Behind the Curtain: An Epistemic Design Process for Democratic Media Education Simulations[1]

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Jane[2] logs in to her firm's project management system, reads an email from her boss, and begins to work on her task for the day. Her task is to collaborate with a team of other interns and their account manager to conduct research on a proposed state level ban on fracking. This research will help them to design a media campaign for their client, Clean Water Virginia, a special interest group supporting the proposed ban on fracking – the process of extracting gas through hydraulic fracturing. This process entails pumping chemicals, sand, and water deep into the ground to force oil or gas to the surface; it is controversial within the environmental and public policy sectors. In order to do the research to prepare their media campaign proposal for their client, Jane and her team research evidence for and against fracking, analyze polling data on how people in the state view the issue, and identify allies among local politicians, special interest groups, and journalists who could potentially help their campaign.

This could be an account of the many young interns who work for the growing number of strategic communications firms in Washington, DC and around the world as the role of media in politics increases. In this case, however, Jane is a 17-year-old student participating in *PurpleState*. *PurpleState* is a virtual internship designed to help

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[1] Stoddard, J., Swiecki, Z.,* and Shaffer, D.W. (in press). Behind the curtain: an epistemic design process for democratic media education simulations. In C. Wright-Maley (ed.) More like Life Itself: Simulations as Powerful and Purposeful Social Studies. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press.

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students learn about the role of media in politics and to engage in controversial public policy issues.

In this chapter we describe the design framework and process for *PurpleState*, using examples from the simulation. In particular, we focus on the concept of epistemic frames as a model for designing a virtual internship simulation. Through *PurpleState*, we illustrate how a simulation based on the work of a strategic communications firm may be a model for students to learn about the role of media in politics and to foster their skills and habits as democratic citizens for the digital age. Although *PurpleState* has been running on an online platform designed for Virtual Internships by the Epistemic Games Group at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, we present the design framework here in a way that teachers or curriculum developers could develop their own simulations in either analog or digital formats.[3]

The Need for New Epistemic Frames in Democratic Education

Goals for democratic education include having citizens who understand the institutions and structures of government, have the ability to research and use evidence, can discuss and deliberate controversial historical or contemporary issues, and are able to take civic action (Gould, 2011). Best practices for reaching these goals include simulations, the deliberation of controversial issues, and inquiry (Gould, 2011; Hess, 2009; Parker, 2003). In order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, however, students must also develop their understanding of media and ability to communicate and take action using new media (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Stoddard, 2014). Here

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[3] The WorkPro online simulation environment and VIA (Virtual Internship Authorware) developed by the Epistemic Games Group may be open in the future for teachers and schools interested in using currently available virtual internships or for those interested in creating their own. See the Epistemic Games Group website (www.edgaps.org) for more information.

we present epistemic frames as a model for developing simulations to engage students in developing the skills, knowledge and values for democratic and media education.

Defining Epistemic Frames

The term epistemic frame is used to describe the knowledge, skills, values, and identity of a particular profession or member of a community of practice, such as an engineer, community organizer, or politician (Shaffer, 2006a, 2006b). The concept of epistemic frames goes beyond heuristics or pedagogical models based on academic disciplines (e.g., history) to also emphasize the development of expertise within the social context of a community of practice. In essence, the epistemic frame provides a lens for students to interact within simulated communities of practice that are structured to develop expertise and professional identity, including the knowledge, skills, and values of these practices (Shaffer, 2006b). Thus, according to Shaffer (2006b), the epistemic frame includes disciplinary understanding as well as the ways of thinking and acting of professionals within communities of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991).

Here we make the case that the concept of epistemic frames provides a model for student transfer of academic experiences to their role as citizens outside of school (Bagley & Shaffer, 2009). We also argue that an epistemology of professional practice is a valuable alternative to academic-based models for democratic citizenship education (e.g., the historian or social scientist). This is because a professional practice may better model the skills, knowledge, and values for college, career, and civic life. It may also be more relevant than the epistemic frame of a politician or US Supreme Court Judge for helping students understand how they can engage in civic action on public policy issues at the local or state level.

