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Education Faculty as Knowledge Brokers: Competing for Access to New York State Print Media and Policy Influence

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Abstract: In an environment in which new policy entrepreneurs and networks are influencing policy and public opinion, many university faculty are increasingly seeking ways to mobilize knowledge beyond academic conferences and journals. Using New York state as a case, we searched *Access World News* to compare the level of media access of academics with other knowledge brokering organizations (KBOs; e.g. think tanks, teachers' unions, advocacy organizations, etc.). Our data shows relatively low levels of access for academics and provides profiles of those academics with high levels of access and what we might learn from them. We provide a discussion of the strategies of those academics who are successful at accessing the media and how disinvestment by the state

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from higher education and current incentive systems make it more difficult for academics to engage in knowledge mobilization beyond universities.
Key words: knowledge mobilization; media; policy; academics

Como profesores universitarios mobilizan el conocimiento en la educacion: Competiendo para acceso a los medios de comunicacion en el estado de New York

Resumen: En un entorno en el que los nuevos empresarios y redes de políticas influyen en la política y la opinión pública, muchos profesores universitarios buscan cada vez más formas de movilizar el conocimiento más allá de las conferencias y revistas académicas. Utilizando el estado de Nueva York como caso, buscamos en *Access World News* para comparar el nivel de acceso a los medios de los académicos con otras organizaciones de intermediación del conocimiento (KBOs; ej., Centros de estudios, sindicatos de maestros, organizaciones de defensa, etc.). Nuestros datos muestran niveles de acceso relativamente bajos para los académicos y proporcionan perfiles de aquellos académicos con altos niveles de acceso y lo que podríamos aprender de ellos. Proporcionamos una discusión de las estrategias de aquellos académicos que tienen éxito en acceder a los medios y cómo la desinversión del estado en la educación superior y los sistemas de incentivos actuales dificultan que los académicos se involucren en la movilización de conocimiento más allá de las universidades.
Palabras clave: movilización de conocimientos; medios de comunicación; política; académica

Como professores universitários mobilizam conhecimento em educação: Competindo pelo acesso à mídia no estado de New York

Resumo: Em um ambiente no qual novos empreendedores e redes de políticas estão influenciando as políticas e a opinião pública, muitos professores universitários estão cada vez mais buscando maneiras de mobilizar conhecimento além de conferências acadêmicas e periódicos. Usando o estado de Nova York como um caso, pesquisamos o *Access World News* para comparar o nível de acesso à mídia de acadêmicos com outras organizações de corretagem de conhecimento (KBOs; (por exemplo, grupos de reflexão, sindicatos de professores, organizações de defesa, etc.). Nossos dados mostram níveis relativamente baixos de acesso para acadêmicos e fornecem perfis desses acadêmicos com altos níveis de acesso e o que podemos aprender com eles. Apresentamos uma discussão sobre as estratégias dos acadêmicos que têm sucesso no acesso à mídia e como o desinvestimento do estado no ensino superior e os atuais sistemas de incentivos tornam mais difícil para os acadêmicos se engajarem na mobilização de conhecimento além das universidades.
Palavras-chave: mobilização de conhecimento; meios de comunicação; política; acadêmicos

Education Faculty as Knowledge Brokers: Competing for Access to New York State Print Media and Policy Influence

In an age of misinformation and "fake news," university academics are struggling to get their work into the larger media conversation on policy issues (Edelman, 2001; O'Connor & Weatherall, 2019). Academic concerns with knowledge mobilization have a long history, reaching back at least to Carol Weiss's (1977) work on knowledge creation, dissemination and utilization. But there is a new context today that includes greater political polarization, the emergence and proliferation of corporate funded think tanks (Rich, 2004), and a desire on the part of many faculty to be more engaged in the policy conversation (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020). Moreover, there is a growing frustration among many faculty that academic knowledge production, relegated as it is largely to academic journals behind paywalls, has become irrelevant to the burning issues of the day (Dumas & Anderson, 2014). While some academics have turned to Facebook, blogs, podcasts and other social media with varying levels of success, most continue to struggle to get a foothold in the print media.

During the three decades following World War II, some academics had significant influence on public policy. Academics such as Kenneth Clark, Patrick Moynihan, and James Coleman influenced social policies around civil rights, Head Start, and education funding. In the late 1970s, the *effective schools research*, initiated by Ron Edmonds (1979) had a significant policy impact on public schools and what was then called school restructuring, although its implementation was uneven. In 1983, Howard Gardner published his book on multiple intelligences, which had a powerful effect on classroom practice if not policy.

However, few powerful, corporate funded think tanks and venture philanthropists were wielding influence in those days. As new policy networks consisting of corporate and philanthropic leaders such as Eli Broad, Bill Gates, the Walton Family and Wall Street hedge fund investors have gained influence, we have seen a shift toward market-based and managerial school reform policies largely supported by both political parties[1].

It was the perception in the post-war years that liberal academics had some direct and indirect influence on social policy that spurred conservatives and the business community to initiate efforts in the 1980s to create a new set of institutions to counter academics and their perceived liberal ideology (McDonald, 2013a; Phillips-Fein, 2009). Among these new institutions were think tanks (Rich, 2004), and although think tanks were not new, those that existed previously tended to be viewed as relatively neutral knowledge producers (e.g., Russell Sage, Brookings, etc.) or government contract shops (e.g., Rand). Conservative think tanks with an explicit ideological and advocacy orientation have proliferated since 1980 (Haas, 2007a). While policymakers and the media tend to consider university-based academic research as more credible than think tanks and other advocacy organizations (Doberstein, 2017), academic researchers struggle to get their work out to the media as efficiently as think tanks and advocacy organizations do.

There is a growing body of research that suggests that many university academics are attempting to move beyond knowledge *production* in universities to *knowledge mobilization or knowledge brokering*, which in basic terms involves efforts by individuals and organizations to make academic scholarship more relevant beyond universities (Zuicker et al., 2019). Some research on knowledge brokering focuses on the complex relationship of academic research to professional practice (Malin & Brown, 2019).

