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This document compiles articles that were previously published online as stand-alone posts on the College Media Review website. During the original release period, content was not produced as bound issues; articles were uploaded individually as they were approved. For archival purposes, traditional volume and issue numbers have been replaced with a volume year, reflecting the publication cycle from July through June. CMR historically published a Research Annual each year. When publication frequency changed, some research articles were published online only. To avoid excluding any work, all online-published research articles are included.

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Research (Vol. 62): Their Voices are Green

Their Voices Are Green: An Analysis of Environmental Themes in College Magazines 2018–2022

Abstract

Campus magazines are tasked with producing content to serve and reflect the lifestyle of their campus and community. But, student magazine editors redefined "campus culture" in content choices, as life outside campus changed amid culture wars in 2018, a mass shooting in a Florida high school, historic floods and wildfire, a global pandemic, the Sunshine Movement and COP26. Through these historic events, editors – particularly in Editor's Note – chose to use their voices to redefine "campus culture" and call for their generation to live with intention and accountability.

Editions from three nationwide contests were sampled 2018-2022 to examine environmental content focusing on three variables: Cover, Table of Contents, and Editor's Note. Prominent themes that appeared through semiotic analysis are climate change; policy; food; distribution / system; fashion: art / beauty; solutions; activism; pollution; hazard / crisis weather; conservation; sustainability. A review of 55 publication and 135 elements shows climate change, solutions, and activism dominate discussion, with editors introducing content in more than half their columns not found in edition content. Cover art results show 59% contained some environmental element while Table of Contents amplified environmental content with 61% . Framing was measured by how creators located their content: how is their commonsense of environment defined: as a global, local, or campus intent? Results show writers based their environmental concern on campus than in urban environments, while analysis of institutions shows private colleges produced the majority of environmental content.

Key Words: Environment, Campus Media, Magazine, Semiotic Analysis, Framing

Introduction

This research study analyzes award-winning college magazines 2018–2022, specifically focusing on discourse and content of environmental themes during recent unprecedented times: severe and historic global weather events; a new decade spurs generational calls to eco-activism; the COVID-19 pandemic prizes a clean environment as civil rights; COP 26 gathering generates Gen Z and youth participation in record numbers.

One objective was to extend earlier work tracing content changes found in three elements of campus magazines 2018–2022 (Terracina-Hartman, 2024). This study selects a subset of dominant themes to further assess the framing, presentation, discourse, location as well as analysis of creators and their institutions.

Background

College media are growing into an active area of scholarly research as campus-based media outlets provide a training ground for student practitioners (Wotanis 2016; Chappell 2015; Kolodzy et al. 2014; Sarachan 2011; Huang et al. 2006). Despite this growth, college magazines remain understudied. On a college campus, a magazine records a moment in time; as documenters of life for a defined community, staff editorial decisions reflect campus culture as much as the editor-in-chief at that moment.

Recent data indicate the campus magazine is stable (Benchmark Survey, Kopenhaver 2022): media advisers advise these publications at least annually (46%), on par with 2015, which showed growth in publication frequency and page count. Additionally, web versions not only mirror some print content, but offer routine and frequent updates, thus, adding fresh content (Kopenhaver, Smith, and Biehl 2021).

Prior literature confirms the magazine medium as a unique cultural form (Piepmeier 2008). Magazines – consumer, trade, niche, campus ¬ – build communities of interest among the readership; the content expresses and explores a community's culture, ideals, and identity. Thus, as cultural artifacts, (Piepmeier 2008; McQuail 2005) magazines continue to be valid for study.

Literature Review

Environment, Society, and Magazines

Since the medium's heyday (1880 to 1920), magazines remain central for scholarly research (Prijatel and Johnson 2013). This timeframe creates a structure to examine content, operations, and innovations. Content themes such as nature and environment have been analyzed, especially in terms of reader uses, reaction, and satisfaction (Takahashi and Tandoc 2016; Meisner and Takahashi 2013; Labbe and Fortner 2010; Knight 2010; Neuzil 2008; Donovan and Brown 2007; Schoenfeld 1983).

While environmental movement scholars trace and often debate its history, scholars of environmental news list the late 1960s as key (Friedman 2015), spurred in part by publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962). With science an addition to the discourse, readers increased interest in their ambient environment.

Also at this time, activism surges following a Santa Barbara oil spill: Sen. Gaylord Nelson proposes creation of Earth Day amid protests over fossil fuel reliance. What follows is a busy legislative period: establishment of the EPA and ESA, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and more.

Prior to this legislation whirlwind of 1968 to 1972, magazines covered environment more frequently than mainstream publications (Knight 2010; Neuzil and Kovarik 1996). A spike in mainstream media coverage occurred post-agency creation, suggesting, "environmental issues were initiated not by the general interest media, but by professional interest groups, specialized [magazine] publications, and the government bureaucracy" (xix). But, compared to other media, magazines remain understudied in the environmental communication arena, some suggest, because of an editorial impact and role in reflecting and shaping community discourse (Meisner and Takahashi 2013; McQuail 2005).

Environmental communication research confirms a prevailing theme that positions the environment as an economic resource as opposed to a public benefit or civil right (Terracina-Hartman 2019; Knight 2010, Allan, Adam and Carter 2000). In the early 2010s, research on climate change communication confirmed these discussions were best framed in pragmatic terms, such as public health, disease transmission, crop impacts, severe weather occurrences, cost-saving measures, and more (Myers, Nisbet, Maibach, and Leiserowitz 2012; Maibach et al. 2010).

With social media campaigns aimed at college-aged audiences in early 2010s (e.g., Sierra Club's 2011 Beyond Coal and 'Unfriend Coal') and the activism of Greta Thunberg and her Sunrise Movement in the late 2010s, this dialogue shifted and moved (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012; Lovejoy, Waters, and Saxton 2012; Keniry 2010). Lack of action – amid dire warnings from IPCC reports – motivated Gen Z to stand up and demand their future, in a sense, decrying lack of action as dangerous as inaction on gun safety. Social media usage among nonprofit environmental groups

targeted this population with dialogic opportunities and landed: three purposes are identifiable (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012) information, community, and action. Early scholars in environmental communication noted the movement aligned a clean environment with civil rights; in this digital arena, climate actors advocate for policy change, political action, and most importantly the social justice issues involved in climate change (Chen et al. 2023; Weinstein et al. 2015). Tracking climate change discourse 2018–2021, researchers found several themes of predominance, including, "policy discussion: climate justice." Keywords included communities, social, recovery, vulnerable, women, solve, populations, native, learning, action, effective (Chen et al. 2023, 401). These themes peaked as the U.S. headed into COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Brown and Hawlow (2019) noted how protest (or 'climate strike') coverage appeared to delegitimize marginalized communities while Ludwig (2020) documented a discourse shift in which debate moved from science to individual responsibility to policy and community efforts; however, the COVID-19 shutdown and hyper-focus on individual actions appear to have altered that emphasis (Haßler, Wurst, Jungblut, and Schlosser 2023). Thus, the discourse has shifted in which Gen Z talking about climate change is tangible in ways that was not tangible to Baby Boomers two decades ago (Tyson, Kennedy, and Funk 2021; Keniry 2010).

Gen Z engaging more with climate change content is visible in at least four activities listed during a recent Pew survey (2021): donating, contacting elected official, volunteering, attending rallies and protests. This engagement appears to parallel activism ignited during the 2018 culture wars, after the Parkland shooting, and on college campuses (della Volpe 2022; Tyson, Kennedy, and Funk 2021; Keniry 2010). Results show Gen Z and millennials are more active than older generations addressing climate change on and offline (55). Additionally, surveying for five conditions (excess of garbage, water pollution, local air pollution, lack of greenspace, no safe drinking water), Pew researchers report 60% of respondents indicated they see "moderate" environmental problems where they live (Tyson, Kennedy, and Funk 2021, 56).

Theoretical Background

It is appropriate to reference Stuart Hall and grounded theory in discourse analysis of media texts. Early on, Hall writes the form of the message "has a privileged position in the communication exchange and that the moments of encoding and decoding though only relatively autonomous in relation to the communicative process as a whole, are determinate amounts" (1973, 2).
Hall agrees that repetition is key to discourse analysis – whether it be visual (headline, photo, page design) – or change in style or production, as it can signify importance as well as unimportance. Like Gerbner, however, scholars agree any change in media production may be most worthy of study: "What stands out as unusual or exceptional may have the greatest weight" (Steiner 2016, 104).

Two threads of research converge in Hall's model: the processes leading to content production and the other, which views media as symbolic artifacts, essentially arbiters of routine. Alongside this effort is belief among early magazine scholars, who argue for balancing content between 'giving readers what they ought to read as well as what they want to read' (Ray Cave, quoted in Johnson and Prijatel 2013): and "What matters most is not what the editor puts into a publication but what the reader takes away" (Johnson and Prijatel 2013, 249). Likewise, Hall argues that newspaper producers declare they are giving their audiences what they seek; however, it's not clear whether the readers know what they want or don't want (1975).

Hall emphasizes that "dominant" meanings are not "majority" meanings; thus, he argues that media producers may favor or present specific encoding, but are unable to control meanings for receivers. And while he rejects the notion of hypodermic-needle theory of media effects, he acknowledges the power with which media producers can create and establish cultural structures by which groups and their members tend to operate.

The concept of meaning wanders into framing theory. A frame continues to offer a context-specific structure by which to examine meaning-making; framing theory offers an additional avenue to examine these choices and usage over time. Gerbner et al. (2001) suggest this repetition in mass media – essentially construction of a "frame" – leads to cultivation not only in meaning, but likely also in attitude among producers and receivers.

Four approaches exist by which to assess frames in media content (Entman, Mathes, and Pellicano 2009). A qualitative approach aims to identify frames by tracing usage in discourse of a single event over time (see e.g., Esser and D'Angelo 2003; Pan and Kosicki 1993). A frame can be "identified by analyzing selection, placement, and structure of specific words and sentences in a text" (2009, 180) with researchers setting parameters for analysis (Pan and Kosicki 1993).

Dunwoody (1992) defines a media frame as a, "knowledge structure that is activated by some stimulus and is then employed by a journalist throughout story construction" (p. 75). Recent research into college media content finds campus newspapers lead with campus news (47%), student life (15%), followed by sports (9%). Of the hard news that were lead stories, 26% were tied to a national, news issue, yet 87% related to a campus issue (Lyon Payne and Mills 2015). For the purposes of this study, frame is assessed by geophysical or perceived location identified in the article (Adams and Gynnild 2013).
Semiotics also is appropriate for this analysis as together they capture denotation – specific, literal, precise meanings – and connotation – historical, sociological, psychological, and highly individual meanings.

In line with prior research, it was the intent to examine college magazine content and allow categories to emerge from the data, thus gathering representations over time (Foss 2005; Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1990). From there, key words define themes, signaling a "commonsense meaning" of how student journalists construct messages of environment and Nature in their campus lifestyle magazines.

Research Questions / Hypotheses

This study uses semiotic analysis to examine environmental communication in a content analysis of campus magazines 2018–2022.
This study offers three research questions:

> **RQ1**: How prominent are environment themes in campus magazine content 2018–2022?

RQ2: Are trends visible in where these themes appear?
RQ3: How is location used to frame commonsense meanings of 'environment'?

Building on prior work (Terracina-Hartman 2019; Knight 2010; Podeschi 2007) the study gauges theme frequency, records locations, type of institution, and develops key words (e.g., accountable, narrative, intention) to record discourse occurrences.

Based on prior work (Seelig and Deng 2022) of messaging findings and climate change anxiety and activism (Weinstein 2015; Terracina-Hartman, Bienkowski, Myers and Kanthawala, 2014; Adams and Gynnild 2013; Keniry 2010) among college-aged populations, the following hypothesis is offered:

H1: Creators issue personal and communal "call to action" in environmental content.

Methods

To contribute to knowledge of campus media operations, this study selected award-winning (placing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd) campus magazines from three national college media competitions: Associated Collegiate Press Pacemakers, College Media Association Pinnacles, and Columbia Scholastic Press Association Crown, collecting content from editions published 2018 through 2022.

Honorable Mentions were discarded as awarding was not uniform. Literary magazines and magazines not 100% student-run were filtered out and discarded. This yielded a sample N = 55 publications (Appendix 1).
A codebook was adapted from prior study of college magazines (Terracina-Hartman 2024) while an environmental news code was adapted from Knight (2010) framing study of news and magazines (Appendix 2). A coding team trained on editions not in the dataset to refine the identified themes, subtopics, locations, type of institution, and department. With Scott's pi value of .84, the team established demonstrated intercoder reliability on 5 variables (and others not in this study: graphical treatment and length).

Using central tenets of fundamental semiotic principles (see e.g., Barthe 1972; de Saussure 1959) content was reviewed to reveal prominent themes, or meanings: 10 themes were identified organically, with minor trends tied to each theme to include variabilities (e.g., climate change and global warming). Content pertaining to prominent environmental themes were then selected for analysis, with measurement also for occurrences of #COP26, #SavethePlanet, #DitchtheBottle, #2020 hashtags prominent during the study period.
List of prominent themes:

- solutions
- sustainability
- conservation
- policy: corporate polluters, fossil fuels, individual
- fashion / art / beauty
- activism / accountability / responsibility / minimalism / 2020
- food: production / systems
- hazard / crisis (wildfire, drought, flooding), extreme weather
- pollution
- human-caused climate change

Results

Of the 215 eligible elements from 55 award-winning publications, N = 114 eco- and Nature-related themes for analysis. After a review of data and open-ended responses using key words (e.g., global warming), yielded N = 135 elements for analysis.

