimilation between traditional disciplines and professional disciplines has been underway for some time and that most professional disciplines now have components of liberal arts at their foundations as a result (*ibid*, p.10-11).

Just as in journalism education, the debate over liberal arts and professional education is often a matter of opinion, style, preference or personal survival. Ernest L. Boyer, in his Carnegie Foundation report, did concede that regardless of a student’s major, she expects to become

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gainfully employed using her education (*Ibid*, p.11). To think that in this day and age most students pursue a college education because a class-based society insists upon it for survival, of the elite is naïve and uninformed.

Boyer attempted to debunk several assumptions in the course of his often cited report. He responded directly to criticisms that higher education had become too vocational. He said simply that a university education had always been considered “useful” and that term naturally meant something different in the 1980s than it did in 1900 (*ibid*, p.12).

In fact, a handful of authors have traced the origins of liberal education, finding that the resistance to career preparation has always been an issue for proponents of liberal education. Depending on the state of societal evolution, liberal arts education and professional education serve a particular role in that very evolution (*ibid* p.12).

We have moved from a society in which people were prepared to take up their positions in the upper classes or become a middle class worker such as doctor or lawyer to a society in which we needed educated people to become active participants in civic life. We now enter a period of consumerism that places education in a pragmatic light. It is viewed as “an investment and its product is human capital for the economy and productive careers for the graduate” (*ibid*, p.12). We have two choices: either attempt to change that view of education or attempt to develop curricula to address it.

Blanchard and Christ, in an effort to provide broad context, asked two basic questions: What is a liberal education, and what is the meaning of liberal arts? The same questions should be asked of journalism: What is a journalism education, and what is the meaning of journalism? The problem, no matter what questions we ask, is that there will never be a unified answer.

The authors propose that an outcomes approach is the most likely method of defining or building a curriculum because it uses a broad outline that can encompass many different ways of thinking.

Blanchard and Christ use outcomes to address liberal arts and professional education curricula, then superimpose findings on a media education curricula. It’s important to note that when liberal arts outcomes, as defined by the American Association of Colleges and the Carnegie Foundation, were synthesized with outcomes as defined by the Michigan Professional Preparation Network Report, it was found that the two lists dramatically overlap (*ibid*, p.15).

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As far back as 1969, there has been debate over classical curriculum vs. subject specialization. Once the classical curriculum was abandoned as the norm, a new debate arose: which discipline would be considered superior?

The answer, generally, is none. The problem, after half a dozen studies, is a matter of “coherence and unity of knowledge” which has been addressed by general or core educational frameworks in most higher education settings. (*ibid*, p.18). As will be discussed later, the issue of balance in journalism education is often at the heart of the public debate. How much liberal arts? How much skills training? How much theory?

The core curriculum also addresses a balance issue: general knowledge, major knowledge and electives. There is also an issue of balance looming over higher education in general: individual vs. community. Major fields of study focus on a student’s personal interest and aptitudes, while a liberal education hopes to nurture civic responsibility and sense of community. It is thought by many institutions that this is best accomplished by an environment in which students share a learning experience with common outcomes, hence the development of a core general education requirement at most universities.

The Carnegie Report made perhaps one of the most useful observations for curricula developers. It expressed an interest in seeing the liberal arts and professional subjects connected and integrated rather than separated. Blanchard and Christ’s deep exploration into the educational reform movement, liberal arts education and the relationship of both to media education is a good foundational brick in the public discussion surrounding journalism education. Even if you do not agree with their *Blueprint for the New Professionalism*, the questions raised regarding pedagogy and the big picture are useful if your mind is open to ways in which we can embrace many educational realities.

### ***Winds of Change: The master of versus***

In 1996, The Freedom Forum funded a year-long study to assess the status of journalism education. The result was *Winds of Change: The Challenges Facing Journalism Education*. While the premise under which the study was performed is suspect, the study did provide



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interesting data. Its title reflects a positive view of the issue as it replaces the usual term “problem” with “challenges.”

The report is important for several reasons. Not only was it heavily funded and given a reasonable timeframe in which to conduct surveys and interviews, it attempts to delineate the issues, not solve them.

There is a danger inherent in survey methodology. If the results do not reflect the reader’s reality, she is likely to dismiss the results by attacking the sample or the questions. I do both, but not because the results do not mirror my thinking. I consider the data, but at the same time, I am aware that surveys and cursory interviewing do not divulge the agenda or influences of those responding.

It is my experience that no two journalism programs are the same and the work environment for faculty is not the same. One teacher with 10 years’ experience may answer questions identical in manner to a relatively inexperienced teacher. A teacher holding a doctorate may agree with a former editor holding only a bachelor’s degree.

I believe human nature is such that forcing a single “best” answer may be more harmful than helpful. To assess the state of journalism education, the researchers attempted to understand the following:

- What journalism programs are teaching
- Who is teaching and with what qualifications
- How working journalists view their education
- How journalists with journalism degrees compare to those without
- How newsroom recruiters regard journalism education

Although these are important components to consider, respondents were asked one question related to their “description of selves and introductory skills” (Medsger 1996 p.85). In addition, there is no way to connect responses to types of teaching environments. In short, the entire study was based on the premise that something is wrong with journalism education. It then offers findings and recommendations based on responses, the underlying conditions of which we are unaware. In addition, journalism education’s relationship to industry was a critical concern in

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this study, yet the industry is not put to the same test as education. The biggest assumption made in this study, and indeed in all studies related to journalism education, is that it is responsible for the quality of journalism we see and hear today. We do not know the educational experience of an editor who stated she holds journalism education in low regard.

My concerns and criticisms of the *Winds of Change* study can be applied to all surveys. As long as surveys are the method of choice in journalism education research, I believe the gap between industry and educators and between journalism educators and the academy at large will be widened, not bridged.

The key findings of Medsger's research efforts are:

- Journalism education is important to news organizations.
- The future of journalism is in jeopardy because faculty does not have enough professional experience.
- The doctorate is not considered essential to the teaching of journalism.
- The accreditation process pushes too hard for the doctorate as a hiring requirement.
- New journalists feel their best teachers were those with professional experience.
- Journalism educators are confused about the requirements for promotion and tenure.
- Newsroom recruiters have a low regard for journalism education.
- The future of journalism is jeopardized by low salaries.
- Fewer students intend to become journalists.
- Journalists without a degree in journalism are doing as well if not better than those with a degree in journalism.
- A majority of journalists say they like their jobs but many say they will leave because of the low pay.
- Current trends in journalism conflict with what newsroom supervisors say they want.
- The accrediting process does not address the concerns of faculty or industry.
- Schools with the fewest teachers holding doctorates graduate the most students who become journalists.
- Educators and journalists say they want to see more continuing education partnership for

working journalists (*ibid*, p.8).

In future chapters, I offered a personal account of my journey from student to teacher for a reason. This one account shows how a teacher's experience affects her answers to survey questions. Those causal factors are never exposed using quantitative methods; however, the data compiled from such methods is used as a foundation for public debate and curricular development.

In other words, the discipline of journalism operates from a false or shaky foundation which keeps it on a cycle of perpetual finger pointing rather than innovation and experimentation. Literature from the 1930s through the 1960s showed us that tensions present in journalism education communities were considered normal and a natural occurrence for a discipline linked to an ever changing public and industry. Those same tensions today are expressed in a negative and sometimes vicious rhetoric. I know that many editors surveyed do not know me and do not see me in the classroom, yet their survey responses assume they do.

Using some of Medsger's results as a gauge, you can see how continual surveying leads to a poor foundation.

"The lesson for today: journalism is dying." This is the sub-head used on page 20 of Medsger's report referring to what she sees as the negative tone journalism educators bring to their classrooms. However, I am a journalism educator, and I do not believe this statement, nor have I ever used it. More than half of the new journalists surveyed said they had instructors who expressed their views that journalism is a "dying profession." Approximately 50 percent did not agree with the statement. From this statistic it was determined that the lessons taught by journalism educators today are that journalism is dying.

The survey data also showed that 76 percent of new journalists surveyed said "most" of their professors said journalism is a valuable public service. Only four percent of respondents said that "most" of their professors were negative about the profession. In fact, fewer respondents chose the term "most" to describe negative professors than any other category.

Another example: "Based on their experiences recruiting on campuses and working with interns and new journalists, newsroom recruiters and supervisors expressed extremely low regard for the expertise of journalism faculty and said the quality of journalism education needs to be improved a great deal" (*ibid*, p.21).

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In fact, no question asked respondents to grade their level of regard for journalism education. They were asked if journalism education was the main source of employees, whether they felt journalism education needs to improve, whether journalism education has recently done a good job of preparing students for employment, whether journalism professors are on the cutting-edge and have a strong influence on the profession, and whether people from their news organization ask professors for advice (*ibid*, p.92).

The results: 35 percent of respondents said they felt journalism education needed to improve a great deal. However, 20 percent said they mildly or strongly disagreed with that statement. We have no idea why a newsroom recruiter or supervisor feels this way, nor what the scope of their experience was. Had they dealt with two local journalism programs, 25 national journalism programs, a program under transition, a generic communications placement resource?

When asked if journalism instructors are on the cutting-edge AND have a strong influence on change in the profession, 61 percent said yes, 11 percent said they didn't know and only 29 percent said they did not think instructors were on the cutting edge AND have a strong influence on the profession (*ibid*, p.92).

The study's interpretation? "Minuscule portions of the recruiters/supervisors surveyed for this study said journalism educators are leaders of change in the profession and possess up-to-date expertise that would be helpful in solving newsroom problems" (*ibid*, p.20).

That minuscule portion is the three percent who felt "strongly" about the question. The question has two connected parts, though the ideas are not connected. If a teacher is not on the cutting edge, she naturally has no influence on the media. If a recruiter holds journalism education "in low regard," would she believe an educator has influence?

Although a "highly regarded" research consultant firm, The Roper Organization, conducted the survey with assistance from a highly regarded panel of journalists and educators, the final interpretation of data appears to be Medsger's.

I would interpret the data much differently than Medsger because I recognize my experience in some data and not in others. I would naturally critique certain data more closely than others as a result. I would have to contest data that I did not understand based on my experience.

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Nowhere in Medsger's study is pedagogy or quality teaching evaluated or defined. I would still be suspicious of responses to questions related to pedagogy, but the fact that they were omitted says something about the operating premise. There appears to be an assumption that if a highly regarded journalist is put in a classroom, she will be a highly regarded and effective teacher, when nothing could be further from the truth.

In all fairness, Medsger's conclusions do bring us back to earth. She refers to journalism education as "vulnerable," which is a true statement by any measure of data. Unfortunately, Medsger refers to journalism education as that dreaded "monolithic entity" and we are left with virtually no place to go but back to black and white camps of philosophy.

Journalism has been going through a "profound identity crisis" and it needs to be "rescued," she said (*ibid*, p.66). We are back to square one with an uncontested discourse. What qualifies as an identity crisis, and what determines the need for rescue?

In this century of rapid change, Medsger says it is a good time for journalism education as a whole, as well as individual programs, to "take stock of both the right and wrong turns that took place during journalism education's first century - and choose which path to take in the new century" (*ibid*, p.66).

As is the case with the majority of the study, there are equal parts recognition of multiple realities and unfair generalizations. It is always good to take stock and choose new paths, but journalism education as a whole cannot do this because there is no such entity – there are many individuals with different philosophies and agendas.

It would take another doctoral dissertation to evaluate the *Winds of Change* study, but generally speaking, the study provides interesting data that can be used to bolster any argument or policy change or curricula overhaul. It, like most other studies or essays, does not acknowledge the highly political nature of educational institutions, nor newsrooms for that matter. The leadership and/or the faculty in any journalism program will dictate the direction of that institution's course.

There are more grassroots issues needing attention than general public debate that is fruitless in terms of arriving at a consensus. That issue is, media organizations are responsible for determining what type of new employee they want and for finding that employee. It is the responsibility of an educational program to state its mission and outcomes clearly, so students

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can decide what is right for themselves. Just as we criticize politicians who pander for certain audiences or funders to get elected, trying to please the voter of the day, we should admit that no journalism program can appeal to every student or every media organization.

If we are honest, we should admit that judging is a personal and political matter, and judging is what the public debate is all about. Who is better? Who is right? Who has good intentions? Who is out to damage the student body, the industry or the public?

I'm willing to concede that the Freedom Forum, Betty Medsger and all those who participated in the massive study resulting in *Winds of Change* are trying in their own way to move the debate forward leading to better education and a better journalism. I just don't believe their methods have succeeded.

It is interesting to note that *Winds of Change* did not address the issue of liberal education as a separate issue. Instead, it is couched in the form of intellectual skills versus generic communication. As noted earlier in this chapter, "versus" thinking is rampant in journalism education. It is also interesting to note that Betty Medsger has become a chief proponent of liberal arts education based on her research into the qualities and educational experience of successful journalists. She has advocated an education focused on vessel contents, not vessel filling (2003).

On the other hand, the *Winds of Change* study labels the battle as journalism versus communications studies. She says the two "competing paths" dominant today come in the form of a traditional accreditation model or an "integrated" curriculum or "new professionalism" model.

There are many reasons why a journalism program decides to incorporate speech, communications, cultural studies, and so on. Sometimes it is forced, sometimes not. There is a market for general communications programs. When a student applies for an entry level reporting job, it is the responsibility of the employer to determine if that student's education matches the job's needs. A program calling itself journalism should be critiqued by the journalism community. A program not purporting to be a traditional journalism program is a different animal.

It is one thing to note trends or disagree with a trend and another matter entirely to deny

there are ample journalism programs to fill the available positions unless, of course, the issue is really about having a traditional journalism program within 10 miles of every American citizen.

## **BLANCHARD AND CHRIST'S NEW PROFESSIONALISM:**

### **One version of innovation**

The chief proponents of an integrated curriculum, according to Medsger, are Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ of Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas (1993). Their curricular model, called the "New Professionalism," is based on an extensive exploration of the connection between liberal arts instruction and professional instruction.

I do not interpret Blanchard and Christ's work in the same way Medsger does. While I choose to place myself in the traditional camp as opposed to the integrated camp, like Medsger, I think there are many other credible or valid choices, not just two.

The reality must be repeatedly brought to the forefront of any argument. Some teachers and administrators feel there is no real market for traditional journalists, at least not in relation to the number of journalism programs. Some teachers and administrators address the changing job market by leaning toward a generic communication model. Medsger refers to journalism as being at risk like throwing a baby out with the bathwater. The baby, then, is being tossed back and forth between two camps so much so that the issue has blurred. We are trying to decide who can best protect the baby, who doesn't want the baby anymore and how many ways there are to utilize the baby to its fullest potential. The literature focuses on the people throwing the baby around, not on the baby itself.

Blanchard and Christ's model is devised from a small liberal arts college point of view. I don't believe their model appeals to many, but it is an option for those whose philosophies or academic experiences mirror that of Trinity College. If you teach in that environment, you're more likely to be absorbed by a department of English or communications. You may have 20 or 30 majors to work with. One or two of those may be interested in a journalism career. The general education core is usually more difficult and takes longer than a core in a public institution. Holding to a traditional journalism ground could signal an end to your job and your

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program. In that setting, shifting focus to appeal to a different or broader pool of students or to address your location in the academy makes sense.

Blanchard and Christ are not talking about journalism education; they are referring to “media education.” And so, we need not become alarmed at their new curricular “blueprint” because we are not required to adopt it and it is not likely to appeal to all institutions or permanently damage journalism education as many of us know it. There is no formal mandate to adopt generic communications, public relations or convergence curricula.

It is the issue of liberal arts and professional programs taken up by Blanchard and Christ that should be of interest to journalism educators.

We all know that accreditation by the Accreditation Association of Educators of Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires students to take 75 percent of their courses outside their major (broadcast, print, photojournalism and so on), In addition, many schools require a core of general education courses ranging from 30 to 60 credit hours. This means, obviously, that many journalism programs can only offer students approximately ten courses in their major area.

Superimpose the expressed needs of the industry on those ten courses, and you’ll see the math doesn’t add up to satisfy anyone. There are limits to the time you can require of students which differs from campus to campus. The student body make-up differs from campus to campus. Many public institutions are dealing with working students while private liberal arts colleges or Ivy League schools do not.

Admission requirements are not always negotiable; some schools mandate requirements for all departments and some allow for input from certain departments.

Funding tied to enrollment numbers also causes problems in terms of curriculum development and quality of instruction. To lower class sizes, you must hire more teachers. To do that, you need more money. To get more funding, your enrollment numbers need to go up and you are on a cycle building up numbers to reduce numbers.

The issue of hiring criteria is sometimes based on divergent philosophies. Larger research institutions or liberal arts colleges with long traditions require the doctorate for its faculty. Journalism education literature generally whines about this requirement which does



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more to harm the discipline's standing in the academy than any other factor. It sets the discipline apart as a victim rather than a unique and challenging field of study.

Universities and colleges are not extensions of business. They are distinct places of learning separate and apart from the labor force. A journalist turned teacher must be held to the same standard as a doctor turned teacher or social worker turned teacher etc... or a philosophy teacher or math teacher. Journalism literature refers to the discipline as somehow so different from any other ideology or discipline that it must be given special treatment in the form of lower academic standards of its teachers, but higher professional backgrounds, with no real regard for teaching ability by professionals.

Because journalism programs try to provide depth and breadth to an educational experience by requiring heavy contact with other disciplines, most students take introductory liberal arts courses that themselves become technique courses, not studies in depth designed specifically for a particular discipline.

Medsker expressed concern over the type of model recommended by Blanchard and Christ because, she states, the model assumed that skills courses required no intellect. Also, this model may be seen as another peg in the trend toward removing journalism from the curricula altogether in favor of an integrated communication style program. I don't see it that way.

I would argue that Blanchard and Christ have offered a model for a particular philosophy. I believe they have taken the call for experimentation and innovation seriously. The fact that not all stakeholders will agree with the philosophy or the model is not necessarily a bad thing. I defend the somewhat "radical" departure recommended by Blanchard and Christ if only because I intend to offer my own radical model for consideration.

The same argument made about journalism education is being made about liberal arts education in America. "Higher education and especially the traditional classical liberal arts caretakers have lost their way," said Blanchard and Christ. Again the assumption is made that there is one liberal arts education (*ibid*, p.6).

Because professional schools are often blamed for the deterioration of the liberal arts, the issue does affect journalism education. Just as the industry routinely "blames" journalism education as the cause of media criticism, professional schools are often blamed for wiping true

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liberal arts educations off the educational map.

An entirely separate debate is waged in the literature about the general role of the university. Because this argument cannot be resolved, the role of journalism education cannot be defined in a nice neat package. I believe the education community is doing harm to today's student because most discussions are framed in either/or formats, black and white, us and them. It seems more productive to expose different philosophies and the curricula that result from them, and let the chips fall where they may in terms of outcomes assessment. In other words, define your philosophy, develop a curriculum? That fits, continually evaluate its effectiveness, revise your curriculum and stand your ground with grace, not animosity.

Students and the marketplace will let you know whether your design and ideology is working. Blanchard and Christ address this very issue, the impossible to resolve issue, by attempting to define "professional" and "liberal." In essence, they noted the emphasis placed on self-direction in both liberal education and professional education. Critics of professional schools often cite the lack of "liberal ethos" in course development. This leads us back to the philosophical foundations of any curriculum. Does it help develop the whole student for an entire life or just impart skills for a narrow specialized and often short-lived career? (*Ibid*, p.62-63).

Blanchard and Christ express a concern with the lack of values in the framework of media programs. Citing well known educators such as James Carey and Everette Dennis, the authors repeatedly drive home the issue of resistance which would make critical theorists like Henry Giroux quite happy, I would imagine. And, it is this concept of resistance that forms the basis of my own curricular offering.

A liberal education, then, can be seen as one which guides students to formulate a personal ethos, one that will empower them to resist the status quo and to question such entities as capitalism and democratic principles in action. Blanchard and Christ state unequivocally that "the discipline's [media] dilemma cannot be resolved and reform cannot take place without an affirmative, purposeful shift from industrial and occupational and individualistic values to liberal university traditions and community priorities" (*ibid*, p.64). And again, I disagree. This ignores the fact that we live in a very different world than the one my mother experienced. She

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attended a private Presbyterian college in 1954 where she studied Latin and Shakespeare and was taught to “behave like a lady.”

Again, it is important to note the either/or thinking. The term “cannot” is the opinion of the authors, not a verifiable fact.

Although I disagree with the method they propose, I do agree with Blanchard and Christ’s hopes that an education should strive to prepare students to “shape” their own careers, work product and facilitate a shift in management ethos in the media industry toward quality, not quantity. This philosophy will naturally not be popular and/or embraced readily by practicing journalists. If I were forced to take one stand and generalize by agreeing that journalism education is broken, I would say it is broken because it refuses to shoot right back that it is the media that is broken.

The authors should be given the credit denied by Medsger and others in the literature. Most of us remember hearing in journalism school the phrase “everyone wants to read the news but no one wants to be the news.” This adage holds true with regard to the journalism education literature. Blanchard and Christ hold the media industry accountable as well as the education community. They acknowledge the faults of all stakeholders: students, teachers, administrators, journalists and media managers. Yes, they’ve chosen to take a particular stand, advocating a shift toward communications as opposed to traditional career tracks, but underlying their argument is a philosophy of change. That word, “change”, means that each stakeholder is in the “news,” which usually leads to a critical response just as Mr. Smith would call a reporter and spew anger because his secret criminal life was exposed on the front page.

Medsger’s *Winds of Change* report, while comprehensive and useful, does not acknowledge a harsh reality experienced by journalism, speech and media teachers daily in the classroom. That is, much of what ails journalism education programs is the media environment, not the educational environment alone.

The literature reflects two distinct points of view: those of recruiters and those of teachers. Medsger’s project surveyed new journalists to gauge their perspective on the work environment. Approximately 49 percent said the quality of management in the newsroom was very good or good. Some 51 percent said it was average or poor. Managers had a higher

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opinion of newsroom management than non-managers (*ibid*, p.131). Approximately 72 percent of respondents said money dominated newsroom decisions.

This statistic would not, I believe, surprise educators. Medsger's interpretation does not provide media manager feedback on this statistic. In general, Medsger's report tells us that media professionals feel journalism education and educators are inadequate; however, the data also points to the work environment as fraught with problems. To present the "challenges facing journalism education" without equally addressing the challenges facing journalists in the workplace skews the public debate. From *Winds of Change* came another onslaught of arguments based on a one-sided blame game.

In Medsger's opening statements summarizing the data, the last point made was this: "sleazy journalism doesn't help" (*ibid* p.23). Blanchard and Christ emphasized the state of the media work environment while Medsger placed the issue last on the priority totem pole.

"Many forces affect what happens to journalism education," wrote Medsger. This statement should be the opening statement to all literature, studies or publications related to journalism education. Unfortunately, the thought quickly gets lost in the messy word game that ensues.

How is journalism education to expect respect in the academy which leads to funding and support if the media continually heads down a sensational and entertainment path resulting in a shrinking news hole? The ethical dilemma for journalism educators is increasingly difficult and painful. How much truth do you withhold and how much truth do you tell your students? Are you doing them a disservice if you educate them for an ideal environment that doesn't exist?

Medsger breaks down the issue like this: there are people within journalism education who do not care, nor have they ever known about or cared about, journalism's mission. Those people would have journalism lose its distinctness, falling into a big generic communication hole instead.

There are those within journalism who do know and respect journalism's role in society, but for economic reasons, are willing to damage journalism by scaring off future journalists. While there is some merit to her arguments, the problem just isn't that simple. No

one is served by this either/or thinking. What happened to this message: many forces affect what happens to journalism education? Many have been reduced to one: a group of teachers who are hurting journalism education by advocating generic communications. Again, it isn't that simple in reality. Quantitative data tends to simplify the complexity of reality.

The fact that Medsger's comprehensive study resulted in a host of mixed messages is a testament to the argument that simple interpretation of data is not helping matters. For example, Medsger says it is a "tough and exciting time" to be a journalism educator. This is positive. "If teachers are honest," she writes, "some of the lessons they teach are about the quite harsh realities of journalism that coexist alongside the exciting possibilities of journalism. Will there be an explosion of opportunities or an explosion of journalism?" (*ibid*, p.26). Even though this is Medsger's own opinion, it does mirror the opinion of much of the literature: either/or.

And finally, Medsger points out that the future is "not clear." It is not clear if media moguls will change their ways. It is not clear if advertisers will dictate news content. It is not clear whether news organizations will stop "eating their own [journalists.]" Will they run off an entire generation of new journalists"? (*ibid*, p.26).

### **Where are the students?**

If you attempt to use the points made in *Winds of Change*, you would have to throw your hands up in the air. At no point in the comprehensive study can you find unity or coherence, in part because multiple realities preclude such, but in part because the one thing needed for unity or coherence is the admission that we have already thrown the baby out with the bathwater. It's done. The literature proves the point. Discussion about journalism education should center on the student.

A thorough review of the literature reveals that students have been locked away in their bedrooms. We'll call them out when a news organization needs to hire. Then we'll argue about whether the teachers did their jobs and whether the media industry provides a good work environment.

In the summer of 1988, David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit unveiled their survey

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findings of journalism and mass communication educators' traits, attitudes and values. Interesting survey, but there was no attempt to determine teachers' attitudes toward students, learning or pedagogy. The authors stated that their purpose was to shed light on educator's views toward education, media roles and ethics and media performance.

Unfortunately, there was no mention of the classroom environment, support for high standards, the admissions process or other obstacles to reform. We have no way of determining how a given ideology or belief in a particular issue, such as the role of journalist in today's society, plays itself out in the classroom.

Weaver and Wilhoit's study is useful and interesting for a variety of reasons, however, they did not take the opportunity when they had it to also assess the interaction between philosophy and practice, or praxis, which is at the heart of curriculum development.

The concept of "professionalism of scholarship" offered by Stephen D. Reese and Jeremy Cohen has something in common with Blanchard and Christ's "new professionalism." Neither focuses on the presence of a living breathing complex student. I ask my student newspaper staff members to think of the newspaper as a living breathing thing because it's one way to keep them focused on the public service task at hand rather than themselves. I would offer the same "advice" to Reese, Cohen, Blanchard and Christ, Medsger and others. Most parents will tell you that using the age-old argument, "because I'm your mother and I said so," doesn't work with today's child who is exposed, despite best efforts, to messages diametrically opposed to the principles of some parents. To offer an educational philosophy without considering the student on the receiving end leaves the idea, model or recommendation sounding hollow.

Reese and Cohen point to a 1997 survey by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute that found freshmen university students demonstrated the "lowest level of political interest in the history of the survey" (Reese & Cohen, Sax et al, p. 214). This proves, they said, that liberal arts education intended to hone civic skills is not working. This truth, combined with the fact that the media is declining in public opinion, means we need reform within the university, and specifically within journalism education, that will instill a sense of civic responsibility (*Ibid*, p.214). Unfortunately, students are not mentioned again in the study until the end: "Given our emerging knowledge of the learning sciences, can we separate the liberal

arts from journalism and still expect students to create a whole out of the parts?" (*ibid*, p.224).

An interesting and important question is raised. Wouldn't we need to discuss the "learning sciences" rather than peripheral arguments divorced from the life of a real living breathing student?

*Winds of Change* did not survey current students. The yearly enrollment surveys sponsored by AEJMC and the Grady School of Journalism and Mass Communications do not address current students.

It is interesting to note that Blanchard and Christ devote an entire chapter to "Teachers and Students on the Front Lines of Reform", yet students are considered only as a receiver of information. The good news is, Blanchard and Christ's report is the only comprehensive study of actual curricular models found in the literature. After interviewing dozens of educators and sifting through documents, the blueprint does address an often neglected issue and one that needs to come to the forefront of the public agenda.

Not only has the media changed since General Lee suggested a journalism program in 1876, but higher education has changed and the student body has changed. Part of the explanation for the perceived inadequacy of graduates has been a decline in intellectual ability as larger and larger proportions of the American populace have gone to college, says Sloan. Students of average ability have tended to shy away from intellectually challenging disciplines such as history or philosophy and to be attracted to professional areas. Such areas emphasize skills more than the rigorous thinking required in some of the traditional scholarly disciplines, and they offer occupational training and the direct path to a job, which for most students is the goal of education (*ibid*).

Journalism schools have had more than their share of such students. The average level of ability of graduates has declined, not only in journalism but throughout the university, meaning that more journalism students with unexceptional talent have entered the workforce. The low salaries newspapers pay have exacerbated the problem of mediocre students. With average beginning yearly salaries around \$15,000 on newspapers, many of the best students, especially males, have found fields such as economics, engineering, marketing, science, law, business and medicine more appealing. Only a small percentage of students who select journalism have

mastered both basic journalistic techniques and the broad fields of liberal arts by graduation time. Such students are the ideal ones whom editors want to find, but they have become as rare as good newspapers” (*ibid* p.20-21).

### **And then, there’s Columbia**

For a few months back in 2002, journalism educators across the country were buzzing about Columbia University. Everywhere I turned there was someone talking about it, and I was living in South Africa. I can’t help but believe that deep down, many of us were glad that Columbia President Lee Bollinger decided to postpone the journalism school’s search for a dean because he felt there needed to be a deep discussion about its mission. For a few months anyway, there was a purpose to the debate. It gave us reason to re-evaluate our philosophy.

The debate that ensued is a perfect example of the scourge of generalizations and the unwillingness to place students at the center of the so-called “learning” debate; I believe it is actually a self-preservation debate that has little to do with learning or having an influence on the state of the media.

Bollinger’s initial explanation was that there is a gap between the “various visions of what a modern school of journalism ought to be.” And, he said teaching “the craft of journalism” is not sufficient in this “new world” (2002). Considering the prominence of Columbia’s journalism school, when it talks, people listen. Bollinger may or may not have known how his decision would act as a catalyst for heated debate. At any rate, if Columbia were questioning the role of a journalism school in today’s world, it could be assumed that all of us should take stock.

What followed Bollinger’s actions was a barrage of opinions, shouting, finger pointing, name calling and downright ugly accusations. The public message: this is war. Either journalism remains pure or it is watered down with that dreaded intellect. Those are the choices.

As a journalism education enthusiast, the final outcome of the Columbia debate was somewhat disheartening. At the same time, what is heartening is the manner in which Jeremy Cohen, editor of *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, articulated the next move. In response to Bollinger’s call for curriculum reform, Cohen called for a focus on teacher quality.



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Rather than cite any number of journalism education surveys, Cohen cites a Carnegie Corporation study showing that “the quality of the teacher is the most important cause of pupil achievement” (Cohen 2002, p.182).

In a report for the Carnegie Challenge, Michael Hinds concluded that teachers need the tools necessary to “assess students’ capabilities, diagnosing their learning styles, prescribing a curriculum and adjusting teaching practices to reflect the latest research, their own experience and that of their colleagues” (*ibid*, p.182).

While he conceded that Bollinger’s “call for a renewed discourse” was a correct move, the lesson from the Carnegie study, said Cohen, is that we cannot expect a balanced curriculum to achieve our goals alone. “Without accompanying reform of how we teach—and how we prepare our future colleagues to become professional teachers—the likelihood of meaningful impact will remain a distant dream” (*ibid*, p.182).

If you add up all the available literature on the topic of journalism education, you would probably find only about a dozen references to teaching quality. It is not even on the agenda. There is talk of the need for practical experience and there is dispute over the necessity of an earned doctorate. But neither of these criteria equate to quality teaching necessarily. G. Stuart Adam, a prolific journalism educator from Canada, offered his advice to Bollinger. In a nine point treatise on curricular balance, there was no mention of teaching quality (2002).

On a sarcastic note, journalist Jack Shafer offered his thoughts to Slate.com. He concluded that if all journalism programs were to disappear overnight, the news media wouldn’t miss a beat (2002). And I think he’s right.

Bollinger’s actions, and the ensuing serious advice of scholars like Adam, seem almost nonsensical in light of Shafer’s estimation. With no proof that journalism education has any, much less a profound effect, on society or mainstream media, we have the luxury of interpreting journalism education any way we please. There is ample proof that media organizations do play a part in democracy but again, no proof that journalism program graduates have the knowledge or power to override the financial bottom line that fuels most media organizations.

The biggest losers in an abolition of J-schools, said Shafer, would be the janitors, the teachers and the Annenbergs and Gannetts. Some journalism teachers are great, he admits, but there are also teachers who chose academic life because their journalism careers were over

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from burn out, laziness or lack of advancement opportunity (*ibid*, p.3).

Shafer says most journalism school graduates might say they could have done without it, but that's only after they have some training time in the field. Shafer's friends were willing to admit that most of us live by the motto: if I'd known then what I know now... But, journalism schools fill in that gap. They teach you something, i.e. the language of the industry, how to get internships, what career options are out there and they provide a credential. For students who need networking skills, the trade secrets and a collegial environment in which to test their skills and ideas, J-school is a good thing.

Shafer and friends agreed that a true J-school must have a publication for that thing called practice. He says the "single greatest impediment to becoming a reporter is overcoming the basic human aversion to getting in strangers' faces and asking nose questions" (*ibid*, p.3).

Shafer wants Bollinger to know that he wishes him luck, but not too much. An overly academic journalism environment is the kiss of death for journalism, he says. If there comes a day when all newspaper reporters are required to have a degree in journalism, then we'll lose the "uncredentialed losers, outsiders, dilettantes, frustrated lawyers, unabashed alcoholics and even creative psychopaths" that it takes to keep journalism a viable democracy protecting entity (*ibid*, p.4).

Despite Shafer's clear irreverent tone, we can't afford not to listen to journalists like him. He is part of the "new" generation of journalists, those who not only hit the ground running but who keep running after stories like their lives depend on it. He may have written for Slate.com, not the *New York Times*, but he has an audience, a big one. He accepts the reality that J-schools exist and will continue to exist, so why not throw in two cents from his point of view.

The trouble is, Shafer and Bollinger will probably never come together. Columbia University has prided itself on its location in the heart of New York City, a place providing journalism students with a rich reporting environment with smoky bars and corruption, money and poverty, international power and ethnic communities. It is ideally located to offer a unique educational experience, something not so easy at Mary-In-The-Woods, Indiana. To Shafer's credit, he gives us a tongue-in-cheek reality check. If only more people would subject themselves to the reality check.

The point is, I think, that Columbia University is highly visible. Despite the fact that it

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engages only in graduate education of journalists, the principles on the line affect the public debate in principle. The Columbia debate took on a new fervor, as if the very life of journalism education depended on it.

In the normally staid and intellectual *Chronicle of Higher Education*, journalist Carlin Romano offers, what I think is an award-winning critique of everyone involved in journalism education. He says a program (2003) leader should be able to “detect both the excrement of the bull in the theoreticians, and the anti-intellectualism of the practitioners.”

Romano’s critique is noteworthy because he is able to incorporate all arguments with one suggestion: “For journalism education to ever achieve its proper place in the university—for it to be a discipline rather than a jobs program—it must accept journalism’s own universality in the modern world, and transcend its origins in a trade-school mentality. That means output—requiring every matriculated student to study some journalism—and input—filling the graduate curriculum with the world of information that belongs there” (*ibid*, p.12).

Responding to Romano with equal parts wit, Caitlin Kelly said it is highly unlikely that the amazing student Romano hopes for does not exist. “The students seeking credentials, certainly at many schools below the most elite, may lack the cage-rattling gene in the first place and simply never rise to the level Romano longs for.”

What may sound like a pessimistic view of today’s student to some is a harsh reality to others. An even more harsh reality is that “those most likely to offer a fresh perspective are the least likely to be invited to join the conversation” (2003, p.17).

When Bollinger appointed an “all-star” cast to explore the issue of journalism education, he left the issue purposely vague. He said that the gap between camps was just too big to ignore. The core questions needed to be addressed, he said, even more so than specifics of curricula. What should a modern journalism school look like? What is the relationship between journalism and the rest of the university? Where is the profession going?

As I noted earlier, there are two main philosophical camps at play here: educate for a career, and educate for life. Bollinger clearly believes it is the role of the university to educate for life. “If the profession said all we want are people who can do some technique, then it is our duty to decline. It is not worthy of a great university to produce graduates who know a technique and nothing else” (2002).

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Bollinger's perspective was on the table for all to see. His desire to see a curriculum that balanced competing camp visions yet was grounded in the university's obligation to the public set the stage for further discussion. Just look at the form some of that discussion took.

You can't even separate the rebuttals because none of them have a single point to make. It's a gut feeling they express, a philosophy they live by and their ideas about journalism education come from gut and ideology.

New York University adjunct instructor Amy Atkins, for example, wants Bollinger, and us, to know that we can't rely on the 'real world' to teach the craft of journalism because the real world "sucks." She's been there as a working journalist. She knows newsrooms are not designed to mentor, advise or teach like they were in "the old days." She has realized that it is her job to teach craft and ethics, to encourage young people to do a bit of both - soak up general knowledge and learn the craft. But, most importantly, she says, "perhaps j-schools can inoculate young journalists to the diseases eating the flesh out of what could be the most important force outside the government: the Fourth Estate" (2002). Another NYU professor, Ellen Willis, whittles her thoughts down to one critical point: journalism must be seen in a different light, not as craft but as a distinct enterprise; it is a "transdisciplinary inquiry into the present, which takes place not in scholarly journals but in a non-specialized public conversation. A serious journalist is by definition that figure so much discussed in the academy—the public intellectual."

In Willis' view, craft is a means to an end which is "promoting a rich, nuanced, complex and diverse public conversation on contemporary affairs." We should be asking ourselves how journalism education can contribute to this goal. (Willis 2002).

And yet another NYU professor, Robert S. Boynton, provides one of the most thoughtful analyses of the issue I've heard yet. He says the media environment barely resembles the training i.e. in-depth research and reporting. In short, we train students "properly" but they are thrown into a world that practices a different kind of journalism, one we do not advocate in the classroom.

Boynton suggests we adopt a new philosophy, one that reflects the one guiding law schools or creative writing programs. Students are exposed to ideas and skills that best represent the discipline assuming there will be a market for the graduate, one that favors a "high quality

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intellectual capacity.” His example: even though all lawyers will go on to practice work such as trusts and estate planning, they are all required to analyze the greatest legal decisions ever made. In short, law schools do not tailor their education for the marketplace, yet graduates do find jobs because the marketplace knows this is the system they draw from. (Boynton 2002).

Teaching is finally drawn into the Columbia debate, if only briefly. Michael Norman’s response to the Columbia discussion filtered the issue away from politics. “Because the debate is political,” he said, “it is often more an exercise in dogma than an exploration of ideas and professional practices.” He went on to say that students are the ones cheated by this debate, “cheated because no one—again, I overstate the case—no one in journalism education is thinking about the cognitive principles essential to good course design. We know what we should be teaching, reading and writing, and it makes little difference whether we teach the reading and writing of news stories, essays, arts criticism, business writing or left-handed wind shifting.”

Norman finally says that if we would spend as much time “fine tuning our teaching as we do arguing about what we should teach, then journalism would be intellectual enough for everyone” (Norman 2002).

For someone like myself, I’m heartened by Norman’s philosophy. And, I would add, I believe the reason we purposely avoid the discussion of teaching quality is because we are afraid to be evaluated for our teaching abilities. It’s one thing to assess my skill knowledge or evaluate my previous work experience, but another thing all together to judge me as a teacher. We need good teachers. Good teachers naturally blend craft with philosophy with broad knowledge from history to economics to politics to the arts. They can teach learners of all styles. They can address a large class and a small seminar class. They are excited about learning, not tenure. So, what does it take to bend the argument back into the direction of teaching? I suspect it will take both good strong leadership and courageous teachers.

One of the biggest surprises in the post Bollinger decision came from educator Betty Medsger, author of the oft cited *Winds of Change: Challenges Confronting Journalism Education*. Medsger says that in the course of conducting research for *Winds of Change*, she was struck by the number of students who did not major in journalism yet who became quite

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successful in their field.

She admits that perhaps it shouldn't be such a surprise that most award-winning journalists are those without journalism degrees. "After all," she says, "journalism itself is the study and synthesis of everything else, of all disciplines (2003).

For the longest time, journalism teachers felt their primary role was to teach students how to fill vessels of varying types rather than focusing on what goes in the vessels. It seems experimentation with new approaches is needed, said Medsger.

One solution, said Medsger, is looking for students with inquisitive minds, abandoning traditional forms of student recruitment. We could try our hand at "new experiential programs, in which journalism educators would be gate openers to the whole university on behalf of students interested in journalism." And, we could open the doors for faculty, giving them a new goal, to show students how to use their education to improve and deepen the journalism that appears in the world out there (2003).

In general, Medsger's message is one of diversity and inclusion. We need to diversify our relationship with the university and include the university in our educational mission. We are, in some ways, she said, our own worst enemy. We need to get out of our own way.

In one of the few opinions published in a mainstream outlet, William A. Babcock let his thoughts wander in the *Christian Science Monitor*. He posed the usual questions: Is journalism a trade, a craft or a profession? Is it like plumbing or carpentry or veterinary science or medicine or law? How much do you converge the various media in the curriculum? Should a student learn each medium or specialize? What about the increasing number of students interested in advertising and public relations? And finally, he does what most of us should do. He admits there is "room in the crown for other journalistic jewels," he says. And, with no one party holding more legitimacy than another, the question of balance will always come from individual programs (Babcock 2002).

Weighing in on the Columbia issue were some disciplinary heavyweights like Geneva Overholser, generally respected for the myriad of positions she's held and the perspective that gives her.

Overholser's conclusions mirror my own: this is a no win argument "since the only proof is in the world of an individual" (2002, p.101).

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“We need a place where thoughtful people do instructive research and make interesting pronouncements and produce illuminating case studies, a place that can bring all this to bear on the education of students—and also on the trade and even on the civic life of the nation,” Overholser said.

“In our craft,” she adds. “We need leadership.”

If you keep looking through the mounds of paper resulting from Bollinger’s decision, you can find half a handful of critics who choose teaching and leadership as the touchstones of quality education and specifically, journalism education. Yet, the bulk of the paper steers clear of these two issues, perhaps for fear of the consequences, perhaps because it simply hasn’t occurred to the authors.

Hidden in the cracks of almost every personal essay, however, are the beginnings of a theme. Mitchell Stevens wrote his version of a J-school manifesto with leaks. “It is easier to teach what we know—or think we know—than to teach what still needs to be figured out,” wrote Mitchell. “It is hard to work the unconventional, the experimental into a textbook or onto a blackboard. And if we encourage students to escape formulas, we fear that we will no longer be able to hold them, or the profession, to standards. But journalism education must accept the risk.”

Mitchell offers four specific nuggets for journalism programs re-evaluating what they do.

- Let students explore.
- Honor a broader tradition.
- Look deeper.
- Encourage experimentation.

To implement these suggestions, Mitchell says, we may need some new journalism programs and some new journalism professors. Nothing is more telling than a story Mitchell relates. When Columbia’s dean, Tom Goldstein, announced that the school wanted to graduate more thoughtful journalists, a major news organization sent him a letter stating, “the last thing

we need is thoughtful journalists” (2002).

As you have probably noticed, some journalism program faculty speak a particular student-centered language while others speak a more academic language. Usually we would hope that cross-cultural communication would occur with practice and respect. However, in this case, it isn't just the languages that create barriers; it is the ideology underlying the language that creates the gap.

Laura Washington, writing for the *Chicago Sun Times*, spoke the green eyeshade language when she mocked Bollinger's decision to appoint Nicholas Lemann as dean of Columbia's School of Journalism. “He [Lemann] says that an Ivy League institution like Columbia should be preparing ‘leaders’ in the business, pursuing loftier goals ‘than saying this happened yesterday.’”

Washington called this attitude “pretty high falutin.” She said Lemann will impose “the values of an elite, long-form magazine writer on people who are scurrying around just trying to get a basic news story into the next day's paper.”

Hers is a meat and potatoes view, but one tied to public service. If we have lost the public's trust, Washington questions whether this is the time to ground journalism education in anything other than accuracy.

There wasn't nearly as much public fuss over Bollinger's choice for a new dean that I imagined, perhaps because Nicholas Lemann comes with an impressive resume and body of work. Lemann, a *New Yorker* writer and editor and author of several books, appears to be well liked by academia and industry. While Lemann has not said much about his plans, he has said he wants to move the discussion past the usual green eyeshades and chi-squares.

Rather than roll out the findings of Bollinger's task force at the beginning of this discussion, I've chosen to do things in reverse. And here's why. When you analyze Bollinger's reasons for wanting to renew the “mission” discussion and you look at the ensuing debate plus the task force findings and ultimately Bollinger's decision, you'll see this event as representative of the larger issue called “journalism education.”

People talk right over each other and at each other. Points are made and re-made that don't even need to be made. There isn't a shred of evidence that any kind of journalism



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program affects the media. There is no talk of changing “the media” in a significant way. And all the while there is media consolidation, convergence, increased cable options, a shrinking newspaper audience and a society both losing trust in the media and depending on it too much.

“As we enter another new century, at a time of similarly profound [from Pulitzer’s era] and destabilizing changes, the role of the media in America is even more critically important to society than it was a century ago and is again in the process of rapid change,” said Bollinger in his final task force statement. “And so it seems timely to review where we are and consider afresh how journalism education in a great university can contribute to the process by which the media adapt to a new world” (2003).

In other words, what type of curriculum should Columbia have? Is there new information to share with regard to curriculum development? Is there new evidence showing one type of instruction will result in a better media environment? What happened was a rehashing of all the old arguments. There was one fresh document that made its way around, however unofficial, that offered hope for experimentation.

Titled “The Future of Journalism Education: Discussion Draft, March, 2001,” a working document of the Bollinger assembled task force offers promise that a few prevailing heads can filter out the politics and say what needs to be said.

The task force arrived at working assumptions based on their discussions: (*emphases added*).

- Journalism education, *like journalism itself*, is in critical need of renewal. The role of the journalist is changing rapidly, and journalism education should not merely adjust to but should *influence* that change.
- In a world of proliferating information, journalists will play a more important role than they do now as they become *society’s most important “sense-makers.”*
- Journalism education needs to be more integrated into the fabric of the university.
- The *traditional arguments* heard among journalism educators—the benefits of theory versus practice, the primacy of communication studies over journalism, vice-versa—are *not the most helpful way* of looking at the problems of journalism education.

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- Journalism education should be more oriented to what journalists need to know *substantively* and to what approaches they should employ to best gather and present information. Journalism education should be less concerned with nuts and bolts, while not ignoring the need for training in basics.
- With the understanding that the journalism industry may value basic training at journalism schools because it subsidizes a function that the industry would otherwise have to underwrite, we should distinguish between what the industry can do best (on-the-job training) and those areas where *a university-based education is superior (teaching thinking skills, teaching history, ethics, laws, values.)*
- If journalism education is to improve the practice of journalism on a broad basis, a *different* type of student and a *different* type of faculty need to be attracted to journalism education.

If you take nothing else away from these working assumptions, and the body of literature in its entirety for that matter, it should be this: it's time for experimenting, challenging old ways of thinking and facing realities.

From those working assumptions, the task force also noted working recommendations:

- Unlike many other fields, in journalism very little agreement exists on what journalists need to know. While consensus is probably unwise (and surely impossible), concerted attempts should be made to develop an inventory of what journalists need to know. This inventory should encompass kinds of knowledge and high-level sorts of skills, and not just present an inventory of useful facts and vocational qualifications. This list should be divided into several parts: that which can be best learned on the job, that which is best taught at a university, and that which is best taught in a continuing way.
- A very different, cross-disciplinary curriculum needs to be developed. Aspiring journalists should learn about evidence (looking at ways journalists, lawyers, scientists, social scientists and others assess information) and about numeracy (the ability to

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analyze and present statistical information). They should be exposed to the work done by historians, sociologists and others to understand journalism's changing place in society. Students need to be acquainted with how best to display information visually. Courses should be designed in which students can learn journalism values and can begin exercising news judgment.

- The rigidity of the 14-15-week semester should be challenged, and courses developed that try a more modular approach. Some subjects need a full semester, or even two, while others could be dealt with in considerably less time.
- The best and fastest way, to accomplish these goals would be to establish one (or more) small experimental schools within existing journalism schools. These incubators would encourage innovation at a relatively modest cost.

The task force also considered specific ways to achieve the goals, which will be considered in detail, along with the entirety of the report, in chapter six.

Suffice it to say that the draft document, when analyzed in light of all the other literature, including *Winds of Change*, has a firm grasp on reality and at the same time has very little grasp on reality, depending on whose reality you are dealing with at the time. The key component in the draft document is the direct call for experimentation. This, to me, says that we should be collaborating and sharing information rather than remaining static and focusing on being right.

When Lee Bollinger provided a task description to his all-star task force, he told them a literature review was not necessary (Bollinger 2003a). He said he wanted to avoid the “typical problem in such discussions of spending too little time in sustained discussion, reflection, and judgment.” He said he felt the expertise present at that table was enough. He showed wisdom. After a thorough review and critique of the journalism education literature, I believe it is more productive to engage in what Bollinger called “sustained discussion, reflection and judgment.” The body of literature does not offer researchers, educators or practitioners much more than a detailed picture of animosity and paralysis.

And finally, Bollinger offered his interpretation of the task force's discussions. The only thing missing from Bollinger's point of departure, I would argue, is that he, like so many,

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believe journalism education has had an effect on the media which then has an effect on democracy.

Understanding Bollinger's premise does water down his ideology and resulting recommendations somewhat, but not entirely. He addresses the concerns about ownership consolidation a bit naively:

“One of the best ways (and perhaps a necessary one) of dealing with these realities—the growing importance of journalism and the concern about commercial and other interests becoming too dominant—is for journalism to embrace a stronger sense of being a profession, with stronger standards and values that will provide its members with some innate resistance to other competing values that have the potential of undermining the public responsibilities of the press” (Bollinger 2003a).

Although I rail against those who speak in generalities and speak for us all, I do believe that at present, no amount of professional standards will put the dollar driven industry genie back in the bottle. There are few options: quitting, striking or just making a lot of noise. The masses of news consumers would need to either rise up or turn away. If we believe for a minute that a student receiving a “perfect” journalism education can change the attitude of a media mogul or publisher, then we are just naïve.

I would even venture to guess that a top news anchor could scream “enough is enough” at the top of her lungs and the only result would be termination and replacement. I question why even Bollinger, a First Amendment scholar and proponent of the press doesn't advocate a new system, a massive mass media literacy campaign or more drastic measures to turn the tide from fast food media to depth.

