

EFFECTS OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF A SMALL-TOWN SCHOLASTIC PRESS PROGRAM

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by
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DEDICATION

To my wife Kendall, my daughter Presley, and the rest of my family and friends for their support and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

Using social capital theory as the lens, this case study investigates how being part of a scholastic journalism program impacts the academic, social, and civic engagement levels of students in a small-town, rural setting by observing and interviewing journalism staff members at Canton-Galva High School in Canton, Kansas. Two journalism advisers and eight journalism students were interviewed, and observations took place during the Spring 2018 academic semester. The students were part of either the bi-weekly news magazine or the yearbook. Concepts of media literacy and pedagogical practices of the journalism advisers were also explored. Though the results cannot be generalized to encompass the experiences of students in all high school journalism programs, the study finds Canton-Galva High School students, who are experiencing increased academic engagement, fail to engage socially or civically directly as a by-product of participating in the journalism program largely due to weakness in pedagogy of the journalism courses. Students are increasing their social capital, though, by being exposed to tenets of social and civic participation.

Keywords: scholastic journalism, engagement, social capital

Chapter 1: Introduction

In April 2017, the *Booster Redux*, the student newspaper of Pittsburg High School in southeast Kansas, made national headlines. This stemmed from a report the student journalists published questioning the credentials of a newly hired district administrator (Schmidt, 2017). The students found principal Amy Robertson's master's degree and doctoral degree came from the unaccredited and possibly nonexistent Corllins University (Chappell, 2017). Four days after publishing the report, Robertson resigned (Mele, 2017). Throughout the reporting process, the students were told to stop pursuing it because Robertson had been properly vetted by the school board, the superintendent, and a hiring committee, which even included the Pittsburg High School journalism adviser (Schmidt, 2017).

The story started out as a simple profile on the newly hired principal, but then the students uncovered the discrepancies. Outside of the questions concerning her advanced degrees, Robertson also claimed to have received her bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of Tulsa, but after checking into it, the students found Tulsa does not even offer such a degree (Mele, 2017). Even working over spring break, the students spent weeks reporting the story and raising questions with the superintendent, who continually assured the students Robertson was qualified and would be a good principal (Morrison, 2017). The pressure on the students was undoubtedly intense. Having never pursued such a story, the students sought advice from the executive director of the Kansas Scholastic Press Association, and they made the decision to publish the story (Schmidt, 2017). They were further bolstered by the Kansas Student Publications Act, a law "which grants students independent control over their editorial content, including material that might

paint a school in an unflattering light” (Mele, 2017, n.p.). The students even beat the local paper, the Pittsburg Morning Sun, to publishing the expose over Robertson (Chappell, 2017). Had she not resigned, Robertson would have received a \$93,000-a-year salary (Morrison, 2017).

Research Problem

What happened in Pittsburg demonstrates the important role high school journalism can play, even in small-town, rural Kansas. If it were not for the students questioning the credentials of a newly hired administrator, an unqualified person would have been in charge of an educational institution. Though not every high school journalism article carries enough power to unseat an administrator, the work student journalists do is equally as important as they shed light on important issues students face, whether it be something less controversial like test anxiety or something as unsettling as rape. Without a journalism program, such newsworthy topics would go unreported.

With Kansas riding a wave of national attention for its student journalism, it raises questions about what other programs are doing to produce quality journalism. While Pittsburg High School journalism would seem to be doing exceedingly well, what Canton-Galva High School journalism faces presents a more problematic issue as it relates to the program’s longevity. Located in rural, central Kansas, Canton-Galva High School had an enrollment of 98 students during the 2016-2017 school year (2016-2017 Classifications and Enrollments, 2016), and had an enrollment of 108 students for the 2017-2018 school year (2017-2018 Classifications and Enrollments, 2017). The community is largely comprised of white, middle class, and conservative individuals. The school district consists of two communities — Canton and Galva — located 11 miles

apart. Through the 2016-2017 academic school year, the journalism program had produced a yearbook, a monthly magazine, and a website. That changed for the 2017-2018 school year. Longtime adviser Jessica Bowman, who had led her program to multiple state awards, left to teach at another school. Instead of hiring a replacement for Bowman, the journalism duties were shifted to two other teachers already in the building — Tina McMannis and Cara Duell. This resulted in the elimination of the printed monthly magazine in favor of a digital-only, bi-weekly news magazine and the shuttering of the website. Essentially, this change in staffing resulted in the elimination of two journalistic outlets for the program and created a new one.

In small-town schools, the attention of students is pulled in numerous directions. Everyone is expected to help the school by being involved in as many things as possible. The athletics teams need players, the school play needs actors, the academic organizations need members, the band needs musicians, and all the students have homework and, often, work schedules thrown into the mix as well. This all spreads the students thin, and journalism is not always the first choice for most students due to the nature of the work or reputation of the program. Having only one physical journalistic product can further reduce the appeal of being a part of the program as opportunities for recognition for the work being done become rarer.

Research Purpose

With engagement being defined “as a collection of experiences” (Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder, 2010, p. 39), the purpose of this research is to explore levels of academic, social, and civic engagement of the students living in a digital age who are involved in a small-town, Kansas journalism program. Such a study is important because

a lot of research concerning high school journalism focuses on large, urban schools. This leaves out rural journalism students. Furthermore, this research adds to the scholarship on this topic because most studies look at larger, more metropolitan high schools when investigating different forms of engagement. Instead, this study looks at a school in a more rural setting with smaller student populations. It is hoped that through such a study the validity of journalism at small schools can be increased. Too often it seems the focus is only on the larger schools with the money to have seemingly unlimited resources. Small schools can produce great journalism too, and they often do so with much less in terms of funding and support. Also, not many studies focus on Kansas, instead opting for more generalized nation-wide surveys of the prevalence of journalism education and impacts of ethnicity and socioeconomic factors on journalism programs (Amster, 2006; Dvorak, Bowen, & Choi, 2009; Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson, 1994; Marchi, 2012).

To observe operation of the class and its results, a case study was combined with in-depth interviews. Interviews afford the opportunity to gain insights concerning the experience the students and advisers are having.

Research Questions

A lot of the research concerning scholastic journalism tends to focus on larger schools in more metropolitan areas (Amster, 2006; Bobkowski, Goodman, & Bowen, 2012). Missing from this strand of research is focused inquiry into rural and small-town high school journalism programs. To contribute to the broader body of knowledge concerning scholastic journalism and using social capital theory, this study sought to explore how journalism is taught in smaller schools as a way to increase academic, social, and civic engagement.

RQ1: How are journalism programs structured to support engagement? The structure of a high school journalism program can vary from location to location. Some programs operate with more student control, while others put the adviser in charge of many aspects of the student publications. This relates back to the social norms and values of the community in which the program operates. School administrators are often reluctant to give student journalists too much leeway to preserve the public image of the school district. However, such actions can dampen student engagement.

RQ2: How are student journalists given opportunities to engage socially and civically? Scholastic journalism programs provide students the chance to practice journalism. This can be done by producing an annual yearbook, a monthly newspaper or magazine, or a more frequently produced broadcast or website. Beyond this, though, student-produced media can be platform for expression. Also, the students' involvement can result in connections being made with social and civic organizations that could lead to larger engagement opportunities.

RQ3: Based upon the perceptions of the students, to what extent do high school journalism advisers influence student engagement? Educators can be hugely influential in the lives of youth. A journalism student's interest in social and civic endeavors can be sparked by time spent in a classroom with a particular teacher. A government teacher would be an obvious possibility for this kind of inspiration, but journalism deals with social and civic issues on a daily basis. The hands-on exposure to such aspects of life might have a significant impact on a student's thoughts and opinions.

RQ4: What curricular components are incorporated to teach students their rights and responsibilities? Journalism is not taught uniformly from school to school.

Therefore, student exposure to First Amendment Law education might be limited depending upon the school district, the program, and the adviser. To effectively engage socially and civically, students need to know their rights. Key to this is a curricular focus on media literacy. Such education can help students understand the media landscape and know how to sort through the online noise. With increased media literacy, impacts of phenomena such as “fake news” can be reduced.

RQ5: How is technology, such as social media, used in the program to amplify students’ voices? Social media is an equalizer. Regardless of personal resources or physical location, people can connect and share ideas with incredible ease. Collaboration can happen in an instant. Thanks to mobile devices, people are always available on social media, and the platforms have been used to organize movements, such as what took place during the Arab Spring (Davison, 2015). Social media can also be beneficial to engaging audiences, which is a skill journalists need in the professional realm. Scholastic journalism programs present the opportunity for students to learn multiple skills with and uses of social media and other technologies.

By considering these research questions, a clear picture of how high school journalism programs support social and civic engagement is drawn. By looking at a more rural setting, important understanding of a less-often considered and represented segment of the population is gained.

Explication of Concepts

Journalism education is important for a democratic society because students involved in scholastic journalism “follow and engage with important community issues and that by informing their audiences about these issues, they perform civic service and

learn to effectively contribute to the civic process” (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016, p. 530). Furthermore, journalism education allows for students to focus on service learning, which is a pedagogical concept relating to developing self-efficacy as part of the doing process and becoming a member of a democratic society by developing a value for participation (Ball, Procopio, Goering, Dong, & Bodary, 2016). The value of journalism education is extended into more academic realms by the fact students involved in scholastic journalism consistently perform higher when judged against standard testing practices (Dvorak, Bowen, & Choi, 2009; Roschke, 2009). In journalism programs, students are granted the opportunity to increase psychological processes of memory and learning by being allowed to practice the skills being taught in a real-world setting of producing journalistic content (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015). Social engagement, specifically relating to media literacy and understanding of messaging, is increased when students are involved in journalism programs (Marchi, 2012). This is important because “mass-produced messages form the culture” of our society “and thereby shaped public knowledge and beliefs over the long term” (Potter, 2014, p. 1,017). Furthermore, students exposed to journalism education show more understanding and participation with politics at all levels (Bobkowski, Goodman, & Bowen, 2012). Journalism programs also allow students to become socialized in three of four aspects of public life, which are family, school, media, and peers (Shah, McLeod, & Lee, 2009). With fewer opportunities to be involved in journalism, the levels of engagement by the students could be negatively impacted.

With the technology currently available in today’s society, students have more of the world at their fingertips than ever before. This would seem to indicate high school

students would be more adept at engaging with others and being more open to people with differing viewpoints and backgrounds. After all, social media connects people from any distance, and younger people are highly connected on social media (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). However, it has been suggested that students might be more antisocial due to social media because they would rather engage with others in a digital space rather than face-to-face (Sass, 2016). This is akin to Putnam's (2001) research of social capital theory, in which he found the widespread use of television by the public led to a decline in social and civic engagement. However, since social media is a two-way communication tool, unlike television, the potential positives for using social media outweigh the negatives. High school journalism programs and the engagement levels of the students on staffs are benefited by putting a focus on digital reporting tools, such as social media or websites. After all, being able to develop social capital through a journalism program helps to "stress the importance of community involvement to sustain democracy" (Zhang & Seltzer, 2010, p. 156).

The next chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the study, including an overview and explanation of theory and introduction of prior research that informs the approach to this study. An explanation of and rationale for the methods used is presented in chapter three. The results of the study, including insights from the study's subjects and observations of the operation of the journalism program, are presented in chapter four. Finally, chapter five presents the conclusions reached as a result of the study and suggests why the study was important and where further research should focus.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (as cited in Strauss, 2013). When it comes to learning, one type of education stands out — journalism education. For society to benefit and positive impacts to be made, students must understand how to navigate the media landscape and interact with the world around them. Participation in journalism programs provides unique opportunities to practice being a citizen before fully embarking into full societal contribution. Presidential elections might only happen every four years, but with each high school graduating class, newly minted adults enter society. These former students can continue to be students or simply enter the work force. With proper education and experiences, what they do with their rights and responsibilities as citizens and members of society can result in positive change, regardless of the scale to which the impact is imparted.

Students have First Amendment rights, despite what some administrators or other adults may believe (LoMonte, Goldstein, & Hiestand, 2013). It is the job of educators, at all levels, to teach skills and knowledge associated with journalism so that power is wielded properly. Instructors must be advocates for student journalists and practice sound advising techniques that protect those rights and allow student journalists to function as professional journalists, even if administration pays for a portion of the publication costs (Kopenhaver, 1984). Methods of instruction vary, but the goal of developing future journalists holds true for the majority of educators. This is particularly important in a world of ever-changing technology. Educators must adapt to give students the skills needed in the current employment marketplace (Briggs, 2007). However, if the students

are part of a minority race and the income of their parents is low, the education received can be affected (Amster, 2006). Furthermore, students exposed to journalism education show more understanding and participation with politics at all levels (Bobkowski, Goodman, & Bowen, 2012).

Research in journalistic education is varied. Some studies look at pedagogy (Dailey, 2016; Tuggle, Sneed, & Wulfemeyer, 2000). Others look at the students' abilities to find jobs after graduation (Becker, Jeong Yeob, Wilcox, & Vlad, 2014). Also, studies look at how technology is playing an ever-increasing role in journalism education (Grabowski, 2014). Implications of journalism education on civics also show up (Clark & Monserrate, 2011; Clark & Monserrate, 2018). Continued research in the area of journalism education is important because of budgeting concerns at learning institutions and changes within the journalism industry that require journalists entering the field to have new and varied skills. Scholastic journalism programs exist to help train future journalists, so keeping apprised of changes in school systems and the professional realm proves necessary.

Social Capital in Society

“[S]ocial capital is the nutritive tissue from which civic organizations and collective action grow” (Matei, 2003, p. 6). Putnam (2001), a recognized leader on the subject, suggests social capital is a web of mutual trust and cooperation derived from the participation in community groups and organizations. Putnam's research led him to see how social capital as he defined it is a crucial component for social and civic engagement (Maras, 2006). Putnam (2001) saw a decline in social capital by noticing fewer people were joining bowling leagues and other community organizations, which he attributed to

increased television consumption. The issue with television consumption, as some research suggests, is that it can cause viewers to be desensitized, especially to societal ills such as poverty or violence (Edgar & Edgar, 1971). This can lead to a less civil society, which can negatively impact democracy functioning properly (Putnam, 2001). Such impacts can be attributed to less knowledge being available due to the lack of the prescribed engagements (Edgar & Edgar, 1971). Without this knowledge, which is important for being active in a democracy, reasons to become civically engaged dwindle because the idealism, instilled responsibility, and enjoyment of political participation becomes nonexistent (Putnam, 2001).

With the increase of Internet connected devices and social media use, less social capital could be developed, especially with younger generations. The primary cause of this could be time displacement in that users are more engrossed in their digital lives than the social and civic opportunities presented around them (Maras, 2006). The research on this, however, is not in complete agreement. Some scholars believe “on-line communities will make possible new social arrangements, more democratic and more inclusive,” while others believe “social groups facilitated by the computer revolution will, in fact, destroy traditional social bonds, leading to weak social ties” (Matei, 2003, p. 3). These forms of digital and online engagement are a form of mass media. Therefore, the two sides of the academic theory are worth considering because a society’s culture is formed and informed by the mass media consumed as it shapes public knowledge and beliefs (Potter, 2014).

As such, to develop a society with more social capital, the education high school students receive should be considered. For instance, a high school journalism program

gives students the opportunity to develop psychological processes of memory and learning needed to be more productive members of society (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015). Furthermore, such an education allows students to develop key skills to having a successful public life, such as learning to interact with school, media, and their peers (Shah, McLeod, & Lee, 2009).

However, not all high school journalism programs are the same, especially when considering available resources such as funding or curriculum. Most research focuses on large programs, overlooking smaller ones, but the smaller, rural schools may be playing a part in local information that's being overlooked. Despite the digitally connected world society currently exists in, "most journalism continues to serve audiences closer to home" (Hess, 2015, p. 482). Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig (2010) suggest rural communities are those with less than 2,500 people, consist of large swaths of farm ground, and "tend to be older, less educated, less wealthy, and less mobile than urban Americans" (p. 1,370). Local media, then, plays an important role in connecting and informing the communities it serves, and the reading of local print products is pointed to as being an indicator of having higher levels of social capital (Hess, 2015; Maras, 2006). High school journalism often fills the role of local news provider in small, rural communities, so a student-produced newspaper helps keep the local populace informed. Print journalism helps climate the feelings of social and geographical isolation that rural residents can experience (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010). Such isolation could contribute to the fact television and other media privatized leisure (Putnam, 2001). The effects of which could be more impactful in rural areas because there is less to do and television viewing in one's own home is more convenient (Maras, 2006). However, even though access in

rural areas can be an issue, rural individuals seem to adopt new technologies quite readily, which could be due to a desire to minimize isolation (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010).

Therefore, print products and the use of emerging technologies in a rural school are important considerations. This is especially true due to social media allowing various individuals to connect over any distance, and younger people use social media at high levels (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Even so, rural social media users tend to connect with those closer to themselves geographically (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010). Using technology to increase engagement then suggests possible drawbacks for rural students due to rural communities being more focused on a print product. It can be a clash of social norms that can hinder the development of social capital because it is suggested that students have become more antisocial due to their preference to be on social media instead of interacting with others offline (Sass, 2016). With social capital being a strong indicator of engagement and technology possibly disrupting this (Putnam, 2001), social capital serves as the best lens through which to inspect the work of a rural, high school journalism program. Furthermore, research suggests females develop more social capital through engagement with social media (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010), so the demographics of rural journalism programs can be a contributing factor in the levels of engagement seen. Coming from the communities they do, the students that the student journalists serve with their journalistic products might be more interested in the print product due to the social capital values they have become accustomed to through the socialization processes they encounter where they live. This relates to the correlation between increased technology use and decreased engagement Putnam (2001) suggests. It

should be noted, though, that correlation cannot empirically mean causation. Social capital theory cannot determine the reasons for decreased engagement even if it can make suggestions.

Pedagogy and Application of Journalism Education

In developing a journalism program to achieve goals of engagement, several factors must be considered. For educational institutions to view the program favorably, there must be ways to determine levels of student learning. Dailey (2016) discusses how the Common Core measures competency in a variety of subject matters by measuring skills in project-based learning, rather than being able to regurgitate information for a test in more traditional learning environments. Journalism education breaks away from traditional methods of instruction in which the teacher dictates all learning and expects students to remember facts to be recalled at test time and instead focuses on student-orientated learning where the pupils are in more control of their learning with the instructor acting in an advisory role to ensure the students gain knowledge without forcing upon them the path to gain such knowledge (Lowrey & Kim, 2009). Roschke (2009) builds on this idea by pointing out the technical skills required for success in the journalism field. Specifically, skills needed focus on writing (Dailey, 2016). Regardless of the medium content is produced for, writing plays a crucial role. Bloggers write posts, video production teams write scripts, photographers write cutlines, et cetera (Briggs, 2007). Therefore, as a way to meet the standards put forth by the Common Core, which is becoming more prevalent in education, journalism rises as a great example of Common Core in practice (Dailey, 2016).

Therefore, **RQ1**: How is the journalism program structured to support

engagement?

