

CONCEPT MAPPING IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
FOR UNIVERSITY-BASED ENGAGEMENT
WITH RURAL SCHOLASTIC JOURNALISM PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By

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August 14, 2024

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Dedication

To my husband and my parents, three champions of education.

Acknowledgments

With special thanks to committee chair Dr. Tom Ward, for guidance throughout this study, and to committee members Dr. Peggie Constantino and Dean Rob Knoepfel, for encouragement in this program. On the dedication page of the history of North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, I wrote, “To the students. May we always hear, heed and allow their voices.” In service to those voices, I remain indebted to the scholastic journalism community—especially the teachers, the mentors, and the scholastic press association directors who participated in this study.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	2
Statement of the Action Research Problem	4
Evidence Supporting the Existence of the Problem	6
Probable Causes Related to the Problem.....	7
Context of the Action Research Problem.....	7
Information Related to the Organization.....	8
Information Related to the Intended Stakeholders	9
Conceptual Framework for the Study	9
Action Research Model.....	10
Brief Description of the Action Research Process	11
Action Research Questions	13
Definitions of Terms	13
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature.....	16
University-Based Outreach and Engagement	17
Public Service and Professional Schools	17
Emergence of High School Journalism and Scholastic Press Associations	19
North Carolina Scholastic Media Association	21
Outreach vs. Engagement	22
Horizontal History of University Engagement	25
Horizontal History of Scholastic Journalism	27
Scholastic Journalism as Academic Pursuit	29
Journalism Civic Self-Efficacy.....	32

Rurality and Rural Schools	35
Community of Practice Theory and Frame	37
Framing in Three Segments	41
Knowledge Flow Theory.....	43
Concept Mapping	44
Summary	48
Chapter 3: Methods	49
Action Research Questions	49
Action Research Approach.....	50
Description of the Action Research Approach.....	50
Role of the Researcher	52
Participants	53
Data Sources.....	54
Community of Practice Meeting Documentation.....	54
Field Notes Journal	55
Semi-Structured Interviews	56
Concept Mapping	58
Data Collection.....	60
Data Analysis	63
Action Research Question 1	63
Action Research Question 2	63
Action Research Question 3	64
Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions	66

Delimitations	66
Limitations	67
Assumptions	67
Ethical Considerations.....	68
Chapter 4: Findings	69
Community of Practice Structure.....	70
Data Analysis	75
Coding	75
Concept Mapping	77
Action Research Question 1	78
Barriers.....	79
Facilitators.....	82
Action Research Question 2.....	84
Barriers.....	85
Facilitators.....	88
Action Research Question 3.....	90
Cluster Rating Map	95
Pattern Matching Subgroup Comparisons.....	96
Go-Zone Direction Toward Action.....	99
Summary of Findings	102
Chapter 5: Recommendations	103
Summary of Major Findings	104
Action Research Question 1	105

Obligations, Expectations, and Logistics	105
Teacher and Community Networks	106
Action Research Question 2	106
An Economic and Media Divide	107
Teacher and Family	107
Action Research Question 3	108
Discussion of Findings	109
Understanding Engagement Partners and Communities	109
Understanding Engagement Resources and Communication	111
Community of Practice Frame	112
Misalignment with Literature	114
Implications for Policy or Practice	115
Recommendation 1	116
Recommendation 2	117
Recommendation 3	118
Recommendation 4	119
Recommendations for Future Research	119
Brainstorming Data Analysis	119
Needs Analysis of Scholastic Press Associations	120
Textual Analysis of Student Media	120
School Finance Equity Framework for Co-Curricular Programs	121
Summary	121
References	123

Appendices	138
Appendix A: Logic Model	138
Appendix B: Kellogg Commission Seven-Part Test Defining Engaged Institution	139
Appendix C: Participant Informed Consent Form	142
Appendix D: Field Notes Journal Outline.....	143
Appendix E: Interview Protocol	144
Appendix F: Codebook	147
Appendix G: Brainstorming Statement Sets	148
Vita	151

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Semi-Structured Interview Questions as Related to Research Questions</i>	57
Table 2. <i>Action Research Questions, Data Sources, and Data Analysis</i>	66
Table 3. <i>Participant Assessment of Community of Practice Meetings by Subgroup</i>	74
Table 4. <i>Emergent Codes and Codebook Descriptions</i>	76
Table 5. <i>A Priori and Emergent Code Counts</i>	77
Table 6. <i>Emerging Themes and Frequency</i> <i>Within Educator Subgroup for Research Question 1</i>	79
Table 7. <i>Emerging Themes and Frequency</i> <i>Within Director/Mentor Subgroups for Research Question 2</i>	85
Table 8. <i>Cluster Map Legend with Names, Numbers,</i> <i>Descriptions, and Sample Statements</i>	95
Table 9. <i>Go-Zone Statements as Action Items</i>	101
Table 10. <i>A Priori and Emergent Codes</i>	114
Table 11. <i>Recommendations Based on Study Findings</i>	116

List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Action Research Interacting Spiral</i>	11
Figure 2. <i>Community of Practice Frame as Literature Review Structure</i>	42
Figure 3. <i>Group Concept Mapping Process</i>	61
Figure 4. <i>Point Map</i>	92
Figure 5. <i>Cluster Map</i>	94
Figure 6. <i>Cluster Rating Map</i>	96
Figure 7. <i>Pattern Match on Importance Rating of Clusters by Subgroup</i>	97
Figure 8. <i>Pattern Match on Current Presence Rating of Clusters by Subgroup</i>	98
Figure 9. <i>Go-Zone Map</i>	100

Abstract

Scholastic journalism has been a part of university-based outreach and engagement for more than a century, with higher education institutions hosting scholastic press association workshops and contests for high school journalists who produce yearbooks, newspapers, magazines, and broadcasts. Research indicates academic advantages and civic self-efficacy associated with high school journalism and the disproportionate number of suburban high school students with access to those advantages. This mixed-methods action research study employed a community of practice (CoP) frame to investigate university-based engagement with rural high school journalism programs. The CoP was comprised of rural high school journalism teachers, high school journalism mentors, and university-based scholastic press association directors. A rural scholastic journalism needs analysis revealed the pivotal role of the journalism teacher and a unique regard and disregard for journalism in the rural community. The CoP engaged in concept mapping, using interactive brainstorming software to illustrate the study's findings in the form of concept maps, visual displays of data showing consensus around securing funding to launch, support, and sustain rural high school journalism programs and working with leaders in rural school districts to communicate its value. Recommendations suggest seeking a communication plan, asset maps, and engagement capacity to inform and determine next steps in the action research cycle, acknowledging divergent views between current scholastic press directors and current and former educators in this study's CoP.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A high school newspaper, yearbook, broadcast, or magazine represents more than an artifact from an academic year. These scholastic journalism outlets showcase student voice, and they allow a forum for student expression. High school journalism classes and scholastic media programs provide educational opportunities through course credits and through extracurricular impact. These programs make a difference in the academic pursuits of students who produce them and in the civics lessons gained in the school communities where they are supported. These journalism courses and student media outlets are not available in all high schools, however, and those that do exist, are not equally resourced or supported (Becker et al., 2014; Bobkowski et al., 2017; Clark & Marchi, 2017; Goodman et al., 2011).

When ERIC Clearinghouse published *Journalism Kids Do Better: What Research Tells us About High School Journalism* (Dvorak et al., 1994), most of the book's chapters were devoted to the aftermath of the landmark Supreme Court ruling, *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (484 U.S. 260, 1988), and its impact on those student expression outlets. High school journalism in 1994 was still reeling from the sea change of that 1988 decision and fears of eroding free press protections that high school journalists had enjoyed since the Vietnam War era. The opening chapters of the *Journalism Kids* book, however, focused on the book's subtitle, presenting Journalism Education Association and American College Testing data revealing academic comparisons between those students who had participated in high school journalism or worked on a high school yearbook, radio, television, or newspaper staff and those students who had not. Relationships between participation in high school journalism and academic

performance measures revealed that these “journalism kids” scored higher on ACT standardized college-entrance exams and Advanced Placement language and composition exams, exhibited better writing skills in comparisons of collegiate writing, had higher high school grade point averages, performed better in first-year college English classes, and were more involved in co-curricular school activities (Dvorak et al., 1994):

Based on this solid statistical evidence, we can say that Journalism classes and staff work on high school newspapers and yearbooks are definitive educational experiences in students’ secondary-school careers that not only carry over into higher education and future life but also make the difference for distinction and success while in high school itself. (p. 49)

Research has continued to reflect this “difference for distinction” (Dvorak et al., 1994, p. 49) for students engaged in scholastic journalism, but it also reveals what is lost when disproportionate numbers of suburban schools have the access to those advantages (Bobkowski et al., 2017; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Goodman et al., 2011; Plopper & Conaway, 2013).

