Faculty Epistemologies and Academic Life: Implications for the Professoriate

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Abstract: *This research project focused on the often implicit relationships between personal and philosophical epistemologies in academic life and research. Data were collected from interviews with members of the faculty in a Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education program at a research-intensive university. Their understandings of the meaning of "living their epistemologies" varied considerably, highlighting the complexities of negotiating epistemological development and awareness in higher education. The results provide important insights into the impact of one's beliefs about knowledge and reality on both research and academic*

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life. This research contributes to current debates about the value of epistemological awareness for learning and research, and extends the discussion to consider larger implications for faculty work and doctoral education.

Recent trends in educational research encourage linking scholarship more firmly to public policy discussions (Johnsrud, 2007) as a way to demonstrate relevance to external constituencies. Neumann (2006) takes a different position, arguing that “scholarship is, to some extent, emotional and personal.” (p. 382). Her findings reveal the intellectual passion with which her participants engage in their work, demonstrating a strong link between their scholarship and their personal commitments (Moore & Ward, 2010). However, by advancing this proposition about the emotional nature of scholarship, she moved away from most of the literature and practice related to faculty work, which eschews too close a link between the professional and the personal, prioritizing instead institutional mission over individual faculty members’ commitments. These two positions are not, however, mutually exclusive, and Neumann concludes her work by considering a possible departure from the current climate in higher education institutions:

> On the basis of what I learned about the emotional character of professors' scholarly endeavors, I wonder what would happen, intellectually and educationally, if talk of passionate thought were more the norm in academe and if, concomitantly, silence on this subject were questioned. Might talk and thought of what scholarly work truly entails-and what scholarly lives require-lead, in due time, to the creation of enriched academic settings supportive of thoughtful teaching, research, and creative work? (p. 416)

While it is not possible to predict the arrival of such a future, Neumann (2006) suggests that even in pondering this possibility, it can be “created-if only in bits- as renewed scholarly practice” (p. 416).

One possible explanation for the continuing absence of talk about the personal from discussions of scholarly work is the dominance of an understanding of research as impartial and unemotional (Neumann, 2006). The post-positivist paradigm, equating educational research with scientific, objective research (Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002), continues to hold sway despite 20 years of discussions about alternative paradigms. Toma’s (1997) study of the impact of alternative inquiry paradigms on the definition of academic lives tells us something more

about how individual researchers think about the work that they do. Faculty members' epistemological stances are often unarticulated as such. More commonly, he tells us, researchers align themselves with a particular theory or research paradigm, and this paradigm then plays an important role in shaping their academic lives. This largely tacit process remains problematic, given the foundational role of epistemology in research design (Creswell, 2009; Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009; Naples, 2003), and the influence of faculty epistemology on what and how they teach (Schommer-Aikins, 2004).

In this paper, we bring together two distinct conceptions of epistemology and explore the implications of these constructions in faculty work and life, and by extension, in the socialization of future faculty. The concept of "epistemology" is addressed quite differently in philosophy and psychology (Sandoval, 2005). For the purpose of this study, we considered both "the logical and philosophical grounds upon which scientific claims are advanced and justified" (Sandoval, 2005, p. 635), as well as participants' personal, or psychological, epistemologies (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997) that reflect the "set of beliefs that individuals hold about the nature of knowledge and its production" (p. 636). For faculty immersed in the production and consumption of knowledge, both the philosophical and psychological orientations of epistemology are an inherent, if often tacit, part of daily life.

Understanding epistemological implications for research is, in turn, essential to developing a deeper understanding of what it means to consume and produce research (Pallas, 2001). Specifically, awareness of the relationship between epistemology and research methodology, and exposure to examples from a diverse body of research provide firm grounding for a consideration of the extent to which particular standards for good research are created and legitimated within particular paradigms (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) go so far as to assert that the "argument for epistemological awareness, instantiation of methods" (which they link to epistemological awareness), "and methodological transparency becomes especially important in the current political and academic climate, in which many question the design choices, purposes, and trustworthiness of qualitative studies and alternative research approaches" (p. 687). Our thinking in this study concurs with Koro-Ljungberg and her colleagues, and reflects the work of scholars such as Bernal (1998), Naples (2003), and Milner (2007),

who emphasize epistemology as fundamental to the ways in which scholars think about, conduct, analyze, and present research.

