Maria Guglietti, MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY, mguglietti@mtroyal.ca

Exploring Students' Articulation of Value in a Social Research Methods Class: Towards a Phenomenography of Value Making

ABSTRACT

This study describes journalism students' value making of social research methods, such as sampling, data gathering strategies and quantitative and qualitative data analysis, by using a mixed-method approach to analyze 260 written reflection assignments. In their reflections, 26 student participants assessed the value of their new knowledge of social research methods on ten different occasions throughout the term. The qualitative analysis consisted of two stages: a content analysis and an analysis of students' collective experience of value making (phenomenographic approach). The findings of the content analysis showed that students generally value knowledge that is seen as useful and familiar from the perspective of trainee practitioners (professional standpoint). A focus on students' collective experience showed that value making happens when students adopt a standpoint from where to judge new knowledge and make connections between new and past knowledge and experience. Weak connections may lead students to disregard new content. The analysis of connections showed that students either reproduce the connections made by the instructor in class (performative connection) or make an original link with present and past experiences and knowledge (original connection). Performative connections produce general statements of value making, while concrete value making happens when students explicitly integrate and transfer knowledge to produce original connections with past and present personal or professional learning and experience.

KEYWORDS

Social research methods instruction, social research methods literacy, value making, value, journalism education, phenomenography, qualitative content analysis, connections, standpoints, trainee practitioners

This paper examines the process of value making among 26 third-year journalism students in an undergraduate social research methods class which introduces trainee practitioners to issues of sampling, data gathering strategies, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and a review of ethical implications of scientific research. Value making is

the process of producing and reproducing implicit and explicit acts of evaluation (Smith, 1988) and is typically experienced as a set of goals, incentives, reasons, and beliefs that inform attitudes, perception, and behaviour. Research on value making in educational contexts has focused on the connection between motivation, expectations, and value (Brophy, 2008; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Feather, 1988; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Value influences students' motivation and, indirectly, their performance in the classroom and should, therefore, be taken into consideration when establishing productive learning communities (Brophy, 2008).

The goal of this paper is to describe students' definition of value making through a qualitative content analysis of students' written reflections about the value of new knowledge of social research methods. It will also identify the structure of the experience of value making through a phenomenographic approach. This analysis will show the typical practices and strategies involved in students' value making to understand what journalism students need to engage in value making. In addition, a better understanding of students' value making is important for research methods educators because it may help explain why some pedagogies and strategies either succeed or fail in fostering students' appreciation for research methods literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research methods instruction of journalism students

Recent discussions in academic and industry circles have stressed the need to prepare future journalists to understand and interpret scientific research (Adam, 1989; Fife, 2008; Houston, 2013; Mersey, 2006; O'Donnell, 2001-2). Journalists lack proper knowledge of scientific methods which explains frequent misrepresentations of scientific research in the media (Condit, 2004; Entwistle, 1995; Hijmans, Pleijter, & Wester, 2003). In addition, the few studies that focused on journalism students' perceptions and experience of research methods instruction identified students' anxiety about statistics and a general sense of disconnection with research methods literacy as obstacles in the learning of research methods (Mencher, 1995; Mersey, 2006; Rancer, Durbin, & Lin, 2013). The ongoing debate over the appropriate role of theory and academic research in journalism education only aggravates the situation (Greenberg, 2007; O'Donnell, 2001-2). This debate persists even when research methods classes are a requirement in many journalism programs across North America.

Studies in the area of research methods instruction have found that there is a general reticence and fear of research methods among undergraduate students (Fife, 2008; Ransford & Butler, 1982; Stacks & Hickson, 1991; Wagner, Gardner, & Kawulich, 2011), and particularly among trainee practitioners (Aylor, 2001; Nguyen & Lam, 2009; Parks, Meara, & Goldsmith, 2011). However, findings are generally based on instructors' observations of challenges and anecdotal accounts of strategies. More alarmingly, there is very little insight into how students experience research methods instruction.