More than 2 decades after Dvorak et al. (1994) published *Journalism Kids Do Better* showcasing the academic power of participation in scholastic journalism, Bobkowski et al. (2017) explored whether today’s “journalism kids” do better because of high school journalism or because high school journalism attracts better students. Educational longitudinal study data revealed that scholastic journalism students do, indeed, exhibit greater English self-efficacy, more school-activity involvement, and higher English grade point averages. Further examination of the data revealed that these “journalism kids” who take more journalism classes than their counterparts score higher in English on standardized tests and, if pursuing journalism or related fields in college, score higher in college English classes (Bobkowski & Cavanah, 2019). This

same longitudinal data also yielded civic engagement profiles of students who have taken high school journalism classes. These students are more likely to vote, and underprivileged high school journalists were shown to vote and to volunteer more than peers who had not participated in journalism (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Survey results from high school journalism programs in two metropolitan areas revealed that journalism students display a journalism civic self-efficacy, or a confidence in applying their journalistic skills to community awareness, as well as a link to future political participation (Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Clark & Marchi, 2017; Marchi, 2011).

These academic and civic engagement advantages available to high school journalism students are not available to all students, however. Only 18% of students in Grades 10 through 12 participate in some form of scholastic journalism (Bobkowski et al., 2017). Only 11% of students in Grades 11 and 12 enroll in journalism classes (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Journalism programs are disproportionately populated with White, affluent, female students, and these journalism classes are found predominantly in better-resourced suburban schools (Bobkowski et al., 2017; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Goodman et al., 2011). Yet research shows students in urban and rural schools could directly benefit from journalism's link to community engagement (Marchi, 2011). This action research study focuses on scholastic journalism in rural schools, seeking to construct knowledge and awareness around the facilitators and barriers to scholastic journalism in those school communities and to apply that knowledge and awareness to inform more inclusive university-based engagement with scholastic journalism.

Statement of the Action Research Problem

University-based outreach and engagement services in the scholastic journalism community include a web of university-based state, regional, and national scholastic press

associations and other services that have existed for more than a century. These scholastic press associations, traditionally based in journalism or communication schools, have historically had ties to their respective universities' schools of education, with coordinated curriculum for what was once a more prevalent high school teacher licensure option in journalism education, replaced by the now more common secondary language arts licensure area, sometimes including journalism coursework through the university's journalism/communication/media department or school (Dickson, 2001; Freedom Forum, 1994). University faculty and staff in these journalism schools have served as scholastic press association directors, providing organizational leadership to the scholastic journalism outreach agency within their academic unit. These higher education faculty and staff have produced scholastic journalism research, often presented in the Scholastic Journalism Division meetings of the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Accreditation standards developed by the accrediting body for journalism and media programs includes one standard specifically referencing scholastic journalism outreach. (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, 2023; Dickson, 2001; Hussman School of Media and Journalism, 2020).

Scholastic journalism's ties to K-12 schools and its foundational base on higher education campuses reflects the intentionality of how higher education outreach and engagement can be envisioned. Norris and Martin (2021) asserted that higher education institutions are well-positioned to assist public school districts facing funding and performance challenges. They provide a collaborative community, school, and university frame for a university pipeline outreach program using community engagement competencies. Moskal and Skokan (2011) explored an obligation of universities to support K-12 schools, amidst tenure and promotion

tensions that may not recognize K-12 outreach while major grantors, such as the National Science Foundation, solicit impact statements reflecting such outreach.

Teaching, research, and service set forth the three fundamental missions of higher education, and scholastic journalism associations embody service, traditionally referred to as “the third mission” of higher education. Extending scholastic journalism resources in service to the larger community and ensuring equitable access to those resources is paramount in meeting the mission of service for the field of journalism education (Freedom Forum, 1994; National Scholastic Press Association, n.d.; J. Nelson, 1974). University-based engagement efforts that focus on the field of scholastic journalism, however, contribute to systemic inequities if they do not intentionally acknowledge and address inequalities, such as those within the K-12 community regarding scholastic journalism’s presence in rural schools.

Evidence Supporting the Existence of the Problem

When the Center for Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University released its 2011 national census of scholastic journalism education programs and student media outlets, the report touted, “Student media presence remains strong in American public high schools” (Goodman et al., 2011, p.1). The first subheading, however, in smaller type, quietly confessed, “Poor and minority students more likely to be left out” (Goodman et al., 2011, p. 1). The report revealed that smaller schools, poorer schools, and large minority population schools are more likely to have no student media outlets, such as yearbooks, newspapers, news sites, magazines, and broadcasts. Lack of funding, teacher training, and administrative support in smaller, rural schools is also cited regarding use of scholastic journalism technology (Goodman et al., 2011; Plopper & Conaway, 2013).

Probable Causes Related to the Problem

Scholastic journalism outreach efforts have existed for more than a century through higher education-based scholastic press associations focused on recognizing achievement in student expression and on coordinating instructional services through conferences and conventions. (Journalism Education Association, 1987; Vogts, 2023) Scholastic journalism's K-12 educators and high school student media advisers who serve in leadership or mentorship roles within these university-based associations have traditionally been asked to focus on supporting contests, conferences, and conventions. They and their colleagues who teach journalism in rural schools had not been asked to participate as expert collaborators in examining higher education issues of equity and access, and they had not been asked to lend their expertise in sharing perceptions of scholastic journalism outreach. Instituting a community of practice (CoP) with these educators, along with scholastic journalism teacher mentors and scholastic journalism association directors on university campuses, allowed a research platform for these teachers' perceptions of scholastic journalism, of rural schools, and of university-based outreach and engagement.

Context of the Action Research Problem

The North Carolina Scholastic Media Association (NCSMA) represents eight geographic regions of the state, spanning mountains to coast. The high school journalism teachers and student media advisers on the association's leadership board advise student newspaper, yearbook, online news, news magazine, podcast, literary magazine, and broadcast outlets. NCSMA is based in the School of Journalism and Media at the state's flagship university, as are other states' scholastic journalism outreach organizations.

While North Carolina is regarded as a state of growth and opportunity with a tech sector centralized in its Research Triangle and tourism stretching from mountains to coast, it is also a state of small towns and farmlands and river basins. North Carolina has the nation's second largest rural population and second largest rural school district population, second only to Texas. The 2020 Census revealed that the percentage concentration of the state's population in rural areas exceeds that of Texas (Cline, 2023). North Carolina also ranks among the top 10 states with rural education concerns, needs, and deficiencies. The National Rural Education Association in its report, *Why Rural Matters 2023: Centering Equity and Opportunity*, gave a stark view of the lived experience of rural North Carolina schoolchildren:

Compared to their rural peers in other states, these students are much more likely to live in a household with an income below the federal poverty line, attend a racially diverse school in a poorer community, and move residences often. Schools and districts are large, instructional spending on students is low, and the state is one of the few places where rural students graduate high school at a lower rate than their non-rural peers. (Showalter et al., 2023)

Information Related to the Organization

Portions of the North Carolina Scholastic Media Association's (n.d.) mission statement define it as "a statewide organization that promotes excellence in scholastic journalism and encourages respect for freedom of the press" (para. 1). The mission further explains the association's connection to the state, explaining that it "promotes professional growth of journalism advisers" (para. 2). NCSMA is housed in the School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill), a Research I institution of 31,641 students. Public service to the state is not merely a goal at UNC-Chapel Hill. It is

embedded in state policy, a policy requiring that 82% of undergraduate students admitted to the university must be residents of the state (Hussman School of Media and Journalism, 2019, 2020; University of North Carolina Board of Governors, 2023). Regarding the unit's connection to engagement, UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Journalism and Media's most recent accreditation report included a section on outreach, with specific emphasis on efforts in serving scholastic journalism.

Information Related to the Intended Stakeholders

NCSMA-based teacher mentors who engaged in this action research study participated voluntarily in the CoP examining how the organization they serve can better serve others. Findings will be shared with the association's advisory and student leadership boards. The School of Journalism and Media's dean and dean's leadership group will be apprised of findings, along with scholastic journalism directors in a network of state, regional and national associations. Findings regarding inclusion and equity in university-based initiatives will be of special significance to these leaders.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The design of this action research study was guided by a CoP frame, aligning with the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism allows for the creation of meaning, and social constructivism makes that creation of meaning an exercise in interaction with others and negotiated outcomes. The inductive approach in social constructivism translates to research based in a community, meaning constructed in a community, and a researcher positioned in that community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertler, 2017; Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021). This CoP frame and its basis in social learning theory posits that engagement invites meaning and that learned behavior results from social interaction. The social learning systems approach places