Toma (1997) argues that an understanding of faculty work must consider discipline as well as paradigm of inquiry, which reflect fundamental assumptions about ontology, epistemology and methodology, or in other words, what is real to us, how we know what we know about that reality and what methods allow us to gather more information to inform these positions. As Toma suggests, most faculty identify themselves as operating within a particular theoretical or methodological tradition. We understand the fundamental assumptions faculty make to be a reflection of their personal epistemology, and name them as such in the following analysis because discussions of paradigm and theory tell us a great deal about what individual faculty think regarding the nature of knowledge. Despite the foundational link between epistemology, research design, and definitions of good research, very little scholarship explores the relationship between faculty epistemologies and the cognitive and professional development of doctoral students, despite the important role faculty play in the socialization of doctoral students (Lovitts, 2001).

This study explored, in the context of one College of Education at a research-intensive institution, the role of philosophical and psychological epistemologies in the ways faculty conceptualize and conduct their research and their teaching/mentoring. Three research questions guided this study: How do scholars articulate their epistemological stances? How do their philosophical and personal epistemologies play out in their scholarly lives? How do they view their own socialization into the academy, as well as that of their graduate students, from an epistemological perspective?

We present the findings by highlighting emerging themes in the data related to the nexus of faculty epistemologies and doctoral socialization. Next, we discuss the philosophical and psychological frameworks for understanding faculty epistemology and highlight the complexities of faculty life in reconciling what are sometimes competing and/or contradictory ways of knowing, believing, and doing. Finally, we consider the implications for practice, as well as those for future research to further explore competing epistemologies in faculty work.

Methods and Data Sources

As part of a Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate-sponsored effort to strengthen doctoral preparation, one College of Education established a doctoral seminar on epistemology and inquiry, setting it as the foundational course in the research core for all degrees granted in the college. Following Pallas' (2001) recommendations regarding the need to prepare future faculty for epistemological diversity, students in the new doctoral seminar read and discussed pieces from numerous theoretical orientations, including post-positivism, feminist theory, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, place-based education, poststructuralism, and queer theory. This study allowed student/researchers to explore the influence of paradigmatic and theoretical structures on individual faculty's decisions about research design and methodology. The research was a collaborative effort of a team that included doctoral students who had recently completed the seminar and the faculty instructor. All members of the research team were part of the Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education (CSSTE) graduate program, and as such they were developing a common intellectual background, overlapping with that of the participants. However, engaging in this research provided an opportunity to make the familiar strange and explore more deeply the commonly held assumptions and attitudes of their colleagues/mentors/teachers.

Participants

The team recruited six CSSTE faculty to participate in the study. The CSSTE program is typically associated with fairly deep theoretical discussions, as well as considerations of the social constructions of knowledge and reality. Researchers collected data through interviews and artifact analyses to insure that multiple types of information were gathered to validate results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Interviews

Interviews are an integral component of qualitative research. As Fontana and Frey (2005) suggest, the research team relied "on the interview as the basic method of data gathering [because] the purpose is to obtain a rich, in-depth experiential account of an event or episode in the life of the respondent" (p. 698). We conducted semi-structured interviews of 60 to 90 minutes with each participant. The flexibility of a semi-structured approach allowed for probing questions to clarify the meaning of words

or phrases. Madison (2005) describes the reason for asking probing questions: “During the interview session, topics and questions will arise that will invariably lead you to feel that you need to gain a deeper or clearer understanding of what has been expressed” (p. 33). Open-ended, non-directional questions also allowed for the experiences of the participant to be less constrained by the interviewer (Creswell, 2009). All individual interviews were transcribed verbatim, and given line numbers to easily track original contexts of data.

Artifacts

Documents are also a valuable source of information that contribute to the richness of a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, we also collected either citations or reprints of an article which each participant considered to be representative of her or his research agenda. These articles were used for triangulation purposes and to provide further insights regarding how participants not only talked about and conceptualized their work, but also how these ideas were manifested in their practice. These articles had the “advantage of being in the language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to them” (Creswell, 2009, p. 231).

Data Analysis

Before the study concluded, the research team began the data analysis by tracking and discussing the data being collected (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In the initial phases of data analysis, each member of the team coded interviews independently. A prolonged discussion about the consistencies and inconsistencies in this initial coding exercise resulted in a consensus on a list of codes to be used in the next round of analysis. This list of codes was not limited to any number and it was imperative to allow the codes to fit the data and not vice versa (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

In the next phase of analysis, coded data were placed into categories and listed together. This process allowed the team to get a better sense of the connections within and across the categories and the “story” of the data, which we present in the findings that follow here, began to emerge (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). At this point in the analysis, themes were developed in light of the theoretical framework and literature (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) related to epistemology, faculty work, and doctoral socialization.

