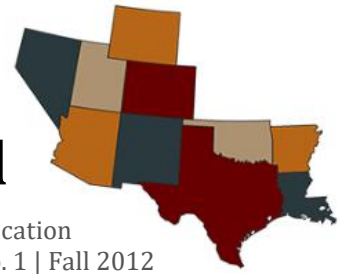


Southwestern Mass Communication Journal



A journal of the Southwest Education Council for Journalism & Mass Communication
ISSN 0891-9186 | Vol. 28, No. 1 | Fall 2012

Organizational Influences on Student Newspapers: A Survey of Newspapers of ACEJMC Programs

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Surveys of student editors, faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators of journalism and mass communication programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism in Mass Communication suggest that influences at the organizational level do have an impact on the content of student newspapers. The findings show that student editors were more likely to self-censor content when they did not have primary control of the newspapers. Significant differences were found to exist between the perceptions of student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators in relation to influences on content and their relationship to censorship issues. Student editors were the only group who reported perceiving censorship as a problem. However, the survey results also showed that most public institutions had official governing rules and were not experiencing censorship issues.

Suggested citation:

Bickham, S. B., & Shin, J. H. (2012). Organizational influences on Student Newspapers: A survey of newspapers of acejmc programs. *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal*, 28(1). Retrieved from <http://swecjmc.wp.txstate.edu>.

Abstract

Surveys of student editors, faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators of journalism and mass communication programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism in Mass Communication suggest that influences at the organizational level do have an impact on the content of student newspapers. The findings show that student editors were more likely to self-censor content when they did not have primary control of the newspapers. Significant differences were found to exist between the perceptions of student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators in relation to influences on content and their relationship to censorship issues. Student editors were the only group who reported perceiving censorship as a problem. However, the survey results also showed that most public institutions had official governing rules and were not experiencing censorship issues.

The issue of the effects of media content on the audience is a topic that has been much debated and researched extensively over the course of many years. Media content has been identified as being responsible for everything from agenda-setting to children committing violent acts. If media content is in fact a powerful force to be reckoned with, what are the influences on media content at the developmental stage where messages are molded?

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) identified four levels of influence that can affect the content disseminated through the media. These levels are individual, organizational, societal, and ideological. At the individual level, those who work in the media influence content based on their unique personal background and values, ethical standards, and general beliefs. The internal structure of a media outlet sometimes creates influences on content at the organizational level. Accepted social norms affect content at the societal level of influence. At the ideological level, the overall, dominant perspective of a media outlet may have an influence on content. Influences on content occur when those involved in the news-making process select content based on their own personal characteristics, the organizational structure of the media outlet, or the social factors of external parties (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These actions could be intentional or unintentional. Censorship, including self-censorship, occurs when content is intentionally withheld from the public because of these influences. People who possess a certain level of influence can control the information that will be published in the newspaper, while at the same time censoring content to influence what information will not. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2000) describes self-censorship as the practice of avoiding newsworthy stories or softening the tone of stories. Censorship occurs in the newsroom when people at one level censor those at another. Self-censorship occurs when people censor themselves in an attempt to avoid being censored or shunned by others. Particularly, the role of the organization,

its structure, and the process for implementing and enforcing policies are some of the major factors that influence or ultimately censor media content. The structure of an organization also determines the level of independence a media outlet has from the corporate entities that own it.

Student newspapers are not exempt from these organizational influences, and the college newsroom is often the starting point for students where they learn the news-making process. Influences on content and further censorship practices negatively affect credible reporting and the very nature and integrity of journalism. Publishing student newspapers that are grounded in journalistic integrity requires that editors and institutions stay abreast of each other's rights. If the rights of either party are violated, the task of disseminating information to an increasingly diverse student body becomes more difficult. The role of the administration and faculty advisors complicates the situation. To some degree, college newspaper editors grapple with the actuality or possibility of administrative and faculty intervention as well as their own intuition to influence or self-censor while striving to publish newspapers that offer pertinent, truthful, and objective information to their readership.

There has been little research conducted at college student newspapers that explores the various influences on content. The purpose of this study is to analyze influences on student newspaper content at the organizational level of influence as identified by Shoemaker & Reese (1996). College newspapers were selected for this study because they serve as the training tool for budding journalists. If student journalists influence content using systematic methods while in college, they may also continue to do so after making the transition to the professional journalism industry. This study also examined the ways that these influences might lead to censorship, particularly self-censorship, of student newspaper content. Censorship threatens the training of journalism majors through the campus newspapers (Kasior, S. & Darrah, E., 1996;

Holmes, 1986). Student journalists who are taught to be tolerant of censorship might carry this attitude to their professional careers. The topic is significant because if censorship is an accepted practice in American journalism at universities, there can be grave consequences. The notion of the free press at universities will also be compromised.

Theoretical Framework

Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) presented several hypotheses to identify and explain how various influences play a role in determining the content that is eventually disseminated to the public. While there have been several studies and theoretical frameworks that explore the impact content has on its audience, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) suggested that the factors that help shape content need exploration as well. They showed how various internal and external factors that affect media content have resulted in the presentation of different versions of reality.