After a year's worth of turmoil and hullabaloo, Bollinger named Jon Lemann as the Columbia School of Journalism dean. His task force reported to him and he reported to us. In an eight page document, Bollinger said nothing new. The commotion died down and we have progressed the issue no further. Except for one tiny step: the task force's draft document did ask for experimentation.

## Chapter Four

### Defining “Documentary Tradition”

*Documentary, the word, and the resultant activities bearing the name, have evolved into a generic term meaning different things to different people. It generally refers to film; however, with the introduction of Reality television and dozens of specialized cable programs, the term documentary has continued to stray from its original roots. The recent popularity of the work of filmmaker Michael Moore has taken documentary film from the fringes and brought it closer to mainstream. However, the term documentary is still used primarily to refer to film, video and still photography. In addition, new journalism, literary and narrative journalism is sometimes used interchangeably with the term documentary journalism. For that reason, a discussion of the term “documentary tradition,” as used by the CDS, and the differences between it, the film tradition and literary journalism is necessary.*

The contemporary understanding of the term “documentary” in America relates to film and video. The documentary tradition as espoused by CDS co-founder Robert Coles is based on literature, self reflection and the power of stories. Others at the CDS refer to documentary as a way of seeing, and a responsibility to others.

The New Yorker media critic, Louis Menand, says the term “documentary tradition” sounds like a “grand phrase for a genre that includes everything from ‘Nanook of the North’ to ‘Girls Gone Wild.’” But, he says, films purporting to be documentary have one thing in common: “they show you what was not intended for you to see” (2004, p.90).

Early documentarians were not journalists. They weren’t even necessarily trained filmmakers. They were businessmen. Films were nothing short of propaganda. When the feature-length film became the norm, documentary films took on a political, progressive and advocacy nature (*ibid*).

Menand believes that people making documentary films have a particular ontological agenda. That is, they aren’t necessarily trying to offer multiple views of the world. He says they

do not believe there are “two sides to every question” or “that reasonable people can disagree.” They believe there is a right side and a wrong side and they want you to agree with their version of the right side (*ibid*).

In addition to film, new journalism and literary journalism is sometimes equated with documentary journalism. A thorough review of the literature shows a clear delineation between the practice of documentary as defined by Robert Coles and others at the CDS and that of filmmakers and journalists (Zelizer 2000). The difference appears to be in the intention. Literature related to literary journalism, new journalism or narrative journalism focuses on writing styles and forms of storytelling while the literature devoted to documentary focuses on moral concerns and “ways of seeing.”

Literary journalism is “a profoundly fuzzy term,” says Ben Yagoda, co-editor of *The Art of Fact: An Anthology of Literary Journalism*. To qualify for his anthology, Yagoda and co-author Kevine Kerrane developed three criteria: 1) It must be factual 2) Active fact gathering 3) Currency (the writer had to get on the story soon after it occurred. “The longer the gap, the more the resulting work edges into the realm of history; which is where we place such admittedly groundbreaking and worthy books as *The Longest Day*, *Praying for Sheetrock* and *Young Men and Fire* (1997, p.14). The key factor separating literary journalism and the documentary tradition in America is the former focuses on the literary and narrative devices while the documentary tradition is focused on the representation of the subject.

Kerrane and Yagoda also define literary journalism as “thoughtfully, artfully and valuably innovative” (*ibid*). Innovative is important, they say, for two reasons: 1) journalism has been an object of mass production, churned out based on age-old standards and in accepted shapes. But, these methods are limiting to writers and they see literary journalism as writers’ attempts at casting aside old methods and trying new writing styles. All the definitions and criteria chosen by anthologizing related to writing technique. However, within their anthology fall the works of James Agee and George Orwell, often associated with the documentary tradition in use at the CDS. Kerrane and Yagoda say that works by such writers as Agee and Orwell qualify for a literary journalism anthology because their skill at innovation also leads to “understanding.” They place them in a category they call “Style as Substance” (*ibid*, p.16).

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Although journalist/novelist Tom Wolfe is often credited with coining the phrase “new journalism” in the 1970s, the term actually was coined in the 1880s to describe reform-minded reporting. American muckrakers that followed added literary touches but this came less from “artistic design than the writers’ sense of moral or political urgency” (*ibid*, p.17). The one thing all literary journalists have in common, say Kerrane and Yagoda, is an immersion in the world of their story, and this would be a point of commonality with documentary work.

George Orwell’s nonfiction work in the 1930s, which conforms to Cole’s definition of documentary, has also been described as “documentary” by critic B.T. Oxley, because Orwell’s social reports were long investigations “carried forward by a far more personal voice than any straightforward sociological survey would allow” (*ibid*, p.19).

Kerrane and Yagoda opine that documentary films today actually take their cues from literary reportage because they are trying to make the facts and “the truth” more appealing with dramatic structure much in the same way Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer did with their “new journalism” (*ibid*, p.20).

They go so far as to say that literary journalism sets the standard for documentary because of its “extraordinary range of subject matter” (*ibid*). In short, they say, both documentary films and literary journalism “point to the double pleasure of true stories artfully told” (*Ibid*). Again, this definition is a departure from the thinking of Robert Coles because it has a clear style intention as opposed to social intention.

In 2001, Harvard University held a Nieman Foundation conference entitled “Documentary and Journalism: Where they converge.” Experts in both the field of documentary and journalism were asked to speak to the commonalities and differences between the two forms of reportage.

A review of the resultant Nieman Reports from the fall 2001, reflects a growing community of both documentarians and journalists who see a need for the two to converge but recognize economic and management obstacles to weaving the two together in a mainstream way.

The issues of time and intention are the common themes among those who would like to see the documentary become friends with daily journalism. Documentarians see time as their friend while mainstream journalism sees it as the enemy (Richter 2001).

With time as a friend, documentarians say they can commit themselves to their subjects and a desire to promote both civic participation and action.

Ellen Schneider, former director of P.O.V. (Point of View) for the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) said that even when journalists came together to work with filmmakers on P.O.V. programs, their roles were the same: “We want[ed] to encourage well-researched and powerful documentary work that offer[ed] people a way to engage in meaningful discussion about complex issues that have such an impact on how we interact with one another personally and politically. At a time when so many random bits of information are thrown at viewers from so many sources, there is abundant need for places to turn where thoughtful, engaging and sometimes provocative insights can be gleaned from visual storytelling” (2001).

In a Schneider sense, then, documentary and mainstream journalism have more in common than documentary and literary journalism.

Also a P.O.V. producer, Cara Mertres places documentary in a rubric including civic and/or public journalism, because the latter allows for a participant and/or advocacy role (2001).

Radio documentary journalist Jay Allison says he is not part of “regular” media because radio documentaries have a social calling. He serves that mission through traditional journalistic methods, but he also helps others speak for themselves (2001).

One of the obstacles for documentary workers is the format and audience of mainstream news, says Sandy Tolan, a 1993 Nieman fellow. You may use journalistic methods and have a powerful story to tell, but documentarians are loathe to water down a story’s power just to fit the accepted norms of daily television or newspapers. Can you play 60 minutes of a first person account to an audience used to short snappy news packages? (2001).

Broadcast time or print column inches is not necessarily the obstacle, says radio documentarian Stephen Smith. “Length is not the defining quality; a documentary can last hours or five minutes,” he says. “Documentaries convey a rich sense of character and detail—



or a substantial body of original investigative material—that simply aren't heard in the majority of public radio news reports" (2001).

However, Smith does admit that time spent in the field is often what differentiates a documentary from a feature or enterprise report. Documentaries feel more "lush" and more "active" because of the fieldwork, he says.

The difference between photojournalism and documentary photography is in the message, say documentary photographers Antonin Kratochvil and Michael Persson (2001).

Documentary photographers "reveal the infinite number of situations, actions and results over a period of time," they say. They reveal "life" which isn't "a moment." Life is not a single situation because one situation follows another and another. The pictures shown in daily newspapers "show frozen instants taken out of context and put on a stage of the media's making, then sold as truth." (Kratochvil & Persson 2001).

Documentary photographers have an opportunity to present layers of life. When they are presented, the viewers are encouraged to use "their intelligence and personal experiences, even their skepticism, to judge" whereas mainstream photojournalism appears to assume that viewers need the judgment made for them. The work of photojournalists is important, but the need for speed and the decontextualized images that result, be the images we want to use to inform decisions we make in a democracy, ask the documentary photographers (2001).

Documentary photographer Eli Reed says what matters the most about the images taken by documentary photographers is that they "take viewers to places within themselves that they don't often visit." This act often conflicts with mainstream media management who feel it is their job to give people what they want, not what is good for them. As a result of that philosophy, photojournalists are not "given" the time needed to wade through "the thick layers on the surface" (2001).

Rounding out the arguments and discussions at the Nieman Conference are the words of independent documentarian Margaret Lazarus.

"We are not journalists," wrote Lazarus. "But what we produce arguably overlaps, in some respects, with the ways in which reporters and producers find and tell stories that touch on important issues of our time" (2001). She found her way to independent documentaries

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because she did not feel topics could be presented using the normal “ubiquitous narrator, the person who told you what to think or who neatly framed the discussion in a ‘balanced’ dance of pros and cons.” She said that type of reporting assumed that all questions had two equally valid perspectives, as if a controversy must be resolved in a “bicameral way.” She wanted to produce documentaries that challenged people to think, not passively receive information that had been framed for them.

“If objectivity and balance are the test of journalism,” said Lazarus, “then our work doesn’t qualify.” But, she says, if fairness and solid reporting are the tenets of journalism, then her work can stand under the umbrella community of questioning what we see and hear around us (2001).

The American Exodus project of the 1930s, sponsored by the Farm Security Administration, sought to “accurately” portray the suffering of the poor without a publishable product as the goal. Social scientists, Rupert Vance and Howard Odum, wrote forewords for issues of American Exodus. Their 1930s view of this work provides a clear comparison between the documentary tradition and other objective-based writing and photography.

*“They favored clear, pungent prose mobilized for the purposes of direct, careful observation, with theoretical speculation kept under watchful teacher; and, not least, they had every interest in reaching a broad public, readers of general magazines and newspapers, in the hope that obvious inequities, not to mention injustices, would be addressed. They abandoned even the pretense of being ‘value-free’; and they never tried for a language that announced neutrality or emphasized the secret, cabalistic, guarded world of the academy” (ibid, p.162).*

As the research effort on subsequent pages attempt to compare the documentary tradition as practiced at the CDS and the ways it might apply to journalism, the way in which documentary workers Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor reworked the journalistic five Ws serves as a simple but clear roadmap for documentary work.

“Where we gonna go? How we gonna get there? What we gonna do? Who us gonna fight? If we fight, who we gonna whup?” (*ibid*).

**The documentary perspective of Dr. Robert Coles: CDS co-founder**  
**A review of “Doing Documentary Work”**

Robert Coles has written the only text on the actual doing of documentary work, entitled aptly *Doing Documentary Work*. Co-founding member of the CDS, Alex Harris, has not written on the issue of documentary work and, as will be reported in Chapter Five, is a practitioner, not a writer. Despite the fact that Coles is no longer affiliated with the CDS, and despite the fact that new director Tom Rankin is helping to re-shape the CDS structure and mission, I believe the philosophy underlying documentary work, as described by Coles, is still generally embodied in the staff and work performed at the CDS. *Doing Documentary Work* is the only comprehensive literature related to the CDS use of the term documentary tradition. The opinions and thoughts expressed by Coles, however, need to be considered in the context of the personality because of the criticisms leveled against him, difficulties encountered at the CDS and the failure of Doubletake Magazine under his leadership.

In the late 80s, Coles found himself in the presence of like-minded spirits in Durham, North Carolina. What started as a documentary photography house for “starving artists,” was shaped into the Center for Documentary Studies, affiliated with Duke University. There, Coles and photographer Alex Harris carved out a “home” for their vision of documentary work which included *Doubletake Magazine*.

*Doing Documentary Work* is Coles’ attempt at defining documentary work as he sees it. Coles chooses to call this craft “documentary.” His vision of documentary does not rely on non-fiction film; rather, his is a vision of reflection based on literature. Coles envisions a craft that is based on moral goals which is inspired by mentors or personal heroes.

Coles narrows the job description of a documentarian this way: “...do justice to the complexity of observable life, to the moral responsibilities and hazards that confront us as we try to change aspects of that life and to the nature of the documentary work that brings us closer to the world around us but which poses many questions and challenges “(*ibid* p.17).

In *Doing Documentary Work*, Coles attempts to define the type of work he engages in, but he has much trouble doing so. Coles traces the word “document” to its Latin roots meaning

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“to teach.” He traces its journey to contemporary times. He tosses about adjectives and verbs and finally settles upon this: “The issue, finally, becomes one of judgment, and thereby a subjective matter: an opinion of someone whose mind has taken in all that information, that documentation, and then given it the shape of sentences, of words used, with all their suggestive possibilities” (*ibid*, p.19).

In Coles’ world, documentary work is borne of a tradition dating back to the first historians, people concerned with analyzing societies and the effects of human behavior. This led to a science of anthropology in the late 1500s, a science concerned with customs and traditions. Sociology was given its proper name in the 1840s. We went from studying the “concrete particulars” to making “abstract pronouncements” (*ibid*, p.23).

Journalists on the other hand, “respond to the particular,” says Coles. Some of them do it briefly and tersely, concerned only with chronology or fact. Some journalists allow themselves to report and interpret. Yet others, mostly in magazines, turn into essayists who can reflect and contemplate the meaning of facts. Agee and George Orwell are Coles’ best examples of the limitations media place on reporters (*ibid*).

Both Agee and Orwell were assigned stories by magazine editors. At some point, Agee “stopped being interested in a limited, reasonably balanced, or even-handed discussion of a particular social and economic question facing the nation at the height of the Great Depression.” Instead, Agee began to investigate a “different kind of language, a different way of seeing the world of central Alabama” (*ibid* p.25).

Orwell also failed an assignment from the New Left Book Club. *The Road to Wigan Pier* was literally a road for George Orwell. The road was located in a “land of personal, moral reflection, storytelling narration, of social and political polemic, of combative and sometimes erratic digression, of vivid presentation of moments experienced, remembered and considered to be of significance without recourse to the justifications of social theory, political practicality, even journalistic custom or convenience.” Orwell threw his writing in the face of his journalism colleagues and critics by using a “different kind of language, a different way of seeing.” (*ibid* p.26).

Both reporters turned writers came up against the same tensions: the demands of reality

against those of art; the demands of objectivity against those of subjectivity; a quantitative emphasis against a qualitative one; the tone a first person narrative offers as against one executed in the third person; a voice seeking to be contemplative, considered, as against one aiming for passionate persuasion, or advocacy, or denunciation; a distanced, analytic posture as against a morally engaged or partisan one; an inclination for the theoretical, as against the concrete, the practical; a narrative, rendered in personal or vernacular or even confessional language as against one replete with a technical or academic language” (*ibid*, pp.26-27).

Coles admits that the word, documentary, is difficult to pin down to one single definition. He says he uses the word as a means of filling “a large space abutted on all sides by more precise and established and powerful traditions: that of journalism or reportage, those of certain academic disciplines (sociology and anthropology in particular), and of late, a well-organized, structured approach to folklore and filmmaking (as opposed to an ‘unconventional’ or ‘unintentional’ or ‘accidental’ approach)—university departments of ‘film studies’ and ‘folklore studies’” (*ibid*, p.125).

Coles reminds us that documentary photographer Walker Evans has described the term documentary as “inexact” and “vague” and James Agee referred to it as “a way of seeing” and a “way of doing.”

Coles points to the different discourses used by different “professions:” Academics have their own set of rules and procedures and language, while journalists attach themselves to “the news.” Nonfiction writing is only different in that it can deal equally with facts and ideas and concepts that are important to a specific writer only. Photographers address their ideas as concepts: light, forms, spatial arrangements of objects and lines. All of these professionals focus on something other than “lives” (*ibid*, p.126).

But, the documentarian is not constrained by deadlines or advertising dollars. The doer of documentary work, says Coles, “is out there in this world of five billion people, free (at least by the nature of his or her chosen manner of approach to people, places, events,) to buckle down, to try to find a congenial, even inspiring take on things” (*ibid*).

Often, Coles makes reference to journalism, sometimes in connection with documentary work, sometimes in opposition to it: “The point was to dream, to wander from topic to topic,

and then, finally, to find the specific place and time, so that the eyes were free to follow the reasons of heart and mind both: a lyrical sociology; a journalism of the muse; a dramatic storytelling adventure that attends a scene in order to capture its evident life, probe its secrets, and turn it over as a whole and complicated and concrete and elusive as it is has been found to those of us who care to be interested” (*ibid*, p.127).

Coles offers acclaimed documentary photographer Walker Evans’ attempt at whittling down a definition of “documentary.” “When you say ‘documentary,’ you have to have a sophisticated ear to receive that word. It should be documentary style, because documentary is police photography of a scene and a murder...that’s a real document. You see, art is really useless, and a document has use. And therefore, art is never a document, but it can adopt that style. I do it. I’m called a documentary photographer. But presupposes a quite subtle knowledge of this distinction” (*ibid*).

William Carlos Williams, physician, poet and mentor to Coles, laughed at Coles’ attempt to pin him down to a definition of documentary anything. Instead he offered his own definition: “Lots of streets to walk lots of ways to walk them.” (*ibid*, p.131).

The psychiatrist turned documentarian suggests that we not try too hard to define the documentary style; rather, we should let the doing do the defining. He takes a “you know it when you see it” approach to definitions. The irony is evident; Coles espouses the documentary style as superior to other styles of representation but he avoids definition.

The Coles version of documentary work encompasses many adjectives: “investigative, reportorial; muckraking; appreciative or fault-finding; pastoral or contemplative; prophetic or admonitory; reaches for humor and irony; glad to be strictly deadpan and factually exuberant; knows exactly where it is going and aims to take the rest of us along; or, wants only to make an impression—with each of us defining its nature or intent” (*ibid*, p.137).

Because Agee and Evans and Orwell were journalists of sorts, Coles has addressed the issue of mainstream journalism with a documentary perspective over the years. He befriended the former editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, Ralph McGill, engaging in many conversations about “the limits of journalism.”

If Coles is asked how he developed his working style, he’ll recite a list of journalists he

got to know and observe over the years. He recognizes the skills used by journalists as the very skills used by his definition of documentarian. But, when he spoke with McGill, they simply accepted the limits of journalism. McGill told Coles that “at a certain point, we have to stop.” This creates a middle approach to storytelling and reporting. Magazines and book publishing step in to tell in-depth stories. Newspapers give up (*ibid.*)

Documentary work in the Coles tradition is about “seeing for oneself” and “making a record that you, the writer can believe, before you ask someone else to believe it.” The documentary tradition is about emerging and evolving realities:

“The documentary tradition as a continually developing record is made in so many ways, with different voices and visions, intents and concerns, and with each contributor, finally, needing to meet a personal test, the hurdle of you, the would-be narrator, trying to ascertain what you truly believe is, though needing to do so with an awareness of the confines of your particular capability,—that is, of your warts and wants, your various limits, and, too, the limits imposed upon you by the world around you, the time allotted you (and the historical time fate has given you) for your life to unfold” (*ibid*, p.144).

Coles admits that claiming a piece of work is “documentary” and highly subjective.

“The issue, finally, becomes one of judgment, and thereby a subjective matter: an opinion of someone whose mind has taken in all that information, that documentation, and then given it the shape of sentences, of words used, with all their suggestive possibilities” (*ibid*, p.21).

The term “documentary tradition,” when it is compared to journalism, looks like this, says Coles: “Journalists respond to the particular, tell us the news – recent events have occurred. Some journalists do so briefly, tersely, paying attention only to factuality and chronology; others give themselves (or are given) more leeway – are both chroniclers and interpreters of the news. Even the most factual kind of journalism, of course, can be suggestive, poignant, arresting – art giving shape to the presentation of reality. On the other hand, an interpretive essay in a newspaper or magazine is usually presented to the reader as the response of the publication’s editors, through a writer, to something that has happened or is now going on: events with all their ramifications. In certain magazines, however, journalists may become something else – essayists who regularly contemplate those events and fit them into the larger frames of reference

that historians or social scientists pursue” (*ibid*, p.24).

Coles says that “essays” are more closely aligned with documentary tradition than traditional journalism. Essays “allow social scientists a chance to abandon their created ‘characters’ (the theories they construct) for the possibilities and challenges of an ordinary language meant to inform and persuade “the common reader” as opposed to one’s professional colleagues.” He says they offer what used to be called “social knowledge” and maybe it’s time to resurrect that form of knowing. (*ibid* p.24).

Documentarians, rather than devote themselves to the journalistic objectivity, are first observers, then writers. They are people who saw and now want to represent, in the sense of conveying or picturing, so that others will say or feel “I got it,” or, better, “I’m really getting it,” (*Ibid* p.48). Also differing from journalism, documentarians care what the people they write about think about the work. He says documentarians believe people just want to know that you will remember them when they leave (*ibid*, p.66).

Documentary work places the observer and the observed on equal footing. People who make careers out of documentary photography or film, or a kind of oral history, or socially engaged journalism that requires fieldwork as its mainstay, deeply reflect on just what their responsibilities are to those they spend time with (*ibid*, p.4). Coles asks, “What kind of moral and psychological accountability should we demand of ourselves, we who lay claim to social idealism, or to a documentary tradition that will somehow (we hope) work toward a social good – expose injustice, shed light on human suffering, or contribute to a growing body of knowledge stored in libraries, in museums, in film studios (*ibid*, p.74)?

This work that Coles calls “documentary” was born out of the Farm Security Administration’s project called “American Exodus.” As noted in previous chapters, this project attempted to document the affect the Great Depression was having on the poor of the Midwest and South. The writers and photographers did not have a journalistic mission intended to reach a wide audience. It was intended to help the government justify government intervention in a crisis of poverty.

Working for the FSA, many photographers felt their pictures stood on their own. But photographer Dorothea Lange and sociologist Paul Taylor challenged that notion. Coles says



they not only photographed and observed, they asked questions (*ibid*, p.110).

The project, American Exodus, was done “informally, unpretentiously, inexpensively, with clear, lucid language and strong, direct, compelling photographs its instruments. This particular piece of research stands out as a milestone: it offers us a guiding sense of what was (and presumably still is) possible – direct observation by people interested in learning firsthand from other people, without the mediation of statistics, theory, and endless elaborations of so-called methodology” (*ibid*, pp. 113-114).

Taylor and Lange, says Coles, were a man and a woman of “unashamed moral passion, of vigorous and proudly upheld subjectivity, anxious not to quantify or submit what they saw to conceptual assertion but to notice, to see and hear, and in so doing, to feel, then render so that others, too, would know in their hearts as well as their heads what it was that happened at a moment in American history” (*ibid*).

Perhaps one of Coles’ best definitions of the “documentary tradition” is his summary of the American Exodus project: “This is a documentary study at its revelatory best – pictures and words joined together in a kind of nurturing interdependence that illustrates the old aphorism that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (*ibid*).

Just as James Agee felt crippled emotionally by his inability to define what he saw and felt and heard in a way that would respect what he saw and felt and heard, Coles tries repeatedly to define what he sees as a form of “social inquiry” that can be used in all areas of disciplinary inquiry.

“The word ‘documentary’ is indeed difficult to pin down; is intended, really, as mentioned earlier, to fill a large space abutted on all sides by more precise and established and powerful traditions: that of journalism or reportage, those of certain academic disciplines (sociology and anthropology in particular,) and of late, a well-organized, structured approach to folklore and filmmaking (as opposed to an ‘unconscious’ or ‘unintentional’ or “accidental” approach)”...(*ibid* p.125)

Coles even went so far as to compile a list of attributes that can be applied to the documentary tradition-based writing: Investigative, Reportorial, Muckraking, Appreciative, Fault finding, Pastoral, Contemplative, Prophetic, Admonitory, Reaches for humor and irony,

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deadpan, factually exuberant (*ibid*, p.136).

Below are a group of descriptions Coles uses to define the documentary tradition. Like James Agee, Coles is a prolific writer and his work has the same rambling style of Agee. But, like Agee work, Coles' most compelling ideas and thoughts are buried deep within large blocks of text that to take out of context is to skew their meaning. The documentary tradition calls us to describe and describing adequately in this tradition ignores the rules of brevity at times, one of the obstacles to blending its intentions with the practice of journalism.

*The documentary tradition is “a continually developing ‘record’ that is made in so many ways, with different voices and visions, intents and concerns, and with each contributor, finally, needing to meet a personal test, the hurdle of YOU, the would-be narrator, trying to ascertain what you truly believe IS, though needing to do so with an awareness of the confines of your particular capability – that is, of your warts and wants, your various limits, and, too, the limits imposed upon you by the world around you, the time allotted you (and the historical time fate has given you) for your life to unfold” (ibid p.144).*

*“Documentary writing and photography are essentially a response of the mind and heart to a given state of affairs...” (ibid, p.149)*

*(Coles on photographer Dorothea Lange). “Again and again she was anxious to be a moral witness; she used photographs to make the point that novelists and poets and painters and sculptors all keep trying to make: I am here; I hear and see; I will take what my senses offer my brain and try to offer others something that will inform them, startle them, move them to awe and wonder, entertain them and rescue them from banality, from the dreary silliness inevitably pressed upon us by the world” (ibid, p.179).*

*(Coles on Kathleen Norris' Dakota.) “A tradition of watchfulness and evocation that in form defies literary conventions and in content mixes concrete description with spells of soulful inwardness suggestively put to word” (ibid, p.200).*

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*(Coles on the films of Frederick Wiseman.) “He, like others, is a storyteller, not social scientist. “While sociologists increasingly play with banks of computers and spew an impenetrably mannered, opaque, highfalutin language and most anthropologists stay resolutely in the Third World, Wiseman and his camera attend the contours of our daily life, and in the end, as with fiction, help us better see and hear ourselves” (ibid, p.244).*

*“The call to documentary work is an aspect of the call of stories, of our wish to learn about one another through observation of one another; that way, we can consider how we are getting on with one another, serving each other, with documentary work as the reflective side of such service—those stories and pictures a chance for us to wonder how we are doing as we try to affirm ourselves by reaching toward others, helping to make a difference in a neighborhood, a nation” (ibid, p.252).*

*“Documentary work is “a somewhat idiosyncratic ‘field of study’ (with its studies done in the field) that properly resists somewhat the classificatory schemes that exert their powerful hold on so many other academic realms and fiefdoms” (ibid, p. 254).*

## Chapter Five

### **Scholarly Personal Narrative meets the Documentary Tradition: The path to an innovative journalism education curriculum**

As explored in Chapter Two, my research path is a series of stepping stones strategically placed to lead to a place that might serve as a dialogical meeting space for like-minded journalism educators. The disciplinary discussion agenda has remained the same for more than three decades: lack of academic prestige, theory versus practice, teacher qualifications and the integration of technology based on convergence. However, all of the debates and discussion are conducted without a clear human reference point. As a result, the academic discipline has never moved forward in a productive way. The discipline as a whole has not recognized the variables involved in journalism education and the impossibility of a one-size-fits-all philosophy, curriculum or criteria for hiring faculty.

It is not within the scope of my research to explore all of the variables involved in moving journalism education forward in the academy. This is a singular focus that relates to many variables. However, knowing just one teacher's story and how it relates to a new type of journalism curriculum is a start as it puts a real face on a generic conversation.

I am connecting my personal story to a particular type of journalistic practice in the form of a Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN). I chose the Center for Documentary Studies in Durham, North Carolina, as a research site based on personal interpretation, interests and values. Because the unit of study was chosen based on personal values, it stands to reason that a full exploration of those values is required.

When I set out to conduct a case study of the Center for Documentary Studies affiliated with Duke University, I had a lot to lose, namely, my long held fascination with the center. For more than 10 years I had followed the Center for Documentary Studies via its website and magazine, *DoubleTake*. I was initially attracted to the center by the magazine. I was attracted to the magazine because it used the word "documentary" to describe its contents. I was attracted to the term "documentary" because of the Salt Center for Documentary Field Studies in Portland, Maine.

As a journalism major and editor of the campus newspaper at a large state university, I was exposed to the annual posters produced by the Salt Center. They were striking black and

white images that screamed “humanity.” I remember a poster image of three migrant workers. Although almost 16 years have passed, I still remember the hardened yet vulnerable expressions on the workers’ faces. Cigarette smoke swirled around them. One was leaning against a window sill gazing out with a resigned look. I am not a migrant worker, but I connected immediately with the longing gaze of that man and the unstable existence of migrant workers. I should have recognized my idealistic nature and the conflict that nature would have with a media workplace ultimately.

There was another poster with a close close-up of a weathered fisherman. I remember the lines of his large weathered “been-around-the-block” face, which followed you when you passed the poster in a hallway crowded with college students. For a brief moment, I was reminded that my life was overly privileged; I had done nothing to earn a white middle class existence.

My college experience, like most of my life experiences, was marred by frustration that manifested itself in the form of anger. A professor once told me that in order to be a great journalist; you had to live in a state of sustained outrage. If that’s true, I should have several Pulitzers by now. I didn’t understand at the time that outrage managed is good journalism. Outrage not managed is disorganized inner and outer chaos. It wasn’t until years later that I came to understand that properly managed resistance is an attribute, not a defect.

It wasn’t just the images of the Salt posters that pulled me in. It was the way the center represented its mission. It spoke to that part of me that felt different and misunderstood.

*WE try to **make** something extraordinary out of the ordinary. We seek to **capture a moment** in the lives of people around us, and to **do justice** to that moment. To do so, we work long hours at **honing** our craft. Some people say we're **intense**. We **keep trying**. Our shooting might be a split-second off. Our words won't quite describe what we mean. The sound editing will be cumbersome. So we go back to work again. As many times as are needed. There are **no competitors** here. There is **no "right"** way of doing things. We try to **help each** other step beyond the **merely good**. We **don't fit** into any neat categories. We **combine** discipline and imagination, breadth and detail. When we succeed in what we're doing, we **sit back** for a minute view and listen to what we've created. (Emphasis added) (Salt n.d.)*

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I believe that a certain type of person is drawn to this type of life and work philosophy, just as a particular type of person feels instantly connected to the life and work philosophy of journalism. To my knowledge, there is no educational program that combines what I call the “documentary perspective” with journalism education.

If mass communication requires a sender using a form of technology to reach a mass audience over distances, then the term “documentary” would not qualify: as it has been practiced for almost five decades, it does not reach a mass audience and for the most part, isn’t intended for mass audience. Alternative publications and broadcast outlets may attempt to resist mainstream media techniques, but they do so for a narrow audience. I believe this can be altered for the purpose of reaching a mass audience and mass communication education.

I am one of those people who instantly felt a connection to the discipline of journalism based on its foundational values. Others are drawn to it because it provides an unpredictable schedule; no two days are ever the same. Some see journalism as a travel ticket. Some think it allows them to make a living writing while they secretly write the great American novel in their spare time. And yet others take up posts in journalism because it provides a steady income in conjunction with fulfilling an interest in, say, sports or the arts.

What hooked me was the First Amendment - the fact that you have a constitutional right to be heard resonated because I had been denied that right as a child. That basic need to be heard forms the core of who I am. If you apply Parker Palmer’s theory that we teach who we are, I am a teacher and a journalist that places being heard above all else, and as a result, I want my life’s work to be about helping others be heard. I was conscious of this need. I knew I wanted to take childhood trauma and turn it into something that would give me back my dignity and prevent others from experiencing a powerless existence. As the middle child of an abusive father, it was my job to speak for us all and accept the consequences. I am a person comfortable in the empathetic role. I recognize that my priorities are based on my life and your priorities are based on your life—and they may not create identical lists. We are thrown together in the workplace, however, and we need to know and understand each other’s lists and each other’s stories.

Taking the First Amendment a bit further into the role of journalist was even better. A journalist's job is to act as gatekeeper, watchdog and champion for the voiceless? What more could I ask for as an idealist on a mission to right all the world's wrongs as a means of somehow vicariously righting all my parents' wrongs.

I was an angry and intense woman at the age of 29 when I took my first journalism course, "Mass Media and Society." Some people are unsure why they have chosen a particular profession, but I'm not. I am painfully aware of the connection between journalism and who I am as a woman, a daughter, a sister, a citizen of a country and the world. Because of the lack of personal control I experienced during the first 18 years of my life, I was committed to living an honest life, one that did not conflict with my principles; I believe I had no choice but to pursue a career in journalism. I spent 15 years as a medical transcriber, allowing my spirit to wither and almost die. Journalism saved me.

My vision of journalism was naïve. I maintained a Salt philosophy. I wanted to show the extraordinary in the ordinary. I knew there was no right way to represent the truth, so I could never be wrong as long as the truth was my goal. I wanted "intense" to be a good thing. I wanted to work in an environment where colleagues supported each other, moving past the "merely good." I didn't want to fit into any "neat category." I wanted to combine discipline and imagination, breadth and detail. I wanted to reflect on my work and be proud of what I'd done at the end of the day.

It didn't take long for me to realize that "my" journalism and "the" journalism were mortal enemies. As the editor of my campus newspaper, truth as I "knew" it was rarely obtained. Student reporters had time and talent limitations. Campus officials wouldn't talk. We didn't have access to most records. The journalism faculty wanted nothing to do with us. We had no feedback, which left us with a trial by error environment. It was a shock, finding out that no amount of technique could guarantee I would be able to report the truth. I actually thought, at that time, that I could report the truth; I actually believed there was such a thing as the truth. My journalism education did not offer the tools to balance the ideal with the newsroom reality. But, because I was in charge, at least I could explain the state of the newspaper when confronted. I knew we were doing everything we could with what we had to

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work with. I was able to build a corps. in the newsroom that cared about each other and the product we were entrusted to deliver. We talked a lot about how to do better. I've never experienced that feeling since in a group environment.

The journalism faculty was highly critical of the student newspaper, yet it had no formal relationship with the publication. I was angry and I let it be known. My philosophy then was the same as it is now: keep your mouth shut if you don't intend to do something to effect change.

Just as my idealism was being put to the test at the newspaper, it was rejuvenated by a man named Tom Strawman. I took only one course from him, but it was enough: Native American Literature. At some point we read *In the Absence of the Sacred: The failure of technology and the survival of Indian nations* by Jerry Mander (1991). And that was that. When one person connects to one person, the feeling of isolation disappears. We read about the way "the media" perceives others different than themselves, the role "the media" plays in the destruction of cultures and the way "native" cultures perceive "the media." Making a profit gets in the way of good journalism because good journalism requires time and space and a sense of responsibility toward others. Good journalism might accuse industries that advertise. It may lift up and equalize groups by raising the level of minority voices, and what would happen if we were all equal (1991 p.6)?

I read between the lines of Mander's books and wrote a new version in my head. When you combine Mander's book with the work of James Welch (1980) and Margaret Craven (2008) you get what I call an "other philosophy," to be explained later. Briefly, it means empathy takes precedence over all other feelings, emotions or values. Even though I was born into white middle class, I was impoverished emotionally. I have always identified with "others" because I have always been an "other."

Considering my age at that time - 34 - and my degree of idealism, I felt it was probably more realistic to pursue a graduate degree with an eye toward project work or teaching rather than a traditional reporting career. I had no knowledge of the raging and downright nasty debate that exists within the journalism education community regarding newsroom experience versus academic or non-newsroom accomplishments. Some friends and some family were



disappointed that I wanted to teach rather than report; I had just received the Southeastern Conference's College Journalist of the Year Award and it was felt that I should parlay that into a stellar reporting career. I was surprised to find that my professors believed I had what it took to be a great journalist - not good, but great. But I wanted to effect change and I thought education was a more effective tool for one person.

I headed off to Alaska to see the land and cultures Mander and Craven wrote about. I figured that if I was going to feel different to everyone around me, I may as well live among same way. I knew instinctively that Alaskan Natives (the term First Alaskans choose to refer to Alaska tribes in general) had much to offer and I had much to learn about voices denied.

There was no graduate program in journalism in Alaska, which didn't matter to me. I wanted a Master's degree as an excuse to get out of my own skin, or to become comfortable in it. I wanted life experiences. Education later in life can be overwhelming. You already know, at 34, that each career decision is critical to the overall picture. I thought I was too old to pursue a traditional reporting career. And I thought I had all the makings of a great teacher. I found out later that teaching quality is often given the lowest priority by the industry and the academy. No one told me during my undergraduate experience that the media industry denigrates journalism programs if teachers are not former journalists with extensive experience. Perhaps naïve, but I truly did not know.

As I pursued my Master's degree in cross-cultural education in Fairbanks, Alaska, I worked as an intern for the regional newspaper's Sunday magazine. I later worked for a chain of rural newspapers as a media liaison officer. I worked with Native communities in a variety of ways to improve relations between rural journalists and the villagers. I was the editor of a weekly community paper in the Northwest Arctic village of Kotzebue, and developed an office of special projects for the journalism program at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. I wrote a journalism text for Yup'ik high school students. I conducted writing projects in remote villages. I helped develop a journalism endorsement for the Master of Arts in Teaching program at UAA. I even tried to develop a Documentary Institute in Alaska based on the work of the CDS.

And finally, I was asked to design a summer camp journalism program for Alaska

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Native youth. At face value, this seemed like a good idea. But a \$70,000 price tag seemed absurd to me in the face of such limited exposure to the media for Alaska Native villages. This same \$70,000 could have funded media literacy programs, video projects, newsletter setups, writers-in-residence and a whole host of other activities designed to empower Alaska Natives by hearing their voices in mainstream media. The truth is, a summer camp was needed to compete with a summer camp held annually by a Native organization. There was bad blood between the university and the Native group. The university wanted to appear actively engaged in Native training. A sexy and highly publicized summer camp would do the trick. But, it wouldn't produce any sustainable results. As a result, I left two weeks before the camp started. I'd had enough of "journalism" in newsroom form or academic form. Four and a half years involved with Alaskan journalism was enough to know I wasn't cut out for a traditional journalist position. It wasn't in my DNA to participate quietly in a profit-based and political activity that I felt undermined democracy and good citizenship.

My relationship with that university's journalism department and my interactions with the press in Alaska left me disillusioned. If my Alaskan media experience was any indication, I wondered if I would ever be employable.

As a journalist in the midst of an ethnic group much different than myself, I found that I could not write the truth as I saw it and documented it. Self-censorship was rampant among non-Native journalists at small newspapers. Those who didn't self-censor didn't last long. I knew that if I were given the time and resources, I could report "the truth," but I couldn't fit the Native truth into a Western newspaper.

I look back on the stories I wrote during that period and wonder if I lacked courage or if I realized I was intimidated by the sheer differences between myself and the people I was writing about. I was constantly conflicted over the right to speak and whose truth to use. There was no support from the top to provide the courage I needed, which was a lot.

At the late age of 37, I had to be realistic. And, perhaps because I was 37, I knew what realistic meant in the workplace. Did I want to try and fight this battle in a traditional newsroom? Should I pursue alternative media sources? I didn't want to work in an alternative setting; that meant I was admitting the system had beaten me. Should I be satisfied with small

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victories? Every once in a while a story made a difference. Every once in a while a story was as true as I could make it in the space I was allotted. Was it necessary to throw out the baby with the bathwater? Leave journalism altogether because it had morphed into something ugly? I loved journalism, but I hated journalism. Nothing “out there” looked like the Salt Center’s vision statement. I was broke and tired. I didn’t feel that I could afford at my age to jump from job to job looking for a mainstream work place that met my needs or the needs of anyone else for that matter. I didn’t want to become cynical, insensitive and racist like so many of the journalists I met in Alaska. Granted, it was a difficult place to report because of the lack of physical access to villages and the reluctance of any white person to criticize any Native group. There were incredible thick and real tensions at play in Alaska; I often wondered how journalists there lasted as long as they did.

The Alaska experience was invaluable, however, with regard to perspective. Because a good portion of my time there was spent in a “research” and teacher capacity, I had a chance to spend long periods of time with Alaska Natives in their environment. Most of the time I was not acting as a reporter. Instead, I spent time in villages talking to Alaska Natives about the media, asking them for insight into their perspective so I could translate that into recommendations for the “white” press in Anchorage.

Interestingly, I found that when the Native perspective was presented to mainstream press, it was ignored. Publications all over Alaska seemed to view progress as increased coverage or “safer” stories or lovely cultural stories complete with feathers and beads. Understanding life and issues from the Native point of view was non-existent. I was always told that few organizations had the finances to support journalists who lived in rural areas and even when they did, journalists who actually lived in the Bush fell victim to self-censorship as a matter of survival. And so, a few journalists were sent out into the Bush to try and make contacts and get a better feel for the Alaska Native way of seeing and then they went home to report in the safety of a newsroom.

Generally speaking, what I learned from the Alaska media experience was that taking the high road made people mad . I learned that leadership is the key to change because change takes courage. At one point, I asked my mentor at the University of Alaska Anchorage why he

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felt people seemed determined to sabotage my projects. He was a lifelong resident of Alaska and he said it was a simple matter. Information is power, he said, and no one really wants Alaska Natives to embrace the power you are peddling. Because Alaska is actually sparsely populated and fashioned into camps of thought, I wasn't able to make any progress and I wasn't interested in wasting any more time trying. Education had resurrected my life at a late age and I didn't want to squander a minute of life if I could help it.

I don't know what I thought I would do when I left Alaska. I felt defeated. I didn't like running away but I was exhausted from the battle. I had seen a side of "white culture" that I didn't like. I felt like an outsider even though I was just in a different state. I felt like an outsider in villages, at the university and in newsrooms. But I still believed that journalism could bring people together to a place of mutual understanding. I just didn't know how to go about it.

As luck would have it, my first journalism teacher was in need of a replacement so he could take a long planned sabbatical. I came to the rescue. The job also rescued me. I had no previous university teaching experience. My gigs had taken place in villages and behind closed doors in newsrooms. That didn't seem to matter to my mentor. He knew me and that was what mattered. He knew I loved journalism, loved teaching and worked hard. That mattered. He took quite a risk by asking me to jump in to hold down the fort by myself until he returned. This accidental job opportunity was both a curse and a blessing; it was a blessing for the obvious reasons (I needed a job) and a curse because it protected me from the debate over teacher qualifications. That protection worked against me when the debate ultimately reared its ugly head in my professional life.

A one-semester gig at a private Christian liberal arts college led to a full time tenure track appointment. I was one of two faculty with 15 majors or so at any given time. I advised the bi-monthly student newspaper. No one cared if I ever obtained my doctorate. The environment was so small that it seemed I would have a chance to create the environment I wanted. The college was considered a "premier teaching institution" where good teaching trumped research. I was lucky to have a colleague who understood me. He didn't balk too much at the community service programs I dreamed up or the special sections I designed to

address world perspectives. He didn't participate in my vision, but he didn't stand in my way either.

My frustration shifted from the journalism out there to the students in the classroom. Try as I might, I could not develop a core of students serious about journalism. In my four years at that institution, there was only one student who deeply respected the principles of journalism. Students expressed a variety of reasons for pursuing journalism degrees, but none, except one, resembled the Salt or Duke versions.

In a traditional faculty position, the journalism education literature started to play a bigger role in my life. I devoured it all. I was confused by the tone of the arguments. If we are educators charged with developing the character and knowledge base of young people, why is the focus of the literature so removed from my daily reality in the classroom?

Those people, the editors and publishers, kept saying that journalism education was a mess and one of the reasons was that teachers didn't have enough experience in newsrooms. I felt that was a good thing. I wouldn't have wanted any of the seasoned veterans I knew to get their hands on students. They didn't have a clue what young people were like in the classroom. They were cynical. They were tired.

They had to give in to corporate principles day after day. I met very few journalists that I felt had the qualities necessary to teach skills, instill values or develop programs designed to "improve" the quality of a new citizen. The literature did make me question my presence in the classroom, but not for long. If you read enough of the literature you realize very quickly that it reflects the views of a few, and certainly none of my reality. My heart was in teaching journalism because I didn't like the way it had been taught to me. I was, and still am, convinced that if I'd had a more comprehensive education, I would have had the skills necessary to perform and resist in the workplace. I wasted several good years trying to understand all the things my journalism experience omitted.

My students confounded me from the start, but more so after I was introduced to the African continent by a former classmate turned Peace Corp volunteer. I traveled to Zimbabwe in the summer of 1999 to conduct a cultural writing project with him and his students. I got my first taste of true learning, teaching and community. Such profound experiences, I feel, defy

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words. Despite the fact that I knew the children were indoctrinated into a system of authority and control, I still felt their genuine desire to learn every second of every day. When new ideas were offered, the children squealed with delight. And these were high school-age children! Given homework assignments, children stayed after school in their desks soaking up the last ray of sunlight as there was no electricity.

School began at 8 a.m. Children left their homes as early as 5 a.m. to walk to school. Finding that hard to believe, I asked to visit one of the students at her home. My friend and I walked the three hours to their home, ate lunch and walked three hours back to school. How can an experience like that not change you?

Several days a week I would awaken to the sound of young African voices wafting in and out of my makeshift window. The children would gather to sing hymns before school. Their voices carried up the hill to my room and into my life. The contrast with my American students left me confused and more frustrated than ever.

The next year I returned to Africa, this time traveling to Rwanda to visit the National University's journalism program. I had received a grant from my employer to visit South Africa in the hopes of developing a study abroad service program. Rwanda was felt too dangerous and funding was denied for that leg of the trip. I paid for it myself and the students there repaid me ten times over.

My visit was six years post-genocide. I had no idea what I would experience there, but in a way I forced myself to go to a place that had experienced the most horrific event I could imagine so that I could offer my students an example of courage, even though I was scared to death. While my American students were disinterested in my experience in Rwanda, I was forever changed.

The university students in Rwanda knew more about American history and politics than I did. They devoured information. They said they believed communication was the key to Rwanda's resurrection from the hell they had witnessed. Many of the students bore visible scars from the machete massacre, but their facial expressions united them. Each student in his or her own way looked grateful to be alive, determined to make their life mean something, and focused on the future. I wanted to stay forever, but I had animals depending on me and a job to

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finish. I felt guilty returning home. Life seemed too easy and undeserved after my Rwandan visit.

The journalism students in Rwanda were, and still are, up against a news tradition restricted by government control. Their response to questions surprised me until I considered the consequences of speaking out. As in Alaska, I learned to consider every thought from a Rwandan point of view, whether I liked it or not. There can be no progress within cultures or cross-culturally if we hold onto our way of seeing and thinking as the only way. It's not easy for students to step into the shoes of another because their lives have not generally forced them to do so. My life hadn't forced me to do this either, but my experience as a child had instilled in me a feeling of "otherness." I felt misunderstood and isolated by extended family that didn't seem capable of empathy, so I knew what it felt like to feel marginalized, though hardly to the extent of a Rwandan.

I went on to develop a service study abroad program with the University of Natal at Durban. I met two professors in Durban who were part of a Community Outreach and Service Learning program (COSL.) During my stay there, I came to believe that there were people out there who shared my intensity and passion for project-based education. The professors introduced me to South African history and culture in whirlwind fashion. They introduced me to their international winter school, which I felt was perfect for my American students. It seemed like a Salt environment where people were devoted to learning and equity. We talked at great length about the problems they had experienced with American students. While I was embarrassed, I was glad to have the opportunity to tell them what I felt America was really about. The experience made me want to prove to them that there were some American students interested in learning about other ways of thinking. I returned home to begin what would be my last year teaching at the private university.

Every time I interacted with my students, I became more and more disillusioned. The 2000 election debacle didn't help matters. My African friends e-mailed with incessant jokes; they got a big kick out of seeing America blunder. When students went into fits because they couldn't find a parking spot within three feet of the classroom door, I wanted to scream. When they showed up in class with \$200 cell phones and then swore they didn't have enough money

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to make long distance phone calls, I wanted to scream. When I tried to engage them in a public service project with the predominantly black neighborhood next door, they cried “safety” and refused. I shared my African experiences with them, hoping they would see the point without me overtly trying to shame them into gratefulness. It didn’t work. When I raised expectations in the classroom, I had calls from parents. I wondered, often, whether a seasoned beat reporter would be better at devising teaching methods to address a student body disinterested in learning.

After experiencing life, learning and teaching in Alaskan villages, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and South Africa, I knew that I no longer wanted to live a life inconsistent with my values or desires. I didn’t know if I would ever find a work setting consistent with those values, but I knew I wanted to try. Just as in Alaska, I felt defeated. Clearly, I thought, I don’t have the skills needed to fight systems. I had the skill to argue on a daily basis and resist conformity to a certain degree, but I didn’t see how I could play a part in actually changing a system.

I decided to leave the university to pursue my doctorate in South Africa. I turned down the opportunity to take a paid leave of absence as I felt that I wouldn’t be the same person when I returned, and my colleague deserved to have someone on board that was “stable.” The program would suffer with substitutes and uncertainty. And I wanted to broaden the field of opportunity when I returned. I didn’t need the doctorate to continue teaching at a small liberal arts institution, but I needed the experience of living outside my comfort zone. I thought that it would do me good to live in a place where everything isn’t a given, where you still have to work to make things work. I wanted to live in a place where education is still considered the key to the success of a nation. I wasn’t feeling terribly anti-American, but I was feeling disgusted with the education system, and in particular, the journalism education system. When my students realized how hard journalism is, how little it pays and how little glory there would be, they turned to public relations or changed majors. There were many roads I could have taken at that point. I chose the one I thought would be most likely to result in dramatic change in my life.

Even though I knew I would be leaving my university, I agreed to design the study abroad program, recruit and see it get off the ground. The university brought in a nursing professor to help carry on the program. The staff at the University of Natal (Durban) designed a



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program that included serving at an orphanage for four weeks. The whole premise of the program was service. To be honest, I chose this type of program to satisfy my own needs and I regret that now. I wanted to expose students to hardship so they might appreciate their lives and understand the plight of others. It didn't work.

The recruitment process was difficult because few students had an interest in traveling to a place considered "third worldy." The popular programs took students to London or Australia. I was forced to accept the applications of students that were not ready for an African experience. The environment was explained in great detail. I wanted to be sure students were prepared for what they would find at the orphanage. In hindsight, I realize that nothing I could have said would have changed their ability to deal with it. A much more thoughtful and patient recruitment process was needed to find just the right "type" of students.

I arrived in South Africa six weeks in advance of the students and their faculty adviser. It was my hope that I could iron out details and work directly with the program coordinator to resolve any issues before the students arrived. The program coordinator was a South African Indian, a lovely soft spoken lady, and her style of organizing was difficult for me to contend with, considering I knew the storm that was on its way. She did not like being challenged. Questioning was disrespectful in that environment. I had no choice. I didn't really care if she liked me. What I cared about was structuring the program so the group would be "happy" and in turn would represent America well. I didn't want them to cause problems or do anything to affirm the image the South Africans held of American students. I was fighting a losing battle.

