Media Ethics Teaching in Century 21: Progress, Problems, and Challenges

Edmund B. Lambeth, Clifford G. Christians, Kenneth Fleming, and Seow Ting Lee

What is the status of media ethics as a specialty in the journalism and mass communication (JMC) programs of North American colleges and universities at the turn of the century?

This article is the fourth in a series in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* that addresses major parts of that question—the current goals, content, and key issues in media ethics instruction. The article also reports on classroom practices and summarizes the research and creative activities of media ethics teachers.[1] More broadly, the series of articles has sought to serve as a continuing progress report on the academy's search for ways to develop applied ethics as a liberal arts component in the education of journalists and mass communicators. An important aspect of that effort is the status among JMC units of the separate course in media ethics.

A new measure introduced in the current survey compares the perceptions that media ethics teachers and JMC administrators have of the standing of media ethics instruction and research and of the relationship of that academic specialty to the practice of journalism.

The proximate audience for this fourth article is the readers of *JMCE* and the more than 400 journalism educators who have participated in the National Workshop on the Teaching of Journalism & Mass Communication, as well as readers of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* and *Media Ethics, the Magazine Serving Mass Communication Ethics.* It also is intended for the members of the Media Ethics Division and sister divi-

Edmund B. Lambeth (LAMBETHE@MISSOURI.EDU) is professor emeritus of journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia and director of the Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public; Clifford G. Christians (CCHRSTNS@UIUC.EDU) is a research professor of communication at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana; Kenneth Fleming (FLEMINGK@MISSOURI.EDU) is director of the Center for Advanced Social Research at UMC; and Seow Ting Lee (STLEE@ILSTU.EDU) is assistant professor of mass communication at Illinois State University.

sions within the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), plus the small, but vitally important group of editors and reporters who seek to connect themselves actively with the ethics teaching movement in the academy.

Literature Review

The scholarly and professional work that most closely informs this and the earlier articles spans the twentieth century. A concern for the moral health and effectiveness of a democratic press infused Walter Lippmann's earliest books. In his 1922 classic, *Public Opinion,* Lippmann articulated the difference between news and truth and argued that neither the press nor major institutions of society—as then constituted—were offering the public the quantity or quality of knowledge which a democratic theory of the press demanded. Institutions were implored to interpose "some form of expertness between the private citizen and the vast environment in which he is entangled."[2]

Seven years later, his *A Preface to Morals* drew upon philosophy, history, and the then nascent social sciences. The book reflects, among other goals, Lippmann's personal and passionate search for an ideal of journalism that would reverse the decline of journalistic standards brought on by the Jazz Age reporting of the 1920s. In an age when secularism seemed to be gaining new strength, he argued that the "ages when custom is unsettled are necessarily ages of prophecy." Then he penned the following lines in his 1929 book, which some would say could have been written as easily for media ethicists working in our own pluralistic context of the early twenty-first century:

> The moralist cannot teach what is revealed; he must reveal what can be taught. He has to seek insight rather than to preach. The disesteem into which moralists have fallen is due at bottom to their failure to see that in an age like this one the function of the moralist is not to exhort men to be good but to elucidate what the good is.[3]

Christians noted that the book went through six editions in the first year, and described it as a "rallying point... against the nihilism and despair usually associated with the twenties."[4]

Between the two Lippmann volumes at either end of the decade, professors of journalism themselves contributed to the national conversation about the press. Nelson Crawford outlined ethical standards and guidelines for journalism students; Leon Flint developed case studies of ethical decision making for the classroom. William F. Gibbons discussed issues of professional practice and urged adoption of professional codes of ethics as responses to the occupation's poor standing in public opinion. He also identified excessive commercial influence on news as a major impediment to the ethical health of journalism.[5]

Editor Charles Dana, whose *New York Sun* was itself criticized for sins of sensationalism, offered a sharp and succinct set of maxims for journalistic behavior in a 1888 speech to the Wisconsin Editorial Association. By 1914, the genre of the code seemed to crystal-

lize in an acme of idealism known as *The Journalist's Creed* by Walter Williams, founding dean of the nation's first school of journalism at the University of Missouri. It was reprinted widely by newspapers and press associations, and still graces not a few academic hallways in the United States and abroad.[6]