Validity/Reliability

Creswell (2009) describes the process of establishing validity in qualitative research: "…the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the results through strategies such as member checking or triangulation" (p. 648). The credibility of this study was established through triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2008, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stringer, 2007). Creswell (2009) explains that triangulation "ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes" (p. 266). Participants were given an opportunity to read and edit the verbatim transcript of their interviews to determine if the researchers' interpretation of their statements were accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, participants were given an early draft of this paper and asked for feedback. Member checking insures that "the description is complete and realistic, themes are accurate to include, and . . . the interpretations are fair and representative" (Creswell, 2009, p. 267). The transferability of the results is important in contributing to the larger body of research on epistemology. While the ability to transfer these conclusions to other settings is the duty of outside readers (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Stringer, 2007), the research team has attempted to provide enough details that such connections will be more obvious.

Findings

Neumann (2006) writes about faculty pursuing their passion in research; the participants here told a similar story of taking on a researcher persona congruent with their fundamental sense of self, and then struggling to align that with the realities of faculty work at a research institution. Positivism and even post-positivism, at least for this group, are metaphorically dead, just as Passmore (1967) and other philosophers and sociologists (Gartrell & Gartrell, 1996) have argued. All participants described reality as socially constructed, variously emphasizing race, identity, gender, class, and fractured/situated knowledges. These understandings influenced the research questions they posed in their scholarship, the methodologies they used, and even their definitions of research. The group shared common ground: They are individuals who have actively lived their respective world views, reflecting distinct moral, political and philosophical views in a distinct intellectual identity. This world view and their intellectual identity together have had a profound impact on the purpose, process and production of their

research. Further, the participants described an experience akin to being seduced into the professoriate by graduate school experiences of thinking deeply and engaging directly with texts and with other scholars. As current faculty members, they described their professional lives using language that evoked a sense of drudgery in comparison to the seductive experiences of graduate school. They have negotiated the tension between their worldview and the dominant research model by drawing on their personal beliefs. We furthermore used the research questions, stated above, as a heuristic device to organize our discussion of the themes emerging from the data. We did this in order to make connections between what we learned about faculty epistemologies, academic life, and how these epistemologies impact the socialization of future faculty.

Articulating Epistemological Stances: "Living" a World View

The student researchers expected—somewhat naively—to find in these interviews a clear and direct connection that went something like this: Professor X has A epistemological stance, which influences her choice of B methodology, in that she works primarily with C method, and uses D approaches for representing the data she collects. The difficulty in articulating these ideas, however, was obvious in one participant's initial response to an interview question: "Oh, wow, this is pretty heavy stuff for a Friday afternoon!" Even this participant, however, quickly realized that while she had not frequently used these labels, she had given a great deal of thought to the conceptual understandings the labels represented. This was also the case with one participant, who talked about ontology and epistemology in what she called "traditional understandings of those kinds of terms":

> They're all incredibly intertwined, and for me, I guess it would be what are your assumptions about the world around you? . . . [I]s there one way to know or are there multiple ways to come to know? Is there one form of knowledge that is more absolute and correct than other forms?

The other participants showed us, however, that separating epistemology from what Creswell (2009) might call a "philosophical world view" can be challenging. There are multiple possible answers to Harding's (1987) questions about the identity of the knower, the nature of the knowable, and tests for legitimate knowledge. Unique personal experiences, including the cognitive development process (Hofer, 2001), inform each individual's answers to such questions. One participant exhibits this,

describing his epistemological framework as “more of a personal commitment for me,” than a philosophical position. The influence of individual experience and perspective revealed by the participants in this study suggests that epistemology and world view may be more correctly discussed as interconnected (Ladson-Billings, 2003) This participant’s comments offer one possible explanation for Toma’s (1997) findings about researcher identity/alignment with a particular theory or methodology.

Participants shared a common vision of education as an important component of social systems. The specific motivations for an individual’s unique research focus vary with personal experience, as do their epistemological stance or world view. For one, whose work focuses on place-based education, “our places are the contexts of our lives and I am interested in how education contributes to the problems and solutions around places.” Another colleague worked as a community organizer prior to her teaching career. These experiences also influenced her thinking about systems of education. She described schools as “a space for kids to be better democratic citizens, to be more thoughtful human beings, a place for teachers to grow. We don’t necessarily have it, but I believe in it. And that’s why I’m here.”

Their colleague studies the central role of education in empowerment: “How have we used education and . . . systems of schooling to keep people down . . .? On the other hand . . . when you think about . . . power and change and you begin to think about empowerment, education to me is also right there.” She also reflected upon her intellectual identity and personal experiences as they influence her scholarship. She uses “multiple theories” in her scholarship because “I often find that . . . one theoretical framework is not sufficient to explain what is going on” in the data. “Part of that,” she explained, “is rooted in me. I feel that there isn’t one theory that can explain me…so I have to pull from different areas to get a complete picture.” Speaking about her approach to qualitative research, she also acknowledges a contribution to her “world view,” or epistemological stance, to the data collection process:

> Most often I think that researchers try to believe that they have more of a secondary role . . . But the reality is that we have co-constructed a reality or we have co-constructed something. [In this conversation,] You [the interviewer] are very much a part of my

> responses …so you really cannot separate yourself from your research.