Unlike other academic areas at the high school level, though, journalism educators do not inherently have specialized training in the field. Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) point out less than 30 percent of high school journalism teachers have any certification in journalism, with less than 10 percent having majored in a journalism-related area of study while in college. Despite this, limited survey data shows of 834 schools 93 percent had yearbooks, 79 percent had student newspapers, and 13 percent had student broadcasts (Bobkowski, Goodman, & Bowen, 2012). The journalism advisers involved with such student-produced media are generally married females with at least two children (Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson, 1994). Though fads such as Common Core may cycle through, as some educators believe, the focus of the instruction remains relevant due to the fact journalism will remain and the skills derived provide non-journalists valuable skills applicable outside of the industry (Dailey, 2016).

Though skills of reporting and writing will continue to be a mainstay of journalism education, technology is quickly becoming a key component of the journalism world. Though the tools themselves may change, the presence of technology appears to have become a permanent component of journalism (Briggs, 2007; Grabowski, 2014; Roschke, 2009; Singh, 2010). In this day and age, most journalism students will become online journalists upon entering the work force, so they must understand how they will fit into news organizations transitioning away from traditional, print-orientated focuses (Hartley, 2013). Carpini (2000) suggests the digital tools currently available to high school students could be used to reengage socially and civically. Furthermore, using online and other technologies as the vehicle for the distribution of products derived from

journalism education is becoming more appealing. This is due to its low cost, which is important due to the fact scholastic journalism programs are not established to generate profits, even though making profits via yearbook and advertising sales do help keep the organization isolated from outside influences (Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson, 1994). However, socioeconomic disparities can result in even the relatively inexpensive access to such digital tools from being evenly distributed among school districts (Bobkowski, Goodman, & Bowen, 2012). In such instances low-socioeconomic and minority populations, Amster (2006) finds family support, of not only the students but also of the educator and program, is crucial for success. Regardless of obstacles concerning educator training or economic status of students, journalism education continues to provide a valuable experience because it allows students of all types to learn specific skills and gain understanding of how the news works (Roschke, 2009).

A key part of civic engagement is the ability of everyone to have their voices heard. The first Amendment gives citizens the right to free speech. The foundation of journalistic education builds upon the First Amendment. Journalism educator Bobby Hawthorne argues it is the role of the journalism adviser to defend the rights of the students, even if the students don't have a firm grasp on what those rights entail (as cited in "Experienced educators reaffirm that all voices matter," 2015). The First Amendment must be promoted and sustained not only for journalism, but basic civil liberties, to survive (Haynes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, & Thomas, 2003). The high school level is where the understanding of the importance of the First Amendment's rights and responsibilities begins to form, but some adults do not believe students should be allowed to exercise such rights to the same extent adults are allowed (Click & Kopenhaver, 1988).

The adviser has to understand that if a student publication is a designated forum of free speech, the students have rights that cannot be infringed upon (LoMonte, Goldstein, & Hiestand, 2013).

The delivery method of journalism education is key. With the First Amendment providing the foundation, journalism advisers need to fully understand how journalism functions in a democracy. Proper education of the educators becomes an important component. Schools should allow for curricular components and other resources in order for a journalism program to succeed, and support from the community and family of the students journalists is important for the program to thrive.

Therefore, **RQ2**: How are student journalist given opportunities to engage?

Based upon survey data out of Florida, administrators largely believe they have the right to control what is printed in a student publication by prior review or express censorship of articles they deem unfit for print (Click & Kopenhaver, 1988). Such a view of student journalism isn't isolated to Florida, and its prevalence can be attributed the United State Supreme Court decision in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, which granted administrators the right to dictate what types of speech students were permitted to express as long as any censorship addressed "legitimate pedagogical concerns" ("*Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*," n.d.). This contradicted the United State Supreme Court decision in *Tinker v. Des Moines*, which granted students First Amendment rights and made clear students did not lose such rights when at school unless the speech prevented the normal operation of the school day ("*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*," n.d.). Based upon the court cases being at odds with one another, it is vital for advisers to understand the rights of students (Kopenhaver, 1984). Furthermore,

to be effective, advisers must also understand their role in student expression, including what their own rights are. LoMonte, Goldstein, & Hiestand (2013) explain advisers can support students in instances of opposition to the free expression of their rights, but those advisers do not have the same legal recourse as the students, who must challenge the decision of the school in the courts because it is their rights, not the advisers, that are damaged. Advisers must do what is necessary to create curricula and atmosphere supporting the First Amendment and what journalism stands for (Haynes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, & Thomas, 2003).

As Dailey (2016) points out, despite the core goal of journalism education being relatively universal, the method of teaching journalism is not standardized. The Internet provides numerous avenues for journalistic production (Briggs, 2007; Snee, 2015). This could mean producing a news website, maintaining a coverage via social media platforms, producing a yearbook, or reviving a school newspaper (Smith & Baden, 2016). It could also mean doing specialized projects with precise planning (Wofford, 2016). Romero (2016) discusses a project in which students were paired with elder adults to create multimedia pieces telling the life stories of those adults as an example of community-orientated journalism. Likewise, a radio project in India allows students the opportunity to serve their community and practice journalism at the same time (Singh, 2010). If embarking upon such methods of journalism instruction are not possible due to budgetary or other restrictions, Tuggle, Sneed, & Wulfemeyer (2000) suggest concepts of journalism and media literacy could be incorporated into social science classes to bolster students' critical thinking skills. Doing so would provide the opportunity for students to learn about diversity and how media messaging affects perceptions of groups in a way to

combat stereotypes and other societal ills (Squires & Schriener, 2009). In short, journalism programs help students find their voice and contribute to the knowledge base of the society (Clark & Monserrate, 2008).

Academic Engagement

One positive benefit afforded students participating in journalism programs results in better academic performance. Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) illustrate this by showing high school journalism staff members earned higher grade point averages than non-staffers overall and in specific academic areas of English, social studies, math, and science, with the most significant differences being found in English and social studies. Looking at national data collected by the ACT, research shows a correlation between participation in journalism and higher scores on the standardized test (Dvorak, Bowen, & Choi, 2009). Composite scores of journalism students fall into the 76th percentile, while non-journalism students fall into the 74th percentile (Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson, 1994). Bruschke & George (1999) point out, though, the study does not predict English grades during the first year of college. However, the study of ACT data goes on to show journalism students score in the 81st and 74th percentiles in English and social studies respectively, while non-journalism students score in the 69th and 70th percentiles respectively (Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson, 1994).

Academic success shows up more clearly with minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. For example, media exposure has been attributed to better performance in school by Mexican-American children because it helps with improved communication skills to overcome language barriers (Tan & Gunter, 1979). Such an example is indicative of how all minority students benefit from journalism education.

Amster (2006) sheds some light on these benefits by describing journalism education as providing opportunity for students to overcome socioeconomic disadvantages by learning a trade. In terms of grades, minority students in journalism programs earn better grades than non-journalism students in nearly all academic areas, and they go on to have higher grades in their first college English courses (Dvorak, Bowen, & Choi, 2009). Making it clearer why involvement in journalism programs is crucial to student success, Tan & Gunter (1979) point out when minority students read newspaper articles concerning government and politics, it helps those students perform better in school.

Research shows participation in academic extracurricular activities, such as student media and journalism, have positive effects on academic standings (Becker, Jeong Yeob, Wilcox, & Vlad, 2014). Besides grades, though, academic performance can also be gauged by skills learned and jobs earned following graduation. A variety of skills are taught in journalism programs, focusing on basics of news judgement, writing, reporting, and technology (Bruschke & George, 1999; Finucane, 2006; Hudson, 1987; King, 2008; Poindexter, 2013; Thurlow & Bell, 2009). High-order skills such as self-direction, problem-solving, critical thinking, cooperation, confidence, and responsibility, which are desirable traits of employers, are taught in journalism programs (Grow, 1991). Hudson (1987) supports this by enumerating skills deemed desirable by broadcast news employers and expressing the need for experience for individuals to earn positions within journalism organizations, and such experience can be most adequately be gained by participating in student media. Furthermore, journalism education can counter the negative effects technology has on communication by instructing students how to effectively use the tools and express themselves professionally and coherently without

allowing text messaging slang and abbreviations to pervade messages when such methods of communication are not deemed appropriate or fitting (Thurlow & Bell, 2009).

Therefore, **RQ3**: Based upon the perceptions of the students, to what extent do the high school journalism advisers influence student engagement?

Social Engagement

Along with positive academic experiences comes learning how to engage socially, so it must be understood that such interactions occur by way of communication. This communication involves both intrapersonal and interpersonal communication (Lowrey & Kim, 2009). Media programs allow journalism students to become socialized because their education influences how the world is seen by them (Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe, 2015). Journalism programs support the needs of individuals within communication (Gardiner, 2013). Research shows all communication can be attributed to either acquiring information or sharing information, regardless if the information being sent or received is more broad-based or personal in nature (Oates, 1985). Understanding such communication is media literacy, which entails acquiring skills to navigate the news media by being able to evaluate and use information critically (Guo-Ming, 2007; Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012).

According to research, journalism participation is not necessarily attributed to motivations or technology use (Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe, 2015). However, with technology pervading society, the avenues for social engagement by way of communication are ever expanding (Briggs, 2007). Research shows Americans spend more than 80 minutes each day consuming media, and the use of the Internet and smartphones for streaming content continues to increase by significant amounts each year

(Schmidt, 2013). Pew Research shows younger individuals, such as students, differ from their elder counterparts by preferring to read the news digitally rather than watch it on television or read it in print (Mitchell, 2016). The importance for students to understand communication and how it affects social interactions relates to media literacy, which is key for an informed and active citizenry (Garcia-Ruiz, Ramirez-Garcia, & Rodriguez-Rosell, 2014). A component of interaction is motivation to develop a sense of self, and journalism classes afford students the opportunity to gain understanding of their basic needs — such as autonomy, competence, and camaraderie – within the social context to become better citizens as supported by the self-determination theory (Gardiner, 2013). Within journalism programs, this socialization takes place by providing a setting in which culture can be developed through the negotiation of values in a visible sphere (Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe, 2015).

Media literacy standards exist for high school education, and those have been implemented in all 50 states to some extent (Schmidt, 2013). However, some researchers believe media literacy is nothing more than a buzzword with no clear definition (Gray, 2005). Mihailidis (2006) disagrees and presents a concise definition of the term and expresses how journalism education presents a prime opportunity for students to learn media literacy, as both allow students hands-on engagement with journalism. By taking part in journalism programs, students are afforded the opportunity to read and write media texts and analyze the works (Emery & Rother, 2002). Considering journalism programs as a vehicle for media literacy, students emerge as more engaged in their societies (Babad, Peer, & Hobbs, 2009; Mihailidis, 2006). One danger of this concept is the effect the perceptions educators have in relation to how students' perceptions are

developed because it can prevent the students from developing a clear definition of self without influence (Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe, 2015).

Therefore, **RQ4**: What curricular components are incorporated to teach students their rights and responsibilities?

Understanding how news decisions are made feeds into media literacy by providing context for the human aspect of the process, thus providing students the opportunity to relate to the subject matter on different levels. Ethics must be considered here because they are a core tenet of journalism and news that relate to values, attitudes, and philosophies (Cuillier, 2009).

This is important because news decision making is a complex process drawing on psychology (Donsbach, 2003). Social influences in the way of cultural norms and the law impact this process (Cuillier, 2009). Research suggests certain groups are presented in the media in ways influential to thoughts and behaviors of consumers which can affirm or negate stereotypes (Arendt, 2013). Some studies find stereotypes are relied upon by individuals who have a more morbid personality and think about death more, which can change the effectiveness of media messages based upon preconceived beliefs and attitudes (Cuillier, 2009). Cojocariu (2013) makes the case that for any news coverage or piece of communication to be effective, it must have influence, which isn't to be taken as a negative attribute but rather an avenue for growth via learning and understanding one's place in the world.

Such influence can lead to the development of important social skills such as empathy, which the human mind supports and becomes more powerful as knowledge of others grows through consumption of various communications or journalistic products

(Bech Sillesen, Ip, & Uberti, 2015). This goes against beliefs that emotions do not allow for rationality, even though research suggests journalism presented in personal fashions can actually foster the development of social engagement by building emotional knowledge of and investment in news events (Bas & Grabe, 2015). These social skills prevent audience members from being powerless or exploitable when it comes to observing the media and the world in which they exist (Cojocariu, 2013).

Whether enforcing stereotypes, developing empathy, or affecting the consumer in any other way, the process of news reporting and communication impacting individuals can be viewed as the media priming effect, of which research on cognitive implications is not widespread (Arendt, 2013). However, based upon agenda setting, it is clear media priming results in the ability of audience members to remember facts about a particular topic based upon how heavily and in what light the event is discussed in news reports (Valenzuela, 2009). Donsbach (2003) suggests social validation and predispositions drive decisions, which is important for social engagement through media literacy because it outlines ways for individuals to develop the sense of self and arrive at a truth.

Understanding how these driving forces and media priming work allows media effects to be uncovered, understood, and handled, especially in settings where stereotypes are challenged and attempted to be reduced by making the individuals more informed about the realities of any given situation (Arendt, 2013). Personal values that are guiding principles of life are created, which research suggests is impacted by journalism involvement and lead to understanding humans in terms of a cultural society (Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe, 2015). Part of this culture is technology being used for communication and social purposes (Thurlow & Bell, 2009).

Civic Engagement

Though media literacy education and new media technologies present the opportunity for youth to lead active civic and political lives, studies show the engagement by these young people is not happening at high rates (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012). High school journalism programs teach civics with a focus on the process of civic engagement to train students to see the benefit of keeping the societal whole in mind rather than only being concerned with themselves (Clark & Monserrate, 2008). Research suggests journalism programs support this type of civic engagement by students (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Successful civic engagement involves critical thinking skills, communication, organization, and decision-making (Clark & Monserrate, 2011). The best way to build such skills with students who are digital natives is to reach them where they are, which is with technology (Garcia-Ruiz, Ramirez-Garcia, & Rodriguez-Rosell, 2014). Access to new media, such as social media, blogging, and video games, via smart phones presents educators with ways to increase this civic engagement (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012).

Therefore, **RQ5**: How is technology, such as social media, used in the program to amplify students' voices?

Other studies support this by pointing out such participative forms of media provide avenues for students to engage civically in creative fashions demonstrating responsibility and critical thinking (Garcia-Ruiz, Ramirez-Garcia, & Rodriguez-Rosell, 2014). However, it takes more than access to technology to develop this type of participation. Students must learn civic engagement means contributing to society by, at minimum, voting in elections, discussing public issues, and volunteering with

organizations dedicated to social causes (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Kennamer (1987) adds to this by suggesting journalism programs provide a phase of education in which political activity is initiated. Clark & Monserrate (2011) argue, though, that there is danger in allowing students to believe volunteering is enough, which means civic participation education must include dealing with government and politics. Volunteering can coincide with journalism, though, when the volunteering means donating one's time to a community journalism project (Bressers, Smethers, & Mwangi, 2015).

Journalism is one of several civic activities students can take part in while in high school, and research suggests student participation in such activities supports civic engagement in adulthood by laying a foundation in which such engagement is valued and respected due to developed knowledge and identity (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). However, such self-awareness leading to civic-minded actions comes over time as most students initially view participation in journalism as an avenue for personal goal achievement and future career success (Clark & Monserrate, 2011). The skills and knowledge gained through journalism implants an understanding of how to exist within society (Garcia-Ruiz, Ramirez-Garcia, & Rodriguez-Rosell, 2014). Participation in journalism programs shows students the importance of consuming and disseminating information by way of communication in order to be informed, which is paramount to being a citizen within a democracy (Clark & Monserrate, 2011). Bobkowski & Miller (2016) expand upon this notion by saying, "communication is central within the process of civic development, when young people hone communication-oriented civic skills and identity characteristics, they are developing their civic communication competence, which is a suite of proficiencies and habits that sustain their civic engagement into

adulthood” (p. 532).

Knowing one’s self is important for effective civic engagement and to be able to weigh in on important matters of all sizes with core a belief and understanding. Producing journalism via a media program gives students the opportunity to find their unique voices and develop appreciation for diverse individuals within their school (Clark & Monserrate, 2011). This leads to journalism students understanding how events and issues at local, national, and global levels affect their peers and communities, which perpetuates further civic engagement by not only those students but consumers of the media they produce (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Tied closely to the journalism created is the right to do so as afforded by the First Amendment, and journalism programs give students hands-on experience with the law (Haynes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, & Thomas, 2003; LoMonte, Goldstein, & Hiestand, 2013). Some journalism programs may face disheartening challenges in the way of censorship and other First Amendment issues, but research suggests this builds civic engagement by inspiring further investigation of individual rights and responsibilities (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). More than simply teaching journalism skills or basic politics, journalism programs serve students by providing a way to learn how they fit within the world around them (Clark & Monserrate, 2011).

Increased civic engagement due to journalism participation is more evident in students with minority or low socioeconomic status (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Low socioeconomic status can be attributed to lower levels of education, and this leads researchers to conclude people with lower levels of education do not have the same ability to process news information effectively as individuals with higher levels of

education (Bas & Grabe, 2015). Research suggests this is due to low-income and minority students and school districts have fewer resources allowing for participation, so when they are able to practice journalism, the increases are more noticeable (Marchi, 2012). By not being exposed to journalism, students fail to acquire needed skills and knowledge in being able to ascertain information, which could be due to lack a lack of cognitive ability one would get from journalism education if the school provided such opportunities (Bas & Grabe, 2015). The lack of engagement could also be attributed to parents who are disengaged and pass that disengagement down to their children by way of example (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Also, a distrust of the media could lead to less civic engagement because of ways minorities are represented, or under-represented, in news coverage and on journalism staffs (Amster, 2006; Marchi, 2012). Creation of journalistic products brings with it inherent positive or negative feedback by consumers, which combats disengagement because it creates a sense of belonging to society as a whole due to it being clear the product being produced is being viewed just like other media products (Clark & Monserrate, 2011).

Though civic engagement can take many forms, the most recognizable method of involvement consists of taking part in politics. Research shows media messaging and how it is presented in any of a variety of formats can impact on how an individual views politics, whether positively or negatively (Faulkner, 2011; Lowrey & Kim, 2009). Regardless of political views, being active in the process allows individuals to develop friendships and bring communities together as social capital is built, which research suggests is important for a democracy to succeed because it allows people to interact and solve problems affecting the community in which they exist (Bressers, Smethers, &

Mwangi, 2015). This involvement can be as simple as taking part in comment threads in online news publications, which provides new avenues for individuals to interact with the news and fellow consumers (Ksiazek, 2015). Studies suggest an understanding of this type of interactivity derived from journalism education allows for participatory journalism on a larger and more impactful scale (Bressers, Smethers, & Mwangi, 2015). Students exposed to journalism education also have a greater understanding of what journalists should be doing, and, therefore, can be more critical in making civic decisions due to a desire to work in a public sphere where attention can be paid to politics and social issues (Andersson & Wadbring, 2015). Civil discourse is important in this discussion because it sheds light on how informed the populace is, and the level of knowledge individuals have can be determined by how well discussions can take place with respect and understanding and without becoming hostile (Ksiazek, 2015). Views of journalism and how it plays into civic life can be generational by nature (Andersson & Wadbring, 2015).