A review of results confirms Seelig and Deng (2022) and Weinstein et al. (2015) in terms of discourse trends: prevention rather than mitigation; act don't react. Discourse analysis reveals discussion of a range of social issues, presenting environmental themes as a measure of civil rights, a matter of personal responsibility, and – at the dawn of a new decade – a moment for this generation to

be active, positive, pro-active, and beyond approaches and / or politics of prior generations.

To answer RQ1, a frequency analysis shows most commonly occurring themes were Human-Caused Environmental Impacts / Climate Change and Activism (Fig. 1).

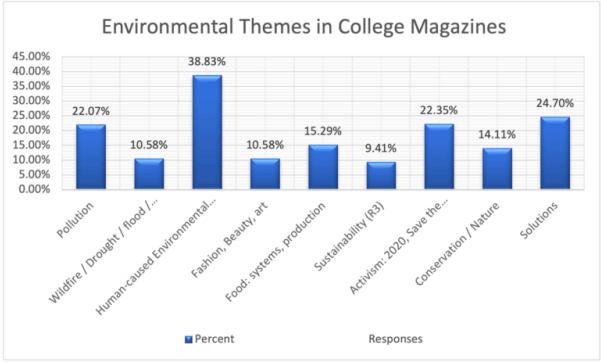

Fig 1. Frequency results of content themes in award-winning college magazines 2018-2022.

The most prominent categories are Climate Change (33, 39%), Solutions (21, 25%) and Activism (19, 22%). And while Fashion / Beauty / Art occurs 11%, its environmental frame indicates an overall news value as discourse features responsible fashion choices, sustainable design, fair trade textile and cosmetic suppliers, as well as entrepreneur creators doing all these things. Readers are asked to consider the environmental impact of their choices in clothing, cosmetics, and creating. Ball Bearings spring 2021 edition 'Woven Identities' theme features "The Ethics of Thrifting" (12, edition 2) details how shoppers choose to frequent consignment or used clothing stores to avoid 'fast fashion' and reduce the industry's impact on climate change by reducing amount of clothing sent to landfills. On the fall 2019 cover: "The Cost of Curls" and "The Truth About Climate Change" (vol 11, edition 1), while inside readers find a feature on climate change activist Kate Elder, who chooses hope and change as she protests alongside others. Similarly, The Collegian Times uses a Game of Thrones-like image to introduce its history-themed Spring 2022 edition. Teasers promise readers a deep dive into La Brea Tar Pits to learn if dire wolves once walked LA the last Ice Age and how climate change + humans drive species to extinction.

Pollution (19, 22%) closely follows Activism, but surprisingly, drought / severe weather content (includes hurricane, heat wave, deep freeze, etc) is low; writers' content references air and water pollution from factories, DOE sites, pesticide usage, automobile exhaust, single-use plastics, and more. Again, the discourse emphasizes steps readers can – and should – take to reduce the impact of their lives on their

homes, communities, their campus, and their future with solutions-themed content (21, 25%).

As a general practice, the Editor in Chief pens their column as the edition is about to be published, thus allowing the possible inclusion of timely updates and information. That also allows for unique content – introduction of issues or the publication's stance – that might not appear elsewhere.

A review of literature indicates editors' voices – whether individual or collective – draw a wide audience and carries much importance. To the objection the editor's job is to "give news, not views," (Dumont, 1919, 6) a dismissal was provided as early as 1912: "From [their] position, the editor is morally obliged to give comment. [They are] the one [person] in the community, usually, who has the greatest number of avenues to knowledge of current events; [they are] in a position to know more about the trend of affairs both local and foreign than anyone in the community" (1919, 6).

Acting as the voice for a campus community, campus magazine editors 2018–2022 wrote about climate change and area pollution, issuing generational calls to action and local activism on these issues (41%). Trending deeper into threats facing the community, additional discourse addressed wildfire's impacts on public health, air and water quality, and the impending – perhaps inevitable – mudslides during the rainy season. Editors called on their community to choose sustainability (55, 78%), such as create defensible space, be active with tree planting programs, avoid single-use plastics, shop in bulk, choose alternate transit (public, skateboard), and compost food waste. Also, most specific: activate campus clubs to advocate for campus sustainability programs to expand recycling, use fair trade vendors, choose biofuel sources, and other options to be a model for the surrounding community. Unlike other sections, these columns emphasized "#choosethisfight" alongside #ourfuture" and #brightertomorrow that do not appear in other sections. This content coincided with #2020 and #choosetosavetheplanet campaigns common on college campuses as a new decade dawned alongside the activism of Greta Thunberg and the Sunrise Movement. Writes one editor in Spring 2020, "Thunberg along with the Australians [staff writers], have reminded me that with each decade comes something to fight for – why not make 2020 a fight for our planet ...?" (Vaccaro, 7). While another Editors' Letter highlights content detailing groups advancing outdoor

equity in spring 2021 (Echo, 2021, 7), another introduces a light / dark edition theme, describing how humans lighting up their world threatens species who live in the dark: "The point of this magazine is to challenge a culture in which elements such as dark and light are polarized and pitted against each other" (Lolacano, 2019, 4).

With a content theme of food: production / systems, results show editors used their columns to highlight family and community traditions presented in edition content (48%). As the pandemic shutdown appeared in their columns, such highlights spotlight the community with profiles of everyday heroes. We find this theme in Ball Bearings spring 2022 "The Muncie Issue," which spotlights local groups studying farmers and food distribution systems to get food to the community, targeting individual neighborhoods; we see family generations, their culinary traditions, and how this leads one woman to entrepreneurship; and a discussion of outdoor safety for all. Elements of sunscreen damage to marine life and our endocrine systems: one writer breaks it all down and tells readers where to read 'Reef Safe' labels and how. Editors point to this content with pride, stating their intention and attention to the reading community.

With a dominant expression of Solutions (59, 85%) – tips for taking action at "home" (campus, community), profiles on "community heroes," such as a firefighter / student / mother – the co-occurrence of environment content with Solutions using a Community frame (27, 32%) confirms an editorial approach and voice to this column over time and across publications.

H1 states "creators issue personal and communal call to action in environmental content." A total review of content featuring a call to action invoking a 'community' voice, with keywords such as "we must," "together," "us," "let's," "for our future," and more in content themes of fashion or food choice accountability, community activism for prevention, or conservation of habitat or Nature spaces, accounts for 88 occurrences or 68%, of content across 2018–2022.

Thus, H1 is supported.

To answer RQ2, a frequency analysis was conducted across all identifiable sections, with three standing sections selected for further analysis, in line with prior literature (Terracina-Hartman, 2024): Editor's Note, Cover, and Table of Contents. Approaches vary to these standing elements; therefore, analysis over time is valid.

Results show Environmental and Nature-theme content prominent in Editors' Note (30, 43%) and Cover Art (45, 64%). Table of Contents, which ranged from a single page and 1 photo behind a bulleted list of content to 3 pages with an array of photos, graphical text treatment, and a specialized banner also appeared prominent, with 43, (61%) in the results.

The Table of Contents section can serve as "a second front page" for editors to graphically highlight content. These choices are worthy of study as often, a Nature or environmental-themed story carries much opportunity and demands many design decisions: severe weather, loss, cleanup, recyclables, collections, heroes / helpers, entrepreneurs, and more. Content that features severe weather conditions follows an issue-attention news cycle (Downs 2016), but in a magazine, the content cycle must follow the story of the community; thus, beginning with social impacts of events, such as loss and survival and how this very big story looks and continues to look in the community. Capturing those voices with images and graphics is essential to guide the reader through to the content. When a community experiences change, juxtaposing a historical photo alongside a current photo can tell a story even before readers consume any text. While research definitively confirming the effects of photo and graphic usage on comprehension, attention, distraction, or attraction is absent, recent work confirms that such usage does elevate the level of importance for readers (Zillman, Gibson, and Sargent 1999). Additionally, for readers drawn to visual media, the possibility of selective perception may be at play (Powell, Boomgarden, De Swert, and de Vreese 2015; Zillman, Knobloch, and Yu 2001). Turning to cover art, the approach varies: illustration vs photographs; stark design vs cover lines. Each speaks to creator voice and reading audience. Post-shutdown, images became intimate featuring heroes, helpers, and solutions. Of the 45 covers featuring environmental elements (59%), 30 used a full-page photo, (43%), 13 produced a photo illustration (29%), and 2 offered a secondary photo (4%).

To extend this analysis, variables that may contribute to production must be considered, such as institutional and student demographics; therefore, considering the type of institution producing this content is warranted. Results show 4-year private institutions produced most content with environmental or Nature meanings (Fig. 2).

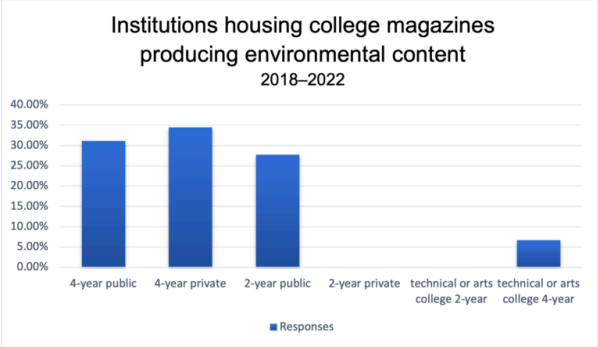

Figure 2. Characteristics of institutions housing college media producing environment-themed content

The location of these institutions may contribute to the editors' content decisions as well as the student demographics. As magazines build communities and reflect communities (Gill and Babrow 2007) and editorial distance between editors and their reading community is less than in other news-type outlets (Abrahamson 2009), these location data offer a significant glimpse into how creators react and interact with the physical environment(s), thus creating a frame for their environmental content.

To further examine this question, RQ3 asks how location serves to frame environment and Nature-themed content. A frequency analysis counts types of locations referenced in content. The intent of this question is to examine what are the commonsense meanings of environment and Nature in the discourse among college media creators. One method for writers to create prominent meanings, or frames, is through identifiers, such as geolocations – placing readers in time and space (Adams and Gynnild 2013. Whether the writers focus the prominent meanings on campus, the surrounding community, a region, or the planet, the content is framed much the way a person looks out of a house through a window (Entman, Mathes, and Pellicano 2009): the frame constructs a specific worldview for the reader to process meaning. Do college magazines present environment-themed content, such as a climate change concern, taking place in hyper-local frame or is the writer crafting a national concern and trying to sift the information to create location frame relevance for the reading community?

Frequency results indicate 87% frame campus location as prominent, followed by U.S. urban (60%) (Fig. 3), while 41 is a national frame (45%). For regional references, West Coast leads (24, 26%), while Midwest and Southern appear nearly equally (17%). These decisions speak to discourse consistency in creating relevant content to the reading audience, but also with a language of activism and of empowerment: climate change is an issue here there and locally and here is what we, readers, can do with our daily choices on campus, in the community, and perhaps achieve a nationwide effect, aligning with prior research (Adams and Gynnild 2013). Given the data showing dominance of activism and campaigns #choosetosavetheplanet, the discourse would be relevant to the campus reading audience (Tyson, Kennedy and Funk 2021; della Volpe 2022) and likely in the surrounding community. As noted in prior literature, the discourse focuses on community and storytelling – unlike newspapers that often lead readers toward decisionmaking on an issue, magazine content digs deep into social issues and how issues affect community; readers are asked to identify with humanity and what that issue looks like.

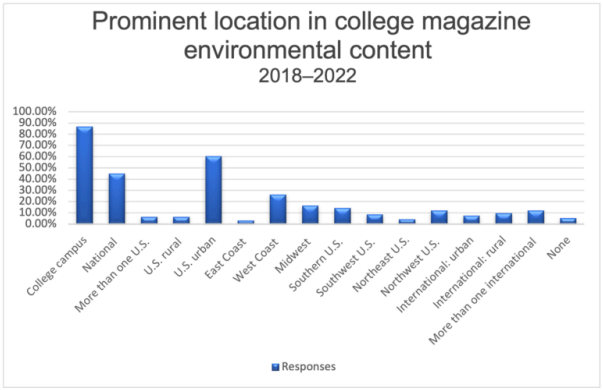

Fig. 3. Locations prominent in college magazine environmental content 2018–2022.

Writes one Editor-in-Chief in a 2022 special edition, "After observing misinformation in media and society surrounding climate change, I knew it was necessary to communicate responsibly and effectively about climate change to our audience" (Levins, 4).

Flux reframes the word "uncertainty," linking it to a post-fire, post-protests, and mid-pandemic "Resilience" theme of the Spring 2021 edition. Writes the editor, "The world still turns and people carry on in any way they can. If anything, these times have proven how resilient we truly are" (Daehlke, 4). Framing these issues – state, national, global – with storytellers in the community "United Through Activism," creators promote action and support: community leaders raising awareness of institutional racism and promoting community engagement; supporting protests against Asian hate and providing a safe space; studying the media for trans representation and rurality.

Lastly, Talisman introduces its fall 2021 edition's content – which takes readers above and below Earth: spelunking and searching for their personal talisman – acknowledging its intention and goal for readers. Executive Editor Jess Brandt writes, "The Talisman has and always will attempt to reflect the spirit of WKU and the larger community through everything we do. As you read Issue No. 11, I urge you to leave these pages with a greater sense of wonder around you, searching for the moments of life that are simply human" (2021, 5).