Her approach to scholarship fits Kvale's (1996) thinking about the interaction between researcher and participant: "An interview is literally an *interview,* an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 14).

The differences among participants' thinking on these issues are primarily nuances influenced by/representative of their world view, or "a general set of personal social commitments" as one participant put it. These commitments exist in a symbiotic relationship with participants' professional or intellectual identity, and represent something Sandoval (2005) might understand as equal parts philosophical and psychological epistemology. Pallas (2001) argues for the importance of teaching students about epistemological diversity; he also joins Barnes and Austin (2009) in emphasizing as the important role that faculty play in socializing doctoral students. The close connection between world view and intellectual identity of the participants in this study model for students the possibility of integrating work and a fulfilling personal life, and thereby allaying concerns that keep some talented students from pursuing an academic career (Austin, 2002).

Scholarly Lives and the Meaning of "Intellectual Identity"

Naples (2003) and Harding (1987) argue that epistemology influences choice of theoretical framework as well as methodology and research method. Only one participant, introduced above, articulated a conscious connection between their epistemologies and the theoretical framework(s) which inform their work, or the research design; she did so in a fairly general way, without labeling herself in association with a particularly epistemological or theoretical stance (i.e., "I am a subjectivist," or "I am a critical theorist"). While acknowledging the play back and forth between personal epistemologies and theoretical frameworks, the other five participants talked more animatedly and consciously about their intellectual identity than a particular theoretical or epistemological stance. This identity is tied, for one person, to how he thinks about research in general:

> My views on research are always changing. . . What is the purpose of research, what are the methodologies that we might use to generate knowledge and to act in the world to make change? Fortunately, there are a lot of people interested in keeping these questions on the

> table. So my feelings about research are constantly changing as I develop as a thinker and doer in collaboration with others.

These scholars place a high value on connecting theory and practice in their research. Rejecting what one called "an unhappy dichotomy between theory and practice especially in education," most agree with the sentiments expressed by one participant; empirical work which simply describes life is, she said, "only helpful to a certain extent." Her own approach to the process and production of research has fused theory and practice, intentionally sitting at the nexus of lived experience and academic training. She takes this approach in response to "that split between empirical reality and theoretical abstraction" which "has done such a disservice to us [as education researchers]. . . . I want them to be intricately tied together." "Hands-on experiences" provided another participant a foundation for bringing theory into play in research design and data analysis, to explain a phenomenon. A third has focused her on "how people think . . . their world view and how they put their world together . . . how they make meaning, how they understand."

Recognizing the power that researchers have in their relationships with participants, this group consciously foregrounded specific methods and methodologies which benefit all involved in the research. One participant described his work as participatory, emphasizing the development of approaches in his research and also in his teaching which supported him in growing as a collaborative scholar/practitioner. Another scholar has worked primarily in historically oppressed schools and communities who have had many negative experiences with researchers. Because of this, she has thought of herself not as an expert but "as the person who is trying to learn. I don't have the answers; the reason that I am doing this research . . . is because I really want to learn." She explained her approach as one of negotiating with her participants asking "how is this research going to benefit all of us?"

This faculty member raised a question here echoed by another one of her colleagues, who spoke of regularly querying the purposes of research in general. He asked "what are the methodologies that we might use to generate knowledge and to act in the world to make change?" He, like other participants in the study, saw himself involved in work that has the capacity to create social change. While the group on the whole rejected the label "activist", they nonetheless acknowledged activism and personal commitments as influencing the development of their research

agenda and individual projects. One participant has been using film and other visual media to present the findings of his research. He did not "necessarily position myself [as an activist] when I am doing [*sic*] the research. . . .[T]he activism . . . comes more in the representation" of the data. Another explained that he regularly draws on specific theoretical tools that foreground "relations of power" and how they "play out in kids' everyday experiences." To be clear, the participants in this study would not see themselves all united on the same political or even epistemological front. One member of the group explicitly rejected activism as part of the role of a faculty member or scholar.

> I want people to take action on something ... If you leave feeling differently . . . [or] disagreeing with me, that's fine. That's great. As long as I got you to think about it and challenge your position so that you are in a position next time to defend it even better, then I've done my job. But it's not to convince someone of something, which I think activism sometimes implies.