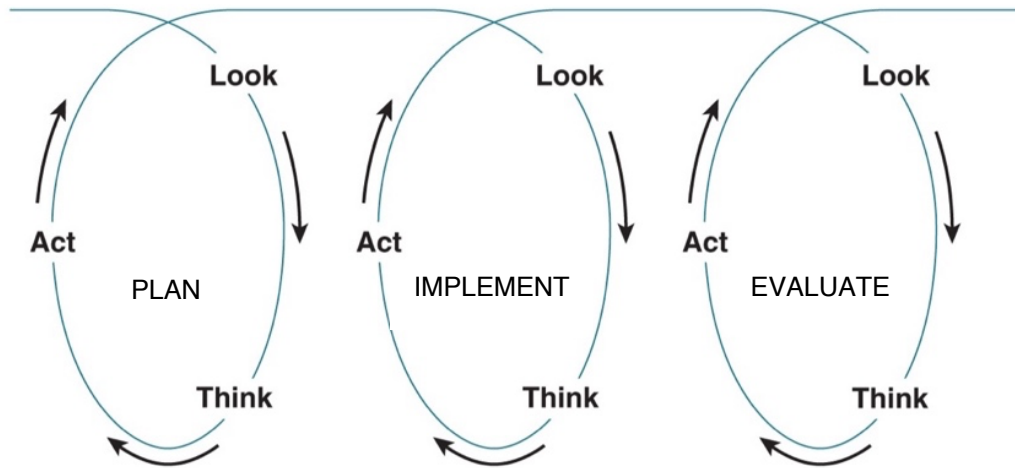
learning into the context of the community being studied, and it allows those who share that community and those who know that community to contribute to the examination of that community (Bandura, 1977; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2010). The CoP frame was further informed by knowledge flow theory (Havelock, 1969; Weerts, 2005) and its application to university and community partnerships, “emphasizing the breaking down of social and cultural barriers between organizations, building organizational capacity to facilitate engagement, and identifying motivators for engagement” (Weerts, 2005, p. 33).

Action Research Model

Stringer and Ortiz Aragón’s (2021) action research model best reflects the ongoing intent of this action research study. The model’s planning, implementation, and evaluation cycles allow for a visual representation in Figure 1 of the Cycle 1 planning approach to the scholastic journalism CoP study as it leads intentionally into Cycle 2 armed with the knowledge and perspective gained through Cycle 1 processes examining inclusion and engagement.

Figure 1

Action Research Interacting Spiral



Note. This study is situated within the first cycle, or spiral. The interacting spiral is from *Action Research* (p. 10), by E. T. Stringer & A. Ortiz Aragón, 2021, SAGE.

Brief Description of the Action Research Process

To seek more inclusive university-based outreach in rural schools, this study implemented an action research approach to yield a better understanding of the state of scholastic journalism in rural schools and how university engagement in scholastic journalism might respond to that better understanding. A collaborative CoP was formed with high school journalism educators and high school journalism mentors, along with university-based scholastic journalism outreach directors. This CoP named and defined problems of practice related to scholastic journalism in rural schools and university-based engagement with those schools, and, through a series of Cycle 1 meetings, prepared to launch a Cycle 2 approach determining subsequent actions to ensure more inclusive university-based outreach.

The Cycle 1 meetings introduced the three distinct groups in the CoP and launched the CoP's exploration of the topic, encouraging interaction around the current state of university engagement with rural schools and current data on needs assessments related to journalism in

rural schools and university engagement with them. Semi-structured interviews with each CoP member took place during this cycle. Meetings within the preliminary stages of Cycle 2 then focused on the study's methodology of concept mapping, a process that generated visual representations of CoP-generated data, arranging CoP brainstorming responses into concept maps showcasing relationships among and divergence of the CoP-generated responses to a focused prompt. The brainstorming prompt engaged CoP members in generating knowledge related to action steps that should emerge from the Cycle 1 exploration of the problem of practice. This concept mapping process yielded point maps and cluster maps reflecting the relationships among CoP member contributions in defining how best to address the problem of practice (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

This concept mapping methodology allowed for the diversity of stakeholders in this CoP to respond individually and collectively in a manner that generated multiple responses to the Cycle 2 focus prompt question. This avoided encouraging a single, consolidated group response that could have silenced some of the more introverted or less experienced CoP participants in a focus group setting, for example. The concept mapping ensured that this unique CoP with three constituencies could maintain and retain individual agency and voice. CoP participants each gave multiple responses in an online format to a single short prompt related to university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs. After the group's multiple responses had been collated and redundancies removed, CoP participants then engaged with the concept mapping online software and sorted and rated all remaining group responses. Emerging themes were generated as CoP members sorted the data and named their groupings of the data. These emerging themes were then represented visually through cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling using proprietary software that generated concept maps in various colors and shapes that

visually showcase the CoP's resulting hierarchical and relational analysis of the group's own data (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Action Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study reflect the intent of a Cycle 1 into Cycle 2 action research approach, concentrating on the construction of knowledge centered around scholastic journalism in rural schools and access to university-based engagement (see Appendix A). The questions also reflect the diverse perspectives of participants who contributed to this CoP.

1. How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?
2. After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism educators in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association directors and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?
3. What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?

Definitions of Terms

Adviser – one who advises a school-based student publication or student media outlet, such as newspaper, news site, yearbook, magazine, podcast, or broadcast

Barriers - impediments to participation and engagement

Community of practice (CoP) – a group of participants with a “shared domain of interest”

(Wenger-Traynor & Wenger-Traynor, 2015, para. 4) who meet regularly to advance their common interest or area of concern

Concept mapping – an approach to data collection and synthesis that maps and visually represents relationships among participants’ contributions

Engagement – a connection or link between university and community

Facilitators – factors that enhance participation and engagement

Inclusive – not preventing the participation or engagement of individuals or groups

Isolation – separated from participation or engagement

Outreach – intentional efforts to link university resources to the community outside of the university

Mentor – former journalism teacher or student publication adviser who shares expertise with colleagues new to the field, their mentees

Rural – not part of a metropolitan area; defined by National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) as “Census-defined rural territory”

Rurality – of or referring to a rural area and the lived experience within that rural area

Scholastic journalism – high school journalism or K-12 journalism education, whether that be for-credit coursework or extracurricular coursework, or any form of student expression through production of school-affiliated media, such as newspapers, news sites, news magazines, yearbooks, magazines, broadcasts, radio, and podcasts

Scholastic journalism association – an outreach organization, usually based on a university campus, that seeks to engage with high school journalism classes, teachers, students, student media advisers, and student media programs in order to advance journalism education and student expression

Scholastic journalism association director – director of a nonprofit scholastic journalism association, usually based on a university campus

Student media – refers to any area of published student expression, including yearbooks, newspapers, broadcasts, podcasts, radio, and magazines

Student publication – student-produced outlet for expression and news, such as newspaper, yearbook, and magazine

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

An examination of existing literature positions scholastic journalism as a K-12 academic pursuit in relationship with higher education's outreach and engagement infrastructure and ideals. This literature review sets forth that relationship in five parts. First, the historic context of university outreach and engagement is explored, delineating the definitions of outreach vs. engagement and revealing timeline alignment in the development of university outreach and engagement alongside the emergence of outreach and engagement specific to the field of scholastic journalism. Next, the academic value and advantage of scholastic journalism is examined while situating scholastic journalism within its own history of student expression. The third section places scholastic journalism and university engagement within the specific context of the rural community, exploring rurality as a research concept. This three-part synthesis of engagement scholarship and the literature of rurality and scholastic journalism informs the structure of this action research study and the study's research questions driving data collection and analysis. The fourth section of the literature review defines community of practice (CoP), employed in this study as a collaborative frame further examined in the literature through the situated learning theory associated with it and the knowledge flow theory associated with university and community engagement. These two foundational theories undergird the CoP conceptual framework that consolidates this study's problem of practice regarding university engagement with rural scholastic journalism. The resulting platforms of relevant literature are organized by the Lave and Wenger (1991) CoP elements of community, domain, and practice.

The fifth and final section of the literature review explores the concept mapping methodology to be employed within the study's CoP to collect and synthesize knowledge created and shared by the CoP.

University-Based Outreach and Engagement

The history of higher education outreach and engagement aligns with the emergence of scholastic journalism associations on higher education campuses and, more specifically, on flagship campuses in Southeastern states. A timeline of American higher education places the development of higher education's connection to public service within the University Transformation Era, a period between 1870 and 1944. The 1862 Morrill Act had established land-grant campuses through federal legislation and policy meant to expand the number of and the access to state colleges and advanced instruction. That advanced instruction, with an agricultural and mechanical focus in degree programs such as engineering, mining, and military instruction, began to extend the perception of higher education's role in American society beyond the more traditional studies of religion, history, and languages (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Thelin, 2019). The new professional fields of study, notably agriculture, provided a direct link to the public's lived experience and livelihoods. These land-grant campuses, especially those in the Southern states, set the stage for university leaders of flagship campuses between 1880 and 1920 to move beyond secluded privilege, to see value in public service. "They shared a vision that economic development and public service offered a way to build statewide educational systems" (Thelin, 2019, p. 141).

Public Service and Professional Schools

During this University Transformation Era, the number of colleges increased fivefold. The Industrial Revolution created the need for specializations in the sciences and beyond, and

those needs became degree programs. Graduate programs were created, and doctoral degrees were first awarded. An emphasis on original research emerged. Professional schools in areas such as education and architecture, which had once been independent bodies, became a part of college campuses. Those professional schools tied the campuses to regional economic development efforts. Those professional schools also established their respective professional organizations and associations on college campuses. The ties between higher education and the larger public were cemented during this era of transformation, and a mission of outward-facing service resulted. The concept of the university—with its three missions of teaching, research, and service—emerged (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Thelin, 2019).

