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of a Professional Practicum:  
A Story Behind the Story of Journalism 828**

**David Williamson Shaffer**

Department of Educational Psychology/  
Wisconsin Center for Education Research/  
Academic ADL Co-Laboratory  
University of Wisconsin–Madison  
[dws@education.wisc.edu](mailto:dws@education.wisc.edu)



**Wisconsin Center for Education Research**

**School of Education • University of Wisconsin–Madison • <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/>**

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# Epistemography and the Participant Structures of a Professional Practicum: A Story Behind the Story of Journalism 828

David Williamson Shaffer

This paper looks at the participant structures of a learning environment and proposes an alternative level of analysis for understanding how frameworks of participation help develop frameworks for thinking. As Palincsar and Lehrer (2004) argue in a recent special issue of *Cognition and Instruction*, for more than 4 decades education researchers have been examining *participant structures*: the “norms of participation . . . governing the type and quantity of interaction that make up [an] event” (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1982, p. 21). Much of this work has been microgenetic or *microsocial* (Smardon, 2005) in nature, focusing on “small behaviors” (Goffman, 1967, p. 1) of face-to-face interaction. Recent studies, for example, have focused on how participant structures function as *participant frameworks*, in which conversational turns systematically position students in relation to one another, to the teacher, and to the domain of inquiry (Cornelius & Herrenkohl, 2004; O’Connor & Michaels, 1996). These detailed examinations of the conventions that operate in moment-by-moment interactions among students and teachers have produced an increasingly sophisticated understanding of how the “physical and social organization of the classroom can affect students’ willingness and ability to participate in classroom events” (Palincsar & Lehrer, 2004, p. 389).

My goal in this paper is to provide further nuance to the concept of participant structure by moving away from the microgenetic lens that analyses of participant structures often use. I take from Lemke (1998) and Newell (1990) the idea that learning happens along a continuum of time scales, with different scales requiring different methods of inquiry and different theoretical perspectives. (For example, we use a different approach to study neural processes that occur in the span of milliseconds than we do to examine conversational turns, which take place in the span of seconds.) Lemke and Newell argue that different levels of description can be simultaneously valid, even though it may be impossible—in theory or in practice—to describe processes that occur at one time scale in terms of those that occur at a different time scale. The differences between levels are reconciled by showing how processes at one level interact with those that operate over slightly shorter or longer time scales. Understanding learning means explaining the linkages between time scales, rather than trying to find some essential level of description.

In this spirit of exploring an alternative level of description, I analyze participant structures at a larger time scale. I do so by returning to Goffman’s (1974) concept of *frame analysis*, and with it the idea of a frame: a set of “principles of organization which govern events” (p. 10). I suggest in what follows that when viewed locally (at a span of minutes), individual participant structures link identity and practice with particular values and knowledge of a domain. When viewed over the course of days or weeks, these structures are linked to one another to form a larger frame. This larger frame—which I have referred to elsewhere (Shaffer, 2004a, in press-a) as an *epistemic frame*—organizes the activities of individuals within a community of practice. An epistemic frame orchestrates (and is orchestrated by) participation in a community of practice by linking practice, identity, values, and knowledge within a particular way of thinking—within the epistemology of a practice.

## Epistemography and Participant Structures

In this paper, I explore the utility of studying participant structures through the lens of epistemic frames by examining the participant structures of a professional practicum for journalism students. I chose this context partly because of my own interest in how the training practices of professionals can serve as models for the development of technology-supported learning environments for K–12 students (Shaffer, 1997, 2002, 2004b, 2004c, in press-a). Creating learning environments based on professional training necessarily involves understanding professional practica in some detail. But professional practica are promising venues for a more general study of epistemic frames as well because, as Schon (1983, 1987) suggests, the professional practicum is a key component in the process by which newcomers are initiated into a professional community of practice. Practica are explicitly designed to forge the links between knowing and doing that are central to the reflective practice of a profession (Shaffer, in press-b). If a professional community of practice is orchestrated by an epistemic frame, then the practicum is a likely place in which to observe the frame in action—and to observe the processes through which the frame is constructed.

The practicum that I examined in this study was Journalism 828, a capstone course on in-depth reporting at a leading school of journalism. In the class, 12 advanced undergraduate and beginning graduate journalism students worked in teams of four over the course of a semester to produce investigative news reports suitable for publication in a local newspaper—stories that, according to the syllabus, would give students a chance to “develop your skills in pattern recognition, in finding the story-behind-the-story, in going beyond the superficial report.” The students were guided in this endeavor by a nationally known reporter on the faculty of the school, with help from five local editors and reporters who made guest appearances in the class.

My claim here is that the concept of epistemic frame (and the larger time scale of analysis it implies) is a useful lens through which to examine the organization of activities—“the story behind the story”—of Journalism 828. I argue that to the extent that this analysis sheds light on the conventional configurations of communicative activities and roles—the participant structures—within which these students and their mentors were working, epistemic frames may be another useful analytical tool for understanding the structure of learning environments.

### Background

Over the past 70 years, research on the concept of professionalism and the education of professionals has emphasized the sociological characteristics of professional work and those who practice it (Macdonald, 1995). Paramount in such investigations have been issues such as the role that professions play in determining who can do what kinds of work (Abbott, 1988) and the ways in which training practices are used to control the supply of practitioners so as to maintain the economic viability of professions and their members (Freidson, 2001). The work of Hall and Stevens (1995, 1996) and Goodwin (1994) is, of course, exemplary in its focus on the psychological and psychosocial processes of the professions, but there has been relatively little study of the ways in which those psychological processes are systematically developed in the course of professional training. Work on situated cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991) has explored how *reproductive practices* initiate newcomers into *communities of practice* generally, and the training practices of individual professions—particularly architecture (Akin, 1986; Briggs, 1996; Chafee, 1977; Levy, 1980; Schon, 1985), medicine (Ludmerer, 1999; Walt, 1993; Weinholtz, Edwards, & Mumford, 1992), and teaching (Darling-Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989; Major

& Pines, 1999; Schell & Burden, 1992)—have been the subject of much study. But the reproductive practices of most professions, including journalism, have not been examined in detail.

### *Schon's Reflection in Action and Goffman's Frames*

The work of Donald Schon (1983, 1985, 1987) is notable for its focus on the psychology of professional practice and on the way professionals develop the ways of thinking and working of their communities. Schon argues that professional practice is characterized by a particular form of activity that he refers to as *reflection-in-action*: “a capacity to combine reflection and action, on the spot, . . . to examine understandings and appreciations while the train is running” (1985, p. 27). Reflection-in-action is the ability to think and work simultaneously—or to be more precise, to reflect on one’s actions without interrupting the flow of activity in progress. Schon distinguishes this form of thinking from *reflection-on-action*, which takes place when one looks back on a completed task or process to consider the implications and consequences of actions. The distinction between reflection-*on*-action and the reflection-*in*-action that characterizes mature professional activity thus lies in the causal and temporal relationship between reflection and the action to which it refers. Reflection-*on*-action occurs after the action is complete. Reflection-*in*-action takes place within the span of time in which decisions and actions can still affect the situation at hand.

The distinction is subtle, as Schon (1983) acknowledges. The span of time in which decisions and actions can still affect the situation at hand may last only minutes in a surgical procedure or a court trial but may stretch over weeks or months in an architectural design process or the creation of a community redevelopment plan. The pace of reflection-in-action thus depends on the rhythms of a particular practice. Borrowing Goffman’s (1974) terminology, the distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action is in the relationship of reflection to the *strip* of unfolding action. Goffman defines a strip as a “slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity . . . as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest” in the activity (p. 10). Strips of activity are segments or units into which ongoing activities are divided for the purposes of analysis. From this perspective, reflection-*on*-action takes place when the goal of one strip of activity is to think about what happened in a prior strip. Reflection-*in*-action is a process by which both action and thought about that action take place *within* a single strip.