Why Democratic Education Requires Re-Framing

In today's media-heavy political context, we need to prepare young citizens who are able to evaluate media messages as well as to know how to communicate, coordinate, and take action within the mediated and global political environment (Stoddard, 2013, 2014). However, the civics and government curriculum often enacted in classrooms in the US and other countries does not align with these goals (Stoddard, 2014). For academic goals, simulations and pedagogical models based on the academic disciplines make sense. For example, learning history through a cognitive model based on how historians read and analyze texts (e.g., Wineburg, 1991) is a more authentic way to learn history and prepare for college than through memorizing random facts for a standardized test. However, do goals and practices of these disciplines align with the goals of democratic education – the preparation of active democratic citizens? After all, this is the primary historic goal for teaching history and social studies (Thornton, 1994).

Civics and government courses have often turned to simulations. These include Constitution-focused hearings in the *We the People* curriculum (Center for Civic Education, 2009) and competitions to common legislative classroom simulations where students are placed in the roles of members of congress (see, for example, Ganzler, 2010; Hess, 2009). Digital simulations range from iCivics games like *Executive Command* to virtual environments where students play the role of a legislative aid (Poole, Berson & Levine, 2010). More recently, Parker and his colleagues have utilized analog simulations as the primary structure for the Advanced Placement US Government curriculum (e.g., Parker, et al., 2011; Parker & Lo, 2016).

These civics and government simulations often place students in the roles of leaders rather than academic disciplines. They are designed, for example, to help students understand the experiences of, and views held by, a member of congress as well as the structures and processes of the legislature. However, these simulations are often limited to positions within the official government hierarchy (e.g., President). They also can lack authenticity as they are designed to align closely to state standards and textbooks rather than the dynamic nature of how the legislative process occurs. They often reinforce rather than shift from the "epistemology of the school" (Shaffer, 2006a) in terms of the emphasis on testable content over developing skills applied to real world problems (Stoddard, Banks, Nemacheck & Wenska, 2016).

Our point here is that the values and actions that align with simulations designed on a textbook version of official government processes do not necessarily transfer to the types of knowledge, skills, values, and actions needed for democratic citizens (Stoddard, 2010a, 2010b; Thornton & Barton, 2010). Nor do these models for learning help young people learn how to filter, evaluate, and produce messages using multiple media platforms in our current dynamic and networked society (Stoddard, 2014). Therefore, we sought out a different professional practice that, when simulated, would help students develop an understanding of media and their role in politics.

Epistemic Framing for Democratic Education Simulations

Simulation experiences modeled on real-world problems and designed to engage students collaboratively have led to positive outcomes related to deep conceptual understanding, engagement and problem solving (Colella, 2000; Parker, et al., 2011). There is also evidence that engagement in simulations can lead to greater student

engagement and motivation (Gehlbach, et al., 2008; Gelbach, 2011; Yukhymenko, 2011).

The primary goal of this project, therefore, is to identify epistemic frames to model a community of practice that can be used to develop a simulation emphasizing the skills, knowledge, and values for both media and democratic education. If simulations are "pedagogically mediated activities used to reflect the dynamism of real life events, processes, or phenomena, in which students participate as active agents whose actions are consequential to the outcome of the activity" (Wright-Maley, 2015a, p. 8), then the virtual internship may be one of the ideal simulation models for today's rapidly-changing world. Therefore, for our goals of democratic education, we explore how the epistemic frame and communities of practice of strategic communications interns can help develop the expertise in the skills, knowledge, and values that can transfer to young peoples' actions as citizens outside of school.

Epistemic Frames and Virtual Internship Simulations

We make the case here for the potential use of virtual internship simulations in democratic education that also work toward the goals outlined in the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) framework (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), the Civic Mission of Schools report (Gould, 2011), and for Media Literacy 2.0 (e.g., Hoechesman and Poyntz, 2012). *PurpleState*, a Virtual Internship simulation, utilizes the concepts of epistemic frames (Shaffer, 2006a, 2006b) and communities of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991) as models for learning in media and democratic education. *PurpleState* places students in the roles of interns at a strategic communications firm. In this scenario, they

are hired to develop a media campaign on a fictitious proposed state-level vote that if passed would lead to a ban on hydraulic fracturing (i.e.,fracking).

Using a community of practice such as a strategic communications firm provides the opportunity for students to participate in an authentic role to work toward the skills and objectives most valued for both media and democracy education. In this way we model learning in the simulation after how a community of practice is designed to do work and develop expertise (Lave & Wegner, 1991). For PurpleState, the tasks and organizational structure (e.g., interns, account managers) is based largely on how these firms actually train and develop their interns to collaborate on projects.