Content is defined as “the complete quantitative and qualitative range of verbal and visual information distributed by the mass media” (p. 4). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) viewed content as a dependent variable with the factors of influences being independent variables. The four levels of analyses to explore influences on content are individual, organizational, societal, and ideological. This study focuses on the organizational level of influence at college student newspapers.

The role of the organization, its structure, and the process for implementing and enforcing policies are some of the major factors that influence media content at the organizational level. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) identified three levels within an organization: the bottom-level of front-line employers, which consists of writers and reporters; the middle level of managers and editors; and the top level of executives. The identified roles are important

because they contribute to shaping employees' viewpoints concerning the organization and content. Also important is the manner in which the responsibilities of these roles are structured within an organization. Media company owners at the top level often possess the most power, thus leading to a larger concern regarding the influence of ownership on content.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) defined organization as:

The social, formal, usually economic entity that employs the media worker in order to produce media content. It has definite boundaries, such that we can tell who is and who isn't a member. It is goal-directed, composed of interdependent parts, and bureaucratically structured (p. 144).

Shoemaker and Reese's study, published in 1991, represents a seminal contribution to research on theories of influences on mass media content. Later explication of the hypotheses in 1996 served as guides in the development of hypotheses for this study of the organizational level of influence on content, along with key literature reviewed about censorship at college student newspapers.

Literature Review

Dealing with Institutional Constraints at Collegiate Newspapers

Students at public institutions have a constitutional right of expression, and this right extends to student publications. Several cases have set precedent that state-supported schools cannot restrict the distribution of a recognized student publication, withdraw funding, or remove staff members because of articles that are unfavorable to the administration or institution (Kasior & Darrah, 1996; Ryan & Martinson, 1986). In spite of these rulings, the three most common ways that administrators attempt to influence content or further censor student publications outright are by cutting funding, reorganizing the governing committees of student publications, and hiring faculty advisers who tend to make decisions that are aligned with the views of the administration (Holmes, 1986; Kasior & Darrah, 1996).

The Student Press Law Center also outlined three methods generally used to influence content and censor newspapers at the institutional level (Tenhoff, 1991). The levels are (1) prior restraint or review from an administrator, faculty member, or adviser; (2) attacks on the editor through either reappointment threats or outright firings; and (3) a decrease or complete cut of university funding.

The constraints on newspapers are not merely hypothetical. Oettinger (1995) identified instances in which administrators at universities have removed editors of publications from office, requested review of publications prior to print, and created environments in which an editor's only recourse was to resign. Censorship through the form of post-publication penalties has also been employed to stop the public from receiving the content of the newspaper (Duemer et. al, 2005; Ryan, 1987). A comparison of newspapers at private and public Midwestern universities revealed that censorship is more of a norm than an exception, in spite of case law in support of students' First Amendment rights (Loving, 1993). Bodle (1994) researched (1) to what extent administrators attempt to influence news selection or content through their financial support of the student newspaper, and how successful they were, (2) how frequently administrators threaten advisers with job dismissal or strongly pressure them because they run or consider running a news story, and (3) to what extent advertisers attempt to influence news selection or content through their financial support of the student newspaper and how successful they were. Bodle's (1994) survey of student newspaper advisers revealed that the majority of respondents have never been asked by university officials to publish certain information and that administrative funding does not affect newspaper content.

On the contrary, a study conducted in 2002 of *The Catalyst*, an underground newspaper at Texas Tech in the 1970s, showed that administrators censored the publication through the use of

post-publication penalties (Banks, Boss, Cochran, Duemer, McCrary, & Salazar, 2002). John and Tidwell (1996) also explained that some campus newspapers that receive penalties might actually be good publications that pursue in-depth journalism that reveals information that doesn't align with the views or positions of campus authorities.

If administrators fail to understand they are tampering with student journalists' development as professionals when they censor, the issue will never be resolved. Accordingly, student journalists have to take the necessary steps to practice professional journalism with balanced stories that their audience can trust. If this is done on a consistent basis, administrators may possibly begin to respect them and their work.

Administrative Viewpoints Regarding Influences on Content and Censorship

Several studies suggest that the content of student newspapers is heavily influenced by the expectations of university administration. Myers (1990) conducted a study to determine whether student publications selected content that was favorable to administration because universities are often the main funding source of student newspapers. Though not conclusive, Myers (1990) found that there was a correlation between administrative funding and story selection. Childress' (1993) research also suggested that if students had a certain relationship with administrators, then they wouldn't print information that could be considered unfavorable to the university. Childress (1993) also pointed out student newspapers often cause problems for universities due to the relationship, or lack thereof, between student editors and administrators.

The director of public relations at Tennessee State University in 2000, Phyllis Quails-Brooks, argued that although she supports the rights of the student press, some student newspapers do not practice fair and objective reporting (Reisberg, 2000). The ethics code of the College Media Advisers, however, dissuades student newspaper staff members and faculty

advisers from editing or censoring student newspapers prior to publication. On the contrary, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education supports the idea that faculty members should proofread student newspapers prior to publication for grammatical errors---not to censor (Reisberg, 2000).