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[1] This influence of the business sector, sometimes called New Public Management, is not new. It was the business sector that gave us the factory model school based on industrial notions of efficiency (See Anderson & Cohen, 2018).

However, in this article, we are interested primarily in academic researchers as knowledge brokers as they interact with print media with the ultimate goal of having some impact on policy and practice through influencing public opinion. The focus of the study is on educational researchers as knowledge brokers in comparison to other knowledge brokers (e.g. think tanks, teachers' unions, advocacy organizations, etc.) that attempt to gain access to the print media, which is itself widely viewed as a knowledge broker in public opinion and the policy-making process (Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019).

Our interest in academics as knowledge brokers grew out of a larger study of what we called Knowledge Brokering Organizations (KBO; Gray-Nicolas, Anderson & Payton, 2018) that sought to identify which types of KBOs, including universities, had the greatest influence in education in local print media in New York state. Using the search engine *Access World News* and focusing on New York State over a four-year period, we tracked the number of mentions of each type of KBO, which education policies they addressed or promoted, how they were identified by reporters, and the discursive and political strategies they deployed.

Since universities and academics did not rank among the top KBOs, we limited our focus to the top influencers in that article, but were intrigued by academics' relatively poor showing, and wanted to explore this data further in another article (See appendix A for how KBOs ranked in mentions in New York state print media). In this article, our focus, then, is not on knowledge brokering organizations, but rather individual university-based academics as potential media influencers. We did a deeper analysis of the largely unanalyzed data on university academics from our previous study, as well as gathered additional data for this study to explore our original research questions about media access as they apply to academics.

Our research questions for this article are the following: Which academics have high levels of mentions in New York State media, and how do these academics differ in how and why they get access to the media? What does this access look like in print (mentions, quotes, op-eds, etc.) and what kinds of policies are academics consulted about by reporters? What implications and recommendations might we take from these academics' approaches to knowledge brokering as they relate to media access? What can we learn from more successful knowledge brokers?

Academic Researchers, Universities and the Dilemmas of Knowledge Brokering

Academic researchers find themselves in a new media environment in which they compete with a growing number of KBOs that are trying to shape public opinion. According to Dumas & Anderson (2014),

> The political right has been successful in using think tanks to provide policy knowledge and frame problems in ways that promote their ideological interests. Educational researchers have a much stronger knowledge base, but have largely struggled unsuccessfully to enter the policy conversation. (p. 9)

Although some academics seek a more engaged stance and are increasingly encouraged by their universities to increase their media profile, there are fundamental problems they face because of their institutional location in social space. Using Bourdieu's (1985) concept of social field, author (2017) have explored the implications for university-based researchers as think tanks and other producers of knowledge seek to usurp universities as knowledge brokers and influencers of public policy. Unlike universities, think tanks occupy a unique social space—part journalism, part research,

part advocacy, part lobbyist—from which to mobilize knowledge and gain influence in multiple social fields (Medvetz, 2012).

While educational researchers have for some time been urged to become more policy "relevant," they find that there are trade-offs that universities and educational researchers face as they attempt to seek greater influence beyond the knowledge production field. This requires both doing rigorous academic research for academic journals while also competing with think tanks by more aggressively communicating findings in ways policymakers and the general public might access and utilize (Labaree, 1998). However, there are legitimation costs that universities may incur as they compete with think thanks and behave more like advocacy organizations instead of disinterested research organizations.

The notion that academic research is disinterested has been the topic of debate for decades (Lynd, 1939; Mills, 1959). Like those who work at advocacy think tanks, university faculty all have some ideological or values commitment and often receive private or government funding that influences their research agendas. Yet the norms of scholarship that they adhere to are different than those of advocacy think tanks, in which ideology, not research, is the goal (Haas, 2007b).

Yet, in spite of the risks involved, some universities are beginning to provide incentives for faculty to interface with media more, in part, to market their "brand." Faculty are also encouraged to brand themselves. Promoting publications on Facebook or Facebook-like platforms like Academia.edu or Researchgate.net not only increases an academic's profile, but also potentially the number of citations which contributes to impact metrics (Duffy & Pooley, 2017). While this can be viewed as more efficient and accessible knowledge mobilization, it typically does not mobilize knowledge beyond a small circle of academics, and the goal of knowledge production for better metrics and promotion in rank reinforces the commodification of academic knowledge (Radder, 2010).

There are also internal pressures that discourage faculty from expending time and resources on knowledge mobilization and a greater media presence. According to Fischman, Anderson, Tefera & Zuiker (2018), college of education faculty in their study "perceived products and activities associated with KMSE [knowledge mobilization for scholarship in education] (e.g., practitioner books, op-eds, media reports, and policy briefs) as a lower priority and believed that their colleges of education did as well" (p. 5). These modalities of knowledge mobilization ranked far below peer-reviewed articles, teaching, mentoring students, conference presentations, and scholarly books. The adoption of bibliometric analyses to measure faculty output has contributed to narrowing the range of options as faculty are encouraged to publish more articles and only in certain "top tier" journals. These are precisely the journals that are less likely to be open access.

A growing work intensification among academics is partly due to competition among universities for rankings in magazines like the *U.S. News and World Report*, but new neoliberal and managerial practices have also contributed. Faculty workloads have increased in part because states have disinvested from public universities, and private universities without large endowments are tuition-driven. As the states reduce funding and colleges of education compete for students with large online, for-profit universities and alternative certification pathways, faculty are asked to do more. Colleges of Education seek more revenue by employing more adjuncts, increasing enrollments in labor intensive, applied doctoral cohorts (increasingly online) and other "market niche" revenue producing endeavors. In addition, faculty are encouraged to seek outside funding and many engage in additional consultancy work for extra income.