One of Goffman’s points in introducing the concept of a strip of activity was to argue that any strip is interpreted by participants in terms of a *frame*: the organizational rules and premises, partly existing in the minds of the participants and partly in the structure of the activity itself, that shape the perception of those involved in the activity (Goffman, 1974). When novices reflect, they do so across strips of activity, working in two distinct frames: one of action and one of reflection-on-action. In contrast, for the mature professional who practices reflection-in-action within a single strip, reflection and action are part of a unified frame that shapes unfolding activity.

Schon argues that this capacity for reflecting-in-action within a single strip of activity—which, borrowing from Goffman, I am describing as a professional frame—is developed in a *reflective practicum*: a context such as a design studio, moot court, or capstone class that

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provides a scaffolded or mentored simulation of the conditions of practice. In reflective practice, students have opportunities to act as professionals and receive feedback on their actions from other students and from mentors. A professional practicum thus generally consists of two kinds of strips: strips in which students take action, and strips in which they reflect on that action with the help of peers and mentors. For example, in design studios, students engage in independent design work and participate in *desk crits* (Schon, 1985; Shaffer, in press-b). In desk crits, a student talks with a peer or teacher (the critic) about the student's work-in-progress. These conversations have a particular form, in which the student and the critic discuss and reflect on design goals, design work, and the obstacles that stand in the way of completing the design. Taken together, these strips of design and discussion iteratively link a frame of action (the design work) and a frame of reflection-on-action (the desk crit). Conversation *about* the design process progressively becomes a private conversation *within* the design process as a student becomes a more mature designer. A practicum, then, can be understood as a collection of participant structures: participant structures in which students act, and participant structures in which students reflect on that action with peers and mentors. This iterative cycle of action and reflection-on-action fosters the forms of reflection-in-action that characterize a particular profession.

### *Participant Structures*

The view of participant structures offered here is, of course, an expansive one. The term *participant structure* was coined by Susan Philips (1972) to describe the different ways that teachers arrange “verbal interaction” (p. 377) with students. More recent work on discourse and discourse analysis suggests that communication involves substantially more than verbal communication, including (but not limited to) “bodies, clothes, non-linguistic symbols, objects, tools, technologies, times and places” as well as “ways of acting [and] interacting” (Gee, 1999, p. 25). Although some work on participant structures remains focused on speech activities and speech events (Cornelius & Herrenkohl, 2004; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996), I use the term here to refer to discourse in the more general sense, and I include within the term “classroom social arrangements” (Cornelius & Herrenkohl, 2004, p. 468) and the ways in which they impact learning. I focus less on “who can say what when and how” (Taback, 2004, p. 399) than on who can *do* what when and how—where saying is one particularly important form of doing. (Or contrariwise, where doing is a particularly important form of saying.)

My use of the term *participant structure* in what follows is also more specific than has sometimes been the case in the past. In its original use, participant structure referred to forms of interaction that were relatively generic, like whole class instruction, teacher-led small groups, independent seatwork, and group projects (Philips, 1972). These descriptions are generic not in any pejorative sense but only in the way that they refer to forms of interaction that are independent of discipline, goal, content, or other specific context. Although participant structures such as revoicing (O'Connor & Michaels, 1996) have been investigated in relation to a specific domain of inquiry, such as science, they are proposed as mechanisms of classroom discourse in general. In contrast, in looking at the participant structures of a professional practicum, I focus here on social arrangements that are tightly bound to the practices of a specific domain—journalism—and the particular activities of the specific practicum. Again turning to Goffman, this is participant structure as the “structure of involvement in the situation” (Goffman, 1963, p.

193)—or, more precisely, the recurrent pattern of involvement that structures a particular kind of situation within a given practice.

### *Epistemic Frames*

The participant structures of a professional practicum are designed to develop reflection-in-action by iteratively and progressively linking the frames of action and reflection-on-action. Schon (1987) argues that in a practicum, students develop “a particular, professional way of seeing their world and a way of maintaining and constructing the world as they see it” (p. 36). My purpose in describing this process in terms of Goffman’s frames of experience is to suggest that learning to reflect-in-action—and more generally, becoming part of a professional community of practice—involve developing a particular kind of frame: an *epistemic frame* (Shaffer, 2004a, in press-a).

For more than a decade, researchers have examined learning as a process of participation in *communities of practice*. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a community of practice as a group of individuals with a common repertoire of knowledge about and ways of addressing similar (often shared) problems and purposes. This common repertoire is made accessible to newcomers through the reproductive practices of the community: the activities through which individuals come to participate in the practices of—and recast their identities in relation to—the community. The training and apprenticeship of midwives, tailors, and meat packers, for example, are the reproductive practices through which the next generation of midwives, tailors, and meat packers is developed.

Much of the research on communities of practice has focused on doing (*practice*) and being (*identity*). The theory of *pedagogical praxis*, which I have developed in more detail elsewhere (Shaffer, 2004b), extends the idea of communities of practice by recognizing that participation in a community of practice also involves developing that community’s *knowledge* and ways of caring (*values*). Furthermore, a community’s ways of doing, being, knowing, and caring are organized by and around a way of thinking. The epistemology of a practice (Beckett & Hager, 2000) provides “knowledge and know-how concerning justification and explanation” (Perkins, 1992) within and around the activities, affiliations, knowledge structures, and value system of the community. It is the way of thinking about or justifying actions, of structuring valid claims within the community.

I have argued that this binding of practice, identity, values, knowledge, and epistemology forms an *epistemic frame* for a community of practice (Shaffer, 2004a). Broudy (1977) argues that the oft-discussed concepts of knowing *that* and knowing *how*—of declarative and procedural knowledge—are incomplete without the capacity of “knowing *with*,” which he describes as providing “a context within which a particular situation is perceived, interpreted, and judged” (p. 12). In these terms, epistemic frames are the ways of knowing *with* associated with particular communities of practice—a form of knowing *with* that comprises, for a particular community, knowing *where* to begin looking and asking questions, knowing *what* constitutes appropriate evidence to consider or information to assess, knowing *how* to go about gathering and assessing that evidence, and knowing *when* to draw a conclusion and/or move on to a different issue. These frames have a basis in content knowledge, values, identity, and associated practices, but epistemic frames are more than merely collections of facts, interests, affiliations, and activities.

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Different communities of practice have different epistemic frames: different ways of knowing, of deciding what is worth knowing, and of deciding what constitutes a warrant for a claim or justification for an action within the community. The theory of pedagogical praxis suggests that professional communities of practice have a local culture (Rohde & Shaffer, 2004; Shaffer, 2004b) and that the epistemic frame is the grammar of that culture: the conventions of participation that individuals internalize when they become acculturated (Shaffer, 2004a). These ways of knowing are a critical part of the coherent core around which a professional community of practice is organized.

### *The Pedagogy of Journalism*

Cultures of practice are never monolithic, and thus any study of *a practice* necessarily focuses on *the practices* of some local subculture. In this study, I focus on the culture of one capstone course in journalism as an example of a reflective practicum in journalism. The goal of the class was to socialize students into the practices of in-depth news reporting; the goal of my study was to understand whether and how that process helped students develop an epistemic frame of investigative print journalism.