The role of an intern at a strategic communications firm differs from other recent attempts at applying simulations in Government classes that focus largely on roles in positions of power (e.g., Supreme Court Justice) (e.g., Parker & Lo, 2016). We took this approach as we believe this virtual internship engages students in the dynamic nature of politics. The internship engages students in learning concepts from political communications, such as earned media, or the ability to get free media coverage for a campaign or candidate. This concept was particularly important given its role in recent campaigns – for example it is estimated that Donald Trump received up to five billion dollars' worth of earned media.

PurpleState also focuses on state-level political action, unlike most official curricula, which emphasize federal politics. In this way, epistemic frames are designed to engage students in practices that lead to the development of expertise. This is done through modeling the internship with the ways in which professionals develop expertise through collaborative practice within professional communities. We selected a state

level issue as we thought it would provide an opportunity to transfer skills, knowledge, and action from the simulation to the students' lives outside of school on issues they care about.

<div align="center">**Creating an Epistemic Frame for *PurpleState***</div>

The Epistemic Frame for *PurpleState*

We selected the epistemic frame of strategic communications consultants, whose firms assist candidates, political action committees, and special interest groups to develop and implement media and campaign strategies. This epistemic frame emphasizes expertise in the skills, knowledge, and values that can transfer to young peoples' actions as citizens outside of school (see Table 1, below). This epistemic frame is both relevant to the current political context and combines the need to learn about media in politics, strategic thinking, and a local policy issue we were seeking.

Development of the Frame

  Objectives. We utilized multiple sources to develop our epistemic frame of strategic communications interns. The primary source is a former student and member of our development team who ran political campaigns and now works for a large public relations firm. He helped us to identify the skills, knowledge, and values of professionals in this field, which helped inform our objectives. He also helped to educate us on the scope and nature of tasks that an intern working on a campaign would engage in. We then supplemented these ideas with materials gathered from textbooks and other resources from academic and professional examples from this field.

We used this expertise and the goals of democratic citizenship that we identified earlier in this chapter to focus the epistemic frame of a strategic communications intern. The objectives we established included students' ability to:

1) be able to identify and explain the institutions and structures of government as they influence contemporary politics;

2) research, evaluate, and communicate using evidence with old/new media;

3) discuss and deliberate controversial historical or contemporary issues; and

4) take action toward civic goals using media.

Tasks. For example, our expert identified the media audit as a primary task that interns conducted. According to him, part of a media audit is to identify stakeholders in order to "help determine the political landscape, including the political players on both sides, the organizations that support/oppose them, and the public they need to reach to accomplish their goal." In addition to these kinds of research tasks, interns would also be engaged in helping to identify which media channels are most effective for reaching different audiences. He noted, for example, that "interns would present their bosses ideas for effectively persuading their target audience and the best medium to reach them." Table 1, below, outlines key examples of the knowledge, skills, values, and identity associated with being an intern at a strategic communications firm.

INSERT TABLE ONE APPROXIMATELY HERE

Overall, we designed ten tasks for *PurpleState*. As this is also a research project, the primary goal of Task 1 and Task 10 are the completion of "entry" and "exit" interviews for the internship – these are pre- and post-measures on knowledge, skills, and beliefs related to the core goals of the simulation. The other section of Task 1 is a technical introduction to using the WorkPro software environment to make sure students are capable of engaging in the mechanics of the simulation (see also, Parker, et al., 2011).

Therefore, the core tasks of the simulation are actually completed within the middle eight tasks, three of which are team meetings such as the one described below. The simulation totals approximately ten hours of work time, done in class or a combination of class time and homework time. See Appendix A for a complete list of tasks.

Deliverables. As part of this process, we also identified key deliverables (i.e., tasks, projects) interns would work on that also aligned with the objectives for the simulation, and deliverables that would also serve as measures for understanding interns' thinking and ability to engage in these tasks. Our research and conversations provided evidence to ascertain the workflow and organizational structure of a firm working on political media campaigns. We found that interns work collaboratively on campaigns under the direction of account managers and account executives. In addition to internal structures, the team needs to keep in mind the needs and goals of the client they are working for and the context in which their campaign will take place (e.g., state, nation). This hierarchical structure exists to foster the design process and hone

campaign proposals for the firm's clients. We therefore modeled the simulation as much as possible to reflect these organizational structures (see Figure 1, below).