Discussion

This study builds on prior work aiming to examine discourse and editorial operations of college magazines during recent historical moments in time. The medium of magazine has established itself as a builder and uniter of community when the community itself seeks a vehicle for doing so. The microcosm of a college campus – where the outside community and external social conditions may be visible on the pages of a lifestyle publication – offer a solid starting point for examination of discourse and content.
Results confirm Seelig and Deng (2022) in terms of prominent meanings and minor trends: action rather than mitigation. Semiotic analysis reveals discussion of a range of social issues, presenting environment themes as a measure of civil rights, a matter of personal responsibility, and – at the dawn of a new decade – a moment for the current generation to be active and reject what prior generations have created. This finding appears to be in line with current and broader research into Gen Z's overall use of discourse, messages, and symbols (Chen et al. 2023; della Volpe 2022; Tyson, Kennedy and Funk 2021).

What's notable is frequency in prominent meanings over time particularly as "campus life" drastically changed outside: from the culture wars in 2018 to the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown to returning to in-person learning in early 2022, the appearance of environment and Nature-themed messages appear in standard locations and standing features while commonsense meanings were revised to stay relevant to the times. We see discussions of global climate change encouraging personal responsibility to participate in a generational effort while profiles on

individual heroes and activists are highlighted in Editor's Note and Table of Contents. Cover art illustrations dominate – illustrating what might be left of Earth in the near future if we don't embrace #2020 #choosetosavetheplanet campaigns.

We see this in the results: the Solutions theme takes a different trend in profiling heroes, family traditions, community celebrations #doingthe19. Fashion, art, beauty creators and needs are different when students spend their days on Zoom and their supplies are limited; discussions of upcycle take on a different meaning with an emphasis on #safeathome and #shortage of needed supplies take over, particularly for those who navigate chronic conditions. As a prominent meaning, Food Systems / Production discourse co-occurred with Solutions during the COVID-19 shutdown: A food shortage figured prominently during these editions; growing food, starting community gardens, forming co-ops, establishing blessing boxes and taking / leaving food appear as minor trends. This result supports the dominant meaning "be active" noted in other works.

The call to action dominates much of the editorial voice, particularly when the editor-in-chief introduces new topics. Again, the suggestion is to be active, be accountable, live with intention and responsibility. And, get outside! Enjoy Nature and here's a list. While traditional news outlets provide the doom and gloom data of a changing climate, the magazine community focus permits this direct connection narrative: let's protect our world. 'Our world' in discourse appears most prominently as campus and the urban environments. Prior research has noted that scholars tend to neglect the magazine medium as a research interest due in part to its less definable editorial impact, which reflects and shapes the discourse of its readership into a niche community (McQual 2005).

The intent of this study was to analyze five years of data; however, CSPA and CMA 2023 contest changes favor restricting data collection to four years.

Limitations and Future Research

While the study period covers years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown and the years returning to in-person learning, it's not possible to approximate how or if the student editors or creators turned their attention more or less to environmental concerns during these historic moments without referencing the chaos of culture wars, the pandemic shutdown and all the attention to personal habits that #safeathome involved, and the activism that converged with these global, national, and regional events. What may be missing are magazines that didn't appear in the winners' circle of the three national college media contests because of pandemic disruption; while the CSPA, CMA, and ACP database indicate a consistency in entries / colleges over a 10-year period, it is not yet possible to review a list of entries that did not win nor colleges that were uncharacteristically absent during the pandemic shutdown years.

While a separate paper examines the content of articles in this dataset, further research should continue to explore the relationship between Gen Z's expression of nature and environment and the prevailing frame of activism, solutions, and accountability – perhaps to further refine or update a definition. Additionally, further variables for study include use of graphics and visuals. Smith & Joffe (2009) found UK Press used visual representations of climate and environmental issues in three ways, primarily by telling people's stories rather than scientists' data. Magazines, similarly, personify an issue or event by illustrating the social impacts on their readership – Hurricane Michael, Camp Fire, Texas Deep Freeze, wetland loss in Louisiana, fracking wellheads in Pennsylvania. Their definitions relied on interactions with Nature (animals, places, plants, weather) and environment (places, scientists, politicians, conservationists), Similarly, Meisner and Takahashi (2013) defined environmental discourse as relationships between humans and nature: issues, players, actions (257), but this study's dataset, as noted earlier, indicates "the environment" is in our homes and down the street at the park – integrated to daily life.

Whether these dominant meanings persist beyond these historical perhaps unprecedented times also is worthy of study. Following award-winning editions for a five-year period to survey consistency of this type of content over time rather than in editions selected for – and winning – as a content submission. Additionally, further investigating location frame and type of institution over time may reveal a

consistent campus life value that existed – and persisted through the COVID-19 pandemic – or a recent news value visible in the content. A content-oriented frame analysis encompasses both generic and topical themes: generic (conceptual e.g., morality and consequence) and topical (issue-specific). The 2018–2022 time period invites further examination into college media content and production given the unprecedented social conditions in which these student creators were operating.

Scholars agree it's not delivery that drives media effects, it's content and repetition; thus, we need to continue to study how this repetition – and the choices leading to usage – are constructed. To approach such analyses from a different method, future research might consider multimodal discourse analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). Were a collection of each magazine's print and digital editions available, comparing the digital and print homepages for content as well as tracing the environmental content outside of the top three departments in which such content appears in this study (digital vs. print) could provide valuable insights into discourse, visual values, and content framing over time.

Lastly, comparing Editor's Note content with news content by theme is a worthwhile topic for study; the data might reveal additional insight into discourse patterns and issue framing for publications over time.

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Appendix 1

List of Magazines

1. El Sol
2. Owl Magazine
3. The Summit
4. Baked
5. Echo (Columbia College)
6. Drake (Iowa)
7. The Vista (Greenville University)
8. Collegian (PA)
9. Pacific Rim Magazine
10. The Sentinel, North Idaho College
11. The Bleed (2-year) (Pa)
12. Ball Bearings (C)
13. SHEI Magazine
14. Common Ground — The Shorthorn Culture Edition
15. KRNL, University of Kentucky (C)
16. The Bull Magazine, Los Angeles Pierce College
17. PRM, Langara College
18. The Current, Amarillo College
19. Distraction Magazine (Miami)
20. DAMchic, (P) Oregon State U
21. FORM Magazine, Duke
22. MPJ / (Syracuse)
23. Tusk
24. Pursuit, Cal Baptist
25. Ampersand (CSPA)
26. Ball Bearings (C)
27. Collegian Times, Los Angeles City College (C)
28. Countenance, East Carolina University (C)

29. Crimson Quarterly, University of Oklahoma (C)
30. Dollars & Sense, Baruch College (C)
31. Etc. (2-year) (C)
32. Envision (Pa)
33. El Espejo (Pa)
34. Focus (C)
35. Flux (C)
36. FM/AM (C)
37. Measure, Marist College (C)
38. OR University of Oregon (C)
39. The Point (Biola College) (Pa)
40. SCAN, Savannah College of Design – Atlanta (C)
41. The Stephens Life (Pa)
42. Talisman, Western Kentucky University
43. Tempo (Pa)
44. TWO (Pa)
45. Uhuru (Pa)
46. Warrior Life (El Camino) (C)
47. Windhover, NC State, Raleigh, NC (C)
48. Woodcrest
49. Blush, FIT
50. Manhappenin' K State
51. Square 95
52. DIG Mag (Cal State Long Beach)
53. Textura
54. UNF Spinnaker
55. Inside Fullerton (Fullerton City College)
56. City Scene (San Diego City College)

- Note: Pacific Rim Magazines becomes PRM during the study time period

Appendix 2

Coding Protocol and key words

Prominent Themes

Measures: publication, contest, theme, graphical elements, department, length, institution, location, and subtopic
I. Origin: Identify publication
II. Identify contest and year
III. Indicate themes present in content
IV. Initial themes revealed from review of content: mark visible in content

- pollution
- drought
- human-caused environmental impacts / climate change
- food systems production / systems / buy local
- solutions
- resources
- sustainability
- conservation
- policy
- fashion / art / beauty
- activism
- hazard / crisis weather

Theme Trends Indicated by Key Words: Mark visible in content

- Natural resources
- Animals / wildlife (welfare, rescue, habitat)
- Profile, community
- Explore Nature; be active
- Minimalism: create self-ecosystem
- Accountability / responsibility / inclusive
- #COP26
- #ditchthebottle

- #2020Reduce, reuse, recycle.

V. Indicate where this content is found in publication
VI. Indicate length of content (columns, pages)
VII. Presentation: Mark design elements and graphics usage
VIII. Indicate type of institution
IX. Indicate locations references in content
X. Indicate locations references in content

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Research (Vol. 60): Starting a conversation

Starting a conversation: An exploration of the state of student media websites at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Abstract

Student media at HBCUs have declined precipitously since 2000 yet provide a significant look at issues meaningful to the Black communities they represent and cover. This study uses content analysis of existing student media websites to assess the state of student media at HBCUs. It finds several notable trends. Frequency of content updates varies, yet student-run news websites are not typically updated daily and are likely updated only when breaking news occurs or when students have new content to post. Stories covering student government or administration were uncommon, and nearly half of the websites did not offer any form of advertising.

Medium-sized HBCUs were more likely to have active social media compared to smaller-sized HBCUs, and public HBCUs were more likely to have some form of a media independence statement on their website. These descriptive data provide a starting point for conversations about an important media source and training ground for future Black journalists.

Keywords: HBCU, student media, news websites, content analysis

Legacy news media continue to bleed, with layoffs continuing into 2024 after a 50% rise in layoffs in 2023 (Farhi, 2024). Newspapers still are closing, leaving communities without independent sources of news (Abernathy, 2023; Newspaper Fact Sheet, 2023). College student-run media, which appeared healthy despite the upheaval in legacy media in 2012 (Kopenhaver, 2012; Payne, 2012), now struggle financially post-pandemic, though 94% continued to publish one way or another through the COVID closures (Kopenhaver, et al., 2021).

Through all of this research, the state of student media at Historically Black Colleges and Universities has been largely overlooked. This research provides the first step in filling that gap.

Literature Review

Only recently have researchers turned their attention to Black media generally with the Black Media Initiative at the Craig Newmark School of Journalism at City University of New York (Thompson-Morton, et al., 2021). Student media at HBCUs have attracted the attention of a coalition of news organizations and companies with the ReNews Project, which provides resources to breathe new life into dormant student newspapers at HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions (ReNews Project, n.d.). Research has taken historical looks at HBCU journalism and mass communication programs (Albritton, 2012; Jeter, 2002; LeMelle, 2002; Wilkinson, et al., 2020). It has examined the role of HBCUs in desegregating the news industry in the decades since the Kerner Commission (Sturgis & Johnson-Ross, 2019). One mention of academic research was found on student media at HBCUs. It was

completed more than 20 years ago by Reginald Owens, and it was an article summarizing Owens' work in *Black Issues in Higher Education* but not a peer-reviewed paper (Stewart, 2000). The only other research was a summer 2023 census of student media at HBCUs and HSIs conducted by one of the authors of this paper in preparation for this research (Norman & Lopez Luritta, 2023).

The two decades out of researchers' view turned out to be difficult ones for student media at HBCUs. Owens found in 2000 that 69% of the 100 HBCUs that responded had active student media, and he bemoaned the fact that only 11 of those, or 16%, published weekly. The rest, it was noted, published monthly or less often (Stewart, 2000). A census of student media at HBCUs done in the summer of 2023 found a much bleaker landscape: only 38 HBCUs, or 36% of the 107 total listed in The Hundred Seven, a website dedicated to tracking HBCUs, even had active student media (Norman & Lopez Luritta, 2023). The 2023 research did not attempt to determine frequency of publication, but the research found decline of nearly half of active student media at HBCUs.

The census of student news outlets at HBCUs and HSIs (Norman & Lopez Luritta, 2023) took a step further, comparing 2023 student media with those listed in the 2017 Editor & Publisher Newspaper Databook (E&P, 2017). This comparison found 35 student newspapers at both HBCUs and HSIs opened between 2017 and 2023, but only 4 of those were at HBCUs, well below the replacement rate of 18 that had closed in those years. Some 30 student media outlets at HSIs had closed in those six years but had been replaced by 31 new student news organizations. The glimmer of good news for student media at HBCUs was that during the conference where this research was presented, editors of Spelman College's The Blueprint showed off their publication, which had been newly revived with the help of the ReNews Project. This brought the total number of student media at HBCUs to 39 as of Fall 2023.

Significance

The state of student media at Historically Black Colleges and Universities deserves special attention. A student editorial in The Lincoln University's Lincolnian in Pennsylvania noted that broader media cover crises at predominantly white

institutions, such as shootings, scandals involving faculty or administration, protests or controversies over diversity, equity and inclusion, but such events are not covered at HBCUs. This lack of coverage harms HBCUs by reinforcing negative stereotypes, perpetuating the false narrative that they are inferior, and this inhibits fundraising efforts and reduces potential advocacy that might change policies and the false narrative with it (Page, 2023).

Beyond that, Black Media Matters, a content analysis of Black media in the United States, finds that Black media cover issues important to Black communities six times more than mainstream media, and it does so with a racial, global and historical context missing in the mainstream media (Thompson-Morton, et al., 2021). Student media at HBCUs, by extension, shed light on institutions important in the Black community. The precipitous decline in the number of student media outlets at HBCUs combined with the important role they could play give this research significance.