Surprisingly, given that the practice is filled with writers, relatively little has been written about how such socialization is accomplished in journalism. Indeed, one professor interviewed in this study complained that there is “little curricular material to go on when organizing such courses.” A few authors have looked at the personal transformation that takes place as a novice develops the skills of reporting and the identity of a reporter (Franklin, 1986; Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001; Murray, 2000; Stewart, 1998). But, in general, research on journalism education focuses on isolated pedagogical issues—for example, the role of ethical theory in textbooks (Peck, 2003), the impact of survey research on student learning (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2003), and the efficacy of Web-based tools in teaching basic writing skills (Henderson, 2002)—rather than on the ways in which capstone courses or other practicum experiences develop journalistic ways of thinking and acting.

One explanation for the lack of attention to how coursework develops journalistic skills may be that journalism school is only the beginning of journalism training. Many practicing journalists believe they learned their craft “through osmosis,” by watching more experienced reporters at work and (often) by talking with them late into the night over drinks (Halberstam, 1994, p. 33). Still, some preparation is required to participate meaningfully in the practices of the newsroom even at the entry level, and journalism schools aim to prepare novices to become legitimate—albeit not full—participants in news reporting. Capstone courses such as Journalism 828 play a central role in enabling students to “function as working journalists who can meet at least the minimum standards of employment at entry-level newspapers” (Rhodes & Davies, 2003, p. 208).

If the literature on journalism does not clearly articulate a method for journalism education, it does describe some of the criteria for functioning as an entry-level journalist. There are particular ways of thinking and acting that a capstone course such as Journalism 828 tries to develop in students. In the genre of investigative news reporting, three critical elements in the skill set of an entry-level journalist are (a) the ability to *write to formula*; (b) the ability to *write as a watchdog*; and (c) the ability to *write for story*.



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*Writing to formula.* Journalism as we know it today has its roots in the Enlightenment. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) suggest, the belief that comparison of information from multiple sources would lead to greater understanding led to the creation of both the scientific method and the First Amendment—and the practice of journalism is inextricably bound up with “scientific” concepts such as accuracy and verification. Indeed, many journalists—though perhaps these days not enough journalists—believe that the fundamental commandment of journalism is: “Thou shall not fabricate” (Gardner et al., 2001, p. 149).

Truth, however, is an elusive concept, and so journalists, like scientists, focus instead on the *method* of their work. As Gardner et al. (2001) explain, every young journalist has to develop “a method of systematically talking to everyone about something . . . checking and cross-checking . . . and putting it together in stories” (p. 185). To the extent that objectivity is believed to exist in journalism, it exists in the methods of reporting and writing (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Small wonder, then, that the methods of journalism are codified with almost compulsive precision. Murray’s (2000) book on the craft of writing offers 18 different lists to guide the writer, including both specific skills (8 tips on writing to deadline, 14 ways to “see the obvious,” 8 ways to write without writing, 30 questions to ask to produce effective leads, 4 ways to get organized, 11 ways to develop a draft, and 36 questions to ask when editing your own copy) and ways of framing the problems of reporting and writing (9 elements of craft of writing, the writer’s 10 senses, the reader’s 5 questions, 7 qualities of a good story, 6 conditions that encourage writing, 6 qualities of an effective lead, 19 forms of effective leads, 15 elements of lively writing, 20 “things I wish I had known before I started at a paper,” 12 notes on narrative, and 14 elements of voice).

The rules of journalistic style are precise and detailed. Journalists must adhere to the requirements of Associated Press (AP) style in all circumstances: rules about capitalization, punctuation, reference to sources, and so on. But the rules of journalistic prose also extend to matters that in other genres are left to the writer’s discretion. For example, Edgerton (1997) provides eight different lists of words and phrases that should not be used by journalists, and Giles (1969) provides a list of 56 words that reporters should use in place of *said* (pp. 22–23). Murray (2000, pp. 25–26) tells novice journalists to “quote from the best representative of the parties involved by the fourth or fifth paragraph” and to “give the last word to the side [you] personally disagree with.” He warns them not to “end your best quotes with an attribution” but instead to “put it within the quote, set off with commas.” He quotes Journalist David Arnold: “A feature about people needs descriptive detail . . . [but] reference to blonde hair is almost always sexist . . . [and] mention of high cheek bones only proves you wasted too much time reading Ian Fleming” (p. 26).

Journalists, in other words, write within a tightly prescribed genre. How-to books repeatedly emphasize this point: “news stories inevitably follow a formula” (Giles, 1969, p. 11); “there are a limited number of forms in traditional journalism” (Murray, 2000, p. 50); “successful contributors . . . write to formula” (Brooks, 1989, p. 3). The essence of this formula is to produce a story that appears to have no writer. Murray (2000) argues that journalists writing straight news stories learn to take on a generic “voice of the newspaper,” and to do so they must “get out of the way of the information . . . and allow the story to tell itself” (pp. 6–9 *passim*). Writing in a generic voice facilitates team reporting and copy editing: there are no distinctive

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voices to blend or preserve. But a story without a writer also appears more truthful. As Brooks (1989) explains:

The opinion and reaction of the author are supposed to be subordinated to the news itself. . . . In reality, of course, it is almost impossible to be so objective as to be invisible in the story. However, hard-news reporters are mandated to keep their views in the background. (p. 111)

The invisibility of the author conveys the intent of objectivity (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Stewart, 1998).

**Writing as a watchdog.** Journalists use the formula of writing stories in a neutral voice to present information that readers need to function as members of a democratic society. In a study of prominent journalists, Gardner et al. (2001) found that half of the journalists they interviewed saw their primary role as informing the public about important information and events. One third said that their role was to support democracy by reporting news needed for informed public debate. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) similarly found that many journalists were motivated to enter the field because of its social mission: moral issues such as “calling attention to inequities” were cited twice as often as other reasons for choosing journalism as a career (p. 184).

To fulfill their responsibility “to provide citizens with the information they need to be self-governing” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 17), reporters use the journalistic formula to make information available to the public and to help readers understand the significance of that information. As Murray (2000) explains to his fellow journalists: “After putting facts on the public record . . . our task is to help the reader make sense of them” (p. 13). In interviews, Gardner et al. (2001) repeatedly found that reporters “perceive their role as transforming data into information—by presenting objective facts so that they will have subjective meaning and, thereby, empowering the public to make adaptive choices” (p. 50). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) similarly emphasize the importance of the press in making public debate possible. They argue that journalists create “a map for citizens to navigate society” (p. 164) and that an essential part of constructing such a map is to “monitor power and offer voice to the voiceless” (p. 111)—to uncover significant events and the causes of those events and to “make the significant relevant and interesting” to the public (p. 148). Journalists write to formula to put facts on the record and help the public make sense of them, and investigative journalists focus on bringing to light facts about “powerful forces and institutions in society” (p. 13) that might otherwise remain hidden. A journalist—particularly an investigative journalist—writes to formula as a “watchdog” for the public trust (p. 120).

**Writing for story.** Journalists thus write in a particular form to serve a particular social goal. But to use the journalistic formula and fulfill their role as investigators, informers, and explainers, journalists have to write about something in particular. As one introductory text explains, in the end the job of any media writer is to “tell stories” (Bunton, Connery, Kanihan, Neuzil, & Nimmer, 1999, p. iv).

The idea of *writing for story* receives less attention in the literature on journalism than writing to formula or writing as a watchdog. The term *writing for story* comes from a book of the same name by journalism professor and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jon Franklin (1986). Franklin’s focus is on *feature stories*: articles, such as investigative reports, that are not

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necessarily linked directly to a specific event. (Feature stories are distinguished from *straight news* stories, the primary goal of which is to report on current events.) Franklin argues that any feature story is, in the end, about specific people. “A story,” he writes, “consists of a sequence of actions that occur when a sympathetic character encounters a complicating situation that he confronts and solves” (p. 71). Murray (2000) makes the same point about straight news, suggesting that for any story “the starting point is in conflict” (p. 64).