However, it is not simply a matter of consuming and understanding the news because individuals face numerous choices from where news can be received in a personalized fashion leading the consumer to feel an emotional response that causes sometimes visceral reactions, such as condemning a politician for prior behavior because the news outlet of choices makes the event seem to be the most important aspect of his or her identity as a political figure (Bas & Grabe, 2015). Different generations view sources of news differently, and research shows younger generations have more of a desire to be included by way of participation and interactivity (Andersson & Wadbring, 2015). Citizen journalism provides an opportunity for such engagement to take place as

participation in such a venture can act as a platform for the growth of civic engagement virtues (Bressers, Smethers, & Mwangi, 2015). With journalism being a key part in how citizens can take part in governance as prescribed by the founding fathers, journalism education can help generations close gaps in knowledge and be more involved in the democratic process (Bas & Grabe, 2015). Supporting this notion, Andersson & Wadbring (2015) propose journalism students hold journalism in high regard due to professional values, unlike previous generations who viewed the media with more commercial interests leading to personal wealth growth. Due to this preference, journalism students are more likely to judge various news outlets more critically, differentiating between sensational and infotainment journalism, often viewed as not supporting the democracy by providing pertinent information, and hard news journalism (Bas & Grabe, 2015).

Part of civic development in youth is actively gaining knowledge by way of journalism programs (Clark & Monserrate, 2008). People most likely to vote tend to be well-informed and regularly consume news (Kennamer, 1987). When it comes to political elections, the media plays a large role by altering how voters differentiate and judge political candidates and parties (Valenzuela, 2009). Research shows, though, media does not dictate what individuals should think but rather what they should be thinking about (Golan, Banning, & Lundy, 2005). Based upon third-person effects, however, research shows individuals believe they are not susceptible to media influence when it comes to making decisions, such as in casting a ballot, but others likely become swayed one way or the other (Banning, 2006). Golan, Banning, & Lundy (2005) conducted an experiment with college students and arrived at results pointing to increased participation in voting correlating with exposure to media messages that respondents felt were not

affecting their decision but would have large impacts upon others viewing the same messages; however, respondents who indicated they were less likely to vote did not believe the messaging was affecting them less or more than anyone else, leading a conclusion to be drawn that voting when experiencing the third-person effect is an effort to balance the election by offsetting the vote of the more impressionable viewers influenced by the messaging. Media messaging impacts young voter turnout, especially as forms of media being used by political entities and consumers alike change (Kenamer, 1987). Online communication, such as social media, impacts public perception of political issues at different levels of government or community (Snee, 2015). Use of social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, has been pointed out in research as being an excellent outlet for political dialogue because of its openness for communication between candidates and voters or simply among voters themselves, most of which are generally younger individuals who have gone through life with social media being a part of daily life (Fernandes, Giurcanu, Bowers, & Neely, 2010). Effective contributions to such public discourse exist as part of what journalism education teaches students (Roschke, 2009). Fernandes et al., (2010) conducted research concerning the use of Facebook in battle ground states as it related to the typically apathetic group of younger voters and the 2008 United States Presidential Election contested between Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama and found more than half of participation within the selected Facebook groups of the candidates consisted of political and civic discussions, of which mentions of the candidates themselves were generally positive in the respective Facebook groups. Such studies do not mention participation in journalism programs, but they make a strong case for journalism education due to what is

involved in such learning (Golan, Banning, & Lundy, 2005; Fernandes et al., 2010). They make the case for students to become informed citizens who have knowledge of political issues, candidates, voting, rights and responsibilities, social issues, volunteering, and human rights, among other descriptors of being civically engaged (Clark & Monserrate, 2008).

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this research is to explore levels of academic, social, and civic engagement of the students living in a digital age who are involved in a small-town, Kansas journalism program with two journalistic products. Therefore, to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning scholastic journalism, qualitative research presents an optimal method to answer the question of how journalism is taught in relation to increased academic, social, and civic engagement. This is because the question drives at how students have experiences. Qualitative research explores “the meaning of human action” (Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007, p. 23). The focus must be on what is happening (Arnett, 2016). Specifically, a combination of a case study and interviews were conducted to achieve the goal of this research. A case study consists of “an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bound by time and activity” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). This also includes analyzing and interpreting those behaviors to draw larger conclusions from those actions (Jackson Drummond, & Camara, 2007). Based upon observations, a researcher can determine who to interview and what questions need to be asked so knowledge surrounding the research question can be gained (Becker, 2010).

Conducting a case study with semi-structured interviews helps address the topic of this research because it will gather information directly from the individuals being studied. This aspect of the research is key for this type of qualitative research (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007). It is their perspectives that provides the most insight into how engagement is affected by being a part of a scholastic journalism program. It should be understood that more quantitative methods could also gather similar data. However, it

would lack the nuance of individual choice and selection. Journalism classes at the high school level are not required courses. Students choose to enroll in them. This suggests an underlying interest in the subject matter or a preference for the teachers in charge of the classes. In either scenario, a case study with interviews allows the researcher to develop a greater understanding of the rationale behind enrollment.

The individual research questions were also more easily addressed using the aforementioned methods because the perspectives are what is important. An ambiguous answer on a survey cannot be effectively followed up on; however, in an interview, more questions can be asked to gain clarity on the responses given. Though some of the research questions, such as those based upon curriculum, might seem better suited for the educators, it is the students who are feeling the impacts of the learning. Clearly at the core of this research is media literacy, so the advisers will need to be questioned about how they approach this aspect of journalism education. However, the perspective of the educators is likely to be different from that of the students. In looking at how the students' different types of engagement are affected, it is important to get the information directly from these respondents. The best way to do this is to observe their behaviors and ask them questions. It can be easy for an individual to represent himself or herself in a certain manner on paper, but the true individual can be revealed by watching and listening. In short, to effectively gauge engagement, the students must be engaged with through this research.

Validity of Methodology

Participant observation was a fitting method to study the newsroom of a scholastic journalism program because it allowed the research to explore questions concerning the

students' "beliefs, rituals, attitudes, actions, stories and behaviors" (Brennen, 2013, p. 159). The method of a case study is found in many fields, and it seeks to "collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). A scholastic newsroom presents an interesting opportunity to look into how student journalists are conditioned to engage academically, socially, and civically, specifically in a democratic society. As suggested by Bloch (2000) in terms of other forms of qualitative research, a case study also needs to be able to consider factors such as nonverbal communication, the setting in which communication takes place, and the medium in which communication is transmitted. Classrooms are set up so a researcher can be present without being noticed, and taking notes will not appear out of place in a setting where note-taking is common among students, which is important to "avoid changing the natural dynamics of the group" (Berger, 1998, p. 106). Furthermore, students are used to having adults be in the room observing them as part of their educational experience, and they even take part in self-observation by opening their lives to the world via social media (Brennen, 2013).

In conjunction with the observations, interviews also presented a valid methodology for gathering data. Asking questions in an interview setting feels comfortable to all parties involved because it is a natural by-product of human interactions through conversation (Brennen, 2013). According to Creswell (2014) interviews "elicit views and opinions from the participants" (p. 190). As such, "[l]istening is central to qualitative interviewing" (Brennen, 2013, p. 28). Interviews allow a researcher to gather detailed information that is sometimes unexpected and would not have been discovered using different methods (Berger, 1998). As Brennen (2013)

points out, “information accessed through interviews helps to broaden our knowledge base while information may also help us to understand alternative points of view” (p. 27). In fact, information gained from an interview, even if it seems to lack importance at first, “may end up telling you a good deal” (Berger, 1998, p. 59). Creswell (2014) suggests interviews combined with observation can yield positive results as the two methodologies can inform each other, especially when direct observation cannot be done constantly. The interviews help fill in gaps of information.

Methodology

For this research, a scholastic journalism program in Kansas was observed. This program was at Canton-Galva High School¹. The total enrollment of the high school is 108 students (2017-2018 Classifications and Enrollments, 2017). At this school, student journalists and their advisers were interviewed in an in-depth, semi-structured setting using interview questions found in Appendix One and Appendix Two. Specifically, a total of eight student interviews and two adviser interviews took place, which gives the research a good sampling of the program as the journalism department only has two advisers and fewer than 20 students. The observations took place over the course of 10 school days in the spring semester of 2018 as a way to allow the journalism education and program production to be in full swing. Each interview lasted for approximately an hour and was conducted outside of the journalism classroom in the school’s library to ensure a quieter environment and responses untainted by the presence of students or

¹ Researcher Todd Vogts graduated from Canton-Galva High School in 2004. This school was chosen to be the site of his research due to his familiarity with the school and journalism program through membership in the state-wide journalism education association and the proximity of the school to his home in another town approximately 15 minutes away. Since his graduation, the staff and administration had turned over considerably. As such, no individual involved with this research was familiar to Vogts.

teachers. The interviews took place both before and after days of observation. Advisers and student editors were targeted for interviewing prior to observations. They were followed up with after the observations, and other student journalists were also interviewed at that time. This allowed the interviews and the observations to inform each other and guide the research. All the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder, and, as Creswell (2014) suggests, an observation log was kept. Selection of respondents other than the adult advisers focused on upperclassmen and the editors of the publications when possible as they were the student leaders. Being in such a position indicates more interest in the work being done, which would allow for better insight into whether or not being a part of the staff is impacting the level of academic, social, and civic engagement being experienced.

Diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity were not considered as a factor in determining interviewees due to the lack of such diversity options. Diversity was difficult to achieve as Canton-Galva High School, like many small, Kansas towns, lacked diversity. This is due to the fact the communities the school district serves are not ethnically diverse. Also, student publications staff members must choose to be a part of the publication, which means class schedules and other factors determine who is involved, which will be explored through this research. Socioeconomic status was not sought as a distinguishing factor in interviewee selection, but it was noted as part of the interview itself if such information became available as a way to investigate if influences outside of the classroom might be at play. Despite the lack of diversity among respondents, these subjects were appropriate for this study to gain insight into how journalism programs increase academic, social, and civic engagement because the

respondents were the individuals taking part in the journalism education.

Analysis, Ethics, and Credibility

Establishing coding schemes in qualitative research can be complicated (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). It is subjective based upon the researcher. This is because the meaning of the data collected is nuanced and can be viewed differently by any researcher (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). For this research, statements made were categorized by whether or not they fit into areas such as background information, political awareness, connection to the community, academic performance, relationships, news consumption, journalistic knowledge, and views of education. Such categories were determined based upon the research questions and a sorting of the responses provided by the interviewees. The recorded interviews were transcribed and combined with notes taken during the observation and interview processes. From there, phrases or thoughts from all respondents were coded. Commonalities among all responses were noted and grouped together for further analysis. Creswell (2014) points out this coding had to be done continuously and throughout the qualitative study so one can see the patterns the data presents as they develop. This was accomplished by annotating the notes from the observations and interviews with the theme of what was being seen or discussed.

Brennen (2013) explains there are many ethical considerations when it comes to qualitative research, and as such “there can be no deception regarding the motives of the research” (p. 16). To account for this, administrative, teacher, student, and parental permission was sought in accordance with the Institutional Review Board. This was important because the majority of the respondents were minors in the age range of 14 to

17. Steps were taken to limit the identifying information of the students. Due to the small sample size and focus on one school, this proved difficult, but to help keep the students unidentifiable, only their first names were used. Also, the goals of the research were communicated to school administrators to avoid any privacy violations under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

The potential for bias had to be accounted for. This can be tricky because a researcher may not be aware of his or her own biases. These can reveal themselves in the types of questions being asked. For example, someone may not be able to ask salient questions about living in poverty due to the fact the researcher does not live in poverty. The questions could, therefore, be skewed to minimize the experiences and input from the respondents. Furthermore, the reports written about the research can become questionable based upon possible influences of personal ideas and opinions of the researcher (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The possibility of bias is particularly problematic in the cases of interviews. This is because the researcher is more closely involved with the respondents as there is a back and forth dialogue that takes place. Bias could be exposed simply by how questions are phrased, the order in which they are presented, the tone in which they are presented, and the body language of the researcher, just to name a few possibilities (Berger, 1998; Brennen, 2013). Any lapse in attention to possible influences, even those unintended, of bias can damage the validity of a study (Fontana & Frey, 1994). If bias is injected into any aspect of the study, the respondents may not give true and honest answers, and the subsequent research report may not be viewed as accurate.

To maintain the credibility of the research, the researcher did not directly interact with the respondents during observation, opting to sit quietly in one corner. During the

interviews, questions asked came primarily from the list of interview questions provided in Appendices One and Two, with follow-up questions being asked for the sake of clarity. Observations were described in detail. Interactions between students and interactions between students and advisers were described, highlighting both verbal and nonverbal communication. The aesthetics of the journalism classroom were also detailed, highlighting such items found in the room such as journalism-related posters, planning documents, and Associated Press Style Books. Comments made during interviews were associated with actions noted during the observation. This allowed for context to be maintained. Such observations were coded to reveal “patterns, themes and experiences” (Brennen, 2013, p. 170). The data was coded, as Creswell (2014) suggests, to fit into “topics that readers would expect to find, based on the past literature and common sense” (p. 198). Keeping such field notes was important during the case study observation as they provide an avenue to look back at what transpired during the observation periods (Berger, 1998). Furthermore, field notes can “provide preliminary analysis and interpretations” (Brennen, 2013, p. 169).

Defining Engagement

The concept of engagement presents multiple definitions, especially as it pertains to journalism. Ball, Procopio, Goering, Dong, & Bodary (2016) suggest the term’s “meaning has become an unwieldy catchall [. . .] touted as important but often oversimplified” (p. 491). Batsell (2015) views engagement as making strong connections with readers and news consumers to help keep the business of journalism viable with a strong customer base. In academic terms, engagement can be viewed as a type of service learning urging students to develop self-efficacy by participating in activities of social

change (Ball, Procopio, Goering, Dong, & Bodary, 2016). Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder (2010) look at the term in a broader way by suggesting it concerns an experience narrowed down to “a specific set of beliefs that consumers have about how some media brand fits into their lives” (p. 40). With such varied meanings for the term engagement, this research requires an operational definition.

For purposes of investigating student academic, social, and civic engagement, this research defined these terms in the following ways. First, based upon the research of Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder (2010), the definition of academic engagement was attentiveness to academic performance. With this definition, the research looked at how a student’s participation in scholastic journalism impacts his or her attention to his or her class work in all academic areas. This definition provided an avenue to explore if, as Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) suggest, journalism students do perform better in school due to their work within a scholastic journalism program.

Second, based upon the research of Ball, Procopio, Goering, Dong, & Bodary (2016), the definition of social engagement was participation in social organizations and activities. This was looked at in terms of if students attend community meetings or took part in outreach or fundraising opportunities for entities such as, but not limited to, the local chamber of commerce, library board, city council, or other non-profit organizations. This participation as a form of social engagement also applied to membership and participation in extracurricular school organizations such as, but not limited to, Future Business Leaders of America, Student Council, Future Farmers of America, Distributive Education Clubs of America, National Honor Society, or Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

Finally, based upon the research of Bobkowski & Miller (2016), the definition of civic engagement was demonstrating a consciousness of political news and actions taking place both locally and nationally within an understanding of the civic process. Such a definition gave yet another lens to look for evidence of media literacy being taught. For a student to be aware of what is taking place in the political arena and understand the implications of such events, he or she must be able to discern fact from fiction and be able to process the information being received. Furthermore, a student needs to understand the avenues through which laws and ordinances go through to be fully conscious of what is taking place and where to direct questions if inquiries arise. Using consciousness as the definition for civic engagement allowed this research to “articulate the link between communication and civic engagement, explain the importance of communication in civic life, frame and evaluate civic issues from a communication perspective, influence public discourse, and use communication to promote human rights, dignity and freedom” (Ball, Procopio, Goering, Dong, & Bodary, 2016, p. 492).

Similar Studies

Amster (2006) conducted a three-year ethnographic study. This focused on three high school newspaper programs in Southern California. Each program served different economic classes of students. To gain access to the schools, a survey was sent to advisers in the state. The three schools chosen to be observed came from the 20 survey responses. Of the three, one school served a Latino population, while the other two served a Caucasian population. The focus of the research centered on 15 students at each school who were interviewed multiple times for 30 to 90 minutes each time. In the study, Amster (2006) looked at how journalism educators approached the students in terms of

teaching the tenets of journalism. Furthermore, she examined how those students exercised their journalistic rights in a post-Hazelwood era where administrative oversight can result in outright censorship or the chilling First Amendment rights leading to self-censorship by the students. The study makes the case for “educators to take sides and extend their reach beyond the classroom by making teaching and learning the instruments of social change” (Amster, 2006, p. 75). The results of the study indicate students should be inspired by journalism programs to engage socially and civically; however, apathy can be overpowering regardless of socioeconomic status. Amster (2006) comes to the conclusion “a better high school journalism, rooted in critical pedagogy, can help youth explore their immediate world. Student journalist can highlight problems in their schools and offer solutions. In turn, they will be more able to access the political system and come engaged citizens as adults” (p. 249).

Marchi (2012) used the qualitative research method of conducting 45-minute, one-on-one interviews with minority students in an after-school journalism program. The journalism program was hosted by a non-profit organization serving primarily low-income, minority students. She interviewed 30 students. The racial diversity of the respondents consisted of 28 percent Latino, 21 percent African-American, 18 percent Asian, 17 percent White, and 16 percent Middle Eastern. The goal of the study was “to learn how these students’ daily experiences with socio-economic and racial inequalities influenced their attitudes towards journalism, the news media, and civic engagement” (Marchi, 2012, p. 751). The interviews took place over the course of three years. Building on the aforementioned idea of disillusion, the study found the students held mistrust for the media. However, as they became media producers themselves, the students’

“journalism experiences proved highly inspirational for them” (Marchi, 2012, p. 759). The study makes clear socioeconomic factors impact civic engagement, but it also suggests participation in a journalism program can provide students a vehicle to become more engaged in their communities. To increase this, Marchi (2012) proposes “professional news organizations should support and collaborate with community-based teen journalists to develop story ideas, air young people’s perspectives, and incorporate teen journalists into professional news reports” (p. 762). By doing so, civic engagement could be increased because student journalists already “felt they were providing a public service by offering information they believed was important for the good of the community” (p. 760-761).