Though student newspapers at public institutions are considered state actors and are privy to exercising their First Amendment rights, advisers at private institutions often make the final decision concerning copy, and they have a tendency to feel as though students should not be completely free from administrative control (Loving, 1993). Student newspapers at institutions affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, for example, are more prone to being censored by administration (Thomason, 1984). Private institutions tend to follow different guidelines concerning student newspapers and press freedom. Most of these newspapers do not have written publication guidelines, and the majority of the publications' advisers review the copy before the publication is produced. Durham (1988) conducted an analysis of all reported censorship cases involving the college student press since 1969. Among other findings, he concluded that college administrators generally could not exercise the rights of a commercial publisher. He found that college students' right to publish does not include material that would cause a substantial disruption of the educational process. Such material is subject to prior restraint, according to Durham (1988). He also found that libel, invasion of privacy and obscenity are not protected by the First Amendment and are punishable, but fear of charges being brought does not justify prior restraint.

Although the administration might be a hindrance to some student publications, administrators can also serve as news sources. Many times student journalists must interview top-ranking administrators in order to bring balance and credibility to their stories. To ensure

that administrators who serve as sources are more receptive of student journalists; they need to be well prepared for interviews and should also follow-up with their sources (Watts & Wernsman, 1997). The frequency of being asked to serve as sources also affects administrators' interest in being interviewed, and their level of satisfaction with stories, reporters, and interviews (Watts & Wernsman, 1997). These practices would ensure that the student newspapers obtained the appropriate and accurate information needed for their stories from administrators.

Administrators would also be aware of the main focus of the newspaper's stories.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypotheses and research questions were drawn from the literature review about the impact of influences on content at college student newspapers and the potential for censorship. The hypotheses and research questions give particular attention to self-censorship. Higher education institutions that have journalism or mass communication programs with accreditation from the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) were surveyed to test one set of hypotheses and answer three research questions. Comparative analyses of ACEJMC public and private institutions were also examined for this study.

Shoemaker & Reese (1996) analyzed influences on content in relation to control. The study suggests that control is a determining factor regarding who influences content. Those who may not have control may be hesitant to go against the status quo by publishing information that those who are in control would consider unfavorable (Kasior, S. & Darrah, E., 1996; Holmes, 1986). Based on the previous studies (Kasior, S. & Darrah, E., 1996; Shoemaker & Reese; Holmes, 1986), the hypotheses are designed to test self-censorship at the organizational level:

H1: At the organizational level of influences, those who perceive having less control over the student newspaper than the other groups are more likely to self-censor news content.

H1a: At the organizational level of influences, student editors who perceive having less control over the student newspaper than faculty advisers and academic affair administrators are more likely to self-censor news content.

H1b: At the organizational level of influences, faculty advisers who perceive having less control over the student newspaper than academic affairs administrators are more likely to self-censor news content.

H1c: At the organizational level of influences, academic affairs administrators who perceive having less control over the student newspaper than the primary target audience are more likely to self-censor news content.

RQ1: Are there any perceived differences among student editors, faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators regarding their influences leading to self-censorship of media content?

RQ2: Are there any perceived differences between those working for public institutions and private institutions in their perceptions regarding control over the student newspaper in relation to their self-censorship?

RQ3: Are there any perceived differences between those having official and written guidelines that outline the rights and roles of student editors, faculty advisers and academic administrators and those not having guidelines in their perceptions regarding control over the student newspaper in relation to their self-censorship?

Methodology

Online Survey Process

To test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, online surveys were administered to student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators of ACEJMC programs. Survey research is used to collect data from a series of questions asked of a representative population. Online surveys are effective in quickly gathering responses (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

To ensure that the results from the survey would be valid, reliable, and relevant to this study, an analysis of survey questions asked in previous studies about censorship at the high school and college levels was conducted prior to developing the survey. Loving (1993) and Thomason (1984) conducted the surveys that were analyzed. The final survey instrument

incorporated questions from the two surveys analyzed as well as original questions designed specifically for this study.

Next, to confirm face and content validity, experts who have previously conducted research in the areas of censorship, student newspapers, and influences on content reviewed the survey instrument and the variables being studied. The experts were asked to review the variables and their operational definitions for accuracy of definitions and clarity of the study. They also reviewed the survey to ensure that it was structured properly and that it asked questions that were all relevant to the study. A pilot test was also administered amongst student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators to ensure that they understood all questions included in the survey.

The target population for this study was the 109 higher education institutions in the United States that have accredited journalism or mass communication programs by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Accredited journalism and mass communication programs were selected because they must adhere to guidelines and uphold certain standards that are put in place to ensure effective learning and are assumed to have a responsibility to uphold the council's mission of encouraging dissent, inquiry, and free expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Contact information for the three groups of participants was identified through (1) online school directories, (2) official websites of the student newspapers, and (3) phone calls to the institutions.