This participant self-identified as "a skeptic" and described both his teaching and his research as endeavors in questioning preconceived ideas as a way to learn more about what is thought or understood. In rejecting activism as the role of a scholar, he did not reject the idea that world view influences intellectual identity. Instead, his thoughts support this line of argument as transcending political or epistemological affiliation.

While each participant taught within a CSSTE program in one College of Education, they all positioned themselves within different theoretical frameworks, without offering a particular theory as a self-identifying label. These scholars generally agree that knowledge is socially constructed (Crotty, 2003) yet their theoretical orientations translated into very different foci and approaches to scholarship. While each of them embraced the notion of "epistemological diversity," few were initially able to clearly articulate what this meant in any detail or explain how these assumptions impacted their work. Many struggled to explain distinctions between epistemological and theoretical constructs. Each person did, however, provide clear explanations of the connections and disjunctures between their belief systems, their research, and their lives in the academy. Ladson-Billings (2003) emphasizes the important impact of epistemologies' "ability . . . to determine significance or importance" (p. 10) of research and scholarship.

Participants in this study discussed an inter-play of ontology, epistemology, and methodology in an individual's research agenda in ways we have termed "living your epistemology." For one participant, epistemological stances and intellectual identities existed, ideally, on a continuum: "the nature of reality [is] a continuum and part of what [scholars do] is to figure out where you situate yourself" on that continuum. The participants' discussion of research broke out into three strands, or topics of conversation: the nature of research, (coming to) a definition of "good" research, and the relevance of the phrase "doing research" to their own scholarly work.

As a whole, the group defined research very broadly. One faculty member put it this way: "theory is a way of explaining what goes on in the world, and research is finding experiences that either support or don't support that particular view of the world." Another sees research as "the collection of all of those things we've talked about so far: epistemology, ontology, methodology, theory, fact. . . .[R]esearch is actually going in with a protocol . . . to help us explain the questions that have come from those other areas." One might choose many different approaches or protocols for finding the experiences and explaining the questions, as another pointed out: *research* "does not necessarily have to be a study. You don't have to have participants in [a] study. . . . [T]here are different types of research. And for me one type is not better than the other. . . . [W]e need all kinds of research."

Each participant also spoke at length about what s/he considered to be *good* research. For some, quality work is in the research design; as one participant expressed it: "How do we go about making it so you are answering the right question with the right protocol? . . . [B]eing a good researcher involves being able to develop those skills." Others judge their work by their participants' responses: "[w]hen I do my member checks, if they tell me, 'Yes, you got it right.' Then that's how I know I've done good research." A third participant points to the peer review process as the arbiter of good research: "I wonder if someone's going to buy this. . . . Then you have people out there who validate, or challenge what it is that you are doing. And I think that's how you know if you are doing good or quality research." Another participant articulated a visceral connection between epistemology, theory, intellectual identity and research that marks *good* work: "the best [research] comes from a *strong* theoretical perspective. You know why you're addressing [a particular topic or set of questions, and] that's all tied in with a vision. To

me visions are all theoretical. They're all epistemological, *but* they're also welling up from the body." The "good stuff," as he called it, really comes from vision because if you have a vision then it's not like Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 to 5, you do your research. You know, you do your research on Sunday 9 o' clock. You're doing it every day. You're doing it on vacation. You know, it's always with you. It's part of who you are."

Because scholarship is such a personal endeavor for many of these scholars, several of them expressed concern about the term *research* as a label for their work. For example, one participant explained that "[r]esearch is a word I use to describe what I do because research is part of my job description. . . . But I guess it is more like scholarship, more like inquiry, more like creativity." Another participant spoke about the irrelevance of the term "research" to his work in a way that highlighted the crux of the connection between epistemological positions and research. This participant began his discussion of epistemology and ontology by articulating a specific set of values and then explaining that these values and beliefs inform all aspects of his life, both personal and professional. "I am always in my research," he said, "because my research is always a product of my commitments." These are the commitments that reflect a particular world view and epistemological stance.

Walt Whitman famously says "I am vast." One participant used that phrase to articulate the parameters of his curiosity and the questions that interest him. Others in the group may not identify so directly with this broad expanse, but they do share a common breadth in thinking about scholarly endeavor. A second participant summarized a theme common to the entire group:

> [R]esearch takes place anytime you carefully and thoughtfully try to understand something. I don't think it has to be this formalized, systematic, in depth study of the three variables that impact student retention in higher education. . . . [I]ts just much bigger than that and what's too bad is we've. . . narrowed its definition and then sanctified it in a certain way. It has to meet these criteria, and I understand that on one hand, but it's just a great tool for solving problems and figuring out what's going on in life.