Just days before the students and teacher arrived, communication broke down with the coordinator. I needed her to understand an American way of thinking and she had no desire to do so. I had tried so hard to respect her way of communicating that I had compromised many of the planning details. I knew I was in for trouble. Eating schedules were not made and arrangements with the driver after hours were left up in the air. What seemed like minutiae to the coordinator would be deal breakers for the students. I knew that and I was embarrassed by that.

And so, the group arrived and trouble ensued. The more they complained, the harder I tried to appease them. Normally I wouldn't do this, but I had something to prove to my South

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African hosts. At this point, I wasn't even employed by the American university and wasn't paid for supervising this group. It didn't matter. I wanted a successful outcome.

When the students arrived at the orphanage about an hour outside Durban, new problems ensued. There were immediate concerns about the living quarters and the children. The children at God's Golden Acre were mostly HIV- positive and/or AIDS children. We knew this from the start. The group worried about contracting the disease from runny noses and so on. I was stunned. The supervisor with the group was a nursing supervisor and one of the students was a 49-year-old nursing graduate. There seemed to be no understanding of the nature of HIV and AIDS. In fact, the nursing professor actually told others at the camp that AIDS was transmitted by homosexuals.

The group was transferred to a beautiful African rondoval structure, much nicer accommodations than any other group of volunteers. Still, no one was content. There was one student with a missionary background who seemed to understand that she was responsible for the quality of her experience and she took full advantage of the opportunity to grow and learn. The others behaved like six-year-olds. The staff at the orphanage spoke to me about the trouble with the Americans. They couldn't provide enough structure to satisfy them. The students wanted clear jobs and clear outcomes, which could not be provided. They were cold and didn't like the food. They needed e-mail and cell phones. They needed real groceries. Although they were in a beautiful place with beautiful children who needed attention, they could not seem to find satisfaction.

The tension just kept growing between them and between them and me. It was a devastating experience for me, and I don't use that term lightly. They represented everything I was running from. In a way, they were my last hope at redeeming American values, at least at that particular stage of my life. Instead, they represented everything people condemn America for.

Repeatedly the group accompanied the orphanage director to Pietermaritzburg, a city about 30 minutes away. They would find street children and provide them with blankets and soup. The director was adamant about not giving the children clothing and other items that could be stolen or bartered. She explained to the students how children learn to take advantage

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of tourists rather than utilize social services available. South Africa as a whole has taken a position on begging. It does not want South Africans, no matter how deprived, to get in the habit of believing outsiders are the providers. In the long run, the harm outweighs the good. But my group of students continued to give away their shoes and clothing, then insist on a trip to the Mall to buy new shoes and clothing. I refused the requests. It didn't occur to them that giving sometimes results in going without. The orphanage staff asked me to discuss the issue with the students again, which I did. Only days later, the nursing student took a taxi all the way to Durban to the mall and back, costing approximately 1,400ZAR, to buy shoes and clothing for a teenage orphanage. I think the orphanage staff gave up at that point. The students simply would not respect another way of thinking, another way of life.

In a final attempt to please the group, I arranged for them to be taken to a game park near the Mozambique border. I shopped for all the groceries they were missing. As we boarded the van to head out on this great adventure, they all confronted me. They wanted assurance that we could leave the park early Sunday morning to return to the mall in Durban. I was stunned, but they weren't kidding. My South African host and driver were also stunned and not the least bit amused. I refused their request which resulted in icy stares and a refusal to speak to me all the way to the game park. One student did, however, ask one of the university faculty on the trip if she could arrange for a tour of an AIDS ward in a Durban hospital so she could see children that were "really dying." I think at that point a part of me just shut down and I told them they were all on their own.

Within days, they all left South Africa, weeks before their service was completed. The missionary student stayed to the end, God bless her, and had a significant experience. I'm not ashamed to admit that the experience left me drained and depressed. If a group of Christian students behaved like this, I thought, America is really in bad shape. In America, there is an assumption, right or wrong, that labeling oneself as a Christian automatically "requires" a strong moral compass and conduct standard. I was glad they were gone and hoped that years later they might see the opportunity they squandered. I wasn't sure what to do with my emotions at that point.

Parker Palmer says many of us live divided lives. We live "one imperative for our lives,

but outwardly we respond to quite another.” A certain amount of tension between our inner and outer worlds is healthy, he says, but it becomes “pathologic” when institutional logic “overwhelms the logic of our own lives.” Common sense will tell you that not everyone can operate outside institutions or civil society could not function. For people to work within and with organizations and institutions, they need to find “solid ground on which to stand outside the institution – the ground of one’s own being – and from that ground [you are] better able to resist the deformations that occur when organizational values become the landscape of one’s inner life.”

I left an institution because I felt it was the problem, and went in search of a community of like-minded people, an organization of like-minded people, students with solid values, a press with values and a global worldview. That particular search was not successful, but in the process I did find “solid ground” from which to resist actions and behaviors inconsistent with my beliefs and values. That solid ground was within me, not under my feet.

I didn’t just leave my job, I left America. I was convinced that I was living in a warped society and I was powerless to change it. I felt deeply helpless to do anything about my students’ consumeristic value system, their lack of global concern or even concern for their neighbor. At the time, all my attention was focused on the way Western values had distorted students. What better way to fight back than to leave the West?

At some point in between resigning and applying for doctoral programs, I read Parker Palmer’s *Courage to Teach* and *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the voice of vocation* (2000). He rescued me from my helpless, isolated thinking. Evidently I am not alone in my search for a place where my “deep gladness meets the world’s deep need. “After my students left South Africa, I was ready to take up a post as doctoral student, and I met my naïve logic head on. Within days of arrival, I knew I could not participate in the program to which I had been accepted. I didn’t pack up all my worldly goods and move to another country just to perpetuate a cycle of frustration and disgust. The program turned out to be highly academic, not applied, as I thought. Highly academic programs serve a purpose, but not a purpose consistent with my goals. I want my work to have immediate practical value. I want it to be accessible to a mass audience. I want it to be as de-politicized as I can possibly manage. I didn’t want to sound like

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another dissatisfied, picky American, but this was a big chunk of time I was devoting to a single activity and it needed to be right. I felt, in part, that the programme had misrepresented itself, but truly, I think I ignored the red flags and it was too late once I looked behind them.

My next move was to secure acceptance to the Department of Journalism at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, a school known for its journalism program. The program there did not offer doctoral supervision, which is the reason I did not apply there in the first place, but I managed to convince a professor in the political studies unit to supervise me, at least for the moment, so I could enroll at Rhodes.

And so I arrived at Rhodes University with my dog, cat and idealism. Unfortunately, I found that academia in South Africa is not much different from that in America. It can be just as political and bureaucratic, and downright anti-learning. I wandered about aimlessly looking for a proper supervisor. My wanderings took a detour when the journalism department asked me to teach “one” class which would help defray some of my expenses.

I found myself face to face once again with institutional and personal frustration. These were not the students of Zimbabwe and Rwanda. These were Western students with South African accents. There were only a handful of black journalism students and the white students came from privileged backgrounds. Faculty meetings left me exhausted. I could count on one hand the number of times learning was actually mentioned. Individual teachers expressed interests similar to mine, but not one of them had reached the level of living a life “undivided” which is necessary for the sense of teaching and learning community I envisioned for myself.

There were no boundaries or structure whatsoever in that academic setting. I felt as if I were behaving like my American students. I wanted things to work efficiently and consistently. I was embarrassed by my own impatience. I couldn’t tolerate the lack of communication and leadership, and it was clear my voice was not welcome. I didn’t know if it was because I am an American or just because I had so many questions. The environment struck a chord in me – I felt like a six-year-old again in my father’s house. Slowly but surely it began to dawn on me that every situation in my life was leading me to a clearer understanding of myself, which was not necessarily a pretty picture. But, it was also (hopefully) leading me to becoming a better person and better teacher.

I found myself making a choice again. To continue teaching meant I would never finish my Ph.D. To quit teaching meant I was once again leaving a situation without contributing to it. I finally could see that I was not that good at choosing which things could be changed and which could not. I wanted to change everything. I had no wisdom to help me understand the difference. It seemed time to stop, regroup and find that wisdom.

As an American in South Africa, my contribution wasn't really welcomed anyway, so making the decision to stop teaching and devote time to myself was easier than most decisions. I'll never really know if my nationality played as big a role as I think it did because it's one of those things people are unlikely to admit. I'm a fairly intuitive person, and enough South Africans were willing to discuss their feelings toward America and Americans, that I feel confident in the conclusions I've drawn. I also believe Americans deserve many of the widely-held negative opinions about them.

One South African teacher put it this way, more or less: "I am tired of Americans thinking they deserve their superpower status. They don't. They got where they are by playing dirty. They got there on the backs of countries like South Africa."

The same professor told me that my frustration toward their chaos was justified only in an American context. I must go home for it to matter. They were justified in their acceptance of oppression and chaos, she said, because things "are far better now than before" (referring to apartheid and the years since its abolishment). She told me that she would rather they (the teachers, students and institution) flounder about learning by trial and error than simply adopt the suggestions of an American, even if their way took longer and was extremely political in nature. At least it was their way.

I was put in my place, and rightfully so. I left America because I was disgusted with societal values. I thought I was a terribly enlightened American. Now I came to discover that I was disgusted with my country's very democracy. Did the founding fathers realize that upholding our constitution would require the oppression of others? I began to see this as the heart of my lifetime of frustration: parents who bring others into the world only to find them burdensome. Parents who raise their children to believe that others' needs are not their problem. Schools that teach children others are secondary to the United States. A media that operates for

profit at the expense of an informed public. That uninformed, self-centered, consumer-obsessed citizenry abdicates its responsibilities blindly to politicians who think it's their job to protect the American way of life even if it means stepping on the backs of others. What a vicious cycle.

I suppose I was born with a resistance gene that made me appear different from others. I certainly felt different. I could not find a "home" for myself at any level: work, worship, relationships or life in general. I wanted to wrap myself in values in the way of family, friends, co-workers and students. But I never felt warm. I assumed my frustration and impatience was a defect because I couldn't find any constructive way to channel my energies.

Post 9-11, in South Africa, I stopped everything to process the perspective living abroad had given me. I read. I read a lot. I read some more. I suffered through John Pilger (2002) and Noam Chomsky (2001) and dozens of other resistance writers. I also recognized myself in Antje Krog's Afrikaaner angst ridden *Country of my Skull* (1998). I read it three times. I re-read Parker Palmer for hope (1980, 1983, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2000a, 2002b, 2006, 2007). I found a philosophical home in these readings, but again, I was an "outsider" because I could not, and still cannot, adhere to just one paradigm. I saw myself, and still do, in most philosophical paradigms. I loved the rebellious nature of Giroux (1997) and the hopeful populist nature of Freire (1970, 1985, 1998). I wanted to get into the classroom and experiment with Joan Wink's critical pedagogy (2000). I knew I was not entirely alone or "crazy" when I devoured the Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods, particularly writings by Wolcott, Richardson, Ellis, Arrendt, Lather (2001) and others who speak in a personal and emotional voice with no apologies. I relate to Denzin and Lincoln's "messy text" theory because life is messy. Research is not linear and clean. People are complicated and their thinking is messy. Stream of consciousness as a literary technique was initially felt to be too disjointed and confusing until audiences realized that it was a more accurate representation of our brain function and we can learn a lot from accuracy. I am drawn to mixed genre work as described by Laurel Richardson, (2001). not only because it allows researchers to openly admit to their messy thinking but because it represents the work of journalists in the field.

I lean toward the practical. I want writing and ideas to be accessible. I struggled with the dense writings of many theorists. I even raged against it at times because it flies in the face of

the ideology of journalism which requires information to be accessible to all. I've been angered by the lack of respect for the journalistic way of thinking and doing, particularly because journalism is not only allowed in the academy, it brings in large numbers of students and contributes graduates who play key roles in the growing of democracies. I had to come to terms with the uneasy fit of journalism in the academy. I had to decide how to address that uneasy fit: conform or "live an undivided life." I've asked myself hard questions: are my feelings toward "high culture" and "high academics" a product of my values or are they just an excuse for a lack of intellectual capacity? Am I anti-intellectual? Am I perpetuating the stereotype of journalism educators as vocational and "simple"? Four years later, I can finally answer those questions. During those four years, I have become proof of Laurel Richardson's theory (2001). that writing is a mode of inquiry; I have written a million words in six years. The end result of that inquiry is a new, quieter confidence in myself as a researcher, teacher, woman, citizen, daughter, sister and friend, and the answers to the hard questions have been worked out. I am not anti-intellectual. I have intellectual capacity consistent with my academic discipline of journalism, not that of media theory, cultural studies or communication science. I believe there is a place in the academy for all kinds of scholars. To me, a scholar is a person with a deep passion for a particular field of study. This person devotes their life to understanding her field using whatever methods are available and useful. A scholar looks at causes and effects, not just the superficial. To my knowledge, in American higher education, there is no definition of a scholar, but there are codified requirements of scholars. This is unfortunate because these requirements do not appear to embrace diversity of minds. My theory-based colleagues would be "out of their league" in my praxis world, yet they are not often held accountable for this weakness. Recently, a friend of mine who is also in the thesis writing stage lamented to me that she was coming to believe that perhaps she was just not "clever" enough to earn a place in the academy. This came from a woman whom I think possesses more wisdom, patience, depth of character and creativity than any other colleague I've ever worked with. I know there is a place for her in the academy. The students need her. The body of knowledge needs her.

Somehow I had received a high school diploma, a bachelor's degree in mass communications and a master's degree in cross-cultural education without really learning much



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that mattered. The American system is designed to help people “succeed,” not necessarily “know” or “learn deeply.” In the eyes of most, I was a success story. In my own eyes, however, I knew something was missing. I was a failure because I hadn’t found a way to change anything.

In the town of Grahamstown, where I lived in South Africa, there is an upscale guesthouse and restaurant pub called The Cock House. It’s considered “larney” by the locals. I stayed at the Cock House during my first visit there and then rented a small flat next door when I arrived to study at Rhodes University.

That sense of community I have longed for my entire life was right there in the form of a drinking establishment. It was more than that though. It was small and cozy. I could sit there by myself and not feel stupid. The owners, Peter and Belinda Tudge, were extraordinary people who became my mentors, friends and even teachers. The regular bar patrons became “classmates” in this unconventional university. Over time, I became a “regular” too. I have always wanted to be a “regular.” I was new in town and didn’t know anyone except Peter and Belinda. Eventually I did make friends outside the bar, but they weren’t regulars at the Cock House. That was my special place. I could go there and be myself, be by myself, be with others or leave. I could listen or talk, read or drink. There was no pressure. It was a safe place for a woman who felt unprotected in a foreign land.

In that South African pub I found out how much I did not know. The re-education of an American took place there under the watchful tutelage of Professor Peter, owner and bartender. One night someone in the bar mentioned “the crusades.” My response was something like, “oh, you mean Billy Graham?” Peter laughed so hard I really thought he would crack a rib. He thought I was so funny. I wasn’t being funny.

When he finally came to realize that I wasn’t joking, that my understanding of the crusades had nothing to do with the Middle East or important history, he was disgusted. How could I have all this education and know so little, he asked. I was a straight-A student. I took courses in Western Civilization and American History in college but I had no knowledge of world history, nor had I ever cared to.

I know there are students in America who do understand world history. But I don’t think

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I can say that I am some sort of exception to the norm. I think I am the norm. Over the course of the next two years I found that I am exceptionally good at one thing: being an American. That's the one thing I didn't want to be. I wanted to be a human being, a person of this world, but I had no idea how to go about it. I didn't truly understand other ways of thinking; I just knew there were other ways of thinking.

As I slid into my regular seat in the pub night after night, people from all over the world slid into the seats next to me. There were teachers from Sweden and a South African toilet salesman. There were parents from Kenya to London visiting their children at one of Grahamstown's many boarding schools. I met South African government officials and American academics. Tourist groups from Germany to Belgium to Australia came in and out of my life.

I chose my battles wisely after a while. I listened to what others had to say. Every time someone heard my accent, the conversation turned toward American politics. No matter how hard I tried to steer the conversation toward the other person's home place, we always came back to America. It was as if America had an impact on every single place in the world and every single person. At first, I found this hard to believe and I found myself telling others to just quit focusing on America. Quit watching American television, reading American books and magazines, quit buying American products. That American attitude was my coping mechanism. Over time, I was worn down by the sheer number of people who expressed the same feelings about America and Americans. They couldn't all be wrong. But, after all, I had undergone a form of indoctrination that didn't allow me to admit my country was "wrong." That would be unpatriotic, and we all know what happens to unpatriotic Americans. Outwardly I would defend America in many areas, but inside, I was trying to figure out what one person could do about a country with a bad attitude.

And a funny thing happened on the way to becoming whole: I broke my neck.

I'll never know for sure what caused a disk in my neck to rupture, shatter and press on my spinal cord. There was no one catastrophic event to blame it on. I only know what I know, and that is pain. Left with no choice but to undergo spinal surgery in South Africa, I took my dog to the kennel, left food for the cat and packed an overnight bag. I remember walking

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through the hospital doors alone with my little suitcase. I felt like a child spending the night away from home for the first time. I thought I was a tough woman, capable of moving to a foreign country alone, but at that moment, I was just as vulnerable as a six-year-old.

There will never be another 24-hour period like that one. I had never experienced homesickness in my life. Maybe because I never felt at home anywhere. I'd made my new home in South Africa. But when I opened my eyes after surgery, it was as if the entire world had disappeared. All thoughts prior to surgery were now seen through different eyes. I wasn't visited by angels, or God directly, but it's as close to a conversion as they come.

I was not at home, I knew that much. The nurses were lovely, don't get me wrong, but they were Afrikaner. They had something in common. A history. A language. A culture. All my life I had felt like an outsider in my family, amongst friends, at work, you name it. Now, I really was an outsider. I made myself an outsider. It just dawned on me that you can't feel part of something if you don't do the work. You can't feel connected if you isolate yourself. And, you can't change anything if you leave.

Unable to move more than a few inches, I lay in that hospital bed for the next 24 hours. I tried to re-trace my life taking new responsibility for the choices I'd made. I was no less frustrated by Western culture or impatient with people who lived hypocritical lives, but I realized my form of resistance was lazy, not brave.

It was a lonely 24 hours. I've heard that kind of feeling referred to as "alone alone." That does seem to describe it accurately. I left the hospital feeling dazed, not from anesthesia or pain, but such a burden was lifted, one I had lived under for so long, that I felt almost too light. What does any of this have to do with journalism curricula or a doctoral dissertation? Everything.

I am keenly self-aware. I know I am not arrogant, but, I can say that I am the kind of person I want reporting news to the world. I care deeply about what is going on around me. I care what happens to others even if it doesn't affect me. I love the search for information. I love telling stories. I love the impact telling somebody else's story has on them. I love writing. I love meeting new people and seeing new places. I love learning on a daily basis. I'm a lover of principles and democracy, but not freedom at any price. I vote based on the candidate, not the

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party. I'll admit when I'm wrong and strive to do better.

But I am not the kind of person who works well within the current media structure. I'm just too darned old now to take on the system from within. I'm not arrogant enough to think I could convince a Gannett publisher to do it my way. I'm not too old, however, to channel all my resistance energy and my love for teaching into building an educational program specifically for people who want to be part of changing the system. When people say "the children are our future," it isn't just a cliché sentiment. I see my students as hope, but I know they sometimes need guidance to develop their sense of self that will allow them to dig deep to meet their potential.

I want journalists who refuse to become cynical. I want journalists who are deeply empathetic, reflective, well read, well-travelled and brave. I want journalists who are human, not robots reporting the truth as it relates to column inches. I want journalists who are willing to forego stability and six figures for a chance to turn media as we know it on its head. I want journalists who will flip a few editors and publishers off and fashion good, strong arguments for newsroom integrity.

I want journalists, editors and producers who work as equals, not adversaries. I want publishers and owners who believe a five percent profit margin is enough. I want a press that helps build a civil society, not tears down democratic pursuits for a few more dollars. I want a media environment that takes the 9/11 experience and honors the dead by vowing to never close our collective eyes again to the big picture, no matter how ugly the big picture might be.

If I want a person like me minding the store, then I want a journalism program designed for people like me. Just what would that program look like? What would it entail? I know there are students like me and students not like me. I can spot the difference a mile away. People like me are naturally drawn to documentary work. Why?

Which brings us to the Center for Documentary Studies affiliated with Duke University.

I have never been a big film buff. As a result, my knowledge of the term "documentary" was rudimentary at best. Like most people, I considered a documentary to be a stark black and white factual film. It wasn't exciting or colorful. It was downright serious.

It wasn't until those Salt posters started popping up around me that I paused to consider what the term could mean. If "documentary" meant what Salt said it meant, then it was for me. When I stumbled across a copy of *Doubletake Magazine* in a local bookstore, I gravitated toward it because the cover drew me in the same way a Salt poster did. Inside, the magazine acknowledged its affiliation with the Center for Documentary Studies in Durham, North Carolina.

Salt refers to its work as "documentary field studies" and the CDS refers to its work as "documentary studies." Either way, both institutions devote themselves to in-depth work aimed at greater understanding of people and places, ideas and emotions. They "get away" with talking high ideals because they are not mainstream.

For more than 10 years, Salt and CDS became the model by which I worked. I had no knowledge of the inner workings of either program; in some ways, it was better that I didn't know. I was free to interpret their concepts for myself and apply them in a way that worked for me.

The cumulative effect of my journalistic experiences was equal parts disgust, anger, sadness, frustration and even hope. The hope came in the form of one piece of knowledge: there are people out there who think like I do, who produce the kind of work I want to produce. The only caveat to that hope was the fact that documentary work reaches a small niche audience, not the very public I think it would benefit. For me, to embrace alternative media or non-profit media would be tantamount to surrendering the fight. The whole premise of the research was to envision ways that the intention and process behind documentary work could be applied to a mainstream audience. I didn't want to give up just because it was proving to be difficult.

In South Africa, documentary work has not been over-exploited or over-exposed. It still conjures up images of truth and reality, exposing and revealing. But, in South Africa, I could find no one interested in my opinion about anything South African. I had arrived there thinking my research could be of service and found an indignant populace. For the most part, academia did not embrace an American researching a South African problem unless it was going to result in a cure for AIDS or an economic breakthrough.

The supervisor that had accepted via phone was aloof and even disgusted when I arrived at Rhodes University. She had good reason. Apparently, in South Africa, when you are ready to pursue your doctorate, you find a supervisor willing to work with you on your research project, then you conduct your research and you write it up. I came equipped with no real topic and no knowledge of traditional academic research. I had originally applied for a doctoral program that purported to focus on field work across the African continent and that turned out not to be the case.

The supervisor was not prepared to walk me through a process that I should have already been through. I was stuck in a big way. I had resigned from a tenure track teaching job, sold my home and moved my animals to a foreign country. I had rejected my original doctoral program and moved again to pursue my doctorate in another province of South Africa. I had several options, as I saw it. I could go home and try to find a job, apply for graduate school in America, try to comply with the requirements of the South African institution which I would have to do entirely on my own and would likely take years just to learn the language of academe or, I could find a new supervisor that understood my predicament and was willing to help me dash through instruction on theory and research methodologies.

Fortunately, the latter occurred. I found a supervisor that said he understood my situation. He approved my area of interest, teacher formation, and was prepared to help me apply my research questions to academic research methods. This process, finding a supervisor and coming up with a research path took over a year. It was a tension filled-process from the beginning because my supervisor had no background in journalism; he was a theorist. First, I devoured all the literature on research which just brought on panic attacks. I found the language to be so dense as to feel pretentious and purposefully inaccessible. It was on the other end of the theory spectrum; journalism is about access to the masses and academic literature seemed blatantly elitist. I did go through an initial period of despair; I felt stupid. I was angry at myself for having chosen a master's program that did not prepare me for a doctoral program. I was angry at myself for not having chosen a doctoral program that began with research instruction. I was on my own, far more isolated than I had felt in remote Alaskan villages. I was an American in a foreign country and a foreign educational environment.

The more I read the more frustrated and angry I became. The idea of choosing a paradigm seemed anti-intellectual; how can we “force” doctoral students to pick one category to describe their beliefs about learning and reality? None of the paradigms appeared to support Christianity as a paradigm. To choose a paradigm meant telling God that we know what the nature of reality is and how we acquire knowledge - akin to telling him that our core beliefs did not come from our faith. It came from a particular set of researchers and philosophers who had created labels for these thought categories. My job, then, was to learn every single philosopher or theorist ever known and place myself somewhere on the spectrum of belief systems. What made this difficult was that I was exposed to academic language and research requirements, definitions of scholar at the very same time I was trying to start and complete a dissertation. This made for an angry student. I felt caged. I wanted to explore the disconnect between the journalism education literature and the realities on the front lines and this did not seem to fit with any quantitative methodology. As I read and read more and more, I discovered qualitative methods and paradigms that allowed for multiple realities and more personal research. I wanted to explore Parker Palmer’s theoretical lens: “we teach who we are.” I didn’t see any way to explore an abstract concept that was based on the very premise that each teacher’s story matters.

To appease my supervisor, I proposed a case study of the Center for Documentary Studies in Durham, North Carolina, because I could use what I learned about the faculty, documentarians and instructors to determine if documentary instruction had something to offer journalism education and to pinpoint any similar personal and vocational characteristics of the educators. My supervisor agreed that I could return home, conduct the case study and write up the results from America. He agreed that it was difficult for the South African institution to embrace a doctoral topic from an American about an American issue.

It was a novel idea, my supervisor said, because most Americans do not enroll in foreign institutions nor do they devote their energies to a problem back home, because, after all, America has no problems. That supervisor and I hit it off immediately in part, I believe, because the program he directed appeared to me to be one that meshed well with my interest in teacher quality. He directed a unique program aimed at helping faculty reflect on their teaching

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and how their epistemological and ontological beliefs were affecting their teaching and research. What I didn't know was that this practical goal was based on theoretical paradigms and no, I had never been exposed to anything close to a paradigm.

It's true. Just as I had mistaken the crusades to mean Billy Graham's lecture circuits, my graduate education had never covered research paradigms, methodologies or methods. I spent two years in the Alaskan Bush writing stories and shooting video to be used by the mainstream press in Anchorage and by the seven rural newspapers. I wouldn't trade my Arctic days for one course in theory, though it is the nature of my graduate program that has caused me great distress in the years since graduating.

I walked away from my Alaskan graduate program equipped to teach in any environment and to adapt and embrace other ways of thinking. I had spent two years translating journalism techniques to a Native population. I spent two years creating journalism techniques to accommodate the Native way of knowing. I wrote news and features on every topic imaginable, just not from the confines of a traditional newsroom. My newsroom was hundreds of thousands of miles large and full of challenges not experienced in the traditional newsroom.

My graduate experience left me feeling competent and confident in my ability to teach journalism to anyone anywhere. I had practiced journalism in the Arctic and I thought my hard core experience could be calculated in dog years – two years in the Bush equaled, oh, I don't know, two years in Missouri at a daily or eight years at a community paper. Every bit of my academic experience had been project-based, hands-on, with a tangible media product in many formats. I still had no idea that the choices I had made would make me difficult to employ. I thought I had chosen a path that would make up for lost time, squeezing in so much life experience and diverse journalistic experiences that I was about to pop.

By the time I finally realized that I would probably never be invited into the fold of academic researchers there, I had fallen in love with South Africa. Though I didn't understand much of the policies or the public agenda, it was exciting to witness a country in the throes of development. The country seemed to want help in certain areas but not in others, and I was one of the others.



When my reading was “complete,” it was time to return home. For the first time, I didn’t want to leave a place. I left because it was too easy to stay. It was too easy to criticize the American media and education systems from that bar stool. It would be harder to go home and commit to not giving up no matter how little my contribution might be. I packed my bags and headed back to America. My home had changed since Sept. 11. Using media accounts, it looked like I was headed back into a society angry and retributive. In South Africa, people said they were saddened by the event but even more saddened that America didn’t seem to be using the event as an opportunity to re-evaluate its place in the world. It didn’t matter. Whatever I found at home was what I would deal with. I was tired of giving up.

I have several strikes against me in the academic world. I’m a woman. I don’t have a long history in the newsroom. The history I do have is riddled with resistance and attitude. I don’t have a long history of teaching. I hadn’t engaged routinely in academic research; rather, I’d engaged in hands-on projects. But I do not see myself in the literature that would add all these strikes up and boot me out. I’ve reflected on my status enough to know I’m not in denial. I simply don’t agree with the “consensus” that journalism teachers should fit in a nice sturdy mold. The person I have become based on my experiences qualifies me to teach and I know dozens of people who should not be in the classroom who do fit the mold. I also know dozens of people who are exceptional teachers who do not fit the mold.

When I arrived in Tennessee, I was heading into a state of depression that I never saw coming. So much had happened to me in the previous two years in South Africa and there was nobody here to connect with and share my revelations with in a meaningful way. I felt like I was living in a very tiny world that existed six feet in any direction from my body. I feared telling my doctoral supervisor that I had no idea what I was doing. That is, I understood the methods required in conducting a formal case study, but I didn’t agree that the method would answer the questions I had.

I had latched onto the literature that espoused credibility for qualitative research and highly flexible constructivism. I had read enough dissertations to know that values-based research had merit and much to offer the body of knowledge. I wasn’t satisfied taking the advice of both my doctoral supervisor and academic colleagues, which was, ‘just write the

thing and then you can change the world.” I didn’t want to just “write the thing;” I wanted to add a new idea and a novel approach to academic journalism research in the current body of knowledge.

I stayed with my sister for a few weeks upon arrival home for Christmas. I had made arrangements to travel to the CDS in February of 2002 to conduct this “case study.” I intended to stay as long as it took, perhaps six to eight weeks. The CDS had agreed to access to explore the center’s beliefs and educational model.

I set out for Durham feeling a bit dazed by the re-entry to America process. I knew in my gut that the case study would be a disaster. I had a severe case of impending doom. Since my undergraduate days, I had been enamored with the work of the CDS and the opportunity to spend time there with unlimited access should have been the highlight of my academic and personal life. But, it didn’t feel that way. I felt that this once in a lifetime experience was going to be derailed by the research methods I had agreed to use.

I rented a tiny house for a short period of time, settled my dog in her new yard and made my preparations to spend time at the CDS. My heart was not in the project and I was confused as to the reasons why. I don’t think I recognized at the time how much I would be emotionally affected by the capitulation. I just knew I felt lost and afraid I would not be able to turn this exploration of the CDS into something a doctoral examiner would find rigorous enough. Although I was familiar with all the literature on qualitative research, there wasn’t much that referred to doctoral research. It spoke to already established faculty with their PhD’s already in hand. My engagement with my supervisor had never fully explored the qualitative option for the case study. I had dueling plans going on in my head. Should I just do the case study the way my supervisor wanted or should I take a risk and use methods that were not academically respected at my South African doctoral home?

I decided to wing it. I would interview the people deemed appropriate by my supervisor and I would attempt to squeeze the information into a case study mold when I was finished. But again, I just couldn’t do that in the end. The information gleaned from the instructors, faculty, administrators and documentarians and students was fascinating. While the “ambiance” of the center didn’t match my expectations, I felt blessed to have such access to people and programs

that matched my vocational interests and personal value system. I had answered my own question very quickly: does the CDS have something to offer journalism programs? The answer: yes. Those interviewed at the CDS agreed but also thought the notion was funny.

Every time, and I mean every time, I brought up the topic of journalism education and the documentary style of the CDS, and I got a cold reception. The underlying foundation of the documentary style used at the CDS was antithetical to journalism. They wouldn't budge or deviate from that belief.

There was not enough "data" for use in a formal case study. I would go home each evening and re-examine the literature related to case study methods and I would sink deeper into depression. I woke up each morning dreading a day at the CDS. After decades of admiring the work of the CDS, I found myself afraid to spend time there. I felt alone even though I'd spent much of my academic life in isolated environments and being part of an "other" situation. In the CDS setting, I felt an extreme case of "the other."

As depression is prone to do, I couldn't reconcile all the mixed emotions I was having. I continued my interviews at the CDS and I had an "aha!" moment. It was the people at the CDS that interested me the most after half a dozen interviews. Their stories represented a population of people who used the documentary method to make a difference in the lives of those they studied. The work there did not focus on the end product, unlike journalism.

Initially, I had proposed to my doctoral supervisor that I be allowed to study teacher formation because I truly believed that teacher quality was at the heart of the academic journalism debate. To satisfy my supervisor, I had agreed to something I didn't believe in or want to do. I did not want to reduce the work at the CDS to surveys and interviews that could then be applied to grounded theory.

I "discovered" from my interviews at the CDS that the people there teaching students at Duke were committed first to the goal of the documentary style, giving voice to people whose voices were underrepresented in American life. How their work would be shared with others was a secondary consideration. To apply this concept to journalism education, or to place the documentarians in a journalism classroom, was an exciting prospect. But, I knew that my excitement over the possibility of creating an incubator program that blended the work of the

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documentary style with the tenets and techniques present in journalism was not an academic discovery, or so I thought at the time.

I didn't have the courage to tell my supervisor how lost I was feeling. I didn't have the energy to argue with him about the best way to "write up" my "case study." My personal emotional struggle during that case study period would, I thought, lead my supervisor to believe I wasn't prepared to do what was necessary to earn my doctorate. I felt I would "scare" him off and I would be left with a wasted two year journey to that point in my doctoral experience. I was right.

As will be addressed in a subsequent chapter, the people at the CDS provided me with data that I felt could be used to create a new type of journalism education and new ways to fulfill the requirements of a "scholar" and "quality" teacher. This potential was still dampened by the method I would use to offer this information. The longer this process went on, the deeper the depression felt. Who wants to admit they are severely depressed? Based on my life experiences, I was terrified to let anyone know, which just makes it worse.

After four weeks at the CDS, I knew I had gathered all the data the place and the people had to offer. And, I knew that if I didn't get to familiar surroundings soon, I may not bounce back in time to keep fooling my supervisor. I had been fooling people my entire life. This one time, I wasn't sure I could play the game; I saw my dissertation quite clearly but I had to accept that I could not produce that vision.

I made my way back to Tennessee knowing that I had tough decisions to make, and I had to find a job. I was so blessed to have a safe place to fall. My mother owned a home that backed up to hers. She offered the house as a place to regroup in peace with no pressure. Who gets that opportunity in their mid-40s? I had only known work. The idea of just relaxing and reflecting was foreign. But I jumped at the chance.

For three months, the summer of 2003, I lived a charmed life. I had no bills. I had no pressure to search for a job. I had time to write the dreaded dissertation. I had a good grasp by that point about where I stood on the theoretical spectrum and it wasn't pretty or easy. In my mind, journalism was directly connected to my theoretical beliefs. Access to the masses defines journalism. Highly dense language and methodologies that didn't best address the research

questions meant academic entrance requirements would directly conflict with my deep belief in the role of the media in society and academic institutions. Accessibility could not be sacrificed, I decided. I knew this was risky position to take as my supervisor showed no desire to learn about my discipline. We spoke different academic languages. I knew that when I set foot back in the classroom, I wanted to be a green eyeshade educator even though the doctoral process only applied to a chi-square educator.

I sat there on summer days with all the windows open. I grew morning glories and played with my dogs. I wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote. The entire thing just flowed and I thought I was adhering to the case study protocol I hated so much. In hindsight, I should have known that if I was enjoying the process, it probably wasn't truly complying with my supervisor's definition of academic rigor.

I had lived my entire life, from birth to a woman in her 40s, by one important value: voice. I didn't want to compromise. Honestly, I couldn't compromise. Also in hindsight, I realized the depression I had experienced was brought on by this value being on the verge of negation. "Find your doctoral voice" my supervisor had told me over and over. I came to understand that he didn't mean "my" voice; he meant "doctoral voice" which, to him, meant "*the* doctoral voice." Journalism had provided me with a purposeful life because it is founded on its ability to give voice to the masses, one person at a time. One story at a time. Why couldn't my dissertation pay tribute to that journalistic tenet: story?

With all the courage I could muster, I sent my supervisor the dissertation. Again, I thought it would fly because I had compromised so much. I just didn't compromise enough for him and the meltdown began.

At the same time this journey to the dark side began, I accepted a position at my alma mater. One of my previous professors had to have emergency bypass surgery and the faculty in that journalism department knew me well from my student experience there and my stint as the campus newspaper editor which led to being awarded "College Journalist Of The Year," something that had never happened there or since. The campus newspaper was not a small operation. It was a twice weekly newspaper for an audience of 24,000 and a half a million dollar budget. At that time, I was considered qualified to teach at that institution and desperately

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needed. I agreed to take the professor's position for the semester and this set in motion an experience that would shake me to my core.

I arrived at my alma mater expecting a short term contract while I finished my dissertation. I never intended to call Tennessee home forever, though I was born there and all of my family lived there. I had higher ambitions than coming back to the small town life. I'd had too many life changing experiences in Alaska and Africa to settle into a place that seemed unremarkable.

My teaching semester went well. I found that I felt comfortable there, which I didn't expect. I'd had a bad experience with the faculty there when I was the campus editor, but, I had a good experience in the classroom, taught by a gaggle of men that focused on the craft of journalism, not communication theory or cultural and media studies. I had taken that practical approach to journalism education out into the world with me. I had no idea this would make me unqualified later to teach because it was an approach good enough for those who taught me.

When my semester temporary gig ended at my Alma Mater, I was asked to stay on with a temporary full time appointment until a new dean was hired and line items would open up for the hiring of several new faculty. It seemed like a perfect situation at that time. I was enjoying living near my family and the commute was only 45 minutes. I was the person that wanted to teach the required courses in media writing and reporting. These were the courses that set students on a career path with skills and ethics. None of the other faculty had any desire to teach these skills courses. I didn't feel I was teaching the insignificant courses; I loved being the first person to introduce skills to journalism students.

At the same time my teaching career was gaining traction, I was losing my relationship with my supervisor. I felt sick when I received his initial feedback. It was so angry in tone and demeaning. In a nutshell, he had inserted arrows with comment boxes that said things like "need some Habermas here" and "you can't claim this." He said "this sounds like an amateur" and "you must address anthropological aspects of media representation." He had consulted with media theorists at that institution. The media theorists and the practitioners at that institution were separated by a brick wall and hurtful accusations. They expressed a belief that the media was to blame for most of society's ills and that it brainwashed people. Their answer

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to the demands made of working journalists was to quit, not try to have an impact on the status quo with excellent reporting. My dissertation was taking on this issue head on and I was horrified that my supervisor would consult these specific people for advice about my dissertation content and tone!

I could tell I had reached the end of the road with my supervisor. The tone was so angry, from both of us, that I couldn't see reconciling. In an effort to understand how far apart we were, I wrote a methods chapter in the densest language I could and sent it to him. He loved it. I believed it said nothing, that it just went around and around with intellectual words and lots of parenthetical attribution. The farce was over. I saw my world crumbling. I had spent several years growing from the woman that had never heard the word "paradigm" to a woman who deeply understood every paradigm position, to a woman with unwillingness to live what Parker Palmer called a "divided life." I couldn't live my life with integrity if I agreed to produce something just for the sake of producing it; I wanted to say something and I wanted to be heard. I wanted to represent all those voices like mine who felt committed to the craft of journalism and happy to embrace educators in the field of media studies. I felt there was room for all of us but only one subsection was being heard. I'd been told for years that I should just finish the doctorate, then change the world. I was never trying to change the world; I just wanted to research and write something authentic.

In my teaching life, I looked forward to the formal search for a chair. I wanted this process to hurry up and happen because my permanent contract depended on the presence of a chair. In the meantime, my colleagues, who also happened to be my first journalism teachers, were making plans for a position that would coordinate all the skills courses and I would fill that role. I was told that position had already been approved at the dean and provost levels. I was so certain, in fact, that I purchased my family's home place farm just up the road from my family. It was a 150 year old farm place with 50 acres, barns, pond, and the whole country deal. It was an exciting time for me, being happy to settle in one place. I didn't realize at the time that buying a home in the country would limit my employment options. I had a great job and would have been happy to stay there until retirement.

And then a chair was hired. I was happy it was a woman. We needed more women in the

program. I liked her during the interview process. She led me to believe that even though her field was advertising, she was committed to the basics of journalism and the need for a well-developed plan for journalism students in the beginning of their academic experience.

Just before the chair arrived, one of the faculty members accepted a fellowship in Washington, D.C. He was the advisor to the student newspaper and there was no other faculty willing to take on that role. It was just too practice based for their liking. In the years between my experience at the campus newspaper, which was not connected to the journalism program in any way, a Pulitzer Prize winning professor had somehow managed to get the program to take on the student newspaper and Student Affairs would support the paper financially. The journalism program had agreed to supply the supervisor. I was asked to step in and supervise the newspaper for the year. I didn't jump at the chance because I was aware of activity at the newspaper that I felt was unethical. The current supervisor had managed to get a faculty contract that gave him a financial cut from all advertising for the newspaper, something that all my colleagues agreed was highly unethical. But it was an "Old Boys" network and the supervisor was a Pulitzer Prize winner. He represented the part of the debate raging in the academic discipline about whether former practicing journalists or doctorates were better for the discipline. This prize winning professor fit the description of quality because he had daily newspaper reporting experience at one of the top newspapers in the country.

I had a sinking feeling that something funny was also occurring at the student newspaper and I wanted assurance from the journalism program that I would not be expected to tolerate unethical practices. I got this support in writing. I didn't think I could spend a year just acting as a lame duck supervisor and turning a blind eye to practices that I felt would send journalism students out in the world to engage in the very journalism practices that cause the public to mistrust the media.

On day one as the student newspaper advisor, it was clear that the student staff was not happy with the situation. They had been close to their supervisor; too much so, I thought. I caught wind of their first cover story of the semester and the battle for ethical practice began. The students were writing a story about the Dean of the Communications Department. It had something to do with administrative evaluations that had not been made public. The students



had gotten their hands on the evaluation from an unknown source and decided the Dean would be a good target, though other Deans received problematic evaluations as well. It was no secret in the journalism program that the newspaper supervisor was at great odds with the Dean of the College. When I asked the students if they were writing the story for the benefit of their supervisor, they gladly told me they were.

Now, what to do? As the representative of the publisher, the university, should I allow this unethical practice or should I just do my year as supervisor with no waves created? The students had no intention of listening to me. They were forcing my hand to see if I would be a heavy hand, or what they thought was a supervisor that felt the First Amendment meant they could say anything they wanted. I chose not to censor the first issue of the newspaper but I did give the Dean a heads-up.

I soon learned that the students were paying themselves exorbitant salaries. As a former campus newspaper that received a \$40 a month stipend, this amount of money was a shock. Some of the students were making upwards of \$1,000 a month. They falsified timesheets. I spoke to my Chair about this and to the Dean of Student Affairs, but they felt that I was a temporary supervisor and they didn't want to make any changes until the permanent supervisor returned. I had to live with this practice and I had to sign my name to falsified timesheets.

The student staff felt that I was too present in their world. They didn't want me to set foot in the newsroom. While I was happy to provide a newsroom experience as close to the real thing as possible, I didn't want them to think that in the real world they would walk into a newsroom and feel they were not answerable to anyone. Another point of contention with the staff was the weekly tabloid they were producing. It was supposed to be an entertainment tabloid that focused on the local music and art scene. Advertising was sold based on that type of publication. But the staff had no desire to produce a music tabloid; this was their version of resistance fighting.

They wrote satire as if it were the truth. They took on cheerleaders and athletes and sororities and fraternities. It was hurtful and mean-spirited for no real reason. And it did not fit the format that advertisers thought they were supporting. After many many discussions and warnings, I killed the thing. I had the right to do it and I did it. Student Affairs agreed to the

action. The publication was a legal liability and did not represent the practices journalism students were taught in the classroom. No matter how hard I tried, I could not convince the students that you have a First Amendment right to free speech, but in the publishing world, the person with free speech is the person who owns the press or owns the company. I asked where they had gotten the notion that the First Amendment meant they could say anything they wanted to in a newspaper owned by the university. Their answer: their permanent supervisor. This information was conveyed to my colleagues and they agreed, once again, that I had the obligation to turn the newspaper into a publication with integrity.

The tension between the students and me continued to escalate. Each time I went to my chair or Student Affairs about some unethical practice, the students became more and more militant. I continued to struggle with my options; look the other way or try to effect change. At the very least, I wanted my colleagues to know that I was not condoning the actions of this staff. Privately the faculty would admit they knew this behavior was going on but they didn't want to publicly say anything that would lay blame at the feet of their Pulitzer Prize winning buddy.

As the first semester was coming to a close, I asked the Dean of Student Affairs to support a shakeup at the student newspaper. This would mean recruiting a student outside of the current cliché and instituting a stipend pay system more in line with other student newspaper operations. They agreed. I knew just the right person for the job. I surprised her by asking her to consider applying for the editor position. And, to my surprise, she agreed to do it. The newspaper staff was livid. Beyond livid.

I had gone out on a limb by accepting the supervisor position knowing in advance that practices at the newspaper represented the journalism program poorly. The new journalism chair agreed. It will be over soon, I thought, when a new editor came on board with new policies and the old guard would likely not want to participate.

The new chair had been given authority to begin hiring additional faculty. As part of this process, the faculty engaged in an email dialogue that lasted for weeks. The faculty participating in the email discussion were the theorists. It should have been a red flag for me that the practitioners did not participate in the conversation. This conversation focused on what kind of person they wanted to hire. Because it was my understanding that I would be hired as a

permanent faculty member to address the skills courses, their emails were disturbing. They talked at great length about whether they should hire a scholar/practitioner, a practitioner/scholar or a scholar. They all agreed, to my disgust, that they didn't know how to go about hiring a scholar who would be willing to teach skills courses, the only type of faculty missing at that time. I felt invisible. I believed, at that time, that I was almost finished with my dissertation. I had purchased the family farm based on the certainty of being hired permanently. The debate about the type of faculty qualified to teach in journalism programs was creeping toward me slowly but surely. The matter was made worse by the fact that the newspaper advisor, a man that was not a scholar by any stretch of the imagination, was also part of this conversation. His Pulitzer Prize somehow trumped unethical behavior and qualified him to engage in the hiring process. None of the traditional faculty that had taught me were scholars. They received their doctorates decades ago and at that time, they were not required to include theory. But, they were tenured so they stayed in one camp and as new faculty were hired, they were theory based and stayed in their camps. Ultimately, this meant that one of the largest journalism programs in the country was not producing journalists and did not have a single faculty member with recent enough newsroom experience to teach skills courses.

Watching my life as I knew it slip away, I went to speak to the chair of the journalism program, the person that had assured me that acting as supervisor of the newspaper would not come back to haunt me later. The theorists saw that position as lowly, unless it was held, of course, by the prize winning reporter that violated every tenet of the craft of journalism.

*"I don't see myself ever hiring someone that would allow themselves to be in a temporary full time position," said the new chair of my department. "No credible institution hires people who graduated from that same institution. We're looking for real scholars."*

*She was speaking to me.*

*I felt betrayed, dismissed, used and invisible.*

*It took several years before I put two and two together, not because I'm not bright, but because my teaching and research environments didn't encourage the methodology necessary to answer certain questions in the field of academic journalism. In particular, this question: who should teach journalism?*

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*Some will say it's an impossible question to answer definitively, particularly in an academic research setting that doesn't routinely explore questions that cannot be proven quantitatively. Asking "who should" deviates from traditional research questions, and that's a shame, I think.*

*As I sat in a small chair half way across the room from the department chair, who sat behind her desk like the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, I felt small physically, emotionally, academically and vocationally.*

You may recognize the above text. It brings us full circle to the beginning of this dissertation. I spent five years in Alaska in one of the toughest reporting environments you'll find. I taught at a premier teaching institution. I worked with South African journalism students to produce a newspaper, something the college had not offered prior to my arrival. I supervised a student newspaper in crisis. All of these experiences, in my view, qualified me to teach journalism. At that time, I believed I was close to my doctorate. But in an instant, I was deemed insignificant as a person and my experience and skills insignificant. I was not a scholar as defined by my chair and a small handful of faculty. I had been misled and promises were not honored. My chair wanted to build a Tier One Research Institution even though the student body was blue collar and more than 90 percent of them enrolled at that institution because of its location, not the type of program.

On the research home front, things weren't looking much better. I thought that if I could quickly finish the dissertation, I would have a shot at filling one of the positions because eventually, they would have to hire someone that could teach skills courses. With the PhD, would I be a scholar and a practitioner? I didn't realize at the time that it wouldn't have mattered. The chair simply thought I was not scholar material because I was not interested in becoming a theorist, though I wasn't opposed to scholarly publication.

I was in panic mode on many levels. What was I going to do with no job and no PhD. and the owner of a sentimental family farm? The interaction with my supervisor via email hit its breaking point. He wouldn't budge and I wouldn't budge. Even in the face of my employment situation, I just couldn't do what he wanted. In hindsight, despite the toll my educational road had taken, I don't regret sticking to my guns. It would have eventually become harder to live

with caving in, than it would have to live with a dissertation that made me nauseated.

My supervisor and I were in agreement; the situation could not be resolved. I was left alone with my disappointment. How did this happen? Inwardly, I felt like a scholar, able to engage with all types of colleagues. I knew I COULD produce a theory-based dissertation, but I didn't want to. At this point, the chair and I were so at odds that I didn't think I could live with a temporary full time position, which she was willing to continue because they had nobody to teach skills courses. Once again, my pride was just too great an obstacle to overcome. I left.

As a Christian, and an aspiring scholar, I know what paradigm guides my life and my work. It is God-centered and dedicated to developing a more intimate relationship with Jesus. It's hard to put those words on this paper. The dilemma academicians have when it comes to religion on public campuses in America is well documented and ever present. It has no place in the classroom, yet it is in the heart of many teachers. I broach this subject only briefly because I believe the next event in my life could only be the result of divine intervention, literally, not a cliché. I also tread lightly on the explanation of the next chapter of my life because it involves my current doctoral supervisor. Robert Nash, the mastermind behind Scholarly Personal Narrative, cautions SPN writers to include only those personal revelations that are needed to give meaning to the narrative.

I was guided to a new supervisor by a series of conversations with friends and colleagues in South Africa. I thought it was a crazy notion that I could locate a supervisor at a new institution via email. But, it happened. Divine intervention had two phases. The supervisor was a green eye-shade and a scholar by every definition. She was a practicing journalist. This is my last hope, I believed, to attempt to write a dissertation that was in keeping with my personal, professional and academic values. And this highly personal accessible language dissertation is the result. I have experienced great joy during this process, something I have never heard a doctoral candidate or a personal holding a doctorate say. If joy were to be my only accomplishment, I thought, I could look myself in the mirror and be proud.