An important precedent to this study in the area of communication studies and journalism education is the work of Fife (2008) on communication students' reception of a research methods class. Fife conducted focus groups with students and found that participants struggled to see the "practical value" of research methods outside the uni-

versity. In his final recommendations, Fife encourages instructors to "show students the value added aspects of taking the course" through service learning and by bringing in guest speakers from the fields of journalism and public relations (p. 113). Fife's discussion of "practical value" may help explain why students are reticent towards research methods classes. However, there is little knowledge of what students do when they engage in value making processes.

Definition of value and value making

Research on students' value making has primarily focused on identifying the role of value in students' motivation to learn. For example, expectancy value theory argues that expectations and values can influence students' choices and behaviour (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Feather, 1988; Schwartz, 1996; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Value was also found to be an intervening variable in processes of self-development and identification (Brophy, 2008; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Feather, 1988; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) and in the interpretation of objects and goals as attractive or negative (Feather, 1998). On the other hand, students' cultural milieu, beliefs, task perceptions, and interpretations may affect value making in the classroom (Brophy, 2008; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). While research has focused on measuring the influence of pre-existing values on students' learning, there is little discussion about how value making happens and how it may be ultimately nurtured in the classroom (Brophy, 2008, p. 133).

Value is a complex set of reasons, feelings, and beliefs that determine students' appreciation for what is taught (Brophy, 2008). A few typologies to map the complexity of value exist. Based on early work by Eccles and Wigfield (1985), Brophy (1999) identifies three main types of values: attainment, utility, and intrinsic or interest value. Attainment value occurs when students see learning as a means to achieve prestige and personal satisfaction. Utility value happens when students regard learning as instrumental in achieving their career goals and a higher quality of life. Finally, intrinsic or interest value indicates students' appreciation of learning per se, the satisfaction that students get from engaging with new content or tasks. It is evident from this typology that addressing value requires an in-depth understanding of students' experience, feelings, and expectations.

Value is also defined as a meaning-making process. Smith (1995), for example, notes that "the interpretation of a text and our experience of its value are to some extent mutually dependent, and both depend upon the particular assumptions, expectations, and interest with which we approach the work" (p. 185). Rather than a pre-existing variable that affects people's relation to new knowledge, Smith (1988) sees value as the result of a "hermeneutic cycle" between the interpretation of the object or phenomenon, its evaluation, and the individual's "set" of psychological dispositions (assumptions, expectations, and interests) (p.10). The implications of this view are important. First, value should be understood as a process that affects and is affected by students' interpretation of content. Secondly, the act of value making does not just express but produces value.

Considering the importance assigned to value in students' perception and interpretation of their learning, this study proposes an in-depth description of journalism students' value making of research methods literacy (i.e., identification and understanding of sampling, data collection, and data analysis strategies) in order to answer the following questions:

> *What happens as journalism students come to value new knowledge? What meaning-making practices do students engage with when asked to reflect on the value of their learning?*

METHOD

Context

Participants in this study were 26 third-year Journalism students at a mid-size undergraduate university in Western Canada. The social research methods class where the data collection took place is a mandatory course in the degree. The class focuses on training journalism students as consumers and translators of academic research to a general audience. To this end, the main objective of the course is the students' learning of basic research methods literacy skills such as the identification and assessment of epistemological and ontological research orientations, research questions, sampling procedures and types of samples, potential ethical implications of academic research, data gathering procedures and methods, and qualitative and quantitative analysis. A second objective of the course is the evaluation of media coverage of academic research and data journalism. Typical assignments in this class are group analysis of media reports of research and academic studies called "seminars," individual reporting on academic research, and a final written exam. A traditional half-hour lecture precedes in-class group work and discussion.

Students in the class struggle with many of the difficulties identified in the literature on research methods instruction discussed earlier. They are anxious about statistics and struggle to understand the differences between some of the data gathering techniques. To many, the class is "difficult" and "dry," according to informal and formal feedback gathered in student evaluations of instruction and in-class discussions throughout the years. To address students' concerns, the class has increasingly emphasized students' identification, analysis, and evaluation of research over a more typical focus on students' direct engagement in academic research. However, after five years of course redevelopment, it became evident that more systematic observation and analysis of students' experiences were necessary to improve students' connection to social research methods knowledge. Given the proven relationship between value, motivation, and students' learning experience, it was decided that value making would be an appropriate focus to understand journalism students' experience of learning social research methods.