This combination of legitimation pressures and work intensification based on a more market-driven and "accountable" university has made it more difficult for faculty to engage in the kind of activities that might make their knowledge production more relevant and accessible to a wider audience, including the media and policy-makers.

Research Methods

Most of our data was gathered as part of a larger study on KBOs, typically non-profit organizations that see knowledge mobilization or media influence as the major focus of their work (e.g., think tanks, universities, etc.), but also those for whom media influence is one of several forms of advocacy that they deploy (e.g., Advocacy organizations, unions, professional associations, etc.) (See Cooper, 2013; Piazza, 2016; Scott et al., 2017). This study draws on this larger data base, although our focus here is on university academics rather than KBOs.

While in this study, our focus is on university academics rather than KBOs, our rational for selecting local media is the same. Since education in the US is a state and local concern, and since many media studies tend to focus on major national newspapers, we wanted to study media access at the state and local level. Also, since university academics in education are typically involved with district and state-level educators, we wanted to know to what extent they were influencers in local media.

We chose to focus on New York state because it has a large number of local newspapers and a rich mix of KBOs, such as think tanks, civil rights organizations, unions, research universities and institutes, and grassroots and corporate funded "astroturf" advocacy groups seeking to influence public opinion. We wanted to understand how academic knowledge brokers fared within this competitive context. It is important to note, however, that a university academic is likely to have more media influence in states with less competition for media access. Also, while we understand that knowledge brokering is a reciprocal relationship in that the media also mediates or brokers who gets access, our focus is on those individual academics seeking access to the media rather than the reporters and news agencies themselves (Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019).

We did extensive media searches using *Access World News*, which was used because it has a more nuanced search function than other media data bases and contains 367 local New York state newspapers. Our search of KBO and academic mentions on *Access World News* covers a four-year period from Jan. 1, 2014 to Jan 1, 2018. We searched for citations and references to KBOs and education academics (what we call "mentions"), producing both quantitative and qualitative data. *Access World News* does not include the *New York Times* in its New York State database. This served our purpose for the original study of KBOs and local media, but we were curious to compare how academics fared in a national media outlet, so for the purpose of this study, we added a search of *The New York Times* to our data corpus.

The quantitative round of data gathering was an attempt to determine which organizations or academics were mentioned more often. As noted, what counts as a "mention" includes being referred to, quoted by a reporter, having an op-ed piece published, or a reference to a report the organization or academic released. In "cleaning" the data, we eliminated mentions that were not related to knowledge mobilization or referenced local individuals with the same name as the academic we were searching for.

We should note that mentions for university academics in education were difficult to compare to KBOs, since it was unclear how to think about academics organizationally. We searched for individual faculty mentions, specific university mentions, and mentions of policy institutes associated with universities. None of these approaches netted numbers of mentions comparable to other KBOs. We settled on an aggregate of terms that identified educational faculty in general ("education professor" and "professor of education") which netted 858 mentions, which constitutes the data corpus for this study, plus the *New York Times* data.

While the quantitative data was gathered as part of the larger study, the qualitative aspect of the data went unanalyzed since academics were not among the top influencers as shown in

Appendix A. For this article, we were interested in doing a deeper analysis of the data on academics to better understand their relatively poor showing and identify and analyze "outliers" who were more successful.

The qualitative data represented the immediate text surrounding the 858 mentions that provides information about the nature of the mention and the person or organization mentioned. We were able to ascertain and code what policy issues were taken up, what language was used, the genre of the mention (op-ed, quote, paraphrase, etc.), whether the mention was the result of a report or article, how the person or organization was characterized, whether they were quoted or merely paraphrased, etc. For instance, some authors were quoted for their expertise, while others were mentioned in relation to an article or report they released or a published book.

Access of University Academics in Education to Print Media in New York State

Because of the growing research attention to emerging policy actors and new policy networks in education (Anderson & Montoro-Donchik, 2016; Au & Ferrare, 2015; Ball, 2012; McGann & Whelan, 2020), our informal hypothesis going into the study was that corporate funded new think tanks, charter management organizations and advocacy organizations would outperform traditional interest groups in gaining access to print media. These traditional groups include teachers' unions, professional associations, academic researchers and civil rights organizations. We weren't sure going into the study where university academics in education would rank among these KBOs.

Two of our key findings were somewhat unexpected. First, the quantitative part of the study found to our surprise that in New York state, traditional membership organizations, such as teachers' unions, professional associations, and civil rights organizations had many more media mentions than somewhat newer policy entrepreneurs, such as think tanks, advocacy organizations (both grassroots and corporate funded), and charter school networks. The other somewhat less surprising finding, which we can be seen in the chart of ranked KBOs in Appendix A, was that the number of mentions of an aggregate of university professors in education ranked near the bottom when compared to most other KBOs.

As noted above, a search for "education professor" or "professor of education," which typically accompanied an academic mention, netted 858 mentions, which ranks them near the bottom along with "business organizations." It should be noted though that influential pro-business organizations, such as the Business Roundtable or the National Chamber of Commerce, are more likely to seek influence through direct lobbying of policy-makers at the state, local and federal levels rather than through local media. They are relatively weak KBOs, but very strong lobbyists.

This means that university academics are not only at a disadvantage in media access, but also in other forms of advocacy that many KBOs engage in. Media influence is only one of many types of influence, and many of the organizations we studied do not see it as their primary focus, which may explain their high levels of influence in general, but their low numbers of media mentions. University academics, on the other hand, are more focused on knowledge production and do not typically engage in lobbying or electoral politics as other KBOs do, which further reduces their overall influence[2].

[2] For instance, pro-business organizations have only a few more mentions than academics, but their main influence is not through the media, but rather lobbying, electoral politics, and funding pro-business think tanks.

While universities also lobby state legislatures and, to a lesser extent the federal government, the scope of their lobbying and their political activities are typically limited to seeking more funding for research. Individual academics may lobby on occasion, but outside of media access, their policy influence is exercised through consulting, providing expert testimony or writing amicus briefs for court cases. This is an important distinction since our data only captures knowledge mobilization through media access, but there are other ways that individuals and organizations mobilize knowledge.