Following my sudden departure from my alma mater, I was disillusioned with teaching, not because teaching was a problem; I just wasn't sure how to practice a different kind of teaching in a traditional environment. It was time for deep reflection again, outside the halls of academe and in the context of the time since I departed South Africa.

And then, a miracle of sorts occurred. The community newspaper in my hometown was purchased by a chain. It needed a professional editor. This is perfect, I thought. I get to practice again in a community environment, which was my specialty. I got to become a big fish in a small pond. It felt perfect. That lasted about four months.

The chain that purchased the newspaper sold a portion of the newspaper to the son-in-law of one of the CEOs. I didn't know that at the time. This man had no business owning a newspaper. He had previously been a printing salesman, and by printing I don't mean publishing. Within weeks, he made it known that the primary objective for the entire staff was to make money. For a community newspaper more than 100 years old, shutting off traditional practices didn't sit well with the community. Printing pictures of town queens and babies and obituaries free was a thing of the past and the brunt of the dissatisfaction landed on my desk. This began to happen almost daily and try as I might, I couldn't convince this man that he would make more money eventually if he would just let the staff build a quality product. We were losing readership and subscriptions, sometimes from people that had subscribed to the paper for decades. Because it was the only newspaper in town, it was holding the residents hostage. They came to hate the newspaper but needed it to carry community information. But now they had to pay for what was an assumed service. Once again, I was faced with principles versus practicality. I had no more employment options in a journalism capacity based on where I lived and my lack of a Ph.D.

I tried the impossible. I quit and started my own newspaper. It was time. I wanted to practice the kind of journalism I believed in; equal parts community reporting with tradition and in depth reporting on issues of importance that did not alienate all the readers. It's a balancing act that daily reporters don't have to deal with. A lot of self-censorship occurs in the name of source alienation. It didn't bother me because I cared about the big picture. I wrote a great business plan, which ultimately was not that great. I got a loan. I hired people. I loved it.

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We produced a product that I was and am proud of. But my former employer had deep pockets to draw from and a scary form of ethics. Advertisers were offered deals not to advertise with me. Strange things happened to my staff and me. He instructed his staff to follow me around and see who I was visiting and who was visiting me. I knew the statistics and the likelihood of a new newspaper to fail. It didn't take long before I saw failure as inevitable. I had no way of paying back the loan if I didn't shut down operation soon. It was devastating, but at the same time, it reinforced my belief that I was a good journalist that was good in the classroom. I would venture to even say great at both. We closed the newspaper with our reputations not only intact but respected.

Now what? I had enough money saved to try another impossible task. I wanted my own version of Salt and the Duke CDS. The timing was perfect. Despite all the drama over the previous few years, I still have a love for reporting and writing and publishing. I started a magazine, a lovely glossy with black and white photography and I sold it locally. I started a writing group and those writers provided beautiful copy. It was the community feel I had wanted for so long, and stories were at the center of my existence once again.

When I had published the last issue of my newspaper, I ran a cover story about an eccentric successful millionaire in the next county. He had purchased most of the buildings in a tiny town's downtown and restored them to their former glory. When he saw the final issue, he became my biggest fan. He recognized the values represented in my version of a newspaper. He invited me to speak with him and I explained the type of story center I envisioned at the community level. He, in turn, went to a small liberal arts college up the road and told the president that he needed to talk to me about this concept called Story Center. The president, in turn, did call me. This was occurring at the same time I was starting my magazine.

I honestly didn't know there was a small college in the next county. It was that small, less than 900 students. I took everything I had learned from my academic teaching experience, my reporting experience and my own research experience and created a concept I felt had a chance of succeeding at a small liberal arts school. That is, like the CDS, the focus would be on the point of origin, the student's world view. Like Salt, students would go out into the field,

surrounding counties, to engage with people on a personal level. There would be no communications or journalism major. Instead, students from all majors would have the opportunity to apply what they learned in the classroom to a real world setting. They could become journalists if they wanted to because they would have skill and content knowledge.

Three years later, I have managed to start a Story Center from scratch, first bringing all my farmhouse furniture and creating a cozy space for students. I produced an issue of the magazine under the ownership of the college and with the help of community members. I am not exposed to the journalism debate anymore. I am respected for my specific experience, not my master's degree and ABD status (all but dissertation.) status.

On the previous pages, you have read a chronologic general description of my professional path. You probably thought to yourself, "How does this relate to the classroom or questions of teacher quality raised in the research questions?" I can answer that question. Below, I am providing a narrative describing the ways in which my professional path relates to my life story and, in turn, how important events in my life have an impact on my journalism teaching philosophy and methods, which, in turn, will address the questions of teacher qualifications. These are just a few of the thousands of experiences that make me who I am. In the Alaskan Arctic, the Inupiat people have a term to describe the characteristics that define them as a People: *Ilitqusait* – those things that make us who we are.

**Who am I?  
The key question raised by Parker J. Palmer's educational philosophy  
"We teach who we are."  
This is who I am and how I teach**

My parents never should have married nor had children. They have both admitted that. With that admission, my sisters and I were burdened with guilt for our very existence. We all dealt with this guilt in our own way.



*This life beginning manifested itself in my everyday life, academic life and professional life. I believe deeply that everyone matters. I see people as individuals first, classified by other labels later. As a journalist, I approached every council meeting with an eye for the council members and why they voted the way they did; every trend or issue was reported in the context of the human origins of those trends or issues. In Alaska, the Native population did not trust mainstream media because they said journalists wrote about them as if they were one big Native entity, not recognizing the each tribe was different and people within those tribes different. Although there was never enough time to explore the human factor behind surveys and studies, I was still able to report with a critical perspective on that quantitative data. Every person is a daughter, son, father, mother of someone; each person deserves equal treatment because I was deemed irrelevant at birth by my parents. No PhD. would result in this deeply personal underlying philosophy that compels me to address compassion, empathy and equality in the classroom with journalism students. It had to come from a life well lived.*

As early as I can remember, which is age four or five, my sisters and I were not allowed to speak once we entered the front door of our house. My recollection may be argued by my mother in a literal sense, but as an adult, I'm entitled to my perception of events as it is those perceptions that shaped me into who I am, and they continue shape me. She concedes my recollection is generally correct.

I can remember getting off the school bus in high school and heading up the hill and around a corner to our house. I would always stop at the corner, take a deep breath, and peek up the hill to see if my dad's car was in the driveway. When it was, I got a sinking feeling. I felt stuck there on that corner, not wanting to go around the corner and knowing I had to eventually. Many a day I gave serious thought to just walking back down the hill and disappearing. I don't remember a specific plan, but I remember wanting to disappear.

Just like in any horror movie, when you see a person standing at a door with their hand on the doorknob, hesitating before going inside because an evil lurks within, that's what my sisters and I did on a daily basis. Some days the monster would just pop out and make himself known; other times, there were interminable hours of monster tension with a feeling of impending doom. The latter was much more difficult to endure than the former.

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One of the tools in my dad's torture arsenal was the "We'll see" tool. On a Monday, I would begin asking if I could go to a football game Friday evening. He would say, "We'll see." He didn't say I had to do certain things to earn the privilege to go to the game, so we never knew what he based his answers on. Each day I would ask, and each day he would say again, "We'll see." Each day I would do my best to find ways to be noticed for good deeds without being asked, hoping this extra dose of good daughter would do the trick. It didn't. I continued to believe I could and I continued to try, up until the very end.

In hindsight, I realize that there was nothing I could have done to change his answer or the way he treated me. By Thursday, I would start to panic because I feared my dad would say no to my request and by that time, school friends were already planning for the Friday night fun. I always assumed that dad would wait til the very end to say yes, just to torture me. But that didn't happen. Friday would come and it would be 5 pm and still no answer. And, to top off this torture, I was not allowed to speak until after he had consumed at least two martinis in his blue easy chair. That was usually 5 pm. The football game would be starting in an hour and I was sitting on the couch dressed and ready to go, forced to watch Merlin Perkins' *Wild Animal Kingdom* in silence while dad rocked his martinis down. My moment came and I asked. "I don't think so this week," he would say. I was not allowed to ask why. I had to sit there, all dressed for fun, until the animal show was over and he dismissed me to my room, where I was not allowed to shut the door or cry.

Eventually I became an expert liar. This was the start of a lifetime of looking for ways to maneuver around obstacles. As a journalist, this life beginning has served me well. I am not daunted by rejection or resistance. There is more than one way to get where you are headed. It takes a strong person to live with this kind of jailhouse mentality. My mother is not a fighter by nature. She was worn down by 20 plus years of emotional abuse, but that's another story. School was the only place that I felt safe, pretty, funny, smart and loved. It wasn't a place to study or learn in the traditional sense. I have few memories of actually getting an academic education. My parents never mentioned college. I never took the required SAT or ACT tests. I've asked my mother many times during my adulthood what they thought my sisters and I would do when we graduated high school. Most of the time she answers honestly with, "I don't

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know. I never thought about the future. I had to get through each day.”

*In the classroom, I keep my word and my expectations are clear. I value kindness and fairness above knowledge of Associated Press style. This means, students utilize the AP Stylebook from a position of kindness and fairness. This means they want to get titles correct so each person is afforded the same respect, not because “it’s just the style we use so learn it.”*

*In the classroom, I make learning the central focus of every course. If a student is going to embark on a journalism career, I want them to take learning and the college experience seriously. When you know that education has literally saved people, you appreciate your opportunity more. When you can recognize blessings and appreciate them, you are more likely as a journalist to recognize learning opportunities in the field and see your work as a privilege. I teach students the value of situational ethics; stringing people along as a teasing technique may work in a journalistic environment, but over time, this technique will alienate sources and your audience. Get to the point. Don’t waste the audience’s time for your own amusement.*

*In the classroom, I teach about silence. What it means to be silenced. What it feels like to be silenced. Why people don’t speak when their voice boxes actually work. How to navigate around sources that won’t speak and to assess critically the reasons why people won’t talk or why they talk so much. Why people silence others.*

*In the classroom, I teach about helplessness, hopelessness and strength. When a city council votes to build a high rise apartment building next door to an historic Victorian home, what can the homeowner do about it? Why is that homeowner so aggressive? Why does a developer show no concern for the homeowner? Is there anything the homeowner can do to change the situation? Or, in a best case scenario, where did that homeowner get the strength to take on a giant development company and win? I teach students not to see others as things. Rather, when we recognize helplessness and hopelessness, it is our job to investigate those emotions right alongside our investigation of facts and big quote sources. It isn’t just homeless people who feel helpless or silenced. The governor may feel silenced by threat or intimidation. Teachers feel silenced. Non-union employees feel silenced. The list is endless. I teach that it is the responsibility of the journalist, at the very least, to consider the role helplessness and hopelessness play in any story and to be on the lookout for strength as it manifests itself every*

*day in many people and groups.*

*In the classroom, I teach about fear. Having the power of the pen can be misused and quite often is; just because you have this weapon, this power, doesn't mean it needs to be used in every situation. Over time, the use of this weapon by the press has created an audience that sees the media, and journalists, as gun toting mafia members out to kill anyone who dares to disobey orders. In turn, this creates a segment of the population that feels silenced by the media rather than seeing the media as a voice for those silenced.*

At the beginning of my senior year in high school, I told my mother that if she didn't do something, one of us was going to die. Either my dad or I would be in the morgue because I intended to challenge him to his breaking point.

A few weeks later, my mother was in a car accident that left her partially blind in one eye. She received a settlement from an insurance company. My mom was smart enough to know that in California, bodily injury settlements are not community property in divorces. One morning, as I was walking out the door to catch the bus, my mother handed me a piece of paper. It said, "When you get out of school today, go to this address," and it listed the name of an apartment complex and apartment number which was near the high school. My father was at home, so I just stared her down and it was that intense eye contact that said the magic words I'd wanted to hear for years: "We're leaving."

I grinned from ear to ear as I told my little sister on the way to the bus. She didn't seem to really understand the magnitude of the situation because she had been sheltered from much of my father's abuse. Although being four years younger doesn't seem like much now, at the age of 13 she was very much still a child. My father had been so busy preying on my older sister, me and my mother, that he had simply ignored my little sister.

I spent an anxious day at school. I could only think of one thing. We are free. I will never know what it feels like to be truly imprisoned, and I would never want to compare literally my experience to those held captive or in prison, but I felt that I had been living in a middle class perfect-on-the-outside family prison my entire life. It was stifling. It was gut wrenching. It was scary. It evoked rage and anger. It was unjust and unfair in my childhood eyes. And now, we were free. It took a long time to feel free of those father shackles. Perhaps

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there are still a few shackles I have yet to break free from, but freedom is freedom and I embraced it for the gift it was.

My mother had a moving van show up after my father left for work. She didn't take much, just our clothes and some dishes and towels. She left the furniture. She made sure we got our personal belongings that had meaning. When school was out, my sister and I headed to our new home. As we put the key in the lock and opened the door to find a fully furnished apartment with nothing from our family home, it felt like a dream. Truly, it felt like a dream with little cherubs wearing halos and bright white lights swirling around us. It was that magical, the concept of freedom at that time on that day.

What my mother neglected to tell us was that she didn't intend to stay in the apartment with us. She wanted to go and live in Fresno with a friend of hers. That's about an eight hour drive. She got a job with an insurance company. We didn't care. It has taken decades of reflection to understand the consequences of the decisions made in those few weeks following the separation of my parents. At the time it was all good. It was great. Mom bought me a new Ford Mustang that was beautiful and I became my sister's chauffer. She paid the rent and utilities and gave us money. She left and we were two teenagers on our own emotionally and physically. I became a parent at the age of 18. My mother opted out and she missed a lot. My father had never opted in. He missed a lot.

My father was so mad that I'm at a loss for adjectives to describe the degree and type of his anger. You do not mess with a Southern man's pride. He didn't miss us. He was humiliated. He didn't tell his family in Tennessee for a long time that we'd left and when he did, he told some whopper stories about my mother and my sisters, as if my mother had the ability to brainwash all of us and he was an innocent victim. My mother was an emotional basket case from the day they were married. She didn't have the energy to brainwash kids; she was too busy trying to make sure he didn't kill us.

The power and invincibility I felt when my father arrived at our apartment door was the greatest adrenaline high I've ever had. By law, there was nothing he could do, and finally, I knew that. I wish I'd known that by law he didn't have the right to do to us what he'd done for decades. He knew my mother was gone and the courts had given me physical custody of my sister, and he thought he could just march in and take my sister back home. I was 18, so he didn't want me nor did he have legal rights to me. He did not want to pay child support for my sister and the only way that would change would be if she lived with him. That was not going to happen. I never let him step one foot in our apartment. He was 6'3" and about 250 pounds, but my power was stronger than his bulk.

You could watch his face get redder and redder as my smile got bigger and bigger. I played this power to its maximum potential. He would take us to court at least once a week for some motion of this or that, and my sister and I went, but my mother stayed in Fresno. The courts decided that I was a better parent at 18 than either my mother or father. You hand that kind of judgment to a proud Southern man and you are asking for trouble. In this case, my dad could not cause trouble, like starting a bar-room fight or slashing my tires or any other hooligan revenge tactic. Knowing how much he was suffering kept me going.

After graduation, I had no idea what I was going to do with my life. I'd been way too busy making up for the previous 17 years to have given the future much thought. I never discussed my future with my mother even after she left my dad. In hindsight, I truly have no memory of what I was thinking or feeling at that time. I do know that after about a year of playing 18 year old mother to a 14 year old, I had to come up with a plan. I had the sense at least to know that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life being my sister's keeper. She had gone wild, which is understandable, and I could not control her.

At that time, my older sister had moved to Tennessee to be near my grandparents and all the family relatives (we were the only family that left Tennessee). I decided Tennessee was the best option because I had family there. There was a large state university within driving distance of my grandparents. My sister wanted to stay and live by herself, at the age of 15, and my mother let her. I enrolled at the state university and packed my bags to head off to college to be a lawyer. I figured that I'd spent enough time in the legal system that I should already

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qualify as a lawyer.

A friend of mine had a going away party for me at the Colorado River, the place we all used as our high school misbehaving getaway. On that trip, I met her brother-in-law. And that was all it took to change the course of my life. We fell in love. At the age of 19, that is a powerful thing. In love and free. That is even more powerful. Because I planned to leave the next week for Tennessee, I suppose things were in fast motion for us. I moved to his hometown in Northern California and let my college plans disappear as if they never existed.

Three years later, I did make my way to Tennessee, as a brokenhearted 23-year-old. I still had no plans for my future. I had managed to pick up medical transcribing as a skill while married, and I would spend the next 14 years typing. My older sister had already moved to Tennessee years earlier and enrolled in Vanderbilt University. She graduated top of her class in nursing school. By the time I was 29, reality had sunk in. My life was stalled and meaningless. I felt alone in Tennessee. I felt life was passing me by. I felt I had talents that weren't being utilized. It was the very first time in my life I had ever thought about my future. I had grown up on the "let's get through this day" philosophy.

One day, I was whining to my older sister, and she suggested I enroll in college. I thought she was ridiculous. "I would be 40 by the time I finished college," I said. "You are going to turn 40 anyway," she replied. It was an "Aha!" moment.

Within weeks I had enrolled at a private Christian college in Nashville. At that time, students my age were rare. I had to transcribe to pay tuition, but I was finally on a path headed somewhere. It was an absolutely magical time in my life. The iron bars were gone. The shackles gone. The self-doubt gone. The depression gone. It was as if I had shed my skin and come back as another person, one full of joy and hope. It's corny. It's true. Education was going to give me the tools to build a life and partially mend the broken woman that I was. As described in the chronologic outline of my professional life, I found myself in a mass media course, the furthest thing from pre-law, but an interesting elective. Sometimes we don't choose our direction; I believe God has a hand in that. In this case, I believe he plopped down in that chair in that class with that teacher to plant a seed. There are many vocational ways to represent

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silenced people or explore the dynamics of family and the damage of family, but journalism filled the requirement for a vocation as espoused by Parker Palmer: a vocation is when your deep gladness meets the world's deep need.

*In the classroom, whether it is a beginning reporting course or an ethics course or a computer-assisted reporting course, feature writing, opinion writing, mass media history of publication design, I am fierce in my protection of the First Amendment. My teaching methods attempt to fill in the gap between the person that we are and the journalism we practice. What do you plan to do with your skills and knowledge, I ask? Why journalism? I teach about powerful emotions, hidden fears, motivations, experiences. I want students to treat each assignment as if it was a case study that answers the why questions as often as possible. We talk about the limitations journalists have in their search for the answers to “why” questions, notably the limitation called “deadline.” But, I don’t let students use their “deadline” card as a reason for superficial reporting. The repetitive use of sources means the student is not seeking out new ways of viewing an issue; it means they are not seeking out people who have been silenced for one reason or another. I teach students to learn now, in school, before they head out to practice journalism, that the media is no longer seen as a monolithic entity. As more and more types of media practices emerge, students will be forced to break out of comfort zones. Audiences are asking tougher questions now and they want us to answer them. If we don’t, they will seek out information from forms of media that conform to their thinking or they will stop digesting information at all.*

*I challenge my students to seek out and/or notice situations that would benefit from their pens. To be keenly aware of your surroundings, as if you are standing outside your body, takes maturity and integrity. Teaching maturity and integrity is not tested on our resumes, nor is our degree of maturity and integrity challenged in the educational process. Common sense would tell you that shady unethical characters usually practice shady unethical journalism. On the other hand, it is possible to be a reasonably kind and fair person on the outside and not possess the ability to reflect and critically analyze or interpret facts and information.*



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*The things that bring our world down are the things journalism students should be learning how to write about. In just one community, there are hundreds of elements coming together to create that community. Some of the elements are deep below the surface. Everything is not as it appears. My childhood home had perfectly manicured lawns and my sisters and I left the house every day in ironed clean clothes. Nobody, and I mean nobody, ever asked if we needed help because part of the torture game for my father was fooling everyone that came in contact with us. I want my students to be the ones to recognize potential volcanoes and act quickly. I want them to listen to their gut instincts that tell them when to fear but I also want them to be courageous in technique and courageous warriors defending the First Amendment. I want them to choose to practice a type of journalism that allows them to work in an environment that meshes with their values; I encourage students to enter the current news industry with a high moral standard but be mindful of the reality that one person rarely gets a chance to change an entire system unless that person owns the printing press, radio station or TV station. This is the reason websites and blogs have exploded onto the scene, I believe. With fewer restrictions by the owners of the “printing press,” more truths and varying versions of the truth are available for audiences to ponder or believe. For journalism students today, it would be unfair for us to teach them perfect technique without exposing them to the harsh realities of the media landscape they will encounter after graduation. To teach a student to practice as if he/she will have the power to make editorial and financial decisions right out of the gate is unethical teaching.*

*As my father used his power for harm, I used my power both as a means of protecting my sister and a means for revenge. I was an angry young woman. As a journalist, I have had to constantly reflect and challenge my motivations to make sure I do not use my pen as a source of harm in any way. At the same time, I teach students to deal with the inevitable harm that results from reporting. Harm is never the intention, but it is often the result. Knowing how to gauge the amount of harm in proportion to the good done by a story is difficult but not impossible to teach.*

*There have been many days in my life that I have wondered what would have become of my family if I had not informed my mother that I felt someone in our family was going to die if*

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*she didn't do something. A host of scenarios play out in my head. Challenging the hopelessness my mother felt is my greatest achievement. In the newsroom, and in the classroom, I have a reputation for challenging anyone and anything. In my mind, being complacent can be a death warrant, literally and/or virtually. I want my students to have the courage to stand firm in the face of fear and retaliation.*

When I was in Zimbabwe working on a writing project with a friend in the Peace Corps, I had to confess to myself that what I was doing in the classroom back home neglected to even acknowledge the human story of world events and issues. I wanted desperately for my journalism students to experience what I was experiencing as I felt it would change the way they viewed the world. As each day passed in Zimbabwe, I had more and more regrets about the way I had been living my life. Students in droves would wait at my friend's housing to ask about America. I could see the sadness in their eyes when they learned about certain aspects of American life. I did my level best to not glamorize my home country, but the children had already heard of General Hospital and they believed we all had grand staircases, wore lipstick wherever we went and had a lot of jewelry, among other things. The most interesting interaction I had with students centered on the treatment of dogs. The look of total bewilderment when they learned that dogs were pets was so telling; at that moment, they seemed to realize that there really was another world out there that made their lives seem unimportant. It broke my heart because they had so much more of what Americans should have; the ability to live each day in the moment with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge.

*In the classroom, I begin each course with a discussion about the many cultural beliefs and practices that we rarely learn about. Usually, students would be brazen enough to ask why we should care if they weren't going to be international journalists. With a giant collection of stories from newspapers and magazines around the world, I strategically choose stories to share with them that will bring them closer to a "big picture" view of the world. Most of the students had previously had no interest in the suffering of others, or, what Karen Moeller refers to as Compassion Fatigue. I have students write essays on their reaction to these stories and what role the media plays in our perception of other cultures and what the media could do*

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*better. I guide them through basic and advanced reporting on a variety of subjects and keep bringing them back to context, the single biggest obstacle I have faced in my classrooms. They had not previously viewed their work as contributing to a body of knowledge or their responsibility to readers to help foster a wide worldview. Ultimately, the number one priority in my classroom became worldview, not collection of data. Their worldview would lead them to sources and information they were neglecting.*

In 1998, during the presidential election between Al Gore and George Bush, my core values were tested like no other time in my life. My love of country was tested. My belief in democracy was tested. My vocational life was tested. My spiritual life was tested. I am a self-declared liberal on the political spectrum, with an open and independent mind. I was embarrassed by the debacle. What concerned me most was my student's lack of interest in the election and the blows it was inflicting on our world reputation, never mind the trust in government domestically. I was so disillusioned that I began to think about leaving the country in protest, if only to satisfy my own moral compass. I was disappointed in the winner, but I was more disappointed in the process. So many other countries have few opportunities to experience the freedom and opportunities Americans have and we were taking these things for granted. I started to cry a lot privately. I was one person on the planet. How could I make a dent in such a massive countrywide lack of empathy or critical assessment?

My experience in Africa taught me that Americans are not the saviors of the world, stepping in to help the "poor Africans". I wanted to move there, not to save the people, but to bring something back to the classroom that students could emulate and learn from. If I wanted to espouse a broad worldview, I could put that theory into practice and hope it made me a better teacher in the long run. Plus, I was just flat out disgusted with the Gore/Bush debacle.

*In the classroom, I am a credible source now when I engage students in conversations about our place in the big world. I can counter their arrogance and sense of entitlement, general lack of work ethic and desire for instantaneous results to whatever they want at any given time. I can literally shut down arguments with real life data. It has been one of the best teaching tools I've collected over the years. I give students examples I've collected along my life journey. I ask students to report with a less arrogant attitude which, when put into practice,*

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*results in better critical inquiry. They no longer assume that America and Americans hold all the keys to the world's problems. They no longer view people of differing cultures as lazy and ignorant. If they could be so wrong about their view of the world, they start to question their preconceived notions of everything they are asked to report about. They don't accept information at face value anymore. In turn, readers are exposed to this broad worldview in the form of stories written by people with a broad worldview. It's both simple and complicated because I have to debunk a lot of inaccurate education.*

When I packed up and moved to South Africa, I didn't realize it, but I was still harboring an American superiority complex. Regardless of the time I had spent in Africa and Alaskan villages, and studying the values of American life, I still thought the plight of Africans was so sad. I generalized Africans even though I knew this was an uninformed thing to do.

It didn't take long to realize that my original goal, to have experiences I could take back to the classroom, meant I was in Africa to collect anecdotes, once again in an American mindset that tells us that everyone else is an automatic "other." This was drilled home when I started my doctoral process. I had just assumed, not consciously, that I would be "smarter" somehow, or better educated, in a country that I "naturally" felt was inferior because of the poverty, illness, lack of systems to bring about true equality in an American instant after Apartheid was dismantled. When I took one look at the doctoral program I had enrolled in, I was terrified. It was theoretical, and I was not a theoretical person. I had not been part of a higher education program that was theoretical; they were all practice-based and applied in nature. Because of my undergraduate and master's experience, I just assumed that every researcher wanted their work to have practical application. I know now that I was operating from a green eyeshade point of view and I'd landed in a chi-square environment. Because theory involved a vocabulary foreign to me, I felt underprepared and to be honest, downright stupid. This means, I had to face head on my assumptions and challenge myself in a painful way. I did what I always had done. I went in search of a program that matched my view of research, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but this time I was seeking an applied setting because I feared theory. This education was expensive, and I didn't want to spend money on a program that would drag me down emotionally. I wanted a program that could be considered

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legitimate back home and one that would lead to better teaching skills. I had already been told that a South African doctorate would probably be suspect, but I didn't care. It would show that I had made an attempt to experience another world and this is what I wanted to share in the classroom, not in the faculty lunch room.

*In the classroom, I turn philosophy on its head. I let students know up front that I will be challenging their notions of what it means to be an American and how they view others of different races, cultures, socioeconomic status and degree of civic participation. I ask students to write about what they know about environments that I assign. At the end of a reporting course or an ethics course or a media introduction course, for example, I ask for the same assignment and students are both stunned and proud of the way their reporting is affected by a new view of "others." I have had parents call me to complain that I am telling students America is not the greatest country on the planet. I've been called in by department chairs. This is a deal breaker for me. I will not omit this valuable lesson from my curriculum. It is the same question others ask in their classrooms related to race relations in America. Why do we think about black people the way we do, I ask? I'm asking the same question on a bigger scale. I can see the difference in reporting by students challenged with these questions.*

On September 11, 2001, I was attending a conference on Internet connectivity on the African continent. As God would have it, I lived nearby and walked home for lunch. I got my sandwich and sat down for a few minutes of international BBC news. And there it was: terrorism attack on the World Trade Center. I can't gauge if my shock was worse than the shock felt by people back home, but my shock was experienced alone. It took my breath away. I called my mother while the planes were still hitting the towers, and she was as stunned as I was. At that moment, three men came to my door to move a cabinet that had been left there by the previous tenant. I answered the door with cell phone in one ear talking about the attack on my country. I told the gentlemen that it wasn't a good time, that my home was under terrorist attack. They just looked at me like, so what. That response also took my breath away. I stood there speechless not knowing which was more painful, knowing that innocent people were dying in those buildings or finding that at least these three people couldn't care less about this tragedy in America.

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I reluctantly returned to the conference just to collect my things. There was one American couple at that conference, and we sought each other out. We shared the shock and grief, but we also did this in hushed tones in a corner. There were big screen TVs at this conference, and the channel was never turned to the news. It was as if the terror attack was as routine as the stock market report.

I had a lovely friend I'd made in Rwanda and she was also at the conference. She invited me for dinner that evening and I told her that I wasn't really in the mood to be around people. I wanted to stay glued to the BBC news. But, she convinced me that I had to eat. In that restaurant, which was full, I kept one eye on my food and one eye on the other patrons. I was actually afraid that someone would approach me when they heard my accent and tell me America deserved what it got. Instead, the chef started making his rounds to inquire about service. When he came to our table, I answered his questions. He just stood there for a minute and stared at me. I thought, okay, here it comes. "I am so sorry for your country's loss," he said. And with that he walked away. I'm a person that feels deeply and instantaneously. I critically assess just about every sight and sound around me. The actions of the chef spoke for millions of people. There were millions of people worldwide that did believe America got what was coming and that we knew it was coming at the government level. But, there were millions of people who did not judge all Americans based on the actions of past and present officials. I made my way to the ladies room and had a good cry. I was so relieved that the entire world didn't hate me or think those who perished in the terror attack somehow had it coming.

*In the classroom, I incorporate this story as often as I can. That experience cannot be considered irrelevant by students. It happened to me. I didn't read about it or see it on the news sitting in my comfy living room in America. When we analyze world news, my students and I actively look for language and images and sources that come from a narrow worldview or a broad worldview. We use pink highlighters. The pages are smothered in pink lines.*

When I agreed to teach a reporting course at a university in South Africa, I was excited. I wanted to have that experience, teaching in a foreign country, learning about the lives of students the same age as mine in America. Again, I think I had this image in my head of

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students who had overcome great obstacles, poverty, lack of opportunities, and the reality couldn't have been further from my preconceived ideas. They were white, for the most part. They acted every bit as arrogant and entitled as my students. How can this be? I asked myself. I thought I was really getting the hang of this bias purging. Beside my initial bewilderment, I had to face for the first time what happens to journalism students when they try to apply media theory to practice.

The journalism students had just completed a long course in media and cultural theory. When I started introducing the principles of journalism as it is practiced, they felt they were being disloyal to their fellow South Africans, engaging in a practice that was so corrupt and damaging to South Africans' development process. Imagine my reaction. I thought it was great that they had been exposed to the current thinking about the role the media plays in nation building, reconciliation and development. But the students described feeling a deep inner conflict because, as they said, they had just spent months being told that their job as journalists was to fight against any work environment that did not have strict cultural guidelines. In a word, they were told to quit any job that put them in a position to report incompletely, to consider political ramifications of stories, to omit sources because of danger to themselves, and so on. The students had learned that practice was so flawed and so potentially detrimental to South Africa as a country, as to make them unemployable. No entry level reporter has the authority to make the kinds of editorial decisions espoused by their media and cultural theory teachers. Now, what was I to do with the mindset of these students? The same, though not intense, situation occurs in my American classrooms. Students despise the media, but want to be journalists. They find many of the techniques required to gather information to be unethical, yet they want to expose corruption and waste and dangers.

*In the classroom, it is not enough to teach skills. Even if students have not been exposed to forceful media theory, it's my job to incorporate the questions of representation raised by cultural and media theorists. I just do it in the course of applying theory to practice; without skills, students simply can't get a job. They won't be hired based on their understanding of representation and their non-belief in the basic tenets of journalism. Journalism teachers are*

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*on the frontlines; we are the ones charged with helping to create a whole person who then works as journalist. A whole person has a broad worldview, skills, an understanding of context and ethics as they relate to the real world, not the theoretical world. My assignments aren't accidental. They are designed to address all of the above, and when my courses are complete, I feel confident I have done my best to instill a healthy dose of skepticism and the skills required to fight the status quo when opportunities present themselves.*

When I was the editor of *The Arctic Sounder* in the hub village of Kotzebue, Alaska, I learned more in a year than I could have learned in 10 years in another newsroom environment. Everything you are taught in journalism is utilized and, everything you were taught is also thrown out the window in that environment. This experience is the reason that I object so vehemently to any notion that you can place time served in the same bowl with quality experience. Two years in the Alaskan bush versus 10 years in a mid-size weekly newsroom. The latter may be more relevant to those hiring but the former may rank higher on the criteria list for others. It just depends...

As editor of the *Sounder*, I was the lone reporter for a region of 40,000 square miles, 11 Inupiaq Eskimo villages, the Kobuk and Ambler Rivers, the Kobuk Sand Dunes, a zinc mine and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, known as ANWAR. Kotzebue itself was located on the Chuckchi Sea, a stone's throw from Little and Big Diomedes on the Russian coast.

The newspaper was owned by a native corporation that published eight small bush newspapers in Anchorage and then flew the papers back out. Editors in the bush didn't last long for a variety of reasons. One reason, because you couldn't really report truthfully and retain any sources. Once you'd burned one source, you'd burned the entire village and reporting was not possible. So, that editor would pack their duffel bag and another would fly in just to see the cycle repeat itself. Journalists that boasted impressive resumes were the first to fail. They would buy beautiful snow gear from LL Bean and head off to their wilderness adventure, AP Stylebook in hand, raring to go expose the truth. The bush newspapers had never really served as harbingers of news; they were advertising vehicles and they gave Native groups a way of keeping up with what was happening in other villages.

There was a lot of news to be told, that's for sure, but you had to do a lot of soul



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searching before you pursued a story. The mainstream press in Anchorage and Fairbanks had no way to really cover 80 percent of the state because there were no roads and because a reporter can't just fly into a bush village and expect anyone to talk. If something was going on in a village that the mainstream press wanted, it had to work with the bush editors and in turn, the bush editors had to deal with the fallout when the villagers learned that information had been leaked. This experience alone makes me an expert on applying journalism ethics, theory and technique to the real world.

I was serving a writer-in-residence in a village named Nuiqsut when an event occurred that made me fear for my life. I had grown accustomed to village life and I wasn't afraid in any village. When I served the residence, I was not yet the editor of the Kotzebue paper, but I was working for the chain of newspapers as part of my master's degree project. I was working on a project called The Village News Network with a group of high school students. We produced a small newspaper, developing film with snow and layout with glue sticks and Exacta knives. One day, I looked up the hall and saw a teenager kicking someone lying on the ground. It took my eyes a minute to focus, but it was the principal unconscious with a burly student stomping on his head. I didn't see any weapon, though I don't know that I really looked. I ran to the scene and told the student to stop. He, in turn, stared me down and told me that nobody tells him what to do. Well, I am, I replied. The principal started to arouse, but it was clear that he'd suffered severe damage to his face. Blood was everywhere. I leaned down to help the principal putting my body between him and the bludgeoning foot. The student ran off.

The paramedics arrived and the principal taken to the village clinic. The student had gone into hiding with the help of his family, though you can't hide forever in a village of 400 and only about 200 houses. There are no roads out and nowhere to go, even if there were roads. Nuiqsut is on the North Slope with thousands of uninhabited miles of tundra.

It didn't take long before the National Guard helicopter was hovering overhead. It landed and went about searching for the student. They found him "hiding" in a 20 foot snow drift.

I was shaken up, to say the least. I called my friend, the editor of the Barrow office of *The Arctic Sounder*. I told her what had happened, and that clearly I could not write a story

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about it and stay in the village. To my horror, the newspaper came out two days later and on the front page was the story about the beating. I was quoted in that story as having said something like, “I’ve never seen that much blood before.”

The newspapers were kept at the village store, but no sooner had they arrived, they were thrown away. I now represented everything villagers despised about the media. I had come into their village as a visitor and shared village details to a newspaper “behind their backs,” painting their home as a place with violent students where the teaching staff was in grave danger. And, I had talked about blood and aiding and abetting of a troubled young man. My days there were numbered.

When I called the editor in Barrow, I asked her what the hell she was thinking. She lived in a village and she knew this kind of story would end any relationships or trust I had built over time. She answered me in typical journalistic fashion: it was news and I reported it. Well, you’ll be getting no more news from the village ever, I replied. That village was covered by her bureau, so I never had to report news from there again, but, I had to leave. It was no longer safe as I had become the target rather than a Good Samaritan who stood up to a clearly troubled teenager. If I hadn’t stepped in, I’m pretty sure the principal would have died.

*In the classroom, I use my bush reporting experiences to help students understand the consequences of their actions. I give them ethical scenarios, not the ones offered in textbooks, but ones I had experienced so I could gauge their decision-making process as it related to real life. Because I had not ever reported for a daily mainstream newspaper, I could not offer them personal experience, so I relied on working journalists who could provide the students with scenarios that could be matched with the actual decision made by a journalist. If the students were to apply the theory and techniques they’d been taught in the classroom, they would have, most likely, followed the hard and fast rules of basic reporting, and they might be dead or, at the very least, unable to maintain sources. Every reporting assignment I’ve had since this incident has given me pause; is self-censoring unethical, wimpy or smart. The answer could be one or all three of those choices, but I do reflect first on the potential outcome before I decide.*

When I took over as editor of the community newspaper in my hometown in Tennessee, I was elated. Although I had grown up in California, my parents received their hometown

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newspaper for decades. When visiting Tennessee almost every summer, I watched my grandmother cross a dangerous highway to get her newspaper from the mailbox five minutes after it arrived. She wasn't interested in news, and it didn't seem anyone else in that small town did either. The paper had been printing for almost 100 years in various forms. It was a true small town newspaper with baby pictures and beauty queens, Christmas parades and Fourth of July fireworks. News was the least priority; news in small towns tends to be known by the standard word of mouth method.

Over the past decade, the dynamic of that county had changed dramatically. There were newcomers mixing with old-timers, and not necessarily in a good way. The newcomers came from larger cities and had expectations of a more sophisticated newspaper. But, the old timers wanted it to stay just the way it was. When the paper was owned by a local family that had owned the paper for generations, it wasn't intended to be a profitable venture. The family had other means of making a good living. The newspaper could be or do anything it wanted and so, it remained as a "fun" and anticipated twice weekly paper.

The paper was sold to a corporation that owned dozens of community newspapers. That company wanted to make money. To do that, a lot of the standard features of the newspaper had to generate revenue. Money replaced fun as the primary goal. And that's where I entered the picture. I thought it was a perfect match. A "real" journalist asked to revamp a newspaper from a "glad rag" to a legitimate news source. I was cocky enough to think this would be an easy task. Just apply journalistic principals and the paper would become a news bearing publication that brought people together with shared information. It didn't.

My first day on the job, the photos of the local beauty pageant landed on my desk. They are cute, I thought. Let's give them a full page to show we support these types of traditional community events. One of the reporters, who had been pushed out as editor, told me nicely that the traditional practice was to place the queen's picture on the front page. I thought that was a bit much and just cheesy above the fold. I gave the pageant its own page. And the phone started to ring and kept ringing all day. No staff member was going to explain this to the angry callers; I had to own up to it and explain it. I thought, they will get used to these changes over time. They'll see eventually.

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There would be no eventually if I couldn't explain my decision to the callers. One of those callers was the beauty queen herself. She thanked me for the full page I had given to the pageant but she had one question. She said something like this: "It's not that I am just dying to have my picture on the front page, but I was wondering why you didn't honor this tradition?" How could I possibly answer that question without sounding like a high brow journalism school graduate? I ran the picture the next day on the front page and from that day forward, I asked my staff members to help me gauge the speed with which I instituted new measures and the method by which I did this.

*In the classroom, I give my students a variety of writing assignments to test their ability to apply their technique and their ethics to all different types of audiences and publications. They were asked to consider writing styles as well as information gathering in a large daily paper setting to a tiny community newspaper. You can do some things with the former that you cannot do with the latter. We talked about the difference between compromising your ethics and finding a way to sustain support and sources. Most students do walk away from my classrooms understanding that it is not unethical to consider your audience and adapt your reporting to the setting.*

Shortly before I left America for Africa, my father died. He had remained in California long after my mother, sisters and I relocated to Tennessee where our family members were born and raised. We were born there but did not grow up there. My father retired at the age of 70, packed up all his belongings, bought a big recreational vehicle and truck and readied himself for a life of fishing and golf in his home place in Marshall County, Tennessee. Before he departed California, he developed a clot in one of his legs. He was admitted to the hospital, given blood thinners, and was told how dangerous the situation could be if the clot dislodged and went to his brain or heart. My dad was so stubborn that he checked out of the hospital and got started on his trek across country. He didn't stop and have his medication levels checked. He actually sat and drove for three days with a clot in his leg.

During this period of time, my sisters and I had virtually no relationship with my father. I hadn't spoken to him in four years. My sisters kept some contact going because they had children. I had given up. I remember my little sister calling and telling me that dad had arrived

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in Tennessee a few days earlier, parked his RV at his aunt's house, and then got really sick and was taken to the hospital which just happened to be right up the street from my house in Nashville. She said that he wasn't expected to make it through the night because the clot had lodged in his brain. I am not proud of this, but I recall asking her if we would have to buy black dresses for the funeral. I just found his impending death annoying and not on my schedule. It's callous, but I know where it comes from.

My sisters and I did decide it was right to visit him before he died. We reluctantly went to the hospital and when we walked into the Intensive Care Unit waiting room, there were a dozen people or so and they looked familiar, though we weren't sure why. Finally, one woman approached and asked if we were her cousin's children. It was an awkward moment. We introduced ourselves to aunts and cousins, as if we were from another country and culture. We found, over time, that we were from a different culture and we were outsiders in my father's family in Tennessee. We didn't know it at the time, but we were seen as three somewhat "evil" aliens that had joined forces with our mother to mistreat him and devastate him by leaving him. They had listened to this story for decades and believed it. We were an unwelcome sight to some of them. We were his daughters.

When we were allowed to visit my father after surgery to remove the blood clot to his brain, he was intubated but awake. When I stood by his bedside, he lifted his arm and used his fingers to simulate shooting me and he smiled. Even half comatose, the man hated me. The feeling was mutual at that time.

By God's grace, my father recovered and was sent to a rehabilitation floor. He spent the next few days berating me because I had not taken back the family name after my divorce. I kept telling him that God had given him a second chance at life and he was blowing it. Within a few days, he had another stroke, this one much more devastating than the first. He had no clot to remove; he had an active bleed in his brain. He was placed on life support and showed no sign of improvement. When the doctors began to discuss our options, namely pulling the plug on all the life assistance, I just didn't want to hear it. My sisters looked at me cockeyed. Why would I care so much about this man after what he'd done to us? I wasn't really concerned about him; I was concerned about myself. My father's sister, who was the lead opposition to

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the daughter presence, told me it was ridiculous to hang on, that he'd lived a full 70 years. In one of my most profound life moments, I explained to her that for the week he'd been comatose, we'd had a father that could not hurt us. He looked sweet and kind in that hospital bed. He was helpless and we got to brush his hair and tell him about the lives he had missed. My aunt had a brother for 70 years and we'd had a father for one week. The minute we pulled the plug, we had no more chances to repair the damage to our relationship, and the absence we'd felt for decades was mediated by the fact that he was still a live human. I realize now that what I was asking was ridiculous: let him live in a vegetative state for as long as possible so we could have a father that we could love without resistance. I lost my argument and life support machinery was turned off.

My father lived another week. My sisters and I set up camp in his hospital room and had a week long slumber party. His sister thought we were nuts. We put lotion on him and fluffed his pillow. We talked and talked and talked. There was so much he didn't know. Just in case his spirit could hear us, we wanted him to know who we had become. We were proud of ourselves and wanted to tell him that we had succeeded despite him. We wanted him to know he was forgiven.

*In the classroom, I engage students in discussions about emotions, feelings and fears. If they don't know who they are, how can they know their biases and other obstacles to good reporting? At the age of 18, a student isn't usually forced to reflect on who they are, because they haven't "lived" yet. But they have, I tell them. What kind of person are you? What kind of person do you want to be? What events in your life have shaped you? And most important, if we report "who we are," what kind of reporters would we be? Sending a young person out into the world of media with limited life experiences, I believe, results in superficiality, unethical behavior and an underdeveloped work ethic. In the short time span we have to help them learn skills and theory, we often neglect the goal of higher education – to help create well rounded citizens, not just good reporters or media professionals. We are there to nurture the development of the whole person, all the dimensions that make us who we are and how we will contribute to the world.*

*In the classroom, I do not tell students who I am, but I know who I am. I teach who I*

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*am. I am a woman shaped by hundreds and hundreds of life events. I've shared just a few with you. The stories I've shared had little to do with journalism, but they form the pedagogy I have created and they help shape the minds of future journalists. I believe I am a quality person with a deep respect for the First Amendment and the role of the press in society. I practice ethical journalism. I have a strong work ethic. I am dogged in the pursuit for "truth" and I have the courage to do what is necessary to get to the truth.*

*My curriculum vitae does not reflect who I am. My work experience on paper does not reflect who I am. My academic credentials do not reflect who I am. They only reflect that I have done something that qualifies as a sentence on a page. Two years in a newsroom versus 10 years in a newsroom tells us little about the quality of the person and in turn, we don't know anything about the quality of that person in the classroom. I have observed firsthand the teaching of seasoned journalists and it was scary. There are some seasoned journalists that are amazing in the classroom. There are some "scholars" that can't connect with students and some that raise the intellectual environment that motivates and inspires students. Do I think the hiring process should include a therapy session that analyzes a person's psychological make-up? No. Do I think we should consider the "quality" of a person when hiring? Yes. How should we define quality as it can be a relative term? We'll never get around the relative nature of this topic, but we can address it head on.*

*If we are brutally honest, I think we all know what quality is when we see it and hear it. I believe we all want to work in an environment where people match the program. But, we have to want to see it and hear it. Like writer and photographer Margaret Sartor said during an interview at the Center for Documentary Studies, "The people I work with get what I do. I don't have to explain it." Chapter 11 will explain what I do.*

**Chapter Six**  
**Walking through the door**  
**Classroom observations at the Duke Center for Documentary Studies**

On January 7, 2003, I walked through the doors of the Center for Documentary Studies (CDS) in Durham, North Carolina, with a lot riding on the outcome of my case study. In previous chapters I have outlined my assumptions, biases, motivation, credentials, hopes, fears and emotional standing at the time the case study was conducted. I remember taking a deep breath before I opened the door to the center.

The data grid prepared for the case study placed people and paper in nice, neat categories, but what I really wanted, and needed, was time to develop a “sense” of the place. I don’t believe the term “documentary” can be singularly defined anymore; it is commonly associated with documentary films, not the 1930s documentary tradition as practiced at the CDS.

I have strong feelings about the connection between an idea and physical space. These are not naïve or romantic feelings; they are ideas I have refined over the years based on personal observation. I wanted to see if the physical atmosphere at the center matched the image I had in my mind based on the marketing materials.

Because my opinion of the center, and what it does, was largely based on marketing materials and the consistent language it uses to define itself for others, I was worried that the “real thing” would not live up to my expectations.

I sensed from e-mail correspondence and telephone conversations with the center’s director of curriculum and instruction that my presence would be allowed, even welcomed to some degree, but there would be a “necessary” wall of caution surrounding the case study. I could not afford to push the boundaries of this granted access. Fortunately, the purpose of the case study was not to analyze or evaluate the center. The purpose was to look at the center’s activities in real time through the eyes of a journalism educator. Deep access was not necessary for success, though it would have added to my degree of understanding.

Just as you would conduct yourself with an air of distance as a journalist, I would have to move throughout the center without making my presence threatening or unwanted.



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I met with Charlie Thompson, director of curriculum and instruction, first. Thompson acted as my sponsor throughout the case study and I'm grateful for his cooperation. He wasn't overly enthusiastic, but enough to make me feel the case study would benefit the center and my research goals.

I sensed an unspoken underlying tension related to the departure of co-founder Robert Coles. This was a disappointing realization; on paper and in theory I greatly admired the work and vision of Coles. When a program or institution is built heavily on the vision of one person, or a few people, it seems inevitable that conflict will occur if new perspectives and the foundation clash. I volunteered not to pursue the Coles departure issue, partly because my instincts told me it was a deal breaker, and partly because it did not heavily affect the case study process. Had I been granted access to the Salt Center for Documentary Field Studies, I would have had the same type of tension to contend with; founder Pamela Woods had been "pushed" out of her own creation leaving an air of conflict for students and staff to manage.

After multiple interviews with staff, the Coles departure would become clearer and my assessment of the effect on the center will be discussed in subsequent text.

### **The atmosphere**

Once through those doors, the building didn't buzz like I thought it would. Of course, the Duke semester did not start until the following day and I thought it might just be pre-class quiet before the storm. There was no central meeting place as I imagined. The building is comprised of individual offices and a small gallery space. A two-story annex has been added since my visit in 1997. It provided more office space, a dark room and a few classrooms. For some reason, however, the entire building felt quiet and sterile.

I wanted the place to buzz and snap the way the literature buzzed and snapped in my mind. I had naïve notions of citizen intellectuals drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes and talking about the meaning of life. I recognized right away that I had built up unrealistic expectations. It was necessary actively to remind myself that place does not necessarily reflect action. I am particularly prone to this assumption and a great deal of inner dialogue is needed to remain focused on process and product rather than place.

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The center offered nothing in the way of atmospheric stimulation. It was like most physical spaces for me. I felt de-motivated. It took several days to put my disappointment into perspective.

The center is located in a renovated home which was moved to the site near the Duke campus specifically to serve as the center's new home.

My initial meeting with Charlie Thompson broke the ice and allowed me to feel that a case study was, in fact, under way. I had an opportunity to ask Thompson basic questions about curricula and hiring practices, though it quickly became clear that the center does not function as an academic department at this time. No centralized collection of syllabi was available for either center-based courses, cross-listed courses or continuing education courses. Thompson was apologetic about this, but he admitted the center was not required to operate as a bonofide academic department because at this time, it isn't a bonofide academic department.

At the present time, the center has an octopus existence. It has one arm in the undergraduate academic world, one arm in the community service world, one arm in the publishing world, one in the professional support world, and yet another in the world of exhibition.