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of 260 reflection assignments completed by 26 third-year Journalism students during Fall 2012. All students provided informed consent for their work to be part of the study at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Most participants were in their early twenties and had little to no work experience in media.

A mixed-methods approach, combining a qualitative content analysis and phenomenography, was used to analyze students' reflections. Students were asked to complete an "opening learning investigation" the first day of class which was a written assessment of the course outline and description of contents. A mandatory "final investigation" asked students to discuss the value of the class and contents as a whole. The other reflections followed group-based exercises and asked students to define and consider the value of different social research methods topics (i.e., sampling, statistical analysis, coding, quali-

tative and quantitative methods), identify how they had learned them, and assess their present and future usefulness. Students were required to write ten out of twelve reflections, including the mandatory final investigation, within 24 hours of completing a group or an individual assignment, and these reflections were graded.

The decision to focus on students' reflections as a main data gathering strategy was in response to Smith's (1988) view of value as a hermeneutic cycle. If the intention was to describe students' value making, it was necessary to create different opportunities for evaluation to observe this dynamic process at different points throughout the term. The link between reflection and value making has been extensively discussed in education, particularly by Mezirow (1991), who regards reflection as the process of critically assessing experience and its interpretation (p. 104). Reflection activities are well-established pedagogical strategies in professional training programs because it is believed that they help students become "reflective practitioners" (Hutchison & Allen, 1997; Schön, 1991). Proponents of experiential learning see reflection as necessary for proper interpretation and valuing of experience.

Data analysis

A mixed-methods strategy consisting of a qualitative content analysis and a phenomenographic approach was followed. The first step of the qualitative content analysis focused on the identification of themes within the reflections. This analysis showed what students valued and what made new knowledge and practices valuable.

The themes were grouped and later compared to Brophy's (1999) typology. The analysis also suggested the existence of different standpoints adopted in valuing aspects of social research methods. A second step in the content analysis permitted the identification of these standpoints. A typology was developed as a result.

A second stage in the analysis consisted in a phenomenographic approach to the students' experience of value making. Phenomenography is a research program and a method developed in the field of education in the 1980s (Svensson, 1997). The goal is "the description, analysis and understanding of experience" (Marton, 1981). This means that the focus of phenomenography is not a phenomenon but the multiple ways in which it is experienced. In fact, the analytical approach describes variation within the realm of experience. This variation is identified, categorized, and hierarchically mapped, resulting in an "outcome space" (Akerlind, 2007; Marton, 1981; Marton, Hounsell, & Entwistle, 1984). An outcome space describes all the possible ways of experiencing a phenomenon by the group under study in a particular context and time.

The first step in the phenomenographic analysis consisted of the identification of students' statements of value making. The statements were isolated and compared. Those statements that showed a similar experience of value making were grouped and categorized. The groups were later compared to identify potential connections between the different experiences of value making.

Content analysis: Students' definition of value

The content analysis of the reflections showed that students define value in multiple ways. Valuable knowledge empowers and furthers understanding and skills (e.g., "If I learn this I will be able to"). It is interesting, transformative (e.g., "If I learn this, I will become"), and familiar (e.g., "It is important because I studied this in another class").

For some students familiarity is an important aspect of value. They value familiar knowledge because it was understood and introduced as relevant in another setting, often in a classroom or at the workplace. For example, a student pointed out that "the academic analysis assignment [an assignment in which students are asked to identify and evaluate different components of a research project] and ethics seminar also seem the most relevant to me in terms of what we are learning in other communication classes." Another stated that "I'm looking forward to delving into interpreting statistics again because I found it to be entirely worth learning." Even when not explicitly mentioned, familiarity underlined much of students' value making in the first weeks of class. In the opening learning investigation, responding to a prompt asking what themes and assignments would be most relevant, students mentioned asking questions, ethical procedures, translating research into stories, and evaluating polls. These are skills that they could recognize as associated with the practice of journalism. Familiarity also proved to be a salient component of more detailed and concrete value making, as discussed later.