The survey questionnaire was sent to 317 targeted survey participants that consisted of student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators at the ACEJMC institutions. They include 109 student editors identified as editors-in-chief, 102 primary faculty advisers, and 106 academic affairs administrators identified as provosts for a total of 317 targeted survey

participants. A student editor for each ACEJMC institution is represented. Seven of the institutions reported that their student newspapers did not have faculty advisers, and three of the ACEJMC institutions were in the process of searching for provosts.

Participants were invited to complete the survey through an email that included a link to the webpage. The participants had two weeks to respond, February 18 through March 3, 2008, as explained in the welcome email and on the homepage of the survey. After one week, participants who had not completed the survey received reminder emails. Of the 317 emails sent with the survey link, 15 emails were returned undeliverable. Of the 302 remaining surveys, 103 responses were completed, with a response rate of 35%. The responses include 47 student editors, 32 faculty advisers, and 24 academic affairs administrators participated in the survey. First, frequency distributions and descriptive analyses were conducted. Then, ANOVA/MANOVA tests were conducted to answer the hypotheses and research questions.

The survey for each group consisted of 53 questions using a 7-point Likert scale of measurement. Demographic information was also gathered through several of the survey questions. The survey asked student editors for demographic information including: (1) public or private status of institution, (2) publication frequency of newspaper, (3) enrollment amount of institution, (4) funding source of newspaper, (5) newspaper staff size, (6) length of employment, (7) age, (8) gender, (9) classification, and (10) major. The surveys for faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators asked them to provide the same demographic information as the student editors, with the exception of the major and classification. Faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators were instead asked to disclose their education level and degree area.

The hypotheses focused on newspaper content as the dependent variable and self-censoring practices as the independent variable. Operationally defined, self-censorship is the process of omitting or changing information that should appear in the newspaper, thus preventing the information from reaching the public. The research questions explored the public or private status of the universities being studied in relation to self-censoring practices. This status is operationally defined based on the institution's majority funding base and its own declaration as public or private.

Results

Demographics of Survey Respondents

The majority of respondents were from institutions with enrollments of 15,100 to 20,000 ($n=68$; 67%). Most respondents were also from public institutions ($n=73$; 70.9%) with daily publications ($n=42$; 40.8%). Student editor respondents served as editors-in-chief ($n=47$; 100%). All faculty who responded served as advisers ($n=32$; 100%), and 83% of academic affairs administrators served as provosts for their institutions ($n=20$).

Student Editors' Demographics. Most student editors who responded were 21 years old ($n=20$; 42%). Females represented most student editors surveyed ($n=28$; 59%). Approximately 70% of student editor respondents were juniors ($n=33$), and 76% were journalism majors ($n=36$). Forty percent of the respondents have worked as student editors for three years ($n=19$). The majority of the student editors also attended public institutions ($n=34$; 72%), while about a third worked at daily student newspapers ($n=18$; 38.36%). The main funding source for their student newspapers was advertising ($n=34$; 73.08%). The staff size was varying 1 to 25 students, and several respondents indicated that their staff size was 25 students ($n=19$; 40%).

Faculty Advisers' Demographics. Approximately one-third of faculty advisers surveyed were between the ages of 41 and 50 ($n=10$; 31.25%). A little more than half of the faculty advisers surveyed were men ($n=18$; 56.25%). The survey results also showed that the majority of the faculty advisers majored in mass communication while in college ($n=22$; 68.75%), and a half earned doctorate degrees ($n=16$; 50%). Approximately 87% of faculty advisers worked for public institutions ($n=28$), 50% advised daily newspapers ($n=16$), and 37% have advised the student newspaper for six to ten years ($n=12$). Half of the faculty advisers reported that funding for the student newspapers was derived from advertising ($n=16$; 50%). A third reported that the staff size was about one to 25 students ($n=10$; 31.25%).

Academic Administrators' Demographics. The average age range for many of the academic affairs administrators who responded was 51-60 ($n=15$; 62.5%). Most academic affairs administrators who responded were women ($n=14$; 57%). Education ($n=6$; 25%) and the social sciences ($n=6$; 25%) were the most common majors amongst academic affairs administrators. All of the academic affairs administrators who responded earned doctorate degrees ($n=24$; 100%). Two thirds of the respondents represented public institutions ($n=17$; 72%), and a third have worked as a provost for one to five years ($n=8$; 33.3%). One-third of the administrators also reported that the funding for the student newspapers was derived from a combination of advertising revenue and institutional funding ($n=8$; 33.3%).

Results from Hypotheses

H1: At the organizational level of influences, those who perceive having less control over the student newspaper than the other groups are more likely to self-censor news content.