INSERT Figure 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE

Designing the *PurpleState* Simulation

Once we established our epistemic frame, core objectives, and example tasks and deliverables, we designed and developed the simulation itself. We followed the steps listed below and described through the rest of the section:

1) identify a public policy issue that would work for the simulation and school contexts where it would be implemented

2) develop a storyline that frames the overall simulation and project based learning around the policy issue and a proposed state ban (our end goal for the campaign)

3) develop assessments that align with real intern deliverables, product objectives and rubrics for feedback, discussion guides, and materials for the simulation.

4) break down the project into tasks to introduce concepts and develop skills through "Engagement First" (Parker & Lo, 2016) activities

5) plan for a real-world capstone for the simulation (i.e., presentation)

Identifying the Issue

We first identified an issue that aligned with our context and goals for the simulation, was relevant and engaging for students, and fit well with the curriculum. We wanted a public policy issue on which substantial portions of the population disagreed and where there was ample evidence available for students to research both sides of the issue. We also needed an issue suitable for use in schools as part of the research study. We therefore settled on hydraulic fracturing.

Fracking is a relevant issue in Virginia, most prominently in the debate over petroleum exploration in the George Washington National Forest. It is a regular topic of debate in state-level news media and policy circles. Further, this issue has clear divisions among the population. Neighboring states such as West Virginia and North Carolina have had similar debates. North Carolina ultimately imposed a state-wide ban on fracking for several years before reversing the ban. Although this simulation concentrates on state-level politics, fracking is an issue that resonates nationwide. As a result, ample scientific and policy data are readily available.

Developing the Story

Once we decided to make fracking our issue, we needed to decide how students would be involved in this broad issue. To do so we identified a case that would engage them in the issue from the perspective of their epistemic frame as *PurpleState* interns. Their work would focus on a proposed ban on fracking that was to appear on the ballot in the next statewide election. We used the language from a real fracking ban proposal in Michigan from 2016 as the model for our own proposed ban (below).

Proposed Ballot Measure from Circulating Petition:

An initiation of legislation to prohibit the use of horizontal hydraulic fracturing or

"fracking" and acid completion treatments of horizontal gas and oil wells; to

prohibit emission, production, storage, disposal, and processing of frack and

acidizing wastes created by gas and oil well operations; to eliminate the state's

policy favoring ultimate recovery of maximum production of oil and gas; to protect

water resources, land, air, climate, and public health.[4]

Providing a motive. We then identified special interest groups to use as models

for our fictional special interest groups on opposing sides for the issue. These are the

special interest groups that would hire *PurpleState* to develop a media campaign to

influence the vote in their favor. Understanding the role of special interest groups, and

media, in the political process are key goals for most government classes. We created

two fictional special interest groups, Clean Water Virginia, modeled after environmental

protection groups, and New Energy Virginia, which was modeled after one of the many

petroleum association groups. These groups serve as the constituents for our intern

design teams, who are charged via a Request for Proposals (RFP) from one of these

two groups. We randomly assign the teams with the RFP from one of the two

organizations, but all teams utilize the same resources, polling data, and other

materials.

The narrative arc. Once we decided on this core aspect of the story, our

narrative began to fall in place for the student interns. First, they enter their internship at

PurpleState and spend their first few "days" of the internship developing their knowledge

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[4] This language was adapted from the proposed Michigan Fracking Ban Initiative's proposed
language for a state ballot initiative:
https://ballotpedia.org/Michigan_Fracking_Ban_Initiative_(2018)

and skills of core concepts for political communications and skills in analyzing media, reading polling data, and reflecting on how media are used in political campaigns to persuade voters. In the second half of the simulation then engages interns in working collaboratively to read and discuss the RFP issued by their assigned special interest group client, research the issue and data to help them design their campaign to help the client's position on the ban win, and then go through two iterations of developing a Campaign Design Proposal to share with the client. Finally, we wanted options for some kind of a capstone project (described further below), and for the first iterations we decided on a media campaign proposal and "pitch" presentation to sell their campaign design to their boss and client.