The good news for educators is that through their membership organizations, they seem to continue to have considerable media influence at the local level where decisions about education are generally made through school boards and community input[3]. Our focus here, however, is on university academics in education and their access to media, and in this regard, universities are in a bind. On the one hand, reporters like to quote university faculty because of their association with research-based organizations that are viewed as unbiased. Universities, for their part are encouraging faculty to reach out more to the media, but lack the aggressive infrastructure of think tanks and their willingness to be viewed as ideologically biased (conservative, libertarian, liberal; Anderson, De La Cruz, & Lopez, 2017).

Strategies of Academics Who are Effective Media Knowledge Brokers

Based on those academics with the greatest levels of access to print media in New York state, we found a diverse set of characteristics and strategies that seemed to influence their effectiveness. We found that professors who were able to successfully access print media have a number of different profiles. Some drew on local reputations that they cultivated over the years or explicitly made themselves available to reporters. Many of these also had areas of expertise of interest to the media, such as in legal and equity issues or policy analysis. Others authored best-selling books that they or their publishers promoted. Some had popular blogs or had made a transition into being media personalities. Still others, directed research centers that produced research targeted to areas of interest to the media (See Table 3). We will first profile David Bloomfield, who had the highest number of mentions among academics.

David Bloomfield represents a professor with a strong local reputation who has cultivated a relationship with specific reporters at local newspapers. Bloomfield is a longtime professor at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center and was previously general counsel for the New York City Board of Education and has served on boards and worked with the city of New York in other capacities. He has a strong media presence within New York state. In our study, he had 193 mentions in state and local media, the highest number of mentions among university faculty. In addition, his website states,

> David C. Bloomfield is a frequent commentator in print, digital, and broadcast media. He has appeared in *Education Week, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Politico, New York Post*, WPIX, Fox5NY, WNET, and others.

He lists 15 published op-eds between 2015-2019 and 12 television appearances during the same period and has served as expert witness in many education-related court cases.

[3] This greater influence of unions and professional associations on local media may seem counterintuitive in the face of the success of conservatives to undermine public schooling and promote charter schools. However, much of New York state is rural and suburban where public schooling is still strongly supported and where charter schools are rare.

Table 3

Mentions of Academic Faculty in New York Print Media (Jan. 1, 2014--Jan. 1, 2018)

Faculty member Name	New York state print media (other than *NY Times*), over 20 mentions.	*New York Times* mentions	Source of appeal to the media, expertise
David Bloomfield, CUNY, Graduate Center & Brooklyn College	193	1	Legal/policy
Diane Ravitch, NYU, Emeritus	176	35	Popular blog/best-selling books
Angela Duckworth, U of Penn	108	44	Best-selling books (grit)
Gary Orfield. UCLA	70	5	Education/Inequality (Directs the Civil Rights Project)
Howard Gardner, Harvard University	70	11	Best-selling books (multiple intelligences)
Carol Dweck, Stanford University	54	36	Best-selling books (Growth mindset, psychology of success)
Pedro Noguera, USC	46	17	Best-selling books on race and education and former director of The Metropolitan Center NYU.
Alan Singer, Hofstra University	38	4	Blogs for *Daily Kos* (previously *Huffington Post*) history/social studies
Sara Goldrick-Rab, Temple University	33	31	Inequality/higher education (controversy over her tweets in Wisconsin)
Marc Lamont Hill, Temple University	27	39	Academic and Media personality
Michael Rebell, Teachers College, Columbia	25	0	Legal/policy. Led Campaign for Fiscal Equity in New York
Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford	25	6	Best-selling books (teacher education/policy)
David Berliner, Retired, ASU	23	4	Best-selling books

An analysis of his 193 mentions shows that he was contacted by reporters and quoted extensively (as opposed to merely mentioned or paraphrased) as well as authoring several op-eds. His mentions were from specific publications: *New York Post*, *New York Daily News*, *Buffalo News* and *Chalkbeat*, showing that major education reporters at those venues have him on speed dial to comment on controversial issues related mostly to New York City and state legal/policy issues. Those reporters include Ben Chapman (*New York Daily News*), Susan Edelman (*New York Post*), Jay Rey (*Buffalo News*), and Alex Zimmerman, Patrick Wall, and Sarah Darville of *ChalkBeat*.

Our data that compares mentions in a national media outlet like the *New York Times* vs. local and state media suggests that the criteria for media attention in these markets may be different. For instance, Bloomfield is an academic who has cultivated a strong local and state media presence, but not so in the *New York Times*, which has a national and international presence. He was by far the most mentioned academic in the New York state print media (minus the *New York Times*), and yet he had only one mention in The *New York Times*. His one mention in the *New York Times* during the four-year period under study, compares to four academics (only one being New York-based) who each had over 30 mentions.

The other difference between David Bloomfield and many other academics cited in the media is that there were no references to his research or publications. He was contacted by reporters for his legal/policy expertise and, as he noted in a personal communication, his willingness to make himself available to reporters.

Bloomfield also notes,

> I gained tenure and full professor through a series of short articles and a short book, as well as lots of campus service and at least adequate teaching, with publications intentionally aimed at meeting minimum tenure benchmarks so that I could get on with my preferred non-academic modes of written communication in my field of choice (personal communication, 2020).

This approach is less viable for non-tenured faculty today, even in less research-intensive universities, where expectations for publications and grant funding have escalated. Bloomfield also notes that his previous work as a teacher and as general counsel for the New York City Board of Education gave him a deep understanding of the education system and a high media profile that most academics lack.

Bloomfield's lack of mentions in the *New York Times* illustrates the importance of relationships with reporters, but also the fact that local and national media have different audiences interested in different issues. Local and state-level media are more likely to cover debates about taxes, school finance, law suits, teacher evaluation, teachers' unions, outsourcing education services, prayer in schools, gendered bathroom usage, etc. which occur daily or weekly in towns and cities across the U.S. And while the local paper is an at-risk institution (Fausset, 2019), it is still—even more than talk radio or broadcast news—where news about education is mostly accessed.