More than half of student editors reported that they did not engage in self-censorship ($n=29$; 59.2%) nor did two thirds of the respondents avoid content that did not support the perspective of the institution ($n=36$; 73.5%). In addition, about a third of the respondents did not avoid content that was critical of the institution, faculty, or administration ($n=19$; 38.8%). Student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators showed that a positive relationship existed amongst survey participants who reported perceiving that control of final decisions for the student newspaper existed at the organizational level and those who believed that content that did not align with the institution's perspective should be censored ($r=.308$; $p<0.01$). There were also positive relationships amongst survey participants who reported that they maintained primary control over the student newspaper and those who encouraged self-censorship of content ($r=.424$; $p<0.01$); those who maintained primary control over the student newspaper and those who avoided content that did not align with the institution's perspective ($r=.217$; $p<0.05$); and those who maintained primary control over the student newspaper and those who avoided content that was critical of faculty and administration ($r=.307$; $p<0.01$). There also existed positive relationships between survey participants who reported encouraging self-censorship and those who reported that they avoided content that did not align with the university's perspective ($r=.253$; $p<0.01$); and those who reported that they encouraged self-censorship and those who reported that content critical of faculty and administration should be avoided ($r=.346$; $p<0.01$).

Survey participants who reported that individuals at the organizational level should be informed about controversial content before it is published in the student newspaper tend to report that faculty advisers should review the student newspaper prior to it being published for grammatical errors ($r=.321$; $p<0.01$). Those who reported that faculty advisers should review the

student newspaper prior to it being published for grammatical errors are likely to report that faculty advisers should review the student newspaper prior to it being published to avoid the potential for libel ($r=.473$; $p<0.01$). Survey participants who reported that faculty advisers should review the student newspaper prior to it being published for grammatical errors tend to report that faculty advisers should review the student newspaper prior to it being published for lewd content ($r=.385$; $p<0.01$). Those who reported that faculty advisers should review the student newspaper prior to it being published for libel are likely to report that faculty advisers should review the student newspaper prior to it being published for lewd content ($r=.899$; $p<0.01$).

H1a: At the organizational level of influences, student editors who perceive having less control over the student newspaper than faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators are more likely to self-censor news content.

The survey results were used to determine when, if ever, student editors should implement self-censoring practices. The hypotheses suggested that student editors would be more inclined to engage in self-censorship when there was more control over the student newspaper at the organizational level, which consisted of faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators. According to the survey results, most student editors reported that they did not engage in self-censorship ($n=29$; 59.2%) nor did they avoid content that did not support the perspective of the institution ($n=36$; 73.5%). In addition, they did not avoid content that was critical of the institution, faculty, or administration ($n=19$; 38.8%).

However, the student editors expressed their likelihood to self-censor to avoid content that is critical ($r=.320$; $p<0.05$) or avoid content different from the university's perspective ($r=.670$; $p<0.01$). There exists significant correlation ($r=.342$; $p<0.05$) between those who

responded, “avoid content that is critical” and “avoid content different from the university’s perspective.”

H1b: At the organizational level of influences, faculty advisers perceiving less control over the student newspaper than student editors and academic affairs administrators are more likely to self-censor news content.

Most of the faculty advisers surveyed did not report that they encouraged student editors to avoid content that did not support the university perspective ($n=25$; 78.1%), nor did they report that they encouraged student editors to avoid content that is critical of the institution, faculty, or administration ($n=25$; 78.1%). In addition, most faculty advisers reported that they did not think that administration should be informed prior to critical content being published ($n=11$; 34.4%). There exists positive relationship between faculty advisers who reported that they encouraged student editors to avoid unfavorable content about the institution and those who reported that they encouraged student editors to avoid content that is critical of the institution ($r=.533$; $p<0.01$). However, the faculty advisers who expressed self-censorship did not necessarily report that they encouraged student editors to avoid unfavorable content about the institution or that they encouraged student editors to avoid content that is critical of the institution.

H1c: At the organizational level of influences, academic affairs administrators perceiving less control over the student newspaper than student editors and faculty advisers are more likely to self-censor news content.

Most academic affairs administrators reported that they did not encourage student editors to avoid content that did not support the institution’s perspective ($n=17$; 60.7%), nor did they encourage student editors to avoid content that was critical of the institution, faculty, or administration ($n=17$; 60.7%). The results showed a positive and significant relationship between administrators who reported that they encouraged student editors to avoid unfavorable

content about the administration and those who reported that they encouraged student editors to avoid content that was critical of administration ($r = .996; p < 0.01$). However, the academic administrators who expressed self-censorship did not necessarily report that they encouraged student editors to avoid unfavorable content about the institution or encouraged student editors to avoid content that is critical of the institution.

Results from Research Questions

RQ1: Are there any perceived differences among student editors, faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators regarding their influences leading to self-censorship of media content?

Forty-two percent of the student editors strongly agreed that censorship was a problem at their institution ($n=20$), though 81 percent of the faculty advisers strongly disagreed that censorship was a problem ($n=26$) and sixty-one percent ($n=15$) of academic affairs administrators strongly disagreed that censorship was a problem at their institution. Results showed that the student editors surveyed did not view influences on content from themselves, faculty advisers, academic affairs administrators, or primary target audiences as forms of censorship. Faculty advisers only viewed influences from student editors as forms of censorship ($n=26; 81\%$). Forty-six percent ($n=11$) of the academic affairs administrators strongly agreed that influences from them on student newspapers were forms of censorship, but that influences at other levels were not.