The forms of expression which might appropriately be used to represent research data are, he continued, equally diverse, including

documentaries, movie and poetry. “I think anytime poets try to understand something in a way that nobody else has seen it before, something as mundane as Frost on a snowy evening.” The poet’s work is research, this participant explained, in that “he makes you think about that scene differently than you’ve ever thought about it or even experienced it. To me, that’s a part of research; it provokes an emotional response.” The purpose of research, for this group, is what one participant labeled “improvement, for human beings. . . .It helps people rethink something. And hopefully change some practices along with their rethinking so we have a more just and equitable world.”

It is in these discussions of their scholarly work that one can most clearly see the passion driving the professional and personal lives of this group of scholars (Neumann, 2006). Many of the participants also told animated stories about their own doctoral programs, experiences which allowed them to read and think deeply, and talk for long hours with their mentors and other colleagues, about these big ideas. The promise of a continued existence living the life of the mind proved a strong attraction for most of them into the professoriate. The reality of faculty work and university administrative structures often did not measure up to these expectations.

Socialization into the Academy: “Seduced into Drudgery”

In almost all cases, participants identified key mentors having profound influence on them both personally and professionally, in terms of their ultimate decision to pursue a faculty position. Typically the participants in our study described these experiences in language depicting romantic views of the life of the professoriate, and the seductive power of these images. As doctoral candidates, the participants pursued faculty positions anticipating a career built on experiences like those they enjoyed in graduate school.

> My graduate study time was a wonderful time [during] which I thought academic work was going over to somebody’s house, having a barbeque, drinking tequila, and talking about Bahktin. I mean what more fun could there be? [W]e’d meet, we’d go to a coffee shop and we had this study group that was just fabulous. And then I had a group of faculty, they had study groups, too. . . . And we were very, very equitable about how they [the faculty] treated us [their students] as colleagues. And . . . so the whole thing was articulated around thinking, around writing, about all this kind of stuff. You can really

> [get] bogged down in universities doing your committee work and those kinds of things.

At the most basic level, participants described a disconnect between the work required to be successful at a research university, and the desirable qualities in the life of a scholar, particularly as they are seen by aspiring graduate students. They spoke about these inconsistencies as producing tensions with what they believed academic life to be when they were graduate students, and the realities they live as faculty members.

Consequently, despite the promise of interesting ideas, stimulating conversation, and engaging research projects, the reality of faculty life proved to be much more mixed. Participants talked about expectations for publications as constricting forces on building a body of scholarly work that fully reflects one's personal commitments. One lamented the dearth of opportunities to "think in unique and provocative ways." Instead, on his way to earning tenure, this faculty member "really spent a lot of time doing very traditional stuff because that's easiest to publish." Another described a feeling of "freedom" to pursue further "research that I believe in" which came after earning tenure. Early in his career, he began amassing the requisite peer-reviewed, top-tier publications; this in turn has allowed him to "take [his] work to another level of change-making."

Another expectation of faculty – the securing of grant funding – did not figure prominently in the conversations with these faculty members. While most of them mentioned increasing emphasis on procuring external funding, many participants simply had not written many grant proposals. One participant expressed an interest in seeking funding "because I [now] have time to think about grants" after achieving tenure. The other participant who spoke specifically about grant funding expressed wariness: "the topics I study are not considered serious. I'm a little leery of funding and what strings are tied to funding and what that means. I know it's not always the case but it does make me a little bit worried about that. So it's [seeking funding has] always been a struggle and will probably continue to be so."

These tensions reflect Slaughter and Rhoads' (2004) critique of higher education as a new form of academic capitalism. Echoing the concerns raised by Aronowitz (2000), one participant explains that the university as a workplace for faculty is "just another arm of corporate America." A

participant pointed to this trend occurring at the university where this group worked:

> [I]n some ways higher education is embracing the whole corporate mantra-- department heads, reorganization and realignment which is taking place right now here at [our university], the disciplines being pushed together, departments heads are no longer first among faculty of that discipline, they're from another field. . . . [P]articularly in Colleges of Ed[ucation], you're just so constrained by political legislation and rules for schooling [as they impact teacher education programs]... So that's a little unsettling. I don't like that.

These challenges and barriers to the dream of the scholarly life notwithstanding, the professoriate still represents for at least one participant "a privileged lifestyle. . . .[T]he freedom to read and write is fabulous."