The work of Lippmann, the public intellectual; Dana, the idealistic editor; and educators Crawford, Flint, Gibbons, Williams, and others spoke to issues as they appeared in the 1920s and 1930s. A generation later, *Time* magazine publisher-founder Henry Luce, through his philanthropic foundation, felt keenly that the post-World War II era needed a deeper exploration of the role of the press in American society. The resulting 1947 Report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, headed by Robert M. Hutchins, supplied enough intellectual tinder for decades of academic and professional debate on what is required of *A Free and Responsible Press*.[7]

History shows that the report was valuable as a stimulus to education and research—despite the fact that it was either ignored or denounced by many within journalism. Criticism focused chiefly on the fact the membership of the commission included no publishers, editors, or working journalists. Nor, except for its recommendation of a national press council, was it very specific about what reforms should be undertaken. Thematically, the commission said a free and responsible press should

    1. Provide a "truthful, comprehensive account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning."

    2. Serve as a "forum for the exchange of comment and criticism."

    3. Present a "representative picture of the constituent groups of society."

    4. Present and clarify the "goals and values of society."

    5. Provide "full access to the day's intelligence."[8]

Although criticism of the report was substantial, journalism educator Margaret A. Blanchard, in a nuanced, detailed, and interpretive account of the historic Hutchins report, noted a significant degree of support for it from key editors and publishers who were major advocates of improvement in media performance. Among them were such leaders as Barry Bingham Sr. of the *Louisville Courier-Journal,* Herbert Brucker of the *Hartford Courant,* Erwin Canham of the *Christian Science Monitor,* and Gideon Seymour of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune.* They were, she wrote, "new leaders, tried and tempered in Depression and war" who "more readily understood the public's demand for a responsible press." Blanchard concluded that the commission "provided the goals for future aspirations," made press criticism "socially acceptable," and delivered its report "at a most auspicious moment: it was an idea whose time had come."[9]

In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, social, economic, and political eruptions within American society provided a new impetus for media criticism and reform. Significant levels of discontent accumulated as citizens, the elite leaders of American institutions and some

news media leaders themselves, struggled for ways to respond to an apparent loss of credibility of the press by large segments of the public. It was a challenge that could no longer be ignored, including episodes related to lapses in press ethics. The context for these criticisms included coverage of the civil rights movement; environmental pollution; gender inequities; consumer issues; the Vietnam War; popular entertainment; and, that hardy perennial, politics. By the 1990s the list included what has become known as America's "culture wars," propelled by a mixture of intense political rivalries, competing life styles, and opposing religious perspectives.

To their credit, journalists and scholars sensitive to the inherent commercial restraints on excellence in journalism wrote many of the book-length critical assessments.[10] Especially significant for academe and the press have been widely distributed empirical surveys that depict the values and ethical perspectives of American editors and reporters themselves. Among the leaders of such scholarship are Philip Meyer of the University of North Carolina and David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit of Indiana University.[11] Their findings have been an important complement to the growing number of normative studies that have been the foundation of the teaching of media ethics in the last quarter of the twentieth century,[12] some of which are included in the references listed below.

Perhaps the study that most directly shaped the rationale for and thrust of this and earlier portraits of media ethics instruction was published in 1980 by Clifford G. Christians of the University of Illinois and Catherine L. Covert of Syracuse University. Entitled "Teaching Ethics in Journalism Education," the monograph criticized the Hutchins report as providing merely "hints" of what is meant by a socially responsible press. Its vision of such a press was hampered by not being "sophisticated enough," the authors wrote. Nor did the report link press responsibility closely enough to the life of actual communities. Moreover, they argued that press ethics ought to be defined more precisely than the Hutchins panel attempted so that news consumers could make their own assessments of how well journalists had performed.

The Christians and Covert monograph was part of a series by the Hastings Center outlining what needed to be done to improve instruction in the teaching of ethics to future professionals. Subsequent Hastings publications included studies of ethics instruction in law, bioethics, business, social science, engineering, public policymaking, and the undergraduate curriculum. Gradually, a body of scholarship evolved that encompassed comparative perspectives on ethics across the full range of the professions. There also emerged opportunities for the academy and its allies in the profession to exchange and compare ideas and deliberate over pragmatic ethical issues.[13]

The Hastings Center monograph on journalism reviewed the various approaches used by journalism and mass communication programs to teach ethics. These options were (and continue to be) courses that combine law and ethics, history and principles of journalism, and responsibility in mass communications. Such courses seek to make ethics an integral part of courses that cover other closely related concepts and knowledge deemed "musts" in most programs of journalism and mass com-

munication. Finally, there is the "free standing" or "stand alone" course in media ethics, which has absorbed much of the attention of the media ethics movement of the past twenty-five years. For purposes of the four survey articles published to date in *JMCE*, all such course approaches have been counted as a separate course in media ethics.[14]

In addition, there are those who, for a variety of reasons, prefer the so-called "pervasive method," that is, teaching modules on ethics within skills or conceptual courses across the journalism curriculum. Others argue that the magnitude of the problems facing the news media requires both a separate ethics course as well as units within conceptual and skills courses.