Research Question

This research uses content analysis to explore student media at HBCUs with this research question: What is the state or current landscape of college media at Historically Black Colleges and Universities?

Methodology

To answer the above research question, examine the current state of college media at HBCUs, and explore indicators of health of the publications, a content analysis was conducted of all current HBCU student media websites in the United States. This analysis was done in two steps. The first included 39 HBCUs identified from the database provided by Norman & Lopez Luritta (2023). Of those available, 6 did not have currently functioning websites, meaning the sites no longer existed or had not been updated in more than a year. Those sites were considered ineligible, leaving 33 websites that had been updated within the 2023-24 academic year. This was a pilot

to inform the researchers' work in terms of operational definitions and coding procedures.

Using data and experience from the first round, the second step included only websites that had been updated after April 1, 2024, to capture websites that were active at the end of the school year. Content and bylines from the past 30 days were included, though in cases when the last content was posted in April, content published before April 1 was not included for methodological consistency. In this second round, 18 websites had no new content before April 1, and the remaining 21 were included for coding.

Before either round of coding, descriptive information was gathered from the 2015 College Blue Book (Romaniuk, 2015), the most recent available to researchers, for all 39 HBCUs with student media. This descriptive information included location, size of school, type of institution (two-year college, four-year college or university), and presence of a communication, media or journalism program. College size was then coded as either small (enrollment fewer than 5,000), medium (enrollment 5,000-15,000) or large (enrollment more than 15,000) based on the classification system used by collegedata.com.

In the first round, coders recorded the following information about the 33 student media websites: date of last apparent update, frequency of regular updates, number and types of stories from the past week, number and types of stories from the past month, number of unique bylines from the past month, presence and status (active or inactive) of social media accounts, types of advertising shown, indication of e-newsletter, masthead information (number and contact information) about the staff, language about editorial independence and founding newspaper year.

Three coders divided the websites and coded them within a two-week window. The coders reviewed and discussed the coding categories, previewed a sample of college newspaper websites and practiced the coding scheme. The coders worked independently and coded sets of websites using a Google form, which was exported to an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis. No reliability was attempted in this discovery phase. It was designed to take a first look at the websites and determine appropriate variables.

In the second round, two coders recorded data independently from each of the 21 student media websites that had been updated since April 1. The variables were reduced to the following: number of unique posts; number of posts on student government; number of posts on administration or board of trustees; number of unique bylines; number of students listed on the staff page; sources of revenue; whether the student media appeared to be active on social media; and whether the website had a statement of student media independence.

Initial intercoder and intracoder reliability on the number of unique posts was below the desired 90% level because of the categories the researchers tried to capture. To address this, the two coders went through the websites together to count only unique content and ended up with 100% reliability, using simple percent agreement method. According to Wimmer and Dominick, published content analyses require a minimum reliability coefficient of 90% or above (2014). The coders decided to include all content, multimedia such as podcasts and non-journalistic such as poetry, as well as traditional news and feature stories. Student government and administration/board of trustee-related posts started with reliability of 95.24% and 80.95% respectively from independent coding. After reviewing the differences, the coders ended up with 100% reliability. In the case of administration-related content, one coder was counting obituaries of former administrators while the other was not; they decided to include obits. The number of unique bylines and students listed somewhere on the website had initial agreement of 33% and 66.67% from independent coding. The coders resolved these differences together; often a coder double counted a student's byline or missed a page where student staffers were listed. Revenue sources started with 76.19%, active social media at 90.48%, and presence of an independence statement at 100%. The differences were resolved so that all variables ended with 100% agreement for all 21 websites.

Results

Phase One Analysis

In the first round, where 33 functioning student news websites were analyzed, we categorized 23 of these covering small institutions, 10 as medium-size institutions, and none as large institutions. Among these institutions, 26 were public and 6 were private. Additionally, we discovered that 25 institutions offered programs in journalism, media, or communication, while 7 did not.

Of the 33 news websites analyzed, 7 were updated less than monthly, 6 monthly, 7 two to three times a month, 6 weekly, and 7 two to three times a week. We found in the second round of coding that it was difficult to determine how often websites were being updated from a 30-day sample, so this variable was eliminated in the second round.

Coders found 11 websites had been updated not at all or only once in the past 30 days. Another 11 had been updated 8 or more times. The remainder had posted new content 2 to 7 times. Most of those stories were features and only 2 were about student government while 1 covered an administration issue. We also analyzed the number of unique student bylines. The findings here were similar to those of new content in the past 30 days. Eleven websites had no or only 1 unique student byline, 11 had 8 or more unique student bylines, and the remainder had 2 to 7. This informed our decision to eliminate websites that had not been updated in the past 30 days in the second round.

Eight of the 33 websites offered a link to the student media's corresponding print content on Issuu or a related website. Because we found some student media on Issuu independent of a link from the website, we decided to eliminate this as a variable in the second round.

The majority of websites included social media links on their pages. Of them, 22 of 33 contained a variety of social media links. Instagram was the most common with Twitter as the second most common. The variation in the types of social media that were active prompted us to consolidate this as a single variable: active social media account.

E-newsletter sign-up options were available for 9 of the 33 websites. This variable was eliminated in the second round. On the masthead or About Us page, 13 included

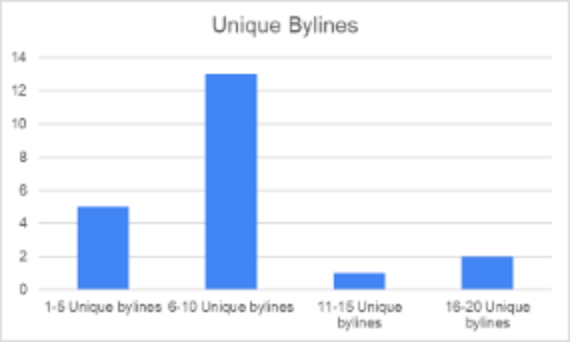
names of editors, and 5 contained contact information for student staff. Of the websites, 18 offered general contact information and 10 had names of faculty or staff advisers. This variable was retained in the second round of coding of the 21 student media websites updated in the past 30 days.

Phase Two Analysis

Of the 21 websites coded in step two of the study, the average number of unique content posts in the past 30 days was 10, with websites ranging from 1 to 31 posts. All of the websites posted some type of content within the code period, with a mode of 10 websites posting 6-10 stories. A total of 4 websites posted 1-5 stories, 4 websites showed 11-15 stories, 2 websites had 16-20 stories and 1 website contained more than 20 stories.

Stories posted about student government were uncommon. Of the 21 websites, 14 had no posts about student government issues, 5 websites had 1 post, and 2 websites had 2 stories about student government issues. Similarly, 15 of the 21 websites posted zero stories about administration or trustees, 5 websites had 1 story, and 2 websites contained 1 story about administration or trustee issues.

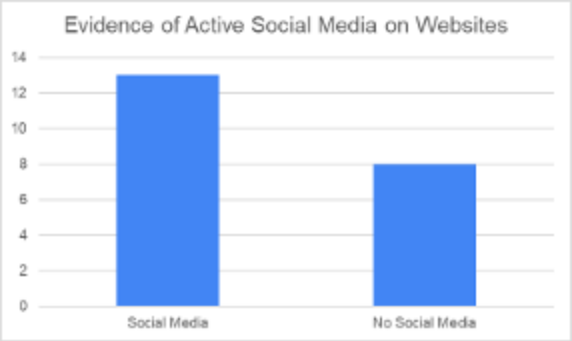
The average number of unique bylines was 8 per website, with websites ranging from 1 to 19 unique bylines. A mode of 13 websites posted 6-10 bylines. Five websites contained 1-5 unique bylines, 1 website contained 11-15 bylines, and 2 websites showed 16-20 unique bylines.



Of the 21 websites, 10 contained no advertising, 6 contained advertising of some type (third party, local, national or sponsored content) and 6 indicated donations as a

source of revenue. One website indicated both advertising (through sponsored content) and donations.

While 8 of the 21 websites coded did not contain evidence of active social media, 13 of them did indicate some social media activity. A post hoc analysis creating a cross tabulation of active social media activity with school size indicates that the majority of schools with no social media were small. No large schools were coded.

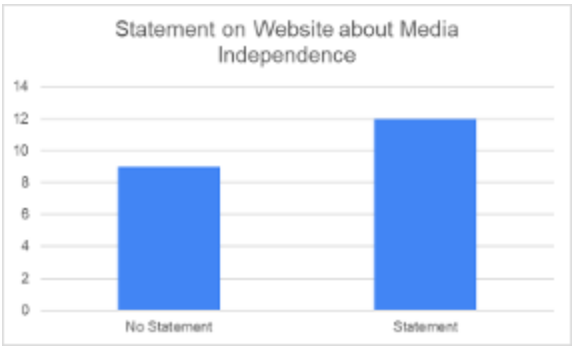


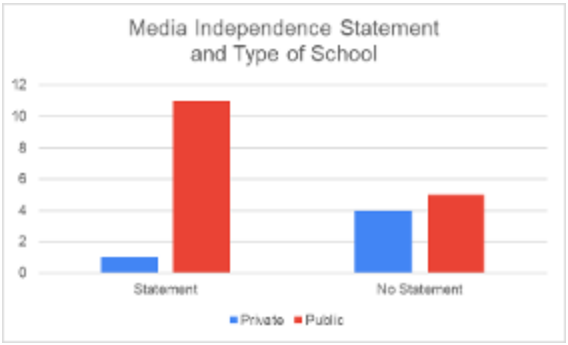
Cross tabulationSocial media evidence and school size		
	Small School	Medium School
Social Media	6	7
No Social Media	7	1

Number of students listed on the staff page of the websites was coded and revealed a mode of 9 websites that had zero staff members listed. There were 7 websites that listed 1-10 members, 2 websites showed 11-20 staff members, and 1 website in each of the remaining categories of 21-30, 31-40 and more than 41.

Number of students listed on the Staff page	
0 students	9 websites
1-10 students	7 websites
11-20 students	2 websites
21-30 students	1 website
31-40 students	1 website
41 and more	1 website

Websites were coded for the presence of a statement on student media independence. Of the 21 websites, 9 did not include any language on editorial independence and 12 did have some kind of statement. When broken out into a cross tabulation for public or private school, some differences emerge. Of the schools that contained some type of language asserting media independence, 11 of the 12 were public schools. Of those that did not include some type of statement, schools were fairly evenly split with 4 private schools and 5 public schools. For example, Alabama State University, a public institution, wrote on The Hornet Tribune website under Core Values, "We have been the independent student voice of Alabama State University since 1879. None of our content is influenced by the university administration or anyone else outside of our staff."





Discussion

This was an exploratory study to inform future research on the health of student media at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The researchers started out with some assumptions about media health that this stage of the research brought into question. We assumed that news websites would reflect the work of the newsroom, but the fact that just over half of the student media identified had news websites updated within the last 30 days of the semester challenged that premise. We assumed that the number of unique content and unique bylines would indicate health, but if the news website is not a priority for the newsroom, especially in smaller newsrooms with limited resources, then health for the broader population of student media at HBCUs must be measured another way. We do feel confident that this exploratory work has provided some insight that will inform future research.

Number of stories posted in 30 days.

When analyzing the number of unique posts from these student news websites, we found that nearly 50% of them posted 6 to 10 unique articles over a 30-day period. This suggests that these student-run news websites are not updated daily and are likely updated only when breaking news occurs or when students have new content to post. The remaining 50% of the websites were split between posting fewer than 6 to 10 unique articles and posting more than 10 unique articles, indicating a variation among HBCU student-run news websites. These differences can be attributed to various factors, including whether the institution is private or public, the size of the

journalism or mass communication department, the number of faculty and staff dedicated to student news media, funding, student involvement, and other factors.

For example, Alcorn State University's The Campus Chronicle was an outlier with publishing 31 pieces of unique content and having 19 unique bylines, which suggests that the more dedicated student involvement a student-run news website has, the more likely the website will have more unique content posted. On the other side of the spectrum, the same holds true, with Grambling State University's The Gramblinite only publishing two pieces of unique content with only two unique bylines over a 30-day period. However, this line of thinking is not exact, with Xavier University of Louisiana's The Xavier Herald being an extreme outlier, posting on its website only one time over a day 30 period, with one unique byline but with 24 students listed in their official staff page. For transparency, one of the researchers, Dr. Quincy Hodges, is a faculty member in the Mass Communication Department at Xavier University of Louisiana and is the faculty adviser to the Xavier Herald. Moreover, given his position as an faculty adviser, he suggests that the Xavier Herald and similar HBCUs in size and classification may place more emphasis on the print product and treat the student-run news websites as a secondary platform. These publications may be stuck in the old ways, focusing on the print product and not worrying about updating the website until after the print product goes out.

Number of stories on student government or administration.

When analyzing the number of student government and administration stories, the data suggests that very little attention is paid to these two governing bodies. This implies that priorities for student-run news websites at HBCUs are placed elsewhere, such as campus news, arts, entertainment, sports, and other hard news topics not related to student government or the school's administration. Many factors could contribute to this lack of coverage. While this study does not attempt to determine why coverage of student government and administration is lacking, several reasons may explain it, including the lack of importance placed on student government, potential lack of transparency from student government, and the general privacy of the board of trustees, especially in private institutions where their meetings are not open to the public. The administration may not be readily

accessible to student reporters, or the majority of students on these staffs do not have beats specifically for student government or administration/board of trustees.

Number of bylines/size of staff in staff box.