The years between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II, the Interwar Years, were formative ones for that service mission of the university at large, parallel to the growth of professional schools. “Occupational groups striving to professionalize themselves” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 113) responded to this new emphasis on university-based study, and they formed organizations and associations on those university campuses, associations that tied these new professional schools and their research to the actual work being done in their respective fields. Associations affiliated with medicine, law, and theology—the original hallowed professions—were now joined by associations in fields such as forestry, engineering, pharmacology, business, and journalism. The growth of business and journalism schools in those Interwar Years occurred as university enrollment nationally more than quintupled. The enrollment explosion drew attention to the public high schools feeding the expanded university structure. University leaders sought articulation agreements focused on influencing the high school curriculum with a college preparatory focus. A tenuous and sometimes contentious

relationship resulted from the interference, but an intense interest in the public secondary school system was cemented (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Hrabowski & Weidemann, 2004; Thelin, 2019).

“Faculty professionalization” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 140), arising from the growth of professional associations developing their own peer review for research and their own standards for the various disciplines, resulted as faculty became part of national networks in their respective fields and as faculty rank with tenure and promotion structures formed. “As the faculty became more professionalized, they added public service to their responsibilities” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 142). The faculty’s public service component encompassed both a desire to educate those outside of the university, as well as a desire to have “a voice in affairs in the broader society” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 142).

College life became a focus of popular culture in these Interwar Years, with media coverage and advertising images of saddle oxfords, mascots, and pennants reflecting a public fascination with college culture. On the campuses themselves, “this was the golden age of student journalism and student writing. The campus newspaper, edited and published by student associations, came into its own” (Thelin, 2019, p. 218). Yearbooks and humor magazines accompanied the news outlets, capturing the history of the campuses and providing a formative outlet for future writers.

Emergence of High School Journalism and Scholastic Press Associations

In secondary schools, these Interwar Years were formative ones for student expression and student journalism. The first high school journalism class had been taught in 1912 in Salina, Kansas. More than a century of high school publications had existed by then, with the first high school news sheet at William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia in 1777 (Campbell, 1963; Hines, 1984). As professional associations on college campuses were emerging, those same

campuses were establishing and hosting outreach organizations linking the campuses to the community at large. As schools of journalism were emerging on university campuses, so too were university-based high school/scholastic/precollegiate press associations. These school press associations were formed to organize contests recognizing high school journalism students' work and to schedule events and programming to offer university-based instruction to the secondary school teachers and students (Gilmore, 1983; Hines, 1984; Konkle, 2013). "Every state has a high-school press association," touted the Teacher's Guide for the *Inside High School Journalism* textbook (Gilmore, 1983, p. 17). The author, on faculty at the University of Illinois, was also director of the Illinois High School Press Association. The textbook provided guidance on regional and national organizations, as well as a description of services offered, such as summer workshops, instructional support, student publication rating services, state conventions, and newsletters. "Every publication should belong to at least one of these organizations," the Teacher's Guide continued (Gilmore, 1983, p. 17).

State high school press associations began to multiply on flagship campuses across the country. The Montana Interscholastic Editorial Association was perhaps the first in 1915, while the Oklahoma Interscholastic Press Association, established the next year, has been the most continuous. The 1920s saw the establishment of three national scholastic journalism associations that still exist and recently marked 100 years: National Scholastic Press Association now affiliated with University of Minnesota in 1921; Columbia Scholastic Press Association at Columbia University in 1924; and Journalism Education Association now at Kansas State University in 1924 (Hines, 1984; Konkle, 2013).

North Carolina Scholastic Media Association

“The North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, our state’s high school press association, began as outreach in its purest form—students helping students” (North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, 2016). The introduction to the print version of the organization’s history explained that the founders of high school journalism outreach in North Carolina were college students, and that the association’s roots extend back to 1936 when the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill)’s campus newspaper, *The Daily Tar Heel*, launched the North Carolina High School Press Institute. These student editors invited area high school editors to campus and recruited guest speakers to the Institute. The four *Daily Tar Heel* editors included Lacy Jane Hunter, one of the first women on the UNC-Chapel Hill student newspaper staff. She later enrolled in Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism. In 1941, the Institute launched by the college editors became the North Carolina Scholastic Press Association and moved into the Journalism Department. Professor Walter Spearman became director of the association for the next 31 years. Spearman, referred to as the “Mr. Chips of Chapel Hill,” was adviser to numerous campus organizations, author of two books, and an alumnus of UNC-Chapel Hill. As director of the state’s high school press association, he continued to direct the annual Institute, a uniquely continuous event, even during World War II when many associations paused operations (Bowers, 2009; North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, 2016).

The association has remained in the Journalism Department and now, School of Journalism and Media. Faculty served as part-time directors of the association until 1994 when the dean at the time, Richard Cole, secured Department of Public Instruction assistance in hiring a full-time director. Graduate-level coursework was then added, aligning with a licensure

endorsement for K-12 teachers who completed the four-course sequence, offered during the summer and as online coursework. Today the association retains a full-time director, though the position is no longer associated with the state's Department of Public Instruction. Graduate-level coursework is now a funded summer fellowship program offered to up to 10 teachers each year. The annual Summer Institute is now accompanied by regional workshops on college campuses across the state each fall, Journalism Field Trip Days coordinated with college campuses in the spring, a statewide high school media contest, and an annual sports journalism camp. The association's events, services, and scholarships are open to any high school media program in the state, as well as schools that do not have student media such as newspapers, literary magazines, yearbooks, podcasts, broadcasts, or radio. The association is also home to the North Carolina Scholastic Media Advisers Association and the North Carolina College Media Association (Bowers, 2009; North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, 2016).

Outreach vs. Engagement

Robert M. Hutchins, president of University of Chicago and eventual president of Ford Foundation, in a 1936 treatise on the state of higher education excoriated any "service station conception of a university" (Hofstadter & Smith, 1961, p. 927). He decried any such connection between campus and community, and he warned of what sort of faculty would be engaged in such a connection, declaring they "may not be the kind that are interested either in developing education or in advancing knowledge" (Hofstadter & Smith, 1961, p. 927). In a 1937 retort and part of a multi-year conversation of sorts between these two, philosopher John Dewey urged that Hutchins take a more democratic view of higher education and its missions, a view less tethered to the past. Dewey called for Hutchins to adopt a more contemporary view of higher education's role: "We live in a different social medium" (Hofstadter & Smith, 1961, p. 953).

The tension inherent here and throughout the history of university engagement can be captured in one extensive critical discourse analysis of university leaders in private conversation with one another about the public good (Pasque, 2010). Pasque (2010) captured and deeply analyzed the exchanges of thought and action in small, invitation-only gatherings of think tanks, foundations, and university leaders, showing those whose voices are heard and those whose voices are not. She operated from a positionality seeking “conscientious community members in a diverse democracy” and “institutional mission” (p. 5). “The importance of sincere collaboration across community-university partnerships to address problems cannot be stressed enough” (Pasque, 2010, p. 5).

Complexities and tensions within engagement research are best viewed from a clear definition of what exactly engagement is. Byrne (1998) looked to organizational culture to define engagement, declaring outreach as a one-direction transfer of knowledge and engagement as a two-directional transfer of collaboration and mutual benefit between a university and constituents. Renwick et al. (2020) explored community engagement through focus group research framed with Boyer’s (1990) four scholarships of engagement: integration, discovery, application, and teaching. Weerts and Sandmann (2008) addressed a gap in engagement scholarship, the lack of conceptual models that help navigate a clear understanding of the shift from outreach to engagement. In their extensive work and resulting conceptual frameworks, they provide the most elaborate scaffolding of the scholarship, illustrating the many factors influencing and affecting engagement, as well as the many barriers. Impediments to engagement include faculty culture and structural barriers. Facilitators include strong interpersonal relationships with external partners, charismatic leadership, institutional culture, flexible governance, and trust (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Weerts and Sandmann (2008, 2010) also established the boundary spanning roles of university staff who today support much of higher education's service mission, albeit in a decentralized manner across all areas of a university (Harden & Loving, 2015). These boundary-spanners engage with university partners, those community members outside of the university. These relationships then inform the public perception of the engagement, now defined by relationships with outreach and engagement staff, not faculty (Harden & Loving, 2015; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). An emerging theory of boundary spanning defines this emerging university community of engagement professionals "who facilitate projects, programs, services, research, and relationships, with community partners, with a set of shared knowledge, skills and values and a professional identity distinct from that of tenure-track faculty members" (Harden & Loving, 2015, p. 10).