Clark & Monserrate (2011) also completed qualitative research to explore how high school journalism programs create more civically engaged members of society. To accomplish this, the duo conducted interviews and observations “between September 2006 and August 2009” (Clark & Monserrate, 2011, p. 419). These interviews and observations focused on high school journalism students and advisers. The respondents included 45 students and six advisers from 11 high schools, with another eight students from seven high schools included by way of focus groups. The students ranged from ninth to 12th grade and were 14 to 18 years old. Of the respondents, 10 were male and 34 were female. Of the students, only eight were not Caucasian, but the majority came from middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. This is where the work differs from the aforementioned studies, which focused on minority students. Like previous research, the results of the Clark & Monserrate (2011) study found students spoke highly of their work as journalists. The findings also suggest the scholastic journalism programs develop skills

necessary to engage civically. The definition of civic engagement has expanded beyond “voting, abiding by laws, regular consuming the news, and participating in the armed services if needed” to “activities such as volunteering in one’s community, or participating in protests, environmental activities, boycotts, and civil court cases” (Clark & Monserrate, 2011, p. 418). The emphasis is on helping students to see themselves as part of a collective community rather than maintain the narrow view of only being an individual. The research also points to individuals being more likely to remain civically engaged into adulthood if they are exposed to such engagement at a younger age.

A key component to being socially and civically engaged is to be a savvy media consumer. The Internet changes how students consume the news, so Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino, & Thomas (2010) conducted qualitative research looking at how online news credibility is determined by users. This breaks away from the other research cited here because the focus was on news consumption instead of news creation. Even so, news consumption can be used as a marker for engagement, as the study suggests. The study consisted of observations and interviews of 102 students. These students were chosen based upon responses to a survey. Breaking away from the aforementioned studies, the respondents in this research were college-aged students. Subjects were compensated for their participation, and video and audio recordings were made to document the observations and interviews. Initial coding of the responses in 35 categories “went through five further iterations,” leading to “several major themes regarding students’ online credibility assessment” (Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino, & Thomas, 2010, p. 479). The study found name and brand recognition played an important role in trust with online media, but it also suggested media literacy needs to be more of a

focus in schools.

These studies provide helpful insights into how this research was conducted. Based upon the scope of this study, though, differences were seen. For instance, the diversity shown by Amster (2006) and Marchi (2012) was not the focus. Instead, the example of Clark & Monserrate (2011) was more closely related to what was conducted here. Furthermore, the number of respondents was much smaller. Also, the Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino, & Thomas (2010) study provided a framework for coding the qualitative data, but unlike the work of those researchers, a survey was not done ahead of time. Similar to the other three projects, students were selected to be interviewed if they volunteered to do so. Also, no compensation was given to respondents.

Chapter 4: Results

This research looked at a rural Kansas high school journalism program in the Canton-Galva Unified School District. In order for the results to be understood in context of such a program, it is important to understand the demographic makeup and physical characteristics of the school, as well as the demographics of the towns comprising the school district in which the journalism program operates. According to U.S. Census data, in 2010 Canton's population was 748, which was down 81 residents from 2000 (Canton, Kansas Population, n.d.). In contrast, Galva's population in 2010 was 870, up 169 residents from 2000 (Galva, Kansas Population, n.d.). Both towns are predominately white as both have more than 96 percent of their populations identifying as being only white, and both towns are nearly evenly split between male and female with females having a slightly higher number in both communities (Canton, Kansas Population, n.d.; Galva, Kansas Population, n.d.). Canton-Galva High School mirrors this. The population is made up almost entirely of white students, and there are nominally more females than males.

Canton-Galva High School sits on the southwest edge of Canton. U.S. Highway 56 runs east and west, parallel to the south side of the school. This highway connects to the two towns that create the school district — Canton and Galva. Both towns sit in the rural heart of a predominately red state. Of the registered voters in both communities, nearly 60 percent are Republicans (Canton, Kansas Population, n.d.; Galva, Kansas Population, n.d.). Wheat fields border the school grounds on the west and south sides. The front of the school faces east toward a residential part of town, and the north side shares a parking lot with the city's public pool. The front of the building is new thanks to

a recently passed bond issue that allowed for wholesale changes to the attendance center. Through this bond issue, the high school became a junior and senior high school, housing 166 students in grades 7 through 12. The income levels of the students vary, using the standards of free and reduced lunches. Only 7 percent of the students are on reduced payment, while 31 percent are free and 62 percent pay full price.

The infusion of money from the bond issue also allowed for the creation of a large gymnasium and new weight room of the southwest corner of the property. In addition to the new athletic complex, an addition to the library, referred to as the Eagle's Nest in honor of the school's mascot, built for students to study, read, or just sit quietly while still being able to be observed through the sliding glass doors that connect the space to the library.

The library shares space with the Canton-Galva journalism program. To get to the library, which is on the north end of the complex, one must enter the front doors of the school. The entrance is new as part of the addition, and it leads into the newly built main office. A secretary's desk meets visitors. After signing in so the school can keep track of visitors, guests go into the first hallway where the new and old builds blend together. A quick turn takes visitors by rows of lockers on the outside of classroom walls. At the far end of this hallway sits the library. There are two ways to get to the journalism room. One is through what used to be a computer lab but has been repurposed as a classroom, and the other is through the library itself. The computer lab is no longer needed as the bond issue also allowed for all students in the building to be issued Google Chromebooks.

The journalism room sits in the southwest corner of the library. There are two large windows on the east wall, providing views of the darkened library that rarely has a librarian on duty. The windows also double as marker boards for the journalism students. They write notes and keep track of information using dry-erase markers on the glass. One door provides entry into the room. To the right of it, a poster espousing the First Amendment hangs on the wall.

The journalism room hosts several media-related classes, such as digital photography, interactive media, and the two publications classes — yearbook and news media. The school is on a standard schedule, so all classes meet every day. Yearbook meets from 11:34 a.m. until 12:57 p.m., and the lunch period takes place in the middle of the class. News media meets from 1 p.m. until 1:50 p.m. The yearbook class produces the school's annual, and the news media class produces a bi-weekly news magazine, which is distributed digitally via the school's website. Prior to this school year, the news magazine was produced monthly and distributed as physical copies that were available around the school. Copies were also mailed to a subscriber list.

The journalism room has a desktop going around the perimeter of the room. On this desktop, 12 PCs cover the majority of the space. These computers are loaded with Adobe Creative Cloud software. Both publications use InDesign for pagination, Photoshop for photo editing, and Illustrator for graphic creation. One section of the desktop is reserved for reference books, acting as a journalism library. Books on using the software, reporting, and yearbook design make up the majority of the materials. Besides the wall of windows, one wall is white cinderblock, while the other two are white drywall. Adorning the walls above each computer are signs identifying who uses which

computer. These names consist of only yearbook staff members, making the room decidedly the home of that particular publication and excluding those of the news magazine. Other decorations also drive the point home that the yearbook is the flagship product. Awards and honors from previous years cover the upper half of walls. This included plaques and pictures of contest winners. The primary contests represented are the annual Kansas Scholastic Press Association contests. The yearbook's planning ladder, which outlines what pages will contain what content, also takes up a conspicuous amount of space above one computer, which is that of the editor.

From a drop ceiling above, fluorescent lights shine down on the room. A projector hangs from the ceiling, pointing at a bare space on the south side's drywall. In one corner of the computer desktops sits an angry looking, large stuffed Spongebob Squarepants doll, the type one could win in a midway game at a carnival. A teacher's desk sits at an angle to the room in the southwest corner, and two tables with chair occupy the center of the room, providing a space for group meetings. However, the tables primarily seem to be used to store personal effects of the students, such as Chromebooks and bottles of water. The room has a cozy feel. It is cluttered, but it isn't messy.

Inside the Publications

To fully explore levels of academic, social, and civic engagement of the students who are involved in the Canton-Galva High School journalism program, an understanding of how the classes operate must be attained. To understand how the class functions, the teachers must be understood. This is because the class structure and performance results from the actions of the journalism adviser. The personality of such a person dictates the atmosphere and culture of the program.

The yearbook class and its adviser. Cara Duell, who also teaches English and is the athletic director, leads the yearbook class. She is currently battling cancer and has shaved her head in preparation of hair loss. She wears a mask to protect herself from germs as her immune system is weaker thanks to the cancer treatments. Her yearbook staff consists of seven students, all female and only two of which who have been on the yearbook staff before. The 47-year-old Duell is teaching yearbook for the first time.

“Do I know anything about yearbook? Still very little,” Duell said. “Straight up I admit I know nothing. I am learning this alongside them.”

Duell got thrown into the yearbook advising job at the end of the previous school year when the long-time adviser left to take a job in another district. That’s when her administrator approached her about the new duties.

“Guess what you’re doing? Oh OK. Sure. Why not. I’m stupid. I never say no to anything,” Duell said.

Duell does have limited experience in the journalism field, though. She did yearbook in high school, and she took a college journalism course. However, the instructor scared her away.

“We had a really old-school professor that really was trying to do journalism like it was still the 1950s, and this was late 80s early 90s. So we were coming into the graphic design and computer. It was a struggle. It burned me out on that concept because he was not allowing the department to change with the times,” Duell said.

Instead, she found a home in other areas of academia.

“English is my first love. It’s my passion. I love literature. Taking literature and how do we apply it to the world. I love that they can take what’s going on and look at that

and go, ‘OK, we could learn from this, and we can apply it to what’s going on now,’” Duell said. “And I think in some ways we’re doing that in journalism too. But there’s a lot with journalism right now, obviously, because of our current political environment in the world. We have to look at how are we real? How are we true? So we’re taking those same lessons in literature, because I teach all of them in English also, and turn them over and apply it to that because we have to be legitimate.”

Such forms of engagement do not appear in the yearbook classroom, though. Instead, the focus is on the work at hand. Duell enters the room after the bell and launches into discussions of what needs to be done. She isn’t barking orders, but she is co-leading the staff with the students. Once a direction for the day is determined, she is often in and out of the room, either tending to her athletic director duties that spring up at random moments or taking a moment of rest so she can make it through the rest of her day. She said the cancer treatments have greatly reduced her energy levels. However, that doesn’t stop her from being herself and engaging with the students on a more personal level.

“I’m a walking entertainment show on a regular basis. I move around and [am] animated, and I don’t know. It’s more entertainment for me. It’s more entertaining for them,” Duell said. “They’re never really sure what I’m going to do. I’m never sure what I’m going to do. And, but, it keeps them more engaged. The more engaged they are, the more active learners they are. The more they’re getting out of it.”

Once Duell is out of the room, students work on their pages or talk about other items of interest. All students dress casually. Some wear jeans, while others wear sweats or leggings. Some students listen to music via headphones, isolating themselves from the

rest of the staff as they work. Though this seemed to be an accepted practice on the staff, it prevented those students from working with the others, which is key for engagement to take place. School events important to the lives of the high school students dominate discussion, such as how to open a stuck locker, spirit week, or an upcoming dance. When Duell is in the room, she bounces between being the leader and being the students' friend as she joins discussions, such as what she has planned for one of the spirit week days. Progress on assigned pages is not clear, and no one student seems to stand out as the leader.

When lunch time arrives, there is no bell. Students just pay attention to the time on their computers or cellphones and leave when they are supposed to as there is no clock in the journalism room. One day the menu called for super nachos.

“What makes them super?” one student asked.

“Mystery meat,” another said.

After lunch, a few students discuss journalism-related topics, such as how to attribute quotes and what a pull quote is, which leads the students toward engagement. Several students look through photos together under the guise of trying to find images they need. One student is also questioned about why she has so many pictures of TJ.

“Because TJ is my BFF,” she said.

In-school drama often derails progress, such as when the adviser of a school organization enters the class to yell at a student for something she did incorrectly in promoting one of the organization's events.

In these moments, Duell asks, “Are we accomplishing anything?”

Mihailidis (2006) and Haynes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, & Thomas, 2003; LoMonte, Goldstein, & Hiestand (2013) suggest high school journalism programs provide many avenues for hands-on learning. This is important for educational initiatives such as the Common Core (Dailey, 2016). Duell sees this as a primary benefit of the yearbook class.

“You know, education is so important, and we have to learn how to deal with the world,” she said. “I’m a big believer in problem-solving learning and project-based learning, and yearbook obviously is project-based learning. Big time. Unless you literally work on an assembly line and you do one little thing, when you go out into the world, it’s problem solving. It’s project-based learning. And I think yearbook is a fantastic way to do that.”

Duell pushes for academic engagement, even though journalism is not her area of expertise. The project-based learning of yearbook is made even more interesting for Duell since this is the first year the yearbook is covering the junior high along with the high school thanks to the redesign of the building. This has led the yearbook’s theme to be “Connected,” which will highlight all of the change the district has undergone and show how, despite the changes, everyone is still part of the same group. Also, the focus on project-based learning opens avenues for Duell to make changes to the structure of the staff. Instead of each person being in charge of everything on a given page or spread (a pair of facing pages), she has students work together. Some students might be better at interviewing than writing, so they get paired together.

“Jenni loves going out and doing interviews,” Duell said. “She’s really good. And people love her. She’s a dingdong. So I mean they love answer her questions, so she goes

out. She's great. She comes back with awesome stuff. Whitney loves to write it up. She'll write a great story from it. Braylee is really good at design. She's got a really good eye. So it's like, you know, we can't just go, 'This is your page. You got to do everything.' We have to work together."

The teamwork extends all the way up to the editor, Emilie.

"My editor is a senior, and I love her. But I think she's had seniorities since day one. She wants to micromanage everything but not do anything, if that makes sense," Duell said. "Now Whitney, who is my junior and will be my editor next year, is fantastic. They're working together without the editor really realizing that's what's going on."

Duell admits her way of doing things is not the way it was done before, but she is confident she is finding her own way. She attributes a lot of her progress to her yearbook sales representative who works for Jostens. She also gives credit to her staff for being understanding and willing to work with her.

"We're in a good place," Duell said. "So it may not be the greatest yearbook we've ever put out, but it's going to be good. There's a big learning curve with five new people and all this additional, you know, adding in the junior high. And trying to figure out how to make that flow. That's, that's already a challenge for people who've been doing this."

Besides fighting cancer and being a first-year adviser, Duell faces other potential challenges. She is not a native of Kansas. She has lived in larger cities, has traveled extensively, and speaks different languages. This leads her to be more liberal in her point of view, something that could clash with the primarily conservative community she works in. This hinders her ability to engage socially. She admits she currently doesn't

closely follow politics due to feeling disenchanting, though civic engagement appears to be important to her. The culture of the area makes it harder for her to incorporate current events into her teaching due to the small size of the school. She said she does use her literature classes as a way to discuss what is transpiring in the world because they can look for parallels to what is happening in society now in comparison to what was happening in the literature they are reading.

“I try to force them to think outside of the box as much as I can,” Duell said. “Without getting fired.”

The primary way Duell said this comes up in her journalism class is through discussions where she indicated she pushes the students to engage socially and civically.

“It’s hard because our media is in so much turmoil right now. You’ve got fake news. Real news, which is so hard. And it’s like, how do you . . . it’s not like when you were growing up, you know. You had CBS and NBC and ABC and PBS,” Duell said. “But you don’t have that anymore. It used to be so different. It was just, so, here’s the news. I talk to them, ‘guys, it’s crafted. It depends on who owns it. It depends on what their perspective is.’ I don’t think they have any idea how much Disney owns. It mean, it’s ridiculous. You think, oh there’s a thousand cable channels. Yeah. They’re owned by 22 different companies. That’s it. They don’t have any idea of that. I think they biggest ones they probably grasp are Fox and CNN, but they don’t realize that everything in between has a bias at this point. And that’s hard to do. And so and even print magazines. There’s very few magazines that I consider neutral anymore. How do you go out and look at how do you know it’s a credible website? How do you know which way they’re leaning? So that’s been, that’s been a bit of a challenge. And the media is so crafted, and

it's a hard place for a journalism teacher to be right now. Even they have their own biases without realizing it. So you know, how do you teach them not to be biased? We've work really hard with the yearbook."

Despite her apparent mistrust of the media, Duell does consume the news via the BBC, Al Jazeera, and NPR. As a self-proclaimed "Chicago girl," she also said she likes the Chicago Tribune. She avoids Facebook because there is so much misinformation coming from both sides of the political aisle.

"I tend to find the news depressing and frustrating because it's so, it's so fear orientated, and I don't want to live my life in fear. I don't want my kids to live their lives in fear. I don't want my students to see, you know, like you have to be afraid of everything. There are things that you should be cautious about. But I hate that that's the direction the news has gone. You know, so fear orientated," Duell said.

Duell attributes much of the media's current issues to President Donald Trump and his mistreatment of news outlets and the proliferation of social media creating information silos where individuals can surround themselves with only like-minded people. This would indicate Duell sees social media as a hindrance to social and civic engagement.

"I still think despite what anybody says that the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, The Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the L.A. Times. I still think those are legitimate, respectable sources," she said. "We can isolate ourselves, and we can choose who we converse with. We can choose who we listen to. We can ignore who we don't want anything to do with. We can ignore sources and people that don't agree with us. We can, unfortunately, respond viscerally to people that we disagree with

because it's so anonymous too. And that worries me because now, you know, people make these responses, but they don't even own up to their responses. And then somebody else responds to that somebody else. And it goes horribly wrong, but it's all anonymous. We don't sit down and have conversations. We don't sit down and have civilized debates. And when we stopped doing that, we stopped going forward."

Luckily, Duell said, the yearbook is insulated from a lot of the negativity perpetuated by the concept of "fake news" because of the small, self-contained nature of the school. The students know the yearbook staff members, which builds more trust in what they are doing. However, the isolated nature of the program negatively impacts student engagement with the larger society in which they live.

Even though Duell may not use the platform of her journalism program to directly focus on the world outside of the school, she does express to the students how important it is to think beyond their small-town community, again suggesting the importance of engaging socially and civically.

"I want them to look at the world as a bigger picture," she said. "We're interconnected, and we can't function inside our own little worlds and survive anymore. We have to learn how to function in the bigger world, how to be an active part of the bigger world, how to listen, how to question, how to converse."

Paying attention to politics and engaging civically is part of that process for Duell.

"We have to remain vigilant," she said. "You know that is part of our civic responsibility. You know, we need to be registered to vote. You have to decide what's important. Journalism plays a huge part in that. It's still there. It's still a positive way to convey information, to share communication. Because journalism isn't just sharing

information. It's communication. To open doors. To start discussions. To provide information."

The news magazine class and its adviser. Tina McMannis, who also teaches English and an assortment of photography and media classes, leads the news magazine class. Her news magazine staff consists of six students, five female and one male. None of the students have been on a journalism staff before. The 42-year-old McMannis is teaching news magazine for the first time.

"I did journalism my sophomore year in high school. And that is the only year I did. And I think it was mostly just because of scheduling issues that I didn't do it after that because I enjoyed it. It was fun. I did. I liked it," McMannis said. "So, my one year, woo, is my experience there."

Like Duell, McMannis was asked to help fill the void created when the previous adviser left. Having a reputation in the community for photography, she willingly took on the classes and publication. The news magazine comes out every other Thursday and is distributed digitally via the school's website. This was due to concerns for the cost of printing.