Franklin (1986) explains that the conflict or complication at the heart of a story must be “significant to the human condition” (p. 75)—that is, it must be important to a wide audience of readers in some general way. But Franklin also argues that any journalistic story “must be told in terms of unique individuals and their specific actions and thoughts” (p. 181). The goal of journalism is to tell readers about issues that matter in their lives. But to do so, journalists write about the stories of particular people and the things that happened to them. Franklin suggests that, in journalism, “the universal is finally achieved by focusing down, tightly, even microscopically, on specific events and the details that surround them” (p. 181).

### *Epistemography*

The starting point, then, for this study is the idea that for an expert journalist, ways of doing, being, caring, knowing, and thinking are bound together in an epistemic frame of journalism that guides his or her reflection-in-action as a member of a professional community. In the study, I look at how novice journalists encountered the practices, identities, values, knowledge, and epistemology of writing to formula, writing as a watchdog, and writing for story through the occasions for reflection-on-action provided by a journalism practicum. That is, I hope to shed light on how the participant structures of reflection-on-action in a journalism practicum relate to the mature practices of the community of journalists.

To do this, I conduct an *epistemography*: an analysis of the structure of a professional practicum through the lens of epistemic frames. In particular, I look at the relationships among the epistemic frame of journalism, key components of entry-level journalism, and the participant structures of a capstone course in reporting to understand how 12 novice journalists were introduced to a particular culture of reflection-in-action. Although the study is, of course, situated in an examination of one particular practicum, my hope is to use this analysis to shed light on the concept of participant structure and on ways in which the concept might be usefully expanded to better understand the process of reflection-in-action within the epistemic frames of other professions.

## Methods

### *Setting*

I came to focus on Journalism 828 through a fairly straightforward ethnographic process. I began by interviewing three former journalists who were teaching at a leading journalism school. They described some of the central elements of early journalism training for their students, including specific courses in the school and seminal texts. These informants explained that the intermediate (800-level) courses play a critical role in developing the skills necessary for entry into successful journalism careers.

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Based on these formative interviews and a review of texts and syllabi, I selected two courses for observation: the course described here and an additional intermediate-level course on civic reporting. To triangulate on the themes that emerged in these extended observations, two graduate students working with me undertook shorter observations in the introductory journalism course and at one of the school's student newspapers. We conducted in-depth interviews with students in the courses being observed and also with reporters and editors at the student newspaper and at a local newspaper.

Journalism 828 was scheduled to meet for 75 minutes twice a week for a 15-week-long semester, but it actually convened only 20 times. Other class days were left open for students to work on gathering information for their stories. Students also met in small groups toward the end of the semester to work on their final projects. The specific sequence of assignments for the class is described at the beginning of the Results section.

### *Participants*

There were 12 students in Journalism 828. Nine were seniors majoring in journalism, and three were graduate journalism students. Many were planning to pursue a career in journalism after graduating. Several had applied to law school or were looking for jobs in communications. No other demographic information was collected about the students. The professor, Kate,<sup>1</sup> was a prize-winning journalist. The class had five guest speakers, all reporters or editors at local or regional newspapers.

### *Data Collection*

Data about the course was collected in several ways. I was present as an observer for 16 of the 20 class meetings. During the semester, students divided into three groups of four to work on a final project for the course. I joined a group composed of three seniors (Melanie, Bill, and Alecia) and one graduate student (Skyler). I received copies of all e-mail messages sent by the professor to the class, as well as those exchanged among members of my project group. I received copies of all papers turned in by students in the class and copies of all drafts returned with comments from the professor. I met four times with the professor to discuss the progress of the class, and I interviewed four students about their experience in the class—three in the group I observed and one from another group to compare experiences.

Data was collected in field notes, and interviews with individual students were also tape-recorded. The field notes provided a detailed record of events, including whenever possible verbatim quotations. The use of quotation marks in the account that follows signifies verbatim quotations from participants in the study as recorded in field notes or in interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was initially segmented into *interactive units*, which were defined for the purposes of this study as strips of activity with a consistent goal and a consistent interactional

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<sup>1</sup> All names used here are pseudonyms. Similarly, some of the details of news stories described have been changed to conceal the identity of the participants in the study.

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structure. One interactive unit ended and another began when the “structure of involvement in the situation” (Goffman, 1963, p. 193) changed—that is, when there was a change in the social arrangement of who was expected to do (or say) what and how, relative to a consistent pedagogical aim. For rhetorical clarity I will provide specific examples of interactive units below under *Participant Structures* in the Results section, but I should say here that in the class—and in the data—these transitions were almost always quite clear and striking and usually were marked by an explicit signal that the activity was changing, such as a reorganization of the class into different groupings or an announcement by the instructor that the class was going to shift to a different activity. Recurring interactive units with similar formats—that is, with similar goals and interactional rights and responsibilities—were identified as instances of the same *participant structure* and were coded accordingly. The analysis presented here focuses on three of these structures—*copy editing*, *war stories*, and *news meetings*—which are described in more detail in the Results section below.

The segmented interactive units were also coded for the elements of an epistemic frame. As described above in the Background section, an epistemic frame is composed of the *practices*, *identity*, *values*, *knowledge*, and *epistemology* of a community of practice. Table 1 describes and provides brief examples of each of these elements. It is important to note, however, that the elements were not considered mutually exclusive. For example, toward the middle of the semester, the professor said to the students: “It’s hard to do political reporting that isn’t completely cynical. It’s a manipulated system. You need to be the one person not manipulated.” In saying this, the professor was commenting simultaneously on *knowledge* (the political system is a manipulated system), *values* (political reporting should not be completely cynical), and *identity* (reporters are people who are not manipulated by the system). Thus, her comment was coded for all three elements. While Table 1 gives short excerpts out of context as examples, it will be clear in the Results section that the actual coding relied on the context of comments and often on the way in which one person responded to another to validate, explain, or clarify comments and actions.

Finally, the segmented interactive units were also coded for the three elements of entry-level journalism identified above: (a) writing to formula; (b) writing as a watchdog; and (c) writing for story. Segments were coded for *writing to formula* when participants discussed or referred explicitly to the methods of journalistic writing, including specific rules of journalistic style, forms or formulae of traditional journalism, or the invisibility of the author as conveyed through an objective “voice of the newspaper” (Murray, 2000, p. 9). Segments were coded for *writing as a watchdog* when participants discussed or referred explicitly to informing the public about important information and events, helping the public to make choices, drawing attention to inequities, monitoring people and institutions in positions of power, or offering a voice to those without power. Segments were coded for *writing for story* when participants discussed or referred explicitly to journalism as a process of telling stories: stories about particular people encountering problems or conflict, the thoughts and actions of those people, and the specific events that happened and the unique details surrounding them.