Students' definitions of value are consistent with Brophy's (1999) typology of value. Empowerment and development of skills and knowledge can be seen as in line with the notion of attainment value, while themes such as interest, transformation and familiarity are closer to Brophy's interest or intrinsic value. It should be noted, though, that these different views of value are not as clearly distinct from each other as Brophy's typology suggests. For example, references to empowerment are often considered in light of future professional development (e.g., "It is worth learning because now I can do something I will need in the future"). Similarly, interesting knowledge may be so because it is deemed "useful." What is clear is that most students valued knowledge that could be used in the present or future:

> I actually really do think that this [ethnography] is worth reading because this may actually be something that we do in our careers as journalists and researchers. It is also important to be able to known the characteristics of ethnographic research when reading it, to be able to determine what kind of participant/ how involved the researcher was and what advantages/ ethical issues come along with that and how it affects the quality of the research.

> I definitely think it [sampling techniques] is worth learning. If I wanted to conduct my own poll, I would know that I should most likely use a probability sampling method, so that I can get the most accurate results. Even if I don't ever conduct a poll, this is still very valuable information to use because as a journalist, I am most likely going to have to analyze polls and relay that information to the public in a way that makes sense to them.

> I imagine that the information I will gain in this course will be very useful in my pursued career. The tools that we are going to learn will help make me a more well-rounded journalist.

> Knowledge is nothing if it can't be practiced or used.

The statements suggest that these students, like most participants in the study, privilege utility or "practical" value in their assessments. Students also appreciated the seminar group assignments that forced them to apply their new knowledge of social research

methods. In turn, the application made the knowledge valuable for many, which echoed Ransford and Butler's (1982) discussion about the importance of "doing research" to facilitate students' comprehension and motivation in a research methods class.

The predominance of practical value statements among students is not surprising considering that journalism students are trainee practitioners and have been taught to regard their learning as training towards a successful professional career. In other words, many see themselves as professionals "in the making." This is evident in the frequent adoption of a professional standpoint to judge the value of their learning:

> One of the themes that seem most relevant at this point is that of ethics [ethical dilemmas and protocols in academic research]. Already, just as a student journalists (sic), we are faced with ethical dilemmas while reporting for The Calgary Journal. [the school paper]

> I am most interested in the topic of ethics. I understand journalists have to protect and honor the people they're interviewing, but I had never considered ethics in [academic] research as well.

The analysis of students' reflections shows that the adoption of a standpoint to value knowledge is an important component of value making. Students value their learning *from* a specific point of view: professional, personal, and even by adopting the instructor's perspective. This finding is consistent with the notion of standpoint proposed by standpoint theory. For Harding (2004), for example, "knowledge is supposed to be based on experiences, and so different experiences should enable different perceptions of ourselves and our environments" (p. 7).

The instructor's standpoint is apparent when students assess content that is relatively new to them and, thus, adopt the instructor's perspective to explain and value the material or experience. An extreme example of this is:

> As I sit here and read through each topic, I am baffled as to what of any of it means. But in class, the professor has mentioned that sometime in our lives we will come across needing these skills, so I believe her.

A professional standpoint requires the assessment of learning in light of a general definition of journalism. In this case, students invoke skills, practices, and attitudes that they associate with professional journalists and trainee professional journalists. For instance, "Being able to analyze research and break it down into simpler terms can help increase your credibility as a journalist." The adoption of a professional perspective is consistent with the professional orientation of the degree. Students learn early in the program that they must think and act as journalists in the making.

It is important to note that the difference between the instructor's standpoint and the professional standpoint is not always clear in practice. The adoption of a professional perspective may originate in the student or in the instructor. The blurring of standpoints is expected among trainee practitioners who are continuously reminded of the connections between their learning and their future professional practice by instructors.