The results suggested that the amount of control that existed at any given level determined the amount of influence that individuals had on newspaper content. The survey responses indicated that primary control over the student newspaper resided with the student editors, who also had the most influence on newspaper content. Because they had the most control, influence at the individual level did not lead to censorship of content. On the other hand, faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators indicated that they did not have primary

control. The lack of primary control suggested that any influence from them could be considered as censorship because they were not normally part of the news-making process.

The results supported overall significant differences among the three groups; student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators, within and between subjects of influences that lead to censorship of student newspaper content ($F=518.151, p<0.000$). A significant difference existed between student editors and faculty advisers and student editors and academic affairs administrators regarding influences that lead to censorship. Student editors were more likely to perceive themselves as having influences on content through their intrinsic characteristics, but less likely to perceive their influences as leading to censorship.

The results showed overall significant differences ($F=813.008, p<0.000$) among the three groups; student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators, regarding their perceptions of: possessing authority to make final decisions existing at the organizational level, having primary control at the organizational level of student newspaper content, censoring student newspaper content, avoiding content that does not align with the institution's perspective, avoiding content that is critical of faculty and administration, conducting prior review of the student newspaper for grammar reasons, conducting prior review of the student newspaper for libel reasons, conducting prior review of the student newspaper for lewd content, administration's role in decision-making, and adviser's role in decision making. Among the significant differences were that faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators perceived having less control over the student newspaper than student editors.

RQ2: Are there any perceived differences between those working for public institutions and private institutions in their perceptions regarding control over the student newspaper in relation to their self-censorship.

The results suggest overall significant differences between public and private institutions ($F=185.213, p<0.000$) regarding perceptions of authority to make final decisions existing at the organizational level, primary control at the organizational level of student newspaper content, censorship of student newspaper content, avoidance of content that does not align with the institution's perspective, avoidance of content that is critical of faculty and administration, informing the organization when controversial content will appear in the newspaper, prior review for grammar reasons, prior review for libel reasons, prior review for lewd content, administration's role in decision making, and adviser's role in decision making. The results demonstrated that individuals at private institutions were more likely to perceive that their influences lead to censorship than individuals at public institutions.

The significant differences are that those who worked at public institutions reported more student editors with perceptions of having primary control over the student newspaper than faculty advisors or academic administrators. However, survey participants at public institutions also discouraged self-censorship of content more than those at private institutions. Survey participants at private institutions were more likely to encourage prior review of the student newspaper for grammar, libel, and lewd content more than those at public institutions. Survey participants at private institutions also perceived faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators of having a role in the decision-making process more than those at public institutions.

RQ3: Are there any perceived differences between those having official and written guidelines that outline the rights and roles of student editors, faculty advisers and academic administrators and those not having the guidelines in their perceptions regarding control over the student newspaper in relation to their self-censorship.

Survey participants were asked a series of questions about written and official guidelines for newspaper editors and faculty advisers. Participants were also asked their perceptions about

the appropriateness of prior review for grammar and style, libel, and lewd content. Survey results show that most institutions had official documents that outline the types of content that the student newspapers should contain ($n=70$; 69.7%) and the roles of advisers, student editors, and administrators in the publication process ($n=59$; 57%). The results also show that the majority of the participants representing schools with official documents for the student newspaper were from public institutions ($n=58$; 83%).

The results supported overall differences ($F=558.213$, $p<0.000$) between survey participants who have official and written guidelines to follow that outline the rights and roles of student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators and those not having guidelines regarding their perceptions of authority to make final decisions existing at the organizational level, primary control at the organizational level of student newspaper content, censorship of student newspaper content, avoidance of content that does not align with the institution's perspective, avoidance of content that is critical of faculty and administration, informing the organization when controversial content will appear in the newspaper, prior review for grammar reasons, prior review for libel reasons, prior review for lewd content, administration's role in decision-making, and adviser's role in decision-making.

Among the significant differences are that those who had official guidelines to follow were less likely to encourage or engage in self-censorship practices. Those who had official guidelines were also more likely to understand the rights and roles of those involved in the publication process ($n=70$; 69.7%).

Discussion

The results of this study identified the types of student newspapers that usually have censorship problems and the perceptions and characteristics of the student editors, faculty

advisers, and academic affairs administrators who are in the positions to influence and censor content at the organization level.

The set of hypotheses tested the amount of control each group perceived having over the student newspaper and the likelihood of each group self-censoring student newspaper content. Results showed positive relationships between groups who perceived having less control over the student newspaper and groups who engaged in self-censoring practices of the student newspaper. Positive relationships also existed amongst groups who perceived having less control over the student newspaper and groups who self-censored content that did not align with the institution's perspective and content that was critical of faculty and administration.

Student editors were the only group who reported perceiving censorship as a problem for their student newspaper. Significant differences were found to exist between student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators in relation to perceptions of control and likelihood to self-censor at the organizational level. Significant differences were also found to exist between groups who worked at public institutions and their perceptions of control and likelihood to self-censor and groups who worked at private institutions. Significant differences also existed between groups who had official documents to guide the student newspaper operations and those who did not.