Starting in 1984, the National Workshop on the Teaching of Ethics in Journalism and Mass Communication offered a five-day workshop emphasizing the separate course on media ethics. Simultaneously, it presented topics and attempted to hone teaching skills and to build themes that could be incorporated into various other approaches to news media ethics instruction.[15] The sessions sought to demonstrate that media ethics, taught as a capstone course, could cultivate critical thinking abilities in the tradition of liberal arts education. This is a perspective that informed a major study of journalism education conducted more than forty years ago by Paul Dressel of Michigan State University, who concluded:

> The unrealized challenge of journalism is that of using the professional courses in journalism as a means of introducing into the educational experience a sequence of courses which will bind together the

liberal arts in such a matter as to justify the label of liberal education. Journalism education, both in the nature of the task and in the limited number of professional courses required, offers an unmatched opportunity to develop a new vision of professional education.[16]

In ways that parallel the steps of responsible reporting of the news, media ethicists use classroom case studies of ethical decision making. This dialogic technique demands of future journalists that they gather, authenticate, and contextualize the morally relevant facts posed by ethical issues that inevitably arise in news gathering. In this mode, students also are expected to identify stakeholders in the news, weigh and weight competing moral principles, and consider consequences of alternative ethical judgments. Not least, the classroom seeks to prepare students, when need be, to explain and publicly justify their decisions.[17]

Given this summary of widely used classroom and newsroom practice, it is especially interesting to note Dressel's conclusion in 1963:

> Finally, and perhaps the most significant of all, is that a course which, by requiring a student to organize and add to his knowledge and to develop and express a point of view with regard to an issue, provides a liberal education experience with synthesizing and integrative properties transcending those provided by the usual offerings in liberal arts.[18]

Educators who share this challenging view can alternately warm—and/or brace—themselves by reading the crisp exposition of the goals of liberal education articulated in the late 1990s by William Cronon, the Frederick Jackson Turner Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It sets forth in clear language the objectives of the liberal arts and the behaviors that can be reaped when the work of teaching is done well.[19]

Research Questions

This article will address these key questions:

- How many JMC schools, colleges, and departments have adopted separate media ethics course?

- How have the instructional goals of media ethics courses changed, if at all, in the nine years since the last survey of JMC academic units?

- To what extent have the research and teaching-related activities of JMC ethics teachers changed during this period?

- What are the perceptions of media ethics teachers and administrators of the standing of media ethics as a specialty within journalism and mass communication programs? How do these perceptions differ?

Some implications of this survey for research, teaching, and creative activity in media ethics will be examined in a discussion section and an afterword below.

Methods

The questionnaire used in this fourth survey was similar in many respects to those conducted in 1977, 1984, and 1993. It gathered demographic information on teachers and administrators, as well as the instructors' responses to questions about the goals, content, and pedagogical practices of the classroom. A few additions were made in the 1993 questionnaire. However, the chief difference in the fourth survey is that the questionnaire has been lengthened to compare the perceptions of ethics educators and administrators on the standing of media ethics as a specialty.

Questionnaires were mailed to the heads of academic units listed in the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 directories of the AEJMC. The survey instrument was also sent to those teachers who identified media ethics as a specialty in the biographical sketches listed in the two directories as well as to the 2001 members of the Media Ethics Division of AEJMC.

Findings

In 1977, a one-page survey mailed to the heads of 247 journalism and mass communication units generated 237 returns (for a 96% rate), with 68 indicating they offered courses specifically on media ethics. In 1984 the same one-page survey was mailed to 274 program heads, generating 238 responses (an 87% rate), with separate media ethics courses reported by 117 schools, an

important increase in the number of units adopting such courses since 1977. By 1993, nine years later, 260 of 325 JMC units responded to the questionnaire, a return rate of 80%. The number of schools reporting at least one media ethics courses had reached 132 schools, an increase of 12.8% since 1984.[20] However, 21 other schools offered 2 courses and 3 listed 3 separate courses for a grand total of 183 courses.