The data shows that a higher number of unique bylines is consistent with more unique content posted on a student-run news website, while a lower number of unique bylines suggests less unique content. This may provide a more accurate representation of the student staff size, given that almost 50 percent of the schools in the study did not list any student staff at all. However, there may be variations. Some schools have larger staffs but fewer unique bylines within a 30-day period because certain staff members may be assigned beats that are not as active in the spring, such as sports reporters covering women's volleyball or football, which typically occur during the fall semester.

Size of school to social media.

Medium-sized HBCUs were more likely to have active social media compared to smaller-sized HBCUs, suggesting that larger schools may have greater student participation in their student media. This increased participation may allow for student staff to be dedicated specifically to social media activity. Additionally, the difference suggests that larger schools may maintain more active social media to reach a larger student body, whereas smaller HBCUs may have smaller communication networks.

Type of school (public/private) to independence statement.

When analyzing independence statements from these student-run news websites, we found that public HBCUs were more likely to have some form of an independence statement on their website. These independence statements establish that these news websites are beacons of freedom of speech and are protected by the First Amendment. This suggests that the content published on their websites is not under the influence or pressure from the university, the board, or any other influencing

stakeholder. Public HBCUs appear to embrace and champion independence, while private HBCUs do not emphasize independence, indicating that student media at private institutions may be more aligned with the institution's beliefs, ideas, and opinions. Additionally, nearly 50 percent of the schools coded did not include any language on editorial independence, suggesting that there may not be significant importance placed on First Amendment protections for the press.

Advertising/financial support.

Nearly 50 percent of the coded websites did not contain any advertising, which suggests that advertising is not a priority for these schools and that there's not much support from outside entities. However, there were six schools that had some type of advertising support and six more schools that indicated that donations serve as a source of revenue. These findings suggest that a majority of these school websites are funded either through the mass communication or journalism departments or the universities themselves, which may lead to smaller budgets and or even potentially affecting the breadth or quality of news coverage.

Conclusion and Limitations

This research is preliminary and not generalizable because of the sample size. It was beyond the scope of this study to compare this small population with student news media at similar size universities that are not HBCUs.

The study coded only student media news websites at HBCUs. Some of these student newsrooms have active publications but do not also have a website for their news. Some of these newsrooms publish online only, according to their website. It is difficult to find a single medium common to all newsrooms for content analysis.

Despite this information being descriptive, these data can serve as a meaningful starting point for a conversation about an important media source and training ground for future Black journalists. Student media at HBCUs provide news to their predominantly Black college campuses. Beyond the campus borders, these voices are

often not well represented, underscoring the value of these student media outlets within their communities.

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Reaching New Audiences: Student News Organizations' Spanish-language Coverage

Abstract

U.S. universities are increasingly adding programs related to Spanish-language media. Such programs may result in more student-produced Spanish-language content. Through a content analysis (N=300) of articles, this research explores what student publications are covering in Spanish. Student-produced Spanish-language newspapers prioritized news and campus coverage; nearly half of the articles directly referenced Hispanic or Latinx communities. Differences with regard to funding, public vs. private, and Hispanic-serving Institution status are discussed.

Keywords: College Newspapers, Spanish, Hispanic-serving Institutions, News Deserts

Methods: Content Analysis

As newsrooms around the United States continue to shut down, with more than 2,000 closing in the last 15 or so years (Abernathy 2020), student news organizations have the potential to fill voids of coverage in local communities. Finneman et al. (2022) reported that student journalists at university-affiliated news outlets that were created, in part, to address news deserts "took pride in covering underrepresented communities" (349). Notably, two of the newsrooms explored in Finneman et al. (2022) were created to serve communities of color in large metropolitan areas that might not traditionally be considered news deserts. Finneman et al. (2022) suggested that demographics also be considered in defining deserts of news coverage.

The results of the last official censuses placed the Hispanic population as the largest minority group in the United States and Spanish as the second most-spoken language in the United States after English (Dietrich and Hernandez 2022). Relatedly, colleges and universities around the country have begun launching programs in Spanish-language and bilingual media. Florida International University and the University of Arizona have bilingual journalism graduate programs, and San Francisco State University launched a bachelor's degree in bilingual journalism in fall 2022.

However, despite the academic interest in Spanish-language media and growth in related degree programs, Arzaba (2020) stated that Spanish-language media is not immune from the industry struggles that other print outlets are facing today, such as advertising and the growth of online platforms. Further, Graciela Mochkofsky, director of the Spanish-language Journalism Program at City University of New York, noted that Spanish-language newspapers have their own unique struggles and suggested that Spanish-language content that is produced by English-owned companies does not get equal respect or resources. Further, she noted that "The Spanish-language industry is still mainly serving immigrant Latin American communities, but the majority of Latinx are U.S.-born, young and bilingual" (Arzaba, para. 4), which should be considered in the planning of coverage. This was supported by Moran (2006) who suggested that older family members encouraged

younger relatives to consume Spanish-language media as a means of connecting with their culture.

Given the evolution of the Spanish-language audience, the development of journalism programs focusing on Spanish, and the experiential learning opportunities for students studying Spanish, research into student-produced Spanish media is critical. Therefore, in this study, the authors seek to further the discussion of potential demographic news deserts that are being addressed by student news organizations by reviewing the content covered by student news organizations in Spanish.

Literature Review

The Hispanic population in the U.S. is by no means a static, monolithic group despite being connected by the Spanish language and largely hailing from Mexico and Puerto Rico. According to the 2020 US Census, the Hispanic population increased by 23% between 2010 and 2020, going from 50.5 million to 62.1 million, which accounts for more than half of the total U.S. population growth during that decade (Jones et al. 2021). Since the early 2000s, the demographics of this population have shifted in two significant areas: place of birth and English proficiency. According to a Pew Research Center 2022 report, "Among adult Hispanics, the U.S.-born share increased, from its recent low of 45% in 2007 to 55.2% in 2019" (Funk and Hugo Lopez 2022). The same report states "Changes in language use have been more pronounced among U.S.-born Hispanics. In 2019, 91% spoke English proficiently, up from 72% in 1980. Meanwhile, those who speak Spanish at home fell to 57% in 2019 from 67% in 1980" (para. 13).

Yet, the interest in Spanish-language news media is increasing. Pew Research reported that the audience for national broadcast news at Univision increased across all major time slots from 2018-2020, though there was more variation at Telemundo, the nation's other leading Spanish-language broadcaster. In general, the average daily audience for national news hovered at about 1.9 million.Univision also saw increases in local affiliate audiences across the same time frame.

While interest in broadcast media has increased, the average per-paper circulation for weekly and semi weekly Hispanic newspapers "remained relatively steady from 2015-2019 but dropped by 8% in the past year, from 118,000 to 109,000" (Pew Research 2021, para. 5).

Spanish-language Coverage

In terms of coverage, Shumow and Vigon (2015) explored the topics covered by 28 U.S.-based Spanish-language news websites, specifically pertaining to political coverage that was deemed important to Hispanic audiences and the variety of coverage in general. They found that "The scarcity of coverage of some key topics as identified by Hispanic voters is problematic" (61) and observed that while there was some variety of coverage, it was not diverse enough to account for the geographic and demographic variation in the Spanish-speaking audiences.

Dulcan (2006) compared framing strategies between Spanish and English coverage of a specific immigration issue—a rogue border enforcement group known as the Minutemen. Dulcan found that Spanish-language newspapers covered the topic more extensively and with greater topic variety than their English counterparts, but reported little variation in their use of news frames. However, in reporting on immigration, English-language newspapers were generally more negative in tone than Spanish-language coverage. These findings were affirmed by Branton and Dunaway (2008), who also reported that:

> *Spanish-language news outlets generate a larger volume of coverage on immigration when compared to English-language news outlets. Additionally, English-language media outlets are more likely to focus on negative aspects of immigration and produce negatively slanted news stories than are Spanish-language media outlets. (1019)*

Similarly, in a comparison of Spanish and English broadcast stations in the same region, Moran (2005) found that the stories aired generally adhered to American journalistic norms of "newsworthiness" but found that there were differences in coverage of "Latino issues." Specifically, the Spanish-language station dedicated

significantly more coverage to issues of immigration (11% of its total coverage) than the English-language station, for which immigration accounted for less than 1% of its total coverage. In essence, Moran (2005) confirmed that the Spanish-language station had tailored its coverage for its intended audience. She credited similarities in style of coverage to market forces including parent company ownership, issues of advertising, etc. In this manner, Moran (2005) argued that Spanish-language coverage, in the studied market, was not alternative media, but instead a form of mainstream media.

COVID-19

Mainstream media of all languages were challenged by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the years that followed. Prior to the pandemic, Villar and Bueno-Olson (2013) found that English-language publications were more likely to report on health issues. Further they found that English coverage was more focused on policy, whereas Spanish coverage was more likely to address diseases. Among the Spanish-language coverage, Villar and Bueno-Olson (2013) found more variety based on geographic location than any other factor.

In terms of Spanish-language media related to the pandemic, Gomez-Aguinaga Oaxaca, Barreto, and Sanchez (2021) explored the relationship between Latinos' Spanish-language media consumption, perceptions of credibility, and attitude formation. They found that "trust in Spanish-language journalists is associated with a greater change in assessments of state and local officials providing adequate information about COVID-19" (10). They concluded that their study documents the need for quality Spanish-language media related to COVID-19 in the US, especially given the documented disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on the Hispanic community (Noe-Bustamante, Manuel Krogstad, and Lopez 2021).

Despite this need, as previously noted, Spanish-language newspapers have struggled to maintain their circulation. Student newspapers may be one mechanism for addressing coverage voids (Kopenhaver, Smith, and Kleinberg Biehl 2021), whether physical, geographic news deserts or cultural or language news deserts. Further, in reviewing disparities in coverage related to COVID-19, Lefebre and Valera

(2022) recommended an "Increase [in] academic pipelines for Hispanics/Latinos to enter journalism and health communications" (2), as well as an increase in Spanish-language coverage.

Experiential Learning

The Spanish language has an important place in the United States. Spanish speakers in the United States influence American life on countless social, demographic, and cultural aspects. Thus, educational institutions' role in developing and ensuring the acquisition of Spanish-language skills is essential.

Experiential learning aligns with Spanish-language curriculum as the premise is that knowledge is acquired by learning by doing, exploring, experimenting, and interacting with the world (Moreno-López et al., 2017). Experiential learning allows students to go from theory-based concepts to real-world applications. Experiential learning also extends beyond the classroom as it helps students think critically and apply linguistic and cultural knowledge in real-world situations.

Experiential learning acts in contrast to a learning through lecture or "sage on the stage" model (Kolb 2014). While experiential learning can occur in traditional classroom spaces, it can also happen through co-curricular experiences such as internships or service-based projects (Kolb 2014). Journalism education has been explored through the lens of experiential learning, as was suggested by Brandon (2002). It has been used to explore topics such as student learning in a digital- and mobile-first newsroom (Burns 2017), sports journalism (Reed 2018), and political reporting during an election (Dodd, English, Lidberg, and Newlands 2021).

However, little research has explored experiential learning in the context of language education, and specifically, not through the lens of student media production. Spanish-language student media offers a unique experiential learning opportunity in which students apply knowledge gained in the Spanish classroom to real life. When students write articles for a Spanish-language student newspaper, they must consider factors including audience and word choice, which goes over and beyond the limitations of writing just for a class, the teacher, or on a specific topic.

Spanish-Language Student Media

Student newspapers in the U.S. have served as a form of experiential learning since their inception, which some credit to Dartmouth University in 1799. Yet, pinpointing the origins of Spanish-language student media outlets is more challenging. As early as 1902, during the fight for statehood, the University of New Mexico's student publication, The Mirage, began to include Spanish-language media to change the rhetoric surrounding the political discussion (Leahy 2020). Through these articles, "the students saw cultural and communicative value in a bilingual newspaper and the value in Spanish itself" (Leahy, 12).

In 1972, while at Colorado State University, Juan Espinosa helped create El Diario de la Gente because he and other Latino students felt that they were being misrepresented by other media (Albidrez 2022). Forty years later, in response to the university being named a Hispanic-Serving Institution, Humboldt State University launched El Leñador (Burstiner 2015). And, in 2020, students at DePaul University founded La DePaulia after the Chicago-based professional Spanish-language outlet Hoy was shuttered.

Yet, despite the growth of programs related to Spanish-language and bilingual journalism, there is a dearth of information on student media outlets that are producing content in Spanish. Indeed, there does not appear to be a comprehensive list or database of such publications, and what they are covering has gone unstudied. Arguably, the research on the day-to-day coverage of student newspapers in English is also limited. One content analysis (Lyon Payne and Mills 2014) found that student newspapers' lead stories were most commonly "soft news," and focused on campus-related issues, but noted the need for additional research into aspects that may influence student newspaper coverage, such as funding, influence of related curricular structures, staff size and adviser role. As insight into the coverage of students newspapers in general is limited, it is unsurprising that such research is also lacking regarding Spanish-language content. To the authors' knowledge, this research is among the first to explore Spanish-language student news media. As such, this research asks the following research questions:

RQ1: What are Spanish-language student news outlets reporting on?

As there is a wide variety of universities and programs, and those factors may influence student media coverage, this research also asked:

> **RQ2**: Are there differences between (a) private and public schools, (b) HSI and non-HSI schools, and (c) institutionally funded and independently funded schools in the types of stories covered?