Discussion

There are two ways to understand what we learned above about competing epistemologies in academic life. Neumann (2006) has reconnected passion with faculty work, and we see this as in line with these participants' discussions of their world view. Several of the faculty members involved in this project describe a visceral experience of meaning making as part of their research and scholarship. This aspect of the data points to epistemology as an important topic to be explored in the scholarly discussion of faculty work issues. The participants are also educators, collectively comprising a Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education faculty. This raises a pointed question: how does *who one is* and *how one thinks* matter to *how one teaches* and *what one's students are learning*? In this way, our study of the relationship between epistemological concepts and faculty work also contributes to the current discussion of epistemological diversity, and its contribution to the philosophy of research and graduate education.

Faculty Work

In the present study, we identified connections between epistemological stance and a world view which, for most of the participants, includes a commitment to social justice or activism. While one participant describes the deep connections between his personal activist commitments and his scholarly work as being "viscerally present" in his work, all of the

participants, while using different language, emphasized the importance of aligning personal values with the research design, the questions, the analysis of the data. Participants also articulate a clear connection between epistemological stance, world view, and the texture of their lives as academics. For many of them, the connection between world view and scholarship is intentional. Research, as one participant explains, can be rooted in a deep sense of self. This intellectual identity, as our participants explained above, operates in a symbiotic relationship between world view, epistemological stance and the realities of living one's world view as a scholar. While theories were seen as more concrete and pragmatic, epistemologies were clearly more intuitive, abstract, and difficult to define. All of the participants did, however, describe their epistemologies as a framework that provided meaning to their work both personally and professionally.

There is an historic, hard and fast separation between personal and professional, between emotion and cognition (Neumann, 2006) which results in little clear understanding of the role of the personal in the professional for academics. This study's findings offer an exciting opportunity to think further about meaning in academic life. We respond to that gap by situating this study at the confluence of Neumann's (2006) work on emotion in faculty scholarship and Gappa, Austin, and Trice's (2007) call to "rethink faculty work and workplaces" (p.1) by looking more specifically at the conditions and contexts of faculty work. Accepting the feminist wisdom that one cannot separate the personal from the political, we go one step further by employing our participants' comments to demonstrate that the professional is also deeply personal. Both Gappa with her co-authors (2007) and Neumann (2006) conclude their work by calling for policy revisions that recognize new realities in faculty work. They move together toward shaping an environment more conducive to collaborative and meaningful work. Taken together, our participants generate a narrative that suggests this is the right direction to move, and one that will institutionalize support for elements of faculty life that have been important for a long time.

In addition, the complexities of negotiating personal and philosophical epistemologies within academe warrant additional research. Koro-Ljungberg et al.'s (2009) consideration of researchers "decision junctures" still focuses primarily on the implications of philosophical definitions of "epistemological awareness" (p. 687). The findings from this study suggest that, within this larger philosophical context, issues

related to how individual faculty members construct and understand knowledge also needs to be further explored.

Impact of Epistemological Diversity on Faculty "Work" and Preparation

This study also raises questions about the extent to which epistemologies influence faculty work, as well as the potential implications of such impact on graduate education. One could easily argue (as, in fact, one of the reviewers of a previous version of this paper noted) that of course faculty members in a Cultural Studies program embrace diverse epistemologies so there is nothing "new" in these findings. Consequently, it is perhaps even more significant that even among faculty whose areas of research are firmly situated within various epistemological stances, many of them found it difficult to articulate the relationship between their epistemological frameworks and their definitions of knowledge and research. As one participant explained, while "theory or theoretical framework is the platform from which we view problems, from which we begin inquiry, . . . often times these theories are tacit, taken for granted assumptions which are unspoken and I think it is really important to uncover those." This participant's observation begs the question, "How do we learn to 'uncover those'?"

The findings of this study suggest that, even among scholars for whom positionality plays an explicit role in their research, tacit epistemological assumptions (LeCompte & Priessle, 2003) are not always easily articulated in terms of their epistemological and ontological implications. Pallas (2001) suggests that doctoral students, and many faculty members, often operate at a fairly superficial level of understanding regarding research. Without preparation in the philosophical foundations of research (Paul & Marfo, 2001; Willower, 2001), academics tend to claim theoretical and/or methodological positions without clearly understanding other perspectives, or even the one they have chosen to espouse. Pallas (2001) explains, "Yet today, quite a few beginning scholars embrace postmodern perspectives without fully understanding what they claim to be rejecting" (p. 10).

None of these participants could be considered "beginning scholars." They also had fairly clear understandings of what they were embracing, and rejecting. These understandings had, nonetheless, become so embedded in their thinking and scholarship that they sometimes had difficulty explaining their thinking to novice researchers. This study

confirms, then, the importance of working across "communities of practice" (Pallas, 2001) in order to keep fundamental epistemological and theoretical assumptions at a conscious level. Instead, Reybold (2003) argues most of the preparation and work that faculty do focuses on the technical knowledge (i.e., methods and methodology) of various research genres without the philosophical knowledge necessary to "understand and interpret the language and the research (Paul & Marfo, 2001, p. 532).