A total of 421 questionnaires were mailed in 2001-2002. Of those, 33 were discarded because they were duplicates from repeat mailings, were undeliverable, or lacked sufficient identification. Of the 388 valid questionnaires, 247 responded for a 64% response rate. A total of 152 schools, 31 fewer than in 1993, reported having separate media ethics courses in the 2001-2002 survey, a 17% drop from the number of courses reported in 1993. Why?

The rate of questionnaires returned—16% lower than in 1993—is one major explanation. Second, the longer questionnaire (asking twice as many questions of the administrators) undoubtedly played a part. Third, there may have been survey fatigue, a not uncommon phenomenon. Many researchers believe that mailed questionnaires are much less preferred than those conducted by telephone or by the Internet.

The above factors are thought to have influenced the decline from 183 to 152 in the total number of media ethics courses reported. However, it cannot be said with confidence that fewer courses are being taught when 141 journalism and mass communication units failed to return questionnaires.[21] Moreover, the response to a key question indicated a deepening of media ethics in JMC curricula of responding institutions. In the 1992-1993 survey, 66 units

of the 260 units responding to the questionnaire (25.5%) reported the media ethics course was required of majors and 28 others (10.7%) reported that the course was included on a list of required courses from which students could choose. However, this year 92 of the 247 reporting JMC units (37.2%) required the media ethics course and 30 (11.5%) offered it as an option from among a list of required courses.

That 12% more JMC units now require the media ethics course—more than a third—appears to confirm the judgment, reported below, that the media ethics course has gained an "essential place" in the curriculum of the major programs of journalism and mass communication. In response to another item, 205 of 247 JMC units (83%) reported they offered "distinct media ethics 'modules' within skills or conceptual courses."

Instructional Goals. There were 149 valid responses from the 339 questionnaires sent to teachers of media ethics courses—a 44% return rate (Table 1). If one looks at the instructional goals identified by teachers, a surface comparison of 2001 with the rankings of 1992 shows very little difference in the rank order of goals. "Fostering moral reasoning skills" remains the most highly ranked objective. Not too surprisingly, asking explicitly about seeking the moral development of students ranks second. Preparing students for professional work is still in third place, as before. Surveying "current ethical practice" in journalism has dropped from second to sixth in the ranking by teachers of "indispensable" goals. Yet this change is less drastic than it may seem, since 81.2% still count surveying current practice as either "indispensable" or "important."

Table 1
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT GOALS OF INSTRUCTION IN 1992-1993 AND 2001-2002

Question Item	1992-1993 ($n = 164$)	2001-2002 ($n = 149$)
Fostering Moral Reasoning Skills		
Indispensable	75.0 [a]	73.2
Important	22.6	24.8
Somewhat Important	2.4	1.3
Dispensable	0	0.7
Contribute to the Moral Development of Students [b]		
Indispensable	n. a.	56.4
Important	n. a.	37.6
Somewhat Important	n. a.	4.7
Dispensable	n. a.	1.3
Prepare Students for Professional Work		
Indispensable	41.5	46.3
Important	47.6	46.3
Somewhat Important	9.1	7.4
Dispensable	1.2	0
Advance the Liberal Education of Future Journalists		
Indispensable	31.7	46.3
Important	47.6	42.3
Somewhat Important	17.1	11.4
Dispensable	3.0	0
Evaluate Media Performance Systematically		
Indispensable	38.4	29.5
Important	45.1	50.3
Somewhat Important	13.4	17.4
Dispensable	2.4	2.7
Examine Race, Gender, Social Justice Issues		
Indispensable	32.3	28.9
Important	46.3	44.3
Somewhat Important	18.9	22.1
Dispensable	1.8	4.7
Survey Current Ethical Practice in Journalism		
Indispensable	50.6	26.8
Important	40.2	54.4
Somewhat Important	6.7	18.1
Dispensable	1.2	0.7
Encourage the Understanding of Classical Ethical Theory		
Indispensable	18.3	16.1
Important	50.0	48.3
Somewhat Important	25.0	27.5
Dispensable	6.7	8.1

Note:
a. Cells are percentages.
b. This question was used in the 2001-2002 survey, but not in 1992-1993.

Table 2
RESPONSES TO RESEARCH AND TEACHING-RELATED ACTIVITIES
IN 1992-1993 AND 2001-2002

Research and Teaching-Related Activities	1992-1993 (n = 164)	2001-2002 (n = 149)
Published in Refereed Journals	28.0	71.8
Published in Professional Periodicals	31.1	67.1
Published a Book	12.2	45.0
Participated in Ethics Panel	68.9	78.5
Organized an Ethics Panel	40.9	50.3

Note:
Cells are percentages.