Finally, given that Hispanic-Serving Institutions must, by definition, have a student population that is at least 25% Hispanic, the authors hypothesize that:

> **H1**: Spanish-language student news outlets at HSIs will be more likely to cover topics incorporating direct references to the Hispanic/Latinx community.

> **H2**: Spanish-language student news outlets at HSIs will be more likely to cover topics incorporating direct references to immigration, DACA, Dreamers.

Method

For this research, the authors identified began with a list of members of the College Media Association. From the list of individual members, the researchers built a list of associated publications and then reviewed the websites for student media outlets that had published content in Spanish. Specifically, the authors captured outlets that had published articles on the outlet's website. Videos, podcasts, etc. were not included. Notably, because the sample was gathered using the College Media Association member list, which reflects individual faculty advisers, etc., some schools/student media outlets were not eligible for inclusion. While there were 77 student publications that had published content in Spanish at some point in time, when the authors limited the sample to outlets that had published multiple Spanish-language articles in 2021, they identified seven outlets: American University, California Lutheran University, California State University Los Angeles, DePaul University, the University of Florida, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and San Diego State University.

Coding

Two undergraduate student researchers were trained to code the articles for information related to their associated organization/institution, the type of content, use of images, etc., which are detailed in the following "Sample" section. An initial sample of 30 articles (10%) were coded by the two researchers and interrater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (Landis 1977). Given minor concerns related to interrater reliability, the coders received additional training and coded an additional 20 articles. Interrater reliability was found to be acceptable (greater than 0.7) for all but two items: the article's focus on a campus, local, state, national or international topic, and the article's use of terms such as immigration/migrant/DACA/Dreamers. In the initial interrater calculations, both achieved a Cohen's Kappa greater than 0.6, and were retained for analysis. However, interrater reliability is discussed in the limitations.

Sample

The sample includes 300 articles from private (n=155, 52%) and public (n=144, 48%) schools, with 149 articles (50%) from Hispanic-serving institutions. Of the articles examined, 87 (29%) were from DePaul University, 68 (23%) from San Diego State University, 51 (17%) from California Lutheran University, 46 (15%) from University of Florida, 27 (9%) from University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 18 (6%) from American University, and 3 (1%) from California State University Los Angeles.

Nearly a quarter of the student media publications were funded by institutional funding/student media fees (23%). Thirty-eight percent had independent funding, and funding for approximately 40% of the publications was unknown. Most articles were written by a single author (n=240, 80%), followed by two authors (n=49, 16%), three authors (n=8, 3%), and four or more authors (n=2, 1%). Primary or first authors were described as reporters (n=103, 34%), editors (n=92, 31%), staff reporters or editorial staff (n=6, 2%), by name only/no description (n=10, 3%), or unknown (n=89, 30%).

Articles were News (49%), Opinions (23%), Features (20%), and Sports (6%). Most of the articles related to something happening on campus (54%) or in the local community (23%); articles also covered events in the state (2%), in the United States (13%), or abroad (8%). The articles addressed a variety of topics: 132 (44%) directly addressed or covered issues relating to the Hispanic/Latinx community or someone from the Hispanic/Latinx community, 131 (43%) addressed issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 37 (12%) addressed issues related to immigration, DACA, or Dreamers.

With regard to the use of visuals and multimedia, most articles (n=221, 74%) included a posed or candid photo, 51 (17%) had an illustration (drawing), infographic/chart or editorial comic, 14 (5%) had a photo illustration, and one article (0.3%) included an embedded or linked video. Thirteen articles (5%) had no visual content. Visuals were reported as original (n=94, 31%), contributed or provided by an external source (n=116, 39%), or of unknown origin (n=76, 25%). Over seventy percent of articles included a caption/cutline (n=213, 71%), with 84% of captions (n=180) written in Spanish, 15% (n=31) of captions in English, and one percent of captions (n=3) written in both Spanish and English. Only two percent of captions (n=6) offered “alt-text” (i.e., a description of the visual/image) or closed captioning.

Results

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to examine relationships between school type (private vs. public) and types of stories covered. There was a significant relationship between school type and coverage of issues related to the Hispanic/Latinx community, $c2$ (1, N = 299) = 20.81, $p < .001$. Private schools (57%) were more likely to cover issues related to the Hispanic/Latinx community than were public schools (31%). There were no significant associations between school type and coverage of COVID-19, $c2$ (1, N = 299) = .46, $p = .497$, or issues related to immigration, DACA, or Dreamers, $c2$ (1, N = 299) = .17, $p = .678$.

The second research question asked about the relationships between HSI status and types of stories covered. The results of chi-square tests of independence showed a significant relationship between HSI status and coverage of issues related to the Hispanic/Latinx community.

Hypothesis 1 was not supported, however; HSI schools (30.2%) were less likely than non-HSI schools (58%) to cover stories related to Hispanic/Latinx issues, c2 (1, N = 299) = 23.43, p <.001. H2 was also not supported; there were no significant associations between HSI status and issues related to immigration, DACA, or Dreamers, c2 (1, N = 299) = 2.43, p = .119, Coverage of COVID-19 was also unrelated to HSI status, c2 (1, N = 299) = 1.48, p = .223.

To answer RQ3, chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine relationships between publication funding (student media fees/institutional funding vs. independent funding) and types of stories covered. Results of the analyses showed no significant relationships between publication funding and types of stories covered (issues related to the Hispanic/Latinx community, c2 (1, N = 182) = .16, p = .684; COVID-19, c2 (1, N = 182) = .18, p = .669; or immigration, DACA, or Dreamers, c2 (1, N = 182) = 2.00, p = .157).

Discussion & Conclusion

This research shows that, when reporting in Spanish, student newspapers prioritized news content, followed by opinion and features. Sports, though a popular area for coverage in many college newspapers, were less prevalent in Spanish. Further, Spanish-language coverage predominantly focused on campus- and community-level topics. More than 40% of the articles reported on something that directly referenced the Hispanic/Latinx community, and, given the timing of this research, it is not surprising that more than 40% of the articles reviewed addressed issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly every article had some sort of visual such as a photo or graphic, but the majority of the visuals that were identified (55%) were contributed (i.e., not original student-produced content).

Regarding the research questions, the most surprising finding was that Hispanic-Serving Institutions were less likely to report on Hispanic/Latinx issues. However, as this research only explored Spanish-language content, it is possible that student media outlets at HSIs also cover such topics in English; the extent of their coverage of such topics in English was beyond the scope of this study. Private schools were also more likely to report on Hispanic/Latinx issues. No other significant differences were found between school type, funding, and coverage of different topics, suggesting that there were basic similarities in Spanish-language coverage among various institutions.

This research may be the first of its kind to document the type of stories being reported on in Spanish at student media outlets. Though limited in scale, it provides a snapshot of the kind of Spanish-language content being produced. Given the prevalence of Spanish in the United States (Jones et al. 2021), and the loss of professional Spanish-language publications, these student publications are providing an invaluable service to their communities, both on campus and locally (Kopenhaver, Smith, and Kleinberg-Biehl 2021). In particular, the focus on COVID-19 related content in the timeframe of this study speaks to the importance of such content. Further, the amount of coverage that directly addressed Hispanic/Latinx issues may directly serve student newspapers' Spanish-speaking audiences.

Finally, though not a direct focus of this study, this research documents the important work of bilingual student journalists. Students who participate in the experiential learning practice of student media gain invaluable skills that may translate to their future careers (Moreno-López et al., 2017). Students who can produce content in multiple languages have an additional edge in an increasingly diverse and globalized society.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research

As with any study, this research has its limitations. First, given how the list of student media outlets was generated based on individuals' CMA membership, some well-known programs with that had completely separate Spanish-language

platforms were not identified in the initial data collection. For example, California State University Humboldt has a separate bilingual publication, El Leñador, that did not appear in the College Media Association member directory (through the membership of an affiliated faculty member). This means that it was not considered for inclusion in the data set. Future scholars should seek a more comprehensive method for identifying accessing student-produced Spanish media content. Also, given that other modalities, such as a broadcast and radio, may be more popular among Spanish speakers, future research should assess content from these platforms.

Second, there were minor problems with interrater reliability. Additional training and a larger data set for sampling may help to address these issues. In general, there are also limits to what can be determined from content analysis. As such, future research should incorporate other approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, to explore student journalists' motivations for and decision-making behind their Spanish-language coverage.

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Table 1

Comparisons of Spanish-language Student Media by School Type

	Private		**Public**		**Total**	**Chi-square tests of**

									independence
	n	*(%)*		*n*	*(%)*		*n*	*(%)*	
Article Type News	53	(35)		94	(67)		147	(50)	
Features	39	(25)		21	(15)		60	(20)	c^2 (4) = 41.83
Sports	7	(5)		11	(8)		18	(6)	*p* <.001
Opinion	54	(35)		14	(10)		68	(23)	*n* = 294
Unknown	0	(0)		1	(0)		1	(0)	
Total	*153*	*(100)*		*141*	*(100)*		*294*	*(99)*	
Article Topic Campus	67	(44)		93	(64)		160	(54)	
Local community	38	(25)		31	(22)		69	(23)	c^2 (4) = 27.24
State	1	(0)		6	(4)		7	(2)	*p* <.001
US	29	(19)		10	(7)		39	(13)	*n* = 298
World	19	(12)		4	(3)		23	(8)	
Total	*154*	*(100)*		*144*	*(100)*		*298*	*(100)*	

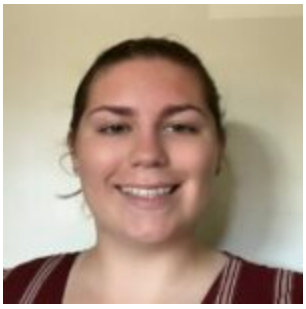
Hispanic/Latinx Content Yes No *Total*	88 67 *155*	(57) (43) *(100)*		44 100 *144*	(31) (69) *(100)*		132 167 *299*	(44) (56) *(100)*	c^2 (1) = 20.81 *p* <.001 *n* = 299
COVID-19 content Yes No *Total*	65 90 *155*	(42) (58) *(100)*		66 78 *144*	(46) (54) *(100)*		131 168 *299*	(44) (56) *(100)*	c^2 (1) = 0.46 *p* = .497 *n* = 299
Immigration/DACA/ Dreamers Coverage Yes No*Total*	18 137 *155*	(12) (88) *(100)*		19 125 *144*	(13) (87) *(100)*		37 262 *299*	(12) (88) *(100)*	c^2 (1) = .17 *p* = .678 *n* = 299

Visual/Multimedia Photo	112	(72)		108	(75)		220	(74)	
Photo illustration	6	(4)		8	(5)		14	(5)	$c^2(4) = 10.30$
Illustration/drawing	25	(16)		26	(18)		51	(17)	
Video	0	(0)		1	(1)		1	(0)	$p = .036$
None	12	(8)		1	(1)		13	(4)	$n = 299$
Total	*155*	*(100)*		*144*	*(100)*		*299*	*(100)*	
Visual Origin Original	33	(21)		61	(43)		94	(32)	
Contributed	86	(55)		30	(21)		116	(39)	$c^2(3) = 54.007$
Unknown	24	(16)		51	(36)		75	(25)	$p < .001$
No visuals	12	(8)		1	(0)		13	(4)	$n = 298$
Total	*155*	*(100)*		*143*	*(100)*		*298*	*(100)*	

Caption/Cutline Yes No No visuals *Total*	114 29 12 *155*	(74) (19) (7) *(100)*		98 44 2 *144*	(68) (31) (1) *(100)*		212 73 14 *299*	(71) (24) (5) *(100)*	c^2 (2) = 11.043 *p* = .004 *n* = 299
Caption/Cutline Language English Spanish English & Spanish No caption No visual *Total*	3 111 1 12 27 *154*	(2) (72) (1) (8) (17) *(100)*		28 68 2 1 41 *140*	(20) (49) (1) (0) (30) *(100)*		31 179 3 13 68 *294*	(11) (61) (1) (4) (23) *(100)*	c^2 (4) = 42.44 *p* <.001 *n* = 294

Offers "alt text" or Closed Captioning Yes	2	(1)		4	(3)		6	(2)	
No	142	(92)		138	(97)		280	(94)	$c^2(2) = 8.59$
No visuals	11	(7)		1	(0)		12	(4)	$p = .014$
Total	*155*	*(100)*		*143*	*(100)*		*298*	*(100)*	$n = 298$
Number of Authors One	130	(84)		109	(76)		239	(80)	
Two	23	(15)		26	(18)		49	(16)	$c^2(3) = 6.055$
Three	1	(0)		7	(5)		8	(3)	$p = .109$
Four or more	1	(0)		1	(0)		2	(1)	$n = 298$
Total	*155*	*(99)*		*143*	*(99)*		*298*	*(100)*	

Primary/First Author Description Reporter	76	(49)		27	(19)		103	(34)	
Editor	52	(34)		39	(27)		91	(31)	$c^2(4) = 50.719$
Contributed	2	(1)		4	(3)		6	(2)	
Name only	4	(2)		6	(4)		10	(3)	$p < .001$
Unknown	21	(14)		68	(47)		89	(30)	$n = 299$
Total	*154*	*(100)*		*144*	*(100)*		*299*	*(100)*	



Aasen

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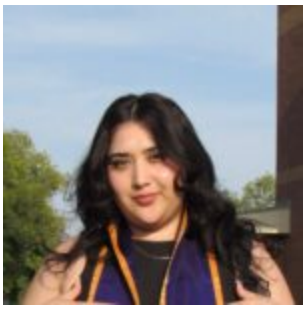

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Will Heath / September 16, 2024 / College Media, Research / college newspapers, content analysis, Hispanic-serving Institutions, News Deserts, Spanish

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Full Court Press: Fighting Restrictions on Student Journalists At Private Universities

Abstract

Research and advocacy on student press freedom at the collegiate level often occurs in the context of laws on free expression and open government. However, student journalists at more than half of U.S. colleges and universities—those that are private rather than public—are not protected by the First Amendment and sunshine laws. Due to their lack of legal protections, scholars have suggested that student journalists at private institutions may choose to self-censor rather than report on campus controversies. This case study focuses on three instances when collegiate journalists at a private institution did not self-censor, but rather took the opposite approach, reporting aggressively on student press freedom conflicts. Our content analysis finds the depth and breadth of coverage—a "full court press" approach—suggests strategic attempts by student journalists to use media effects models such as agenda setting, priming, and framing to mobilize support for press freedom and ward off potential retaliation by administrators.