Relationships extend to university engagement with the K-12 community, with studies of programs "moving beyond limited and short-term community involvement and moving toward establishing lasting and deep collaborative partnerships aimed at addressing real-world problems" (Norris & Martin, 2021, p. 104). Three studies specific to such engagement emphasized following Campus Compact competencies that include communicating the relationships between the campus and K-12 community, connecting campus and K-12 assets, maintaining effective partnerships, and assessing and evaluating programmatic work (Maruyama et al., 2023; Moskal & Skokan, 2011; Norris & Martin, 2021). Emphasis is placed on valuing voice, especially of underrepresented K-12 students, who should be involved in the development of any engagement work (Maruyama et al., 2023).

Horizontal History of University Engagement

Thelin (2010) refers to the effect and influence of associations as important parts of the sometimes less visible “horizontal history” (p. 72) of higher education, defining that horizontal history through the network of organizations and associations that exist alongside as well as within college campuses. Thelin (2010) applied this horizontal history lens to explain a “more complete ecology of higher education” (p. 72), yielding a fuller view of higher education than a mere hierarchy or vertical organizational history. “The perspective of ‘horizontal history’ is attractive because it places colleges and universities into the context of the broad, distinctive nonprofit sector—a phenomenon well established in the United States that is virtually absent from other nations worldwide” (Thelin, 2010, p. 72).

Situated within that horizontal history of higher education is the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT). Brubacher and Rudy (1997) and Thelin (2010) pointed to the Carnegie Foundation as an example of a nonprofit of influence outside of academe, with voice in its evaluation and development. CFAT published or supported the publication of three works with particular stature regarding engagement scholarship, that scholarship that explores the service mission of the university. CAFT President Ernest L. Boyer is cited most prominently as the scholar who sparked the conversation on engagement scholarship with his 1990 publication, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Hrabowski & Weidemann, 2004).

A foundation of outreach and engagement literature can be traced to the series of monographs that spanned the 1990s, starting with Boyer’s (1990). These monographs proclaimed a diminishment of the university’s third mission, how that affected engagement with the world outside of the university, and the implications on faculty members’ academic careers.

They also set forth a plan for action to address the role of what was called outreach in 1990 and, over the course of the decade, became engagement.

In *Making the Case for Professional Service*, Lynton (1995) sought to restore service to a more prominent role in the university. He defines the cultural shift needed to do so and includes a Public Service Roundtable from the University of North Carolina, defining public service as “contribution to the public welfare or the common good” and “reliance on the professional or academic expertise of university faculty, staff or students” and “response to practical problems, issues, interests, or concerns of our society” (Lynton, 1995, p. 82). A recent synthesis of community-engaged scholarship and public engagement resulted in a call to define, document, and reward engagement, observing that anything else disincentivizes and, in effect, punishes faculty for engagement or service (Sdvizhkov et al., 2022).

Glassick et al. (1997) took a more nuanced approach with their monograph, *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate*. In this monograph, the authors use survey data to inform a more in-depth view of how faculty are evaluated and how that influences the capacity for university engagement work. Driscoll and Lynton (1999) followed with even more specificity and a call to action. *Making Outreach Visible: A Guide to Documenting Professional Service and Outreach* provides a step-by-step guide for administrators and departments, as well as faculty themselves. This make-the-case project is accompanied by 16 portfolios of engagement work (Driscoll & Lynton, 1999).

The Kellogg Commission (1999) closed this decade of engagement scholarship with a monograph that still today provides a framework for examining engagement (see Appendix B). Some 26 university presidents and chancellors participated as part of the Kellogg Commission that produced *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*. The monograph cemented the

distinction between a one-way mode of service called outreach and the preferred two-way collaborative model called engagement.

Engagement scholarship began as this series of monographs written by foundation leaders and today continues to have a bit of a cloistered existence, not widely distributed throughout education research. This literature review reveals a confinement to a small number of journals, namely two. This field of study presents an opportunity for scholars to examine the horizontal history of this area of research, and to integrate engagement scholarship into the broader context of higher education research. Another opportunity to address gaps in existing literature is to address the need for engagement research in college outreach programs, as noted in Cates and Schaeffle (2011). They point out the need for longitudinal studies in this area and for more improved evaluation and outcome studies of the outreach, specifically those that specify program components and their effects (Cates & Schaeffle, 2011).

Horizontal History of Scholastic Journalism

The horizontal history of scholastic journalism and its connection to and influence by a network of associations and foundations was on full display with the publication of *Captive Voices: High School Journalism in America* (J. Nelson, 1974). Pulitzer Prize winner Jack Nelson, long associated with Watergate coverage, wrote the text of the book that resulted from a series of hearings across the country, including the first one, in Charlotte, North Carolina on May 13, 1973, along with a series of teacher and student surveys and student publication content analyses. The Commission of Inquiry into High School Journalism published the 264-page paperback book that changed scholastic journalism. The first section of the book, "Censorship," is credited with affecting public opinion regarding student speech and leading to the establishment of the Student Press Law Center. The Commission and the book were sponsored

by the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation, established the year of the assassination, 1968, with a focus on journalism and human rights (J. Nelson, 1974; Student Press Law Center, n.d.).

Journalism education was another prominent section of the *Captive Voices* book, with a chapter on “Scholastic Journalism Organizations.” The Commission of Inquiry did not minimize what it deemed as an opportunity for scholastic journalism associations to do more in service to high school journalism. The Commission criticized the quality of the journalism in high school publications and the low emphasis placed on journalism in the nation’s schools, decried scholastic association contests as empty pursuits, and emphasized the exacerbated inequities and the poor state of journalism in schools with fewer resources. “In general, the Commission found that professional organizations of journalism educators have been slow to initiate change or support reform in the field of scholastic journalism” (J. Nelson, 1974, p. 112).

The Journalism Education Association (1987) responded to this charge in 1987 with the publication of *High School Journalism Confronts Critical Deadline*, published by the Journalism Education Association Commission on The Role of Journalism in Secondary Education. John Siegenthaler, president and publisher of Gannett’s The Tennessean newspaper and a previous member of the Kennedy Commission, endorsed the work of these high school journalism teachers and scholars. The publication explored more scholastic journalism association programs, and the report gave particular attention to the state of scholastic journalism with an empirical look at student journalism and student achievement. This reclaiming of voice by the scholastic journalism community continued through the 1990s and was even more apparent with the Freedom Forum’s (1994) publication of *Death by Cheeseburger: High School Journalism in the 1990s and Beyond*. The text included many North Carolina references and personalities, and

the title of the book emerged from the title of a piece of student satire related to the school lunchroom at Henderson, North Carolina's Vance Senior High.

Scholastic Journalism as Academic Pursuit

The Journalism Education Association (1987) published *Critical Deadline* in the *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) moment, seizing on the threat the field felt in discussions of rigor and change. A web of associations and foundations went into action, working to establish journalism as part of language arts credits and to recognize those credits as academic credits. A national certification program for journalism teachers resulted, and a shift toward an emphasis on academic research came next. Scholastic journalism association directors and educators saw the value in telling the story of scholastic journalism that resulted from longitudinal data and analysis. Scholastic journalism literature addressed the inherent pipeline through which some high school students engaged in news, information, design, photography, and advertising populate university journalism and media classrooms and, subsequently, newsrooms and communication agencies. This news-to-classroom-to-news pipeline is one of importance to university communication schools and to college media departments, as well as to the professional organizations focused on journalism education, as enrollment in some university journalism programs decreases (Becker et al., 2014; Crester-Hartenstein et al., 2024). Most studies, however, focus on the content and context of scholastic journalism.

A most recent textual analysis of high school newspapers and their coverage of controversy explained that scholastic journalism research is “steeped in legal, social, and pedagogical contexts” (Wilderman & Nasrin, 2024, p. 7). The legal context refers to student expression as influenced by landmark Supreme Court rulings and individual school district prior

restraint policies. The social and pedagogical contexts are those that inform the foundation of this study. Dvorak et al. (1994) responded to *Critical Deadline* with a seminal book, *Journalism Kids Do Better*, still referenced and regularly cited some 30 years later. The collection of studies examined job satisfaction of teachers, college entrance exam scores of journalism students, and census data on high school journalism. The foundation of the social and political contexts informs the academic pursuit of scholastic journalism.

This review of literature explores the academic advantages of this area of journalism education and of extracurricular activities and indicates the impact of journalism education and extracurricular activities on college admission and on subsequent academic performance in college. Studies here also reveal disparities, notably socioeconomic ones, that point to the issue of access and availability. A literature review of journalism education and its impact on the K-12 community reflects the field's ties to civic engagement, to academic advantages, and to academic outcomes. To examine links between exposure to journalism education in high school and subsequent civic engagement as a young adult, Bobkowski and Miller (2016) used Education Longitudinal Study data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. A 2002 stratified random sample of 15,360 10th-grade students in public and private schools was followed by three surveys in 2004, 2006, and 2012-2013. Associated transcript data revealed curricular variables, and survey items revealed dependent variables of voting propensity and community involvement. Results noted a substantial direct link between high school journalism and voting propensity. The interaction of socioeconomic status and journalism education was deemed statistically significant, exhibiting journalism education's impact on students of low socioeconomic status and their resulting civic engagement. These students were found to be more likely to vote and to volunteer than peers who did not take journalism. To

determine the effect of journalism education on those with lower socioeconomic family status, Bobkowski and Miller (2016) established the value of journalism education for those with lower socioeconomic family status, and they established the value of exposure to journalism education. Their study notably spotlighted journalism education, instead of merely grouping it with extracurriculars, and it supported the influence of journalism education on those from lower socioeconomic status.