A personal standpoint is typical of value statements of a more intimate character that express a concern for personal growth within and beyond the professional sphere. For example, "I believe the learning investigation assignments will be most beneficial because it allows me to pause and think about how what I learned affects me." References to absolute

personal standpoints were less frequent than those indicating a professional perspective. In fact, the analysis showed that, once again, the distinction between personal and professional standpoints is often blurred, which leads to frequent personalizations of professional value making. In this case, students may still refer to rather abstract definitions of journalism when assessing content in terms of personal growth, but the expression of value is in the first person and may refer to present and past personal experiences. In the context of this study, this hybrid standpoint is referred to as "professional-personal" rather than just "personal." For instance,

> *I find [academic] ethics fascinating. I love the ambiguity of them. I was encountering ethical dilemmas in journalism as early as first year, so I think it will be very helpful to continue to evolve my understanding of how these situations arise and the best way to deal with them. It is very important to me that as a journalist, I don't compromise my integrity – and classes that focus on the ethical and moral challenges journalists face are a great way to reinforce exactly what you don't want to do.*

If this shift from a personal to a professional standpoint and vice-versa is often influenced by some of the prompts in the reflections (i.e., Which of the themes, assignments, and outcomes mentioned in this outline is most relevant in your development as a communication student and in your future as a communication practitioner?), combining perspectives is also revealing of the dynamics of value making. Smith (1988) notes that "when we state the value of a literary work, we are usually not only (and certainly not necessarily, and perhaps not at all) declaring its value for ourselves but also estimating its probable value for others" (p. 13). This is clear, for example, in the shift from "I" to "we" or even "they" in many reflections:

> *I think that the information we received during out time in COMM 3737 was worth learning overall. I think many of the topics effect [sic] us directly as journalists or are something that we will be able to use if we are reporting on social research (. . .) I do believe that this class has given me a new appreciation for academic research.*

The longitudinal analysis of students' value making also showed that students adopted different standpoints throughout the term. However, there is no indication of a necessary progression in the adoption of standpoints (i.e., from an instructor's standpoint to a personal standpoint). In fact, most students combined standpoints in their final reflection.

Phenomenographic analysis: The process of value making

Despite individual differences, the analysis of students' reflections showed that the adoption of a standpoint is a necessary step in value making. A standpoint provides students with a point of reference to evaluate new knowledge and skills. The analysis also showed that students often connect new learning experiences to familiar knowledge and experiences. For instance,

> *I think [academic ethical protocols] is worth learning. It is good information for a journalist to know. If I am going to be publishing results from a study, I want to be sure that the study has been looked over for any ethical*

issues that might arise, so that I don't risk publishing something that is ethically wrong.

In this case the student is valuing her new knowledge of ethical protocols as a trainee practitioner. This requires a comparison between this new knowledge and familiar definitions of journalism and journalistic practices, in this case reporting scientific research. Ethics is a topic well-known to most journalism students receiving social research methods instruction. Most students have been exposed to discussions of professional ethics in first- and second-year classes and are well aware of a professional code of ethics by the time they learn social research methods. Ethical protocols in academia, such as justice, equity, and social welfare of participants in research, are worth learning because they can be easily linked to this early knowledge of professional ethics. My contention is that when this connection to previous knowledge and experience is less evident, students struggle to assign value to new knowledge and practices. The following is an example of the dynamics of connection as manifested in a student's final reflection:

I think sampling is the most important theme as a communication student because by looking at who the researcher pick for their panel and why the researcher picked that particular sample, whether it be qualitative interviews or quantitative questionnaires, is extremely important in gauging the validity and relativity of the study.

The student shows a good understanding of sampling. But sampling is only worth learning if it can be linked to an experience:

For example, I've looked at many studies in this course where there was sampling error, meaning a difference between the population and the sample, and that really destroys the research.

This connection is looked at by the same student from a professional standpoint:

As a journalist, I now know where and how to look for these population and sample examples so I can accurately understand a paper is worth writing about.

Later on, the student admits

I did not particularly enjoy this class, which made it less worth it for me. I find the material too dry, and not applicable to my current studies in journalism. Though I find it important to understand how a research paper is broken down and the elements that make it either valid or invalid I find the details like ethnography, objectivism and other theories unimportant because if I came across those terms in a paper I was writing a story about, then I would just look up the term or ask a researcher myself.