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Code	Description	Examples
Practices	Skills that students need to acquire to become journalists	<p>“No one should graduate from J school without knowing how to do this. It is a fundamental investigative tool.”</p> <p>“Team reporting is tricky and all good reporters do it, so figuring this out now will give you a head start.”</p> <p>“Journalists use personal contacts.”</p>
Identity	Attributes of a journalist as a particular kind of person	<p>“A journalist is . . . a professional pest.”</p> <p>“Reporters are lone rangers.”</p> <p>“I’m not such a good featurey-lead person.”</p> <p>“As a legitimate reporter you can ask direct questions.”</p>
Values	Things that matter to the practice of good journalism	<p>“All good writing has a point—a viewpoint.”</p> <p>“If you owe anything, you owe something to readers and to the truth.”</p> <p>“It seems like this guy is an idiot, but his [own] words are better than editorializing.”</p>
Knowledge	Elements of domain knowledge about journalism	<p>“The more I knew in fundamentals the better off I was.”</p> <p>“In court reporting, never put the name in the lead. No one else knows the person.”</p> <p>“<i>Faux pas</i> . . . is a cliché.”</p> <p>“The voice of the paper overrides the voice of the writer.”</p>
Epistemology	Ways of thinking about or justifying activity within the journalism community	<p>“You need to . . . find a way to give story a face, [and then] without editorializing show how the system is not living up to its end of the bargain.”</p> <p>“This course is teaching students to think like journalists.”</p> <p>“Be mindful of finding the story, not the topic.”</p>

Table 1  
*Coding Scheme for Interviews and Observations Using the Elements of an Epistemic Frame*

The result was a mapping of the data that showed (a) the constituent elements of the hypothesized epistemic frame of journalism and (b) the key components of entry-level journalism as invoked by the professor, the guests, or the students within (c) the different participant structures of this particular capstone course. The relationships among the epistemic frame of journalism, the key components of entry-level journalism, and the participant structures of this journalism practicum were then analyzed within a grounded-theory framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify salient themes.

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### Results

Journalism 828 was an advanced class on in-depth reporting. The syllabus explained:

While the framework of the class includes some obvious government institutions—cops, courts, schools, legislators—the real emphasis is on good journalism: critical, skeptical, knowledgeable, smart, and—we hope—beautifully written. . . . This type of in-depth, issue-based reporting, smart reporting, is the realm out of which world-famous reporters are made.

I describe my observations of Journalism 828 in two parts below. First, I identify three participant structures that were central to this journalism practicum for “smart reporting.” Then, I describe the relationship between these structures and the epistemic frame of in-depth or investigative journalism as it was constructed in this section of Journalism 828.

#### *Participant Structures*

During the semester, students in Journalism 828 filed four news stories. The semester began with an assignment that the instructor, Kate, described as “Writer’s Bootcamp.” Students watched the final trial scene from the movie *A Few Good Men* and had to produce a 500-word story. For the second assignment, students spent a day at the county courthouse and filed a story about one of the trials they observed. The third assignment asked students to file a “follow-up story” reporting in more depth on one of the issues raised by the trial they observed. For the final project, the class selected three topics from among the 12 follow-up stories and then divided into teams of four reporters, so that each team could produce a feature package, including a main story and related sidebars, on one of the topics selected by the class. One group worked on inequities in the juvenile detention system, one group worked on drunk drivers in the court system, and one group, which I followed more closely, focused on indigent defendants’ ability to find legal representation. The final project was subdivided into three assignments: submission of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to a government agency, submission of a rough draft, and submission of a final draft.

For each of these story assignments, work in class was organized by three recurring forms of activity: war stories, news meetings, and copy editing.

**War stories.** War stories were strips of activity in which a veteran journalist (the professor or a guest journalist) spoke to the entire class, recounting events from his or her career. Students (and/or the professor, when the storyteller was a guest) occasionally asked questions, but typically the speaker gave an uninterrupted account that included a narrative of the events that had occurred and a brief explication of the moral or lesson of the story. The professor, guests, and students of Journalism 828 engaged in strips of activity characteristic of war stories 12 times in the 15 class meetings I observed. For example, Kate introduced the second story assignment (“Cops and Courts”) by explaining that “cops and courts” is a typical entry-level beat for reporters, and that it provides an opportunity for young journalists to learn about the differences between official and unofficial stories about important events. “It is socially acceptable to lie to journalists,” she said, “but never OK for journalists to publish falsehoods.” By way of example, Kate told the students a story about her first job as a reporter, and how the local sheriff in the small, rural county where she worked refused to talk to her after she filed a

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story that contradicted his version of events. “Journalists are never the friends of sources,” she concluded. “If you owe anything, you owe something to readers and to the truth, whatever it is. If you are any good, you will tick people off, and if they are any good, they will get over it. . . . It’s not personal. Media power is not personal.”

Similarly, when a local journalist, Gil, visited the class, he described at some length how one paper stumbled on a major story about a pension fund scandal in the state. At an otherwise routine meeting, a county board of supervisors voted on a new pension plan, which kept taxes low by reducing raises but raising pensions for county employees. The reporter at the meeting “didn’t see the significance,” but a freelancer for a local magazine broke the initial story, and the paper assembled a team of reporters to investigate—“an investigative reporter who later moved to the county beat and a senior business reporter with great skills at reading financial documents.” It took the team 2 weeks to unravel the complexities of the pension system, but when the story was finally reported, the result was overwhelming. “I’ve never been in the middle of a story like this,” Gil said. The day after the story appeared, there was “enormous outrage.” The county phone system went down. The county executive and his staff eventually resigned, and the county board faced a recall petition. “There are so many stories you’d never find at a meeting like that,” Gil explained. “Then someone you met 2 years ago gives you a tip. Eventually word of scandal leaks to someone honest—they’re looking for someone to talk to. If you’re a reporter, you want to be the person they think of.” He ended the story by arguing that we need a vigilant press for a self-governing society, and so there is no more important job than being a watchdog: “Action in the public sector to clean [things] up is instant in areas where the spotlight is focused,” he concluded, “but not until the spotlight is on it.”

*News meetings.* News meetings were strips of activity in which students presented their stories-in-progress in front of the class and received feedback on their reporting and on the development of their investigation from a guest veteran journalist and the class. Presentations were generally uninterrupted explanations of (a) the story topic, (b) the approach or “angle” the student was taking to the story, and (c) the people interviewed and information gathered to date. Feedback was in the form of (a) encouragement and affirmation for actions taken by students during their investigative reporting, (b) advice about and explanations of reporting techniques relevant to the investigation under way, and (c) suggestions of additional ideas students might explore or specific sources students might interview. The professor, guests, and students of Journalism 828 engaged in strips of activity characteristic of news meetings 19 times in the 15 class meetings I observed.

For example, Kate ran a news meeting after the students had observed in court for the second assignment. Students described the trials they had observed, and Kate helped them find a focus for their follow-up stories (the third assignment). Melanie described a case she had seen in which a 22-year-old man was defending himself against a drunk driving charge. “He had no idea what he was doing,” she explained. “His evidence was inadmissible, his questions out of order. There was almost a mistrial. He ended up losing—his defense was that the police officer was lying.” Melanie said that, according to the defendant, he had been drinking vodka in his car after an accident to numb the pain while waiting for the police to arrive, and he was defending himself because he had no money for a lawyer.

“That’s a great trial,” said Kate. “How are you going to follow up?”



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Melanie replied: “He was a young guy with no representation. I could explore that aspect of the system. You need to be dirt poor to get a public defender.” Melanie said that she might do a profile of the judge: “He was very understanding. He only lost his temper when there was almost a mistrial. . . . The judge was very patient, rephrasing questions.”

Kate said she thought the judge would make a good story and suggested Melanie should call the judge or his secretary to see if he would give her an interview—and “then have Plan B” if that didn’t work.

“I think the public defender is really interesting,” said another student. “How do you qualify?”

Kate added that she was interested in “the whole right to a fair trial, the financial part and its effects. Also the caseload for the public defender.”

Each story was discussed similarly, and each student left class with suggestions for how to “find the right person” and write what Kate described as “a smart story.”

Two class periods later, Gil led a news meeting in which Kate selected students to present their court and follow-up stories. Melanie described her stories, and Gil suggested that she look at the impact of budget cuts on the public defender’s office. Gil provided suggestions for gathering more information: talk with advocates for equity in the justice system; look for specific cases that have been in the news; call a professor at Northwestern University who works on the Innocence Project; and interview lawyers who have taken pro bono cases. Three other stories were presented, and Gil gave each student suggestions for further investigation.