Developing Products for Assessment (deliverables)

After creating the narrative channel through which student interns' actions would flow, we developed key assessments that were modeled on tasks interns are asked to do at strategic communications firms. Major deliverables included: reports on the research the interns conduct as part of their teams, their collaborative campaign proposals, and pitch presentation. In addition to these products, we asked interns to file daily "notebook sections" that ask them to demonstrate understanding of core concepts or apply what they learned during each of the ten sessions (see Appendix A: *PurpleState* Outline for example deliverables). Each of these intern assignments emphasize clarity of argumentation, using evidence to support their positions or analyses, and being able to identify the implications for their work (either to their team's proposal or regarding the role of media in politics).

Developing materials

The simulation required us to produce or collect three types of resources to support students: 1) resources for students to learn basic concepts in political communications; 2) data to use as part of their campaign design proposal that we needed to adapt or create; and 3) existing real news media accounts (with a particular focus on Virginia), links to appropriate special interest groups, and links or sources that focus on scientific and policy information on fracking.

Introducing core concepts. In order to introduce the core concepts in political communication that aligned with our objectives and that interns will need for the rest of the simulation, we created the proprietary *PurpleState* Campaign Design Manual (CDM). This manual includes an introduction to our campaign design process that also introduces interns to what they are doing in the simulation. The CDM includes four sections we created from our interviews with experts from the field, textbooks, and other sources. These sections include persuasive techniques, how to use polling data, media channels, and how to conduct a media audit. These sources are used early in the simulation and then serve as reference materials throughout the simulation.

Curating data. For data students need to research and plan their campaigns, we utilized existing data and adapt it into materials that are more accessible for students. For example, we utilized existing election and polling data to create a map and table depicting how Virginian's would likely vote on the proposed fracking ban. This included a map of Virginia representing political views based on previous presidential elections in each county in the state. We also included polling data presented by region of the state showing the percentages of potential voters for, undecided, and against the ban. These data are presented both in aggregate; it was also categorized into gender and age

groupings (additional categories such as socio-economic status or race/ethnicity could be added).

This data set, which is included as part of a report from our research department, is particularly important to teams, who use it to identify which regions of the state and demographic groups they will focus on for their campaigns. In addition to the polling data and map, we also provide standard maps showing population centers in Virginia. The report also includes the potential overall themes or persuasive messages for the campaign that have been field-tested by our research department and the cost estimates for the particular media channels used to calculate budgets for the campaign proposals.

We developed this media buying report using—as much as possible—real advertising costs for the different major Virginia media markets. We made the media market report as accessible and functional as possible by focusing on four main media markets. We did so by aligning these markets with areas in which groups dominated by one of the political parties were located. For example, the Northern Virginia media market tends to be heavily Democratic and likely to vote *for* the ban, whereas the western part of the state leans Republican and has a majority that would likely vote *against* the ban.

In this report, we further differentiated the true costs of buying advertising on television, radio, and in newspapers for these markets in addition to costs associated with direct communications (i.e., phone calls, mailers, yard signs), social media, and earned media. For these latter two media channels, we included costs related to

employing a social media manager or public relations consultant to help get media coverage of a campaign.

Linking to web resources. Our final group of sources include links to special interest groups, both state level and national, for both sides of the issue (e.g., Independent Petroleum Association of America). It also includes news sources from different television stations and newspapers in Virginia that report on aspects of the issue useful for understanding the views in different parts of the state and to be used as part of the media audit. We identified policy and scientific sources that explain the fracking process and provide policy arguments and data for both sides. In all of these sources, we considered reading level and sophistication, authenticity balanced by accessibility, and the need to adapt data and sources as much as possible to align with what we were going to be asking the student interns to do with them.

Outlining Engagement First Tasks

The tasks in the simulation fit the kind of engagement first tasks conceptualized by Parker and Lo (2016) where students are engaged in learning basic concepts, data, and skills while they are performing a task and do not necessarily need to learn basics before being asked to perform more complicated tasks.

As the introduction to this chapter suggests, the Virtual Internship model is based on the workflow from the professional practice used as the epistemic frame. For *PurpleState*, students receive an email from John, the account executive, at the beginning of each task. This email outlines the task for the day, the resources that are to be used, and the deliverables that are required. The excerpt below illustrates how the email is used to introduce and explain the task.

Subject: RFP

Hi [Intern],

Clean Water Virginia has decided to fund a media campaign to attempt to persuade potential voters to favor their stance on the upcoming state ballot measure that would ban hydraulic fracturing in Virginia. As expected, the organization has invited us to submit a response to their Request for Proposals (RFP). Remember, an RFP is a document that an organization posts to get bids from companies to perform a service. If our firm is chosen based on our proposal, we will be hired to develop and execute a full media campaign.