It can be argued that ethnography and objectivism are worthless because the student fails to see a connection between these notions and any previous professional knowledge or experience. Her view of journalism does not include these notions. Neither do they trigger any emotional response. The importance of making connections to value new knowledge and skills is confirmed by the value assigned to new "familiar" content, as

discussed in the content analysis section. Journalism students value familiar knowledge because this can be easily connected to previous knowledge and experience. An example of the reciprocal relationship between familiarity and value is explicitly discussed by one of the participants:

> This is worth learning because now I know the difference between connota-
> tion (sic) and denotative meaning in images. This has come up in some
> of my other classes so obviously learning about it again helps me and
> shows me that what I am learning in school does come up and is im-
> portant [my emphasis].

The importance of students' ability to connect new knowledge to previous knowledge is well-known in the field of education, particularly among proponents of a constructivist understanding of learning. In fact, the Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric, developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, proposes integration as vital to successful learning (AAC&U, 2013). Integration is an "understanding and a disposi-tion" for making simple connections between present and past ideas and knowledge, which allows the potential transfer of new knowledge to new situations. It requires the connection between multiple experiences and disciplinary knowledge, and the transfer of knowledge to understand new situations.

Given the similarity between the practices involved in integration and value mak-ing, it could be argued that value making requires some integration of knowledge. This is evident in statements where students connected new knowledge to professional and personal experiences as the examples discussed showed. In turn, the adoption of an in-structor's perspective is less indicative of student's integration and transfer of knowledge because the connections originate in the instructor. By adopting the instructor's stand-point students "perform" the connections made by the instructor in class, because they may not be able or willing to make an original connection to their discipline or experience.

Types of value making

The phenomenographic analysis of students' experience of value making also re-vealed the existence of two main types of value making. Students articulate value either in a general or in a concrete way. General value making relies on standard formulas and abstract justifications. It is sometimes performative, adopting the instructor's standpoint. For example,

> I think the most relevant themes are being able to critically think about re-
> search papers and to be able to identify certain characteristics of the paper
> to be able to further understand how the researchers made their conclusions
> and to be able to find whether or not there may be potential mistakes or
> biases in the research (. . .) it will also allow us as journalists to critically
> think about the material and to determine how to represent the research if
> it is worth representing at all.

In this reflection the student is providing a very abstract justification for the learn-ing of social research literacy which reiterates some of the arguments about the value of research methods discussed in class. This definition is then compared to a rather ab-stract notion of journalism. The conclusion is the following: if social research methods

literacy fosters critical thought, social research literacy skills are worth learning because they allow journalists to be what they are supposed to be: critical thinkers. However, the student does not refer to any specific present or past experience where the skills actually fostered critical thought.

> *I think for the most part, everything we covered and learned seems to be useful. I did get lost in some of the in-depth descriptions of different types of sampling and analysis, but overall, most topics did relate to communications.* I think as a journalist, if you are looking for information or research to back up a story, it'd be really important that you understand what the population was, how the researchers got their sample, what methods were used, and even more simply whether it was quantitative and qualitative [my emphasis].

In this second general example, the student considers research methods worth learning by contrasting this knowledge to an abstract definition of journalism skills. The notion of "backing up a story," a mandatory requirement of any serious journalist piece, was extended to encompass knowledge of social research methods. In fact, this knowledge is worth learning because it helps journalists do what they are meant to: checking the reliability and validity of sources, in this case, an academic paper.

The second type of value making observed is more personal and concrete. Concrete statements show students' articulating the value of new knowledge by connecting it to personal experiences of learning and professional practice. Concrete value statements are more personalized and detailed than general statements of value, and, in some cases, show explicit transfer of social research methods knowledge to explain a past or present situation:

> *[I can] better assess research reports. As usually answered throughout the semester, I can apply it journalistically, but honestly – the term I'll put into heart is "going native." I've found, in a few atmospheres already, that I immerse myself a bit too much into these social scenario/phenomena that I report on. Not to say that I've drastically taken the dive into metal culture, or fundraising culture, but it's important to keep that distance.*

The notion of "going native," which is one of the risks of prolonged ethnographic immersion, is relevant to this student because it helps explain what she already experienced in professional assignments. The articulation of value is concrete and alludes to a specific experience.

While general statements suggest a more indirect involvement with the material learned, students' reflections do not necessarily show students moving towards more concrete value making assessments towards the end of the term. In fact, both types of value making appear in reflections throughout the semester, and students move back and forth along this continuum in response to different topics and prompts.