Keywords: college newspapers, press freedom, private institutions, media effects, agenda setting, framing

Collegiate journalists have long experienced pressure from administrators to avoid publishing certain types of content. Pressure from administrators can include threats to withhold funding, punish and/or remove advisers and/or editors, and impose new controls such as prior review (Kasior & Darrah, 1996). The loss of funding is a particular concern; more than half of collegiate newspapers receive direct funding from their respective institutions (Sparks, Greenberg, Rillo & Alarcon, 2024). Student newspapers may also depend on their institutions for other resources, such as office space and utilities (Bodle, 1996). Concerns about the possibility of losing institutional support have only been exacerbated by the larger financial woes plaguing higher education; colleges and universities are actively looking for ways to cut expenses (Alexander, 2020). The precarious state of college newspaper funding comes at a time that student journalists are increasingly being called upon to fill gaps in local news reporting, which has been experiencing its own financial struggles (Blatchford, 2018; Blazina, 2022). Administrative pressure on student newspapers has led to recommendations by media advocacy organizations to seek financial independence and appeal for support from alumni and other networks (Etheridge & Rank, 2020).

Literature Review

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School Dist. (1969) was the first U.S. Supreme Court case to establish that students, at least at public institutions, enjoy First Amendment protections. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of three junior high school students who were suspended after they refused to remove black armbands they wore to protest the Vietnam War. The court's 7-2 decision found neither students nor teachers "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate" (Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School Dist., 1969, para. 10). First Amendment protections apply to student speech in public schools, the Court ruled, unless their speech disrupts academic activities. The *Tinker* standard has been understood to apply to speech at public colleges and

universities as well (Etheridge & Rank, 2020). However, some scholars have noted that what is considered a "disruption" can be subject to wide interpretation. Chemerinsky (2023), for example, argued "the courts appear willing to give so much deference to school officials and are willing to assume a disruption even when there is no evidence of one" (p. 24).

Another Supreme Court case, *Hazelwood School Dist. v. Kuhlmeier (1988)*, addressed the rights of school administrators to censor student publications. In this case, a high school principal removed articles about teen pregnancy and divorce from the student newspaper, maintaining the content was inappropriate. The Supreme Court ruled 5-3 in favor of the school district on the basis that the newspaper was only a "limited" public forum, since it was produced as part of a journalism class. As a publication that was part of the school's curriculum and funded by the district, the Court found it was subject to editing and approval by school administrators.

Although the Hazelwood case centered on a high school newspaper, some federal courts have applied the ruling to speech on college campuses as well. Most notably, in *Hosty v. Carter (2005)*, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the claims of student editors at Governors State University in Illinois who said their newspaper was unfairly shut down. Governors State administrators who were upset by articles critical of the university ordered future editions of the newspaper to be subject to prior review. In dismissing the editors' claims, *Hosty* was the first case at the federal circuit level to apply the *Hazelwood* decision to higher education. Student press advocates argued this approach was misguided, since the *Hazelwood* ruling was based in part on the age and maturity of the students involved. Applegate (2005) also argued "the structure of high school and college programs is too dissimilar" (p. 275) for *Hazelwood* to apply. Collegiate publications are also more likely to be extracurricular, and thus should be considered public forums, rather than "limited public forums" like the newspaper in Hazelwood (Bodle, 1996). Finally, collegiate publications often receive some funding from sources (such as advertisers) outside their respective institutions, suggesting they have greater autonomy than high school newspapers. In response to *Hosty*, student press advocates recommended collegiate newspapers procure statements from their respective institutions clarifying that their publications were "designated public forums" as a defense against future censorship (e.g. Student Press Law Center, 2005). Advocates also

warned that *Hosty* and subsequent rulings that have applied *Hazelwood* to higher education have also led to ambiguity in how courts could rule in the future in cases related to other forms of expression at the collegiate level, including emails between students and professors, flyers posted on campus, and speech that occurs off school premises (Harris, 2005; LoMonte, 2013).

Some state constitutions have provisions related to student press freedom, which can provide additional protections for collegiate journalists. Since 2000, 18 states have passed so-called "New Voices" laws intended to increase speech protections for student journalists (Student Press Law Center, 2024). Some laws focus on K-12 students, while others include collegiate journalists (Student Press Law Center, n.d.) California's Leonard Law is notable for protecting the speech of high school and college students, including those at non-religious private institutions. It also bars the prior restraint of student journalists. Still, one critic notes that the law only allows students at public schools to sue both their institutions and administrators; students at private schools may only sue their institutions. The Leonard Law also only allows current, not former, students to sue (Ross, 2007). Rhode Island's version of "New Voices" also protects collegiate journalists at private institutions (Norins, Harmon-Walker & Tharani, 2021).

Open government laws are also important to the practice of journalism by ensuring public access to meetings and records. Open government laws, also called "sunshine laws," exist at the federal level, but state laws are more applicable to journalists covering local issues, including issues related to most colleges and universities. Open government laws can vary by state, but generally adhere to a presumption of openness; in other words, government meetings are generally presumed to be open to the public, and records pertaining to government operations are generally presumed to be available to the public, unless specifically exempted by state law. State open government laws may, for example, require university boards to advertise meetings in advance and allow the public to attend. Presidential searches may also be required to be open, in addition to records related to salaries, tenure, and donors (Hearn, 2017). Whether state open government laws apply to student government meetings is less clear (Student Press Law Center, 2018).

Debates about collegiate student press freedom often omit or under-emphasize the fact that such debates are almost exclusively centered around *public* institutions. Public institutions are considered state actors and thus have First Amendment protections, even though those protections do not always prevent administrative interference in student journalism (Etheridge & Rank 2020). Open government laws, which vary by state, also generally apply only to public colleges and universities (Hearn, 2017). Private institutions, which actually outnumber their public counterparts in the U.S., operate instead as "pseudo-public spheres" (Salzano & Lisosky, 2017) and are thus not constrained by the First Amendment or open government laws (Robinson, 2023). This difference is commonly misunderstood and/or miscommunicated in student press freedom literature (Trachtenberg, 2018).

Although student journalists at all colleges and universities may experience administrative pressure, those at private institutions are particularly vulnerable. Policies on free expression and open government at private institutions vary widely and may not be well publicized among students. Some studies have suggested that private institutions often subject student newspapers to prior review and impose restrictions on lewd content (Bickham & Shin, 2013). Policies on free expression and student media may also be spread amongst numerous documents, such as student and faculty handbooks, codes of conduct, and administrative records (Student Press Law Center, 2020).

Some private institutions have policies suggesting support for First Amendment-like protections. Statements affirming the right to free expression "can become binding as law, as part of the contract between the private school and the student" (Dayton & Tarhan, 2021, p. 7). One study found four common themes among statements at private colleges and universities affirming the right to free expression: "the idea of free expression as an education good, the responsibility of using expression in ways that did not harm others or the larger campus community, a conflation of free speech with conflict and alignment with public institutions or constitutional law" (Salkin & Messke, 2021, p. 14). Still, the presence of statements supporting free expression does not necessarily guarantee administrators will adhere to them. Chapman University, for example, required its student newspaper, *The Panther*, to submit an article for prior review in 2019 despite the private institution's policy supporting free speech on campus. The university's president

reversed course after the newspaper wrote an editorial opposing the restriction (Rank, 2019).

In some cases, a policy developed by one private institution has served as a model for others. Yale University's Woodward Report, which declared "The history of intellectual growth and discovery clearly demonstrates the need for unfettered freedom, the right to think the unthinkable, discuss the unmentionable, and challenge the unchallengeable," (Woodward, 1974, p. 5) was considered at the time to be groundbreaking. The University of Chicago's Freedom of Expression Committee created a statement in 2015 guaranteeing all members of its community "the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn" although it also cautions that "does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish" (p. 2). The University of Chicago's statement has since been adopted by at least 100 other institutions (Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, n.d.).

Private institutions face competing pressures when determining, and enforcing, policies on student speech. While administrators may want to encourage freedom of expression, they may also be concerned about bullying, racist, and other speech that can inhibit efforts to provide an inclusive campus environment (Chemerinsky & Gillman, 2017). Codes limiting freedom of expression became widespread on college campuses beginning in the 1980s due to increased concerns about racial and other tensions (Majeed, 2009). Some legal scholars have suggested that requiring private institutions to offer First Amendment-like speech protections and open government laws could cause more harm than good (McLendon & Hearn, 2006; Trachtenberg, 2018). Some even maintain that administrators at public colleges and universities should be allowed to exert more control over student media than the First Amendment allows (Bohman, 2005).

The lack of First Amendment protections at private colleges and universities may make student journalists at those institutions less likely to report on controversial issues, particularly when they involve conflicts with university administrators or policies. One study found student newspapers at private institutions tended to cover press freedom in general terms, rather than report on specific acts of censorship involving their own publications (Hettinga, Medders, & Docter, 2022). Student

newspaper advisers and editors at private colleges and universities have also reported feeling less comfortable with publishing articles about controversial topics, suggesting they may be more prone to self-censorship than their counterparts at public institutions (Filak, 2012).

However, media effects theories suggest that collegiate journalists who take the opposite approach may be able to use the power of the press to fight attempts by administrators to control their content. Media effects models include agenda setting, priming, and framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Agenda setting theory holds that journalists shape reality with the choices they make in which stories to cover, how prominently those stories are featured, and how frequently particular topics are covered (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In short, journalists communicate the salience of specific issues and stories in the choices they make about what to cover. Priming is considered an extension of agenda setting and refers to the "impact of news coverage on the weight assigned to specific issues in making political judgments" (Iyengar & Simon, 1993, p. 368). Framing relates to how journalists cover issues. That is, journalists choose certain facts and exclude other facts "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames commonly applied in news content analyses include those of conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility (see, e.g. Semetko & Valkenberg, 2000).

Research on media effects models in college newspapers is limited. A study of college newspaper editorials on COVID-19 found morality and economic frames dominated (Fleming & Dolan, 2020). A content analysis of collegiate newspaper articles on drugs and alcohol found few articles used frames related to addiction detection, intervention, or treatment (Atkin & DeJong, 2000). A similar study focused on messages related to vaping found college newspapers more often explained how lung problems could develop over time rather than communicating messages of risk and action (Akhther & Islam, 2024). Another study focused on strategic framing by student LGBTQ activists who organized confrontations with religious preachers who visited college campuses. Researchers recognized the intentional use of "highly symbolic" tactics that helped activists achieve visibility, including through coverage in student newspapers (Barringer, Savage, & Howard,

2023, p. 505). Other studies have similarly noted tactics used by activists that can help them influence the media agenda (e.g. Grömping, 2019; Wouters & Lefevre, 2023).

Journalists generally do not consider themselves activists, due to professional norms and codes of ethics discouraging them from political speech, and thus may shy away from suggestions that they use agenda setting, priming and/or framing to persuade audiences. The Radio Television Digital News Association's code of ethics, for instance, warns that "political activity and active advocacy can undercut the real or perceived independence of those who practice journalism" (Radio Television Digital News Association, n.d., para. 7). However, some news organizations make an exception for advocacy related to press freedom; for example, NPR's policy allows journalists to "express support for democratic, civic values that are core to NPR's work," (McBride, 2021, para. 4) including freedom of the press. On the other hand, the *Wall Street Journal* fired correspondent Selina Cheng after she became chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, because, according to her, the newspaper "did not want its reporters seen calling for greater freedoms" (Cheng, 2024, para. 12). Observers have noted that advocating for press freedom can be seen as more controversial in less democratic countries (Simon, 2023).

This case study examines how student journalists at a private institution have covered controversies related to free expression and access to information, despite the risk of retaliation by university administrators. While prior research suggests collegiate journalists may opt simply not to cover such controversies, research on media effects models suggests that journalists could mitigate the risk of censorship by taking the opposite approach: not just covering those controversies, but covering them aggressively—a "full court press." University administrators may hesitate to restrict student newspapers if they believe doing so would reflect poorly upon their institutions. In fact, the Student Press Law Center has suggested university administrators might be deterred by student journalists who fight back, or if publicity about the controversy "might have a negative impact on next year's enrollment figures or fund-raising totals" (Student Press Law Center, 2020, para. 10).