"You know it was, it was pricey to print, and, you know, then try to get out to the public. If you're having to mail it, you got postage. You know, or do you have people a buy a subscription?" McMannis said. "And so they, the district, kind of wanted to get away from that. Well, we can do an online version. For free. You don't have to have any funding for that. We can publish that on our own and post it online. And we just save it in a PDF and post that online, and then people can get to it."

McMannis also uses her news magazine staff to produce video newscasts, though those don't appear to be as regularly created as the magazine.

"It's kind of just an in-house thing right now," she said. "It's on my Classroom page, which is linked to our district site. So theoretically anybody out there on the web could go find it and watch it. They usually have been editing with Windows Movie Maker and then publishing through YouTube."

At the start of the year, the news magazine did not even exist. When McMannis took over the class, she felt the need to back up and teach more of the basics to the students first. Regular publication of the news magazine didn't begin until the start of the second semester. Even so, she hopes that it grows into a year-long publication for the coming school year. She also hopes the broadcast can improve and take on a new shape.

"The hope is to make it more of a kind of like newsletter, more of a regular publication that people are expecting to see that maybe teachers could play for five minutes first hour. What's coming up, you know, this week. We talked about live broadcasting some games and school events and some of that kind of stuff too," McMannis said.

Sharing the same journalism room as the yearbook, when the news magazine class begins, McMannis takes the lead. She talks to the students about what needs to be done, and she critiques students who have not been productive. Then a quiet settles over the room. Only the clicking of keys on the keyboards can be heard as students work. There is a noticeable lack of friendly conversation, especially when compared to the yearbook staff.

McMannis attributes this to the students in the class being shy and not outgoing. They lack the basic tools for engagement, but McMannis believes the journalism class can help correct that.

“They’re not necessarily the group of kids that probably would have enrolled in that class if they would have known what all it was going to be because they’re not the most comfortable with being social and being out there,” she said. “It’s been very good for them. You know, as far as life skills and being able to talk to people down the road, they’re the kids that probably needed some of this the most. They may not know it’s been good for them, but it has.”

All students on the staff seem to be pushed outside of their comfort zones. For example, the lone male on the staff had the assignment to write a story about the basketball team, but he said he knew nothing about basketball. Another student, Sophie, volunteered to help him, so she took him out to go interview players. Eventually, she came back without him, suggesting he could conduct the interviews on his own.

“He has to figure it out,” McMannis said.

As was the case with the yearbook staff, discussions concerning journalistic style sometimes come up with the group of introverted students. When the topic turned to attributing quotes, McMannis reminded them they could only use the word “said.”

“We can’t be creative in the newspaper,” she said.

Though the idea of no creativity being allowed in a newspaper seems misleading, such discussions do point to a level of academic engagement as McMannis attempts to teach the students how to do journalism.

The computer used to produce the newscast appeared to not work more often than not. This gave the student assigned to work on the video for that day the unspoken permission to call it quits for the hour, and little more productivity is seen.

During the course of a given class period, the focus primarily centers on what needs to be done. This allows for little time to discuss broader issues of the world of journalism. McMannis says they simply cover it when something comes up rather than spending prescribed time on such instruction. This leads to little talk about what is going on in the world outside of Canton-Galva High School. This prevents opportunities to elicit social or civic engagement discussions from the students. However, McMannis says she does pay attention to the news and tries to work it into discussion with the students.

“Mostly through television. I always watch the 6 o’clock news or the 5 o’clock news if I happen to be early. Ten o’clock news,” McMannis said. “Facebook. KWCH’s Facebook feed is always coming across. So social media, and we talk a lot about social media.”

However, the news magazine does not use social media to promote its product. Instead, the discussions center on more theoretical concepts of social media. This allows for the possibility of taking part in a dialogue concerning how social media could be used to engage socially and civically. However, academic engagement via social media, though possible by taking part in events such as Twitter chats or watching Facebook Live coverage of conferences, does not appear to be a consideration.

“When we talk about it, it’s more just how it works. They’ve had to think about how they’re portraying themselves,” McMannis said.

While class is in session, McMannis is floating from student to student to provide assistance. She helps students develop interview questions. She assigns stories and photos to students. She works on the design of pages. There is no student editor named, and the entire staff consists of freshmen and sophomores with no experience.

“Sometimes I’m probably too much of a micromanager,” McMannis said.

This leads to McMannis being more stressed about the news magazine’s deadlines than the students themselves.

During the class, McMannis provides more instruction. She discusses with the students what needs to go into a news article, especially when it comes to quotes and finding good sources.

“You have to make sure you’re quoting them accurately,” she said. “You need to get their words down accurately. You can’t guess what you thought they said. We have talked about, you know, who would be, who would be good interview sources compared to others when they’re interviewing for an upcoming basketball tournament. That your coach or your varsity starter would be better interview candidates than the C team player that’s your buddy in study hall. That might be the easier interview to get. But it’s not necessarily the most reliable one for what the article’s about, and we’ve talked about getting a variety of different people too. You can’t go talk to the same people every time. You’ve got to branch out. You have to find a way to add variety and get a wide perspective of opinions in there when you’re interviewing people.”

To help students understand how to write journalistic articles, McMannis has not used mainstream media outlets. Instead, she uses past issues of the news magazine. Again, this appears to be a missed opportunity for engagement as it prevents discussion

of current events taking place outside of the school itself, but it does provide the students the opportunity to gain historic knowledge about what has transpired in the school previously. Therefore, engagement could be fostered if it were to be focused upon.

“Using other news sources, that probably would be good down the road too, but that’s kind of the level they’re at,” she said.

Coming from the realm of English teachers, the most interesting aspect of the class for McMannis has been teaching the students how writing for a news outlet is different than what one might do for an English assignment. Specifically, McMannis has had to counsel the students on just reporting facts unless the article is appearing on the opinion page. She’s also had to work with the students to understand the importance of deadlines, even if inclement weather or other issues causes the staff to miss a day.

“You’re still publishing Thursday, so make sure you’ve got everything in order,” she said. “They’ve learned to pick up the slack for each other.”

In all reality, the news magazine, as it is currently produced, exists as a new product. The reception for it has been positive. Such feedback has primarily been from school board members and other adults in the school system. McMannis said she attributes this to none of the issues taking on any controversial topics.

“It’s OK if you want to hit that controversial topic, but you need to be aware of who you’re probably going to be arguing against. Sort of like with persuasive writing I guess,” she said. “You’ve got to make sure that you’ve got some counter arguments that you have. You know, it’s OK if it’s controversial, but you need to make sure that we can tell in that opinion that you have looked at the other side and addressed the side. You’re not just going in there guns blazing that your side is the only one. It would be like a

debate I guess. I would want them to write it more like that. That it's OK if you have this opinion on this topic. But I want them to be very aware of what the other side is and that they may have to address that if people would write in letters."

Despite running a well-received publication, McMannis views the world of journalism as vital to society but fraught with issues, especially with fake news being a part of the public discourse.

"It's weird. I mean with today's society I think there's so many people who don't trust journalism, especially some of your big mass media outlets. They're skeptical of what they read," she said. "But I do think it is important. You don't even have the chance to think about some of that stuff if you don't get it somewhere. So having access to it, even if you're skeptical of it, I think is important. If you wouldn't have any kind of journalism or any kind of media, there would be a lot of things you would never hear about. Even if you want to be skeptical of them, you've got to hear about them for you to be skeptical."

Such ideals, if expressed to the students, present fertile ground for increasing engagement levels of the students both socially and civically. However, those conversations fail to take place. Isolation from the outside world and intense focus on the production of the newsmagazine contribute to this lack of a larger societal focus in the classroom.

When not teaching, McMannis is also a track coach, and she keeps busy volunteering with 4-H. She and her husband, a volunteer firefighter, also have 230 head of cattle they tend to. She also does some volunteer work with the local rodeo. In her minimal spare time, she also rides horses and does freelance photography.

Politics rarely comes up in the news magazine class.

“So far it really hasn’t. It’s like when the kids bring in discussions about, that you know, they heard from home, from their parents. Do you even know or did you just hear somebody else say that? Most of the time they just heard someone else say that. Well, you know, until you really talk about both sides and know what’s going on, probably just don’t say anything,” McMannis said.

McMannis doesn’t pay too much attention to the topic in her own life either.

“I always vote,” she said. “I usually, before elections, try to look into who the candidates are, and, you know, which one. I try to be an educated voter, I guess. But once the election is over, I don’t follow it a lot. And the main things that come across the news, I see, but I am kind of one of the skeptics that doesn’t always believe everything I see either. Persuasion is a powerful tool. It can’t be believed.”

McMannis understands the need for civic engagement. However, she doesn’t express that to the students. By not modeling it, an opportunity to increase engagement levels in the students is again missed.

When it comes to her class, though, McMannis pays closer attention. She hopes the students come away with skills they can use in all aspects of their lives after they’ve left school.

“There’s just not a lot of that confidence there, I guess, where they’re comfortable talking to anyone. That’s a huge skill. You need to be confident talking to anyone. You need to be OK going out of your box. I don’t know that a lot of kids do that anymore,” she said. “I think there are just so many ways to communicate nowadays that don’t

involve actually being face to face with anybody. You know, they don't talk even with people they know. They don't talk face to face as much as we used to."

By urging the students to become comfortable talking to others, McMannis is pushing the learners to gain social capital and be ready to engage socially and civically. However, that is not the focus for McMannis as a large number of the classes she teaches focus on computer and other skills. This creates a different priority for her. It's not just about job-specific skills. It's about being well-rounded enough to be able to get a job.

"You can have all the computer skills in the world," she said. "But if you can't go to an interview and sell somebody on why you have better skills than somebody else, you're never going to get the job. So we've tried to incorporate more of building those kinds of soft skills, communication skills in."

RQ1: How are journalism programs structure to support engagement? The journalism program at Canton-Galva High School has the building blocks to support all three types of engagement. However, the focus on day-to-day operations limits the impacts on such support. Advisers rarely provide explicit opportunities to see how the journalism program can be applied to the larger community beyond the school grounds. This relates to the lack of student control when it comes to making decisions for the publication in terms of direction and coverage. The program is centered on the journalism advisers.

Impact on Students

With background knowledge of how the journalism program functions under the direction of the educators, a look at how the structure impacts the students can be explored. The interviews of students involved in the program led to six themes based

upon the research questions and derived through a coding process of sorting that encompass the impacts of the journalism program — political awareness, connection to the community, academic performance, relationships, news consumption, and journalistic knowledge. By considering these impacts, the research questions can be addressed.

Political awareness. Emilie is an 18-year-old senior at Canton-Galva High School, and she is the editor of the yearbook. She has been on staff for three years. In addition to her participation in journalism, she is also heavily involved in other activities. These include Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, cheerleading, softball, and band. She also has two jobs, one is at an area Applebee's restaurant and one as a Certified Nursing Aid. Though she is the only journalism staff member old enough to take part in politics, she said politics isn't front of mind for her. She said she actively tries to avoid following politics, instead opting to spend her free time watching Netflix.

"I tend to get very angry at politics," she said. "When I need to, I will. But for the most part, I try not to."

Emilie said the earliest she could vote would be in the 2022 elections, which highlights a lack of awareness of the political scene as she did not know midterm elections were coming up. However, she said she does plan to vote in the future, suggesting a baseline understanding of the need to be civically engaged.

"Yeah, I'll vote just because my mom always told me that if you don't like the people, go for who you would rather have just because it will affect your life," she said. "And I feel like a lot of people would just say, 'somebody else will do it.' But in reality they don't vote. And so if I vote, then that's one more vote toward the person I would rather have. Even if they're both bad."

Emilie attributes her political stances, which she says she's not embarrassed by but doesn't actively share with others unless asked, to her parents, especially her mom.

"My, the base of my views, I guess, would come from my parents, but I've also come up with my own views," she said. "We do disagree just because I think of the time I was grown up in."

What awareness of politics she has, she attributes to her journalism classes.

"Freshman year I knew nothing, and I mean nothing, about politics or the government or society itself," she said. "And going through journalism, and growing up even, I've become more aware of my future and what it's going to be like. Last year we did a page over the elections and everything, and that was one part where I learned a lot because we did a lot of research for that. So think it's definitely opened my eyes about the politics."

Whitney is also on the yearbook staff and is in her second year. She is a 16-year-old junior, and she will be the yearbook editor next year. Like Emilie, she is involved in a lot. She does cheerleading, track, cross country, is a member of Future Business Leaders of America, National Honor Society, and the student council. When she's able to relax, she likes to play her guitar and dance. She also prefers to watch programs on Netflix, and she is a heavy social media user, citing Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat as her primary platforms.

"I'm pretty addicted," she said. "It's sad to say."

Like Emilie, politics is foreign to her.

"I have no clue what politics are, like I don't know," she said. "Someone said the other day, someone asked the question, what is politics? And we're like, we have no clue."

So I really don't know anything about politics. It's just that I know it's just not a place I want to involve my mind."

Whitney's family does not follow politics either and rarely discusses it. However, she does plan to become more knowledgeable in the future.

"I want to understand our government a little bit more. I want to know how it runs. How things out there are supposed to go. I'm hoping next year in government and economics, I'll learn a little bit more about that. But I just, like it if especially voting for a president, I want to know I'm making the right choice. I want to know that I've made the right choice," she said.

Whitney plans to vote in the future, and she sees journalism as a way to become a more informed voter by reading the news. Again, this highlights an understanding of why civic engagement is necessary for democracy, and it shows there is an understanding of to become more engaged.

Taryn, a 16-year-old sophomore, is a first-year member of the yearbooks staff. She is involved in cheerleading, wrestling, softball, and works as a house sitter for a local family, but politics is barely a blimp on her radar screen.

"I don't want to get into that. Like, it's a lot of drama. So I kind of just stay out of it. Not, like, I'm not for or against it, but just that it's there," Taryn said.

No one in her family follows politics, but, like Emilie, politics has come to mind a few times when working on a current events page for the yearbook.

Another sophomore and first-year yearbook staff member is Braylee. She's 16 and is involved in Future Business Leaders of America, basketball, volleyball, and track. When she can, she also likes to read, draw, and paint. No one in her family, including

her, follows politics due to a lack of interest. However, she does feel a responsibility to participate politically in the future and be civically engaged.

“I plan to vote when I can,” she said. “I feel like I need to. For our country. I feel like it’s just our, that we need to vote.”

Megan, one of the youngest yearbook staff members, is experiencing journalism for the first time. She is a 15-year-old sophomore. She plays volleyball and softball, and she is involved in clubs such as Future Business Leaders of America, the Youth Advisory Council, and the student council. Like her peers, politics is an enigma to her.

“It’s just, like, confusing cause I know like a lot of politicians and stuff, like, they say stuff but they don’t always do it,” she said. “And so it’s like confusing for me to, like, hear them say that and, like, I can’t always tell if they did it or not. Like I don’t know what everything means. And, like, there’s just a lot of stuff that I don’t know about it.”

Megan feels helpless and unable to make change, but when she is able to vote, and she does plan to vote, she hopes to do everything she can to positively contribute to society by being engaged civically.

“Even if, like, just one vote doesn’t really seem like it could make that much of a difference. But I feel like, I can’t just like not vote and then complain. So I feel like if I’m going to try to do everything I can to change. Like to make, to make it seem like how I want it to be,” she said.

Though Megan feels her family doesn’t follow politics closely either, her grandfather is the mayor of Canton. Perhaps without realizing it, Megan is gaining an understanding of civic engagement by being around her family through osmosis.

Abbygail, a 17-year-old junior who is on the yearbook staff for the first time and prefers to be called Abby, is a member of Future Business Leaders of America, Youth Advisory Council, student council, National Honor Society, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, in addition to working at a Dairy Queen in a neighboring town. Her brother and father follow politics, but she doesn't.

"It's just never interested me. Like, a lot if it I don't really understand, and I don't really care to understand," she said. "Like, I'm almost 18. So when the next election comes around I'll definitely be, like, looking into it so, like, I can, like, see who I would vote for. But right now, I really don't care."

Though being on the yearbook staff has not contributed to any increased awareness of politics, Abby does plan to participate in politics in the future because she views civic engagement as an important attribute of living in a democracy.

"I do want to vote because, I mean, that's one of my roles as a U.S. citizen," she said. "To vote and decide who my leader is going to be."

Sarah, a 14-year-old freshman, participates in cross country, track, choir, forensics, and scholars bowl. She is on the news magazine staff. Her mom follows politics by watching Fox News, but Sarah does not pay much attention.

"I feel like it's very hard to trust political sources sometimes," she said.

However, civic engagement by way of voting is in her future.

"I feel like my opinion matters," Sarah said. "Yes, I'm just one person, but a vote shows what I believe in."

Sophie, a 16-year-old sophomore, is also on the news magazine staff. She doesn't participate in any other school activities, but she does hope to become a Certified Nursing

Aid soon and get a job. Like the majority of her fellow staff members, she does not follow politics.

“I just never had any interest in politics,” she said. “Like I don’t understand it all. I don’t really care. I know it’s bad and you should, but.”

Her family doesn’t follow politics either, but she does plan to be civically engaged by voting in the future.

RQ2: How are student journalists given opportunities to engage socially and civically? Though the students understand the need to be engaged civically by voting, the primary way students are given the opportunity to engage civically is by producing content. Students who had participated in journalism before both cited current events pages as a way to become informed and inform others about happenings in society. The biggest example was a current events spread discussing the 2016 elections.

Connection to the community. Emilie does not connect with her community. She attributes this to time constraints and the fact she lives in the country, making it difficult to be involved in community events or volunteer with local organizations. Taryn connects with the community by helping with the junior cheer team, which consists of first through sixth grade students. Outside of this school-related function, she also attends city-wide festivals in both Canton and Galva. Taryn said she likes to help people in any way she can “because I feel like it just gives me, like, happiness. Like. I like to help them.” By expressing such sentiments and taking such actions, Taryn would be classified as socially engaged.

Whitney views helping at her mother’s business as her form of volunteerism. Like Taryn, Braylee sees her involvement in a school-related activity as a way to connect with

the community. This comes to fruition in the form of a Thanksgiving food drive the Future Business Leaders of America organization conducts each year. Based upon the operational definition of social engagement, Braylee is engaged.

Megan, however, does connect with the community on a different scale. She volunteers with her church in addition to doing things like the Future Business Leaders of American food drive. She participates due to altruistic motives, which are indicators of social awareness and engagement.

“Not everyone is as lucky as I am,” she said. “Like my parents are really nice, and, like, I feel like I have a lot of friends, and a lot of people who are there for me. So I think it’s good to give back to people who might not always have people there for them or might not always have the things that they need because I’m pretty well taken care of.”

For Megan, her mom is an example of community and social engagement.

“My mom goes to school board meetings sometimes and just sits,” she said. “She’s not on the board or anything.”

Abby also engages socially by volunteering. She serves as a counselor at a church camp. She does this due to her connection to her church in the community and for the personal benefits.

“I volunteer mostly because, like, my family, we’re really strong Christians,” she said. “We’ve always been pushed to be involved. A lot of times, I volunteer because it looks good on a resume and college applications. But like camp and church and stuff, like, that’s just what I love to do.”