Bobkowski et al. (2017) used that same longitudinal data in a subsequent study focused on defining the high school journalism student, determining whether journalism students perform better academically because of their exposure to journalism or whether academically advanced and advantaged students are more likely to participate in high school journalism. The study challenged Dvorak et al.'s (1994) longstanding and long-cited journalism education research linking student media participation and subsequently positive academic performance. Researchers used that same clustered random sample of survey and transcript data, examining English self-efficacy, grade point average, and school attachment, as well as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomics, with dependent variables of for-credit and extracurricular journalism. The regression analysis revealed definite demographic markers: Female students were more than twice as likely to take for-credit journalism in the 11th and 12th grades, for example. White, affluent, female students, the authors concluded, dominate journalism classrooms. Journalism programs are found predominantly in better-resourced suburban schools (Bobkowski et al., 2017; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Goodman et al., 2011). Yet research shows students in urban and rural schools could directly benefit from journalism's link to community engagement (Marchi, 2011). Only 11% of students in Grades 11 and 12 enroll in journalism classes (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016).

Bobkowski and Cavanah (2019) made further use of the longitudinal data set in a study examining high school journalism's relationship with academic outcomes on college entrance exams and during college. They employed self-determination and occupation theories to inform hypotheses on standardized test scores, college major choices, and performance in journalism-related courses. Results revealed

the clearest picture yet of the educational outcomes associated with high school journalism participation by using a large, longitudinal data set that allows for the control of various factors that have confounded previous attempts to isolate the effects of journalism education. (Bobkowsi & Cavanah, 2019, p. 446)

The results show high school journalism's role in some positive academic outcomes, including higher entrance exam scores in English and reading, increased likelihood to major in journalism or related fields, and higher grade point averages in college English.

Journalism Civic Self-Efficacy

When high school journalists immersed in reporting, writing, and disseminating news to their school communities find themselves faced with the responsibility, leadership, and effort such work entails, they demonstrate the academic challenges and rewards of scholastic journalism. In formulating a theoretical framework for examining how such journalism practices relate to future engagement, journalism civic self-efficacy captures the link between these secondary-school journalism endeavors and the development of political voice, as well as the commitment to political participation (Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021). In identifying how school and classroom experiences influence journalism civic self-efficacy, studies applying this framework can inform how young people might be supported in developing their voice. The framework coalesces political socialization and self-efficacy in a manner that explores context

and conditions linking scholastic journalism and future political participation. The authors define the framework as “individuals’ sense that they can use journalism tools successfully to focus the public’s and officials’ attention on an important community issue” (Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021, p. 3). The political communication component of the framework was previously explored through a civic efficacy lens with scholastic journalism participation predicting political engagement later in life and students participating in scholastic journalism exhibiting a special civics-oriented skillset (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Flanagan et al. (2007) applied a political socialization approach to young people’s approach to rights and responsibilities through communal and institutional structures. The approach was grounded in Hyman’s (1959) political socialization theory that references schools and the media as two of four mediating agents of society. These agents of society and individuals’ interactions within them generate development of perceptions and ideologies. Underrepresented students form perceptions of authority that inform trust and engagement, suggesting that if they feel their teachers, their proximate authority figures, are fair, they can develop distal support for civic structures (Flanagan et al., 2007). This part of the journalism civic self-efficacy framework extends to the school environment, as well.

Related to journalism civic self-efficacy, critical media literacy illuminates the value of anti-oppressive media literacy education for marginalized young people, equipping them with the power of media production and the resulting “self-affirming, transgressive media consumption and production” (Moscowitz & Carpenter, 2014, p. 26). That same critical media literacy component of scholastic journalism among marginalized students explored a transformational CoP opportunity for voice and agency among the underserved. This CoP approach yielded an examination of journalism students’ emerging self-confidence and the consequential nature of their journalistic work (Cybart-Persenaire & Literat, 2018).

The primary component of the journalism civic self-efficacy theoretical framework, self-efficacy, is rooted in the field of psychology as part of social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy refers to people's belief in their ability to exert control over a situation, their confidence in having influence and control over themselves or over an event or environment (Bandura, 1977). The four components of efficacy expectations—performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback—allow for measurement of behavioral changes associated with each. Related to journalism civic self-efficacy, the performance outcomes, or mastery, determines efficacy judgment. It provides the connection between what Bandura (1977) set forth as “linkages between treatment procedures, perceived self-efficacy, and behavior” (p. 197). Within this journalism civic self-efficacy framework with self-efficacy in a task-specific format, student participation in scholastic journalism predicts political engagement as a young adult and then showcases journalism's link to civic-oriented skillsets and the development of voice and agency (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016).

Self-efficacy is applicable to and is ever present in higher education research. It has been applied in higher education academic settings in examination of motivation and learning, and it has also been applied in professional development settings as career self-efficacy. In their conclusion of a narrative review of 39 empirical studies referencing self-efficacy in higher education research, van Dinther et al. (2011) declared the possibility of influencing student self-efficacy through higher education programming, discovering that 80% of the intervention studies they examined reflected a significant relationship between intervention and student self-efficacy. The preponderance of mastery experience, that part of self-efficacy reflected in journalism students' journalism practice, also is found in higher education self-efficacy research, translating

to the importance of hands-on, practical applications in such areas as internship education (van Dinther et al., 2011).

Journalism civic self-efficacy as a theoretical framework connects to higher education scholarship through its application to higher education outreach and that outreach's instructional components. An example is the curricular development of scholastic journalism outreach programs that might mirror the framework's focus on journalism participation and voice and agency later in young adulthood. Another example is the curricular development of teacher education programs related to journalism education. The notion of a teacher's proximal sphere of influence and the impact of that influence on a student's interpretation of fairness distinguishes the importance of that educator's lasting legacy in relation to a student's perception of civic efficacy.

Rurality and Rural Schools

Scholastic journalism in rural schools exists within that concept of place and sense of community unique to rural areas. Common definitions of rurality reference population density or distance from major cities, yet these parameters do not capture the character, circumstances, and context of rural areas (K. S. Nelson et al., 2021). Schools in these rural communities embody a storytelling ethic reflective of familiarity of place. Student media outlets can embrace that sense of place without approaching it from a deficit model of what is missing from rural schools (Means et al., 2021). Challenges do exist, however, and the socioeconomic realities, coupled with geographic isolation, make professional collaboration for rural schoolteachers difficult. The unique subject area of scholastic journalism translates to even fewer peers for scholastic journalism educators in rural areas (Inouye et al., 2023). Collaborative work in these circumstances has impact, encouraging engagement with rural education partnerships and

reflecting the National Rural Education Center’s 2022-2027 research agenda initiative on partnership research as “pivotal to addressing inequities and building upon rural education assets” (National Rural Education Center, 2022, p.2).

Henry (2019) employed a resource allocation conceptual framework to examine learning improvement victories in rural schools. Thematic analysis revealed engagement work aligning with learning improvement. This engagement work included fostering partnerships with those outside of the school and inviting the community to invest in the school. Tieken (2014) approached her ethnography, *Why Rural Schools Matter*, through portraiture:

I wanted to work with participants, not on them. I wanted to hear their stories, stories of rural school and rural community, stories that could reveal the roles that a rural public school plays in its rural community and show how these roles are patterned by historic racial inequalities and current education politics. And stories, I knew, require relationships, because they are not simply listened to—they must be listened for. (pp. 29-30)

This storytelling ethos in rural school research is place-based and spatially centered (Ohlson et al., 2020; Tieken, 2014). In a meta-analysis of 100 years of rural education research, Biddle and Azano (2016) traced scholarly perceptions of rural education from an initial reform agenda that was well-intentioned but cast the schools as problems to a modern approach that places value and prestige on place as a curricular concept. An examination of teacher training reveals an emphasis now on place-based preparation. Today, place-based pedagogies are employed and researched in rural schools, and rural school research references “place attachment” and “a sense of place” (Biddle & Azano, 2016).

Rural America is at present a sector of population growth after a decade of decline (Davis et al., 2023). Amid that growth, and accounting for cost-of-living adjustments, an adult in a rural area today has as much likelihood of finding a job that pays middle-class wages as an adult in an urban area (Carnevale et al., 2024). Studies and analyses that use an assets approach to examinations of rural communities counter the lingering stereotypes of the deficits approach still in effect long after President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 War on Poverty (The American Presidency Project, n.d.) speech. The Urban Institute applied a community capitals framework as an asset lens in redefining rurality and locale. The result yielded a dashboard of asset values such as energy-rich hubs, remote recreational and cultural areas, and high-employment agricultural areas (Urban Institute, 2021). Challenges and deficits persist, however. Poverty, isolation, and inequity remain. Access to reliable transportation is an ongoing obstacle for residents of rural areas, as is broadband connectivity (Carnevale et al., 2024; Lichter & Schafft, 2017; Tieken, 2014).