Advancing the "liberal education of future journalists" now shares third place with preparing students for professional work, jumping from sixth place in the 1992-1993 survey. That may well be because building critical thinking skills, often associated as an outcome of liberal education, has been widely embraced by both academe and media employers.

Research Activity. Perhaps the most striking change during the last nine years is the sizeable upswing, shown in Table 2, in the self-reports of research and teaching-related activity outside the classroom. Many influences would seem to be at work. Established by Jay Black and Ralph Barney in the mid-1980s, the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* (JMME) overcame growing pains to become a durable and significant refereed intellectual forum for the journalism academy at a critically important time. Likewise, *Journalism Educator* and *Journalism Quarterly* remained open for ethics articles, as did the magazine of analysis and commentary, *Media Ethics*, published by Tom Cooper and Manny Paraschos and edited by John Michael Kittross at Emerson College. Finally, opportunities to meet, confer, and debate were enhanced when the specialty organized itself as a division of AEJMC by William Babcock and his colleagues in 1999.

The responses in Table 3 suggest that the Media Ethics Division has an opportunity to take the ethics teaching workshop to regions of the country and perhaps to major individual campuses. Mentoring and advising on research, already offered by MED, likewise appear to be continuing needs.

When given the opportunity to express their opinion, 132 of 149 media ethics teachers (88.6%) said researchers should do more to explain the nature and extent of impact, if any, their teaching has had on students after they begin working in newsrooms. In the early 1980s, when Weaver and Wilhoit of Indiana University conducted their initial study of professionalism among American journalists, they asked practitioners to assess 10 sources of influence on the development of their ethical standards. Of the 10 sources, journalism teachers ranked fifth, at 53%.

Table 3
RESPONSES TO INTERESTS AND NEEDS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION IN 2001

Question Item	2001 (n = 149)
Would you like to have an opportunity to participate in an ethics teaching workshop on or closer to your home campus?	72.5
Would you like to have more opportunity to advise/ mentor students and/or colleagues on how to conduct media ethics research?	45.0
Would you like to discuss a specific research project with an experienced media ethics researcher?	39.5

Note:
Cells are percentages.

The rankings were as follows: "day-to-day newsroom learning (88.3%), family upbringing (72.3%), senior editor (60.8%), peers (56.5%), journalism teachers (53.2%), senior reporters (51.9%), [other] university teachers (49.5%), religious training (34.7%), publishers/general managers (24.6%), and high school teachers (24%).[22]

Comparative Perceptions of Media Ethics Instruction. A comparison of the perceptions of media ethics as a specialty was undertaken to discover what insights would emerge from an examination of the views of two groups of participants, other than the students themselves, who are closest to classroom instruction.

An identical set of questions was asked of teachers and JMC administrators. It was prefaced with a statement that the purpose was to gain their "sense of the standing of media ethics as a field within journalism and mass communication." The respondents were asked whether they "strongly agree," "agree," were "unsure," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" with four statements that speak to the standing of the specialty. An independent samples t-test was used to compare their responses, applying the .05 level as a standard of significance.

In responses by the two groups to the question of whether media ethics "has established an essential place in the curricula of most major journalism and mass communications programs," the t-test revealed no significant difference between administrators and teachers on this question, $t(392) = 1.07$, $p = .29$. In fact, on a 5-point scale both administrators ($M = 3.96$, $s.d. = .91$) and educators ($M = 3.86$, $s.d. = .85$) agreed that media ethics instruction has established an "essential place" in most JMC programs.

Table 4

Question Item	Teachers ($n = 149$)	Administrators ($n = 247$)
Media ethics has established an essential place in the curricula of most major journalism and mass communications programs.		
Strongly Agree	22.8	30.0
Agree	47.7	44.9
Unsure	21.5	15.8
Disagree	7.4	8.9
Strongly Disagree	0	0
No Answer	0.6	0.4
Significant progress has been made over the past 20 years in increasing the breadth and quality of media ethics instruction at colleges and universities across the U.S.		
Strongly Agree	22.1	12.1
Agree	59.7	49.0
Unsure	15.4	28.3
Disagree	0.7	9.3
Strongly Disagree	0	1.2
No Answer	2.0	0
Media ethics as a field has not yet created the kind of relationship with professionals that allows it to significantly influence the practice of journalism and mass communication.		
Strongly Agree	20.1	6.1
Agree	56.4	38.5
Unsure	13.4	19.0
Disagree	8.1	32.8
Strongly Disagree	0.7	3.6
No Answer	1.3	0
Not enough college and university professors have the preparation and training to conduct the kind of research (in media ethics) that would make a real difference to the field.		
Strongly Agree	12.8	10.1
Agree	51.7	47.8
Unsure	24.2	20.6
Disagree	9.4	19.4
Strongly Disagree	0.7	2.0
No Answer	1.3	0

Note:
Cells are percentages.