In this media environment, years of insider knowledge and legal and policy expertise makes an academic like Dr. Bloomfield the person to call for an interpretation of a recent law suit, legal decision, or political maneuver. Another key to his success with state and local media is that he has lived and worked in New York for decades, developing professional and political networks over the years.

Stylistically, Bloomfield, although politically liberal, can usually be counted on to take an iconoclastic and sometimes provocative position on issues, being critical of both the Bloomberg and DiBlasio mayoral administrations. Although reliable as a knowledgeable academic, he has a flair for the provocative turn of phrase. For instance, in a 2017 article, in which UFT president Michael

Mulgrew and NYCLU president Donna Lieberman, both argued against a New York State constitutional convention, saying it could erode funding for public education, Bloomfield argued the opposite.

> "Instead of eroding school funding, a constitutional convention could ensure it flows directly into school budgets," said David Bloomfield, a professor of education, law, and public policy at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. More than 10 years after the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit settlement, which ruled the state had to allocate more money to schools in order to provide students with a "sound basic education," advocates say schools are still owed billions of dollars. (The governor disputes that.) Bloomfield said that without a radical change like a constitutional convention, "there is no hope" for school funding reform.
> "The current political apparatus is fixed for incumbents and crooks," he said.

This ability to provide a sound analysis, backed by his academic credentials, but with a flair for the provocative makes Bloomfield a popular source for reporters. However, this style is more congruent with media outlets like the *New York Post, New York Daily News*, and *Chalkbeat*, where most of his quotes appear. A newspaper like the *New York Times*, might find this more combative style less attractive.

Michael Rebell, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia has a profile similar to Bloomfield. Although he had fewer mentions than Bloomfield in the four years of our study, his founding legal work with the New York State Campaign for Fiscal Equity has given him a high profile with New York media over the years. It is likely that had we chosen earlier years in which the campaign was more active, his mentions would have been much higher. Rebell represents a strategy of media access that includes what Thrall (2006) called "making noise and making news" (p. 416).

Knowing that protests and activism tends to make the news, Rebell, in classic advocacy coalition style (Weible & Sabatier, 2007) built an alliance among, The Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE), which Rebell helped to found, the Alliance for Quality Education, which was a parent organizing group that CFE created, the Shott Foundation, and other organizations and individuals, including famous celebrities. They organized protests and marches to Albany that were widely covered by the media and their use of celebrities also got the media's attention (Korten, 2009). Rebell combined Bloomfield's credibility in legal and policy issues with engaging in activism as a strategy for gaining media access.

Because many academics move from university to university, they often do not develop relationships with local media or involve themselves in local politics. Nor does the incentive system of universities—even in applied fields like education—encourage faculty to climb out of the ivory tower. For an assistant or associate professor seeking tenure and promotion, Bloomfield and Rebell's approaches would likely have opportunity costs in terms of professional advancement today. The data gathered by Fischman, Anderson, Tefera, and Zuiker's (2018) discussed above supports concerns that faculty in many colleges of education, perceive that in today's university culture, they would not likely receive tenure or promotion if they followed this route.

While a university academic like Bloomfield is cited in local and state media, his profile is less appealing to national and international media like the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* seemed to favor authors of best-selling books, such as Angela Duckworth, Diane Ravitch, or Carol Dweck or academics who were at the center of major controversies, such as Sara Goldrick-Rab and Marc Lamont Hill. While being New York-based was an advantage for gaining access to local and state media, it did not seem to be a major factor for the *New York Times*.

Marc Lamont Hill is a unique case in that while the controversy over his pro-Palestine comment (Rosenberg, 2018) netted him several mentions in the *New York Times*, most of his

mentions were related to his high media profile and the 2016 book *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, From Ferguson to Flint and Beyond*. Lamont Hill is one of several university academics turned media personality, and such exemplars may provide insight into how faculty might manage their media and academic careers. Lamont Hill has struggled, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, to juggle both careers.

British criminologist David Wilson, a sought-after academic on British TV discusses the trade-offs in straddling academia and the media. "There are tensions too within academia. Some now label me a populist who has dumbed-down and sold out, even if I continue to publish monographs and peer review articles, act as director of a research centre, and edit the *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*" (Wilson, 2013, p. 2). Both Lamont Hill and Wilson became television personalities, but this exposure also made them sought after for comments by the print media.

Many tech-savvy young faculty are producing traditional research while also mobilizing knowledge via Facebook, Instagram, podcasts, Edtalks, Tweeting, and blogging (Vazquez Heilig & Jameson Brewer, 2019). Although most education blogs are by non-academics or run through media and other organizations, faculty like Julian Vasquez-Heilig, Bruce Baker, Diane Ravitch and Alan Singer manage to blog regularly to a large audience. In addition, some academics are either full professors or retired emeritus faculty who are no longer up for tenure or promotion and are increasingly engaging with a wider audience through elaborate websites, blogging and publishing books that appeal to a more mainstream audience.

The most mentioned academics, who tend to be retired or nearer the end of their careers, bear this out. In the New York state area, New York-based education bloggers, like Diane Ravitch (176 mentions), and to a lesser extent, full professor, Alan Singer (38), tend to have high mentions. Although they are more associated with psychology than education, Angela Duckworth (108) and Carol Dweck (54), published bestseller books heavily applied to education: *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (Duckworth, 2016), and *Mindset: the New Psychology of Success* (Dweck, 2006/2016). Howard Gardner (70) also published a series of bestselling books on multiple intelligences. Besides blogging, Diane Ravitch also published bestselling books on school reform, such as *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* and *Reign of Error*. It should be noted that, besides publishing books for a broader audience, these academics have published more traditional academic research. Popular, best-selling books are often discounted as non-rigorous publications by tenure and review committees.