### **The “faculty” meeting**

The term “faculty” needs quote marks in this case. The people who comprise the “faculty” at the CDS are not academics in the classic sense. I don't believe they see themselves as “faculty.” They don't act like “faculty.” Their primary role is not that of teacher. Each person brings a different history to the table.

I had the opportunity on January 13 to attend the semester's first “faculty” meeting. The “faculty” consisted of documentary artists, graduate students, and doctoral level professors from Duke and community service staff. The tension you often feel in faculty meetings was not apparent. It appeared to me that each person brought a particular talent or interest to the table, and it was a balanced table. It was interesting to watch a diverse group of people attempt to function as a cohesive department when, in fact, it isn't.

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The center prides itself on its interdisciplinary nature. The make-up of the faculty and staff reflects this interdisciplinary vision. The faculty meeting set the stage for an assessment of the inherent democratic ties between the documentary tradition and organizational function. To the outsider eye, politics did not appear to be a key player as it so often is within academic environments.

There was no tension, it seemed to me, because each person was not only allowed, but encouraged to participate. The group does not interact on a regular basis; they come together as part of a shared belief in the center's work. Discussion centered on course numbering and the ways in which this helps the center by providing some control. When the center first started offering courses to Duke students, it was felt that claiming courses as formal Duke classes would make the center take on the very bureaucratic system they disliked. As the program has grown, the need has arisen for a permanent administrative employee, however. The program has the means now to keep track of information. It also has its arms spreading all over the university and naturally, I think, it starts to want to claim credit as well as exert some control over how its courses are viewed by outsiders.

Charlie Thompson summed it up this way: "We have the best of both worlds." He discussed openly the power issues involved in aligning the center with Duke University. The CDS program gets to do what most departments want to do – be as tight knit as it wants or as loose as it wants, vacillate back and forth as it serves the common purpose. There is a sense of collegiality, not competition. They get to blend skills with disciplines under one roof.

One problem with this approach, as Charlie Thompson made clear, is that very little overall vision is manifested in the range of courses offered. Right now it's left up to the teachers to offer a course. There is no central board from which to view the balance of medium, skill or content. As a result, I think the curriculum leans heavily towards photography, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it doesn't necessarily fit with the expressed vision of the center. It's very weak in the writing instruction area, heavy on photo, moving into video and very little radio. There is a nice range of societal topics woven into the courses, but mostly photography students would get access to this wide range. I wrote a reminder to myself to discuss this issue

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further with Thompson.

Discussion was held about archiving student work at the special collections library. No discussion was held regarding publishing, exhibiting and so on. It is important to note that Tom Rankin mentioned that student work is not just student work – it is set to become important historical and cultural material. He said they don't want to curb their conceptual framework around the potential for stable medium. This issue must be considered when trying to marry the center's concepts with a journalistic mission.

A discussion was also held regarding the transition from short courses to undergraduate courses. Some of the instructors teaching evening adult short courses are interested in offering the same courses for Duke undergraduate students. There are several issues to be considered. The different audience may require changes in course structure or teaching methods. And, course offerings need to fit into the certification framework. Now that the CDS is inching toward Duke University, it has to start dealing with the demands of an academic setting, which includes the addition of research from an interdisciplinary point of view.

Kirk Felsman, a psychologist by training and the director of the Hines Fellows program aligned with the CDS, spoke to the faculty about the need to choose a candidate to work abroad per the program's structure. It was comforting to hear Felsman speak about the desired characteristics of candidates. He said the first criterion was character, not skill or even knowledge base. There was no opposition to Felsman's point. It seemed the antithesis of traditional academic language which speaks of grades, financial status and major field of study.

I came away from the faculty meeting feeling that the atmosphere missing in the building was present in that room. At the very least, it was a motivating environment. I found myself wishing the meeting would not end so that I could observe the group interaction. They rarely converge in one room so it is difficult to define a group rapport or to evaluate issues of politics and power. I worry that this short period of group observation does not allow for an adequate interpretation. On the other hand, any hidden agenda or power/politics at play at the CDS would not affect the case study. My intent was to look for areas of applicability and replicability, not evaluate particularity.

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I was also able to observe the staff meeting on Wednesday, January 15. The staff is quite large, approximately 20, but there were only two administrative issues to discuss and the meeting took all of five minutes. It seemed odd that people did not share information from their particular corner of the CDS world. It was evident that the center is not truly an academic entity because the number of staff working on administrative or project duties outnumbered the teachers at the faculty meeting. I had the feeling that behind each person's door an isolated project may be under way but the sense of community doesn't exist between all the participants.

It is the lack of camaraderie within the building at any given time that disappointed me. I recognized that atmosphere and ambience did not detract from the good works any one given person might be doing. But, I also am a firm believer in the connection between physical space and learning. I did not feel motivated in the physical space which is in direct contrast to the way I feel when I peruse the web site or hold a product. I have to remain vigilant and aware of the priority I place on feeling as opposed to results or individual action. My need for community is not the same as it is for others, but this does not need to affect my ability to assess pieces of the whole that might be put together in the end to create an atmosphere that is more alive.

### **Inside classrooms**

Data collection continued on a simultaneous basis. While classroom observation was taking place in the evening, interviews with staff were conducted during the day. I visited the library's archives to evaluate the center's collection. I collected syllabi, inventoried the center's informal library holdings and spent time at the center observing activities, from January 7 to February 14 (or six weeks).

### **Rationale for choices:**

In the fall of 2002, a total of 15 center-based courses were offered and cross-listed for Duke University students to receive credit. Some of these were courses needed for a certificate in

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credit documentary studies. In addition, 12 evening continuing community education courses were offered to non-Duke students.

In an effort to confine data collection to a manageable amount, I chose to observe courses that were likely to provide answers to the research questions. I chose courses based on the credentials of the teacher, the course topic and medium. I wanted to observe courses taught by career academics and career practitioners. I wanted to evaluate teaching methods of both and student response to both. I wanted to gauge the level of instructional balance between skills and theory or skills and subject matter. I felt it was important to observe courses focusing on different media.

In addition, Thompson provided suggestions for course observation based on his knowledge of the instructor and course content. While I was introduced at the faculty meeting, it was made clear that any participation with my study was voluntary; the center was not endorsing or commissioning the study. As a result, I had to approach teachers individually to ask for syllabi and/or access to their classrooms.

The lack of a centralized meeting space complicated matters. Only a few of the instructors were actually housed in the Lyndhurst home. The others were either adjunct and based in their homes or they were full time professors at Duke University. Each teacher did have a personal cubby box at the center in which to receive mail.

### **Student survey attempt**

I placed requests for classroom access and copies of syllabi in each box. I also placed pre-course surveys for students in the teacher boxes. It was my hope that I could gather student impressions at the beginning and end of courses. Because the center had not requested an evaluation, it seemed intrusive to intercept students personally before or after their classes. It would have been difficult to round them up without teacher cooperation. The physical space of the building also makes discussion awkward. Students and teachers do not congregate at any given point. They arrive and leave.

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I do not know how many teachers presented the surveys to their students. I only know of one instructor, Margaret Sartor, who relayed to me that she had distributed the surveys. One student responded. I did not pursue the student surveys with vigor because it was not essential information. My focus was on the structure and content of the center's activities and how they might be woven into a journalism program.

It would have been interesting to understand student motivations for taking CDS courses and to inquire as to applicability of skills and knowledge gained. There is no traditional journalism program at Duke, and as such, it would have been interesting to assess the potential for these liberal arts students in journalism careers. That issue, however, was outside the scope of my study.

I also wanted to make sure my presence was as subtle as possible. I'm not sure why there was not more overt effort made by teachers or students to respond, but finding the answer to that question would have required too much interaction with teachers about quantitative data which might have jeopardized my observation opportunities.

I was able to speak to former CDS students by telephone at length. Their reflective position allowed them to provide in-depth description of their experiences at the CDS and thoughts about documentary work in general. A detailed description of those interviews is discussed later in this chapter.

It was interesting that during my stay at the CDS, not one instructor or staff member sought me out to discuss their role or their opinions. I think I would have wanted input if a case study were being conducted in my work setting. No instructor voluntarily responded to requests placed in mailboxes. A few responses came in the form of e-mail. For the most part, I had to physically appear in the building and "find" an instructor by luck or time my arrival to coincide with their classes. Because the center was not endorsing or facilitating my case study, I did not make as much of an overt effort to engage with faculty and staff as I would have otherwise. In the end, what I needed was an overall view of the structure of the center, not an ethnographic understanding of details.

**Observation of Alex Harris' classroom**  
**Course: Reinventing Age**  
**Jan. 13, Mon 6-8 p.m.**  
**14 present – 3 males – 11 females**

From the moment I set foot in Alex Harris' classroom, my impression was that Harris is a critical educator. His tone of voice and body language was that of facilitator, not the holder of all knowledge. He had already discussed with students in the first class how to go about threshing out possible participants in their age related documentary studies. The students were responsible for contacting organizations and working as a group to make sure everyone had a subject that was interesting to them. The students did this without a sense of victimization as I so often see. It was expected and they did it.

I was impressed by the degree of difference between these students and those in every other environment I have ever experienced. The students were remarkably plugged in to the topic and each other. I sensed no secondary life in the classroom. That is, students appeared to place "everything" else on the backburner while class was in session. They were fully focused on the moment.

As Harris spoke to the class about its structure, expectations, deadlines and logistics, I noticed a recurring theme: patience. I probably place a great deal of emphasis on patience because a journalistic environment is centered on inches, deadlines, brevity, clarity and moving on. Harris' discourse was peppered with words and phrases like "wait" and "see what happens."

Harris asked students to think in terms of the big picture. "All the skills you've built to this point will be used," he told the class. The students were told to allow knowledge to build on their prior experiences. As the class was diverse in terms of ethnicity and "styles," the students would necessarily have different types of skills and perspectives and their understanding of the aging process would also necessarily be unique.

"As much as I'd like you to get going now, patience always pays," said Harris. He did not appear to be frustrated by the lack of structure or boundaries in this seminar-style class. Even though everyone's life might be a little easier with more structure, it was evident from Harris'



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demeanor that he viewed learning as a process that unfolds based on circumstances that are out of the student's control.

At one point Harris discussed film type with his students. He had suggestions regarding type and availability. He made no effort to assist students in the process of securing film. The students voiced no financial concerns or time constraints. It has been my experience in both a private liberal arts setting and a public university setting that students generally do not take ownership over their educational experience. My students have, for the most part, resisted requests to purchase the materials necessary to facilitate learning. The consumeristic entitlement attitude I have experienced did not show itself in this classroom. Harris required a certain level of engagement and commitment (in the form of attitude, time and money) and the students appeared to accept their responsibility as part of the opportunity.

Reinventing Age is more of a sociology course than a photography course. The readings related to the sociologic phenomenon of aging. Students asked questions related to politics and policy to moral responsibility and family dynamics. Students are not required to have photographic skill. They bring to the table a varying degree of expertise and a varying degree of camera sophistication. I heard no questions related to visual representation. Harris explained that understanding the issue would naturally lead to visual representation.

On paper, Harris is not a geriatric expert. What sets the CDS apart is its apparent definition of "teacher." Harris has worked with the elderly for long periods of time. He photographed the elderly for a text by Dr. Robert Coles, "Old And On Their Own." He's done his academic homework as evidenced by the wealth of readings he offered students.

I was struck by the fact that Harris' life experience dealing with the elderly is what qualifies him to teach a course on aging. In the academic journalism community, this is a contentious issue which I believe is related to the philosophy of journalism itself. If you adhere to the tenets of journalism, you believe that sources must be credible. There is an unspoken definition of "credible" that diminishes the veracity of citizen voices. Students are taught that readers will be less likely to respect and believe media reports if "common" voices are used to state the facts. Everyday voices are used for color and style purposes. Feature writers are allowed

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the creative freedom to write about laymen, but news reporters are required to rely on official sources or to protect official sources.

I believe this training, or indoctrination, is at odds with the tenets of documentary work. Documentary workers adhere to a grass roots philosophy. What is valued is not official sources, but lived experience. The same holds true for teachers in each field. It is assumed that lived experience trumps official credentials whereas in journalism, lived experience must also be recognized in some official capacity. For example: to teach a course in geriatric journalism, a teacher would be considered qualified if she had academic credentials in medicine, health care, social work and so on. Or, if she served as a beat reporter focusing on issues of the elderly. Or, if she held academic credentials in journalism. It is unlikely that a course in geriatric journalism would focus on the elderly. Rather, it would focus on reporting about the elderly. The instructor would be considered a journalist or teacher able to teach students how to interact with elderly for publication purposes.

Harris' course appeared to me to be a course about the issues related to aging. The students discussed stereotypes and the emotional phases elderly people experience. Harris facilitated their discussion, not as an expert on aging or photography. Rather, he was a citizen with an interest in the elderly and he has experience visually representing the elderly using a camera. Harris brought a full circle to the teaching table and nowhere in that circle was there a link called "credentials." The circle was comprised of empathy, compassion, experience, skill, and desire to share that empathy, compassion, experience and skill. There may be many more political layers to the hiring decisions, but on the surface it appeared to me that qualification is defined by the CDS differently than in a traditional academic department. The "feel" of the classroom was the "feel" that I wanted to "feel." I was happy not to be let down.

An ethical seed was planted as I listened to Harris and his students. Each student was trying to "find" a subject for their "investigation" into the aging process. Despite the fact that aging is the real issue at hand, the level of photographability had to be discussed. I believe this is an area of conflict that arises for photographers as opposed to writers. If the visual environment surrounding a story is not something that will excite viewers, do you choose another story focus to accommodate the need for visual quality? If, in fact, the goal is to document and make a

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concerted effort to show “the cruel radiance that is” or “human actuality,” as Agee has written, should the visual quality of the “subject” be an issue at all? Doesn’t this disempower people based solely on the visual quality of their life or surroundings?

There is a difference between trying visually to represent something that is abstract or simply difficult to define and not attempting at all because the visual images will not meet some definition of “good.” This issue isn’t as pronounced when a documentarian is working on her own. When you try to squeeze this process into a classroom setting, students are often asked to choose a subject of inquiry that will also meet an aesthetic sensibility. Sometimes reality, truth or courage just aren’t visually attractive. In the course of a two hour class, Harris backtracked several times allowing change to occur based on student input. He may have planned a certain course of action, but when the students collectively come up with a new direction or idea, Harris, lets things work themselves out rather than sticking to a course of action that may not be the best. The students did not appear confused or exasperated. They noted the changes and moved on. They appeared satisfied with the fact that Harris considered their input valuable and worthy of implementation.

I was witness to a thorough discussion about stereotypes and representation. The class transitioned smoothly between the skill and art of photography to the issue of age. Theory and practice got along quite well.

I walked away from this observation session feeling energized. I took away a sense that had this been a class full of journalism students, a public service would have occurred. In the course of two hours, students were asked to take their responsibility seriously as a person charged with representation. They were asked to have an in-depth understanding of the issues they would be representing. They were asked to view the “subject” as a valuable human first, a valuable source second. Skill and technique played no part in this two hour period. While the medium of photography was in the background of the conversation, it was not center stage as the star. The camera, much as the pen is for writer, acts as the liaison between person and audience. Journalism courses rarely concentrate on subject matter first, skill or medium second.

**Observation of Margaret Sartor's classroom**  
**Course: American Communities: A documentary approach**  
**Jan. 14, 7-9 p.m. Tuesday**  
**14 students (she prefers 12)**

As I waited for Margaret's course to begin, she asked if I was aware that she is married to Alex Harris. I had no idea. It has no real effect on the case study except to note that the core staff at the CDS is quite small. If two are married, I would assume the diversity of perspectives gets smaller if Alex and Margaret have similar interests and views.

Margaret has been teaching this particular course for many years. She has full discretion over who gets in. Students write an essay for enrollment consideration, which is not the norm in American higher education. She doesn't use a waiting list but she has a policy not to reject someone twice.

Right off Sartor discusses with her students the need for a safe space to speak. Dissenting opinions are important to her. She wants to know if the heat is at a comfortable level in the room. A few people say yes, it's fine. But Sartor asks if anyone thinks it isn't fine. This was a great example, I think, of a teacher who has developed a critical pedagogy; Sartor addressed her students as equals in a process, not teacher as all knowing and please the teacher mentality.

Sartor explains the project concept and the flexibility of the presentation style. "Form needs to be appropriate for what you are trying to say," she says.

This idea could relate to journalism but rarely does. Documentary work, in this sense, is more of an art form than journalism. Journalists rarely have an opportunity to consider whether the presentation format is in keeping with the "message." If that was true, reporters would be allowed to write magazine style or provide poetry or only photographs if they lent themselves to the story.

I noticed that Sartor didn't introduce herself in the first class. She did not give students a sense of her credentials or past experience. This suggests either that she doesn't want herself to be a big issue, or that she is confident that her presence alone speaks to her qualifications.

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Students didn't ask about her experience either. This was, of course, the first meeting for this class. Perhaps during the course of the semester more information will be shared regarding Sartor's professional work history.

The majority of this first class meeting was spent discussing definitions of "community." Just as was the case in the Harris course, Sartor is not a credentialed expert in sociology or any other field pertaining to community dynamics. Her personal and professional experience qualifies her to facilitate this experience for students. She has published books on photography and has had gallery showings of her work. She works closely with her husband, Alex Harris, on documentary projects in a variety of environments on multiple social topics.

The students were asked to define the role of the documentarian. Most immediately spoke about objectivity, about showing "real" life in a real way. But Sartor did step in and discuss the notion of objectivity, about acknowledging preconceived ideas. She used words such as "authentic" as opposed to "real." The job is not to "report" or even to "document" but to explore and reveal. She defines documentary work as trying to reveal how people live.

What is NOT documentary, she asks: How does it differ from TV, magazines and so on?

Some of the answers included:

1. In news, images are secondary or set up.
2. Time and a sense of artistic control set documentary apart.

"People draw lines between art, journalism, documentary. I'm not sure why they do," said Sartor. My impression of her comment is that it is in keeping with a critical approach to knowing and learning. It happens when you allow it to happen. Lines, borders, structure, categories and boxes inhibit knowing and learning.

"You go into a place and try to figure out what it is. You let your relationship with the place and people guide your eye," she explained.

Sartor said the purpose is not to teach you how to photograph. It is to create an atmosphere that is supportive, fun and critical so that knowing and learning may occur.

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“Fieldwork is not just about talent. It’s also about luck. But you have to make your luck and you do that by being there,” said Sartor.

This comment paves the way for comparing journalism to documentary work. You must “be there,” in order to reveal what “really” happens, not what is recreated or reflected or reported.

The big question is always, “How do you show something that is invisible? How can you reveal “community?” We often look for subjects that we can show rather than challenge ourselves to uncover something that is invisible to the common eye. Journalism students are trained, I believe, to report the obvious. I think readers need us to uncover what we don’t “see” because it takes time and effort that few American citizens are willing to invest on a daily basis.

I was equally impressed by the students in Sorter’s class as I was with the Harris class students. The class was diverse in terms of ethnicity and “style.” When they all came to the table, however, there was a sense that this group shared a common interest or they would not have taken this course. Unlike mandatory courses, this type of “elective” is charged with a special energy.

It was unclear if the students I was observing were somehow an aberration or the norm. I was inspired to check into the admission standards at Duke. I wondered if these students had all had some sort of common background or exceptional upbringing. The level of maturity and intellectual curiosity far exceeded my experience with undergraduate students. I want to know if “these” students share a characteristic that brought them to a documentary course. I’m afraid that to answer that question would require another study entirely.

The next week I received an e-mail from Sartor in response to my request to survey students or speak with them individually. It read, in part:

“Fern, feel free to return in a month -- you’ll see more results though in six weeks to 2 months -- this kind of work runs through a kind of natural cycle of enthusiasm to frustration/boredom to fascination and finally fruition. Having the luxury of going through the frustration and boredom to the other side is part of the point of the class and is also something a working journalist can’t afford or has the patience to see through.”

It is clear that one of my biggest obstacles, if not the biggest, is the time versus truth issue. How do you adequately represent with limited timeframes? Sartor summarized the two

issues as time versus ability, however. If a journalism student was exposed to a way of seeing as opposed to a way of producing, maybe daily deadlines could still be met and a more accurate rendering also achieved. What if we required authenticity from our students rather than the illusion of truth?

**Observation of Randall Kenan's classroom:  
Course: Modes of documentary writing  
January 16, 2003**

It took several attempts to connect with Randall Kenan to gain access to his course on documentary writing. As this was the only course offered in the spring of 2003 specifically related to writing, it was important for me to see how the center applied its vision to the printed page. The center does not focus heavily on writing which makes applicability to journalism a challenge. Most documentary work comes in the form of photography, radio or video.

I'm not sure why Kenan's course is called "modes of documentary writing" because he did not talk about "documentary" literally or even theoretically. I don't think I heard the term once. He did talk a lot about the many names given to non-fiction writing, but I was disappointed that he didn't try to give shape to the term documentary. In my mind, it is distinct from the other forms, which is why the center exists. Otherwise, this would be a course unnecessary to the center. Maybe this is one of those cases when the term's overuse is manifesting itself – Kenan is a superb writer, a great personality, very passionate about language and the human condition, and these qualities to add up to make for a documentarian, but either he can't articulate that for a student audience or he isn't really of a documentarian cloth, so to speak. Maybe I'm just afraid that what I'm finding is that documentary is a mindset only, not something that can be boxed into a curriculum in a mainstream way. But what's wrong with a particular mindset? Isn't that what the center means – a place for this particular mindset? I'm not sure Kenan fits that mindset in relation to the other instructors. But he is fun to listen to and his work is beautiful.

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I think because Kenan is a versatile writer (non-fiction/fiction/poetry), he structured the assignment so that it had more shape – a beginning, middle and end. This is different from the other courses I've observed and different from the philosophy of the other instructors. But, this is a necessary component if one wanted to see this type of work in mainstream media – or is it? Does an audience need this traditional form or are we assuming that it does?

Kenan described “modes” as a form of writing that uses fiction techniques. How does this fit with the documentary tradition? Did Agee use fiction technique? Kennan's approach is traditional in that he approaches writing as a tool for expression rather than starting with the intention, the worldview and the content to be molded with the tool. In that sense, Kennan's course does not reflect the center's expressed mission.

Kennan does note that some people are just uncomfortable with the often personal nature/subjectivity of documentary work (which is funny because the students described documentary work as objective and fact-based.) There is a real disconnect between what it “is” and what people think it is – this may be due to the film industry – when you hear documentary you think of archival war footage, which takes a dry and seemingly neutral stance.

I'm curious about Kennan's statement regarding the level of comfort for students in relation to the degree of personal voice. Is this related to an education and media system that “brainwashes” people into believing writing should remain objective or is it related to a genuine level of discomfort about exposure and vulnerability?

I walked away from this class period feeling as if I'd just observed a journalism course. That's fine, but I was hoping for some insight into the melding of the documentary “perspective” and writing instruction. It appears that Kennan qualifies for his position because he is a writer in the non-fiction genre. He writes about emotional and historical issues. He may even write from a perspective that is seen by the center's staff as compatible with the documentary tradition. I saw no evidence in the classroom, however, that Kennan was able to articulate to students what he defined as “documentary” other than to say it is in the family of non-fiction and reportage. Maybe Kenan discusses the role of worldview in writing during later class periods.

This observation period was both disappointing and confirming. Here was an



accomplished writer, passionate about language and storytelling, but who approached writing from a craft point of view just as journalism teachers would. It is my hope that after observing courses based on “seeing the world” and courses about “writing” or “photographing” or “filming,” I will be able to design curricula that place equal weight on seeing and representing, on worldview, process and product, or beginning, middle, end.

**Teacher: Ian Lekus**  
**Course: Gender, sexuality and oral history**  
**Date: January 21, 2003**

This was the first observation of a course by an instructor who is not a regular “member” of the center’s inner circle. Dr. Lekus teaches in Duke’s history department and is considered a specialist in oral history and gender issues. He is a career academic as opposed to the practitioner background of center-based instructors. I chose to observe this course because it claims, by title, to merge the observation of gender and sexuality issues with a research and expressive method. This concept is in keeping with my goal of exploring a curriculum model that will balance subject matter, process and product. As oral history is a method and not necessarily an end product for mainstream consumption, I did not expect to see immediate relevance to my goals, however, two out of three elements are better than none. The photography based courses do not claim to focus on technique instruction while Lekus’ course did.

Ian really had a love for his work and that came through. He has such a deep syllabus. He engaged the students in the foundation of history – why history is important and useful. It was interesting to hear students talk about how they learned history. These students, unlike me at that age, know they have learned a very narrow view of history and they want to know more. They know textbooks have fed them a form of propaganda.

Lekus explained his view that oral history is making a comeback. It became something for the elite, the academic. He said oral history makes all history more democratic because of the average everyday voices it includes.

One student said: “The media just won’t go out and interview the masses.”

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Isn't that terribly ironic? We're talking about mass media and these students recognized that "mass" only refers to the number of people it reaches, not the number of people it includes or represents.

The first real oral history was heard after the New Deal of the 1930s. There was an attempt to hear and record the narratives of slaves, Lekus explained.

The effect of oral history can be measured in stages. First you get the voices recorded. This leads to the building of communities. Then you look at possible legislation or benefits due to people based on that history. And finally, you can focus on the re-writing of the grand narrative better to reflect the reality of the people involved in history. Many individual voices add up to effect change.

Because Lekus chose to represent oral history as a change agent, I felt a sense of empowerment. I hope the students felt the same. Unlike journalism, the end result of a course was represented as change, not product.

Lekus made a beautiful transition from discussing the uses of history, the importance of history, to a skill discussion about interviewing – it wasn't just the technical stuff, but the reasons behind interviewing in certain ways and how it leads to better understanding. It was one of the better discussions on interviewing I've heard. In addition, the students sat focused on Lekus, soaking up every word. I have not experienced this kind of student body at the university level in America.

I felt Lekus was a good example of how a person can be a serious academic and a practitioner of a craft. Why in the world can't we see journalism professors the same way? Is it because students know professors aren't engaged in their practice in any manner? Is it because we discourage journalism teachers from practicing the craft once they become academics? Lekus clearly had accomplished both – academic credentials and an ongoing research practice that included oral history.

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**Teacher: Sally Peterson**  
**Course: Asian American Voices: Redefining the South**  
**Date: January 28, 2003**

This is a course that was literally thrown together at the behest of students. A group of Asian American students, very active on campus in terms of trying to garner support for a cohesive AA program, asked for a course. I don't have the details. I am not certain they asked for a course specifically through the CDS or just a course in general to address their interest in documenting Asian American communities.

Peterson appears to have connections and experience in the AA community. She refers to herself as a folklorist. There was no syllabus. It was the second group meeting.

There were 10 students present; eight were Chinese American. They were quite animated and excited about the course and the topic. They had remarkable insights into American culture from their perspective.

They had gone out to visit Asian type establishments to get a sense of documentary topics; most of them went to restaurants or Asian grocery stores. They were encouraged to just look and get a sense of places and feelings, unlike journalism students.

"If you spend enough time, meaning will emerge. It will focus you," explained Peterson.

Peterson's advice clearly differentiates journalism from documentary work. The issue of time will be a huge obstacle in developing a documentary based journalism program. I'm still thinking that training via a documentary approach gives students a foundation based on empathy and cultural exploration. The actual product, a mainstream product, would have to include two elements: stories that need reporting today and stories that evolve over time. At the very least, this type of education versus an education founded on a snapshot perspective might send journalism students out to start their careers with a keen understanding of the role time plays in storytelling.

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In other words, Peterson said, it's what's out there that does all the work, makes the meaning, writes the story so to speak. Journalists are taught write the story, not to take the time to let the story tell itself to the journalist.

“Investigate points of surprise.” This comment by Peterson is another clear indication that documentary work directly conflicts with the tenets of journalism education (not necessarily journalism.) When a journalist is “surprised,” that means there is evidence of “two sides to every story.” A journalist would investigate other sides to a story rather than investigate the actual meaning of the “surprise.”

These students talked about feeling guilty about their privilege. They discussed the ways Asian culture is promoted: the promotion is not for Asians, they said, but for white people – the dominant culture.

Another idea presented by Peterson was that the subject is the authority. You are not. Again, journalism students are lead down a different path. You become an expert because readers have abdicated their responsibilities to you. Citizen voices are not experts in traditional journalism education.

I thought Peterson was winging it big time, but was brave for taking it on last minute. I thought these students were remarkable in the way they are able to articulate what goes on around them.

However, I don't think there is enough form to the classes I've been seeing. This may be an observation based on my academic background. It takes a mature student to feel at ease with a non-structured course. These students seem remarkably mature. The issue of structure is not as critical with small elective classes. It becomes problematic for larger classes or mandatory classes. If students think they will receive personal time and they are deeply interested in the topic, structure does not seem as much of an issue. The resistance level from students goes up as the level of interest in the topic does down.

It's probably fine for a student taking one class, but if a student depended on the center for a minor, even the certificate, then the courses would just be a series of discussions with

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different facilitators. There isn't a plan for what kinds of research methods are being learned and so on, or the range of topics investigated. But, each class on its own is inspiring. It seems this was an opportunity for a particular ethnic group to have a safe, supporting environment in which to investigate the intersection of their culture and American culture, which can only be a good thing. However, I'm not sure how a course like this would work in a more diverse setting.

Readings were included to supplement the class. Peterson admitted she was still in the process of organizing the course. Again, her enthusiasm and knowledge about the subject matter made up for the fact that she was behind in organization.

**Teacher: Wendy Ewald and Katie Hyde**  
**Course: Literacy Through Photography**  
**Date: January 29, 2003**

I chose to observe Wendy Ewald's course for a variety of reasons. First, I am a longtime admirer of her work. For more than 10 years I have incorporated Ewald's techniques in my own project work with children. Ewald produced a book called "I Wish I Had An Angel In My Pocket" with children in India. I have used that book on many occasions to show students how different cultural beliefs and environments affect choices.

Ewald is an old timer at the center. She is a founding member of the center. She produces books regularly. She teaches at the center and at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She lives in New York and commutes. Her work centers on identity and self-perception. She uses cameras to draw out the inner thinking of children and has used her techniques in other settings such as women's prisons. She holds summer workshops for teachers. And most recently Ewald has produced a book describing her techniques, "I Wanna Take Me A Picture," which is a simple to read and understand instruction manual for anyone wanting to work with children and photography.

Because I have held Ewald in such high regard for a long period of time, I was mindful not to romanticize the classroom setting. I needed to evaluate the content and methods with an open mind.

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I was surprised at how soft spoken and unassuming Ewald was. Because of her legend status in my mind, I was expecting someone more arrogant or aggressive. Her demeanor has clearly served her well in foreign cultural settings. She listens intently and emotional gestures are kept to a minimum. She has a colleague, Katie Hyde, who she has worked with for years. They appear to have an intuitive relationship: they seem to know what the other is thinking at all times. Hyde is also soft spoken and seems mature beyond her years.

The students were very quiet and subdued, different from the other courses I observed. They had no experience with film processing, which just shows that it isn't as much a photography issue as a literacy and humanistic issue at stake. The students learn how to perform basic photographic skills well enough, I think, to apply the process to children. They aren't trying to do anything fancy, but they do need to know how to explain the mechanics of light and mechanics to kids.

The students in this course, for the most part, are education majors. They take the course because they want to add Ewald's technique to their skill set. There were some students taking the course strictly out of interest in either photography or working with children.

Ewald is a seasoned and celebrated photographer. She has perfected this process of working with children. You forget that she does her own work because much of her life has been devoted to seeing what children can produce and how they see the world. She is fascinated by the way professional photographers see the world, and capture it, render it on film, and the way kids do this – she says kids usually want to be photographed more than actually take pictures – they want to be seen. Isn't this true of university students as well? How do we know?

Ewald seems at times to not have any plan, but she does. She is so used to working with small children that she has learned to be quiet, toss out a question and allow students to answer even if there is silence, which is often difficult to do without awkward tension.

I'm curious what these students get out of the process. What does Ewald get out of it; so much so that it intrigued? her and she pursued it for so many years. Does it make the students think from a child's perspective? Does it have an effect on them in more ways than just their

teacher training?

How would a course like this fit into a documentary-based program? How does Ewald link this literacy through photography with documentary, the term and tradition? I don't see the connection in the classroom setting, though Wendy showed photographs of long term projects she has done.

**Teacher: Charlie Thompson**  
**Course: Migrant Farmworkers**  
**Date: February 5, 2003**

Charlie Thompson is the director of curriculum and instruction for the center. His background is not in education. He is a specialist in agricultural issues and migrant worker issues. I'm still not quite sure how he came to take up the post as education director.

Thompson has an assistant for his course. I have not had much experience with graduate assistants or teaching assistants, and I have to say that I find it awkward. It isn't clear who has designed the course or whose vision is being presented. At times it seemed that Thompson wasn't aware of the assistant's research. Ewald and Hyde have coordinated their course for a number of years and their organization is apparent. This course felt more "on the cuff."

The center is quite active in the migrant farmworker movement in North Carolina. It is home to an independent project called "Student Action with Farmworkers." It places interns with agencies assisting migrant workers in a variety of ways. It is not clear how this ties into documentary work except that a booklet has been produced showcasing student stories and some poetry. The student work is not of publishable quality and there does not appear to be any structure, style or format. I think this is a shame because the students could bear public witness to a situation needing public attention. If the two areas could come together (content and product) I think the SAF could have more influence.

This is one of those courses that deal with other agencies. This always causes logistical problems at the start of class. My observation period came at approximately Class Four after students had begun the task of connecting with agencies. Even though Thompson had already

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Established initial relationships with the agency contacts, students expressed difficulty connecting in conjunction with their own school schedules. This often occurs in journalism classrooms. Any time a class is project based or involves outside sources, the educational setting limits the quality of relationships with those sources. It appears to be unavoidable unless a program is structured to allow for uninterrupted blocks of time like the Salt Center in Maine.

This course is intended to connect students with teenage children of migrant workers who have organized themselves at different sites into a group. The Duke students would get to know these young people and help them tell their stories or at least hear their stories and help the youth group in some way. From the finished products I have seen from other sections of this course, there isn't a clear enough outcome set forth at the beginning. There is some understanding gained about the migrant plight and outreach work, but the use of documentary skills to further that issue isn't clear.

The students did seem engaged and participating well. They talked a lot about representation issues in general, but there wasn't a clear connection to the experience of migrant workers. I think this type of course takes several weeks to get up and running. Once students connect with their agency and can share with the class their experience, the connection between what they are experiencing and how to document that experience probably comes into focus. Thompson is highly qualified to facilitate such a course and like Ewald, he has remarkable patience. He expressed confidence in the students' abilities to forge ahead with their projects. Because of his patience, confidence and knowledge of the subject matter, I think the students were less frustrated with the process than they might have been.



**Teacher: Spencie Love**  
**Course: But Now I See: Freedom Stories**  
**Date: February 6, 2003**

I chose to observe this course because the instructor is the only former journalist teaching a course. I wanted to see how this course might differ from the others based on the instructor's

This course is supposed to be about Freedom Stories, but it is actually an exploration into moments of life conversion. I missed the first session which might have helped clarify the course path.

This was a great class. Spencie had created an environment where students were thoroughly engaged and bonding as a group. She'd managed this in just a few class periods. They brought food and seemed to enjoy each other's company.

Love had students read an excerpt from Barbara Ehrenrich's "Nickel and Dimed In America." She used a large flip chart to list issues related to minimum wage workers, class struggles and the journalist's role in this book. Students were animated and thoroughly engaged in the process. At this point I was not clear how this would tie into the course title regarding stories of freedom or emancipation.

After a food and social break, the students took turns exploring their ideas for a project. I believe students were asked to find a person to interview who had undergone some type of major life conversion. I inferred from the discussion that stories of freedom and emancipation could lead to moments of personal insight or that the telling of stories was liberating in itself. This was the one course I observed too late. The theme of the course was unclear based on the syllabus and the title; however, the students seemed quite clear about their tasks.

I made arrangements to meet with Love after the class for a personal conversation.

### **Interpretation of class observations:**

Ideally, classroom observations should include beginning, middle and end portions of courses to see how students are relating to material and what they are producing at the CDS.

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Many of the classes overlap, so it wasn't possible for me to attend the same class each week or I would miss an opportunity to observe a wide spectrum of topics courses. I believe I was able to observe enough classroom activity to get a "feel" for the center's mission and how it plays out in the educational setting.

As noted elsewhere in this thesis, I carried a bias into the case study. Every effort was made to not try and mold observations into the interpretation I might want. I did tend to always see the glass half full, however.

From my observations, I do feel there are common characteristics among those who are either drawn to the CDS version of the documentary tradition or to teaching that version. Those characteristics include sensitivity, empathy, broad worldview, respect for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work, flexibility, creativity and patience for the unfolding of their work. This observation was made in every classroom period and during every interview, with the exception of Community Programs director Barbara Lau.

In addition, I noted that teachers approach their courses with an approximate 75 percent focus on the topic and perhaps 25 percent on "skill" to render a "reality" about that topic. As noted in *Doing Documentary Work*, the courses focused on particulars though each CDS teacher presented a broad context for those particulars.

In terms of the student body, my past experience had a big influence on my perception of the Duke students. I worked quite hard to be aware of these at all times. That is, I was highly impressed by the caliber of the CDS students. Tom Rankin noted several times that they have a "self-selecting" pool of students. They have created something they [the faculty and staff] think is important and useful to society. Students drawn to what they do are the students I saw, not the "average" student body in a required general education class for example.

I have had a well-rounded teaching experience thus far. I have worked with Eskimo children, teens, and elders as well as media professionals in Alaska. I have worked with middle age children in remote villages of Zimbabwe. I have worked with university students in Rwanda, private Christian school students in Nashville and students at a very large public state university. I have never seen the level of self-motivation of students that I witnessed at the CDS. When I mentioned this to several teachers, I was met with amused faces. Evidently, the instructors at the

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CDS are either used to this student pool or they are not experienced with a variety of other student bodies which would allow them to make comparisons.

There is no way to know for certain if my perception is based on my own experience, Duke's recruitment practices or the natural self-selecting process that Rankin notes. What I saw were students highly engaged in critical reflection. They were respectful of their instructors but they also engaged with them as "equals." I felt there was a "tangible learning process" occurring in my presence.

Because I was able to observe a broad array of course topics, I walked away feeling that this free standing unit acts as a "mini-university." It is drawing on all the liberal arts students learn on the main campus and adding to their knowledge. Unlike many journalism courses in which it is assumed students have taken their required history and literature courses, the CDS courses incorporated those topics and honed in on particulars to understand history or literature or people better.

Although the CDS is now "connected" to Duke University more than was originally intended when the Lyndhursts committed monies to it, the center does not behave or look like an academic department. My sense is that everyone knows there is a line not to be crossed. To cross that line would mean the center had lost its independence and the ability to engage in certain activities that it wouldn't if it became too entrenched in university bureaucracy.

Teachers of CDS courses, for the most part, seem freed from usual university constraints. That may be one of the things that attract them to the CDS, though none of them mentioned this during informal conversations. In "regular" classroom environments, I believe teachers are more aware of the concept of intended outcomes, even if they don't use the term. This type of thinking is antithetical to what documentarians appear to believe. That is, emphasis at the CDS is on unfolding, evolving, patience and emergence. To plot and plan for specific outcomes would be to try and control the course of the semester. Because most courses require students to engage in fieldwork with a person, place or agency, there needs to be flexibility based on the way each student's project unfolds. CDS teachers do not appear stressed by the lack of control, in fact, this

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type of teaching seems necessary when teaching about the documentary tradition. In addition, I did not witness the degree of “obsession” about grades and course structure that I usually see in the classroom. There appeared to be an unspoken agreement that teacher and students were in this thing together and as long as everyone made a genuine commitment to the principles driving the documentary work, the course, and the student, would be deemed a success. Again, this scenario, I believe, depends on a mature student.

Even though I attended only one or two sessions of any given class, I felt my own skill level improving based on what I heard. Combining all the discussions, I gave greater thought to the relationship between the researcher and the “subject.” I began to stop trying to make the case study “prove” a point. I allowed the entire case study process to unfold naturally. I did more listening and less talking. I gained an appreciation for the connection between academic versions of fieldwork and the artistic and humanistic intentions of documentarians. Oral history and folklore preservation began to show up in my activities and thinking. I began to worry less about the course of my own career and the inability to describe my interests and put them in neat categorical boxes. If these things occurred in me after just “superficially” interacting with CDS faculty and students, it did occur to me that long term exposure to that type of learning environment would most likely expand a student’s worldview in a significant way.

I did feel that the projects housed at the CDS could involve students more. There is a clear divide between the CDS educational efforts and its professional activities. This organizational structure seems to work for the center, but I would argue that the center could take on a more dynamic feel and presence if students were drawn into some of the documentary projects such as the Jazz Loft, Neighborhood Project and About Race. There may be students involved in these projects on a sporadic nature, though I did not find in the literature or in interviews any evidence that an institutional effort is underway to connect the professional with the educational aspects of the CDS.

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The Student Action with Farmworkers is a good example of a CDS affiliated project that utilizes Duke students. Though these students are not necessarily CDS students, it is housed at the CDS and its work complies with the center's mission and vision.

Considering the rich material produced during the documentary classes, it would be nice to see an outlet for exhibiting and sharing student work. I did ask Tom, Charlie and Lynn about the possibility of a magazine or tabloid that would showcase student work. At the present time, "Document" shares center news and occasionally publishes student work, though it is a small exhibition of the size and scope of work being produced in classes. I was able to read some of the work produced in Charlie Thompson's yearly courses on migrant farmworkers. This material was found in the library in notebooks and other types of stapled or notebook binding. The writing quality was poor and would not have lent itself to publishing for dissemination.

Perhaps this is my journalistic nature at work here. If teachers had to worry about whether student work was of high enough quality to be shared publicly, it might affect the learning process. It would be difficult to "teach" students to respect the unfolding and discovery process if there was a publishing "outcome" expected.

It was also interesting to note that writing quality did not appear to be on the CDS priority list. There were two courses, the one taught by former journalist Spencie Love and the one taught by Kenan Randall that had a writing element to it. It appears that the quality of presentation is secondary to the quality of representation, and this characteristic makes the center different than "normal" academic environments. Again, my observations in this area are probably directly related to my background as a reporting and news writing teacher. Journalism is a product-based discipline while documentary work is process based.

I also felt that teachers appeared "unusually" comfortable in their surroundings. Classes felt much more like coffeehouse discussion groups than formal classrooms. They did not appear to be working from a structured syllabus; rather, they knew their subjects well and simply shared that "knowledge" with students. Students responded to this pedagogical approach by remaining interested throughout discussion periods and by asking a lot of questions of their "expert" instructor. Despite the informal feel of classrooms, this did not equate to "superficial

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knowledge” in my opinion. There was a respectful “academic” atmosphere between students and instructor.

There are four “outcomes” that I feel naturally occurred in the CDS courses:

- 1) Students learn about a particular subject in depth, both through class discussions and reading and through personal interaction with someone or something that represents that subject.
- 2) Students learn how to interact and/or engage with people or groups. That is, a particular method is advocated in each course, such as taking oral histories, shooting video or taking photographs.
- 3) Students learn about representing the views and realities of others
- 4) Students are asked to reflect critically on their own views about those points made above.

**Chapter Seven**  
**The People Make the Program**  
**Interviews at the Center for Documentary Studies**

**Name: Barbara Lau**  
**Title: Director of Community Programs**

“It isn’t the center’s priority, to take care of students.”

Barbara Lau is nothing if not honest.

Lau had quite a different take on documentary work than others at the center. She feels there is an inherent contradiction between the concept of service and the use of students in the process of service. It isn’t about learning, she says, but I disagree strongly.

Lau holds an office independent of the educational arm of the center. She does not teach. This is one of the aspects of the center that I was interested in exploring: the ability to operate programs and offer instruction to undergraduate students. It was painfully clear from Lau that while the center may do this, it isn’t without tension. I will say unequivocally that despite Lau’s feelings toward the interaction between the community programs and students, I feel an educational institution can, and should, explore ways to house sustainable ongoing programs in which students can participate.

Lau said she thinks students go into a service project to get a taste of a place or a group, or to gain a skill, but that isn’t fair to the people she tries to serve. I don’t see why that can’t happen and service be rendered as long as that is clear to all parties up front.

Lau said she feels it hurts communities, like hit and run, when students come into their lives, take their information and run. She prefers community or group initiated projects because they have total control. They ask for assistance and they already know why they want to do it and what they will do with any results or products.

What students can do, she says, is learn the process of engaging with a community. This is valuable in many ways. She draws the line, however, when it comes to creating programs that

depend on students for success because their priority is education (or graduation) and Lau's priority is facilitating a group's wishes.

She said she disagrees with teachers at the center who say their job is to teach empathy. I'm not really sure why she disagrees. Her job is different than that of a teacher. It's a fairly dramatic statement she made. My impression is that Lau interprets empathy to mean pity or sympathy. My understanding from speaking to the instructors is that empathy is a key component in documentary work. They speak of empathy as an attempt to develop cultural understanding as much as is humanly possible. I would agree with Lau if I felt sympathy did not lead to empathy with proper guidance, but I believe one is connected to the other in the learning process.

Community service, or service learning in the educational setting, is a "rich man's hobby," she said. I admit to wanting to debate this issue with Lau, but she is entitled to her point of view. Perhaps she has seen too many situations in which students hurt a community or group's program.

Lau said it isn't the role of the university to assist communities. They should do what they do best, she said. I sensed that Lau was not happy about the center's new direction or exploration into the Duke undergraduate terrain. Prior to this new mission, the center was a home for community based projects and a means of support for documentarians of different ilks. The situation could be described as old school versus new school of thought.

When you start to put the power in the hands of different people, the truth changes, Lau said. This is an important point. I liked the fact that Lau's passionate objection to student centered community service programs may be a genuine desire based on long term experience to protect the rights of people who want to be in control of their own stories and outputs. I need to take this idea further as it relates to journalism, i.e. when you identify yourself as a journalist versus no identification; you get different versions of the story. But if a person tells their own story, does that really mean we get closer to the truth? They often tell the truth as they see it or as they want us to see it, so who determines what is closer to the truth?



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Lau said it is disrespectful of a group if you send students in to do the work. It says to them, “we don’t think you are worth a professional.” I hadn’t thought of it this way. My feeling has always been that if a community is informed of the institutional mission clearly, they are happy to participate in the exchange of learning from both parties.

It was interesting to see how very very different Lau feels compared to that of a teacher. There’s a clear tension. Although I don’t agree with Lau’s take on things with regard to the end result (students engaging in service learning), she does make really good points that need to be considered. I think it is counterproductive for the center to leave this tension unresolved. If it intends to venture into academia, I think it needs to work through all relevant issues.

Because I am not privy to the day to day dialogue between center employees, I don’t know how much tension they feel. I may be making too much out of Lau’s philosophy because I am not familiar with the full context of the environment and history of the center. I do know that for my research purposes, an independent program within an academic department would have to be pro-student or it would be sabotaging its own mission – to provide opportunities for learning in a safe and democratic environment.

**Name: Alex Harris**

**Title: Holds a Professor of the Practice appointment through the Center for Public Policy and co-founder of the Center for Documentary Studies**

I was quite nervous about my interview with Alex Harris. With the departure of Robert Coles from the center, Harris is the only voice to speak to the center in a holistic way. He knows its origins and its journey to where it is today. He has a body of work that places him in the top tier of American social photographers. I am intimidated easily by people I admire. I am not intimidated by people deemed talented or visionary or even great if I do not connect with their work in some way. I knew Harris was a formidable brick in the center’s foundation and quite honestly, I did not want to mess up this interview.

Harris, like Ewald, is soft spoken. I have a particularly hard time with quiet personalities. It takes a great deal of effort on my part to tone down my own enthusiasm level to allow a person

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to speak freely in their own voice. For some reason, I equate a soft spoken nature with mysterious brilliance. Perhaps this is because I sometimes feel my outgoing nature is an unconscious effort to hide my flaws for fear of being found out as an intellectual fraud. Someone once offered me an alternative explanation. What if quiet people are doing the same thing, hiding quietly as opposed to hiding loudly?

What if some people are just loud and some are quiet?

At any rate, my preconceived idea about Harris' nature did make me a more nervous interviewer.

It is difficult to solicit in depth answers from Harris. He doesn't come across evasive, rather, he seems to have a clear idea in his mind of what is important and that's what he shares - no more and no less.

Harris said the center grew out of a documentary photography center located in the downtown area. When funding came their way, the funder had a very specific idea: not to become consumed by the academic institution, to have its own identity, chart its own course.

I found that ironic considering the center appears currently to be aligning itself to Duke University in a more traditional way. Perhaps this is the tension I felt when I spoke to Barbara Lau.

Robert Coles, Bill Chapman and Harris were teachers when the center started to take shape. Harris would be the stable component while the other two commuted. They were looking for ways to do documentary work by getting it out there, which you couldn't do if you were in academe. It has taken this long for the center to evolve, he said.

Now the center is in a position to replicate opportunities for students. He likened the center to the Iowa Writers' Workshop which started independent and moved into an academic structure, and the College of Santa Fe which started with faculty in the environmental conservation department, who merged documentary work with conservation. Now the college is offering a degree program in documentary studies.

"The point of the project is to get to know something, -knowing that you can't find it. You define something as it re-defines itself," explained Harris. This was a simple but complex way of explaining his epistemology. I need to explore this further with other documentarians. It

differs greatly from the way journalists are trained. From my experience, journalism teachers present a quasi-positivist epistemology by default. Even if a teacher believes, as Harris does, that knowledge is an evolving process based on the evolving nature of reality, it would be difficult to send a student into an industry limited by availability of sources, finances and time constraints. It seems easier to teach students that everything is finite as opposed to infinite.

Harris said Robert Coles took this approach: You have heroes, and you pass them on to others. Most people hadn't heard of Coles' heroes and now they are "household" names.

Alex said there are two parts to him: One doesn't care at all about what documentary work is, what it means, but for 30 years he's had to try and define it for others. He used to be a purist, perfecting technical skills so he could better render people's lives.

One notion is that a purist strives for minimal impact. At times this has been Harris' work philosophy. Then, there is a more intentional social activist bent to his work which allows him to focus on content rather than technique. In terms of training, Harris says students need just enough technique to find their own voices. I really liked that statement. It takes a confident person to say "just enough." It cannot be defined. He trusts his judgment and that of his students. He notes that Paul Strand wrote in a 1971 New Yorker piece that it took him eight years to find his "voice" photographically.