Neither Sarah nor Sophie volunteer out in the community.

“I haven’t really considered it,” Sarah said.

Sophie would be open to the idea if she had the opportunity, though.

“I would like to volunteer for like, um, at a shelter or something like that because I really love animals, but I don’t,” she said. “Beings as I’m in, like, you know, Canton, and I don’t really want to drive all the way to like Wichita or Salina or something like that. So if it was more available then I definitely would volunteer at an animal shelter or something like that.”

Besides the lack of opportunity, Sophie also likes to only surround herself with people she is familiar with.

“I pretty much stick to talking to people who are in, like, the school that I know,” she said.

In terms of how the journalism program connects with the community, only Emilie sees any connection.

“When we publish our yearbook, we tend to get extras, so we give them to our school district office on Main Street, and then we give them to local banks around the community,” she said. “I think it promotes the yearbook. When I was younger, I would go to the banks, or my mom would go to the banks, I would sit there and wait. I would see the yearbook, and I would pick it up. I would look through it, and I would find stuff. I would read some of the stories, and it was pretty interesting of what happened. So I think it promotes the yearbook even to a younger base. Not just adults.”

RQ2: How are student journalists given opportunities to engage socially and civically? The journalism students are presented with ample opportunity to engage socially. However, these opportunities largely exist outside of the journalism program. Church affiliations, other school organizations, community groups, and family influences

drive engagement. For the student journalists, social engagement seems incompatible with their work on the publications staffs.

Academic performance. Though political awareness and connections to the community may not be bolstered by the students' participation in Canton-Galva High School's journalism program, academic impacts are more noticeable, providing strong evidence for academic engagement. Emilie sees one specific benefit — time management.

“It's a lot of time, so it has affected it. But it's more in the homework aspect of it. I think my grades. They've been the same for the most part. I've just had to put my management in time skills to use because yearbook is very time consuming,” she said. “And this year we have a new staff and a new teacher. And I've been given the role of almost teaching the class and the new students how to do the yearbook specific stuff. So that's been kind of stressful.”

Emilie's writing skills have also been lifted.

“In English class this year, we've done a lot more writing, and it's helped me, like, straighten out,” she said. “Because yearbook writing and English class writing are different. So it's helped me establish the different styles and more vocabulary I guess.”

Being involved in high school journalism has also made Emilie consider studying journalism in college.

“When I first started I wasn't planning on going to college for it. I've actually been going for nursing, and I've been planning on that for a while now. But from all the years, the three years I have done it, it's definitely made me think. Do I want to pursue in

it longer, or is it just something I did for fun in high school? So it's definitely made me think about it. I still don't know, but I'm debating," she said.

For Taryn, journalism hasn't affected her academic performance, but the class does give her a bit of a respite from the rest of her day.

"Yearbook is like, kind of a break from all the other things that I work on. It's more, like, relaxing," she said.

Whitney, on the other hand, sees more positives from working on the journalism staff. Specifically, her academic performance has improved as she has engaged with the tasks of journalism.

"Being on the yearbook staff has opened my eyes to writing," she said. "Like, I never liked writing before, but once I found out that I could write a story and pretty intelligently compose a story. I loved writing. After that, it was the best thing I've ever done. Like in other classes, and they tell us you have to write something, I'm perfectly happy writing a story. Teachers probably like it more because I'm actually writing something I know and I enjoy being able to be talking about. It's been a very big positive."

Being on the journalism staff has also widened Whitney's options for college.

"Cheerleading is one thing I've always wanted to do in college, and now I'm like I want to do cheerleading too. But I also want to be on the yearbook staff and help. It just, kind of like, it gets me involved in college a little bit more because, like especially in yearbook and high school, I met new people. I learned more things about our school and how it works a little more," she said. "So maybe if I go into college yearbook, I'll learn a little more about the school and how it runs. It makes it an opportunity, like a good

choice of mine. I'm also interested in architecture and in education. But then, now that I really like to write, journalism is now another option I could take."

Braylee has not seen any impact on her academic performance due to being involved in scholastic journalism, but it has caused her to consider doing journalism after high school. On the other hand, Megan has seen positives even though she does not want to be a professional journalist in the future.

"I think that being on yearbook has helped me, like, use, like, my creativeness," she said. "In like making things visually appealing."

For Abby, being a part of the journalism staff has caused personal growth. Due to the challenging nature, she has had to adjust to journalism not coming as easily as other classes usually do for her, forcing her to engage with the subject matter more fully.

"I've always been pretty quick with doing things and learning things," she said. "But this is completely different because I'm not very creative, and I definitely have to pull out that creative side of me to find a good story, to take good pictures. So it was kind of challenging at first because I'm not used to not being good at things. But it's gotten better."

However, journalism is not in Abby's future, and her volunteering at church camp has given her an avenue to practice what she wants to do for her career.

"I want to be an elementary school teacher," she said. "The working with kids and teaching them. Like, I just love it. Like nothing else, I just love doing it. So that's like my passion and what I really want to do. So I haven't really considered studying journalism."

For Sarah, journalism class has resulted in an increase in academic engagement as well because it has caused her to pay more attention to detail. Improvements in writing

and time management have also been noticed. In fact, her experience with the news magazine has made her want to major in journalism when she enters college. Sophie, though, does not plan on majoring in journalism when she goes to college, but she does put more care into her writing.

RQ1: How are journalism programs structured to support engagement? The journalism program provides avenues to engage academically. It causes most students to see increased performance in areas of writing and time management. Creativity is also boosted. This stems from the curriculum being writing intensive and structured in a deadline-driving format.

Relationships and social media. All the students interviewed use social media and are on at least one of the major platforms. The three mentioned most frequently were Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. All said they use the services to maintain relationships with their friends. In this way, a form of social engagement is facilitated by using this technology. However, neither of the publications use social media to create and maintain relationships with the readers. In fact, social media is not implemented by either publication in any form. Several students mentioned how there used to be social media accounts operated by the publications, but the changes in advisers caused those initiatives to be dropped.

RQ5: How is technology, such as social media, used in the program to amplify students' voices? The Canton-Galva High School journalism program does not use social media to amplify students' voices. In the past, social media has been used, but it is no longer used. For the staff, therefore, social media is not implemented to increase engagement of any sort.

Relationships and the advisers. However, face-to-face relationships are still important for the students in the journalism classes. Specifically, the relationship they have with the advisers themselves present opportunities for the students to be positively impacted. Emilie has noticed the largest change in the advisers since she worked for two years with the previous yearbook teacher.

“My first two years it was structured very well. I learned a lot my first two years, which I’m grateful for, especially this year,” she said. “So since we lost that adviser, our adviser this year, she wasn’t trained, I guess, to teach yearbook, but she knows how to do it. She’s spunky. She’s very spunky. She’s not your average teacher. You’ll meet her, and you’ll think she’s crazy at first. You really will. I did. But after a while, you get used to her. I think she’s very fun.”

The lack of structure might suggest a negative impact upon engagement. However, the agreeableness of personalities could foster an atmosphere for students to engage civically and socially, and it seems to help the students with academic engagement. One explanation for this is the fact relationship between the students and the yearbook adviser is different than in other classes.

“We get that one-on-one personal connection,” Emilie said. “And other teachers, it’s more about the work you’re doing. Where our adviser this year, she takes it to a personal level. So I feel like I can talk to her about journalism or anything else basically.”

Taryn agreed.

“Mrs. Duell. She’s my favorite. I love her. She is very helpful, and she’s spunky. That’s what I love about her,” she said. “She’s outgoing. She’s always honest. Very honest. We have the same, like, personality, and we just connected, I guess.”

Whitney has also experienced a different journalism adviser.

“Last year’s was really strict, and I felt like she didn’t like me,” she said. “But this year I have had a little more opportunity to do, like, more important things within the yearbook, which I love that she’s made me more of like a junior editor without, like, saying the name.”

Regardless of the personality of the adviser, though, Whitney points out trust is of chief importance to a journalism program, and that trust allows for engagement to take place.

“I have to trust my adviser a little more because this is a, this isn’t just a test on other chapter,” she said. “It’s a thing. This is. It’s like a business that we have to run. We have to get the book out by the end of, by the beginning of next year. And if it’s not done, we’re going to be way too far behind. So we have to trust each other that we’re going to get this done, and we’re going to make sure it’s good, and we’re going to have enough ads to keep the book running. And you just got to trust them.”

Braylee also has a good relationship with the adviser.

“I’d say I’m closer to Mrs. Duell than all the other teachers in the building,” she said. “She’s just around more, and it’s more of a friendlier relationship because she’s not really teaching us. She’s helping us. Mrs. Duell doesn’t know about journalism, but she knows enough to teach us how to write captions and stories, and she gives good advice.”

Like Braylee and Taryn, Megan was recruited for the yearbook by the previous adviser. Even so, she has formed a bond with Duell.

“Mrs. Duell’s really nice,” Megan said. “And she’s like super supportive. I think that I’m closer to Mrs. Duell because I have her in more than one class. And in yearbook

she's, like. There's not very many people in yearbook, so she's really personal with each of us. She knows what we're good at."

Abby joined the yearbook staff because her sister did it when she was in high school, and that inspired Abby because she thought it looked like fun "to make the yearbook and see it all come together." This speaks to participation in journalism becoming a family tradition, which can foster engagement and build social capital as siblings develop a network of commonly held ideals and relatable experiences. Even though the adviser is new, Abby is enjoying the class and attributes some of that to Duell.

"Mrs. Duell's probably my favorite teacher because in yearbook it's more laid back. She's really helpful," she said. "Sometimes she doesn't know the answer, but she's really good at finding the answer. She's really helped us become closer because, like before this year, like I didn't really know anybody other than the people in my class."

Sarah echoed the idea of becoming a group when joining a publications class.

"I feel like it creates a lot of opportunities to get involved," she said. "We have some kids on the staff who are involved in maybe only one or two things, and some who are involved in almost everything. I feel like it brings everyone together, and like it makes you interested in going out of your comfort zone. Talking to people. Getting involved. Thinking about something that you didn't even realize was going on."

Such sentiments derive from Sarah's relationship with McMannis.

"It feels a lot more personal. A lot more one-on-one. Not like she's just there to teach us and make us take tests. Like she's there to work with us. Very helpful. Very passionate about journalism and photography," she said.

Sophie agreed.

“She’s definitely very helpful. But not too helpful. Like, she, you know, she’ll help you. But then at some point she’s like, ‘OK. You’ve got to figure this out on your own.’ She’s a great teacher. Being it’s her first year, I think she’s doing really good. I’m not really close with her, but I definitely like her. She’s one of my favorite teachers.”

RQ3: Based upon the perceptions of the students, to what extent do high school journalism advisers influence student engagement? The relationships between students and journalism advisers is positive. Trust exists, and the students and advisers all seem to enjoy each other’s personalities. This would present the chance to foster social and civic engagement, but such actions do not occur. The only form of engagement influenced by the advisers is academic engagement.

News consumption. Despite being part of a journalism staff, most students consume very little news, making social and civic engagement difficult. When they do consume it, the primary venue for seeing any news seems to be social media, and the engagement with the larger world via news exists as a largely passive exercise as the student seldom seek out information from journalistic outlets. This dovetails well with the students’ preference to use social media to maintain relationships with friends and family.

However, even when seeing news on social media, Emilie usually only reads the headlines.

“Unless it actually, like is really intriguing or something that affects me, I’ll read it,” she said.

Whitney said she chooses not to consume the news due to the tone of most news reports.

“It’s like, most of it’s negative, and I don’t like to focus on the negative. It just, it just makes me sad, and I don’t like to be sad and focus on it,” she said.

Even so, social media still gives Whitney the opportunity to read the news.

“On Facebook I’ll see, like, stories that have happened, and I’ll click on them and read them. But that’s like the only way I actually hear the news anymore,” she said. “My favorite for, like, news stories is Facebook because I know they’ll be reliable sources, but, like, that’s like the only one I’ll focus on the news on. Everything else is just for fun and seeing other people’s lives I guess.”

Braylee said she uses social media to consume the news as well, but her main news source is BuzzFeed. Her parents watch the news occasionally, but she doesn’t watch it on television or read it in newspapers. Sophie related similar experiences. This is in line with Taryn, who says she doesn’t have time to even look at the news on social media.

Megan also passively consumes the news when “sometimes the news is on” at her house. Otherwise, most of her information comes from social media. Her main news platform seems to be Snapchat, and she doesn’t use Facebook at all.

“I just don’t really know how to work it. Like, it just seems confusing and not a lot of my friends have it,” she said.

When news invades her Facebook or Instagram timelines, Abby gets exposed to the news. However, the only person in her life that pays attention to the news is her mom, and she primarily turns to Facebook and the Fox News website.

“We don’t get newspapers. We don’t have TV,” Abby said. “Every once in a while, when it comes on, I listen to it on the radio.”

Sarah only reads the news on social media and various websites. Her family watches the television to stay informed, and sometimes she joins them. When she does read the news on social media, she uses the “recommended posts” and “discover page” to lead her to information.

All students also shared a complete lack of social media utilization when it came to getting readers to consume the media they have created, failing to use the available technology to engage with the audience. They again cited the attempts at past years to implement social media use, but despite the fact they all use social media and consume news when they stumble upon it, none of them gave any indication that the thought to use such platforms to promote their work and attract readers had occurred to them. This highlights the failure of the program to use social media to amplify student voices.

For the news magazine, social media would seem to be a perfect fit; however, it is not utilized. McMannis said the magazine is posted on the school’s website, and then she puts a link on her Google Classroom page, which is a learning management system. Other teachers also post a link to the PDF on their own Classroom pages.

“The teachers help promote to the students,” Sarah said. “The teachers post about it, and then the students will click the link and find it on our website.”

However, Sophie was not even aware of this effort to share the news magazine with a wider audience.

Even though the publications are not taking steps to interact and engage with the audiences beyond face-to-face encounters in the hallways where staffers might tell a student he or she is going to be in the yearbook or upcoming issue of the news magazine, all of the students report the publications are well received. They said they have not

encountered any accusations of the publications being “fake news” or even any truly critical comments.

“I think with our small school it’s not a heavy, like, important thing, but I definitely do think that when it comes out a lot of people will read it. They’ll see something they didn’t know happened. And so I think it’s a good memory keeper, I guess,” Emilie said. “They know the people on the staff, and they know them on a personal and closer level than they would in a bigger school. So it’s basically kind of like a friend telling you something.”

Taryn agreed.

“I would think people would trust it,” she said. “So it can capture all the memories throughout the year and express them through a book at the end.”

Whitney also said people tend to trust the yearbook. However, she had more concerns about a lack of respect for the product. She feels more prominence needs to be given to the journalism happening at Canton-Galva High School.

“I don’t think people in this school respect it as much as they should because it takes a lot of time out of our lives,” she said. “I feel like it would help if they knew how to write a story and how long it takes. Like having to interview people, write the story. It takes a lot of time and commitment to writing a good story. I’ll tell them it takes a lot of effort and a lot of creativity to create a yearbook.”

Megan also views the yearbook as more of a keepsake than a journalistic product. Even so, she puts an emphasis on accuracy to maintain and increase the trust the yearbook has with its readers.

“We wouldn’t lie in the yearbook,” she said. “We have to be true, and we ask, like, people for, like, what they were doing here and how this affect them, so we get a lot of quotes. So like, we just didn’t make all this stuff up.”

Abby echoed such sentiments.

“Well, we’re the ones that document literally everything. Like, we got to games, we go to the musical. We go to concerts. We go to different classes. We go to events, special events, like state conferences and district conferences. We take pictures and then document it all,” she said.

Sarah suggested the news magazine plays an important role in the school, and when the students take care to perform that duty to the best of their abilities, trust is formed.

“We help connect kids together to each other and help them learn about stuff that they’re not normally involved in,” she said. “They know who it’s coming from. They know it’s coming from kids in their classes or their friends.”

RQ5: How is technology, such as social media, used in the program to amplify students’ voices? The Canton-Galva High School journalism program does not use social media to amplify students’ voices. In the past, social media has been used, but it is no longer used. Work is not promoted. Sources are not sought out. Social media only serves the students as a way to socialize, not to engage socially or civically. The program fails to leverage the available tools to increase its reach and impact.

Journalistic understanding. Though the students do not view consuming the news or even getting others to read their own work as a priority, the students do place a value on journalism in general. A base understanding is present.

Emilie views the role of journalism in society as an important one.

“I think the role of journalism in society is to keep people informed,” she said.

“The reason, like, we have journalism is to keep people informed, not only on like a social aspect of it, but government too.”

Taryn also sees the role of journalism to be one of informing the masses.

“It’s very important because people need to know what’s going on in the world,” she said.

“You’re like the storyteller of that story, and you got to get the word out about what happened,” Whitney said.

“Inform. Help people make decisions,” Sarah said.

Braylee and Megan both held truth in high regard, especially as it related to reporting. Abby took it step further, emphasizing how pervasive journalism is in society.

“Journalism is actually really important,” she said. “That’s like, the recent school shooting that happened in Florida. Like the way everybody found out about that was not by calling somebody on the phone. Like, hey this happened. It’s because they saw on the news, and the news is journalism. Like journalism is everywhere.”

Abby’s statement, as well as those who placed a high value on journalism in general, suggest their sparse news consumption does have an impact. They are gaining awareness of the world around them, which drives at social and civic engagement. They see the value of being informed on some level. However, it is not their top priority.

For example, Sophie had a different take on what journalism’s purpose is.

“It’s to entertain and inform people, mainly,” she said.

Even so, these views on the role of journalism in society have informed the students' perceptions of what they should be doing as journalists themselves.

“I think my responsibility is to give accurate news and accurate information,” Emilie said. “I do my best not to give false information. So I think I have the responsibility to tell people what they want to know.”

The rights she has, though, aren't as clear to her, which points to a failure in the curriculum. The students are not able to fully engage socially and civically because they do not know what they can do as citizens and as journalists.

“I think it's, like, the First Amendment,” Emilie said. “I don't know. It's the right to freedom of speech and stuff. But that's the only one I can think of. I'm not good with laws and rules and stuff.”

Taryn, however, was unaware of any rights and responsibilities she has as a student journalist. Whitney also did not know of any laws that grant her specific rights, but she did have an idea of what responsibilities she has.

“I got to get the best story I can. Be most truthful to it,” she said. “I cannot tell lies or just guess. I have to actually go out and get facts. Gets statistics on how everything worked and everything.”

Along with her peers, Braylee also was unaware of any laws supporting journalism, but she felt it was her “responsibility to tell the truth and get credible sources.”

Recognizing the First Amendment and the protection it affords journalists, Megan also felt she had a lot of responsibility to be a good student journalist by adequately performing her duties as a publication staff member.