During today's work session you will first need to read the RFP and then meet with your account manager and colleagues to discuss the research tasks needed to prepare the proposal…

Each section of the email is outlined so that they are easy to develop and each section (i.e., each identified deliverable) is connected to the rubric used by the account manager to assess and provide feedback on the deliverable.

Pedagogical & System Mediation

For *PurpleState*, we use both the conceptual model and platforms developed by the Epistemic Game Group at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, founded and led by the third author. Two online platforms were used as part of the design and piloting of *PurpleState*: the Virtual Internship Authorware[5] platform used in the development phase and the WorkPro environment used to engage students in the simulation. Once the storyline and main design decisions were made for *PurpleState*, we began to develop the simulation itself utilizing an existing Virtual Internship as a model.

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[5] The VIA system was designed to help teachers or simulation designers to more effectively revise existing simulations or create entirely new ones. Therefore, it uses a model that helps the authors develop or change all of the dependent components, support communication between students, teachers, and mentors, serves as a repository of resources and deliverables, and enables researchers to monitor students' thinking throughout the simulation.

One of the key components of the virtual internships are structured team reflective meetings facilitated by the account managers. For example, once interns read through the RFP, their account manager leads them in a discussion of the RFP and some initial planning for how they will begin to conduct their research for the campaign. These meetings include a structured set of discussion questions and a revoicing statement used to emphasize the primary concept for a particular set of questions (see O'Connor & Michaels, 1996, for more on revoicing strategies). The account manager can set the revoicing statement to be either negative or positive depending on whether students appear to be illustrating a high enough level of understanding in the discussion. For example, the question set and revoicing below was used in the RFP Meeting. This is the first question set that asks interns to discuss and identify the position of the organization that they are developing the proposal for.

Proposal Request Meeting

Question 1: OK, let's talk about the RFP. What organization is requesting a proposal from your team?

Question 2: What position on the issue of fracking does the client organization represent?

Question 3: If you're not sure who is requesting the proposals, take another look at the RFP.

Revoicing Positive: So you're saying that New Energy [the client special interest group] is requesting proposals to design a plan to promote their position

in the upcoming state ballot initiative to ban fracking. Would you agree?

[or]

Revoicing Negative: You might want to consider whether New Energy is requesting proposals to design a plan to promote their position in the upcoming state ballot initiative to ban fracking. Would you agree?

Below we describe how a teacher may be able to develop a classroom-based virtual internship using commonly available resources without needing access to VIA or the WorkPro environment. A teacher could credibly develop a Virtual Internship simulation without having access to the custom designed online environment. It may also be possible in the near future, however, for teachers to be able to access the platforms developed by the Epistemic Games Group to develop and implement their own simulations.

How to Apply the Design to the Classroom

The concept of the epistemic frame as a model for developing simulations, and in particular the internship model described here, can be used as a design framework for any classroom context.

Step One: Identify an epistemic frame that aligns with the objectives of the task and the capabilities of your students. For our part, we considered multiple potential epistemic frames that could be used to work toward the objectives we identified. These could also have been a journalist or documentary filmmaker whose paths also span the worlds of media and politics. The key is to identify where the skills and knowledge needed by professionals align with the developer's goals for citizenship and media education.

Step Two: Developing the epistemic frame. The best way to develop the epistemic frame is to collaborate with local professionals or university programs whose practices align with the goals of your activity. Ask them how they train members new to the community, the skills and knowledge most valued by the profession, and how they collaborate to complete complex tasks. For example, if you select the epistemic frame of a journalist, talk with a local journalist to understand the structure of the newsroom, the tools and skills they value, and how they collaborate to bring stories to their audience. For example, you might ask, what steps are necessary for developing and producing the story, and who in the newsroom completes the task (e.g., research, interviewing, writing, editing, production)?

Step Three: Developing the Simulation. As we describe in the Designing *PurpleState* section earlier in the chapter, you first need to identify the problem or task at heart of the simulation. This is typically a task or problem for which a great deal of intellectual and collaborative work is required. It also should have multiple possible warranted outcomes (see Wright-Maley, 2015). In our case it was a campaign to either help pass or defeat a state ballot measure. If your interns are working on a documentary film project, you could provide them with the focus for the film or allow them to pitch ideas for the project. Similarly, for journalists you could focus on an area such as local public policy issues, or start with a big idea like poverty and have the interns identify and pitch specific stories as part of their developing understanding about how journalists operate.