In North Carolina, more than one in three students attends a rural school, and those rural schools and rural school districts are likely large ones, not small. North Carolina rural school students are more likely to live below the poverty line and more likely to attend a school with fewer instructional resources. These students are more diverse than rural school students in other states, and they are less likely to graduate from high school. In other states, rural students are more likely to graduate from high school than non-rural students. North Carolina, once hailed as the Education State, is now among the 10 states in which rural schools are facing real deficits (Showalter et al., 2023).

Community of Practice Theory and Frame

The formation of a CoP represents a collection of expertise, competence, and perspective, addressing the unique attributes of the rural school community with an acknowledgement of the

lived experience of the rural school educator and of the level of expertise that educator has in relation to those seeking to engage with rural areas. The ongoing interaction of a CoP, its focus on a problem of practice, and its goal of forming a response, make it especially appropriate as a research-based approach to rural school engagement for the higher education community (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wilson et al, 2020.)

Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the phrase *community of practice* and subsequently associated its roots in anthropology and psychology with situated learning theory, ascribing “legitimate peripheral participation” (p.18) to those social learning situations that are informally structured and relationship oriented. This type of participation encourages those at different stages of their career and with different levels of expertise to interact within a CoP. Jean Lave was an anthropologist, and Etienne Wenger an educational theorist when the two developed the foundation of CoP theory. The CoP frame is based on social interaction and participation, with a social learning systems approach informing the creation of knowledge within the community being studied. The foundation in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and the idea of voice is extended in CoP theory to consider the impact of place. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) extension of Bandura’s social learning theory to situated learning posits that learning takes place “in situ” through social interaction within the CoP environment, allowing CoP participants, or learners, to connect their lived experience and knowledge to new knowledge gained within the social setting defined by their CoP.

The CoP frame was immediately adopted in the business world as an effective way to “manage knowledge” (Wenger, 1998 p. 4). The immediate and sustained application in strategic planning and assessment is attributed to the following characteristics of this research frame:

- Communities of practice enable practitioners to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge they need, recognizing that, given the proper structure, they are in the best position to do this.
- Communities among practitioners create a direct link between learning and performance because the same people participate in communities of practice and in teams and business units.
- Practitioners can address the tacit and dynamic aspects of knowledge creation and sharing, as well as the more explicit aspects.
- Communities are not limited by formal structures: they create connections among people across organizational and geographic boundaries. (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 17)

These characteristics translate to use by governmental agencies as they seek to work across and within formal structures amid the challenges of bureaucracy. As an approach to managing knowledge, a CoP frame is also useful in education settings, nonprofit organizations, and professional associations. Wenger-Trayner et al. (2023) explained that CoPs work best when they are integrated into the community being studied and when voice is respected, and value is recognized.

Wenger et al. (2002) outlined seven CoP principles that indicate how a CoP frame is most appropriate for this study and how the seven principles should be applied.

1. Design for evolution.

The CoP should be designed for ongoing continuity, allowing an organic development of a created community that can begin as a personal network, but grow to include others over time.

2. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives.

Include diversity of thought and expertise of position in the CoP and make room for the contributions of those outside of the CoP. “Good community design requires an understanding of the community’s potential to develop and steward knowledge, but it often takes an outside perspective to help members see the possibilities” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 54).

3. Invite different levels of participation.

Participation should be voluntary, never forced. Participation should be allowed to take place organically, and CoP members should be expected to assume different participation levels as the community develops. Some CoP members will initially be those who are core to the community’s mission. Others will be active participants, and some will be peripheral observers.

4. Develop both public and private community spaces.

Interaction should be as a whole group, as one-on-one, and as small group. Allow for variety in the CoP engagements and meetings.

5. Focus on value.

Be intentional with planning but allow for culture to emerge. The initial value of the CoP will come from the focus on the problem of practice and the knowledge generated toward addressing that problem of practice. Eventually, the value of the CoP will emanate from the application and accessibility of the generated knowledge.

6. Combine familiarity and excitement.

Create engagement within the CoP. The familiarity of place will cultivate a sense of comfort with the knowledge generation process within the community. Effective CoPs, however, will also invite into community new voices and perspectives.

7. Create a rhythm for the community.

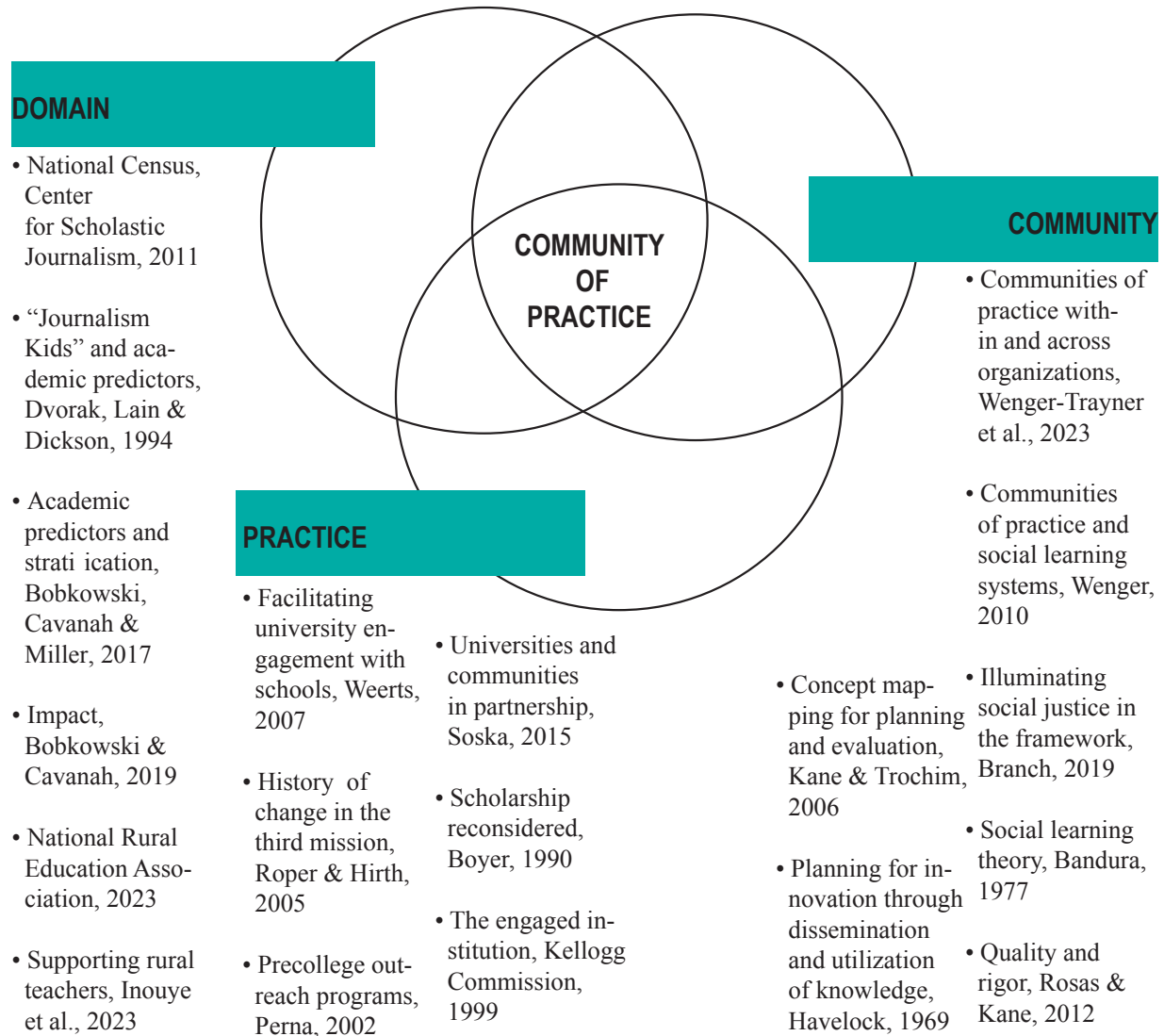
Foster relationships in a CoP by respecting group dynamics and group interactions. Set a structure for meetings that establishes a comfortable routine that invites community to form and develop.

Framing in Three Segments

These seven principles address Lave and Wenger's in situ extension of learning theory, and the principles provide a guide for the establishment of the CoP structure in this action research study. CoP scholars have also positioned a three-part CoP frame that sets forth the three required and related elements for the establishment of a CoP. This CoP frame (Figure 2) also provides a structural approach on which to synthesize this literature review, reflecting the domain, community, and practice of this action research study.

Figure 2

Community of Practice Frame as Literature Review Structure



Note. This three-part CoP frame is set forth in *An Introduction to Communities of Practice: A Brief Overview of the Concept and its Uses* by E. Wenger-Trayner & B. Wenger-Trayner, 2015 (<https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice>). CoP = community of practice.