I have to consider what the point of education is in this area when the market for documentary work is narrow. It would be like offering a journalism program for non-profit organizations only. Interest in documentary films is growing in America in part, I believe, because Michael Moore's documentary films have touched a national button on issues such as war and health care. Harris said he believes "documentary" work could have a larger market if more academic programs were offered. The center has found a way to take its form of documentary work into the non-profit world through its Lewis Hines documentary fellows program which matches students with non-profit organizations abroad. This is a program connected to the Center for Public Policy at Duke University. I will take an in-depth look at this program as part of the case study.

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I asked Alex, if he could choose how to educate a person to do documentary work, what would he want to teach them?

He said:

1. Choose a subject you are passionate about
2. Take time, interact, engage
3. Use your tools to record, to explore rather than say something.
4. And finally, it's all in the editing – respond to the best of what you've seen.

What Harris just described is exactly the vision I have for a journalism school. Except, I would add #5: It's all in the teachers. You have to have like-minded people committed to a shared vision and committed to an environment that encourages passion, creativity and above all, courage.

We ran out of time and rescheduled another meeting. I find these discussions difficult because I am coming from a very distinct educational point of view and the documentarians are not. We have different discourses. They talk content, I talk structure. I have to. No matter how much I want to discuss abstract ideas, I have a limited timeframe in which to gather their insights into how you take those abstract ideas, apply them to journalism and create a curriculum in a traditional educational setting.

It's challenging. In general, documentarians are abstract, conceptual thinkers, which is funny considering they engage in what people think is a very fact based, reality based, clear cut recording of events. It's much more artistic in nature than you think. They don't talk about skill. Students aren't required to have photographic skill because that isn't what it's about. I think documentary film instruction must be a bit different with a focus on .intrusive equipment, lighting, crews and new technology. The reason I wanted to focus on the CDS approach is because it does not focus its attention on the medium. Over the past decade, the Center has begun to explore how to present its work on specific media platforms, though the focus is still on the content. Whether the Center presents its work on blogs, websites, video, film or print, says Harris, the Center will always evaluate how the message changes based on the medium and

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how to hold on to its mission.

When I talk to Alex again, I want to know: if he had all the money in the world, and all the freedom and control, what type of educational institution would he design? What kind of students, teachers, facility, equipment, mission – is this it? What would be done with the product?

I also want to get a sense of his feelings on what I see as the “elite” nature of the work – the funding process, the audience (should we even attempt a media literacy kind of campaign to draw a bigger audience?) I want to know what he feels others gain from this type of work – not the “subjects” and not the practitioner, but the audience.

**Name: Randall Kenan**

**Title: Holds a dual appointment as the Lehman Brady Chair in American Studies and Documentary Studies between Duke University and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.**

Randall Kenan holds the title of Lehman Brady Chair of American Studies and Documentary Studies. He will lecture for a year at both Duke and UNC Chapel Hill. His writing accomplishments are indisputable; however, I don't see the connection between what Kenan does and American Studies or Documentary Studies. That is, his work has received wide acclaim, but Kenan is proof, to me at least, that we cannot make an assumption about a person's ability to contribute in a classroom based on their professional work.

For example: Charlie Thompson, Wendy Ewald, Margaret Sartor and Alex Harris are members of the center's inside circle. There is an unspoken understanding based on the center's history about what “documentary” means and how it is played out in a classroom setting. Kenan, on the other hand, speaks of documentary much like a laymen would. He is a writer. He talks about documentary as a method. The others noted above talk of documentary as a worldview.

The other Center faculty and instructors speak about the importance of perspective, of honoring the subject with an open mind, allowing the subject to evolve as opposed to acting as a journalist that must mold a narrative that fits with the medium. How does the documentarian view the world? Kenan did not address this issue that is central to the Center's mission and

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goals.

I have always thought that students gain from being exposed to authors and other professionals. Kenan brings enthusiasm to the table. He brings life experiences to the table. But I could not erase the disconnect I felt with Kenan—a disconnect between what the center espouses and what Kenan represents. In short, he seemed out of place save for the fact that he is a writer.

The conversation with Kenan was strange. Kenan holds a dual chair in American studies and documentary studies, but he doesn't seem to have any real thoughts on the issue of documentary work. I pulled out all my journalistic interviewing tricks, but could not engage Kenan in a conversation about documentary work. He didn't present as evasive; he just didn't seem to have any thoughts about the issues I presented.

Honestly, in 30 minutes' time, I learned nothing from Kenan. There is nothing in my notes worth transferring to field notes. He said nothing. My notes read: 1) writing is about point of view and sometimes that takes time 2) lots of feature stories use narrative techniques 3) some war correspondents wrote up close and personal stories.

He did refer to Rick Bragg, who has been discussed in several of the courses I observed, but if Bragg's writing is considered documentary, I'd like to know why. I have my own thoughts about Bragg's work and I do believe his particular worldview is an equal partner to his writing talent, but I wonder how Bragg's mainstream writing fits into the center's approach to education. Kenan did not respond to questions about Bragg's form of feature and in-depth reporting could be woven into journalist training. Bragg's journalistic work has a common thread which, to me, seems to be a compassionate worldview and a careful consideration of the way his writing subjects see the world. He also just happens to be a mainstream journalist. Most mainstream journalists follow a more traditional neutral stance.

Kenan is an extremely likable man. He smiles a lot and makes you feel comfortable. He seems uncomfortable with the connection between what he does and what the center is trying to do. I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing. He provides me with more motivation to find a way to connect the two. Students have a lot to gain from Kenan's interest in cultural and sexual themes and the way he presents them in writing. Kenan would fit well into a traditional journalism program because he has mastered non-fiction narrative. But, if he were able to also

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articulate his worldview and how that dictates his writing style, students would move closer to empathetic journalism or, work within the framework of the documentary tradition. I had a limited conversation with Kenan. He was due for other appointments. I had a limited observation period of his teaching methods and message. Despite this, I was able to use my exposure to Kenan as “ammunition” in my argument for a curriculum model designed to address worldview AND medium.

**Name: Wendy Ewald**

**Title: Founder and Director, Literacy Through Photography; holds faculty appointment with Duke.**

I confess that I went into this interview with high expectations and stars in my eyes. I have been enamored with the work of Ewald for at least 10 years. I was interested to see how the person matched up to my ideas.

Ewald is very soft spoken, a quality which I would love to have and just don't possess. Her work has been so intertwined with that of children that I don't really know about her as a photographer in her own right.

The students who take Literacy Through Photography courses are from all academic backgrounds. I thought they were all education students, but that's not true. The course is offered through the education department, but hasn't always been so.

What skills do students learn in this course?

1. They learn to understand children better. They are forced to examine how they view children and then, by nature of the work, they start to re-examine their own privileged status.
2. She says many of them come with highly romantic notions. They think they are going to serve children in distress.
3. They learn critical thinking skills
4. They learn photographic skills.

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Ewald says students are usually frustrated by the process because it is never cut and dried, no matter how much structure or information is given. They see how hard teaching is, but at the end, they also see the benefits in allowing things to evolve (like documentary work itself, and life for that matter.)

She is training students to make a COLLABORATIVE document. “When I started, I didn’t teach as much about education. I work intuitively. I didn’t study education.”

Now, Ewald says she includes a lot more about learning theory, child development and so on.

Her type of work is about the relationship between the “artist” and the material.

“Documentary has almost come to be used as a dirty word,” said Ewald. It has a class connotation because of the work done in the 30s and 40s. It was looking at “others” as opposed to art – the German new documentaries strip all emotion. It was more artistic in Europe.

But it has a wide spectrum now - “The way it intersects between art and anthropology.”

The premise is simple: each person sees the world differently. For her, it’s fascinating to see how others see.

As Ewald was talking, I had an idea for a project: Do you see what I see?

It would be interesting to document something, and then allow others to document the very same thing, without knowing others had done this.

Ewald has taken her interests and spun off in several directions. If she had no restrictions, her future projects would include:

Creating an interactive website

Workshops for different regions

New curriculum

More money for pilots

Making the archive bigger

Again, the interview with Ewald proved challenging. “True” documentarians do not think as educators. At least they don’t express themselves as educators. It seems that education is



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secondary and performed by trial and error. But, this has been my experience with journalists turned educators. It's probably true of nurses turned nursing instructors or lawyers turned professor. Those academic disciplines which do not rely on professionals to enter academic are structured in a traditional "scholarly" manner. Then, tensions arise between professional programs and traditional academic programs. Scholars look at professionals turned academic as "less than" and professionals look at scholars as "elitist" and out of touch.

This is an ongoing tension in the journalism education community. There is some merit to the argument, but I don't believe it's the merit discussed publicly. Any time you take a practitioner and ask her to become educator, you must understand what it feels like to work without a net.

My hope is to create a curriculum model that puts this dynamic on the table as a given, not a deficiency.

**Name: Margaret Sartor**

**Title/affiliation/role: Teaches photography based courses at CDS, edits books, photographer, writer**

This was one of those great interviews journalists long for. I think Margaret represents the reasons I am drawn to this type of work. She is confident. She loves what she does. She knows others don't understand it, and that's just fine. She has enjoyed the journey, relished it in fact. She thinks deeply and out loud.

She says documentary is evolving, and that that's the point entirely – evolving, unfolding, allowing, emerging. The duty of the center is to explore this "thing", not define it.

Unfortunately, I have to try to define it if I expect anyone to embrace a model centered on it.

Sartor admits she has taken only one photography class. Her father taught her how to take pictures at a young age.

She said she is not trying to convince anyone of anything, which isn't true of social documentarians.

In terms of teaching, she says her philosophy is, don't plan much. You teach people to let

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things be revealed. For a lot of students, it's a life changing experience. It's so empowering. They get excited about themselves. They are trusted to think, feel, speak, act.

She says it is exhausting to teach this kind of work because you have to engage with each student personally about their project to make sure they get what they need to get from the experience.

Sartor was speaking to the issue of pedagogy without using that term. Because of the size and structure of the CDS, teachers can afford to teach in a critical manner. Sartor sees herself as a practitioner passing on ideas to students. She has the authority to do this because she is not tied to the requirements of an academic. But if a traditional journalism program relied on visiting professionals, there would be a problem with continuity and overlapping of outcomes. I need to explore this issue further.

It's an unsettled feeling when you refuse to simplify life, explained Sartor. When you look right at it, you live a more unsettled life.

I love this. "The people I work with, they get what I do."

She doesn't have to explain herself. There is time freed up to do what needs to be done, not justify and argue and play games like an academic department. This is an intriguing concept because of the focus in the journalism education community on defining what kind of teacher or scholar or journalist we are. The entire focus of this research project is to compare and contrast the work of the CDS and the arguments made in the journalism education literature about identity. The Center does not have this discussion. Those involved with the Center share a philosophy and they don't expend a lot of energy trying to define rigid criteria for hiring.

Sartor hesitantly admits she teaches because she needs the money. For the most part, most documentarians do this. It's a really hard existence, finding money and sustenance. She loves teaching, but that isn't her love.

This conversation was held at the home of Sartor and her husband, Alex Harris. They have two children. Their home reflects their genuine selves. I do wish the CDS reflected the same worldview this home projected.

The home is an old farmhouse which seems out of place on a busy highway. Sartor says that when they bought it years ago, the surrounding area was uninhabited. Somehow they've

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managed to wall themselves and the property off to the point that it feels like you're in a rural area.

There are pictures covering every inch of wall space. That is, every inch that isn't covered with something else. Tapestries and artifacts adorn the walls. Color is everywhere. Fabrics are varied and rich. Furniture is old and worn but comfortable and friendly. Signs of children appear in every nook and cranny. It's unorganized but tidy. The home screams "family" and tells you a lot of living and growing has taken place within these walls. This, I thought, is an environment where learning occurs.

Sartor had to run out and pick up her daughter. Our time was too short. I found myself wanting to sit at the country kitchen table with a cup of tea for hours hearing about Sartor's life and passions. Sometimes I think I'm drawn to people not for what they say, but how they say it. I'll take enthusiasm and joy over accuracy or efficiency any day of the week.

I feel the need to confess that when I feel a sense of comfort and belonging, I try to recreate it. I've been fortunate to experience at least a few environments that left profound impressions on me. Parker Palmer has said that "the degree to which a person yearns for community is directly related to the dimming of memory of his or her last experience of it" (1987 Sept/Oct. Change Magazine)

The bottom line is, I may very well have chosen this research topic because I want to recreate a learning community to fill my own "dimming of memory." The longer it takes for me to find that community, the higher the degree of yearning.

The interview with Sartor and the feelings evoked from her home increased my level of yearning by a few degrees.

**Name: Tom Rankin**

**Title: Director of the Center for Documentary Studies**

I'm not quite sure what to make of Tom Rankin. His resume is impressive. He has explored the southern landscape for years in a variety of ways. He presents as a professional but down to earth.

Rankin was brought in as director, it seems, when the CDS board decided to revise the

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center's mission and methods. He has both a professional and academic background, and seems an ideal person to bridge the divide between an independent creative body and a traditional academic body. It may take more time for Rankin to figure out a way to create clear boundaries and a more visible structure for the center, which I think it needs if it wants to offer itself to students as part of their academic experience. There is a big difference between independent and collaboration.

Rankin says there is a distinct difference between process and product that seems irreconcilable. He was referring to documentary work versus journalistic work.

The center's job, Rankin says, is not to create a curriculum to train students for a specific career, but to facilitate learning about ways of knowing that will inform many occupations.

He refers to the ongoing debate in higher educational institutions across the country. We're in an age of consumerism and universities are being challenged about their relevance to the labor market. The center does not promise an occupational program. Because it does not promise this, students voluntarily take courses there for reasons other than job training. The center does not have to change its vision because it has independent funding and a history of independence, but my sense is that it is changing its vision without a corresponding plan for implementation.

Rankin recognizes that there is a job culture and a learning culture that creates tension. His experience has been that most "documentary" students choose graduate school for specific occupational training after liberal arts training.

Students often ask him, what's the recipe? How do I make a living? He doesn't have any easy answers. How can I pursue work that is my passion and that is needed?

Rankin's observation of student concerns connect with Parker Palmer's notion of the divided self and his theory of vocation: a place where the student's deep gladness meets the world's great need.

The director says students can look at the paths of their teachers, which is an added benefit of practitioner? This needs to be explored: do teachers open up their paths to their students if they are proud, and withhold if they are not?

The center has built a curriculum based on bookends – first, the traditions. Then you

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experience these traditions in a variety of ways. Then you demonstrate what you know and how you interpret that knowledge.

The Center for Documentary Studies' Three step Curriculum:

- 1) Exposure to broad ideas. Talk about it. Explore the meaning in a safe environment.
- 2) Experience those ideas. Do it. Fail. Practice. Get up. Different themes. Different skills.
- 3) Demonstrate your understanding.

How would this curriculum look if designed for a specific occupation? Can it be designed for this purpose? Would it need to leave journalism skills for graduate school? What would a documentary-based education do for a journalist? "It would make that reporter aware of how little he knew. It would make him understand how the subject feels," says Rankin.

I thought this was significant, epistemologically speaking. I have not witnessed journalism teachers encouraging students to admit how little they know. The opposite has been my experience. Students are taught to "know" so they can inform others. I personally adhere to Rankin's philosophy because I know the public has abdicated its searching role. If a journalist actually knows little, but the public assumes she knows everything, we have an ill informed electorate.

Rankin said he wasn't sure whether the average reader would notice the difference between the work of a journalist from a documentary background and a journalist from a traditional background. This idea would serve as a worthy research project.

When students are exposed to an oral history process, they develop a new relationship with the interview process, said Rankin. Again, it is unclear whether training in oral history methods would make a difference to daily news reporting. Proving a difference quantitatively would be difficult. I believe oral history would add to a student's understanding of "others," which could not possibly hurt. For the purposes of this research project, oral history refers to a research method, not a journalistic practice.

I think it's interesting that journalists often go into documentary work, or become

folklorists or cultural journalists, writers, filmmakers, but not usually the other way around?

Rankin opined that one of the ways journalism might be affected by documentary education is that there is an issue of relationship with your editor. Traditionally, says Rankin, journalists aim to please their editors. If editors are aiming to please their supervisors and their publishers, all field practice is conducted in search of approval, not accuracy. He said that if editors adhered to a philosophy similar to that of the documentary tradition, we would likely find more stories based on patterns. He said the people most likely to understand the local are the reporters. They are not just a vehicle for information. Different issues might get covered if reporters and editors were exposed early on to broad issues and the documenting of those issues. Documenting is different than reporting; the former takes more time, more patience, less adherence to the notion of objectivity and a reverence for the story subjects.

Historically, there is a fine line between documentary work and journalism, said Rankin. They are tense cousins; documentaries are like magnifying glasses that look very intently at a particular person, place or thing that sometimes represent a larger issue. Rankin says they are richest when dealing with things that no one pays attention to. It amplifies an issue.

What is the difference between the two? I asked.

“Simply put, it is passion,” answered Rankin.

Once again I find myself questioning my motives. It is the passion documentarians exhibit that I find attractive and missing in mainstream media and daily American life. Because journalists have a profound impact on the tone of our lives, I want them to be passionate people. I recognize that the current profit-based media system sucks the passion out of many journalists. This is why I want a new system – educational and media. I want a wholesale boycott of what I see generally as a passionless form of education and a resultant passionless information system and finally, a passionless electorate and citizenry.

Rankin says the advantage of a liberal arts education is that students SEE THE LINK between all subjects. Once they see and experience the link, they can decide how to manifest that vision in the workplace and/or their lives.

The CDS is fortunate to have a self-selecting student pool of students. The Center does

not “need” students in numbers in the same way an academic program needs them. Students enroll in courses knowing that credit for those courses will not advance their chosen major; rather, he says students enroll in courses because they want to learn about the documentary tradition. Rankin says they are generally curious about the world outside. They are engaged and have a high degree of altruism. They are also aesthetically curious. They are naturally interested in other cultures and many travel abroad.

I challenge the notion that a picture is about art or journalism. It’s a combination of both. If it’s not a piece of art, it won’t be convincing anyone. If it’s art but seen through the eyes of someone who doesn’t connect to others, it won’t resonate with the viewer.

For the most part, Rankin says, the students who gravitate toward the CDS are interested in humanity.

### **How is documentary different from journalism?**

Documentary is a way to talk about values, approaches, and ways of thinking. Some define social documentary photography as a form whose key is the intention. It says, “I want you to see this.” The documentarian is “allowed” to have an agenda or intention.

There is an apparent contradiction that I have not been able to resolve during interviews with the CDS staff. And that is, if documentary work is about empowerment and change and social activism, why is it directed at a limited audience? If a documentarian wants her work to be seen to effect change, why not work toward mass audience for the work?

My interview with Rankin reinforced my view that traditional journalism has something to offer the documentary tradition and vice versa.

**Phone Interview with Noah Hendler, former Duke student  
February 2, 2003.**

When the doc center was still downtown as a photography center, Noah came in contact with Alex and Wendy. He enjoyed the process a lot and felt the camera was a good excuse to hide behind to see the world. He liked the way Alex balanced art with career. He was a freshman when introduced to the center.

He worked his way into the “world” bit by bit: he won a student art award which led to more pictures, and took pictures in New York, a spiritual autobiography, which “changed my life”. Noah was highly influenced by photographer Tom Roma, following up with him to work on other projects. He eventually graduated from NYU in interactive telecommunications. His experience has bled into his life – he pursues a creative life as a result. He said some people are just ideally suited and vulnerable to the documentary message. I would like to follow up on this issue. What type of student is drawn to the documentary tradition?

I gained little insight from talking with Noah. He expressed no interest in the idea of mainstreaming the documentary perspective. He didn’t think it possible because of the time and subjectivity issues involved. He didn’t respond to my questions about the elite audience nature of documentary work and how that contradicts an activist activity.

**Interview with former CDS student Eric Gottesman:**

Eric is five years out from graduation. He graduated from Duke with an interdisciplinary major – American Intellectual Development, history through a multidisciplinary lens. In his junior year, he took his interest in photography to work for the school paper. He won a John Hope Franklin award to shoot in New Hampshire.

He did some type of internship with the Supreme Court and thought he might go to law school, but after freelancing for a while he got a Hart Fellowship. He worked with Save the Children on drought related issues for about 4 months in Africa. He went out on assessment trips and followed doctors around. He took pictures, which had not been done before in this manner.



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He provided a report to the U.S. Aid Agency. The AID agency was amazed by the personal nature of the work. (This is one of the applications of documentary work.)

People showed real interest in this type of work, but he didn't have enough skill, he said. This type of work isn't based on technical skill' it is based on a person's ability to engage. This is a critical point to remember as I make an argument for a worldview based journalism program. With journalists, as Eric emphasized, it is all about product. For documentarians, the priority is process. Again, this is a critical element in a documentary-based journalism program.

The experience sparked his interest in working on social and international issues. He returned to Duke. First he was unfunded, and then he got some money for projects in San Francisco, including working on a book project about pastoral leadership in the Southern U.S. The issue, he said, is that the best work takes time. Editors have to be the type that doesn't want the same old thing. The time issue limits the creativity.

This type of work also requires a big commitment on the part of the reader/viewer. It isn't easy to market. I think this is an assumption as neither Eric nor Noah knew of any instances where marketing to mainstream audiences was attempted. They both note that the New Yorker magazine adapted some of the DoubleTake sections. "I really try to engage, bringing the subject and viewer together," he said. (This comment reflects a critical way of knowing. Knower and known must be connected intimately, not standing at a distance from pain and joy).

What the documentary center does best, he says, is bring subject closer to viewer. He said we are limited by what we don't know. (I think this is a profound statement. Journalists, in particular, are limited by what they don't know. If an educational program was designed to address this basic issue, journalism students would "hit the ground running" with a broad base of knowledge). Of course, this is a somewhat naïve statement because designing a curriculum that would result in students with both passion for the professional technique and content is problematic. Questions related to curriculum development are addressed in later chapters.

Eric said journalists think, “If I have to understand how people here are seeing it, it takes the edge off the authority of voice.” That’s a powerful statement. If that statement is true, it would mean that journalists care more about the authority of their speaking voice than the authenticity of voices.

“I’ve always felt uncomfortable with process,” he said. He saw the others at the Duke CDS as people who were at the stage he wanted to be at. There’s a lot of floating in the career process. It isn’t cut and dried like law or medicine. It requires a “ton” of self-motivation. Much of the work of documentarians is done via grants or private funding because there are few organizations engaging exclusively in documentary work; there is little profit in such a venture.

“People who know me but don’t understand the work, well they have certain expectations. Then that affects my own expectations of myself. There is no set path into this,” said Eric. (My interpretation of Eric’s statement is that documentarians are often seen as eccentric or artsy because it is difficult to pour themselves into a full time demanding career just to make money to support a part time documentary habit. Instead, they do just what is necessary to make enough money to support a full time passion, not necessarily a full time career.)

Eric said you need friends and colleagues like you. Without institutional backing, it is difficult to get feedback. You also need to be flexible because the work depends on meeting people, personal inspiration, things that can’t really be assigned or forced.

Eric, like Noah, did not provide insight into the issue of mainstreaming the documentary perspective. Each time I returned the conversation back to the topic of a potential training ground for journalists, they changed the subject back to an abstract topic. I wasn’t discouraged by this, however. I actually felt that their non-response confirmed my theory. There is a natural disconnect between documentary work and mainstream media. But natural does not mean impossible to overcome. If people recognize the value and benefits of the documentary perspective and they recognize the value of a journalists’ work, there is no reason not to meld the two together. I think it will be easier to convince journalism students than it will be to convince

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documentarians. I believe documentarians look at journalism as an unwanted stepchild in the family of communication techniques. It brings me back to class conflict: elite versus mainstream.

### **Follow up interview with Charlie Thompson**

**Date: 1-27-03**

I wanted to talk to Charlie about his job. I wanted a better understanding of the way the Center deals with “education” as opposed to housing documentarians and projects. I don’t think there is a unified vision or effort underway yet. Charlie’s background is not in education. The Center’s original focus and mission was not education. No record system is in place, although Shirley is helping establish a system. I think Charlie does the best he can, but he’s a lone voice out there in charge of a vague term of “education.” The Center’s main function is not formal academic education; it is Charlie’s job to build a bridge between Duke University and the Center. Having said that, I still can draw from what they do, though I know what they are not doing as well.

The faculty don’t meet together and discuss balance to the courses offered. It’s sort of hit and miss; whatever comes Charlie’s way, he goes for. Potential instructors are referred by professional educators or documentarians. Their body of work speaks for itself. He isn’t required to fulfill the same type of requirements as a regular academic department. He did say that the dean wants to see academics hired in the same way as a department but there is no concerted pressure.

Duke engages in a hiring practice called “Professor In The Practice.” This is something I’d like to investigate further. I think it recognizes there is a “difference” between practitioners in a specialized field who have something to offer and those who have chosen academic/research career paths. One isn’t less than another. The tenure requirements are somewhat different. I still need to ask Charlie in a more direct way what the PLAN is in terms of education. Is there a plan? What about writing? It’s very weak in the curriculum. Do they want to produce students with expertise, or general knowledge? Do they give any thought to the applicability of their work to

the workplace or graduate school?

### **Follow up conversation with Alex Harris**

I met again with Alex Harris to follow up on some of the questions left unanswered after our first interview and questions that arose from that first meeting. I was particularly interested in Harris' thoughts about journalism and about representing others. I have become increasingly uncomfortable over the years with documenting other cultures. It seems arrogant to "speak" for others. Documentary work almost always approaches a group or culture or other and attempts to "render" them (a term used often within the documentary tradition which means, generally speaking, to paint a picture that is as accurate as possible with the realization that, just as artists create renderings, they are all limited by the inability of humans to ever write or photograph with absolute objectivity." Most of the people I've spoken to at the CDS do not appear to be social activists as a general rule. They seem to be world observers who then offer up their interpretation of what they observe. I can't tell if they do it for themselves, for the "subjects" or for an audience. Because the audience is so narrow, I am confused about the purpose of the work. If I had to choose, I'd say that documentary work is sometimes chosen to fulfill a need in the documentarian, sometimes for the subject and sometimes for an audience.

Harris said there are tensions inherent in documentary work. "Let's not pretend everyone can do this kind of work, immersing self in another world," he said.

This is another key element to consider in the development of a curriculum or educational model. A program must admit up front that it isn't for everyone.

Harris sums up documentary work in short precise phrases:

"You have to translate for the outsider."

"You have to be there long enough to do away with preconceived ideas."

“When you edit your work and respond to what you found there, it is an act of discovery.”

I have approached the case study much in the same way Harris describes documentary work. Yes, I have “followed” acceptable forms of case study research, but only to satisfy the academic requirements. I believe that research is about discovery. Harris describes “knowing” similar to Parker Palmer and Laurel Richardson’s description. Palmer believes truth is the result of a dialogue with yourself. Richardson believes truth can emerge through the writing process. Harris also believes new knowledge is gained by responding to one’s work and editing to translate to others. I would adhere to all three claims.

My feeling is that documentarians see journalism as a “lower” form of communication. For that reason, I think many journalism students would often be more likely to consider the documentary perspective. The “trick” will be devising a program that appeals to students drawn to documentary work and then show them how that perspective can be used in a mainstream way.

Most of my interviews at the CDS have left me feeling even more certain that research is needed to evaluate the contribution of the documentary tradition to journalism. Most interviewees seemed amused by my questions. They talk one language and I speak another. The difference is, I want to incorporate their language into my own and they do not exhibit signs of wanting to learn my language. Even my repeated questions about journalism education did not evoke interest. I’ll need to explore this “resistance” a bit more if I hope to express myself in a language documentarians will hear.

**Interview with Courtney Reid-Eaton**  
**Title: Publication coordinator**

I wanted to speak with Courtney because, like Barbara Lau, she directs an office that is independent of Duke University. Her job is to facilitate exhibits. She teaches in the adult continuing education program. Her area of interest is alternative publishing formats. We had a

lively and interesting conversation, but it wasn't useful in terms of my research.

I realized quickly that Courtney did not have an impact on CDS publishing, nor did she have any teaching experience. She has a big personality which is refreshing. She clearly loves photography. She showed me a lot of examples of alternative publishing which were beautiful and creative, but when I tried to transition into a discussion about the application of alternative publishing to a journalism program, she cocked her head a bit and look bewildered. I've evoked that same look several times during my CDS interviews. It's as if the idea is a quaint notion, but nah, could never work. This just makes me want to explore it all the more.

I did think Courtney was somehow connected to the CDS publishing projects. It turns out that she is in charge of handling sales of the materials. Iris Tillman-Hill and Lynn McKnight have more influence on the actual marketing materials and publications sponsored by CDS.

### **Interview with Lynn McKnight**

#### **Title: Director of Communications and Marketing**

Lynn McKnight is the CDS marketing director. She does a phenomenal job if the image of the CDS is her doing. The literature is slick and the language compelling. There is a unified theme to everything the center puts out. The design is flawless. It has drawn my attention for many years. From the literature I felt certain that the CDS would be a place of learning, sharing and growing. I thought it would be abuzz with creative personalities. I also thought it would be an educational laboratory for others to replicate.

Lynn does her job a little too well, I think. The literature is not misleading. It does exactly what it says it does; it offers what it advertises. The literature did give me the feeling that a unified or cohesive framework existed to hold the thing together. I never found that unity. Perhaps the board has a unified vision and the hiring of Tom Rankin is one way to implement that vision. From the inside, it seems like a hall of individual offices connected by a name. The literature does not portray the isolated nature of activity in the building, nor should it.

Lynn's background is in Southern Studies and journalism. She holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Florida. It shows. She has helped shape an image package that appeals to a mass audience. When Lynn told me she had a background in journalism, a lot of

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things came together. What is visible to outsiders is the work of a journalist mind. But, inside, that isn't true.

Lynn said she'd like to expand the center's web presence with a deeper sampling of documentary work. She is somewhat product oriented because she is in charge of marketing a brand. She feels that some of the people at the center are open to the idea of mainstreaming documentary work. If interest in the certificate increases, it may be worth looking at ways to tailor courses to be more "job oriented" like journalism. Right now, she and the center staff have the luxury of freedom; students come voluntarily if they are interested. There is no pressure at this time to change the marketing literature of the CDS mission to draw more students.

### **Follow up conversation with Tom Rankin**

**Date: 2-17-03**

Before leaving the CDS I spoke with Tom Rankin for a few minutes. His time seems heavily scheduled off campus. I thanked Tom for allowing me access to the center staff and teachers. I did try one last time to engage him in a conversation about the similarities and differences between documentary work and journalism.

He said he feels documentary work plays a specific role, that of catalyst to action. He said reflection and affirmation don't occur in journalism. I don't know exactly what he means or how he judges journalists he doesn't know. Clearly there are more than one definition of "reflection" and "affirmation." I don't necessarily see the action component in work done by Alex Harris and Margaret Sartor. I understand the intention behind the work of Robert Coles but he is no longer affiliated with the center. Harris and Rankin have not written extensively on the subject.

Rankin's background is in folklore and photography. He has experience in an academic setting. He seems to be an excellent fit for the center. It will be interesting to see how his vision and leadership style shapes and affects the center over the next few years.

### **Interpretation of interviews**

Generally speaking, my interaction with faculty and staff at the CDS left me with the feeling that Margaret Sartor was right. The people who work there “get” what each other does and why they do it. I left North Carolina believing that I, too, “get” what they do and why they do it. Margaret’s statement said to me that even though there are multiple realities at play under the roof of the CDS, there is a “general,” or “common,” understanding among everyone there about the nature of the CDS philosophy and the nature of the work that falls under that philosophy.

Alex Harris cautioned me with, “Let’s not pretend everyone can do this.” I believe what he was saying is that the notion of marrying documentary work and journalism is, in itself, unrealistic because it takes a “special” type of person to perform documentary work, while anyone can be a journalist. Harris did not refer to journalists in this way; however, my overall impression from all the interviews was that journalism is the reason documentary work is needed and important. Documentary work fills the gap left by journalistic work. There is a general “disdain” expressed toward traditional journalists.

When Tom Rankin said that they are fortunate to have a self-selecting pool, I realized more acutely that my decision to conduct a case study on the CDS was, in effect, putting me in that self-selecting pool; I chose to explore the CDS because I am drawn to the nature of the work. My interviews, while some were difficult and forced me to reconsider some of my ideas and beliefs, provided me with a much deeper understanding of the nuances of documentary work and how the CDS imparts these nuances to students.

First, CDS staff and instructors “teach” by example. Former CDS student Eric Gottesman said “everyone should get a chance to study under Wendy Ewald at least once.” He was profoundly impacted by Wendy, not just as a student sitting in one of her classrooms, but as an observer of her body of work and method of sharing with students. Alex Harris’ body of work fills shelves and is still growing. Margaret Sartor is constantly involved in a new expressive project of some type. Ian Lekus is conducting innovative research in the area of gender and sexuality. Without exception, every instructor has a background that speaks for itself and speaks



loudly to students, I believe.

There is also a consistency that I believe helps students bond with the CDS. The center often offers the same course many times and word gets around to other students. Some of the instructors at the CDS have been involved with the center for a decade or more. The departure of Robert Coles doesn't appear to have affected the student learning environment.

There wasn't any evidence that the center engages in formal curriculum development. This might be in keeping with the general documentary way of seeing and doing; let the course menu develop on its own. At the time of writing, the center's course offering is not so much a result of careful planning for a balance of topics as it is a result of its reputation and the number of professionals that want to teach at the center. As Charlie noted in our last phone interview, the center isn't desperate. It doesn't have to go out recruiting instructors. The Raleigh Durham area is home to many documentarians of many types. Their body of work is usually well known to the staff and faculty at the CDS. The curriculum, except for the certificate bookend courses, seems driven by faculty expertise and by who comes forward and presents themselves to the center for consideration.

Without exception, each person I interviewed found my questions related to connecting documentary work with mainstream journalism either amusing or problematic. Also without exception, those interviewed shared a common discourse, a language that seemed unique to the CDS version of the documentary tradition. Although Robert Coles is no longer affiliated with the CDS, the language used by current faculty and staff mirrors that used by Coles in *Doing Documentary Work*. Instructors address the issue of privileged people documenting people less fortunate or different than themselves. They refer to the same literature Coles refers to as examples of reflection. They all attest to the difficulty of defining the term "documentary" and believe that "you know it when you see it." They differ from Coles, however, because they do not emphasize personal heroes the way Coles does.

My interviews created an interdisciplinary and humanistic picture for me. It didn't matter what the instructor's expertise was in; he/she spoke in humanistic terms, not disciplinary terms.

## **Chapter Eight: Program Materials: The Center for Documentary Studies**

Although the CDS short course program is not intended for undergraduate or graduate students, it provides another view of the documentary tradition and the way in which the center offers educational opportunities to share that tradition.

The short course program at Duke University is quite popular with the local surrounding communities. Programs most often have waiting lists. The CDS sponsors a certificate in documentary studies for non-university students. Students are required to take six three-credit courses for a total of 18 credit hours, though these hours are not university credits.

The short course offerings are actually much more “journalism” in nature. They, too, combine a topic with a research method or mode of representation; however, the focus appears to be much more skill oriented than the undergraduate courses. Local community activists, documentarians, writers, photographers and filmmakers teach the courses.

In the spring of 2003, the period of the case study, the course offerings were:

- Seminar in documentary studies
- Documentary storytelling
- The Untold Story: Interviewing and beyond
- Documenting the Modern African-American Freedom Struggle
- Intimacy with the natural world: A documentary approach
- Basic Photography
- Location Lighting
- Fresh Eyes: an introduction to documentary photography
- Visual storytelling: documenting fieldwork with camcorders.
- Make that audio doc: sound recording and digital mixing
- Advanced audio seminar: pulling it together
- Telling your story: placing yourself in the documentary film tradition
- Video production: planning the project, getting the story

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- Video editing on final cut pro
- Get a grip on the digital video revolution
- Zines and artist's books: alternative vehicles for your documentary project

Clearly, the course offerings are more narrowly focused than undergraduate courses. The short courses are modules that could be used as complements for the longer “topic” courses taught by the CDS for undergraduates.

The instructors for the short courses are primarily practitioners within the community, not necessarily scholars or academics. For example, the instructor for the course on intimacy with the natural world, Lisa Satterwhite, is a good example of the hybrid professional. She is a former high school biology teacher. She studied photography at Princeton, has a PhD from Johns Hopkins and works in the area of cardiology at Duke Medical Center. Satterwhite has combined her love of the natural world with a desire to document that world to share with others. She has expert knowledge in education, science and photography.

The short course instructors do not, for the most part, possess terminal degrees. The instructor descriptions focus on work, not advanced education.

### **Materials related to courses**

#### **\* Denotes direct observation**

During the observation period, spring 2003 academic year at Duke University, the following courses were offered with a CDS course number to Duke students:

- Portraits and Photography
- Advanced Documentary Photography
- Asian Voices \*
- Dream Streets: Representing Cities and Towns
- Reinventing Age \*

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- Freedom Stories \*
- Capstone Course
- Gender, sexuality and oral history \*
- Modes of documentary writing \*
- Literacy through Photography \*

The CDS offers courses that don't appear to have any connection to each other on the surface. But when you observe a variety of courses, you start to see the connection: it has to do with intention, not product.

Each class centered on a topic, not a skill, and not a traditional academic discipline. Alex Harris guides students through the stages of aging, while Margaret Sartor works on understanding communities. Charlie Thompson's focus is migrant workers and Wendy Ewald teaches about children and literacy. The entire menu of course offerings is a picture of depth and breadth from sociology to religion to literature.

Rather than offer courses in photography or interviewing, or American history or Sociology 101, the center instructors bring a wider fund of knowledge to the table. Each topic is discussed in light of the documentary tradition, not separate from it. Very little classroom time is devoted to skill. Discussion about technique relates to fieldwork and the responsibility researchers have to their subjects. There is no tension present in the CDS classes because, it seems, the Duke students enrolling in these courses want to be engaged in discussion about matters of social importance first, and secondly, they want guidance in learning how to document those social issues.

Tom Rankin pointed out that the CDS is lucky because it has a self-selecting pool of students. In effect, "they" built it with no intention of drawing large numbers of undergraduates. They built the CDS the way they wanted and the "right" students showed up.

The CDS courses offer understanding of an issue from all angles including the media representation angle and they offer tools with which to investigate and document.

At the CDS, instructors offering courses under the Documentary Studies rubric do not necessarily come from the same type of background. According to Charlie Thompson, it is the course and the instructor's credentials to teach that course that are considered, not using an

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established faculty and matching them up to courses they are “required” to offer.

Example of courses cross-listed with Documentary Studies:

- American communities (Politics and Public Policy)
- Farmworkers in North Carolina: Roots of poverty, roots of change (Cultural anthropology)
- Growing up hyphenated (English)
- Documentary Experience: A video approach (Politics & Public Policy)
- Introduction to photography (Art)
- Topics in Sound Technology (Film & Video Dept.)
- Children and the experience of illness (Public Policy)

The full listing of cross-listed courses represents the diversity of departments interacting and intersecting with the CDS. The description of some of the cross listed courses do not reflect the language of documentarians working under the CDS tradition. It is not clear from course outlines whether the entire faculty involved in cross listed courses share the working philosophy of the CDS. Review of faculty resumes and/or classroom observation and personal interviews with approximately 30 instructors would be necessary to determine this; however, I didn't feel this would contribute any significant insight into the research questions. Based on the way the center recruits or hires instructors for its courses and short courses, I believe it is “safe” to say that those instructors teaching cross-listed courses do so because they respect and practice some form of documentary work that is in keeping with the CDS philosophy, once again exhibiting the depth of the reach of the CDS on the Duke University liberal arts campus.

### **Certificate in Documentary Studies:**

The CDS offers a certificate program through the continuing education arm of Duke University. In addition, it now offers a certificate to Duke University students. The requirements are similar.

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The requirements for the continuing education version are as follows:

- A total of six courses of 16 hours each are required.
- The Seminar in Documentary Studies is required.
- Four elective courses – students choose an area of specialization: 1) Oral history, ethnography, audio and writing 2) Photography (basic and intermediate) and darkroom techniques 3) Filmmaking (basic and intermediate and Documentary Traditions) 4) Community Outreach and Collaboration.
- Final Project Seminar in Documentary Studies.

Students complete a documentary project and present it to the public at large.

The faculty for the short courses are hired from a pool of practitioners in a variety of documentary expressive methods. It appears that the Raleigh Durham area has no shortage of practitioners interested in teaching short courses as the center does not “bring in” instructors from outside the area specifically to teach short courses.

The center literature refers to two main reasons for pursuing a certificate:

- It allows people to turn their interests into a “more formal pursuit.”
- It helps students find motivation to continue doing work “they care about” by learning processes and by networking with like-minded people.

In the spring of 2003, the following courses were offered by the Short Course Program:

- Visual Storytelling: Documenting Fieldwork with Camcorders
- Make the Audio Doc: Sound Recording and Digital Mixing
- Telling Your Story: Placing Yourself in the Documentary Field Tradition
- Video Production: Planning the project, getting the shots.
- Intimacy with the Natural World: A documentary approach
- Basic Photography
- Fresh Eyes: An Introduction to Documentary Photography
- Video Editing on Final Cut Pro
- Documentary Storytelling

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- Documenting the Modern African-American Freedom Struggle
- The Untold Story: Interviewing and Beyond
- ‘Zines’ and Artist’s books: Alternative Vehicles for your Documentary Project
- Seminar in Documentary Studies
- Advanced Audio Seminar: Pulling it together
- Get a Grip on the Digital Video Revolution
- Location Lighting

As you can see, the course offerings for the short program are much more skill based than subject or conceptually based. There is something for just about everyone, however: video, writing, photography, audio, nature and history. The courses are primarily offered in the evening or on the weekend to accommodate the work and life schedules of adult community members. It is expected that a “student” can complete the certificate program in two years of continuous part time study.

Students pay an enrollment fee for short courses that vary from course to course. Generally course fees are \$145 to \$200 with material fees ranging from zero to \$40. Courses last approximately four to six weeks, usually meeting once a week for approximately two hours. Most courses are held at the CDS in the evening.

I reviewed the biographies of instructors and found that, like the CDS undergraduate program, instructors are highly experienced in both a subject area and a skill area. Spencie Love, for example, teaches short courses as well as CDS undergraduate courses. She said many of the instructors in the short course program would love to work full time at the CDS but the structure and funding at the CDS doesn’t allow for hiring of the dozens of practitioners qualified to teach there.

CDS staff are not responsible for the coordination or administration of the short course program, though it is clearly involved in terms of housing the courses and having a relationship with its teachers. Duke University Continuing Education handles the logistics for the program.

### **The Center for Documentary Studies' Projects**

The final area of data collection is related to the programs and projects affiliated with the CDS.

At first glance, what sets the CDS apart from a traditional academic department is the depth and breadth of its activities. Teaching is a relatively new direction for the center. It began as a home for professionals and embarked on projects that combined service with rendering techniques. Materials related to the CDS projects are attached as Appendix 5. These projects vary widely in theme and presentation. They are usually funded by private foundation funds and most are ongoing. They cover cultural preservation to race relations. They have provided archival materials and exhibits for public viewing as well as educational resources for teaching.

The CDS organizes itself around this structure: Events, Educational Courses, awards, exhibits, book publishing and projects.

#### **Events**

**Brown Bag Speaker Series:** During the academic year, the CDS holds regular “brown bag” lunches to which they invite a variety of speakers. The lunches are open to the public. Speakers with expertise in documentary work or students sharing unfinished works lead informal discussions.

**Fresh Docs:** On the last Friday of every month, the Center for Documentary Studies and the Southern Documentary Fund invite documentary artists to share their work in progress with a like-minded audience.

**Documentary Happening:** The Happening is a yearly community festival that invites documentary artists to gather, present and discuss their work.



**Workshops and Institutes:** The CDS offers a variety of workshops and institutes throughout the year, sometimes based on demand. Institutes and workshops include Literacy Through Photography and Summer Audio and Video Institutes.

## **Projects**

**The Lewis Hine Documentary Initiative:** Two of the CDS projects relate directly to Duke University undergraduate and/or graduate students. The CDS, in cooperation with Duke's Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, have come up with a program that places fellows with non-governmental organizations to provide documentation skills for disseminating information, and sometimes to help improve a sense of identity.

Recent Duke graduates with experience in documentation have the opportunity to apply to the program. They are assigned to serve a humanitarian organization that serves people in distress. The program "connects the talents of young documentarians with the resources and needs of organizations serving children and their communities around the world."

Students spend a year abroad helping to create publications, exhibits, advocacy material and/or websites for host organizations. The Lewis Hines Fellows also produce bodies of documentary work that can be published or exhibited to further bring attention to social issues. For examples of Lewis Hines Fellows' materials, see. Although the materials the Fellows produce are not published by the mainstream press, they do reach an audience that extends beyond gallery exhibits. The materials are used to help bring about awareness and change; they reach people who are most likely able to participate in that change.

The Hines initiative began as collaboration between Alex Harris and Kirk Felsman, a Duke faculty member and clinical psychologist who had worked for decades on children's issues in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa. The Hart Fellows Program grew from the Hart Leadership Program at Duke. From that, Felsman and Harris created the Hines Initiative when they saw the benefits of connecting documentation with children's issues.

## **Literacy Through Photography**

The other project based at the CDS that “trains” Duke students directly is the Literacy Through Photography project (LTP) based on the life’s work of photographer Wendy Ewald.

Literacy Through Photography was born from Wendy’s experiences working with children in rural Kentucky. She “perfected” a pedagogy connecting photography and literacy. LTP now has its own resource manual. It has reached thousands of teachers around the globe, and has been used in women’s prisons and women’s empowerment groups.

Children are not the only beneficiaries of LTP. The Duke students Wendy trains learn how their views of the world will affect the opportunities they create for their future students.

The LTP project works with elementary and middle schools. It holds workshops for teachers. Wendy sometimes collaborates with schools to create materials that she uses in her books or has published in local newspapers and magazine.

## **Projects coordinated by Community Programs office**

**Youth Document Durham:** The YDD program provides children age 12-18 a chance to learn documentary skills. The award winning program brings a diverse group of kids together to talk about issues affecting them and their communities. They learn interviewing and recording skills, photography and videography skills. They see the tangible results of their work in the form of web sites, public exhibitions and public forums. It is experiential learning combined with documentary arts.

YDD’s goal is to help students “examine their viewpoints and amplify voices.” Journalism students need creative ways to do the same.

The project is conducted under the CDS umbrella, though undergraduate students are not involved in the project. The project falls under the Community Programs office and has received funding support from a variety of private funders.

**Regarding Race:** The Regarding Race project uses documentary photography and writing as a means for moving dialogue forward about race and identity. It is based at the Center for Documentary Studies, but works with Teaching Fellows at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill and at North Carolina Central University, an historically black college in Durham. These Teaching Fellows receive financial support for college as they gain their degrees and then they commit to teaching in North Carolina schools for at least four years.

Regarding Race began as a pilot project funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation's Race Will Not Divide Us initiative. Additional funding has been provided by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Warner Foundation.

**Neighborhoods Project:** The Neighborhoods Project, created by local teachers and CDS staff members, offers North Carolina elementary school teachers a way to address their social studies outcomes as mandated by the state. Students connect with their communities by focusing on individual lives and stories. They learn photography, narrative writing and storytelling. The Neighborhoods Project at the Center for Documentary Studies is housed in the Community Programs office. It operates with private funding.

**Jazz Loft Project - Documenting an Underground New York Loft Scene:** The Jazz Loft Project, organized by the Center for Documentary Studies in cooperation with the Center for Creative Photography in Arizona and the estate of legendary jazz musician W. Eugene Smith, is devoted to preserving and cataloging Smith's tapes, researching photographs, and obtaining oral history interviews with all surviving Loft participants. This project operates with private funding.

**Behind the Veil-Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South:** A major research project into the history of African American life during the age of Jim Crow, roughly the period from the 1890s to the 1950s.

The project began in the late 1980s. Hundreds of testimonies and photographs were conducted and taken before generations passed away, taking the rich history with them.

The project has resulted in the production and publication of books and CDs and has

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involved graduate students, historians and CDS staff members.

**Student Action with Farmworkers:** The CDS is also “unique” in that a 501(c) 3 organization also makes its home in the Lyndhurst House. While it is not dependent on the CDS, the Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) program does provide a working opportunity for documentary students.

The organization’s mission is to “bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other’s lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.” The office coordinates summer internships with organizations directly connected to social services serving the farmworker population.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Robert Coles and Professor Bruce Payne began instructing college students from the Duke University Public Policy department on the topic of farmworkers in eastern North Carolina.

In 1990, the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke received a grant from the United States Department of Education to fund college student volunteers as they documented the lives of migrant farmworker children. In 1992 the group formed a nonprofit organization. The office of SAF has expanded to include CDS students documenting the lives of migrant farmworkers, while at the same time working to improve the lives of the workers.

Charlie Thompson, the CDS education director, brings a long history of advocacy on behalf of agricultural workers. His courses connect students to the SAF in a variety of capacities. The SAF, then, remains independent from the CDS but committed to a service-learning environment for Duke students.

**Audio Projects:** CDS audio projects give voice to people, communities, topics, and themes not usually heard on the radio. The CDS produces documentary audio pieces that help understand cultural phenomena over time. CDS audio projects are presented in a variety of formats from public radio to the web. Examples available on-line include the audio exhibit Looking Back: 9/11 Across America, the national photo and audio project Indivisible: Stories of American Community and Documentary Audio Institute projects produced by students in a weeklong

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summer intensive at CDS.

Classes, workshops, and summer institutes are offered to undergraduates, area residents, and visiting students in the areas of audio production, sound recording, writing for radio, and digital editing. CDS collaborates with American RadioWorks, the documentary unit of American Public Media. In addition, the CDS coordinates Youth Noise Network (YNN), an after-school program. YNN participants are high school students who have completed documentary work in Youth Document Durham, a summer program at CDS. YNN students produce audio, writing, and photographs that address current issues of particular concern to young people.

**Book publishing:** The CDS portfolio also includes a book publishing arm: Lyndhurst Books. It refers to its books as “creative exploration, books that convey new ways of seeing and understanding human experience in all its diversity and that challenge our assumptions and awake our social conscience.” The book arm is used to publish center related project books as well as works it feels help promote the documentary arts.

In addition, Lyndhurst Books also publishes *Document*, a biannual publication showcasing CDS based documentary work and news about the center. It also publishes resource materials related to documentary work.