**Copy editing.** Copy editing describes strips of activity in which the professor or students commented on draft stories written by students. Each assignment was subjected to a peer copy editing session, during which groups of four or five students exchanged papers for comments and feedback. After peer copy editing, the students revised their stories for submission to the professor, who provided written comments, corrections, and suggestions. The professor led a copy editing session with the whole class for the rough drafts of the final project stories.

Before the copy editing sessions, the editors (students or professor) received copies of the stories, which they marked with comments and corrections. During the copy editing session, each editor briefly described positive and negative qualities of the story as written, including (a) corrections for improper usage, (b) questions about authorial decisions in constructing the story, and (c) suggestions for changes to the story. Authors (a) replied to questions, (b) asked for clarification when necessary, and (c) sometimes asked additional questions about the structure and flow of the story when the editors had finished with their comments. The professor and students of Journalism 828 engaged in strips of activity characteristic of copy editing 5 times in the 15 class meetings I observed.

For example, during the peer copy editing session for court stories, Alecia said she thought Melanie’s story “flowed really well.” Bill said he was confused about the defendant’s blood alcohol level. Melanie explained: “I was trying to keep it short . . . trying to explain without going into it. He drank in the car waiting for the policeman.” Bill and another student laughed and both said: “You should include that!” Bill pointed out that in one paragraph,

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Melanie used the term *faux pas*, which, he said, was a cliché. A second student suggested that the next paragraph “sounds like your voice.” A third added: “It seems like this guy is an idiot, but his [own] words are better than editorializing.”

In the copy editing of Melanie’s follow-up story 2 weeks later, Bill pointed out that the use of *we* in one of the quotes was confusing. Melanie asked if her lead paragraph worked. Another student said she thought it was “too clinical” and asked if there was some anecdote Melanie could use instead. A third student suggested that to make the story clear, Melanie needed to “outright define what indigent defense programs allow.”

*Strips of activity as participant structures.* War stories, news meetings, and copy editing were thus strips of activity that were characterized by distinct classroom social arrangements. These recurring patterns of involvement used particular physical arrangements and social norms to shape the amount and kind of participation in classroom interactions among novice and experienced journalists in Journalism 828. These were, in other words, participant structures in which roles and responsibilities were stable over relatively extended periods of time: the average length of such structures during the 15 classes I observed was 17.3 minutes.

### *Participant Structures and the Elements of Entry-Level Journalism*

In this section, I examine the role of war stories, news meetings, and copy editing in Journalism 828 by focusing more closely on one instance of each participant structure.

*War stories.* In the middle of the semester, Brian, another local journalist, came to class to run a news meeting. But first he told the students about his newspaper and his own style of journalism. Brian said: “The key question for many journalists is, what are the credentials of a person who wants to raise an issue or concern?” He explained that he tries to have a “lower standard . . . that includes ordinary people. . . . I like to be there in those rare instances where something happens and someone says: ‘I need a reporter.’” He cautioned the students that talking to a reporter is not always in an individual’s best interests, however, so he is careful to explain to potential sources the possible negative consequences. He wants to let them make an informed choice as to whether to give him more information.

Brian illustrated the problem by describing a situation in which press coverage may have made matters worse for the subject of a story. A woman named Rita told police that she had been “raped and robbed at knifepoint.” The police did not believe her, and under pressure she recanted her story. The district attorney brought charges against Rita for lying to the police but dropped the charges after finding evidence that she had, in fact, been raped. But there was still no investigation by the local police department into Rita’s original accusation. She filed a lawsuit, ultimately dismissed, and the state finally reopened the investigation that led to the identification of a suspect.

“Did your reporting make a difference?” asked Kate.

“Yes. A negative difference,” replied Brian. “They dug in their heels to prove they didn’t make a mistake.” The police wanted “to prove they were right” and in the process “demonized” the victim. Brian went on to explain that the criminal justice system “scares the hell out of me.

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[The police have] so much power and so little accountability. They feel they can get away with anything—and they can. They never say they’re sorry. They’re unwilling to accept their terrible capacity for error. And that makes them the most dangerous people on the planet.”

“Not all cops are crooks,” added Kate, but she then told a war story from her own time as a working reporter about a bank president who convinced a police chief to alter a police report to cover up the bank president’s role in a crime. Because Kate could find no independent evidence, she was never able to expose the cover-up. “It’s difficult to take on cops without solid evidence,” she concluded. “You can’t win on your word against theirs.”

“Few cops are crooks,” Brian said. “The issue is how much power, how little accountability.” He went on to explain that he tells people who come to him with information to “get a lawyer, and if the lawyer wants coverage, then call me.”

In this extended sequence of war stories, Brian portrayed for the students his sense of *identity* as a journalist: someone who is “there in those rare instances where something happens and someone says: ‘I need a reporter.’” This identity was enacted in a particular set of *values*: enabling those who would not otherwise be able to have their story (or their side of the story) heard, and doing so to make the police—who “feel they can get away with anything”—accountable for their actions. These values were, in turn, enacted through a set of *practices*: explaining possible negative consequences to potential sources so they can make an informed choice as to whether to talk to the reporter or simply telling people to “get a lawyer, and if the lawyer wants coverage, then call me.” These practices were enacted using specific *knowledge* about journalism: that talking to a reporter is not always in a person’s best interests, for example, or that it is “difficult to take on cops without solid evidence.” Moreover, this set of interconnected identity, values, practices, and knowledge were principally about *writing as a watchdog*: the ways of being, caring, doing, and understanding that a journalist uses to draw attention to inequities, monitor people and institutions in positions of power, and offer a voice to those without power. All of the war stories told in Journalism 828 referred at some point to aspects of writing as a watchdog, and overall 57% of the identities, values, practices, and aspects of journalistic knowledge invoked in war stories related to writing as a watchdog (see also Figure 1, on page 22 below).

**News meetings.** Toward the end of the class period, Brian conducted a news meeting, during which each group presented its story-in-progress. Brian said he thought a story about the lack of lawyers for indigent defendants was “great” because “many people face the justice system without an attorney.” He suggested that the group “quantify the problem” by finding out “how often it happens.” But he added that the students should also find some “good examples” and “keep the focus on a person and situation . . . [on] what happened at the trial . . . [and] jam the information in between. Tell it as an organic story around a single case.”

Brian suggested that the group doing a story on drunk drivers talk to the assistant district attorney who handles drunk driving incidents and find a drunk driver “for whom it’s too late” because “anyone facing the system will not want to talk.” He described a story in the news about a middle-aged man who had killed a teenager in a drunk driving accident.

One of the students asked: “How do you get in touch with these people?”

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“Write a letter to them in prison,” Brian replied.

Alecia added: “I can put you in touch with the mother [of the girl who was killed].”

“There,” said Brian, “you have everyone: the mother, the DA, the offender.”

When the news meeting ended, Brian asked students to send him their final stories so that he could consider publishing them in his paper. Then he reminded students to “be mindful of finding the story, not the topic. Drunk driving is too much. . . . But you can find a person’s story.”