Although there is no significant difference between the two groups about the level of acceptance that media ethics instruction has gained, there *is* a statistical difference over the question of *how much* has been done to increase the "breadth and quality" of instruction. Thus, in response to a second question, we find $t(390) = -5.31$, $p < .001$, with teachers ($M = 4.05$, $s.d. = .64$) agreeing significantly more than administrators, ($M = 3.62$, $s.d. = .86$).

But the language of statistical inference should not conceal the basic agreement between the two groups of educators in their responses to the first two questions. When the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories are combined in the second question, 81.8% of the teachers affirm the "significant progress" in instructional improvement during the past twenty years and administrators do so by 61.1%. The statistical difference relates, rather, to the degree of agreement the two groups perceive in the growth of breadth and quality in media ethics instruction. The percentage difference is large (more than 20%), but both responses fall in the upper range of agreement.

A third question in Table 4 relates to an issue that has emerged distinctly in recent years. As the media ethics instruction finds acceptance in the curricula of professional schools, a question arises whether it makes a difference in the field of practice. In their responses, teachers are harder on themselves—much harder—than administrators are.

Teachers agree with this critical evaluation of their own impact almost a third more than the administrators when the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories are combined. More than three-fourths of the teachers (76.5%)

agree with the statement that the specialty of media ethics has "not yet created the kind of relationship with professionals that allows it to significantly influence the practice of journalism and mass communication." That compares with only 44.6% when the same categories of responses are merged for the administrators. Not surprisingly, this shows up statistically in our samples, $t(388) = 7.72$, $p < .001$, with media ethics teachers ($M = 2.12$, $s.d. = .85$) agreeing significantly more than administrators ($M = 2.91$, $s.d. = 1.05$).

Academe can influence professional practice not only by the depth and relevancy of its instruction of students. If designed with newsroom leadership and management in mind, research may well be able to help practitioners identify good, better, and best means of creating newsroom environments that foster standards of excellence in ethical decision making. Thus, the final question in the comparisons asked whether "enough college and university professors" are prepared for conducting "the kind of research (in media ethics) that would make a real difference to the field." Care should be taken to note that the question relates to the adequacy of the *number of college and university* professors prepared to conduct influential research.

Results indicate that the two groups are much closer in their perceptions of the need to prepare more researchers for advancing media ethics than they are on the strength of the relationship between media ethics instructors and professionals. Yet there still is a significant difference in the views of the two groups.

When the two levels of "agree" categories are collapsed, teachers are more likely to affirm that "not enough college

and university professors have the preparation and training to conduct the kind of research that would make a real difference to the field." The collective agreements were 64.5% for teachers and 57.9% for administrators, a difference of 6.6%. The t-test picked up a significant difference, $t(391) = 2.37, p < .05$, with the responses from administrators at ($M = 2.56, s.d. = .98$) and teachers, ($M = 2.33, s.d. = .85$).

Discussion

In summary, we can say that, by important margins, both teachers and administrators agree that media ethics has established an "essential place" in the major programs of journalism and mass communications. Likewise, they agree that the breadth and quality of instruction have improved during the past twenty years, though teachers are much more confident of that assessment (81.8%) than administrators (61.1%).

Moreover, there is continuity during the past decade on the goals of media ethics instruction that teachers rank highest. "Fostering moral reasoning skills"—in first place—was judged to be "indispensable" by 73.2% in the most recent survey, compared to 75% in 1984. Not surprisingly, the goal that ranked second was "contributing to the moral development of students." This was the only new question added to the survey in 2001-2002. It was deemed "indispensable" by 56.4% and "important" by 37.6%.

Interestingly, when we pair the next two categories—"prepare students for professional work" (92.6%) and "advance the liberal education of future journalists" (88.6%)—we see they are only four points apart. Historically, these are priorities that often have been regarded as competitors. They may still be, to some extent, but they are valued almost equally. That can be seen as good news for both academe and the newsroom.