The findings have suggested that student editors were more likely to self-censor content when primary control was perceived to belong to individuals acting at the organizational level, such as faculty advisers and academic affairs administrators. In addition, research has shown that censorship incidents were more likely to occur at institutions that did not have official guidelines outlining the roles and responsibilities of various constituents involved in the publication process, or official documents explaining the types of content that was acceptable and

unacceptable for the publication. The results demonstrated that most public institutions had official governing rules and were not experiencing censorship issues. Private institutions were more likely to operate student newspapers without official guidelines, but were more involved in the publication process of student newspapers. Institutional involvement made the private institutions more susceptible to being held liable for content that appeared in the student newspaper. The research showed that for this reason, administrators at private institutions were more likely to censor content for libel reasons than administrators at public institutions. It is important to note, however, that influences on content at one level did not equate to censorship at that same level. For example, student editors did not engage in self-censorship until primary control was perceived to belong to groups at the organizational level.

The survey results from this study offered practical considerations for limiting unnecessary influences on content and avoiding censorship of student newspapers at the collegiate level. If student newspapers and institutions would incorporate some or all of the tactics presented, censorship problems could be kept to a minimum. Intolerance of censorship at the collegiate level can lead to general appreciation for fair and balanced reporting in the professional realm. Based on the findings, following are some practical suggestions.

1. Student editors should employ their learned journalism skills during content selection and continuously strive to keep influences based on personal, intrinsic characteristics to a minimum. This will assist in presenting content from an objective standpoint.

2. The roles of the student editors, faculty advisers, and academic affairs administrators in the publication process should be clearly outlined in official institutional documents. Research has shown that faculty advisers, in particular, are often uncertain about their roles with the student newspapers. These faculty advisers often serve as part of the student newspaper staff as

opposed to as an adviser to the student newspaper staff. Official documents should also detail the role of the institution and administration, if any, in the publication process. Particular attention should be given to determine whether the institution could be held liable for content that appears in the student newspaper. This is especially important for private institutions.

3. Student editors should have primary control over the student newspaper. This would help eliminate student editors' desire to self-censor based on the content desires of groups at different levels, such as administrators and members of the primary target audience.

This study detailed several causes of censorship and presented data regarding the types of student newspapers that are usually victims of censorship. Results could be used to explore these cases and determine whether the student newspapers affected by censorship had similar characteristics similar to those presented in this study through the survey analysis.

Though the research offered several theoretical and practical implications, there were also limitations to this study. First, this research was limited because it only focused on 109 institutions with student newspapers. The 109 institutions were all recognized as accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism in Mass Communication. The study did not explore influences on content and censorship issues at higher learning institutions that did not have an accredited journalism or mass communication program.

Most of the survey respondents represented public institutions. The survey results showed that influences on content and censorship issues do exist, but public institutions were more likely to have governing documents that assisted student editors in deciding whether certain content should be published. In addition, student editors at public institutions are protected by First Amendment rights, so censorship, at least on the surface, would be more difficult at public institutions than at private institutions.

Only editors in chief, faculty advisers, and provosts were targeted for this study. The perceptions of student reporters, journalism faculty, and other academic affairs administrators were not examined. These individuals, who might also be involved in the publication process, might have different perceptions about influences on student newspaper content and censorship of student newspaper content.

The topic of influences on student newspaper content and censorship of student newspaper content at the collegiate level could also be explored through further research. A content analysis of newspaper content of public institutions and private institutions could be conducted to compare the differences that exist between the two, if any. Another way to explore this topic further would be to analyze each level of influence more extensively and examine any instances of censorship that occurred at each level through case studies focusing on student newspapers that have already experienced censorship problems.

In addition, a study could be done that explores influences on content and censorship issues at higher learning institutions regardless of accreditation status. A comparison and contrast study of influences on content and censorship issues could be conducted between student newspapers at institutions with accredited journalism and mass communication programs and student newspapers at institutions without accredited journalism and mass communication programs. Surveys would serve as a practical and effective way to collect data. Statistically, further analyses of regression or discriminant function analyses incorporating the relationship between influences, control, and self-censorship could be conducted.

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Appendix: Tables

Table 1

Pearson r for Perceptions of Control and Encouragement of Self-Censorship

	Organizational control final decisions	Organizational primary control	Self-censorship	Content avoidance for adminis.	Avoidance of critical content
Organizational control final decisions	1	.085	-.042	.308(**)	-.029
Organizational primary control	.085	1	.424(**)	.217(*)	.307(**)
Self-censorship	-.042	.424(**)	1	.253(**)	.346(**)
Content avoidance for administration	.308(**)	.217(*)	.253(**)	1	.264(**)
Avoidance of critical content	-.029	.307(**)	.346(**)	.264(**)	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2

Pearson r for All Groups and Opinions on Roles of Administration and Faculty Advisers