“I feel like as a student journalist I would need to, like, take pictures and stuff. And be at events that are, like, important and that a lot of people go to so that I can, like, take pictures of that and make sure that that goes into the yearbook. Especially if it’s like a really big thing like homecoming or something that matters to a lot of people in different ways,” she said. “And I feel like I have, like, can’t just write what I like about. Like, I think homecoming is stupid. I can’t write my story on that. I have to write about, like, everything in the school and how it affects them, not just how it affects me and my friends or anything. I have to make sure that everyone is included.”

Sarah agreed, suggesting even small towns are important for news.

“We have the responsibility to be honest, and to inform other members of the community,” she said. “It’s a lot more than what you think it is. It may seem like nothing is going on, and it’s just a simple town or just a group of people. But each person has a story.”

Telling the story of people is important in Sarah’s opinion.

“So we connect on a personal level instead of just being strangers to each other,” she said.

This points to a desire to engage socially and civically, but, again, they lack the knowledge of how to accomplish that goal. Instead, they simply have a vague understanding of what journalism should be. Sophie feels as though the publications should be reserved for facts.

“I think my responsibility is, when we are reporting on something, that it is very fact based,” she said. “I should keep the facts and not put in my opinion and stuff like that.”

Abby views the publications and her responsibility a little differently.

“For me, I just have to make sure I’m not reporting something that’s false. I have to look for everything for the true facts of it. And then, since it’s yearbook, like, we don’t want to be really negative. So I have to turn it into being positive without lying about it, I guess. Like, I have to find the good things in what happened instead of focusing on the negative.”

As for her rights, Abby expressed the sentiment she doesn’t have as many rights as people in the working world.

“Well, I just know we have, like, the freedom of the press, the First Amendment. Right to freedom of speech,” she said. “But since we’re a school, we don’t necessarily get all those rights. We still have to do what the administration says is OK. What the school board thinks is OK because we are a public school. Like, we don’t really get all of that right. But they still give us the right to report and the right to make it and bring our own ideas.”

RQ4: What curricular components are incorporated to teach students their rights and responsibilities? The scope of the research did not review specific teaching materials used. However, based upon the available data, it seems clear the students are learning that their responsibilities are to provide accurate and timely information. The curriculum lacks, however, in providing instruction regarding the legal aspects of journalism. At most, the students have a vague understanding of the First Amendment, but other legal rights exist. Those rights appear to be overlooked in the curriculum.

Journalistic knowledge. For a student like Abby who has misconceptions about her rights, other avenues of instruction by Duell and McMannis could be warranted. A

better level of academic engagement with the study of journalism is required. In fact, every student shared aspects of the class they would like to see improve, especially as the two advisers gain more experience in scholastic journalism.

“I mean, like, we’ve never really had, like, a sit down, like, this is how you come up with good interview questions. This is how you interview somebody. I’m not very good at that,” Abby said. “Also, I’m not the best at taking pictures.”

For Sophie, who feels McMannis has done a good job with teaching the basics, such as interviewing, her desire for more instruction is of a more technical nature.

“I mean, I’d like to learn a little bit more about the program we use,” she said.

However, Emilie feels the yearbook staff could benefit from more direct instruction concerning the basics of journalism. She attributes the lack of this instruction to Duell being new and untrained. With the adviser not being able to impart knowledge on the subject of journalism, it makes it difficult for the students to engage with the subject matter.

“I would like to learn more about the, like, basic structures and the more detailed stuff,” she said. “Like, you can write a story. But it’s how you write the story and the wording, I guess, to make it a better story is what I would like to learn more about. And all the technical things, I guess. I didn’t realize how much our other adviser before did until I had to do them this year. So there’s even editing. I’m very thankful for the girls because I would edit a page, and I would see errors. And I would tell them about it and how they could fix it. Then they’d give it back, and I’d see some more. And last year our adviser, she would see it the first time. And so I would just like to learn to see all those things.”

Taryn also sees the new adviser as a hurdle to be overcome in terms of what the students learn about journalism.

“We have a new teacher, and she hasn’t been, like, very educated in it. She’s done it once or twice,” she said. “It’s kind of hard when you have a teacher that leaves you and you’re a first-year journalism member. I don’t really know what I can learn. So, if I probably knew what I can learn, I would probably like to learn a lot of things.”

Whitney shared the sentiments of her peers. She too felt the publications could be structured in a more real-world way, complete with specific training for the different aspects of journalism, such as writing. Such a restructuring could allow concepts of engagement to be built into the program.

“This is our first year with a new adviser. So, like, the year before I got a taste of what it would feel like to be in, like, a newspaper,” she said. “But we’re trying to get it as close to feeling like a publication as we can. But last year we had deadlines, and they were specific. This year they’re not hit as nicely as they should be. We have not enforced those as much as we should. So maybe next year.”

Megan said Canton-Galva High School, specifically McMannis, offers other classes where she could learn more specifics of journalism. However, she pointed out a lack of direction in terms of how the yearbook is supposed to function as a publication.

“We don’t know very much, like, in yearbook about, like, how yearbook is supposed to go and everything. So we just, like, take all the information that we do have and try to make it work. I’m sure that there are other things that we don’t know or that we haven’t learned just because, like, Mrs. Duell’s really new to it, and she’s learning. In a couple of years I’m sure it’ll be really strong. But I think it’s just kind of falling together,

I guess,” Megan said. “I would like to know, like, I don’t really know how to work a camera that well. So I know that would be better, like, how to get the camera to settings and stuff, and how to be in the right position to, like, gather, like, the right pictures and, like, the right emotions and stuff. And I think it would be cool to know more of, like, how magazines work.”

Braylee and Sarah both have a more positive outlook on the journalism education they are receiving. However, they both have things they would like to learn more about.

“We have to take our own pictures and interview students and make pages with deadlines, just like journalism in the real world,” Braylee said. “I’d like to learn more about writing in a newspaper, though. Like structure.”

Sarah feels McMannis does a good job about showing the students the ins and outs of the journalism world.

“She often explains stuff to us about how it would work in a real scenario if we were working for an actual journalism company, and she works to connect us with stations around here. Right now she’s planning on having us go to a TV station, a news station, and work with the broadcast. And she’s had us enter in competitions in the past,” she said.

However, there is still one aspect of journalism Sarah would like to know more about.

“Probably entertainment journalism because it’s what people consume the most,” she said. “It’s what you see on the magazines in the stores, but here we don’t have that offered. Like we don’t cover that.”

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to explore levels of academic, social, and civic engagement of the students living in a digital age who are involved in a small-town, Kansas journalism program. A scholastic newsroom presents an interesting opportunity to look into how student journalists are conditioned to engage academically, socially, and civically, specifically in a democratic society. This is because journalism and democracy are intertwined as the media is often referred to as the Fourth Estate, only coming after the three branches of government.

This study used the lens of social capital theory, which views social capital as a web of mutual trust and cooperation derived from the participation in community groups and organizations (Putnam, 2001). This theory was used because it strikes at the heart of what engagement means. However, some researchers believe the term “engagement” is too broad on its own (Ball, Procopio, Goering, Don, & Bodary, 2016). Therefore, operational definitions were used, building upon the concept of social capital.

To understand the findings and determine how the results answer the research questions, the operational definitions must be understood. Academic engagement was defined as attentiveness to academic performance. It looked at how students perceived their academic performance and if being a student journalist impacted said performance in any way. Social engagement was defined as participation in social organizations and activities. The primary goal in such a definition was to gauge whether or not students took part in community organizations and groups outside of the school setting; however, since many school organizations work directly with the local communities, participation in school organizations, with an emphasis on community over school, were also taken

into account. These included, but were not limited to Future Business Leaders of America, Youth Advisory Council, and Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. Finally, civic engagement was defined as demonstrating a consciousness of political news and actions taking place both locally and nationally within an understanding of the civic process. Besides allowing for investigation into the political awareness of the students, it also opens up the possibility of determining whether or not the students are media literate, especially in terms of “fake news” and being able to discern fact from fiction in the information they receive.

Findings

Of the two publications the journalism program at Canton-Galva High School produces, which are a yearbook and a bi-weekly news magazine, only two students have ever done journalism before. Both of these students are on the yearbook staff. One is a senior and the editor. The other is a junior, and she is in line to be the editor next year. Even the advisers are new. Both were placed into the roles on relatively short notice when the previous adviser left to take a job at a different school. This severely limited the education being administered in the journalism program. Students did not even get the opportunity to enter into the Kansas Scholastic Press Association regional contests, the only journalism contests offered in the state where they could have earned recognition on a state level for their work, because the advisers were too new. This failure to participate in the contests came despite the fact the school has historically entered such contests and done rather well. Both advisers have knowledge in the areas they are teaching, but they lack the training necessary for a journalism program to see high levels of success. Both advisers appeared to be in survival mode, especially Duell as she balanced taking on the

new roles and fighting cancer. Compounding this issue was a lack of more experienced students to help guide the staff. The two with any experience still did not have a level of expertise to help the new advisers in a tangible way. They, too, were still learning. Furthermore, McMannis had no support in the news magazine as that staff consisted of younger, first-year students.

This led to a less student-focused classroom setting when compared to what one would expect to see in a student-run publication course. In the yearbook, the students were often left on their own as Duell dealt with other issues, such as her duties as the athletic director and complications with her cancer treatments. When she was in the room, though, she took charge instead of letting the students lead. This would appear to be the result of being uncomfortable with the new duties, leading her to default back to her style as a general classroom teacher. However, she recognized the need for student leadership, but the yearbook staff lacked such leadership due to inexperience. This caused Duell to say, “I’m in charge. In reality, I’m in charge.”

In the news magazine class, McMannis also takes control. The students have no experience whatsoever, so she leads the group. She works with them to assign stories and pages, but the day-to-day operations are centered on McMannis as she sends students out to get interviews and take pictures. She assembles the final news magazine. She publishes it on her website. The students merely gather the content, and there is no designated editor or student leader of the staff.

The two advisers are similar in this way. However, they are also quite different. Duell views the world from a larger perspective. She is more liberal as she is not from Kansas. McMannis, on the other hand, is a native of the area. She appears to align more

with the conservative nature of the state, though she does seem to keep more of an open mind about various topics. She is simply more careful in how she expresses such thoughts. Such diversity in advisers provides the students with more opportunities to learn about thoughts and belief potentially different from their own, which helps the students build social capital.

Both advisers come from a background of teaching English. McMannis has more experience and background knowledge in graphic design and photography, which helps her in the journalism class. Duell seems to struggle to separate herself from teaching English. She often referenced initiatives in her English class to broaden the views the students, but such considerations were not present when it came to her journalism class. Neither adviser went out of her way to have in-depth discussions with her journalism students about her personal thoughts and beliefs, even if such conversations would relate to happenings in society or journalism in general. Even so, the students do view Duell and McMannis favorably, indicating their personal needs and desires for the journalism program are largely being met.

Understanding the advisers is key in understanding the journalism program. The advisers set the tone for the publications. This doesn't necessarily mean they explicitly dictate what will go into the yearbook, though that would appear to happen on a semi-regular basis. It does, though, mean it defines the type of publications that will be produced and the methodology of how such publications will come into existence. The advisers dictate what types of students will be on the staff, either way specifically choosing them through an application process or attracting them via compatibility of personalities, and what kind of knowledge those students will gain. As Taryn pointed out,

students without journalism experience don't know what they can or should learn, so the adviser has to lead that. Such a base understanding helps answer the research questions of this study.

RQ1: How are journalism programs structured to support engagement? By the nature of a journalism program, Canton-Galva High School's publications exist as a forum to promote engagement. However, the current structure of the program does not explicitly support engagement. There is a lack of student empowerment. The advisers lead the publications with minimal input from the students. Students are left with the impression that they do not have a say in what types of content appear in the publications. They are even encouraged, albeit relatively gently, to avoid controversial topics. Some students even believe the purpose of the publications are to be positive because the work they are producing is aimed at being more of a keepsake than a true piece of journalistic work. Such a sentiment was expressed by the yearbook staff members, but the magazine students also demonstrated a desire to stay positive rather than controversial in any way.

The students defer to teacher and administrator control. They lack motivation to develop a sense of self, which is a component of engagement as defined by self-determination theory (Gardiner, 2013). Contrasting this, though, is a sense of belonging the student journalists have. They acknowledge a sense of loyalty. As Sarah said, the staff members look out for each other, especially "if somebody needs help, you help them. It's not just a one-person project. It's all of us working together to get it done." By considering a narrower view of engagement, the journalism students do engage with one another, but the program does not provide avenues for larger engagement as defined for the operations of this research.

RQ2: How are student journalists given opportunities to engage socially and civically? Students at Canton-Galva High School are given ample opportunity to engage socially. Several organizations exist within the school to allow for this. The two that are most visible in the community are Future Business Leaders of America and Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. Both of these organizations do community service projects, such as a Thanksgiving food drive. The Youth Advisory Council also provides an avenue to engage socially and civically. Members work with the local government and community organizations to complete projects and provide advice on issues from a student perspective.

Though these are great ways for students to engage, none of them concern the scholastic journalism program. The program itself does not provide a way for students to engage socially or civically as direct members of the journalism staff. A low threshold for such engagement would be to incorporate coverage of and opinion writing about topics of societal interest. However, such topics are predominately viewed as being possibly too controversial. Again, the mindsets of the students and advisers hinders the program's ability to provide a platform for engagement. The closest the publications have come to approaching such an opportunity is when the news magazine ran an opinion piece critical of how students were walking around the building wrapped in blankets instead of wear jackets or hoodies to keep warm.

Though this did address a topic of the school community, it failed to have any larger impact. Keeping the audience in mind is important, but approaching a topic merely because the writers felt the students looked "ridiculous" wearing blankets does not mean the publication engaged in a social or civic fashion. The aesthetics of wearing a blanket

does not constitute a topic of importance. If the concern was for safety and how blankets could be hiding weapons, then perhaps such a topic would be more appropriate in terms of social or civic engagement. This is more evident as high school publications across the state tackle issues such as rape, teen pregnancy, the #metoo movement, and gun violence in schools, all of which have larger implications and are topics worthy of discussion in the school setting.

RQ3: Based upon the perceptions of the students, to what extent do high school journalism advisers influence student engagement? The students of Canton-Galva High School's journalism program do not know where their advisers stand on larger social and political issues. They may get an idea of this in other classes the advisers teach, but the journalism classroom is not a place where such discussions are had. All discussions in the journalism classroom were focused on the technical aspects of what needs to be done. This prevents these students from being influenced in a way impacting their social or civic engagement levels.

Academically, though, the advisers do put a bit more of an emphasis on keeping the students engaged. They do encourage staff members to go cover specific happenings in other classes, and at one point Duell allowed Taryn to read a book for the entire hour because the book had to be read and a test taken by the end of the day. Even so, the advisers do not provide greater influence than a non-journalism teacher might. The subject of journalism is prime for discussion of such topics, but that opportunity is not used by the advisers. The primary influences the advisers have is on staff retention. All students said they enjoyed the advisers, often citing the advisers' personalities as primary reasons for the students being in the class in the first place. If the journalism program

were to take on a different shape that put more emphasis on engagement, then the relationships between students and advisers could be viewed as a strong influencer of student engagement. However, as the program is currently structured, such an influence cannot be stated.

RQ4: What curricular components are incorporated to teach students their rights and responsibilities? Information is served on a need-to-know basis. When an issue comes up, the journalism advisers at Canton-Galva High School provide instruction. Even so, nearly every student voiced their desire to know more. The basics of interviewing and writing were cited multiple times as areas where more education would be helpful. It would seem the advisers are unaware of such needs or are unable to provide such guidance due to the lack of training they have.

Furthermore, the students lack any understanding of the rights they have as student journalists or citizens in general. Only a few were able to correctly identify the First Amendment as supporting free speech and the freedom of the press, both of which are paramount to the work being done in their publications. They also were unaware of the Kansas Student Publications Act, which grants student journalists more protections from censorship and prior review. It allows them produce journalism without fear of retribution from the school administration. Even so, Abby said she thought the administration had the final say over what went into the yearbook and news magazine.

Without realizing it, as she and none of the other students were familiar with the case, she believed her school lived under the United State Supreme Court decision in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, which granted administrators the right to dictate what types of speech students were permitted to express as long as any censorship addressed

“legitimate pedagogical concerns” (“Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier,” n.d.). The Kansas Student Publications Act rolled back such a repressive decision for the state of Kansas, reinstating the protections of the United State Supreme Court decision in *Tinker v. Des Moines*, which granted students First Amendment rights and made it clear that students did not lose such rights when at school unless the speech prevented the normal operation of the school day (“*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*,” n.d.). As Kopenhaver (1984) suggested, the advisers must know the rights of the students to be able to provide adequate guidance and help the students do their work as journalists. Again, a lack of training for the advisers hinders the curricular components of the program.

RQ5: How is technology, such as social media, used in the program to amplify students’ voices? Technology and social media are heavily used by the students in Canton-Galva High School’s journalism program. All students reported having social media accounts and using them on a daily basis, even if the duration of such use was minimal. However, the journalism program does not use social media in any fashion. The two experienced staff members mentioned there used to be a Twitter account and a Snapchat account the journalism students used to provide extra coverage and engage with the audience.

However, when the two new advisers took on the publications, those accounts were shuttered. Though it was unclear if the accounts were completely deleted, people no longer knew the log-in information so that the accounts were essentially useless, or if the use of the accounts simply had not been implemented for the school year, it was clear that no social media was used to promote the work the students were doing or to amplify their

voices to a stage larger than just their publications. Emilie did mention she uses Snapchat's chat feature to contact sources on occasion, but this is an exception, not the rule.

McMannis discussed social media in her class, but she did so in a more theoretical fashion. She talked about the importance of maintaining a positive online presence and being safe online, and she discussed different ways social media could be used. However, there was no implementation of such concepts. The only way either publication uses online technology to reach beyond the classroom is by posting announcements that the yearbooks are for sale on the school website and by sharing PDFs of the news magazine on the school website. There was talk about finding a way to sell photos online as a way to fund the publications, but social media was not part of that equation when the advisers spoke about it.

Significance

These findings address the research purpose of this study, which was to explore levels of academic, social, and civic engagement of the students involved in the scholastic journalism program at Canton-Galva High School. Using the operational definitions of academic, social, and civic engagement, scholastic media is impacting students in various ways. There are correlations between the experiences of each student, though. From these commonalities a certain amount of understanding concerning the impact of journalism as it relates to the levels of engagement experienced by the students can be determined. Each area of engagement sought by this study will be addressed individually. This will be followed by concluding thoughts surrounding the pedagogy of the program. Each area of engagement relates to the theory of this research because they

are the building blocks of social capital, which is a web of mutual trust and cooperation built from participation in groups and organizations (Putnam, 2001).

Academic engagement. Considering if students are more attentive to their academic performance, the data suggests students involved in the journalism program at Canton-Galva High School are academically engaged. Nearly all respondents said they had noticed improvements in their grades and performances in other classes. For some this manifested as increased writing abilities. For others, it related to time management and other skills important for academic success. Other students merely saw their journalism classes as a way to increase their grade point averages, saying they always get an “A” in the class but not necessarily seeing any benefit showing up in other classes.