Once you have identified the problem or main task, develop a storyboard and reverse-engineer the skills and knowledge that interns will need in order to work

collaboratively to produce warranted solutions that address the problem. Then, organize the series of tasks necessary to support students in developing the background skills, knowledge, identity, and values they need to operate effectively in these rolse. This work is accomplished as they participate in their role as interns, and before they move into a larger collaborative task or problem.

The narrative of the simulation, the tools (e.g., data, sources, experts) should all be dictated by the epistemic frame and the identified problem or goal of the simulation. The goal is to balance the authenticity of the profession and community of practice with the academic and civic objectives as well as the structures needed to help students be successful (i.e., making the simulation more simple than the reality it is simulating; see Baudrillard, 1994; Aldrich, 2006) . .

Analog vs. digital. The simulation could readily be performed in a classroom in an analog platform where students would receive their tasks via a printed memo and use hard copy resources, or videos and documents projected on a screen. However, given the growing access to a learning management system (LMS) in schools, teachers could with a little effort develop a platform of their own with many functions equivalent to WorkPro. Daily task emails could be in the form of pdf documents or messages sent to students through student email or messaging accounts. Students can chat with their teammates using an instant messaging or discussion forum function within an LMS. Materials could be linked in a resource section or housed in shared folders.

For the meetings we described above, these could be conducted in discussion forums moderated by the teacher, or student groups could discuss specific questions you pose for them during class time. These groups could be student led, or you could

bring in older students, college students from the professional practice being modeled, or even local professionals to work with students. The technology here is not the key, but can be used to help manage a complex simulation and take some of the burden off of the teacher. Such technology frees the teacher to focus on student support and activity management.

The Potential Contribution of Epistemic Frames and Virtual Internships

Our profession's ability to make use of epistemic framing, such as the one described here in this chapter, has the potential to change significantly how we teach young people to be citizens. In addition to serving as a dynamic model that can help students to address the content and skill goals emphasized in the *C3* and *Civic Mission for Schools*, *PurpleState* engages young people in collaborative practice, fosters a better understanding of the nature of media and its function in society and politics, and provides opportunities to participate meaningfully in a relevant contemporary controversial issue.

Our initial experiences with students in *PurpleState* provides evidence that this approach can be engaging for many students and that participants view the experience as an authentic and motivating alternative to common classroom experiences. That being said, the type of intellectual work and structure of the simulation is also so different from what some students experience that we have found some resistance from students who are not used to being asked to write or think and prefer to simply have the "right answer." In this way, the virtual internship challenges the common epistemology of schooling through providing students with the opportunity to engage in simulations of professional practices modeled on these communities of practice that will help them to

develop foundational skills that are essential in career, college, and civic life. More broadly speaking, students are left with a more nuanced understanding of the role of media in politics, and the skills to engage in political action in the digital age that can then be used in all areas of their lives.