Others with high numbers of media mentions either directed university research centers or were high profile researchers in areas of interest to the media. Gary Orfield (77), co-directs the well-known Civil Rights Project at UCLA (formerly at Harvard University); Pedro Noguera (46) directed the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at NYU; and Linda Darling-Hammond (25) directs the Learning Policy Institute at Stanford University. The faculty in our study that received high levels of media access represent a plethora of strategies. Their experience suggests that building a relationship with reporters, engaging in blogging and other social media, publishing books for a wider audience, being active in local politics, and an association with a research or policy institute enhances effective knowledge brokering for university faculty. We also found that in education, knowledge in psychology, economics, and legal/political expertise were more highly valued by the media than other forms of knowledge. The data also demonstrate that local universities and scholars tend to interface with local media more than those from other states.

It is notable that the faculty with high mentions are nearly all either toward the end of their careers or are retired. While it is true that younger scholars are busy getting tenure and promotion within an intensified and demanding university workplace, a study of social media would likely find that many younger scholars are using various forms of social media to disseminate their work

compared to the faculty with greater presence in print media (Vazquez Heilig & Jameson Brewer, 2019).

Comparisons of Academics with Non-Academic Knowledge Brokers in Education

Many education academics are consulted for comment by print media, and universities are increasingly hiring media specialists, but our data showed that they were generally outperformed by other influential individuals working in education. High level education bureaucrats and leaders of local teachers' unions were understandably mentioned far more often in local media. New York City Chancellor, Carmen Farina, who was chancellor during the period of the study, had 4,420 mentions and Maryellen Elia, who was State Commissioner of Education during most of the period of the study, had 2,485 mentions. In addition, when linked to the search term "education," Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York City during the study, had 1,333 mentions. Likewise, Michael Mulgrew, who was head of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in New York City, had 649 mentions and Randi Weingarten, head of the American Federation of Teachers during the study had 432 mentions. These are all powerful leaders of important organizations that the media would systematically seek comment from. Therefore, it is perhaps unfair to compare them to individual university faculty, who at best might direct a small research center.

There is, however, a more comparable group of knowledge brokers who are associated with conservative think tanks or are independent writers. For instance, E.J. McMahon is the director of the conservative Empire Center for Public Policy, a member of the State Policy Network, and its intellectual leader. He is also an adjunct fellow with the libertarian Manhattan Institute. McMahon has 747 total mentions and 134, when linked to the search term "education." This is more than any education scholar other than David Bloomfield and Diane Ravitch. He also had 23 mentions in the *New York Times* (6 when controlled for education). Much like Bloomfield, his expertise is enhanced by thirty years of experience as an Albany-based policy analyst, and therefore has deep expertise in state policy and broad connections with reporters and legislators.

The Empire Center uses its resources strategically to target specific issues. It can gear its work toward the issues that arise weekly or monthly and be prepared to respond. Academics, on the other hand, tend to have specific areas of research specialization and are often hesitant to venture too far outside their areas of expertise. This makes them strategically less agile in terms of responding to the issues of day. They also insist on research-based responses, whereas few think tank reports, commentary or blogs are research based.

Although the Empire Center releases reports almost monthly, it does not solely rely on its reports being picked up by media outlets; they package their messages as a press release, a commentary, and in their blog, NYTorch, where many of their reports, commentary and press releases are repackaged. The center does little empirical research, so its press leases, reports, and blogs are largely written by Center staff, mainly E.J. McMahon and Bill Hammond. For instance, the Center released a report on April 27, 2020, that responds to the COVID-19 crisis, suggesting seven essential steps for promoting the recovery and renewal of New York's economy. These steps are not grounded in any evidence or research, but are essentially libertarian talking points, such as avoid tax increases and freeze public-sector pay across the board. But McMahon's legitimacy and connections to legislators are a big factor in their relative success. They are adept at getting attention not only in the print media, but also on television, talk radio and social media, and they take on bread and butter issues of importance to local communities.

However, McMahon and Bloomfield differ in the amount of support their organizations provide. Unlike, Bloomfield, who is a full time academic with teaching, research, and service responsibilities, McMahon and other think tank knowledge brokers dedicate their time to influencing the media and legislators. While state-level think tanks tend to have smaller budgets and

staffs than their national counterparts, they often hire directors who believe in their, in this case, libertarian ideology and who have some experience with or knowledge of state legislatures. The examples of Bloomfield and McMahon support studies of media access that have found that being local and having organizational resources are key determinants of access (Andrews & Caren, 2010).

Seeking Both Academic Legitimacy and Greater Media and Policy Influence

University faculty might learn from successful practices of think tanks and advocacy organizations, but they must do so without jeopardizing their legitimacy as evidence and research-based brokers. Traditionally, university academics have been perceived (whether rightly or wrongly) as producing if not disinterested knowledge, then at least evidence-based knowledge. Especially in an age of "alternative facts," this image of the university and its research faculty as a site of evidence-based knowledge makes them appealing to the media; yet, this knowledge is seldom disseminated effectively nor written in a way that is media friendly. This dilemma reveals

> tensions between (a) strategies aimed at incentivizing faculty to secure more grant funding, obtain more publications in journals with high JIFs, [journal impact factors] and increase citations and (b) debates about what could constitute impactful, accessible, and usable scholarship (Fischman et al., 2018, p. 10).

Yet, pressures for national rankings and revenue streams too often increase rather than decrease an emphasis on the former, disincentivizing faculty—particularly those seeking tenure or promotion--from engagement outside the academy. Furthermore, academic journals are behind paywalls and not accessible to policy-makers and the public. There is currently a strong move to make research more widely available to the public. For instance, in Europe, an initiative called Plan S stipulates that scientific research that is funded by the state cannot be behind a paywall and must be open to the public (Quaderi et al., 2019). This promises to radically alter the business plan of the publishing industry. Nevertheless, this does not solve the problem of making the work itself more user-friendly.