In Table 4 the difference between ethics educators and administrators over whether the specialty has had an influence on the practice of journalism and mass communication is shown to be considerable. When the "agree" categories were collapsed, the teachers and administrators were 31.9% points apart. But it is well to read carefully the wording of the question. It spoke to whether "media ethics as a field" had *not yet* (our italics) "created the kind of relationship with professionals that allows it to significantly influence" professional practice. Just over 76% of the professors agreed that such a relationship had *not yet* been established while only 44.6% of the administrators concurred.

This no doubt will strike some veteran observers of the relationship as surprising. Thus, to name just one institution, Washington & Lee features annual campus visits by editors and writers to discuss journalism ethics. W&L pioneered by publishing visiting lectures serially in essay form under the title, *Social Responsibility: Business, Journalism, Law, Medicine.* The volumes were distributed throughout the journalism academy. The chief ethicist at the educator-friendly Poynter Institute for Media Studies, Bob Steele, spent ten years as a reporter, executive producer, and news director before joining Poynter's influential faculty at its St. Petersburg, Florida campus. Among other ways, Poynter regularly links media teachers and professionals by means of an extensive Website, one key function of which is ethics education. Moreover,

the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) has close ties and offers periodic assistance to journalism educators.[23]

But with more than three-fourths of the professors signaling a gap between campus and newsroom, the size of the perceived "relationship deficit" —to give it a name—is too large to ignore. Given that the gap relates to a mutual interest in upholding ethical standards, there would seem to be a real need for wider and more imaginatively designed bridges between journalism educators and practicing journalists in matters of ethics.

The comparative data also speak to the question whether *enough* (italicized here for emphasis) college and university professors have the "preparation and training to conduct the kind of research [in media ethics] that would make a real difference to the field." As shown above, the differences between the perceptions of teachers and administrators are statistically significant, though not as great as those over the question on the relationship between the journalism academy and practitioners. Nonetheless, this finding, too, may be surprising to some in view of the major outpouring of scholarship and creative activity that have occurred during the past decade. This article's endnotes and references merely begin to illustrate the large body of literature related to the topics it addresses.

Measuring and reporting perceptions of influence and impact contain a degree of subjectivity that some find difficult to accept. Such skepticism, though warranted, needs to be tempered when the measurements are from professionals in a position to know about the matters under study, as college and university journalism administrators and teachers of ethics certainly should be.

Subsequent research will seek to explain more deeply the reasons for the variations in the perceptions reported above between teachers and administrators who responded to this survey.

Afterword

Serendipitously for the coauthors of this article, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC), an organization of journalism school administrators, revealed the results of a poll in which the two organizations cooperated. They studied the perceptions that 90 randomly selected top editors and 90 journalism deans held of the overall performance of each other. Specific assessments were gathered of their perceptions of (a) financial support of journalism education by newspaper companies; (b) the facility with the English language of journalism graduates; (c) the mastery of journalistic skills by graduates; and (d) ethics in journalism.

Specifically, the ethics question asked whether respondents agreed with the statement: "Today's journalism graduates have a better understanding of journalism ethics than graduates had five years ago." Almost three-fourths (73%) of the heads of journalism schools agreed. However, 69% of the editors *disagreed*.[24]

Combined with the results of this fourth survey for JMCE, it would seem that the evidence for closer and more effective cooperation of journalism

practitioners, media ethics teachers, and journalism administrators in matters of both ethics teaching *and* research is clear and compelling.

Endnotes

1. Clifford G. Christians, "Variety of Approaches Used in Teaching Media Ethics," *Journalism Educator* 33 (April 1978): 3-8, 24; Clifford G. Christians, "Media Ethics Courses Have Increased since 1977," *Journalism Educator* 40 (summer 1985): 17-19, 51; Edmund B. Lambeth, Clifford Christians, and Kyle Cole, "Role of the Media Ethics Course in the Education of Journalists," *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* 49 (3, 1994), 20-26.

2. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: The Free Press of Macmillan, 1949), 226-38, 239-49.

3. Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 318.

4. Clifford G. Christians and Catherine L. Covert, *Teaching Ethics in Journalism Education* (Hastings-on-Hudson, New York: Institute of Society, Ethics, and the Life Sciences, 1980), 50.

5. Clifford G. Christians, John P. Ferre, and P. Mark Fackler, *Good News, Social Ethics & the Press* (New York: Oxford University Press 1983), 32-35.