Very little has been done to explore the relationship between faculty epistemologies and the cognitive and professional development of doctoral students, despite the importance of epistemology in doing good research (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990; see Moss et al., 2009 on doing "quality research"), and the key role faculty play in socializing doctoral students (Barnes & Austin, 2009; Weidman & Stein, 2003; Weidman, Stein, & Twale, 2001). Understanding faculty epistemology contributes to what we know about preparing future faculty in the same way that we benefit from exploring the relationship between epistemological constructs and pedagogical approaches (Fang, 1996; Hofer, 2001; Sandretto, Kane, & Heath, 2002; Schommer-Aikins, 2004).

Some initiatives in doctoral education strive to make such connections more explicit. For example, the doctoral research seminar from which this research emerged focuses exclusively on "Epistemology, Inquiry, and Representation in Educational Research." Students read and engage in research from a wide variety of epistemological orientations to interrogate how these belief systems influence the ways in which questions are asked and research is conducted. Students' interaction with the material has often led to challenging and incredible shifts in their thinking about research and their daily lives (Shinew & Moore, 2010). Similarly, Lesko, Simmons, Quarshie, and Newton (2008) describe students' strong and emotional response to a similar class that engages future faculty in the process of understanding "multiple paradigmatic, epistemological, and theoretical orientations that define fields of study" (p. 1541). Both of these studies suggest future faculty find opportunities to make the role of personal and philosophical epistemologies more explicitly an important part of their scholarly identity and development.

In addition, Toma (1997) argues that "adopting a specific paradigm – and the culture that goes with it – shapes scholars' careers" (p. 696). This, together with Reybold's (2003) discussion of the need to intentionally socialize doctoral students as future faculty, suggests the value in

socializing student in such a way that they understand from their graduate education how the paradigm choices they make will be received in the academy. Further, Baxter-Magolda's (1996) epistemological development model emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for students to witness their mentors grappling with issues related to epistemological diversity. Doctoral programs that encourage faculty, as well as students, to engage in discussions about the philosophical foundations of their research would enrich understanding for scholars from both "critical" (Kincheloe, 2004) as well as "scientifically based" (Eisenhard & DeHaan, 2005) perspectives. Additional research that explores the impact of such programs would offer important insights into the socialization and preparation of future faculty.

Limitations and Future Research

In an era in which education research is scrutinized in light of "evidence-based" and "scientifically-based inquiry," it is essential to remind ourselves that *all* research emerges from a set of assumptions about the nature of the world, reality, and our (as researchers and persons) relationship to what is "known" or constructed. Such assumptions influence the ways in which research is conceptualized, conducted, and evaluated – though these beliefs are often left unexplored and unspoken.

Compelling arguments have been made for giving appropriate attention to the links between epistemology and research, particularly in educating graduate students (Koro-Ljundberg et al., 2009; Moss et al., 2009). We also know that faculty play a key role in the socialization of future faculty members (Barnes & Austin, 2009), and we have guidelines for what students should learn during their doctoral programs about doing research (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). What is missing is empirical investigation of the relationship between epistemology and the scholarly work of individual faculty members.

This study responds to that gap in the scholarship, but we have only gone so far, given the limitations of our research. Creswell (2009) defines limitations as, "…potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher" (p. 207). The research team identified several limitations for the study. First, there were a small number of participants. While a small number is appropriate in developing rich cases (Stake, 2005), additional participants at other institutions would

have strengthened the study. Conducting follow-up interviews with existing participants could present an opportunity to further explore more fully the implications of their own doctoral education and socialization on their epistemological development. Kane, Sandretto and Heath's (2002) review of the literature linking faculty epistemology to teaching performance highlights the need for more work on this topic in higher education settings. In addition, a study focused on such questions and/or interviewing graduate students who work with this study's participants would provide important information about the interaction of epistemology, research, teaching/mentoring, and the socialization of future faculty.

In this study, we focused on the implications of philosophical and psychological conceptions of epistemology on faculty members' academic lives. For all participants, the philosophical emphasis on how knowledge claims are legitimized and recognized in the academe had profound effects on their thinking about what it means to do "good" research, as well as how their research is received. For these faculty, who seek to maintain passion for their work (Neumann, 2006), considering these philosophical debates, in light of their own beliefs about the nature of knowledge and its production, provides insights into how and why they work, as well as possibilities for educating graduate students.

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