In this extended news meeting, Brian portrayed for the students a particular set of journalistic *values*: to be “mindful of finding the story, not the topic.” Values were, in turn, enacted through a set of *practices*: finding “good examples” and focusing “on a person and situation” so as to tell “an organic story around a single case.” These practices required specific *knowledge* about journalism: the way to get in contact with a person in prison or the fact that “anyone facing the system will not want to talk.” Although Brian did not explicitly say so in the excerpt recounted here, these values, practices, and knowledge were also associated with a particular *identity* of a journalist as someone who helps other journalists find the “good examples” they need to tell a story—Brian’s advice about sources and Alecia’s offer to put her colleagues “in touch with the mother” of a drunk driver’s victim were examples of how, as another visiting journalist explained to the class, “journalists are lone rangers who depend on each other.” This set of interconnected values, practices, knowledge, and identity were principally about *writing for story*: the ways of being, caring, doing, and understanding that journalists use to tell stories about particular people encountering problems or conflict, the specific events that happened, and the unique details surrounding them. All of the news meetings conducted in Journalism 828 referred at some point to aspects of writing for story, and overall 69% of the values, practices, knowledge, and identities invoked in news meetings related to writing for story (see also Figure 1, on page 22 below).

**Copy editing.** Two weeks later, Kate led a copy editing session for rough drafts of students’ final projects. The second story discussed was about the lack of lawyers for indigent defendants, written by Alecia, Bill, Melanie, and Skyler, and titled “Poor Justice: A Closer Look at the Indigent Defense System.”

Kate began: “I got the new lead. I liked it better, and I did some line editing.” But she was “concerned about organization and focus. . . . What is the ‘so what’? Why do I care about this as a middle-class reader?”

Bill replied: “I don’t know how you can make middle-class people care about poor people—especially poor criminals.”

Kate explained that the story has “great shock value because people assume [they’ll get a] lawyer.” It is an “outrage story” that needs to “invoke outrage in people not affected.”

“So go from the anecdotal lead,” Bill suggested, “to ‘he’s not guaranteed [a lawyer]’—that’s the nut.”

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“What you need to do is this,” Kate replied, going on to give a detailed description of how to reorganize the piece as an outrage story: Start with an anecdotal lead, she explained, to “energize the reader.” Then put in the “so what” (or “here’s why this matters”) to convey “the big picture—what this country is about. Some day you’re not going to have a lawyer.” After the so what, she told them to ask, “What is the crisis here?” and then explain that this state used to be number one, but has been “sliding down—a good decade of slide.” Then, Kate said, list the contributing factors. In the so-what section, she explained, include a “graf [i.e., paragraph] on the key issues: an underfunded public defender, out-of-date scale for costs, a bizarre system for court appointments.” And she concluded: be sure to “use subheadings to be clear for the readers,” and “close with an anecdote that ties back into the lead.”

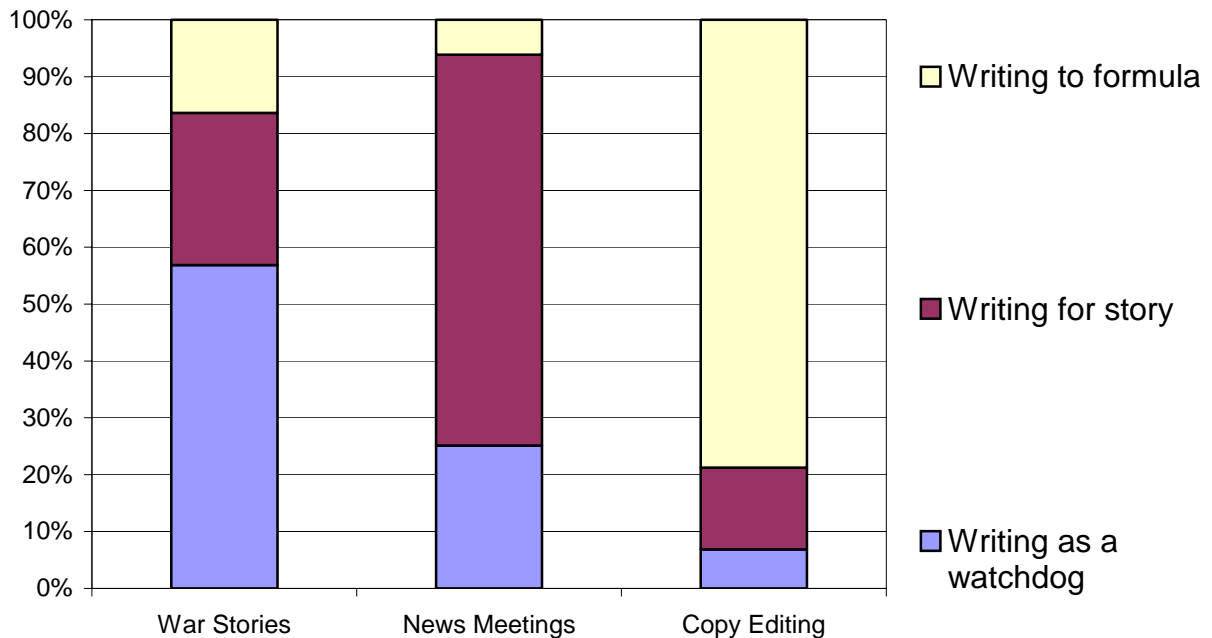
Alecia asked if there was any information missing in the current version of the story. Kate replied: “I thought the story was pretty clear, [but] I wanted a clear focus.” She said she would give the story a line edit, but “more than a line edit, this needs a powerful focus. You’re going to have to be ruthless.”

In this copy editing session, Kate showed the students a set of journalistic *values*: to “be clear for the readers” and to “energize the reader”—to make the story matter to middle-class readers. She explained how to enact these values through a set of *practices*: “use subheadings,” tie the end of the story back to the lead, and give the piece the structure of an “outrage story.” In explaining these practices, Kate used specific *knowledge* about journalism, concepts like an “anecdotal lead,” a “nut,” and an “outrage story.” These values, practices, and knowledge were, in turn, described as elements of a particular *identity* of a journalist as a writer who is “ruthless” about constructing a journalistic story. Moreover, this set of interconnected values, practices, knowledge, and identity was principally about *writing to formula*: the ways of being, caring, doing, and understanding a journalist uses to write in the form traditional to journalism. All of the copy editing done in Journalism 828 referred at some point to aspects of writing to formula, and overall 79% of the values, practices, knowledge, and identities invoked in copy editing related to writing to formula (see also Figure 1 below).

**Epistemology.** In Journalism 828, the values, practices, knowledge, and identities of writing as a watchdog, writing for story, and writing to formula were enacted within the participant structures of war stories (writing as a watchdog), news meetings (writing for story) and copy editing (writing to formula). But these elements of entry-level journalism were not enacted in isolation—that is, the goal of Journalism 828 was not simply to teach students to write as watchdogs, write for story, and write to formula. The goal was to help students learn to report investigative news stories.

In an investigative news story, as Kate explained to the students, “the important question [is]: What is the story behind the story . . . ? Cops and courts are about changes in people’s lives, [but] pattern recognition will define a reporter who really goes somewhere and one who is still a police reporter.” This pattern—“the story behind the story”—is some systemic problem that underlies a specific event. In Journalism 828, an investigative news story was a story, written in the objective voice of the newspaper, that used specific events to reveal larger social problems and the role that people and organizations in power played in creating such problems. That is, an investigative news story *combined* writing to formula, writing for story, and writing as a watchdog. In Journalism 828, an investigative news story exemplified a particular way of

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*Figure 1.* Elements of entry-level journalism referred to in the participant structures of Journalism 828, showing that war stories focused on writing as a watchdog, news meetings focused on writing for story, and copy editing focused on writing to formula.

thinking about journalism. A valid story was one that came from the practice of what Kate called “smart journalism.” As Kate explained in an interview: “Telling the story behind the story can win you awards. . . . [My goal is] to produce smart reporters [who] practice smart journalism, [and] think like journalists.”