There is a long-standing debate about the accessibility of academic language (Barnard, 2010; Lather, 1996), which is beyond the scope of this paper. The issue of accessible language is particularly acute in professional schools like education in which we do more applied than basic research. Unfortunately, with *U.S. News and World Report* rankings at stake, colleges of education and other professional schools feel pressured to complete with the criteria of rigor and the often arcane language established in the arts and sciences.

But not only do KBOs more effectively use language, they also have a better understanding of the power of framing issues. Lakoff (2009) reminds us that academics (and Democrats) fail to understand the importance of framing issues to win an argument as opposed to making a rational argument or presenting evidence. The brain's neural networks respond physiologically to repetition and surface frames easily activate deeper ones. Many KBOs understand this and their mentions in the media were clearly attempts at framing or reframing an issue ideologically. Academics tended to focus more on the substance of the issue, thus, perhaps winning the rational argument and ceding the frame to conservative KBOs. This may help explain why since the 1980s KBOs have been so successful at shifting the ideological frame from a pro-public sector frame to an anti-public sector, managerial frame.

In interviews with prominent staff from think tanks, education advocacy organizations and university-based education policy centers, McDonald (2013b) identified dominant frames in

education policy that have largely been influenced by market and managerial frames promoted by KBOs since the 1980s. These include 1) framing public education as in crisis, 2) the production of human capital as the goal of education, and 3) teachers' unions as the problem. She also found that in the area of educational reform there was little diversity in education policy discourse across both liberal and conservative think tanks and policy organizations in Washington DC.

These dramatic shifts in how public education is framed ideologically are reminders of the powerful effects new policy entrepreneurs have had in mobilizing knowledge. As academics struggle to find their voice in the policy conversation, they will have to struggle with their identities as knowledge mobilizers as well as the constraints that the new managerial university imposes on them.

There are ways to parlay academic research somewhat efficiently into multiple genres. The results of academic research can be published in an academic journal, but a shorter, more accessible version can be published in a practitioner journal. Such journals or magazines are often distributed to thousands of members of professional associations. The same results can also be published as a policy brief with, for example, the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and written up as an op-ed for a local or national newspaper.

There are also new media outlets that combine journalism and academic research. For example, *The Conversation* is a new hybrid of journalism and academia in which academics write short articles for a broader public on relevant issues. Outlets of this kind can be a way for academics to efficiently get their scholarship out to a broader audience that is increasingly seeking reliable sources of information. However, doctoral programs would have to include these genres of writing in their curricula and promote forms of knowledge mobilization beyond the dissertation and journal articles. We also need more research on how academics are using social media and essentially creating their own media. What is the reach of academic blogs, podcasts, and Facebook pages, and how might we use them more effectively?

Many faculty also have active social media outlets through which they can disseminate their findings. In the meantime, faculty in applied fields must continue to press for the recognition of multiple forms of knowledge mobilization in tenure and promotion reviews.

Some university research centers are emulating some think tank strategies. For instance, we found that a report accompanied by a press release is a strategy used by many think tanks and advocacy organizations, and we found that mentions of an organization tended to spike when they released a report. This strategy has been used successfully by some faculty and research institutes during contentious debates that catch the public's attention.

For instance, a report by Stanford's Center for Research on Education Outcomes or CREDO (2009) that compared charter and public schools was widely reported in the media, as was the academic exchanges that followed. The same has been true of previous debates over reading methods ("the reading wars") and bilingual education. This research was mobilized in the context of assaults by conservatives on public schooling, bilingual education, and literature and whole language-based approaches to reading. However, in most cases conservative ideology trumped research evidence as we saw successful anti-bilingual education ballot initiatives, more decontextualized reading instruction and a proliferation of charter schools and vouchers. Such controversies attract media attention, though, and many academics were consulted on these issues. Many university-based research centers that employ full-time researchers have made producing rigorous, but user-friendly reports their main strategy, although with some exceptions, it isn't clear how effective they are in disseminating them. Too often they languish on their website.

As positions in academia become less appealing for some, and positions in education are decreasing due to competition from alternative pathways to teaching and leadership, more doctoral students are taking jobs in research centers. Research centers are in a position to be more effective at knowledge mobilization since they hire full time researchers who are not bound by the process of

tenure and promotion, allowing them to disseminate their work through multiple genres. Yet, based on their low number of media mentions, they are still not nearly as effective at accessing the media as advocacy think tanks are.

Beyond releasing reports, advocacy think tanks prepare media friendly packages that busy reporters can access easily, produce media friendly websites, focus on getting opinion pieces published in newspapers, cultivating relationships with reporters and editors, and give talks and hold press conferences. Research centers could do the same with the difference being that they have more rigorous scholarship to disseminate than advocacy think tanks do[4]. On the other hand, they still lag behind corporate-funded think tanks in funding and infrastructure. So, as is the case with academics, this means much of their time goes into grant-writing and doing funded research rather than knowledge mobilization.

As noted above, media access is just one way to influence public opinion and indirectly, policy outcomes. KBOs are increasingly focused on more than merely influencing public opinion; they also want to influence legislators and electoral politics (De Bruycker, 2019; Trapp & Laursen, 2017). In the US, the extent to which organizations can influence legislators and engage in electoral politics is linked to their tax status. As 501(c)3s, most KBOs cannot focus their work on lobbying and electoral politics. For this, they need a 501(c)4 status and a Political Action Committee (PAC). Many KBOs have their own 501(c)4s and PACs or they are part of a network of other organizations that can do more direct legislative and electoral advocacy. To the extent that they have network support for political and electoral advocacy, they can focus their main efforts on the media. Universities, on the other hand are primarily focused on research and teaching and as previously noted incur opportunity costs if they stray too far from their mission (Anderson et al. 2017). This limits the extent to which they can engage in overt advocacy or electoral politics, but it shouldn't keep them or individual faculty from building networks and alliances with organizations that can do this kind of advocacy.