The publishing is financed by the Lyndhurst Foundation. Books are offered for sale. It is directed by Iris Tillman, a long time editor and publisher at the CDS.

## Awards

**Filmmaker Award:** The center rewards filmmakers via the Filmmaker Award which is chosen from the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in Durham each year.

**Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize:** Every year the CDS awards a \$10,000 Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize for collaboration between a writer and photographer. The award highlights the fact that the center tries to lend equal weight to different forms of representation. It draws upon the collaborative nature of the work of Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor and promotes such

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teamwork in the form of the prize. The CDS often collaborates on a publication showcasing the winners' work.

**John Hope Franklin Student Documentary Awards:** Established in 1989 by the Center for Documentary Studies, these awards are named for the noted scholar John Hope Franklin. The Center for Documentary Studies makes these awards to undergraduates attending Triangle-area universities to help them conduct summer-long documentary fieldwork projects. Students must demonstrate an interest in documentary studies and possess the talent and skills necessary to conduct an intensive documentary project. These skills may include oral history, photography, film or video, essay or creative writing, journalism, audio, or active interest in community service programs. The winners' final projects will be archived at Duke and work from these projects will be featured on the CDS Web site. The awards are \$2,000.

**The Honickman First Book Prize competition:** The Center for Documentary Studies (CDS) at Duke University and The Honickman Foundation (THF), based in Philadelphia, co-sponsor this biennial prize for American photographers. The competition is open to American photographers of any age who have never published a book-length work and who use their cameras for creative exploration. The winning photographer receives a grant of \$3,000, publication of a book of photography, and inclusion in a traveling exhibition.

**Exhibitions:** The center has ample gallery space, which is open to the public. The gallery program takes proposals for exhibits as well as choosing local works to showcase. Students use the exhibits as a shared point of discussion in their documentary courses. The gallery program chooses from a variety of mediums (images, documents, sound and writings). There are three galleries: the Juanita Kreps gallery, established in 1994 and located on the first floor of the Lyndhurst House, plays host to three to four exhibitions per year, introduces new documentary work and supports the work of established artists.

The Lyndhurst Gallery, established in 2001, is used both to expand the space of the Kreps Gallery and to present smaller exhibits.

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The Porch Gallery, established in 1998 to create an intimate viewing space for work growing out of CDS programs, showcases up to ten exhibitions annually. The exhibits come from neighborhood and community programs connected with CDS, work produced by students enrolled in CDS classes or workshops, and various other documentary efforts.

### **Organizational Structure:**

It is interesting to note that according to the directory, there is only one person dedicated to the educational efforts of the CDS and 28 staff members dedicated to the center's other activities. Instructors vary from semester to semester and are not employed by the CDS necessarily. I believe the nature of the center's organizational structure reflects the center's priorities and mission; its primary loyalty is not to undergraduate education at this time when viewed on paper. In "actuality," there is much more activity in the educational area than an organogram would imply.

**Impressions/interpretation of CDS overall structure:** The CDS has created a structure that covers the range of expressive possibilities. It has projects for professional practitioners. It offers funding assistance for documentarians. It reaches out into surrounding communities, works with social agencies and opens its doors to the public for a wide range of dialogue. It hosts events, exhibitions, workshops, institutes and festivals. It has developed a comprehensive short program to cater to the interests of "everyday" citizens. And, increasingly, it is offering a full range of courses for Duke undergraduate students.

The center generally separates its professional and educational activities, which may or may not increasingly come together over time.

As a free standing unit with a university affiliation, I believe the center is a model for partnerships in higher education. I sense from all those involved with the center that maintaining a high degree of independence is a top priority. I believe it is the center's goal to continue experimenting with its Duke relationship, or, as Charlie Thompson put it, position itself to enjoy "the best of both worlds."

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As an outsider, and as a journalism educator, I see things in the center's structure and activities that would be problematic for an academic department hoping to replicate. Those issues will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

It is my impression that the center has a strong identity; those involved with the center share a common understanding of the documentary tradition and what role the center plays in practicing it. However, it is difficult for staff and faculty to articulate what that understanding is to a "neutral" outsider. The personal interviews, marketing literature, syllabi, exhibitions, events, activities, course offerings and sponsored publications do add up to paint a picture of a "discipline" that centers on the exploration and understanding of others and then rendering the "reality" of others in a variety of ways. Because the center's philosophical foundation is built on particular values, it sets itself apart from film schools, journalism schools and courses that use the term "documentary." There is concern on the part of professionals regarding the product, but it appears that professionals interacting with the CDS put that concern secondary to the message and intention of their work.

A great deal more time would be needed to "evaluate" certain aspects of the center's work. However, I was not granted access to serve as an evaluator, nor did my research questions or goals require an evaluation. My task was to observe what the center does and, as much as possible, determine why it does it the way it does. It was not my task to judge whether it does its work "well" or to suggest ways to do it "better."

Per the case study parameters as outlined in Chapter 4, I have observed center activities and reviewed materials related to the center to gain an understanding of the day to day workings at the CDS. I believe the "actual" workings of the center do live up to the marketing materials. This is true in both a broad and particular sense. After a five week observation period, it seems to me that the center could and would continue to function with little interruption if the educational relationship with Duke were to end overnight. That is, the center's commitment to its philosophy is strong enough to keep the center's identity intact without its connection to Duke University. This is an important point because I was looking to see if the free standing and partially privately funded center had been "changed" in a significant way by its increasingly educational activities after the departure of Robert Coles and Doubletake Magazine. I was not



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present to observe the workings of the center prior to Coles' departure, however, personal interviews revealed that the center has made the decision to increase its relationship with higher education despite the fact that the original intention of both founding members and the initial funders was to steadfastly maintain an independent status.

It seems to me that the relationship with Duke University has "helped" the center spread the word about documentary work and has given practitioners a means of making a living at the same time. Access to financial records was not part of the agreement with the center, so I am not privy to how much the relationship with Duke University helps the center financially. The center is actively involved with private fundraising at all times with a full time staff member partially devoted to this activity.

My interview with Community Programs Director Barbara Lau left me with the feeling that there is a tension, albeit not a major one, between the center's "true" mission and its relationship with undergraduate students. Instructors at the CDS are engaging in documentation projects throughout the Raleigh Durham area, working with service agencies and regional schools on "service" projects, yet these activities directly conflict with the opinions of Barbara Lau that "true" service to a public should not be conducted by students trying to learn. For Lau, service to a public should be genuine, not part of a give and take endeavor. In the classroom, teachers are engaging in conversations with students about what they can and/or should be learning from the people they "document."

The center, I believe, exemplifies the term "interdisciplinary" in that instructors come from a wide range of disciplines yet come together with a shared interest. It seems to be an outlet for instructors whose passion about particular subjects that fall outside the scope of their academic departments can be fueled in the CDS environment. I was surprised to see how little difference there was in courses taught by "academics" and those taught by "professionals." There does not appear to be a tension between these two types of educators as there is in journalism education between green eyeshades and chi-squares. Because of the high degree of conflict in the journalism education community, I was keenly attentive to the relationship between professionals and academics at the center. Much in the same way the center enjoys a self-selecting student pool, it enjoys a self-selecting faculty pool; it is an "all-volunteer army," so

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to speak, and there seems to be an unspoken respect by all instructors for the experience of their colleagues. As Margaret Sartor said, and I continue to come back to, the people who work at the center get what it is they are doing and that seems to be the overriding criteria for “judgment” of others: do you get it? If you do, please come join us.

One of the consequences to this informal mode of operation is that there is no real consistency or sense of planning when it comes to the curricula. That is, at the time of the case study and this writing, each semester the course offerings are based on who has proposed teaching and course and who has been accepted. There isn't an overall plan for offering a balanced menu of courses either based on subject matter or mode of representation, i.e. film, radio, writing, photography. This does not appear to be a “problem” because the center is not an academic department offering a major. However, now that the center offers a certificate in documentary studies, and according to Charlie Thompson it may eventually offer a minor in documentary studies, the center has developed an introductory course and a capstone course to provide a means of insuring that students pursuing a certificate will be required to have a somewhat comprehensive view of documentary work.

Overall, after a thorough study of the center's activities, my impression is that the center qualifies as “unique” and will continue to be “unique.” It has taken two decades for the center to build its identity. The departure of co-founder and highly visible Robert Coles could have shaken the center and even “destroyed” its identity, but it doesn't seem to have had that effect. While the tenets of the documentary tradition as expressed by Coles still seem to be in place, the way the center engages with others, i.e. students and communities, has taken on a more educational and cultural preservation tone under the direction of Tom Rankin.

On paper, the center seems to be spread quite thin, with its hands in dozens of projects, offering dozens of courses to Duke students and dozens of courses to community members. However, in “reality,” the center seems to run smoothly with ample staff to handle the number of projects underway and the staff is also of quality; people involved with center activities are highly proficient in the areas they direct, as opposed to people with particular skills being hired to take on subject matter secondarily.

There is an intellectual and slightly artistic atmosphere at the CDS, as if those involved

take the work seriously. There isn't a lot of money in documentary work or many places like the center available for like-minded practitioners to congregate and showcase their work or get support financially and emotionally for documentary work. As a result, to a person, those involved with the center that I interacted with exhibit a sense of gratitude for the center's existence and for the opportunity to work there and/or connect with the center.

The marketing literature and the web site are sophisticated and organized. I was concerned at the onset of the case study that the center would not resemble the representation it puts out there in the public domain. My bias in this regard has been exposed elsewhere in the thesis. At the conclusion of the case study, my interpretation of the center's representation of itself versus its day to day activities, is that generally speaking, there is no disconnect. The center represents itself accurately, in my view. The revised mission statement, written after the departure of Robert Coles, in part states:

*The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University teaches, engages in, and presents documentary work grounded in collaborative partnerships and extended fieldwork that uses photography, film/video, audio, and narrative writing to capture and convey contemporary memory, life, and culture. CDS values documentary work that balances community goals with individual artistic expression. CDS promotes documentary work that cultivates progressive change by amplifying voices, advancing human dignity, engendering respect among individuals, breaking down barriers to understanding, and illuminating social injustices. CDS conducts its work for local, regional, national, and international audiences.*

Based on my observations, this mission statement accurately describes what the center does and why it does it the way it does, which partially answers my research questions. Again, with the exception of the opinions of the community programs director, the center does appear to try and "balance community goals with individual artistic expression." However, I did not get the feeling that staff and faculty are predominantly concerned with their artistic expression. Rather, they express a deep concern for the people and issues they view as in need of "amplifying."

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While the mission statement speaks in idealistic terms, and I often view idealism with some suspicion, looking for personal agendas that drive the idealism, I found that the center staff not only express, but practice, based on moral concerns which mirror those noted in the mission statement. Former CDS student, Eric Gottesman, described the frustration of trying to reconcile the desire to pay the rent and the sense of “calling” that most documentarians feel. Tom Rankin described his role, and that of CDS instructors, as that of example to students with regard to this vocational frustration. Each instructor’s life path and body of work speaks to the possibility of answering their “calling” and finding ways to fit into a society that is primarily concerned with materialism and consumerism. For example, CDS instructor John Moses is a primary care physician who teaches CDS courses on documenting the lives of children dealing with illness. CDS instructor Lisa Satterwhite is a scientist at Duke University Medical Center whose documentary work examines “family, intimacy, and ties to the land.”

As a fairly intuitive person, I did feel there were some tensions present at the center regarding funding priorities and distribution and the direction the center is taking. However, the research question at hand was, “what does the center do and why that way?” Determining the exact nature of tensions fell outside the scope of the case study.

## Chapter Nine Conclusions

### **Weaving the documentary tradition and journalism education; two “integrative” curricular models**

*\*Parenthetical referencing is not employed in this chapter as it is the author’s interpretation of all the sources listed in the bibliography. Journalistic sourcing is used sparingly where the source is needed for credibility and veracity purposes. The reporting and writing style is based on the expectation that journalists (and journalism educators) can synthesize all the necessary and relevant sources for the readers. It is assumed here that a doctoral thesis should be an original piece of work and the student must have original thoughts and solutions to problems. The only difference in the reporting and writing method below from traditional journalistic writing, is that the attributive verb “said” does not follow every statement. It does follow direct quotes where the source would not otherwise be identifiable. All sources are listed in the bibliography.*

A call was made in 2002 to journalism educators to look at the current media landscape, the student body make-up and the resources available at any given institution, and to develop curricula that incorporate the many layers espoused by educators and media professionals across the country.

The journalism education community then embarked on a decade-long conversation, or debate, following events that occurred at Columbia University in 2002. Unfortunately, the resultant recommendations were, in my view, more of the same and only “Big 12” universities were chosen for funding and experimentation. Not much has changed in the field of journalism education since I entered its midst 20 years ago. Or, should I say, not much has changed in the academic discourse. There has been significant change at many universities and some experimentation, I am sure, though it isn’t reflected in the literature or conference agendas. However, there has not been any forward movement toward an academic discipline based on faculty integrity, respect for other ways of thinking, transparency to students about the nature of

the job market, efforts to have a real effect on the industry or a public acknowledgement that we cannot speak in general terms because geographic location, access to media markets and type of student body are so diverse from one institution to another.

As recent as Summer of 2008, Loyola College professor Elliot King said: “Journalism has long been treated as a kind of unloved relative who shows up, usually only grudgingly invited, at family gatherings.” This is the same sentiment expressed for the past 40 years and there is no proof that such a statement is true. There isn’t even anecdotal evidence of instances in which journalism is considered an evil stepchild. These examples may exist, but no program has been willing to offer up names for examination. The literature does not reflect specific examples of institutional disdain for journalism programs across the board or even a quarter of the board. It’s a discourse that has reached the status of truth which then creates labels for journalism education that are repeated over and over again.

The 2005 “Improving the Education of Tomorrow’s Journalists” concluded that journalism as an academic discipline was not serving the industry well and few media managers trusted the quality of journalism programs. And, it is worth noting, journalism educators were not included in the conversation and surveys that formed the 2005 report. Now, there is more debate about how to reach consensus on a core body of knowledge distinct to journalism.

It is so very rare to find mention in the literature of students and teachers in a reciprocal learning environment. It is disconcerting to find the same dozen names penning journal articles yet those journals become the archives and public face of journalism education. There are little worlds of journalism on hundreds of college campuses across the country. It is difficult, almost impossible, to make substantive changes to long standing journalism programs unless an entirely new faculty is hired, all with the same experience and interests. But there are pockets of educators with similar philosophies that together could experiment and support one another. They just have to find each other.

It has been a long journey, this scholarly project. I wouldn’t trade or change one miserable or joyous moment. Parker Palmer often refers to a quote by Frederick Beuchner that is now imbedded in my head: “Vocation is the place where the heart’s deep gladness meets the world’s deep hunger.” My research path, cobbled together as it is, led these two halves to each

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other. Another of Palmer's core theories is that when we live a life that is not connected to our values we live a "divided life" that harms ourselves and others, particularly our students. My deep gladness has met what I see as one of the world's deep needs and I have discovered a way to not live a divided life. That "deep need" as I see it, is bold truth by journalism educators and a singular dogged focus on the education of our students.

It is my greatest hope that even just a few educators will see themselves in my story and realize how little we know about each other in this academic discipline called journalism. I hope one educator will see how much this discipline would gain if its members were also committed to not living divided lives. One of the results of this research journey is that I no longer care if I am seen as kooky or soft, idealistic or naïve, radical or not scholarly. I only care that people see me as courageous because that is what I want my students to be.

My belief that educator stories matter and my attraction to the tenets of the documentary tradition were connected to a research methodology that I believe has resulted in a "new" type of journalism education model. I use the quote marks because I cannot claim to know that no program exists similar to the model I am offering on these pages.

I had hoped simply to provide a qualitative look into the life of a journalism educator that could expand our view of teacher qualification criteria, a view that recognized the human element in program development. I had hoped to simply provide a picture of the work that results from those engaging in projects in the documentary tradition. In the end, both of those things have happened. Two seemingly unconnected issues – teacher qualifications in the field of academic journalism and a process over product "media" environment – can be woven together to create a unique "training" ground for future journalists and yes, even "communicators." My mind has been open along this research journey, and I have changed course several times based on that open mind. Rather than follow the accepted path from Point A to Point B, I have swerved to miss obstacles in the road and finally arrived at my destination. That is, I have come to believe that educator stories at the institutional level could have a profound impact on journalism education.

The Center for Documentary Studies offers a glimpse into an interdisciplinary-based way of seeing the world coupled with skills that document what we see. The observations made during the case study period were analyzed and interpreted in the context of the center's potential to address issues in journalism education. A journalism curricular model has been developed that incorporates elements of the CDS philosophy and structure. The working title for the model is "Integrative Journalism Education." The term "integrative" is borrowed, or adopted, from the current work of education activist Parker J. Palmer and the Fetzer Institute. "Integrated" distinguishes itself from "interdisciplinary" because the former is about blending a philosophy into every course while the latter is about distinct courses in different disciplines.

The model draws from examples in higher education that represent experimentation and those that depart from tradition. It also draws from philosophies and pedagogical practices of higher education reform activists, documentary based programs and journalism education literature.

The experimental curriculum offered for consideration was designed with a particular view of higher education; its role is to help students shape character, define values, challenge assumptions, expose students to broad fields of knowledge and then facilitate a bridge between liberal arts, communication theory, democratic theory, press theories and journalistic practice. Higher education does prepare students for careers; however, I believe that preparation for civic participation is considered equally as important as career goals. For the field of journalism, character development has consequences that affect millions of people devouring the work of journalists. How does a college education prepare a student to effect change at the management level of media outlets? "Rotten" people, common sense would dictate, will probably be rotten journalists. The assumption made here is that students will have successful and fulfilling careers naturally if they know themselves and attempt to know the world around them. The model does not align itself with a chi-square or green eyeshade camp; rather, it considers both schools of thought equally valid and, ultimately, discourages the labeling of students and educators completely.

The experimental model offered here is a direct response to the media reform movement post September 11 and to what I see as the stagnant nature of the journalism education debate



since its inception. It is also mindful of the speed in which social media and the Internet are weaving themselves into the fabric of mass media. Please note, I am not saying that journalism education reform is stagnant, just the public debate about it. The model is not in response necessarily to general educational reform, though it does consider studies exploring the state of American higher education. The model should be seen through a wider lens than reform of education or media; it is a holistic approach to learning and a holistic approach to informing a citizenry brought together to form a holistic curriculum as it relates specifically to journalism education. Holistic here means encompassing the historical, social, spiritual, political, economic and emotional aspects of life and learning. The key issues in journalism education, drawn from the literature, are: 1) type of student pursuing journalism as a career and the relationship of student type to institution and program type; 2) teacher qualifications; 3) absorption of journalism into broader communications programs; 4) An absence of discussion about worldview in the journalism education literature; 5) lack of discussion of the role of external factors in curricular development, i.e. university location, access to media markets, size of faculty, funding, and so on; 6) need for curriculum enrichment and interdisciplinary partnerships; 7) lack of process and media product experimentation in journalism education, and; 8) lastly, the issue of whether or not to offer convergence courses or redevelop traditional programs to include converged platforms, is moving up the agenda list.

The activities and philosophies that comprise the Center for Documentary Studies were first viewed through a journalism educator's lens in an attempt to "understand" what the center does and what the documentary tradition is. Secondly, the center's activities and philosophies were viewed with a comparative eye; those activities and/or philosophies and/or issues that showed tension with journalism activities and philosophies were set aside for further consideration and those areas of documentary work that resembled journalism in goal, intention, theory or actual skill were placed in another category.

When a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the documentary tradition, journalism and journalism education and the potential for the former to contribute to the latter was reached, an educational model was developed for consideration.

### **Journalism education issues addressed by “integrative” curricula**

#### **1) Student quality and recruitment**

Oddly enough, the journalism education literature does not discuss the “type” of student attending American journalism programs today; the discussion is usually in the form of quantitative research, or surveys, intended to “understand” the thinking of graduate level students or enrollment figures to determine the “state” of journalism education. There is quite a bit of speculation about the cause of certain general student characteristics, i.e. obsession with grades, poor fund of general knowledge, poor attitude and poor work ethic. There is anecdotal evidence that faculty and administrators are concerned and/or frustrated with the current student body and, there are projects underway nationally that are looking into the need for civic and character education as a means of combating what is seen as a serious case of apathy, entitlement and academic unpreparedness.

There is little in the way of research that sheds light on the difference between journalism students at Ivy League schools, private schools, public state institutions, and religious based schools, and there is no literature or research that addresses the relationship of student “type” to curricular development. We know that admission standards vary from institution to institution and the assumption is made, I believe, that the higher the admission standards, the “better” the quality of student will be attracted. Journalism education literature does not reflect acknowledgment of the varying levels of student aptitude in American journalism programs. When an author speaks in generalities, criticizing “journalism education” or speaking on behalf of journalism education, we cannot assume that an idea or an issue can be resolved in the same way at each institution of higher learning.

For example, at a large public state institution, with the lowest tuition, there is a higher likelihood that a great proportion of the student body is employed part or full time. The student body includes a high percentage of adult learners with families and jobs and students attending part time over many years. This inhibits a teacher’s ability to engage in deep or sustained reporting and writing projects with students because they have limited time to devote to anything

other than a traditional education schedule. Some journalism programs are home to students with more financial resources. Some journalism programs are located in isolated areas with limited access to media markets. Some institutions have a high degree of outside funding and some squeak by with a limited budget. Some institutions have a higher ratio of traditional 18-22 year old students to adult learners. Students with family responsibilities and well established careers returning to school create new challenges for journalism programs.

From a thorough review of the literature, and from observing the CDS students, a common sense assumption is that curricular development needs to fit the student body, the geographic location and the overall learning environment. However, there has been no sustained effort to understand students and the relationship of students to program development. Can a Missouri curriculum work at a small liberal arts college? That is, can a practice based program with multiple media products created on campus and heavy connection with the media industry work for a college with fewer resources? The literature calls for students with “street smarts” while at the same time calling for highly intellectual students. A curriculum that hopes to address the call for both, needs to first consider the actual student body at the institution. As I will elaborate further in this chapter, the “elephant in the living room” that nobody wants to acknowledge is a faculty reluctance to help create a curriculum that directly conflicts with a faculty member’s comfort level, experience and skill. Even brand new journalism programs are going to reflect the interests and qualifications of the people creating the new program. It is simply a reality that we, as an academic discipline, seem unwilling to admit, though I will admit this in Chapter 10. Journalism education programs, at least as portrayed in the literature, do not appear to recognize the “new thinking” that has resulted from constructivist philosophies and qualitative research. Namely, personal experience and the individual construction of reality should tell us that program development needs to acknowledge the personal and political nature of such development.

Betty Medsger has pointed out that many prize-winning journalists have not had a journalism education. Instead, they majored in a liberal arts area or learned foreign languages or spent time abroad. She has opined that maybe journalism education should focus more on interdisciplinary curricular development than vocational style technique instruction. She has

acknowledged that “perhaps a new type of faculty and a new type of student” is needed. And that’s where her musings end with regard to formal research or an expanded look at this issue. What is meant by “new” type of faculty and “new” type of student? On the frontlines, depending on the mission or resources at any given institution, recruiting a “new” type of student might not be feasible or allowed.

Students enrolled at the CDS are “above average” students as the admission requirements target above average students, and Duke University aggressively pursues diversity enrollment. At first glance, it seemed that the “self-selecting” pool of students the CDS enjoys made the center impossible to replicate in other environments. However, on further reflection, I concluded that all programs are self-selecting in the sense that students choose to attend a certain program based on a variety of criteria: location, cost and program representation. The CDS used an “if we build it, they will come” attitude and it worked because it wasn’t designed to recruit large numbers, meet a quota, fit a student body or follow traditional academic program development. It is a result of the worldview and product inherent in documentary work and a result of the founding educators. Based on interviews with CDS instructors and administrators, it is clear that the CDS does not have the same concerns with student numbers because it is not a traditional academic department relying on those numbers entirely for funding. Curricular development or change at an institution has to consider the impact those changes may have on student numbers which directly impacts funding.

The Bollinger task force forum conducted in 2002 provided a solution to this “problem” by suggesting that perhaps experimental schools within existing journalism programs were needed. This would, in effect, allow programs to build something for a specific type of student and see if students would come. This would create a more self-selecting pool of students for that specific alternative approach and lessen the likelihood of losing a great deal of students from the general program during the experimental process. When the Knight Foundation partnered with the Carnegie Corporation to create the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education, it focused on a handful of large colleges and universities with well-established schools of journalism. The initiative focused on “curriculum enrichment,” news incubators connecting students with news organizations and a task force comprised of deans and

administrators from these journalism schools to “research” ways in which journalism schools could have an impact on the news industry as a whole. I have no doubt this was an exciting time for the partner colleges which include three new schools, Arizona State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, join schools currently supported by the initiative at University of Southern California; University of Texas at Austin; University of Maryland; Northwestern University; Columbia University; University of Missouri; Syracuse University; and University of California at Berkeley. A research center, the Joan Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, is also supported by the initiative.

The initiative was re-funded with \$11 million in 2008 without any real or substantive contributions to the goal of “improving” journalism education. There was never any proof offered that these institutions of learning were offering poor quality programs. They are all in prime location to access media markets and they are highly funded institutions that enroll a large student body of means allowing for true street reporting and in-depth assignments.

Students enrolling at Duke University do have high admission standards to meet. Duke is a private liberal arts based university, although it defies the common description because of its size and the number of “professional” schools located on its campus. The growth of cross listed courses between the institution proper and the CDS does allow many students to experience the best of both worlds – a credit toward their major and a new way of seeing the world offered by the CDS. Students are aware that a course under the CDS is going to require field work. These courses will not follow a traditional pedagogy or be reliant on textbooks and testing. Generally speaking, the students taking CDS courses do not come with advanced skills in writing, film, audio or photography, nor do they come with a lot of knowledge about the topic of the documentary courses. What they appear to have in common is a desire to make a difference, both in the lives of those they engage with and in the lives of those their worked reached. Journalism students, generally speaking, are encouraged to learn how to learn about a topic quickly, not necessarily to take the time to dig beneath layers or to develop a genuine relationship with other people. The CDS students know the reputation of the center and they know they will be expected to devote a great deal of time to each documentary project.

A heated exchange took place in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* after the Bollinger decision to suspend the search for a dean at the Columbia graduate school of journalism. *Chronicle* critic-at-large, Carlin Romano, said the “great failure” of journalism programs is that they don’t graduate students capable of challenging the status quo in news organizations. Students need a “complicated journalistic consciousness that every future boss should both fear and treasure,” he said. In response, educator Caitlin Kelly pointed out that coveted profit margins are partly a result of cheap labor, or new journalists, who are keenly aware of the unstable nature of their employment; if they don’t tow the company line; there are thousands more journalism graduates who will. She said the average journalism student does not possess the “cage-rattling gene” Romano dreams about. Her observation of journalism students is that they are timid and exhibit a narrow worldview. Again, it has to be noted, that the reader doesn’t know what institutions and what programs and what student body these essays refer to.

In a scathing indictment of journalism education, 20-year educator Dave Berkman said the days of journalism programs attracting the “best and the brightest” are gone. His long experience in the field has left him feeling dejected. He said the level of English grammar proficiency is appalling. Increasingly, he said, programs are enrolling students looking for what they think will be an easy major.

“We see students who are convinced that the less they know and the more naïve and sophomoric their writing skills are, the more qualified they are for a job in journalism. They believe their predominantly middle-class status automatically entitles them to it,” he said.

Berkman refers to the writings of journalist Peter Sacks who took a sabbatical from reporting to teach journalism for a few years. His book chronicling his experience, *Generation X Goes to College*, is equally as scathing an indictment of American students as Berkman’s account. Sacks wrote that he dealt with students that were the result of a “profoundly anti-intellectual adolescent subculture that rewarded and encouraged laxity and mediocrity.” Sacks wrote about issues rarely spoken about publicly, including in journalism education circles, perhaps because his was a temporary experience in academia without the same career busting fears that can come with an academic position. Sacks said the American education system, which now treats students as customers, goes to great lengths to satisfy their customers while

asking very little in return.

While an in-depth study of the quality of American college students is outside the scope of this research exercise, mention must be made of the lack of data needed to make such general assertions and condemnation of all American journalism students.

In the January/February 2005 issue of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Evan Cornog also dared to say aloud that perhaps the problem with declining newspaper readership and declining audiences for network news is not entirely the fault of newspapers. Perhaps, he said, it is a problem with the readers. A study conducted by David T.Z. Mindich of the Saint Michael's College journalism school in Vermont showed "devastating" results: ignorance of current events and an indifference to news media have reached epidemic proportions. His data showed that only 11 percent of young Americans cite the Internet as a news source, which is significant because those same young people do not cite television, radio or newspapers as a regular news source. Mindich concluded that young Americans "know plenty about the things that interest them – they just don't follow the news very closely." Again, surveys can only provide us with so much understanding and they can actually harm efforts to configure journalism programs because all the variables of location, resources, and faculty experience, are not delineated in those surveys.

In 1966, almost 60 percent of college freshmen believed that following politics was important, but in 2003, that number had fallen to 34 percent, according to a survey by the University of California at Los Angeles. Given that research has shown a correlation between newspaper reading and active citizenship, the data above is worrisome for both the media industry and the country.

At the 2004 Associated Press Managing Editors convention, readers were "imbedded" at the convention. The readers blended in with formal convention participants to provide feedback about the topics and how they related to the average media consumer. They were surveyed along with managing editors of American newspapers about specific questions related to news choices. The gap between readers and editors was dramatic, with almost a 20 percentage point difference between what readers said should be published or should not be published and what editors said

about the same issue. This points to a disconnect between the “kind” of people running news organizations and the citizens using media to make informed democratic decisions.

Bill Moyers, known for a unique brand of moral-based journalism, suggests that we need to figure out a way to graduate students that are “a little more hard-boiled and street-smart than the present crop.” “Let’s figure out how to attract youngsters who have acquired it [worldly wisdom],” he suggests.

The model offered here was created with Moyers’ thoughts in mind. Recruitment for the model needs to focus on students who may or may not have acquired worldly wisdom, but who want to acquire it. Or, the model will be of interest to faculty and universities interested in reinserting civic education into their missions. Or, the model will be of interest to faculty and universities that want to experiment.

## **2) Teacher qualifications**

One of the biggest bones of contention in journalism education is the issue of teacher qualifications. Should a journalism educator have professional experience or academic credentials or both? And, who should answer this question? This question is the driver on my research journey.

Common sense would tell you that the type of educator needed depends on the type of program. The literature implies that there is such a thing as “a journalism educator,” a monolithic entity, not individuals with varied credentials, experience, talents or interests. A program focused on media studies or general communications, like that offered at Trinity College, would be less likely to need educators with long journalism careers. A program like the one offered at the University of Montana requires skilled practitioners. This common sense factor is found nowhere in the journalism education literature.

What I observed at the CDS was an environment respectful of difference, even an embracing of a variety of qualifications. The green eyeshade and chi-square tensions of journalism education did not exist at the CDS. The only thing that seemed to be important, in terms of faculty, was a body of work or a research interest that was in keeping with the



documentary tradition. This was evident by the composition of the faculty make-up, from a physician to a journalist to a history professor to a child psychologist, all teaching courses under the same umbrella. Some had doctorates. Some had no college experience. Some had advanced technical skills while others applied research methods.

One of the things Duke University does that reflects this respect for individual expertise is to employ the “professor of the practice” hiring method where appropriate. This allows for the hiring of individuals who don’t meet the academic credential requirements of a tenure-track position, but who have much to offer students. I believe this places Duke University in a position to develop programs that might not be possible without the option of hiring professionals to work alongside scholars. For example, CDS director Tom Rankin does not hold a doctorate. He now holds the position of “professor of the practice” in Art at Duke University. Photographer Alex Harris does not hold a master’s degree; his title at Duke University is “professor of the practice” in Public Policy.

At the CDS, there was no faculty member that did not “get it,” as Margaret Sartor would say. “Getting it” is the primary hiring criteria. It would be difficult for someone to present themselves to the CDS as a potential instructor and not adhere to the tenets of the documentary tradition based on the clear identity the center projects and practices. Academic credentials are simply not important; a body of work and a philosophy that “fits” with the CDS goals are the criteria for coming on board. The person that has the most to offer students in terms of depth and breadth of content matter and critical thinking is the person considered at the CDS.

In journalism education, it appears that sweeping generalizations are accepted, which does little to address the “realities” experienced at different institutions. The general categories or arguments for and against a certain list of criteria that add up to “good,” do not see people as individuals. While standards are set to insure academic rigor and to increase the likelihood of useful research, those standards do not always result in the desired outcome. The CDS has set a hiring standard based on the desired outcome, activity consistent with its principles, and because of this, the CDS appears to enjoy great success, if success is defined by the ability to meet the desired goal.

Those charged with hiring new journalists often say they have little or no respect for academic credentials. It is unclear if this is based on their experience with graduates or whether they believe they should be able to better relate to academic journalism instructors, or whether they just believe you cannot teach journalism unless you have a long journalism career. We don't know what graduates they are talking about and how that graduate's alma mater taught journalism. We do not know what these beliefs, or general conclusions, are based upon. This is the problem with quantitative research when the answers are subjective. Forcing a round peg into a square hole is a self-defeating exercise.

There is debate in the literature about whether we should even care if the industry approves of university hiring practices. Institutions with skills-based programs need a relationship with media organizations more than theory based programs; not all programs develop their curricula with the media industry in mind. In addition, while many educators have professional experience, some working journalists or media managers have no experience as educators. The criticisms aimed at universities by media practitioners, then, could be coming from a relatively uninformed position; more uninformed, that is, than that of educators. Media practitioners do not necessarily have a clear understanding of the broad mission of higher education and the limitations of journalism faculty to change a well-entrenched educational system to suit the needs of the industry. We cannot assume that professional journalists have adequate knowledge of the learning and teaching process to make accurate judgments about the quality of journalism educators. A Pulitzer Prize does not translate necessarily into prize winning teacher.

### **3) The incorporation of traditional journalism programs into broad communications programs.**

Based on the literature, traditional journalism programs are “disappearing” in favor of broader communications programs. However, there are still approximately 300 programs in the United States? with traditional journalism relatively intact. There is no indication that journalism, as an academic discipline, will eventually cease to exist. It has been said that it is in danger of

extinction if it does not continue to evolve and reflect on its relevance to current media practices and world events as evidence by the growing number of “convergence” program. If a particular institution does not have the student body interest to support a traditional journalism program, but it does have the interest to support a different type of communications program, it seems fruitless to argue that all journalism programs must remain pure and intact.

The dismantling of some journalism programs will undoubtedly leave a number of journalism educators frustrated and/or out of jobs. This reason alone is not enough to warrant a general statement that change is not good for a particular institution. There is no shortage of opinions about this issue, but it does appear that arguments are made in correlation to a particular faculty member’s area of expertise or belief system without in-depth discussion of the media landscape or the student body composition.

There is no evidence to support the connection between the increasing number of communications programs and impact on the news and information organizations in America. This change in academic structure affects faculty and students, but again, there is no evidence to support a declaration of “negative impact” on students or society in general. The trend simply goes against the beliefs of more traditional journalism educators.

The CDS practices would fall somewhere in the middle between broad communication practices and journalistic practices. It provides a learning environment based on the way we see others, relate to others and represent others with our words and images though such elements are not presented in the form of media theory. It employs journalistic techniques such as interviewing, immersion, investigating, researching and then representation using a pen or a camera. Its practices have not been used to reach a mass audience as the documentary products fall outside current mainstream guidelines. It does not offer instruction in formal communication theory; it advocates the documentary tradition philosophy, which does not have clear boundaries like traditional theories. It could, I believe, be replicated and renamed journalism or communications, depending on the faculty composition, student body interests and institutional support.

**4) An absence of discussion about worldview in the journalism education literature.**

The elements of a journalism education, as defined by the literature are balance between liberal arts and skills courses, and balance within a journalism program between concepts, theory and skills. This type of thinking assumes that by taking liberal arts courses, a student will then apply that liberal “knowledge” to their role as journalist.

Even without best practices to draw from in the literature, I assume there are some programs that approach journalism from a worldview foundation, if only because individual faculty members may approach teaching from a worldview origin point. Based on the literature, and personal experience, however, it appears that journalism education is not seen through a wide worldview lens; rather, it is approached only from a Western perspective. Even if media theory, cultural theory or communication theory acts as a foundation for a journalism program, these theories, in my view, are seen from a Western perspective.

Media activist and journalist John Pilger has said that westerners are trained to view other societies in terms of their usefulness or threat to the West, and to consider cultural differences as more important than the political and economic forces by which we judge ourselves. He says that people in the best position to understand this, educators, “suppress their knowledge publicly.” In addition, Pilger says journalists are taught early on that their loyalty is to institutional needs. The only difference between an authoritarian state and America’s democracy is that the authoritarian state makes these demands openly and directly. In America, based on their worldview, journalists self censor and omit routinely, a practice Pilger feels is not “covered” in journalism programs. In fact, he says, reporting about others in terms of their usefulness to the West has become an “act of professional faith.”

Few would disagree that September 11 “changed” America. Few would agree on exactly what changed, however. *Christian Science Monitor* journalist Ralph Knickerbocker, in an essay on the first anniversary of September 11, said there is a need to have a new awareness of one’s self, of those around us and of our place in a world that seems more dangerous than it did a year ago. Americans have a more confused and ambivalent national outlook post 9/11, according to a *Christian Science Monitor* poll in September 2003. The survey showed that Americans no longer believe America is in good standing in the world or that our country is headed in the “right”

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direction. Polls show contradictory evidence as well, that Americans are both becoming more conservative post September 11, but are also increasingly liberal post September 11. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell has even said that “the well being of the United States depends on the well being of the world,” reinforcing Pilger’s remarks.

On the anniversary of September 11, said Knickerbocker, it seemed that America had not yet “turned the corner” toward a changed mentality, one that can make sense “personally and globally” of a terrible event. Journalists are having trouble writing the “first draft of history” because the draft keeps changing. A more accurate account of history will take time, he said. Just two weeks after September 11, 2001, journalist Peter Ford investigated the causes of world hatred toward the United States. One of the things he found was that Muslims warned that if America didn’t “wage its war on terrorism” in a way that the Muslim world could consider just, America was risking even more hatred and opening itself up to more attack.

With a narrow Western worldview, it would be difficult for a journalist to self motivate to seek out understanding from a Muslim point of view.

It is this sense of helplessness as expressed by Knickerbocker and a narrow worldview, as explored by Ford, that the CDS attempts to address. The documentary tradition is empowering in the sense that practitioners are in an active search for understanding of the world through the eyes of others. It is the key tenet of the documentary tradition.

Islamabad business student Nabil Ahmed told Ford that the only way for America to be a friend of Islam is to “consider our lives to be as precious as their own.” He said we should not just talk of those killed on September 11, but of those killed in Kashmir, Palestine, African countries and Bosnia. To do this, to consider others equally as precious and to “talk” of the suffering of others equally, a journalist would need a worldview that enabled her to do this. And, even if a journalist did have an empathetic and broad worldview, the current media system may or may not allow the space or time to bring that view to the American public.

A task force set up by the Council on Foreign Relations in New York determined that generally, America is stereotyped as “arrogant, self-indulgent, hypocritical, inattentive and unwilling or unable to engage in cross-cultural dialogue” and this directly conflicts with a survey by the *Christian Science Monitor* in September 2002 that shows 68 percent of Americans believe their country’s action “usually or almost always” benefits the world.

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Dozens of books have cropped up since September 11 that attempt to unravel the American worldview and look for new views, but the literature does not reflect an attempt on the part of journalism programs now to require an American journalism student to expose herself to radical ideas or new perspectives or criticisms of American actions and values. Prophetically, British author and educator Derek Heater advocated an “education for international understanding” as long ago as 1980. He wrote that eventually the world would face “grave difficulties” that would require a high degree of understanding and a greater capacity for cooperation between disparate peoples and nations. Education, he said, was not doing enough to inform students about the “outside world and the attitudes towards other peoples that may be essential for human survival within a generation or two.”

Immediately post 9/11, American media did not focus on asking why the event occurred. Journalists were unable to break free of their worldview to consider causes, for to do so might be to condone the act of terrorism. A thorough analysis of post 9/11 media coverage is outside the scope of this research; however, mention is made because it speaks to the broader issue of worldview and its relationship to the information presented to the American public on any given issue. As an American in South Africa at the time of the terrorist attack in New York, I was exposed to very simple but profound beliefs on the part of many South Africans: we deserved it and we should have seen it coming.

The texts used in journalism education are written from a Western point of view. Most texts in most topics used in American education advocate a Western point of view. Educators have come up through the American education system, which supports a Western perspective. Individual educators have adopted a broader global and/or empathetic view of the world and our place in it, however, the literature does not reflect this to be the norm. Media and/or cultural theory courses, usually offered at the graduate level, may or may not be taught from a broad worldview; just because theory requires an in-depth look at cultural reproduction and the causes of hegemony and unequal power structures, does not necessarily mean the student is challenged to consider the way Americans view the world versus others, and how differing worldviews affect global relations and humanity.

The CDS mission statement reads, in part: “The CDS promotes documentary work that

cultivates progressive change by amplifying voices, advancing human dignity, engendering respect among individuals, breaking down barriers to understanding, and illuminating social injustices.” This is a statement about worldview. If these were the stated goals of a journalism program, with curricula that supported this outcome, perhaps the graduate would practice a journalism that expanded the view of its audience.

In *Literacies of Power: What Americans Are Not Allowed to Know*, Donald Macedo said that the American education system rewards teachers for reproducing and not questioning dominant mechanisms designed to produce asymmetries along the lines of race, gender, class, culture and ethnicity. While he agrees that not all teachers suffer from “the inability to separate myth from reality, to read the world critically,” this inability is the norm. The faculty at the CDS, for the most part, are not cultural or critical theorists. Most of them are not scholars with advanced study in these areas. It is the nature of their work that has “taught” them to ask critical questions related to power, inequality and multiple realities. This raises the issue about the need for critical thinking. If journalism students, in particular for this conversation, wouldn’t this naturally expand their worldview? What they have *seen* in the field drives their thinking. What I witnessed in the classroom was critical praxis, whether the instructor was aware of the term or not. The instructors melded theory with practice via their experience in the field in a natural and organic way. There could be no punishment for challenging students to challenge the status quo in the CDS environment because the challenge is imbedded in the center’s mission.

##### **5) The role of external factors in curricular development**

A great deal of tension could be reduced, I believe, not only in the literature but in individual journalism/communication departments as well, if outside factors were acknowledged and dealt with accordingly. For example literature resulting from Bollinger’s actions did not appear to consider the fact that Columbia is home to a graduate journalism program in the heart of New York City. It has a tremendous amount of external funding, a long history and is part of a large university. The fact that decades old debates centering on undergraduate education was rekindled in light of Bollinger’s concerns reflects the generic nature of the public discussion that rarely ends in consensus or resolution. The singular answer to key questions cannot be attained,

nor would a singular answer be implementable because each institution deals with factors unique to it alone.

If a program is located in an isolated area with limited access to media markets for partnering or internship opportunities, it may have to modify its curriculum. Should such a program be prohibited from offering a traditional journalism program because of the obstacles it faces, requiring students to go elsewhere? It is not likely that a governing body would ever be able to enforce regulations that would result in a journalism education system, nor do I believe all journalism education programs would ever agree to such a system. When Washington State newspapers attempted to “rate” journalism programs there, tensions were created related to the criteria used and to the lack of understanding of the educational system on the part of media professionals. At the present time, a news organization has the right to internally reach a conclusion about a particular program based on the quality and skill level of its graduates.

The structure utilized by the majority of American universities can be an obstacle to traditional journalism education, and the structure has a different impact on different institutions. For example, semester and block class systems make it difficult to spend sustained periods of time with students for the purpose of practice. With increasing numbers of students working, more so at public state institutions, trying to get students to engage in the practice of journalism becomes problematic.

Because American schools are course-structured, students no longer begin their academic career as freshmen with a known group of other freshmen and continue as a group throughout their college experience. Instead, students can take one course a year for several years, then several courses for a year, then a heavy summer load, and so on. The time lapse between classes and varying degrees of student lifestyles makes skills training difficult. Most journalism schools are not structured like other professional schools such as nursing or aeronautics or law, which require students to commit to clinical practice, flying time or all day seminars. The University of Montana Missoula is a good example of a curriculum that requires two years of sustained study in the journalism program after completing all core requirements. Students apply to the journalism school, leaving Montana with a highly motivated pool of students. Suggestions made in the literature assume all programs are the same and all student bodies are the same.



The literature also does not reflect an understanding of the role faculty composition may play in curricular development. If an institution adheres to a research mission that requires the earned doctorate for hiring, it is unlikely that a traditional skills based program will be successful as few journalists with long work histories devote the years necessary to reach the doctorate level. If an institution's administration supports the use of professionals and differentiates tenure requirements, a program could offer a balance of theory and practice. For there to be a "successful" learning environment, the key, I believe, is a curriculum that fits well with the faculty type(s), the student body and the external factors such as location and size of program. It would be helpful if the literature were broken into categories that are cognizant of the "actual" work environment at educational institutions. At present, this focused method of creating journalism programs is not occurring. Instead, many programs are attempting to fit a square peg into a round hole and wondering why the former doesn't fit into the latter. The literature does not recognize programs that are squares or circles, only faculty that are squares or circles.

At the CDS, the curriculum and structure matches the environment; Duke is home to "quality" students; the faculty share common interests and worldview; the surrounding area of Raleigh-Durham, and North Carolina are rich with history and media markets and agencies/groups with which to partner in the area of culture, history, science, environment, education and the arts.

##### **5) Lack of interdisciplinary partnerships in journalism education**

The literature does not reflect actual suggestions for blending journalism with other disciplines and helping to make the discipline an integral part of university life. There are many calls to do so, however. There may be programs successfully partnering with other disciplines on their campuses, but these practices are not offered publicly in the literature. Graduate programs appear to be doing a better job of marrying journalism study with other areas of study

with the offering of joint degrees in journalism and law, public health and public policy, for example.

At the CDS, the nature of the work is inherently and necessarily interdisciplinary. Duke students are still required to complete a general core education sequence, but the classes offered at the CDS revisit topics such as history, literature, sociology, and so on, then connect the liberal arts and humanities to a documentary method that explores representational issues by interacting closely with a person or group. That is, the courses are not in the field of documentary work; they are courses that explore a particular area of society rather than the general overviews required in general education courses. For example, in the spring 2003, the CDS offered courses ranging from children with illness to personal conversion moments to aging to local communities.

At the present time, the accreditation process dictated by ACEJMC requires 75 percent of courses be taken outside the student's major area of communication studies. However, programs are not required to show student competence in applying the content of those courses to representation for a mass audience.

**6) Lack of process and media product experimentation in journalism education.**

The impetus for exploration of the documentary tradition was the call for experimentation by the Columbia task force in 2001. This was the first time a direct request had been made for experimentation. I was naïve and I took this call literally. A thorough review of journalism education literature dating back to the 1920s revealed that curricular development has been tied to university needs and industry needs with little development based on that generation of students or media reform. The literature does not reflect an understanding of the connection between program structure and faculty composition. Even the task force did not make its call in the name of media change; rather, it said there is an “urgent” need for re-evaluation of the way we educate journalists because of rapid changes taking place in the “information economy.” The

call for experimentation was related to curricular experimentation, not necessarily experimenting with new and “better” media systems.

One of the few consistent voices in the literature speaking to the state of the media industry is the former dean of the University of California Berkeley’s graduate school of journalism, Orville Schell. He has said that the biggest problem facing journalism schools is dealing with the gap between journalism students who are “trained well to do thoughtful, thorough credible, accurate journalism and paucity of jobs in media outlets that want people to do this kind of work.” If one were to believe the body of literature, she would believe there are no students educated to work as thoughtful change agents, which simply cannot be proven.

Journalism educators as well as media practitioners appear to focus on what we teach, not on the environment in which those graduates will have to work. Although it is outside the scope of this thesis to thoroughly review the media reform movement in America, it is necessary to mention the current media landscape; those working at the CDS made it clear to me that they cannot envision a place for their work in mainstream media because of the low level of trust in the media, the profit focus of the media, the impact of daily deadlines on “truth telling” and the narrow worldview of practicing journalists. Faculty at the CDS are not in the business of media reform, nor are American journalism programs in general.

Journalism education programs attempt to routinely change themselves to meet information technology advances rather than attempting to change “deficiencies” in the current media environment. This places the role of the university squarely in a “vocational” category rather than that of contributor to society. Even a “new” approach to journalism education, like that offered by Blanchard and Christ at Trinity College, is in response to an information environment with blurred lines between vocations, not in response to the information needs of the American public. For example, if American medical programs only taught their students how to treat current diseases with current procedures and medications, and did not consider it a responsibility to continually look for better treatments or ways to eradicate diseases, where would we be?

While James Agee was one of the first working journalists to publicly lament the limitations of mainstream journalism, he fell short because he did not consider the possibility

that “his” type of journalism would or could become part of mainstream journalism. Although the media reform movement makes mention of some of the very issues raised by Agee, it does not appear to think journalism education programs can contribute new models that would address those issues. Many universities across the country do offer courses in independent media, usually referred to as alternative media or non-profit media. These courses, however, are still approaching the subject from a niche market perspective. As Lee Bollinger noted in his final report on the findings of his task force, a “healthy” media is necessary to have a healthy democracy.” If one criteria of a healthy democracy is participation by “all,” then it would make sense that the mainstream press, which is accessible to the masses, needs to be healthy. Specialty publications and programming reach specialized audiences that usually seek out their information sources based on what is comfortable to them; there is no mention in the literature of programs attempting to experiment with ways to improve the health of American media, rather, journalism education looks for new ways to educate future journalists to work with the current unhealthy system knowing full well that decisions are not made by new hires.

The civic journalism movement in America has, at least, resulted in “experiments” on the part of media outlets and journalism courses. But, even this movement is not based on change across the board. Rather, it results in projects intending to increase civic participation on a variety of topics. It has been criticized for “making news” rather than just reporting it, and the nature of the criticisms show that any challenge to traditional reporting practices are met with resistance.

What makes change across the board critical at this point in American history, I believe, is the impact of September 11 on the rest of the world because of the response by Americans and America’s government. Elsewhere in this thesis I have discussed the connection between September 11 and the need for journalists and media products with a broader worldview. Here, I want to mention the work of the *Christian Science Monitor*, a weekly publication with ties to the First Church of Christ, Science.