By the end of the class, students had internalized this way of thinking about journalism—of justifying their actions and warranting their stories as legitimate investigative news stories. Melissa said in an interview: “A good story [is when you] find the story behind the story.” In explaining why he thought their final project was a success, Bill said:

We had facts and figures—we had our indictment of the system—but people don’t really care about the system, numbers. We had to find a person who could be an anecdotal lead—show how the system had impacted him. Just be able to relate it to a person and say: “This happened to him and here’s why. . . .” You need to capture attention . . . [to] find a way to give story a face, [and then] without editorializing show how the system is not living up to its end of the bargain.

In other words, the epistemology of investigative journalism encompasses the forms of reflection-on-action of writing to formula, writing for story, and writing as a watchdog—and thus exists across the participant structures of copy editing, news meetings, and war stories. The thinking that characterizes smart investigative reporting emerged as students developed an understanding of the relationships among these forms of reflection. As Alecia explained:

You learn quickly that news writing is fairly formulaic: how to present both sides, leads, an orientation graf. I’m a straight newspaper person: not very creative. This [gave me] inspiration that you

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can make a difference. . . . Nobody had said before: “This is not just about what you’re covering, but [about] why this affects the average person.” No one made that connection before.

### Discussion

Journalism 828 was thus organized by three participant structures of reflection-on-action. War stories, news meetings, and copy editing were each distinct patterns of reflection that entailed particular classroom social arrangements as to the amount and kind of interactions engaged in by novice and experienced journalists. War stories were marked by a single expert reflecting on his or her own actions to a group of novices; news meetings were marked by a single expert reflecting with a single student (or a group of students working on a single project) on the student’s (or the group’s) actions; and copy editing was marked by a group of students and/or experts reflecting on the actions of a single student.

These participant structures were more than just particular physical arrangements and social norms, however. They also were occasions for reflection-on-action linked to particular pedagogical purposes. Each participant structure focused on an element of entry-level journalism. War stories emphasized writing as a watchdog: the importance of drawing attention to inequities, monitoring people and institutions in positions of power, and offering a voice to those without power. News meetings emphasized writing for story: the importance of telling stories about particular people encountering problems or conflict, those people’s individual thoughts and actions, and the specific events that happened and the unique details surrounding them. Copy editing emphasized writing to formula: the importance of using specific methods of journalistic writing, rules of journalistic style, and traditional journalistic forms or formulae. The participant structures of Journalism 828 thus provided opportunities for students and experts to reflect on the particular values, practices, knowledge, and identities of writing as a watchdog (in war stories), writing for story (in news meetings), and writing to formula (in copy editing). In so doing, these strips of reflection-on-action provided opportunities for students to advance their work as journalists by framing their activity in particular ways.

The frame of in-depth reporting also extended across these individual participant structures, however, because learning to think like a “smart” journalist in Journalism 828 meant learning to simultaneously reflect from all three perspectives. Thinking like a journalist meant understanding that a good investigative report takes a specific set of events (*the story*) and represents them in the formulae of journalism (*a story*) to shed light on problems of the larger systems that organize society (*the story behind the story*). The epistemology of a practice is the means by which claims are warranted or actions are justified—the terms by which legitimacy is established within a community of practice—and a warranted claim in the epistemology of Journalism 828 was one in which a student integrated the individual frames of reflection-on-action from news meetings, copy editing, and war stories, using *the story* to create *a story* about *the story behind the story*.

Focusing on a more extended time scale—across strips of activity rather than only within them—thus highlighted the structure of the epistemic frame of Journalism 828. This focus showed how the practices, identities, values, knowledge, and epistemology that characterize the reflection-in-action of the community of practice of investigative journalists were made explicit through participant structures of reflection-on-action in this professional practicum. A larger

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scale of analysis thus shows how the reflection-in-action that, for an expert, takes place within a single strip of activity was deconstructed in this practicum for the novice into separate strips and frames of reflection-on-action. The mostly private, local, and internal process of reflection-in-action was mapped onto public, extended, and distributed participant structures of reflection-on-action.<sup>2</sup> In Journalism 828, students reflected from three perspectives: writing to formula, writing for story, and writing as a watchdog. In the process, the practices, identities, values, knowledge, and epistemology that would become (for those who complete their training) simultaneous and continuous with action, were made discrete and explicit by the participant structures of the practicum.

There is, of course, much that this analysis potentially leaves out. A more traditional microsocial analysis, such as those conducted by Hall and Stevens (1995, 1996), Goodwin (1994), Erickson (2004), O'Connor and Michaels (1996), Cornelius and Herrenkohl (2004), Taback (2004), or even Goffman (1974), would surely tell us more about the relationship between strips of journalistic activity and their local frames. It would likely reveal how discourse moves constructed particular power relations between novices and experts in this journalism practicum. A microsocial analysis might also reveal in more detail the mechanisms through which links were forged between elements of the epistemic frame of journalism—for example, how knowledge was used to link identity and values when the professor told a student: “It’s hard to do political reporting that isn’t completely cynical. It’s a manipulated system. You need to be the one person not manipulated.” Issues such as these are surely important to a rich understanding of what happened in Journalism 828.

Looking at a broader time scale had particular advantages, however. It showed how the participant structures of Journalism 828 were social arrangements tightly bound to the practices of journalism. These participant structures reflected Goffman’s “structure of involvement in the situation” (Goffman, 1963, p. 193), rather than generic patterns of discourse, and were intimately related to the specific values, practices, knowledge, and identities of investigative journalism. Use of a larger scale of analysis thus shed light on the ways in which these structures linked together to develop students’ understanding of the epistemology of the community of investigative print journalism. In Journalism 828, the frames that organized strips of activity persisted across interactional encounters. It may be the case that, when one focuses locally on “small behaviors” (Goffman, 1967, p. 1), action appears to be, as Erickson (2004) suggests, “a matter of discontinuous opportunity” that “may or may not occur from one successive moment of ‘now’ to the next” (p. 167). But viewed at a broader time scale, the same epistemic frame of investigative journalism orchestrated multiple strips of activity in Journalism 828. This is not to suggest that such a frame is invisible at the local level, but only that a larger scale of analysis may make the frame’s presence, structure, and import more evident.

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<sup>2</sup> Those familiar with Hutchins’ (1995) study of how quartermasters learn naval navigation will no doubt recognize a similar process at work here. In Hutchins’ example, a critical feature of the learning environment was the distribution of cognitive activity across persons and tools. When different novice quartermasters worked on different aspects of the task of navigation in a shared workspace, the workings of a complex computational task became explicit. The mapping between the problem space (the tasks to be accomplished) and the social space (the roles of the participants) made public a process that for expert quartermasters becomes internal. In a similar way, the participant structures of Journalism 828 provide a mapping between expert reflection-in-action and novice reflection-on-action.



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Discourse moves and power relations were, of course, relevant to the activities of Journalism 828. But backgrounding such issues makes more apparent how the forms of reflection-in-action characteristic of investigative journalism were visible in the participant structures for reflection-on-action of Journalism 828. The larger participant structures of this journalism practicum provided opportunities for systematic reflection about and with the values, practices, knowledge, identities, and epistemology of entry-level journalism. As students engaged in these frames of reflection-on-action, they began to develop the epistemic frame of this community of practice.

The ethnographic nature of this study necessarily means that any conclusions are limited to what one particular group of students and experts did in the context of one particular capstone course. However, the results of this study do suggest that focusing on the participant structures of reflection-*on*-action that organize professional training may be a useful way to understand the nature of reflection-*in*-action of a profession—and that the concept of epistemic frames and the larger time scale of analysis it implies may be a useful lens for carrying out such investigations. It may be advantageous, in other words, to study reflective practices such as journalism through *epistemography*, or ethnographic study of the nature and development of the epistemic frame of a community of practice.

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