DISCUSSION

The table describes the experience of value making as a result of the phenomenographic analysis. The three columns represent three aspects of value making (standpoint, action and type) and their categories of description. The rows define potential structural relationships between categories.

Table 1. *Outcome Space*

STANDPOINT	ACTION	TYPE OF VALUE MAKING
INSTRUCTOR'S	PERFORMATIVE CONNECTION	GENERAL
PROFESSIONAL PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL-PERSONAL	ORIGINAL CONNECTION	CONCRETE
	INTEGRATION AND TRANSFER	

General and concrete value statements should be seen as two poles on a continuum rather than two distinct categories. Both types of statements require the adoption of a standpoint and a connection. The reflections showed that journalism students produced more general than concrete value statements. This finding is consistent with the general disconnections felt by many trainee practitioners in social research methods classes discussed earlier in this paper. General statements are often the result of performative connections that reproduce the instructor's standpoint and do not require the students' original connection of new knowledge to professional knowledge or experiences beyond the classroom. The adoption of a more personal perspective, as in professional-personal and personal standpoints, tends to produce more concrete value statements than a purely professional standpoint which often activates more abstract and general definitions of journalism and journalism practice.

It is important to note that the absence of concrete value statements does not necessarily mean poor understanding or lack of interest in the content. What the reflections show is that concrete value making happens when students connect their learning to past or present experiences, which is an explicit indication of integration and transfer of knowledge. This integration and transfer are most noticeable when students adopt a personal or a professional-personal standpoint because they explicitly use their new knowledge of social research methods to explain present and past experiences as students and professionals in the making, and this forces the student to move away from the instructor's standpoint. For many, this "use" of the newly acquired knowledge of social research methods makes the knowledge valuable (utility value). Others might feel empowered and satisfied by this transfer and integration of knowledge, which results in expressions of interest and achievement value. Compared to concrete value making, general statements do not always provide enough information of explicit integration and transfer of knowledge beyond a connection to a rather abstract definition of journalism.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that an analysis of 260 reflections produced by just one class can only provide partial knowledge of how journalism students value social research methods literacy. This project focused on describing the process of value making from a student perspective. The analysis did not intend to prove any causal relationship between value making

and learning. While concrete value making shows evidence of integration and transfer of knowledge, there is no evidence that integrative learning requires value making. This study simply shows that value making happened in a research methods class and that the process of value making in this context requires a connection and the adoption of a standpoint.

While general statements seem to indicate a more basic approach to value making, due to their performativity and weak transfer of knowledge, there is no evidence that learning about social research methods allowed students to move from general to concrete value making. Further research is needed to establish a relationship between these two modes of valuing.

In terms of the use of semi-guided reflection as the main data gathering strategy, it would be interesting to know whether this type of reflection had any impact on students' value making. For instance, having a question that asked about relevance of knowledge for a future profession at the beginning of the final learning investigation may have predisposed some students to answer all subsequent questions in that exercise from a professional standpoint, even when other questions were certainly open.

The main lesson of this study is the importance of connections in the process of value making. To value, students need to be able to make connections with what they know. If these are not evident, students will either try to perform connections already made available by the instructor, as some general assessments showed, or will most likely disregard the content as worthless. The participants in this project tended to connect social research methods to a repertoire of images, experiences and abstract definitions of, first and foremost, their profession. This was not an easy task because their view of journalism rarely included the understanding, valuing and translation of academic research as a professional skill. In addition, the frequent adoption of a professional standpoint as a reference point to valuing aspects of social research methods is linked to students' valuing of knowledge primarily in terms of utility. If journalism students are told that they are professionals in the making, they will most likely focus on experiences and learning that make them excel as professionals.

The importance of familiarity in value making should not be overlooked. Familiar content is valued because it is clearly connected to past knowledge and experience. The task of those teaching research methods literacy to trainee practitioners is to, first, give students time to think about the connections between research methods literacy and their professional knowledge and experiences, and second, to show students these connections when they are not evident. This study has shown that even the most general value making depends on performative connections.

Maria Victoria Guglietti is an adjunct instructor in the Faculty of Communication Studies at Mount Royal University, Alberta, Canada.

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