Church founder Mary Baker Eddy founded the *Christian Science Monitor (CSM)* in 1908. The paper’s motto, “To injure no man, but to bless all mankind,” sprang from Eddy’s dissatisfaction with the negative view most newspapers take to the world. Despite the fact that

the paper has ties to a church, it does not purport to exist to spread church doctrine except insofar as a humanity-based philosophy drives the operations.

The CSM describes itself as “global, both in practice and in spirit.” It says that “in an era when the mainstream media has narrowed its lens,” the newspaper believes readers actually want the opposite.

The organization claims that its goal is “to embrace the human family, shedding light and understanding with the conviction that truth is the beginning to solutions.” Although the paper was weekly, not daily, and had a relatively small circulation, it was the closest thing to a mainstream publication utilizing methods similar to that of the CDS. A journalism education model designed to produce journalists with moral concerns and able to practice in an environment such as the CSM is warranted. *The Christian Science Monitor* ceased paper publication in 2009 but its online addition adheres to the same tenets imbedded in its operation.

This is how the publication describes its methods for covering news: “We're unrelenting, but fair. We're excited by what's new and developing yet always mindful of the history behind us. We're broad in scope, but written for the individual. And this is a newspaper that makes a point of resisting the sensational in favor of the meaningful. We're also free to be an independent voice, devoid of the corporate allegiances and pressures that critics say too often skew today's media.”

There are magazines and websites that hold philosophies similar to the CSM, but again, those are targeting narrow specialized audiences while the CSM targets a mass audience. The newspaper operates as a non-profit, and an in-depth case study would be necessary to see how this fact affects its ability to publish daily and circulate wider.

If you compare CSM reader comments with the observations made at the CDS, many similarities appear. For example:

*“Way back in 1973, in my journalism school, we as students were told that CS Monitor was a good example of good journalism. That commendation by the faculty then holds good today. Thank you for being consistent.”*

– Mahesh Vijapurkar

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*“The CSM treats peoples of the world in its news coverage as neighbors we should know about, not as exotic or frightening strangers. I love the thread of common humanity in the coverage, and the clear ‘there but for the grace of God go I’ message. We’re all in the big leaky boat together, and the CSM acknowledges and celebrates it. We’ve subscribed for over a decade, and plan to for many more. Keep it up!”*

*– Ross Jennings*

*“I felt obliged to write to thank you. Thank you for contributing to building an understanding between people. And I emphasize the word ‘people’. Thank you for allowing this undistorted image of the way religion affects the people of Saudi Arabia to be presented to your readership. This article was an island (like the October 2003 National Geographic special feature) of objectivity in an extremely subjective coverage of life in Saudi Arabia.”*

*– M. Taibah*

*“This note is a short addition to the chorus of praise for your “Talking with the Enemy” series. I cared passionately about the outcome of this election, and your articles were constant reminders passion has to exist with at least openness to other views or we are truly in deep trouble. It’s not an easy position that you advocate, but it certainly is important. Thank you for running this series.”*

*– Chambliss Neil*

These reader comments refer to a worldview that is global and compassionate. The newspaper covers many of the same stories seen on the evening network news and in national daily newspapers, however, it does so with a clear commitment to this worldview which is

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expressed via story choices, slants, photographs and even layout and design. For a journalism program to use this mode of reporting as its foundation, it would have to admit there are few mainstream outlets for employment. This type of reporting takes time and administrative buy-in and support. It is a prime example of the difficulty of focus on quality, not sales, as the CSM ceased publication in 2009, although it does have a limited online presence. This type of work is behind in terms of exploring how it fits into an increasingly online world.

Even publications willing to allow for “immersion” or “intimate” journalism do so with a mentality of “time equals truth.” Both of these forms of journalism are based on spending long periods of time with a subject and writing about “everyday” life and seemingly insignificant things to represent the more significant aspects of life. Neither of these forms is based on the type of lens used by reporters. Even National Public Radio, America’s premier non-profit news and information radio source, does not ascribe to a worldview position; it does, however, deviate from a traditional “objective” reporting position.

In the wake of Bollinger’s task force, three graduate schools of journalism did take action, though it did not come in the form of true experimentation. Columbia University did finally choose a dean, Nicholas Lemann, former magazine writer for *The New Yorker*. In collaboration with Columbia are Orville Schell at Berkeley, Loren Ghigione of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, Geoffrey Cowan of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California and Alex S. Jones of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University.

These five schools were awarded \$6 million by the Carnegie Corporation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The money funded a three part program: 1) to develop national reporting projects that will hire the best reporting students to collaborate with media organizations; 2) to create a media policy task force at the Shorenstein Center to conduct research and coordinate the views of deans and university presidents in debates on media issues, and; 3) develop more innovative curriculums by pairing journalists with scientists, historians, economists and other scholars on their campuses.

“This is a time not only to try and make journalism schools as relevant as possible to the evolving profession, but also to have universities begin to weigh in on the debate about what happens in the media,” said Orville Schell, about the project.

This is a step in the right direction. However, it is not clear what impact the process will have on the current state of the media. That is, will the executives at Gannett or Knight Ridder, the largest newspaper chains in the country, change their product based on the views of university deans? Partnerships of this type have been forged in the past, particularly within the civic journalism movement, and as yet have not resulted in a significant change in media practices.

It is outside the scope of this thesis to probe the issue of social media in depth. This is not to say that social media and convergence should not be a critical point to consider related to experimenting with curricular and program development. The focus of this thesis is the human factor in journalism education. I assert that because there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all program, experimentation with program formats has to consider type of faculty, institutional history, student body and location. The conclusions I have drawn based on a thorough review of the literature and following a case study of the CDS place worldview at the forefront and the media platforms, skills and tools with which to share that worldview is secondary.

### **Building a “worldview” based journalism program**

Betty Medsger has written that perhaps journalism education is its own worst enemy. To be committed to the First Amendment and to believe journalism is directly linked to democracy does not mean academic journalism must close its borders tightly to protect those things. In fact, drawing from the best of what the university has to offer (anthropology, history, science, philosophy,) seems to make more sense if journalists and the media are to keep step with an increasingly connected world with diverse beliefs and values.



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The College of Santa Fe in New Mexico developed a program that could act as a model for a documentary tradition based journalism school. I don't think it is a coincidence that CDS co-founder Alex Harris has a relationship with the school and some of its faculty.

The Documentary Studies Program at CSF assumed that students can receive an education that allows them to make a living but also live a "meaningful" life. The interdisciplinary program drew upon elements of sociology, environmental conservation, economics, political science, photography, non-fiction writing and film. Instruction occurred inside and outside the classroom. The courses emphasized fieldwork and "artistic" expression.

Internationally renowned documentary photographer, Sebastiao Salgado, who is director of an institute in Brazil dedicated to reforestation and sustainability of the Atlantic Forest, was affiliated with the CSF program. Students of the program were required to spend a semester in Brazil. Salgado is an example of the blending of content knowledge with skill just as the instructors at the CDS blend.

Salgado's theory is that a documentary photographer is trained to show connections. She must be prepared, "both intellectually and also emotionally." When a photographer understands the story behind the picture, "it can lead to photos that would never happen otherwise." He says the best pictures are given, not taken.

CSF's president has said it is rare to find a "workable" interdisciplinary program. By collaborating with distinguished scholars in many fields and combining these fields with photography, film, writing, social science and political science in a "seamless" curriculum, students can "form a personal sense of their role in collective future."

With an emphasis on doing and service, students learn how to apply their worldview in constructive ways. CSF's Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Mark Lombardi, said the program was a model of "interdisciplinary, participatory education."

The program at CSF was the first of its kind, matching an area of concern, the environment, with journalistic skills, although the program does not use the term journalism. The program is similar to the Lewis Hines Fellowship directed by the CDS and the Center for Public Policy at Duke University which matches students to non-profit humanitarian agencies abroad to document in film, words and pictures the plight of others. These programs utilize

journalistic technique under a documentary tradition philosophy to create representations that will be of use to service agencies addressing a diverse list of social issues such as hunger, genocide and AIDS.

I don't believe it is surprising that the College of Santa Fe closed its doors as an institution in 2009. It was offering a new form of college education that needed time to sustain itself. This failure, along with the cessation of printing by the Christian Science Monitor, is evidence that change and innovation are difficult to say the least.

Another example of an undergraduate program utilizing documentary techniques is the Salt Center in Portland, Maine. Salt does not use the term "documentary tradition" but it does refer to its work as documentary. The center is also a quasi-freestanding institution, like the CDS, and is affiliated with the University of Maine at Farmington. It also has agreements with a host of institutions resulting in the transfer of undergraduate and graduate credits.

Like the CDS, Salt was founded by a "big" personality. Cultural journalist Pamela Woods did not have the luxury of a large foundation. Instead, she began teaching cultural journalism at Kennebunk High School in Maine. What started as a way to engage students with their surroundings ultimately became a successful school specializing in in-depth writing and photography. Wood's methods are in the tradition of Foxfire, a high school project begun in rural Rabun Gap, Georgia by teacher Eliot Wigginton, though both projects developed without knowledge of the other.

While Foxfire has continued to work with rural high school students, documenting rural traditions and stories, Salt moved up to higher education. Salt uses the term "documentary studies," however, not in the same context as the CDS. Salt work focuses on method and product while the CDS focuses on worldview and intention. Like the CDS, the Salt philosophy is difficult to define but appears to attract students like those at the CDS.

Salt describes its work this way:

*"We try to make something extraordinary out of the ordinary. We seek to capture a moment in the lives of people around us, and to do justice to that moment. To do so, we work long hours at honing our craft. Some people say we're intense. We keep trying. Our shooting*

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*might be a split-second off. Our words won't quite describe what we mean. The sound editing will be cumbersome. So we go back to work again. As many times as are needed. There are no competitors here. There is no "right" way of doing things. We try to help each other step beyond the merely good. We don't fit into any neat categories. We combine discipline and imagination, breadth and detail. When we succeed in what we're doing, we sit back for a minute view and listen to what we've created."*

It describes the "documentary process" this way:

*Sociologist with a camera? Writer on a discovery course? Historian of street language? Storyteller looking for stories? Where can you go to learn to put it all together? To the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies, of course. Salt is a unique program in Maine where academic disciplines—fragmented on campuses—reunite before the great issues that face people today: workplace and home, community and isolation, continuity and change, possession and dispossession. What we do has been called ethnography, cultural journalism, oral history, folklore, qualitative sociology, documentary photography, visual anthropology, non-fiction writing. We are less concerned about what to call what we do than how we do it."*

The similarities between CDS and Salt are clear. Salt's alumni have gone on to achieve great success in the field of journalism, though few of the alumni studied traditional journalism. CDS has not tracked its "alumni" long enough to know whether they will ultimately find themselves working in the media industry. Students represent all areas of academic disciplines. "Students are able to build significantly upon and extend their campus studies with single-minded focus, undistracted by courses they might otherwise be required to take," says the center marketing materials. For example: anthropology and sociology majors have an opportunity to test and challenge their classroom studies with extended fieldwork. For English, photography, and art majors, the Salt Semester "heightens one's craft, pushed by the twin demands of field work and publication. And, for journalism majors, the Salt Semester offers an "expansion of standard journalism models," allowing students to use literary and social science techniques in an in-depth study of a topic.

While CDS students take traditional semester courses based on a topic, Salt offers semester long intensive programs. Students take courses in a non-traditional time block manner,

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studying field research, advanced skills in either non-fiction writing, photography or radio, and issues in documentary studies. Students are challenged to “explore the intellectual and moral challenges posed by the research relationship as they learn the basic techniques of collecting and interpreting information; focused participant observation; in-depth interviewing, and assessment of the meanings of local environments (material and natural cultures).”

Unlike the CDS, Salt attempts to produce a quality product. It publishes a quarterly magazine, Salt, to showcase student work. A writing technique referred to as “literature of fact” is utilized at Salt. Writer John McPhee, usually associated with the genre, has an affiliation with the center. The genre, generally speaking, combines fieldwork and literary interpretation, creating stories about “the everyday fabric of life and events through careful observation and listening.” The association of Salt with a particular literary method differs from the CDS, which does not adopt one specific type of artistic expression.

The magazine, and the center, has struggled with finances and leadership issues just like the CDS. Founder Pamela Woods was “asked to step down” from the institution she founded ten years ago. It appears that the board of directors felt Woods was not able to keep up with the center’s needs and evolution. The magazine faltered for some time, but has recently begun publishing again. The center’s gallery also showcases student work and the center is home to an extensive archive of Maine history as a result of decades of student work. One of the co-founders of the CDS, Dr. Robert Coles, met the same fate as Woods. There is a danger of creating programs that are based on the philosophy and passion of one person.

Because Salt offers semester programs, the limitations inherent in traditional course scheduling at universities and colleges is not an issue. Students can spend large blocks of time in the field and large blocks of time engaged in discussion groups as well as large blocks of time honing documentary skills. This type of scheduling addresses one of the notes made by the Bollinger task force, that is, sometimes a particular skill or issue does not require an entire semester. Experimenting with traditional schedules might be necessary, the task force concluded.

There are colleges and universities that experiment with traditional scheduling and guidelines.

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In particular, there are two practices in education worth considering: 1) The Washington Center for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education at Evergreen University 2) Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee which uses an innovative focused calendar.

Of particular interest to the model offered here is the movement called “learning community” that began in the 1980s as a response to debates over the path higher education took in the 1960s. In Washington State, Evergreen State College was founded as a public alternative liberal arts college following on the heels of experiments at University of California at Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin.

No academic departments

No faculty rank

No tenure

No merit pay increases

No grades

No majors

No distribution requirements

No required sequences of courses.

The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, which was founded as a public service center of Evergreen, has designed a model curriculum that is “low-cost, transferable, systematic and designed to overcome some of the structural barriers to educational excellence.”

By 2002, more than 500 American campuses were engaging in some type of learning community curriculum design. While there are literally dozens of types of learning communities, some elements remain constant; the emphasis is on student learning via integration of ideas and concepts.

Another example of a proactive and change-centered approach to higher education is Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee, one of three colleges in America using a focused

calendar and adhering to a “character building curriculum.” The focused calendar represents a radical departure from traditional semester-based schedules. Blocks of time replace semester courses. Tusculum has utilized this calendar for more than a decade and has been called a “model institution” by the Carnegie Foundation. The physical module structure of the Independent model draws from the work of both Tusculum College and Evergreen University.

The Bollinger task force asked for experimentation in journalism education. The examples of Evergreen’s integrated learning communities and Tusculum College’s focused calendar are not intended to imply that a journalism program could radically depart from the structure of the larger university in all cases. The examples are intended to show that radical experimentation and departure from tradition is possible, though difficult.

The choice to explore the workings of the CDS was made based on my opinion that it might address some of the concerns expressed about the future of journalism education. The resultant model I propose is also based on an opinion; I believe the education and curricular philosophy of Parker J. Palmer is a good fit with the philosophy practiced at the CDS and with my personal views, based on research and experience that the focus of journalism education should change toward worldview rather than skills, liberal arts or general communications.

In Parker Palmer’s 1998 *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer advocates a pedagogy he calls “the subject-centered classroom.” This type of environment makes greater sense in the context of Palmer’s ideology. Palmer calls his version of education a “community of truth.” He carves out a belief system called “knowing in community” and takes this further to the point of praxis, weaving his theory into a classroom of flexible practices. Palmer explores classroom models to see how well they advance this question: “Do these models enhance and advance the educational mission of knowing, teaching and learning?”

There are three models, says Palmer, that have grown up in American education to create thick “underbrush.” They are therapeutic, civic and marketing models.

A therapeutic teaching and learning environment focuses on human relationships and “love.” This means that a love for learning, a passion for furthering knowledge, is the foundation for the model. But, he says, in the application of a therapeutically built community to the educational setting, there is a danger of forcing people to get on board, to create intimacy under

duress. If it is true that most people experience true intimacy with only a few people in their lifetimes, then asking students to believe anything outside that state of familiar comfort and level of intimacy leaves them unable to appreciate “others.”

When we apply therapeutic community to civic models of community, an “important corrective” takes place, says Palmer. Civic models embrace the idea that people from disparate backgrounds need to “hang together” or they will undoubtedly hang separately, achieving little.

Civic community comes from ancient roots. The university has been considered, since Plato, as a place that furthers democratic values. Palmer agrees with the writings of Benjamin Barber who has put forth the theory that the academy is not just a parallel function with democracy, rather, it is the same thing.

Civic models applied to education pose a problem, however. In a civic society, we deal with issues such as racism and discrimination via negotiation and mediation. The problem is, the search for truth cannot be dependent on a “greater good” principle, says Palmer. “Truth is not determined by democratic means.”

Because “truth” is the goal of journalism, a journalism education model needs to be designed around the obstacles to finding truths. We cannot assume there is a method for truth that considers the greatest good for the greatest number or we create a learning environment out of synch with the discipline’s public mission that must be inclusive of all citizens’ rights, needs and desires. In its current state, generally speaking, journalism education does not endorse a democratic product, one that intends to make sense of information for all people or one that intends to be relevant to all people. It purports to do this, but in reality, a mass medium really only intends to reach a specific mass.

A marketing model of community, says Palmer, combines the personal nature of a therapeutic model and the practical nature of the civic model. The marketing model treats students as consumers that must be satisfied. This model abandons truth or knowledge as priority. The sense of community in a marketing model centers on happy or dissatisfied consumers. Parker asserts, and I agree, that a “good” education can often make a student unhappy. They are often angered by tough challenges to belief systems or methods. In an educational setting, assuming the customer is always right sabotages the process of learning.

Taking what can be gained from therapeutic, civic and marketing community models and applying this to education leads to an alternative model of education which I believe works well when woven into a documentary perspective. To explain this theory further, it is necessary to look at the theory preferred by Palmer.

Parker's model, community of truth, embraces and guides and refines the core mission of teaching, learning and knowing. These labels are not accidental. Embracing, guiding and refining can also describe the work done by documentarians at Duke's CDS, the Salt Center in Portland, Maine and other documentary-based institutions and/or programs across the country, along with such adjectives as evolving, reflecting and growing which were heard upon observation of the CDS.

Palmer's community of truth is founded on the idea that "reality is a web of communal relationships and we can 'know reality' only by being *in a* community with it."

A transformation of images of reality has occurred in almost every academic discipline over the past 50 years from ecology to physics. Even subatomic particles have been shown to communicate, says Palmer. For those who believe that reality is highly relational, it makes sense that epistemologically we no longer feel obligated to disconnect from the "other."

Where does truth fit into this thinking? Where would it fit into a journalistic educational setting if truth was still the goal? As social theory is evolving and changing, so are journalism schools which are in the process of figuring out how to present a unified understanding of truth, and more important, objectivity. It is widely accepted that the old journalism purported to have the ability to be objective and the present belief is that objectivity is a lofty goal that cannot be completely achieved because we are human messengers.

New curricula should, then, address this issue head on. What is the nature of "truth?" What is the nature of reality? For whom? What is the relationship between the reporter and the source, between reporter and knowledge, between reporter and information? The answers to these ontological and epistemological questions will vary depending on where you place yourself



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on the theoretical spectrum. The answers will differ from region to region, from journalism program to journalism program based on a host of variables.

Palmer takes a highly antagonistic approach toward the “objectivist myth of knowing.” His position contrasts with that of many positivist academics much in the same way the journalism community is split between green eyeshades and chi-squares. See Appendix for Palmer’s visual version of the objectivist myth.

In Palmer’s version of objectivist truth, the truth flows from the top down. An educated person is one who can “remember and repeat the expert’s propositions about the object.”

Palmer says, and I agree, that this myth “profoundly deforms the way we educate.”

If you embrace Palmer’s “community of truth,” then Palmer’s visual map represents the likely relationship between knower and known. An important distinction between Palmer’s map and the traditional pedagogical map is that Palmer places a subject at the core while the predominant teaching model places an object at the top. The “other” is not an object. The subject, if we allow it to be the focus, is afforded ontological respect that is usually only afforded humans.

Applied to a classroom, specifically a journalism classroom, we would join together to understand the subject in a “circular, interactive and dynamic fashion by sharing observations and interpretations, correcting and complementing each, torn by conflict in this moment and joined by consensus in the next.”

Palmer points out that each discipline may have its own rules for observation and interpretation, but these must be allowed to change and evolve as our understanding of the subject evolves.

Under Palmer’s description of truth, a journalism student would be encouraged to approach a story as an ongoing conversation, one that flows back and forth. “To be in the truth,” says Palmer, “we must know how to observe and reflect and speak and listen with passion and discipline in the circle gathered around a given subject.”

Palmer’s academic and activist philosophies and writings mirror that of the CDS faculty. Though Palmer does not write on behalf of any particular discipline or area of expression, his

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beliefs about the nature of reality, knowing and learning are similar to that of documentary workers in the Depression era tradition.

The documentary tradition as practiced by the Center for Documentary Studies practices what Palmer preaches. Practitioners there speak of an unknowable truth. They talk about evolving knowledge. They talk about the relationship between the seeker and the unknown and what can be learned by different types of relationships.

Palmer recognizes that some will accuse him of relativism. He addresses this accusation by noting that the subject knows itself better than we can. “Openness to transcendence is what distinguishes the community of truth from both absolutism and relativism.” Classroom observation at the CDS revealed a degree of “openness” and flexibility not routinely seen in traditional academic environments. It appeared to be a natural outcome of the “discipline.”

What does a community of truth look like in a classroom? It isn’t just a “banking system” with teacher as expert and students as depositories. It is also not a new age approach with pillows for desks and trees for classrooms. An educational community can be as varied as the teachers and depends on the “integrity and identity” of the teacher.

Looking for teaching and learning models that are neither student-focused nor teacher-centered, rather, one that is worldview-centered, lead me to the work of Parker Palmer, who proposes a subject-centered classroom. Palmer calls the subject a “great thing,” drawing from liberal arts education that was based on classics and classical “pieces of knowledge.” It is this “great thing” that draws student and teacher equally to the center, holding both equally accountable to the subject and each other.

Palmer describes his vision of a subject-centered classroom this way:

*“In a subject centered classroom, the teacher’s central task is to give the great thing an independent voice—a capacity to speak its truth quite apart from the teacher’s voice in terms that students can hear and understand. When the great thing speaks for itself, teachers and students are more likely to come into a genuine learning community, a community that does not*

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*collapse into the ego of students or teacher but knows itself accountable to the subject at its core.”*

*It is ironic that objectivism, which seems to put the object of knowledge above all else, fosters in practice a teacher-centered classroom. Objectivism is so obsessed with protecting the purity of knowledge that students are forbidden direct access to the object of study, lest their subjectivity defile it. Whatever they know about it must be mediated through the teacher, who stands in for the object, serves as its mouthpiece, and is the sole focus of the student’s attention.*

*“A subject centered classroom is not one in which students are ignored. Such a classroom honors one of the most vital needs our students have: to be introduced to a world larger than their own experiences and egos, a world that expands their personal boundaries and enlarges their sense of community. This is why students often describe great teachers as people who “bring to life” things that the students had never heard of, offering them an encounter with otherness that brings the students to life as well.”*

As noted in the literature review, Robert Blanchard and William Christ conducted an extensive review of educational reform literature looking for ways to develop a new curriculum for their communication students. They identified issues facing journalism education, just as I have. They chose a general communications model that would educate broadly. They categorized types of teaching roles, one of only a handful of references in the literature to teacher types and pedagogical approaches. They chose a model that suited them as teachers and their type of institutional life.

I have chosen a subject-centered approach to curriculum development because it mirrors what I witnessed at the Center for Documentary Studies and because it focuses attention in the classroom to a shared “thing” which serves to facilitate discussion and exploration of that one thing. In doing so, all areas of knowledge are incorporated into looking at that one thing, i.e. social, historical, economic, and philosophical. The CDS, for the most part, offered courses that began with a narrowly focused topic and then applied a broad worldview to that topic. The documentary tradition was the “one great thing” for every course offered at the CDS.

## **Chapter 10: The Story Center**

Although it has been almost 10 years since Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia University, made a call for experimentation in journalism education curriculum development, not much has changed if you gauge the academic discourse by the body of literature. This should not be surprising as the contentious debate about the education of journalists and journalism's fit in American higher education has been present since the first journalism course was offered at Washington and Lee College. Now, with the onslaught of social media, advanced technology and a world connected by the internet, it seems the right time for institutions of higher education to "justify" radical departure from traditional program structure. We never needed a justification, but for the sake of argument, perhaps there were never enough external factors to warrant overhaul of an institution's program structure. The problem of tenured faculty with entrenched areas of preference and expertise will continue to plague the discipline's need for innovation, but some institutions may be in a position to re-think the relationship between faculty, student body, location and the world's great need.

The primary research question asked in this thesis is, "who is teaching journalism?" This question has to be asked in order to address the question most often argued in the literature: "Who should be teaching journalism?" Why is the research question relevant or important? Because we would require our students to ask this question if they were writing a story about the long running areas of tension in journalism education. How can we ever hope to coalesce as an academic discipline if we are unwilling or afraid to look at ourselves, as well as our programs? Personalities create curricula, develop programs, teach, research and publish. This thesis is an attempt to lay the foundation for like-minded teachers and researchers to find each other. The experimental program offered here is based on the work of people that I gravitate toward naturally; all have, at times, dealt with heavy criticism for their ideas, and for their life and teaching philosophies, and they have taken their heretic status and parlayed it into a faithful following. The model offered here has two parts: it addresses issues raised by the journalism education community and the media industry, and it creates a space for teachers with similar passions, leading to an environment in which students are not confused or distracted by politics of personality or politics of the college or university.

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A review of my reasons for exploring the Center for Documentary Studies and attempting to fashion a journalism education curriculum using its tenets follows:

- The Columbia University inspired task force made a call for change and experimentation.
- A post Sept. 11 movement from the international community as well as American society, asking for a reconsideration of an inflexible Western perspective
- The contentious nature of the journalism education public debate and literature for decades
- The increasingly important role of the media in global relations and democratic participation
- A concern over the disintegration of civics education in American higher education and the role civics education plays in nurturing participation in democratic life.
- A concern over a journalism graduate's ability to contribute to change

For the purpose of reader relatability, I will assume here that “traditional journalism program” means skills courses (reporting, editing, photography, graphic design, feature writing) and programs with tracks (print, broadcast, radio). A traditional course could also include standard concept and theoretical courses such as Mass Media and Society, Media Law, Media Ethics, Critical Theory and the Media and courses specific to public relations and broadcast. Traditional here does not mean programs that are deemed “communication” programs with an emphasis on communication theory and a broad communication research focus.

Rather than simply suggesting a journalism curriculum that is taught from a wide worldview perspective, I am proposing a program in which “worldview” sits at the center of the academic circle. This model could be implemented in addition to a traditional journalism major or a media studies major. This model assumes that an institution recognizes that students from all disciplinary programs would benefit from exposure to media issues and skills in a globalized and media driven world.

Generally speaking, in America, currently core classes are divorced from journalism theory and skills courses, and the accreditation process encourages this scenario. It is unlikely that a journalism program could ever “intervene” and connect the dots between required core

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courses and their relationship to journalism because this would require a scheduling feat impossible to pull off; all students would have to be taking the same core classes at the same time for the journalism program to reach students at the same point in their coursework.

Students at the CDS do not take courses in skills. That is, students do not take courses in just photography or just radio or video. Each class is tied to content. Some of the evening adult classes not tied to Duke University by credit hours will focus on skills and technology, but again, the subject matter is still front and center equal with the technology. Students at Duke University from any academic major take courses at the CDS that are cross listed with their discipline. This allows students to combine the content of their liberal arts courses with media and representational issues in a seamless course without one aspect taking precedent over the other.

The Story Center concept mirrors that of the CDS with a few important deviations. The CDS is a free standing independent entity with an affiliation with Duke University. The Story Center as it is offered here is presumed to be located on an academic campus.

It is easy to understand concepts underlying the Story Center if you take the name literally. The Center sits at the center of the academic circle and it focuses on stories and storytelling (or communication, if that is a more palatable term on particular campuses).

The logistics of implementing the Story Center model in a traditional university structure could be problematic depending on administrative and institutional support. The Bollinger task force recommended that perhaps experimental programs within existing programs are warranted. I am not advocating for that recommendation; I am advocating for a program that disconnects itself from journalism programs and offers itself as a separate free standing entity.

Parker Palmer asserts that students learn better when there is a common “thing” for them to share. At the CDS, students have that common “thing.” It isn’t free speech or communication theory. It is a passionate worldview. It permeates every inch of the CDS from the people to the courses to the students to the products. Regardless of the manner in which the model is implemented, what is important, I feel, is that a wide worldview takes up a central and visible position as the “one great thing” from which everything else flows. Hiring instructors based on shared philosophy allows students to receive a “pure” education free of politics, tension and confusing conflicting ideological messages. The Story Center model can be implemented without

ever hiring new faculty if there are faculty that see merit in the experimental tenets.

The case study conducted at Duke University affiliated Center for Documentary Studies provided “ideas” for a type of program that would not only address the key issues defined by the literature, but addresses the vocational homelessness of faculty who want to break out of the box and consider radical change.

It is clear from an extensive review of the literature that little attention has been paid to the actual structure of educational institutions and who or what they serve. It is also clear that the manner in which the discipline discusses faculty quality is so narrow that it keeps the discipline stuck despite its claims that it wants to modernize to match today’s information needs. There is some real disagreement about the role journalism programs should play, but that disagreement is split along party lines; hiring editors say programs either don’t provide enough skills training or not enough context training; career academics say they need to focus on research; professionals turned academics say journalism is on the verge of death to general communications programs, and so on. Each group advocates a position that serves it, not students, and therefore not society. I am no different. I am advocating a position that serves me, but it is based in large part on my experience as an undergraduate before an academic career was considered. The somewhat “radical” departure of the Story Center model may not be possible in certain environments, but that is not a good enough reason to throw in the media reform towel.

Because the Story Center is not offered as part of an educational reform movement, I have not focused heavily on curriculum development research, which is limited in reference to higher education anyway. Blanchard and Christ’s (1993) New Professionalism model is in response to educational reform; I refer the reader to their bibliography for studies related to higher education reform issues.

I have also not focused on teacher preparation in the traditional sense. I want the focus to remain clear; in order to change the current media system, we need to provide students with an educational environment that empowers and motivates future generations of journalists to resist the status quo. There is no body of literature that specifically addresses higher education curricula with an outcome labeled “change.” The students and instructors at the CDS share a desire to make a difference in the world in some way. This is not the key philosophy journalism

students are asked to share. Contributing to democracy, the key philosophy guiding journalism education can be compared to the CDS philosophy if an institution and its instructors believe change in focus is warranted as I do.

### **The documentary tradition and journalism: similarities and differences**

After interviews with the staff and instructors at the Center for Documentary Studies, I found a new language emerging in my notes. As a journalist and journalism educator, I am used to the discourse surrounding these two roles, but it was exciting to discover there were many similarities that could bring the two together and overcome elements of one that appears to conflict with the other. The language was a language of worldview, compassion and quality. The language could refer to journalism, and many journalists and journalism educators might secretly use this language as they go about their daily work. But this is not a language we publicly advocate, generally speaking.

The instructors at the CDS are action and results oriented. Their language is full of verbs and full of adjectives describing results. First, there are verbs related to “the act” of documenting:

Recording, preserving compiling, interpreting, discovering, writing, photographing, acknowledging, engaging, documenting, understanding, remembering, creating, telling, recalling reconsidering, revisiting, renewing

Then, there is a language describing what action can do: preserve, acknowledge, promote change, connect, identify, shape community life, alter, give shape, give voice, influence broader conversation, prompt new ideas, create better understanding, clarify common goals, moving people to consider, advance, stimulate, inspire, strengthen connections, shine light on untold stories, challenge

These terms are not part of a dogma that instructors simply repeat over and over; they represent the core principles each instructor actually lives by and whose professional portfolios confirm. I see no reason why the intentions and methods associated with the documentary tradition cannot be used as a foundation for educating future journalists. The experiment requires



buy-in by like-minded people but it doesn't require dismissing all other forms of journalism education.

### **Here it is: The Story Center**

The Story Center is a physical space that can “service” all academic disciplines on any type of campus. It can serve students and faculty as part of existing courses, new courses or projects. There is no requirement to engage with the Center. There it sits, doors open for faculty and students to use as a resource. It isn't intended to offer an official major or minor, although it could. Like the CDS, it could offer a certificate in documentary studies. The Story Center is an umbrella concept allowing varied projects and instruction to take place under its roof, connected by a unifying thread: “worldview based communication.” Journalism educator Betty Medsger (1997, 2001) has written many times over the past 15 years that academic journalism programs are our worst enemy at times, that we might better serve our students and society if we were willing to throw away our walls, creating opportunities for a new “brand” of student that might enter the world of journalism.

At the heart of liberal arts education is the belief that critical thinking, humanism and broad knowledge form the foundation for vocational, professional, spiritual and personal life. At the heart of academic communications programs is the belief that society increasingly depends on the ability of its citizens to communicate across cultural and technical boundaries. Rather than only offer a communications major, or add a few communications courses to the core curriculum, a liberal arts based college could place communications at the center of the educational circle and allow it to service and support all other academic disciplines. This model is a form of convergence; however, it converges content, not formats.

Students majoring in everything from English literature to sports management need to be able to communicate generally and to communicate in their chosen areas of study. The Story Center espouses a “worldview-based technique”; however, it can focus closely on people, places and issues related to specific academic disciplines using a broad worldview.

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The center's intended techniques are formed by blending the intentions, philosophy, structure and products resulting from high school Foxfire programs, the Salt Center for Documentary Studies in Portland, Maine, the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, qualitative research methods, cultural preservation tools and humanitarian journalism techniques. It provides students with research and vocational skills and increases their knowledge in particular subject matter.

If the concept of The Story Center is applied to an academic environment, it looks like this: for example, a course offered by the Religion Department on the Holocaust would allow students to interview and write/tape the stories of Holocaust survivors and then share those stories on a variety of media platforms. The instructor of the religion course would team up with the Story Center instructor. Students of any disciplinary bent would benefit from collaboration with the Story Center because there is a focus on blending information gathering techniques with fields of knowledge with communicating that knowledge to a wide and diverse audience. Learning to interview in a sensitive and thoughtful manner with a trained eye on the bigger picture benefits the student, the interviewee and the readers. This type of course requires the student to blend knowledge in the liberal arts with communication skills.

The same type of result could be achieved through a course entitled "Africans in America," offered through the history department. Such a course would allow history majors, for example, a chance to seek out and hear the stories of Africans (not African-Americans) living in America. Students can contrast and compare what the texts say about the history of Africa and how Africans see their history. This type of course would be of interest to students from all disciplines, not just history, adding an important component to the center's goal: to help students see their chosen discipline as part of a big picture that is connected in some way to all other areas of thought and study.

The Story Center has layers of components; however, the initial phase of development of a center would require very little: a director, a physical space and collaboration workshops for campus educators. In subsequent phases, the center would either need, or have access to, a working laboratory complete with computers with graphic capability, transcribing machines, digital cameras, video cameras, work stations, interview rooms, funds for adjunct and/or visiting

faculty, gallery and documentary arts library space.

Because the Story Center is intended to function as a “separate” entity from other academic disciplines, it has the capability of creating revenue to support itself and contribute to the academic institution in time. Magazines, books, web sites, videos, mobile phones and other marketing type materials would result from the student work. It sets the stage for an institutional publishing house. It also allows business programs to become involved in the marketing and sale of student and faculty works.

The example organizations cited above, namely the centers located in Maine and North Carolina, are freestanding bodies affiliated with University of Maine Farmington and Duke University respectively. Those centers have their own board of directors and are responsible for their own operations. Duke’s center offers courses to Duke students and receives partial funding from Duke University. Duke pays faculty members to teach courses at the center and provides several faculty positions devoted solely to the documentary center. The Salt Center offers credits to students from all over the country and shares tuition dollars with those institutions via contract. The Story Center has the potential to bend to the structure preferred by an educational institution. Naturally, each institution has different needs and goals and it is critical that the relationship between the story center and the educational institution be clear.

In addition to collaboration and team teaching, traditional research papers can be repurposed for a general audience. Students could work with the Story Center to reframe their narrative with journalistic attribution or to create first person social essays. Students would learn early in their academic and professional careers that research can, and often should be, “converted” to reach a wider non-academic audience.

The Story Center could also offer its own courses that cross list with current academic disciplines similar to the manner in which the CDS cross lists with Duke major and minor programs. Story Center courses could be based on media issues, research methods or specific topics based on the expertise of participating faculty. The key tenets espoused by The Story Center would form the foundation for any course it offered and for any instructor affiliated with The Story Center. Faculty with a passion for the Story Center’s foundational belief in a wide worldview and ethical representation of others would align themselves with the Center, creating

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an invigorated learning space like that present at the CDS and The Salt Center for Documentary Studies.

The Center could also play host to community documentary projects and service-learning projects much in the way the CDS creates long standing programs to document a particular element of society which share through film festivals and art gallery showings, production of magazines and books.

After ten years of research in the form of extensive reading, in-depth case study, crafting of a Scholarly Personal Narrative and proposing a program that would address journalism education issues, The Story Center concept took shape. It seems terribly simplistic in proportion to the effort.

From the outset of this research journey, I wanted to offer a very specific story that could be relatable to a variety of educators. I was a direct victim of the qualifications debate that plagues journalism education. At first, I think I just wanted to justify my existence and right to teach a discipline I love. While I was dismissed by only one person, that person was entrenched in the chi-square and green eyeshade mentality. Without a teaching position in a journalism program, I had the courage to explore a highly personal topic, one that I know will draw criticism about rigor and valid methodology; one that will cause people to see the entire research effort as an act of revenge, one born from anger and humiliation.

Research questions are often a result of a researcher's personal experience and even intuition. I knew that I was not alone in my experience and in my philosophy. Long before I was dismissed as unqualified to teach journalism, I had developed a longing for an educational environment like that of the CDS and the Salt Center. The only thing missing from those two programs was the end result: products that were intended to reach a wide audience. There are two parts to me: teacher and woman. Both of those parts are grounded by altruism. It is difficult to participate in a journalism program anywhere because altruism is antithetical to daily practice. At least, that is what is preached publicly. Under the surface, however, many of us teaching journalism believe that you can teach journalism and altruism and students will rise to the challenge of blending the two with a certain degree of professional objectivity. In my own classroom, I have done this. On paper, in the literature that represents my academic discipline,

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there is no place for diversity which is ironic considering a national re-focus on appreciation of diversity post September 11. As a discipline, journalism is many things and I don't understand why we think there will ever be a codified list of necessary skills or an accepted program structure. By default, accreditation seems to be a destructive activity.

I have made a promise to myself based on my research journey. I promised myself I would never again affiliate myself with a program that does not allow me to be who I am. I was willing to accept that employment options for me would be limited based on this promise. But something really interesting happened post promise.

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### **If you build it, will they come?**

Any unconventional journey will naturally result in good days and bad, obstacles and bumps. What matters most, if you truly believe in the destination, is that you keep going.

In keeping with this personal research journey, I am providing a professional update, not for personal reasons, but because the model proposed in this thesis has been given a chance to see the light of day. One of the reasons I love the documentary tradition is that it recognizes the important relationship between time and accuracy. Without this update, the reader would have nothing more than speculation with which to judge the potential of the Story Center model. This thesis has been written over a span of almost ten years. It's such a privilege to have been able to let it marinate and change organically. It is the time that gives it validity for those who might be skeptical of the personal and subjective nature of the thesis. I stuck with it. I dreamed it up and I tried it. And I'll keep trying until it finds a form that works for the students and meets the intention of the model.

In Chapter 5, I discussed my personal career path and the stepping stones that guided it. Four years ago, my community journalism work was brought to the attention of the president at a small faith-based college in Tennessee. I was in the process of devising a way to open The Story Center as a free standing unit like the one found at Duke University and like the Salt Center in Maine. I had no idea how I would fund it or who I would partner with; I just knew that it was time to take the vision and make it tangible. This small Southern college has transitioned in the past 10 years from a two-year college to a four-year college and this year broke the 1000 student mark. It sits in the heart of an historic neighborhood and the county refers to the college as its "crown jewel."

The college is in the middle of massive growth, not only in terms of building renovation and additions, but in terms of program offerings. As a small liberal arts campus catering to students that would transfer to four year institutions, the program offerings were general and

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comprised mostly of core requirements. Now, it needs to make itself current and relevant to attract students. It's an exciting time at Martin Methodist College as it reflects on its history and forges a road for the future.

The president asked me for my advice on the potential success of a communications program even though he had not been referred to me for that reason. He recognized that today's students are looking for majors that will set them up for immediate employment. The college has a limited budget and it was unlikely that it could hire enough new faculty to launch a communications major. In addition, the college is within 40 miles of some of the best journalism and communications programs in the country: How could the college address students that wanted communications training and knowledge given the type of student body and the college's budget?, he asked.

I was honest with the president. I didn't have any interest in starting a media or communication program. That conflicted directly with my belief that journalism education could use a dose of innovation. Here was a college with no baggage; it had no media program and no student newspaper. Its yearbook had a rocky history. Here was a college that did not have the financial resources, I thought, to create a traditional journalism program that needs a computer lab at the very least. As I have concluded in this thesis, every college has particular circumstances and sometimes it isn't reasonable to implement traditional programs at those colleges. I took a leap of faith and presented The Story Center concept to the president. He will never know how afraid I was that he would not respond to the concept in the way it was intended. In the back of my mind I was thinking, if this doesn't fly, I may have to move for academic employment and I did not want to do that. I had moved enough and it was time to embrace roots. Besides, what was the chance, I thought, that I would ever find a college with a blank slate again?

The Story Center, as proposed, would address the concept of practical reasoning as defined by the Carnegie Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. That Center had created a task force to deal with the "antiquated" option that the purpose of an education was to foster critical thinking. Instead, the task force determined that in today's workplace and society,

the role of higher learning should be to “shape the life of the mind for practice.” The goal of such an approach, said the task force, is to give students the tools with which to live a meaningful life by blending critical intelligence and moral commitment. Using the Carnegie Center’s study to propose the Story Center showed the college I had done my homework and knew what a small liberal arts college is struggling with in today’s higher education market.

The Story Center would act as a bridge between theory in the classroom to practical applications of that theory by claiming that communications is that bridge. Theory, in this case, means theory present within each discipline, not media theory. The Center would serve as a resource for faculty to meet specific disciplinary learning objectives by supplementing academic work resulting in the production of a tangible representation of their discipline’s current topics of interest and need.

The Story Center is an umbrella concept allowing varied projects and instruction to take place under its roof, connected by a unifying thread: “worldview based communication.” As a faith-based college, Martin has the “luxury” of promoting a worldview that falls in line with Christian philosophy, and the Methodist faith in America is progressive and forward thinking when it comes to embracing diversity of all types.

In my view, at the heart of liberal arts education is the belief that critical thinking, humanism and broad knowledge form the foundation for vocational, professional, spiritual and personal life. At the heart of academic communications programs is the belief that society increasingly depends on the ability of its citizens to communicate across cultural and technical boundaries. Rather than only offer a communications major, or add a few communications courses to the core curriculum, a liberal arts based college could place communications at the center of the educational circle and allow it to service and support all other academic disciplines. This model is a form of convergence; however, it converges content, not formats.

Students majoring in everything from English literature to sports management need to be able to communicate generally and to communicate in their chosen areas of study. The Story Center espouses a “worldview-based technique”; however, it can focus closely on people, places and issues related to specific academic disciplines using a broad worldview.

The center’s technique is formed from blending the intentions, philosophy, structure and



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products resulting from high school Foxfire programs, the Salt Center for Documentary Studies in Portland, Maine, the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, qualitative research methods, cultural preservation tools and humanitarian journalism techniques.

I proposed to the president that faculty could use the center in a variety of ways:

- Faculty can choose to assign research projects that can be published in a campus magazine or placed on the college's website. The faculty can work collaboratively with The Story Center by team teaching, allowing me an opportunity to work with students on writing for publication rather than only learning to write for academic publication.
- Faculty can submit student research work for repurposing to share with a campus and community audience.
- The college can cross list courses with a Media designation to allow students an opportunity to research and write about topics related to their discipline and have that course approved as an elective.
- The faculty can ask me to design a project that addresses a learning objective by utilizing human sources locally and regionally.
- The faculty and other college groups can collaborate with The Story Center to create service-based projects adhering to the center's contention that writing stories can be a service to individuals and groups.
- The center can implement documentary cohort groups that require students to follow one topic for a long period of time.
- The center can be involved in capstone courses and portfolio building based on the tangible product produced by The Story Center.
- As the primary faculty member and director of The Story Center, I am able to address the point of origin of all research and writing and the campus has embraced a wide worldview as the origin of The Story Center involvement in instruction.

### **The president says “Yes!”**

Over the course of several months, I met with various members of the college community, including the academic dean and the president of the faculty senate. Each phase in the process was more frightening than the one before. I just wanted it to happen so badly. I knew the president wanted a communications program, but I convinced him to let me try the Story Center concept first. I knew that he had no idea what journalism education looks like as a national discipline and I didn't really want to share the tensions of the discipline since its inception. I didn't want him to know how I really felt about my discipline based on my experiences. I wanted him to believe in the concept and he did. I'm not sure the majority of the campus community members I met with believed the concept would work, but I knew I could prove to them it could work if they gave me a chance. And they did.

I confess that I made an assumption that since God had led me to this college with no media program right up the road from where I live in a rural part of Tennessee, surely the rest would be easy. It wasn't.

### **How has The Story Center fared thus far?**

As The Story Center enters its fourth academic year, the concept has not had the success I had envisioned. There are a variety of reasons for this, none of which present impossible obstacles to overcome. They just present a challenge. I don't think I spent enough time initially engaging with faculty members. Initially, I believe it was seen as an oddity and perhaps a luxury the college couldn't afford. Faculty have heavy teaching loads and most wear multiple leadership hats.

The list of successes is short, but a list nonetheless. Several faculty asked for help instructing students on interviewing and writing techniques. Another asked for true partnership. For example, the instructor for a course entitled “Religion In The Context Of The Holocaust,” asked me if there was a way to connect students with Holocaust survivors. I contacted the Tennessee Holocaust Commission and arranged for the students to travel to Nashville to

interview two survivors. The class split in two and interviewed the gracious survivors.

Each student wrote a story in third person and the best of these were chosen for publication in the campus magazine, a black and white glossy I created to showcase student work. The students and the instructor agreed that the experience put a face on the subject matter. The students were visibly moved and the survivors relayed how touched they were by the narratives the students produced. Faculty are beginning to see the center as a resource for all disciplines; its shape and scope is not yet clear. Some courses are perfect for practical application and some aren't.

I have been given a physical space which I furnished with furniture from my farm. This year, the college provided all new furniture and a computer lab. That gesture says to me that the college sees merit in the work I am doing, though the lab was provided for the purpose of producing a student newspaper. Whatever the reason, I still have a lab to work with. I am a lone wolf on campus with no department, no colleagues and a variety of administrators to report to, and I confess the isolation has played tricks on my thoughts and confidence. In hindsight, it would have been better to have full faculty buy-in before committing to the college, but also in hindsight, I needed time to get a feel for the needs of the college's student body and for the college. If I am to be honest and follow the values I have expressed in this thesis, I must admit that the college does not need a Story Center; it needs a media major to be competitive. I personally believe every campus would benefit from communications at the center of the academic circle, but I haven't had a chance yet to make a national argument.

I still believe I'm just about the luckiest journalism educator ever if only because I have an opportunity to do what I love without tension, resistance or qualification judgment from *existing* journalism educators. I am in the process of developing a media major to meet the college's need and I do so gladly now because, in return, I will have the freedom to continue building the Story Center concept.

This past semester, students interested in communications/media/journalism knocked on my door on their own, apart from any course. Many of the students interacting with the center express a desire to learn more skills as they have developed an interest in a media career through their interaction with the Story Center. And, another miracle of sorts occurred this year; several

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students came forward requesting a student newspaper, something the college has never had. Despite the fact that most American colleges are phasing out paper products and phasing in online news, this particular college is not entirely wired for access. A singular source of information in paper form is needed. With few resources, a group of students produced the college's first newspaper. A motley crew of young people pulled off a "miracle." They had no experience, just a desire to serve their fellow students and they put in long hours and overcame a steep learning curve to do it. The production of the newspaper has allowed the Story Center to become part of the college's language, albeit not for the reasons I intended.

The college initially approved a course entitled "Media and your Major." Students from any discipline could enroll. The students could write in-depth features and/or investigative pieces about topics relevant to their discipline. They could research the impact media has on their field of study. They could learn about other disciplines as well as their own. But, and this is a painful but, no students enrolled in this course. Students at Martin Methodist College have few elective courses built into their program and the college offers many discipline related activities and electives that taking a media course probably feels like an illogical luxury.

I am in the process of proposing a new media and cultural studies major, not because I necessarily want to, but it seems to be my best shot at directing a program that operates based on the principles that create the foundation for the Story Center concept. The proposed program has the one characteristic that I believe in the most: the dots must be connected between content and skills if we hope to educate media professionals that can adapt storytelling and research to every media platform in a way that stays true to the timeless tenets of journalism.

Any time you introduce a new concept, there is the chance it will not be accepted or supported. The Center has not taken off with fireworks and passion as I had hoped. I haven't always been patient. At times I've felt deserted and alone in a forest of happy and contented teachers, with no journalism educators to confer with. The thesis has become my colleague. Educators at the Center for Documentary Studies told me over and over that one of the things that made the CDS successful was the fact that they didn't have to explain what the documentary tradition is about and they don't have to all fit into a mold that can be well defined. They just "get" each other. Right now, I don't feel anybody "gets" what I do.

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At this conclusion of this research journey, I feel like a “disciple” of the documentary tradition and there are days when I feel I’m failing at my “job.” But, nobody said being a “disciple” would be easy and, I’m loathe to try and force a doctrine on people. I would rather that my colleagues just “get” what I want to do. I’m sure this is the way the likes of James Agee, Pamela Woods, Alex Harris, Robert Coles, Laurel Richardson and Parker Palmer felt when they attempted to describe a process that asked others to change their thinking or their program structures.

When the Columbia task force offered suggestions for infusing new life into journalism education, it said that perhaps “incubator” programs within schools of journalism would be worthy experiments. The Story Center is such an incubator. It may require giving birth to a media studies program in the future, but the incubator can still sit at the center of a parent program.

As the college engages in a 2020 plan, there is much talk at the administrative level about innovation, bold thinking, new delivery systems and an entrepreneurial spirit. The Story Center embraces all of these concepts, so I have hope that it may be able to play a part in the manifestation of these concepts.

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