Methods

This research takes the form of an instrumental case study to explore how student journalists at one private university covered controversies related to free expression and access to information, despite the risk of retaliation by school administrators. This study is based on coverage of three conflicts related to student press freedom at Pace University, a private institution based in the New York City metropolitan area. The articles were written by staff members of *new morning*, the student newspaper at Pace University's second-largest campus in Pleasantville, NY. *new morning* was in operation from 1971 to 2001. Its publication schedule varied. In some years, issues were published weekly; in other years, the newspaper came out every other week. An average issue of *new morning* was eight pages long.

The three controversies in this study emerged as part of a larger content analysis of changes in style, formatting, and topics covered in Pace University student newspapers over the Pleasantville campus's roughly 60-year history. Articles were sampled every five years, with some exceptions due to gaps in the university's student newspaper archive.

Findings

Three controversies related to student press freedom were identified in the sample, in the years 1972, 1985, and 2000. In each instance, we find that *new morning's* coverage suggested attempts to protect itself from administrative backlash by employing a "full court press" approach. That is, the newspaper covered these controversies not just once; rather, several journalists were assigned to cover the controversies from a variety of angles over multiple issues. The newspaper also strategically incorporated a variety of content, including editorials, columns, supportive letters to the editor, and even a cartoon.

Open Meetings (1972)

The first example of a student press-related controversy was coverage of an effort by members of the student government in 1972 to send representatives to Faculty Council meetings as non-voting observers. The monthly meetings had been closed to students since the Faculty Council's inception in 1965.

Agenda Setting

new morning editors signaled that this controversy deserved student attention by covering it over multiple issues and placing articles about it on the front page, two indicators of agenda setting. The first article on the controversy, "Closed door: DSGA seeks admission to faculty council," appeared on the front page of the February 26, 1972 issue and featured a photograph of the Faculty Council's chairperson. The next issue on March 10, 1972 also included a front-page article on the controversy: "Faculty Council: Open door policy or absolute privacy needed?" The controversy was covered one last time in *new morning's* next issue on March 24, 1972: "Resolution: Faculty Council to admit press observer." This time, the article appeared on the back page, a signal of diminished newsworthiness: crisis averted, time to move on to other things.

Priming

new morning attempted to prime its audience to support student access to these meetings by complementing its coverage of the controversy with other news related to the Faculty Council's activities. As the legislative body representing faculty interests on campus, the Faculty Council often makes decisions that are newsworthy to a student audience; by covering such decisions, the student newspaper communicated their salience. Indeed, in the same February 25, 1972 issue in which the open meetings controversy broke, *new morning* reported on two other Faculty Council matters: the tabling of a proposal to let students evaluate their professors each semester, and the approval of a tuition increase. Both articles also appeared on the front page—in fact, the entire front page of that issue was dedicated to news about the Faculty Council. All three articles also jumped to inside pages. In the second issue to cover the open meetings controversy on March 10, 1972, *new morning* ran a story about a Faculty Council decision to seat students as voting

members on one of its standing committees. The article quoted students and faculty who believed other committees should also add student members, and be more transparent about their work. Finally, the back page of the March 24, 1972 issue featured not only a story about the admittance of a "press observer" to Faculty Council meetings, but also another article about the professor evaluation proposal: it had been approved.

Framing

new morning's coverage of the open meetings controversy included conflict, morality and responsibility frames. The newspaper conducted a poll for its March 10, 1972 issue asking students and faculty their opinions on the meeting policy. Results brought the conflict into sharp relief: students were overwhelmingly in favor of opening the meetings, while faculty were divided. Quotes from students often presented morality-based arguments. For instance, a student government representative noted that administrative staff were allowed to attend Faculty Council meetings, thus meaning that "the student body is the only faction in the Pace Community to be barred." Another student said, "It's our money. We should know what's being done with it." The provost was also asked about the fact that student journalists were allowed to attend Faculty Council meetings on Pace's other campus and was quoted that it "has caused no problem," thus suggesting that Pleasantville faculty were responsible for the controversy. The final article on March 24, 1972, while noting the Faculty Council's decision to admit a student journalist, also included caveats. First, a student journalist would only be allowed to attend Faculty Council meetings "at the discretion of the Executive Committee." Also, members of student government would still be excluded—and they had led the charge to open meetings in the first place.

Censorship (1985)

In 1985, *new morning* covered the censorship of Pace University's other student newspaper, which operated on the main campus in New York City. The *Pace Press* had published an article on AIDS that included explicit language and descriptions of

sexual acts. Administrators responded by suspending the newspaper, seizing about half of the issue's print run and ousting the newspaper's editor-in-chief.

Agenda Setting

new morning's December 9, 1985, issue included three articles on its front page about the controversy. The first article, "Suspension of *Pace Press* lifted," ran full-width at the top of the page and included a photograph of the university's president. Two other articles focused on reactions to the newspaper's suspension: "Experts critical of Pace's reaction to AIDS article" and "Former editors also critical." All three articles continued inside, combining to fill an additional page. The issue also included a staff editorial, "Why Pace doesn't have a free press," a letter to the editor from an alumnus decrying the censorship, and an editorial cartoon that satirized the seizure of the copies.

new morning continued to cover the *Pace Press* story after students returned from winter break. *new morning*'s January 21, 1986, issue included reprints of columns that had run in two professional newspapers, the *New York Law Reporter* and *Gannett Westchester*, both of which criticized the university's actions. Additionally in that issue, a column by a *new morning* staff member recounted previous examples of censorship in Pace University student newspapers.

Priming

Although they are part of the same institution, Pace University's two campuses are far enough away from each other that students perceive them as having separate identities and generally spend time only on one. Student organizations also operate mostly independently from each other. The two campuses have always had separate student newspapers, for example. By covering the controversy at the *Pace Press*, *new morning* thus signaled that, in this instance, students in Pleasantville should be aware of a controversy based on the "other" campus.

Framing

Articles focused on two themes. One was that administrators had made a draconian decision that was "not at all enlightened," as the Gannett Westchester column put it. Quotes from professional journalists and press advocates acknowledged the *Pace Press* article had been in bad taste, and that the university had the right to censor the newspaper, but nonetheless the decision reflected poorly on administrators. *new morning* also noted that the university had revised its student press policies less than a year before the controversy. That fact was included in the lede of the top article in the December 9, 1985 issue:

> *In a series of events lasting three weeks and coming 10 months after Pace Chancellor Edward J. Mortola issued an Editorial and Circulation policy in order to establish guidelines for the student press, the university suspended the* Pace Press*, forced its editor, Brian Sookram, to resign and had the newspaper elect a new editor.*

The article also described as "ironic" Mortola's invocation of the Editorial and Circulation policy to defend the censorship (the policy required that news reporting be in "good taste"). *new morning* noted the policy had been created in response to the seizure of *Pace Press* issues the year before, when the newspaper had reprinted a Forbes magazine article critical of the university's business school. "The policy was meant to prevent future confiscations of student newspapers," the *new morning* article said. The article portrayed the ousted editor-in-chief as being blindsided by a demand that he defend the newspaper's reporting in a special meeting of the Faculty Council's Publications Committee. "They just threw everything at us without telling us what to prepare for," the *new morning* quoted Sookram. "It was very unfair."

The other major theme in *new morning*'s coverage of this controversy was that, although Pace did not have to abide by the First Amendment, it had violated the "spirit" of it. Reaction articles included only quotes that were critical of the university's actions. Quotes came from outsiders, including from the leader of the New York division of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Student Press Law Center, a Columbia University journalism professor, and a "First Amendment expert" at the Village Voice; as well as from insiders, including five former editors, a

former adviser, and a Pace journalism professor. A letter to the editor from an alumnus who went on to work at 60 Minutes questioned, "How can students understand what it means to live in a free society unless they experience it?" The staff editorial noted that student journalists at Pace did not have First Amendment protections: "Happily for the university, Pace can stand behind its private university status and claim it behaved legally. Ethically though, the university hasn't a leg to stand on." And the January 21, 1986 column by a *new morning* staff member reiterated the public-private distinction, arguing that the actions of administrators "would be an illegal violation of First Amendment press-freedom rights had Pace been a public university."

Adviser Firing (2000)

new morning's faculty adviser was fired February 11, 2000, apparently because administrators believed the newspaper was not being productive enough to justify the amount of funding it was receiving from the university. According to *new morning*, Dean for Students Jack Gentul criticized adviser Donna Cohen for allowing the newspaper's publishing schedule to become "erratic," and for staff members to produce less work than they used to, suggesting they were overpaid.

Agenda Setting

Like the other two controversies in this study, *new morning* dedicated multiple issues to coverage of the conflict. The first issue was a rare special edition on February 17, 2000, with all four pages dedicated to coverage of the firing. The story "Gentul's actions yield uproar" occupied the entire front page. The rest of the issue included three reported articles: one about the staff paying tribute to Cohen, one about other instances of administrative interference in *new morning*'s operations, and an explainer piece about the control Pace administrators exert over student organizations that receive university funding. The issue also featured other pieces critical of the firing, including a staff editorial, a column by the newspaper's managing editor, and three letters to the editor.

By the newspaper's next issue on February 24, 2000, Cohen was back. *new morning* covered her reinstatement in a front-page article ("*new morning* battle brings back Cohen"). Inside, a staff editorial praised the university's change of heart. Three more letters to the editor criticized Cohen's firing. Finally, on March 7, 2000 (a later than usual publication date that editors explained was due to the special edition they published on February 17), *new morning* ran two other articles that were related to the reasons administrators had given for Cohen's firing. One article described the attempts of student government leaders to rein in *new morning*'s publishing schedule. Another article covered an announcement by a university administrator that he was reviewing procedures for allocating tuition remission to staff members of *new morning* and other publications. The March 7, 2000 issue also included a staff editorial accusing the student government of undue secrecy, a column by the managing editor that called for Gentul's resignation, and three letters to the editor: one that supported Gentul, one by Gentul himself, and one that sided with *new morning*.

Priming

By publishing a special issue with content solely about Cohen's firing, *new morning* communicated to its audience a sense of urgency and deviance. Continuing to cover the controversy beyond Cohen's reinstatement, and broadening its coverage to include disgruntled members of other student organizations, signaled to readers that *new morning* staff members did not see the conflict as fully resolved.

Framing

new morning's coverage was again heavily reliant on sympathetic sources. The The initial article about Cohen's firing appeared to be based entirely on her account of what happened. Gentul was also quoted, but his comments were limited to claims that *new morning* staff were among the highest-paid staff members of collegiate newspapers in the country—claims that were disputed by the former president of the College Media Association. The article also quoted three Pace professors who were critical of Cohen's firing. Finally, the article heavily referenced *new morning*'s

constitution, which specified that the adviser is chosen by the editor-in-chief, does not exercise editorial control, and cannot be dismissed by the university without cause.

Morality frames were frequently used, as they had been in the other two controversies. "It is absolutely imperative and vital that the students have a feeling of absolute freedom to express their view," one professor was quoted. An editorial depicted Cohen's firing as "an infringement on our First Amendment rights." Letters to the editor depicted the controversy as a power grab by Gentul, an attempt to turn the newspaper into "a PR extension of the university," and "the single greatest threat to student freedom of the press in *new morning*'s 28-year history."

Discussion and Conclusion

This study is limited to coverage of student press-related controversies at one private institution. Thus, we are unable to conclude whether student journalists at other private institutions have similarly used "full court press"-style tactics to mitigate the risk of censorship by administrators. Because this is a study based on content analysis, we are also unable to determine the extent to which censorship was a serious risk, or was perceived to be, for student journalists at Pace University at the time these articles were written. Thus, it is difficult to know whether "full court press"-style tactics affected the ways these cases were resolved, or the likelihood that they would be punished for covering these controversies. Opportunities for future research could include interviews with student journalists at private universities who encounter similar controversies to gain insights on how they strategize—or do not strategize—their coverage.

Despite the limitations of this study, it is clear that coverage of these three student press-related controversies was outside the norm for *new morning*. The sample of issues that we examined included few other topics that were covered in such depth, with such frequency, and with the same prominence. Thus, while pressures on student journalists at private institutions may often prevent them from fighting administrative threats to press freedom, coverage of these three student press

freedom controversies suggest that students may take the opposite tack: an aggressive, "full court press" approach that may discourage administrators from retaliating. In the case of *new morning,* this approach consisted of continuing coverage across multiple issues, often on front pages, and complemented by articles and opinion pieces that primed their audience to support press freedom and transparency as general principles, despite the lack of applicability of the First Amendment and open government laws to private institutions. Frames portrayed students as advocates of press freedom and administrators as secretive, unenlightened, and over-controlling.

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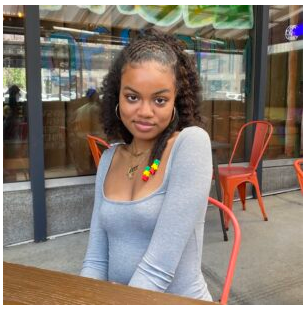

McQueen

Sahtrese McQueen graduated with a B.S. in Digital Journalism from Pace University in 2024 and actively participated in the school's newspaper. She conducted research into the newspaper archives in the summer of 2023, and worked with Dr. Fink to present findings on student newspaper and administrative relations over the course of a year. McQueen currently does freelance journalism with News 12 in Westchester County, NY.

Fink

Katherine Fink is an Associate Professor in Pace University's Department of Media, Communications, and Visual Arts, Director of the school's MA in Communications and Digital Media, and Faculty Adviser to the student newspaper, the Pace Chronicle. Fink's research interests include news business models, freedom of information, and student press freedom. Fink spent 11 years working as a journalist in Pittsburgh and central Virginia before earning her Ph.D. in Communications from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

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