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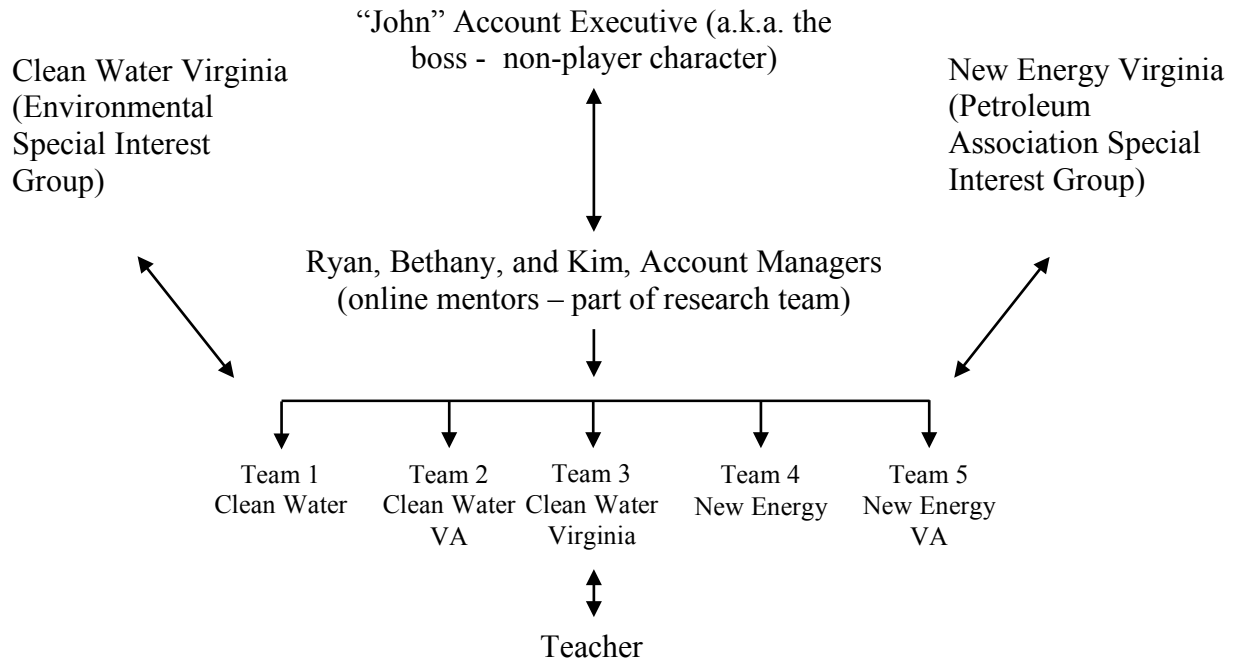
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Table 1

Epistemic Frame of the Strategic Communications Intern

Epistemic Frame	Critical Attributes
Knowledge	- audience identification and polling - persuasive communication strategies - issue specific content knowledge - nature of media forms and how to use them to reach different demographics - the political media landscape
Skills	- research (e.g., polling data analysis, opposition research, local/national contexts) - create and communicate a clear and compelling message through multiple media forms for intended audiences - work collaboratively with design team and with other firm functions (e.g., research team)
Values	- mission or issue driven - desire to impact politics - ethically driven - desire to inform and persuade people
Identity	- collaborative - passionate about politics - visual - creative - data driven strategic thinker

Figure 1: *PurpleState* Virtual Internship Organizational Structure

"John" Account Executive (a.k.a. the boss - non-player character)

Clean Water Virginia (Environmental Special Interest Group)

New Energy Virginia (Petroleum Association Special Interest Group)

Ryan, Bethany, and Kim, Account Managers (online mentors – part of research team)

| Team 1 Clean Water | Team 2 Clean Water VA | Team 3 Clean Water Virginia | Team 4 New Energy | Team 5 New Energy VA |

Teacher

Appendix A: *PurpleState* Solutions Outline

***PurpleState* Solutions Outline**

Task 1: Entrance Interview and Workflow Tutorial
Interns complete an interview (pre-test) and read the workflow tutorial

Task 2 *PurpleState* Campaign Design Manual Orientation
Interns research complete research tasks for their boss that also prepares them to gain expertise in basic concepts for political communications (e.g., persuasive techniques, polling, media audit):

Task 3: Media Audit Task
Interns utilize their knowledge developed in Task 2 to "catalogue" example political media for the *PurpleState* Media data base

Task 4: CDM and Media Audit Reflection – [Meeting]
Facilitated discussion with account manager (online mentor) to share their CDM research and Media Audit Feedback.

Task 5: **RFP [Meeting]** Interns read Request for Proposals (RFP) resource to learn about the campaign design proposal that they will be working on at *PurpleState*

Task 6: Issue Research and Media Audit
Teams break up research tasks on the fracking process and different components for their campaign design proposal.

Task 7: Campaign Research Feedback Reflection **[Meeting]**
Account Manager runs a reflection meeting with interns to reflect on polling and interest group feedback

Task 8: **Initial Design for campaign (for Account Executive "John")**
Group collaborative design of elements for campaign design proposal for their client.

Task 9: **Final Campaign Design Proposal**
Using feedback from the initial Campaign Design Proposal, interns collaborate with their team to revise their design and compile a final proposal and PowerPoint "deck" and plan for pitching their campaign.

Task 10: Exit Interview
Interns complete exit interview

Optional Part of Task 10: Presentation (in class option)
Presentation in class of their Campaign Design Deck to client or Account Executives