6. Ronald T. Farrar, *A Creed for My Profession, Walter Williams, Journalist to the World* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 201-204.

7. See Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four*

Theories of the Press (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956); J. Edward Gerald, *The Social Responsibility of the Press* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication* (New York: Harper & Row, , [1957], 1969); John C. Merrill, *The Imperative of Freedom, A Philosophy of Journalistic Autonomy* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1974).

8. Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press,* 87-92.

9. Margaret A. Blanchard, *The Hutchins Commission, The Press and the Responsibility Concept,* Journalism Monographs, no. 49 (Columbia, SC: AEJMC, 1977), 51-52.

10. Among others, these include Leo Bogart, *Commercial Culture, The Media System and the Public Interest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1969); James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars, The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991) ; and Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death, Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984).

11. Philip Meyer, *Ethical Journalism* (New York and London: Longman, 1987); David Weaver and Cleveland G. Wilhoit, *The American Journalist, A Portrait of U. S. News People and Their Work* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); and its sequel by Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s* (New York: Erlbaum, 1996).

12. The References section below is

intended to illustrate rather than comprehensively define the range of normative scholarship in monographs and articles relevant to the contemporary teaching of media ethics in the schools and departments of journalism in the United States. For an important integration of the literature on the teaching of media ethics, see Christians, Ferre, and Fackler, *Good News, Social Ethics & the Press*, 32-41. For earlier citations of the developing scholarship, see Clifford Christians and Vernon Jensen, *Two Bibliographies on Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law, University of Minnesota, 1986).

13. An excellent example of this cross-professional perspective can be found in William F. May, *The Beleaguered Rulers, the Public Obligation of the Profession* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). Organizationally, the movement is expressed in the work of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, 618 East Third Street, Bloomington, IN 47405, <http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/>.

14. In none of the four surveys of media ethics instruction, including this one, has an attempt been made to list what should be included in a course for it to be counted. As Christians explained in the 1985 article cited above in note 1 above, "The word 'ethics' provided a negative boundary. If it was in the course title, the researchers counted it—though obviously that word was not required for a course to be listed as specifically devoted to ethics. In fact, titles for these courses varied greatly. Typical ones: 'Journalism Ethics,' 'Law and Ethics,' 'Ethics and Mass Communications,' 'Social Responsibility of Mass Media,' 'Ethical Problems of the Press.' The word 'ethics' appeared in 83 per-

cent of the course titles."

15. The Gannett Foundation supported the creation of the five-day workshop in 1984 with a grant to the University of Kentucky School of Journalism, followed by the Freedom Forum as the workshop moved to the University of Missouri in the 1987-1988 academic year. Outside financial support for the workshop continued through 1997, after which it convened as an all-day pre-convention event at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

16. Paul Dressel, *Liberal Education and Journalism* (New York: Institute of Higher Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963), 89.

17. See Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism, What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 9-14, 26-49, 179-96. Also, consult the periodic cases presented under the editorship of Professor Emeritus Louis Hodges of Washington & Lee University, in the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*.

18. Dressel, *Liberal Education and Journalism*, 97.

19. William Cronon, *The American Scholar* (autumn 1998).

20. See note 1 and note 14.

21. However, in a 2004 letter to fellow retirees, reporting text author Melvin Mencher, professor emeritus of journalism at Columbia University, reported that on the basis of an informal survey after the Jayson Blair ethics episode at the *New York Times*, he was "surprised to learn how many schools do not offer a journalism ethics course."

22. As a courtesy to this article's first author, Weaver and Wilhoit in-

cluded the question in their first survey of professionalism and the results were summarized in Edmund B. Lambeth, *Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 159-60.

23. See Joann Byrd, "A Closer Look at the ASNE/Poynter Ethics Tool," *The American Editor*, November-December 2003, 25-28. The interactive electronic version of the tool was developed as a teaching tool for journalists and educators by Byrd and Poynter ethicist Bob Steele, in concert with Larry Larsen, multimedia editor at *Poynter Online.*

24. Lee Stinnett, "Deans and Editors Have Broad Consensus," *The American Editor*, November-December 2003, 49. Stinnett, former executive director of ASNE, received from ASJMC in 2003 its annual Gerald M. Sass Award for Distinguished Service to Journalism and Mass Communication. The full text of Stinnett's acceptance address and results of the survey can be found on the ASNE Website (<http://www.asne.org>).

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