The advisers do support the students in being academically successful, as was evident when Duell allowed Taryn to spend an entire class period doing non-journalism work, helping her to maintain a grade in another course. However, outside of the students who found improvements in writing and time management, the correlation between academic awareness and participation in the journalism program cannot be empirically viewed as causation. Other factors could be present. Parents or guardians of the students could demand certain grades are maintained. Students may also be more motivated to keep their grades up by other activities that require a minimum grade in order for students to be eligible to participate.

Overall, the idea put forth by Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) stating journalism students perform better in school due to being a member of the journalism staff is supported by the data. Nothing points to this being an absolute truth, but it does seem clear the students are experiencing academic benefits by being a part of the publications.

What's more, they recognize the benefits, making them aware of how their academic abilities are developing. This allows them to engage more fully with their academic activities. For example, the students know they need to learn more about journalism. They are aware of this academic need for instruction, and they are seeking it out because they want to improve their performances. Such a consciousness of the need for knowledge helps the students lay the foundation to build social capital. This is because education provides student the opportunity to develop psychological processes of memory and learning, which are key to become a productive member of society (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015).

Social engagement. Considering if the students participate in social organizations and activities, the data suggests student involved in the journalism program at Canton-Galva High School are socially engaged, but this is only to a certain degree. Many of the students spoke of being part of various school organizations that engage with the community. They also spoke of having a desire to help others. Taryn even attributed being more empathetic to others from being on the journalism staff and talking to people she normally would not have encountered. With social media playing a fairly large role in the lives of the students, students like Taryn show screen time is not necessarily desensitizing them to what is going on in the world as Putnam (2001) and Edgar & Edgar (1971) suggested. In fact, since the journalism program is comprised primarily of female students, any use of social media could help build social capital because research suggests female develop more social capital via social media (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010).

However, most students did not report participating in any capacity beyond the school organizations' activities. Megan and Abby both said they volunteer with their churches. Abby would appear to be the most socially active because she volunteers as a church camp counselor in the summers. Of course, this is driven by her parents and her faith because, as she said, "my family, we're really strong Christians. We've always been pushed to be involved." This does not seem to be a direct relationship between social activism on the part of the students and the journalism program. Even so, participation does exist. Thus, the students are building social capital. Though the reasons for being socially active vary, the students are developing habits of participation that could be carried forward into their adult lives.

Both advisers said they volunteer with various organizations in the community. Duell has done so less of late due to her battle with cancer, but she has done tutoring and youth group work in the past. McMannis is heavily involved in 4-H and the local rodeo. With this in mind, the two represent potential role models for the student journalists and possible avenues to get students involved in outside organizations, which would help build social capital in the students. However, there seems to be no connection made between what the journalism advisers do outside of the class and what they discuss with the students. An opportunity is being missed. The advisers do not have to force the students to be more involved socially, but by discussing the topic with them it could spark ideas for the students to consider other ways to get involved. As Putnam (2001) suggested, it is important for students to go out into their communities to understand the fabric of society around them in order for them to build social capital. They need to not be so content with screens and, instead, need to communicate with other humans in a

face-to-face setting. The only difference between what Putnam (2001) found and what this study points to is that the students are focused on their cellphone screens instead of television screens. However, by being involved in the journalism program, the students could leverage their social media use to become more socially engaged. This would contradict the assertion by Maras (2006) that social media could cause social media users to become more self-involved

Overall, the suggestion of Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe (2015) that media programs allow students to become socialized due to the journalism education influencing how they see the world fails to ring true in this case. Nothing in the data points to the students' participation in scholastic media as having a direct impact on their social engagement. The students do demonstrate a level of social engagement by participating in the school organizations. Such engagement does not cross over into the journalism classroom, though. No stances on societal issues are taken on the editorial page of the news magazine. Nothing even remotely resembling negative coverage appears in the yearbook. The students are aware of being socially engaged, and, by the operational definition of social engagement, they are socially engaged. However, this study cannot go as far to say the correlation of students being involved in an organization such as Future Business Leaders of America and the journalism program is causation for the other.

Civic engagement. Considering if the students demonstrate a consciousness of political news and actions taking place as it relates to the civic process, the data suggests student involved in the journalism program at Canton-Galva High School are not civically engaged. First and foremost, every student indicated they do not pay attention to

politics. Several said they did not even understand what politics were and had no inclination to become informed, even though one student had a family member that held public office. They did demonstrate an understanding that voting was part of the civic process and said they planned to vote when they were able. This understanding puts the students on the path to build social capital as voting is a key component of the civic process (Putnam, 2001). However, they were not concerned with working on becoming informed about the world of politics until they had to. Many said they would become informed by doing research online and reading the news. Despite this, the news consumption of all respondents suggested they do not read the news in any concrete fashion. Even so, they did say they were familiar with the concept of “fake news,” but they did not associate the idea with politics, notwithstanding the fact the term has entered the public discourse due to politicians heavily relying upon the phrase to discredit unfavorable media coverage. This awareness of “fake news,” though, demonstrates a low level of literacy for the media they seldom consume. They spoke of the difficulty in separating fact from fiction online and voiced concerns about how difficult it is to find credible sources. However, this was primarily discussed in the context of writing research papers for English classes. The term seemed to not feel real to them because they believed their readers trusted the publications they produced. They had not encountered “fake news” accusations, so it apparently wasn’t something they needed to be too concerned about.

The advisers do consume the news to a greater degree than the students. They cited listening to NPR, reading certain newspapers, and watching evening news broadcasts as their source for news. However, even they admitted to not paying as close

attention as they should. Furthermore, though they both said they vote, that is the extent of their political participation. In fact, both said they felt the needed to pay closer attention to politics because, as Duell said, it “is part of our civic responsibility.” Even so, little discussion of what is going on in the world takes place. This duality, at least in Duell, is interesting. She has built social capital in her own life, acknowledges the need for more, but is not taking steps to increase her social capital.

McMannis indicated she planned on having the students start including news from outside of the school into the newsletter, which will help get the students paying more attention. This would help build social capital in both the staff members and the readers because the fabric of society is often informed by mass media consumption (Potter, 2014). Likewise, the yearbook staff and Duell all mentioned having current events pages, which will contain information concerning happenings affecting the world. Though these are steps in the direction of encouraging students to be more aware of the news and politics happening around them, building social capital, it clearly isn't a focus of the instruction in the journalism classes. The news magazine would seem to be well served by reading other news sources, at least so the students could get a feel for the writing and style of coverage such a publication needs. Instead, as McMannis said, they only reference past issues of the news magazine from the time when it was a print product.

It is clear that those students who had even a base understanding of what politics consisted of learned it from government and history classes, not the journalism class. Though Carpenter, Hoag, Grant, & Bowe (2015) said too much influence by the journalism advisers could negatively impact students by not allowing them to develop a clear definition of self and personal political and social values, the journalism classes at

Canton-Galva High School seem to go too far in the other direction by not even broaching the subject. This hinders the students' abilities to engage civically as viewed by the operational definition of the concept used for this study. Furthermore, by supporting a civically engaged student media program, the readers of the publications can be influenced to be more civically engaged as well because they will be exposed to more issues of importance to society as a whole (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Of course, a lack of engagement does not fall solely on the educators. The lack of engagement could also be attributed to parents who are disengaged and pass that disengagement down to their children by way of example (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). The data would suggest this is also part of the issue in this case. Furthermore, living in a small, isolated rural community can make engagement more difficult due to the typical demographics of less education and less wealth (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010).

Pedagogy. The advisers of Canton-Galva High School's journalism program are new. They were thrown in the roles at a late date, and they had no experience in the world of advising publications. This is relatively common in the world of scholastic journalism. Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) point out less than 30 percent of high school journalism teachers have any certification in journalism, with less than 10 percent having majored in a journalism-related area of study while in college. In such a situation, any level of engagement achieved by the students is admirable, though there is clearly room for improvement. Both advisers spoke of aspects of the program they would like to change for next year, indicating forward thinking on their part. They recognize the need for improvement. In order for this to happen, they need to have support from the administration in the form of training. The world of journalism is in a near-constant state

of flux as new technologies come and go. Upon entering the workforce as journalists, students will need to know a wide variety of skills, though the basics of writing and reporting need to be at the center of all instruction (Dailey, 2016). After all, no matter the medium, writing is a key component (Briggs, 2007).

To support the learning of the teachers, the administration might consider covering the cost of attendance for conferences. This can be pricey, so even paying for memberships in associations such as the Kansas Scholastic Press Association or the Journalism Education Association could help. This would allow the teachers to connect with other advisers and build a personal learning network to help support them with their publications. Also, membership in the Journalism Education Association would also grant the teachers access to curricula they could use to enhance their teaching. This could prove to be a vital lifeline for the educators as they attempt to improve the journalism program at Canton-Galva High School.

Limitations

Though this research provided rich data, it does have its limitations. In terms of the theory being used to guide the inquiry, social capital theory cannot be used to determine what print products a high school journalism program produces as there are other factors such as funding, educational structure, and support to consider. Also, in this instance, social capital theory is not able to definitively look at political participation as the majority of the students are not eligible to vote in elections, even though Kansas has no age requirement to run for the elected office of governor (Martin, 2017).

The method limits the generalizability of the specific results. This is due to the data derived from the select number of interviews is not representative of the scholastic

journalism landscape as a whole. However, there are likely similar conditions under which journalism programs operate in other schools. It is common for an English or business teacher to be tapped to teach yearbook and other journalism-related courses. This often means the programs are not fully equipped and supported financially in a way that would increase students' success.

As such, another limitation is that this was the first year Duell or McMannis had advised a scholastic journalism program. This casts a light on what they are doing. It is not inherently fair to judge a person by their first attempt at any endeavor. Learning is still taking place. Without incorporating any data from the tenure of the previous adviser, there is no standard for comparison except that of what research suggests is what should be happening in a high school journalism classroom.

Directions for Future Research

With focused instruction by knowledgeable instructors and family support, student journalists are more likely to be engaged academically, socially, and civically, thus becoming more productive members of society. Literature concerning effects of journalism education supports this. Research “indicates when it comes to civic engagement, participation in high school journalism matters” (Graybeal & Sindik, 2012, p. 42). Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) present the most compelling research to this point, but, as with all the literature reviewed, there seems to be missing elements in need of further study. Most studies used quantitative research methods to determine an average of numerous factors. For example, using quantitative methods, Graybeal & Sindik (2012) find student journalists consume news at least once per week, but the majority of respondents point to using mobile devices primarily for social interactions with friends

rather than a tool for media consumption. This proves beneficial when looking at journalism programs as a whole; however, individual program and student attributes end up being ignored. A more qualitative approach is called for wherein programs and students could be looked at with more attention and scrutiny to determine if current research is applicable to them rather than getting lumped into the statistical averages. This would allow for new hypotheses to be developed, which would prove to be important as the journalism industry changes and journalism programs attempt to adapt to the different shapes media is taking. Furthermore, current research fails to focus on small-town, rural settings. If, as Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson (1994) suggest, most schools have some form of journalism program, focused attention must be given to rural schools because they will undoubtedly defy the averages and could present new areas of investigation.

In the future, more schools need to be included in such a study to provide a wider scope of inquiry and array of data. Specifically, though, Canton-Galva High School needs to be studied again in the future after the advisers have had time to settle into their roles. New students will be in the classes, but how they are responding and performing can then be compared to how the students under first-year advisers fared.

It could also prove to be fruitful to narrow the scope entirely. Instead of looking at three areas of engagement, further research could focus on only one aspect of student engagement. Also, studies could be focused on journalism adviser performance and training, or the focus could be on student understanding of journalistic practices and how laws provide them the opportunity to do journalism. Even another topic could be news

consumption itself, especially as the student journalists at Canton-Galva High School largely reported not paying attention to the news.

Recommendations

For students and advisers to succeed, three key takeaways from this research should be considered, all of which build upon each other. First and foremost, advisers need to either have knowledge about journalism or have access to such knowledge. As was highlighted previously, the state and national journalism education organizations — Kansas Scholastic Press Association and Journalism Education Association — provide a myriad of resources. These range from lesson plans and teaching materials to simple networking and mentorships with more experienced scholastic media advisers. Even advisers not teaching in Kansas can connect with their own state association, and this can benefit the advisers by providing them a community with which to engage and learn from. A question about a technical issue such as how to use design or photo editing software can be answer by reaching out to fellow members of the organization. Likewise, a more philosophical question such as how to cover the death of a student can also be addressed by tapping into the hive mind of the association. The key, of course, is that the advisers need to be supported in joining such organizations. Administrators need to be willing to fund memberships and costs associated with attendance at conferences.

Second, students need to be explicitly taught the foundations of journalism. They need to understand the process of a production cycle, but they also need to know how to report. They need to be exposed to law and ethics as part of their education as well. This is important for student success. They need to be well-rounded journalists. In looking at the current industry, Ferrucci (2017) found new journalists entering the industry, though

they can use technology well, lack the basics of writing and critical thinking. Students need to be exposed to such skills. As digital natives, less focus should be put on the mechanics of using technological tools. This is easier said than done in the current structures of academia. “Finding the right balance between the basics and new technologies remains elusive” (Ferrucci, 2017, p. 4). Even so, the focus should be on how to write and think about what constitutes news, as well as how to find information they need. Of course, the technology needs to be woven into the instruction, but the technology should be used as a vehicle for the writing and thinking education instead of being the point of emphasis of the education as often happens. Ferrucci (2017) suggested schools “should be teaching the ‘essence of technology’ more than technology [. . . and] should prepare students to work in all media, whether it be print, broadcast, audio or, especially, web, and help them understand the similarities and differences between the media” (p. 6).

Third, in terms of writing and critical thinking, students need to be exposed to quality journalism. By consuming professional media, students can begin to pick up on some of these skills. If they frequently see good leads, for example, they can begin to replicate such styles. Likewise, seeing how professional outlets determined newsworthiness of a given subject, they can make similar determinations for their own publications. Only looking at previous publications produced by other students, though valuable in gaining understanding of what has come before and how others have handled a given situation, misses the opportunity to learn from professionals. Another byproduct of using professional media as a teaching tool is increased media literacy. Students will come away from a professional product with a greater understanding of how to be a

savvy media consumer and separate the chaff from the wheat. This is crucial in a media landscape where choice reigns supreme via various websites and social media platforms. Of course, the same ability to isolate one's self online also provides the avenues to cheaply use professional media in the classroom. Every major media outlet has a website, and at least some of the content can be accessed for free.

These three areas where improvements can be made are obviously not all inclusive. However, focusing on them can improve a scholastic journalism program. "A focus should be placed on the timeless skills necessary for becoming a successful journalist" (Ferrucci, 2017, p. 9). Beyond the day-to-day impacts, it will also allow the students to engage more fully academically, socially, and civically. This will occur by providing them the tools necessary to be a productive member of a democracy. Even if the students do not end up pursuing a career in journalism, the tenants of understanding journalism will serve them well as they attempt to make sense of the world around them.

Final Thought

With the changing journalism landscape, continued research in the area of scholastic journalism will continue to be important. High school journalists will become the professional journalists covering impactful stories, and they will also be the consumers of the news. It behooves the journalism world to pay attention to what is taking place in scholastic journalism programs. The field is ripe for investigation. This is especially true as a lot of research in journalism does not focus on this particular segment of the industry.

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Appendices

Appendix One

List of Questions for Students

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your current grade level?
4. How many years have you been on the journalism staff?
5. What other activities are you involved in?
6. Do you consume the news?
7. Do any of your family members consume the news?
8. Do you read a newspaper, watch television, listens to the radio, visit news websites, or rely on social media to learn the news of the day?
9. Do you use social media?
10. How do you use social media?
11. What enticed you to be a part of the journalism staff?
12. What role does the yearbook/magazine have in the school? Do people trust it and look to it to become informed?
13. With “fake news” being a topic of public conversation, have you encountered any negativity regarding your work as a journalist in which you have been accused of producing fake news or questioned about the validity of your reporting? If so, please explain.
14. Do you use social media to connect with the readers, promote your work, or gather leads about news stories?
15. How has being on staff affected your grades in other classes?
16. What is the role of journalism in society?

17. What rights and responsibilities do you have as a student journalist?
18. How do you exercise those rights as a member of the journalism staff?
19. Do you do volunteer work outside of the school? Why or why not?
20. How do you engage with the community?
21. Do you volunteer with any local organizations?
22. How do you spend your free time?
23. Do you feel the journalism program is structured in a way that provides you with knowledge of how journalism works and functions in society?
24. What areas of journalism would you like to learn more about that are not covered in the journalism classes?
25. How does participation in the journalism program affect your intent to go to college?
26. Does it make you want to study journalism in college?
27. How would you describe the journalism adviser?
28. Do you feel as though you have a different relationship with the journalism adviser when compared to the relationships you might have with other teachers?
29. Do you follow politics? Why or why not?
30. Do any of your family members follow politics?
31. How do you participate in politics?
32. Has the amount of time you spend paying attention to politics changed since becoming a part of the journalism staff?
33. Have your perceptions of politics changes since becoming a part of the journalism staff?
34. How does producing journalism affect your perception of the world you live?

Appendix Two

List of Questions for Advisers

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What classes do you teach?
4. How many years have you been a journalism teacher?
5. What other job duties do you have?
6. Do you consume the news?
7. Do you use the news and current events in your classroom as educational materials?
If so, how?
8. How do you teach students to consume news and determine if a news source is reliable?
9. How much of a focus on media literacy does your curriculum have?
10. How do you teach media literacy in any form?
11. Do you read a newspaper, watch television, listens to the radio, visit news websites, or rely on social media to learn the news of the day?
12. Do you use social media?
13. 13. How do you use social media?
14. 14. What drew you to teaching journalism?
15. What role does the yearbook/magazine have in the school? Do people trust it and look to it to become informed?
16. With “fake news” being a topic of public conversation, have you encountered any negativity regarding the work of the student journalists in which they have been

accused of producing fake news or questioned about the validity of their reporting? If so, please explain.

17. Do your students use social media to connect with the readers, promote their work, or gather leads about news stories?
18. What is the role of journalism in society?
19. What rights and responsibilities do your students have as a student journalist?
20. How do you teach the students the right and responsibilities they have?
21. How do you support the students in exercising the rights they have as a member of the journalism staff?
22. Do you do volunteer work outside of the school? Why or why not?
23. How do you engage with the community?
24. Do you volunteer with any local organizations?
25. How do you spend your free time?
26. Do you feel the journalism program is structured in a way that provides students with knowledge of how journalism works and functions in society?
27. What areas of journalism would you like to learn more about that you have not received training in?
28. How would you describe the journalism staff?
29. Do you feel as though you have a different relationship with the students as the journalism adviser when compared to the relationships other teachers might have their students?
30. Do you follow politics? Why or why not?
31. How do you participate in politics?

32. Has the amount of time you spend paying attention to politics changed since becoming a journalism adviser?
33. Have your perceptions of politics changes since becoming a journalism adviser?
34. How does advising the production of journalism affect your perception of the world you live?