Nearly all KBOs today belong to coalitions of networks of other like-minded organizations and engage in multiple strategies to get access to the media. Other than networking at conferences, academics are not very good at building alliances with other KBOs that have this capacity. Several KBOs could be natural allies for academic faculty. For instance, teachers' unions and civil rights and grassroots advocacy organizations could use the skills of university researchers and academics could get their work out to a wider audience of teachers and organizers. For example, Education International (EI) is a global federation of teachers' trade unions consisting of 401 member organizations in 172 countries and territories that represents over 30 million education personnel from pre-school through university. EI is working with university academics to produce an extensive body of research as part of their campaign against privatization and commercialization of education on a global scale (Education International, 2020).

Given the strong showing of local professional associations in media mentions in our previous study (author), academics might forge stronger relationships with their membership as well. These KBOs, made up of school board members, superintendents, school administrators, school business and finance professionals, and librarians were heavily consulted by reporters on local education issues, demonstrating that they have a high level of expert credibility, at least on local issues. While school boards were eliminated under mayoral control in New York City, their professional association's 1,118 mentions in state-wide media shows they still enjoy considerable media access state-wide.

Academic researchers largely attend research conferences, such as the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, but might do well to consider affiliating themselves with these professional associations if they want to have greater influence outside academia. These professional associations might provide academics some of the infrastructure to access the media that they otherwise lack.

As noted above, academics are somewhat limited to the social field of knowledge production, while think tanks can straddle social fields, such as journalism, lobbying, and advocacy. This creates a dilemma for academics. Their credibility rests on the perception that they produce disinterested, peer-reviewed, rigorous knowledge, but to the extent they become associated with advocacy organizations or social movements or have a strong media presence, their credibility as scholars may be diminished.

Conclusion

The issue of how academic research can be mobilized to enter the conversation around policy and practice has been a concern for decades (Weiss, 1977). Our study looks at a subset of knowledge mobilization; that is, access by university academics to local and national print media. While academics do not seem to be able to compete effectively with other knowledge brokering organizations, influential government and union officials or public intellectuals, we have identified both daunting limitations and some promising strategies that academics might leverage. While academics do not appear to be at the forefront of mobilizing knowledge to influence school reform or public opinion, we have provided some outlier exemplars of academics that have been successful at accessing the media.

School reforms from high stakes testing, to school choice, to mayoral control are more likely to be grounded in ideology and issue framing than research, in spite of a discourse of evidence-based policy and practice (Mehta, 2010). While traditional policy actors like teachers' unions, professional associations, and civil rights organizations continue to wield influence, a plethora of new actors heavily funded by dense networks of venture philanthropists and corporate money are now vying for influence as well (Ball, 2012). In the face of such a crowded and well-funded field, our interest in this study was to explore more systematically, what we were observing anecdotally: the ways academics are beginning to develop strategies to get their peer-reviewed research into the policy conversation about education reform in local and national media.

While academics are struggling to disseminate their work more broadly, they are also impacted by work intensification, the demand for more and narrower forms of scholarly production as a response to university rankings, and the need to create new revenue streams as the state withdraws support to universities. These shifts in academic labor conditions leave academics with less time and infrastructure to engage in broader forms of knowledge mobilization. Ironically, to the extent that scholars are encouraged to become more entrepreneurial and promote their universities' brands, they, like their employers, come more and more under the influence of corporations, foundations, and venture philanthropists, who are unlikely to fund research that departs too sharply from their scholarly agendas, material interests, or political ideologies. This dilemma, perhaps more than engaging in political advocacy, challenges the notion of disinterested knowledge, which is a source of university academics' credibility in an age of increasing political spin.

In this age of misinformation and disinformation, university researchers in education find themselves in a position that should be advantageous to them, but which they seem unable to leverage. Under the current set of incentives, academics will likely continue to present research studies at academic conferences and publish them in academic journals, most of which are behind

paywalls and not easily accessible to reporters, even if they had the time and interest to access them. Academic researchers constitute an important community of practice and knowledge production and academic conferences and journals are important sites for the circulation of research findings. But as various forms of right-wing populism gain hold globally, many academics understandably want to expand their audience beyond the academy.

Without a shift in incentive structures and infrastructure in universities, it is unlikely that many academics can compete for media access, and by extension, significantly influence public opinion or policy-makers. Many older academics were able to receive tenure and promotion at a time when the requirements for publication were less demanding, a point made by David Bloomfield. However, the current generation of tenure track faculty's noses are firmly pressed to the academic grindstone. In an age of "alternative facts," in which access to reliable data and rational discussion is in short supply, the handicap that university researchers have in comparison to other KBOs in knowledge mobilization promises to continue to largely hide our knowledge from public view.

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Appendix A

Education-related Mentions in New York state print media, Jan. 1, 2014-Jan. 1, 2018 by type of Knowledge Brokering Organization.

Organization Type (with top two organizations)	**Total mentions**
Unions New York State United Teachers or NYSUT (2,860) United Federation of Teachers (1,751)	5,900
Civil/Human Rights Groups National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or NAACP (1355) The Legal Aid Society (299)	2,850
Professional Associations New York State School Boards Association (1,118) New York State Council of School Superintendents (381)	2,764
Think Tanks Empire Center for Public Policy (448) Brookings Institute (397)	2,649
Charter School Networks Success Academy (charter network) (1,465) New York City Charter School Center (195)	2,246
Grassroots Advocacy Organizations Alliance for Quality Education (834)* Campaign for Fiscal Equity (459)	2,184
Astroturf (corporate-funded) Advocacy Organizations Families for Excellent Schools (551) Teach for America (347)	1,333
Pro-Business Organizations Business Council of Westchester (562) Business Council of New York State (228)	930
University Professors in Education	858
Foundations (The) Gates Foundation (277) (The) Carnegie Foundation (for the advancement of teaching) (93)	370

*Alliance for Quality Education is classified as grassroots, but has a significant amount of union funding.

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