	Inform organization	Grammar prior review	Libel prior review	Lewd content prior review	Admin part of decision	Admin major role in decision	Adviser part decision	Adviser major decision
Inform org.	1	.321(**)	-.096	-.103	-.099	.143	-.231(*)	.182

Grammar prior review	.321(**)	1	.473(**)	.385(**)	.216(*)	.348(**)	.335(**)	.089
Libel prior review	-.096	.473(**)	1	.899(**)	.392(**)	.236(*)	.634(**)	-.038
Lewd content prior review	-.103	.385(**)	.899(**)	1	.439(**)	.158	.530(**)	-.023
Admin part of decision	-.099	.216(*)	.392(**)	.439(**)	1	.468(**)	.513(**)	.251(*)
Admin major role in decision	.143	.348(**)	.236(*)	.158	.468(**)	1	.328(**)	.453(**)
Adviser part of decision	-.231(*)	.335(**)	.634(**)	.530(**)	.513(**)	.328(**)	1	.037
Adviser major in decision	.182	.089	-.038	-.023	.251(*)	.453(**)	.037	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

Multiple Comparison Test Results Addressing Self-Censorship and Control Amongst the Three Groups

Dependent Variable	(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Organizational control final decisions	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.31	.251	.657
		academic administrator	3.73(*)	.272	.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	.31	.251	.657
		academic administrator	4.04(*)	.293	.000
Organizational primary control	academic administrator	editor in chief	-3.73(*)	.272	.000
		faculty adviser	-4.04(*)	.293	.000
		editor in chief	-1.95(*)	.368	.000

		academic administrator	-.99(*)	.399	.043
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	1.95(*)	.368	.000
		academic administrator	.96	.429	.082
	academic administrator	editor in chief	.99(*)	.399	.043
Self-censorship		faculty adviser	-.96	.429	.082
	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.33	.180	.204
		academic administrator	-.50(*)	.195	.037
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	.33	.180	.204
		academic administrator	-.17	.209	1.000
	academic administrator	editor in chief	.50(*)	.195	.037
Content avoidance for administration	editor in chief	faculty adviser	.17	.209	1.000
		faculty adviser	.13	.336	1.000
		academic administrator	.66	.363	.216
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	-.13	.336	1.000
		academic administrator	.53	.391	.523
	academic administrator	editor in chief	-.66	.363	.216
Avoidance of critical content	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.53	.391	.523
		faculty adviser	-1.82(*)	.353	.000
		academic administrator	-1.59(*)	.382	.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	1.82(*)	.353	.000
		academic administrator	.23	.411	1.000
	academic administrator	editor in chief	1.59(*)	.382	.000
Inform organization	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.23	.411	1.000
		faculty adviser	-3.00(*)	.285	.000
		academic administrator	-4.05(*)	.309	.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	3.00(*)	.285	.000
		academic administrator	-1.05(*)	.332	.006
	academic administrator	editor in chief	4.05(*)	.309	.000
Grammar prior review	editor in chief	faculty adviser	1.05(*)	.332	.006
		faculty adviser	-.83	.428	.170
		academic administrator	-.02	.463	1.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	.83	.428	.170
		academic administrator	.81	.498	.323
	academic administrator	editor in chief	.02	.463	1.000
Libel prior review	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.81	.498	.323
		faculty adviser	1.46(*)	.434	.003
		academic administrator	2.19(*)	.470	.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	-1.46(*)	.434	.003
		academic administrator	.72	.505	.464
	academic administrator	editor in chief	-2.19(*)	.470	.000

		faculty adviser	-.72	.505	.464
Lewd content prior review	editor in chief	faculty adviser	.92(*)	.360	.035
		academic administrator	1.89(*)	.390	.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	-.92(*)	.360	.035
		academic administrator	.97	.419	.068
	academic administrator	editor in chief	-1.89(*)	.390	.000
		faculty adviser	-.97	.419	.068
Admin part of decision	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.11	.255	1.000
		academic administrator	.98(*)	.276	.002
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	.11	.255	1.000
		academic administrator	1.09(*)	.297	.001
	academic administrator	editor in chief	-.98(*)	.276	.002
		faculty adviser	-1.09(*)	.297	.001
Admin major role in decision	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-.62	.256	.050
		academic administrator	-.06	.278	1.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	.62	.256	.050
		academic administrator	.56	.299	.191
	academic administrator	editor in chief	.06	.278	1.000
		faculty adviser	-.56	.299	.191
Adviser part decision	editor in chief	faculty adviser	1.04(*)	.361	.014
		academic administrator	1.54(*)	.391	.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	-1.04(*)	.361	.014
		academic administrator	.50	.420	.712
	academic administrator	editor in chief	-1.54(*)	.391	.000
		faculty adviser	-.50	.420	.712
Adviser major decision	editor in chief	faculty adviser	-1.76(*)	.407	.000
		academic administrator	-.28	.441	1.000
	faculty adviser	editor in chief	1.76(*)	.407	.000
		academic administrator	1.48(*)	.474	.007
	academic administrator	editor in chief	.28	.441	1.000
		faculty adviser	-1.48(*)	.474	.007

Based on observed means.

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.