In Figure 2 the structural elements of a CoP are displayed. *Domain* refers to the shared subject matter that binds the group together, the foundation of the group identity. Scholarship

related to scholastic journalism and rurality, or scholastic journalism and rural schools, is grouped under Domain. *Community* refers to the methods in which the CoP interacts with one another. Studies and research listed here reference CoP theory and the study's concept mapping method. Finally, *Practice* binds the Domain and Community elements with the shared resources and storytelling intended to address the problem of practice. Here, Practice is represented by the university outreach and engagement tying all stakeholders together.

Knowledge Flow Theory

To further inform this CoP frame in its application to this action research study, university engagement literature on knowledge flow theory provides a theoretical structure specific to university and community partnerships, exploring how knowledge is traversed among and between organizations such as universities and rural schools (Havelock, 1969; Weerts, 2005). Havelock's (1969) theory focuses on how organizations in partnership with other organizations negotiate sharing or protecting knowledge as commodity. The theory names barriers to knowledge flow, including local pride and status difference. Local pride refers to an assumption that knowledge about an organization should come from that organization. Weerts (2005) explains that university norms centered around engaged scholarship and how faculty are socialized around the promotion and tenure value of that scholarship can inhibit partnerships. Regarding status difference, the importance of trust emerges as vital to knowledge flow in university and community partnerships, when university representatives may speak in "coding schemes" of academia and create intimidating interactions.

Facilitators to knowledge flow in these university and community partnerships include acknowledging reward value, such as universities helping to solve a local problem and experiencing the political capital from state leaders in recognition of the effort. Another

facilitator is organizational crisis, such as a leadership change that forces engagement. Another is training of university faculty and staff to be neutral and to communicate effectively. A fourth and final facilitator to university engagement in knowledge flow theory is organizational capacity, described by Weerts (2005) as encompassing the seven-tenet test of university engagement set forth by the Kellogg Commission (1999; see Appendix B).

Concept Mapping

CoP theory and concept mapping methodology share a common motivation in ensuring individual voice in group perspective, both rooted in a constructivist approach. As a research method, concept mapping presents a structure to capture and showcase consensus while including individual contributions from each member of the group, allowing voice to be captured and counted in producing a visual representation of a resulting conceptual framework (Branch, 2019; Kane & Trochim, 2009). Within a CoP setting, concept mapping provides a path toward “multiple holistic and inclusive strategies” (Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021, p. 185) to confront a problem of practice.

Concept mapping refers to two vastly different applications of visual mapping, or visual displays of knowledge. In many education settings, concept mapping involves a learning application, a visual representation of curricular concepts as part of learning theory. This application was developed in 1972 and today can involve online tools such as those that encourage interactive mind maps and representations of planning and organization tools (Novak & Cañas, 2006). Concept mapping as a research method was established in the late 1980s at Cornell University (Trochim & Linton, 1986). Trochim (1989) edited a special issue of *Education and Program Planning* on concept mapping, with 11 articles that explored a breadth of topics, from measurement of the method’s multidimensional scaling to its use in planning and

implementation. Credited with developing the method, Trochim (1989) concluded the issue with “Concept Mapping: Soft Science or Hard Art?” to frame his analysis of validity and reliability. The progression and application of the method can be seen in a more recent examination. Rosas and Kane (2012) conducted a pooled study analysis of 69 concept mapping studies examining validity, reliability, and rigor of the method, still a relatively new one in social science research. The mixed-methods group concept mapping approach had been actively employed for two decades when they published the analysis, declaring “strong internal representational validity and very strong sorting and rating reliability estimates” (p. 236).

Sutherland and Katz (2005) assert concept mapping as a “methodological catalyst for organizational learning,” (p. 257) linking Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory to the concurrent individual and group learning and knowledge making that takes place. Concept mapping affords various stakeholder groups the opportunity to create a single “summative and formative conceptual framework” (Sutherland & Katz, 2005, p. 259) for organizational planning, evaluation, and implementation. The resulting framework communicates complexities and nuance as a unified visual display of geometric shapes representing the various stakeholders’ contributions.

Concept mapping began in the 1980s as a physical index card brainstorming method used to sort, rank, and compile generated group knowledge. The method was used in health science and social science research to capture stakeholder input and participation in a visual concept map display with shapes representing sorted and ranked brainstorming data. Today scholars employing this mixed-methods approach may rely on those physical cards of old or use online interactive tools such as Survey Monkey or Qualtrics to collect brainstorming data and to invite stakeholder sorting and ranking of that data. SPSS software can then be used to conduct

multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analyses of the data. A widely used approach today is to rely on proprietary software offered by a company of scholars rooted in the method. These scholars, part of groupwisdom™, are also widely published in the area of group concept mapping, ensuring deep expertise in the methodology and its development, but also representing a need for novice scholars to contextualize their contributions as also related to proprietary and commercial use.

Kane and Trochim (2009) distilled concept mapping down to a method that helps “solve a problem, articulate a group need or desire, author a plan, or develop a program” (Chapter 14), and they asserted the following six principles of the method:

- Concept mapping actively values individual knowledge or articulation of content. A specific source—usually a person with knowledge or experience of relevance to the issue at hand—has specific input, knowledge, or observations that are valid as contributions to the conceptual picture of an issue. Concept mapping aggregates individual knowledge across knowledge sources—represented by those who contribute input.
- Concept mapping provides rules for building, or, often, recognizing, emergent relationships of meaning among the concepts. Concept mapping guides the process by which the participant operates to link the individual input of ideas and observations.
- Concept mapping constructs a knowledge or conceptual model from the participants’ specific units of input. Combining input via the application of simple rules, the researcher creates an emergent framework, often a unique representation of issues that have not been combined in such a way before.

- Concept mapping supports the inclusion of often disparate units of existing knowledge in a unified conceptual framework. Individuals involved in group concept mapping each bring specific requirements and perspectives to the issue at hand.
- Fundamentally, concept mapping facilitates the identification of common themes to enable theory development, decision making, action, or assessment.
- Concept mapping encourages application in the participants' context, whether it is to understand the elements of the theory at hand, to enhance understanding and planning in an organizational setting, or to design a system for research or evaluation based on community-articulated requirements. (Chapter 14)

In their scholarship, Kane and Trochim (2007, 2009) and Kane and Rosas (2018) incorporate applications of concept mapping across numerous fields of study. In doing so, they articulate its flexibility as a method for education, health communication, nursing, business management, urban studies, and more. Regardless of field, the methodology is a six-step process beginning with preparation of group and study focus, then generation of ideas through brainstorming, structure of ideas by rank and sort, review of brainstorming through hierarchical cluster and multidimensional scale analysis, interpretation of the resulting concept map, and application of that concept map. Kane and Trochim's (2007) introductory text on concept mapping is an approachable one that allows understanding of the method's applicability and its nod to individual voice and group consensus. The textbook format includes end-of-chapter integrated learning activities and summaries, and it communicates how the methodology and proprietary software have advanced so that hundreds can now participate in a simultaneous interactive online brainstorming exercise, while also continuing to accommodate a smaller CoP

approach, reflecting the group dynamic from which the methodology was first developed (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989).

Summary

A synthesis of the literature points to collaboration as an opportunity for the study of scholastic journalism in rural schools and for university-based engagement with the field. The academic profile of scholastic journalism, as well as the sense of community and the storytelling ethos in rural schools, provides a foundation for the CoP approach. The relationship orientation of the CoP and its intentional focus on learning ground this study's CoP mission in researching inclusion in university-based engagement with scholastic journalism. University engagement scholarship informs the CoP mission of rural school and community engagement with an asset lens, and studies in rurality inform that engagement with the stark reality of the current state of North Carolina's rural schools.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This action research study invited into conversation the expertise and perspectives of rural high school journalism teachers advising student media outlets, of retired high school journalism teachers serving as teacher mentors, and of university faculty and staff leading university-based scholastic journalism outreach efforts. Representatives of these three groups were selected to collaborate with one another and to extend the impact of a community of practice (CoP) intervention to inform, define, and address a needs assessment of rural high school journalism programs and of university-based engagement efforts focused on scholastic journalism.

Action Research Questions

The following three action research questions guided the study:

1. How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?
2. After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism educators in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association directors and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?
3. What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?

Action Research Approach

Action research encourages collaboration among those conducting the research study and the community being studied. Research in this regard allowed this study's three groups of collaborators to examine scholastic journalism in rural schools. The involvement of these three groups of participants meant diverse perspectives with deeper insights and less bias. This type of action research ensures that participants' voices are heard, and that a more democratic and deliberative dialogue results.

Description of the Action Research Approach

This study used the action research approach of concept mapping to give voice to these three distinct groups participating in the CoP. Concept mapping allowed the CoP to engage in a systematic approach to defining, categorizing, and ranking actions that emerged from this action research study of university engagement regarding scholastic journalism in rural schools. This approach, seeking input from each member of the CoP, involved a brainstorming session, a subsequent ranking of that CoP brainstorming data by each CoP member, and a resulting visual display yielding a framework, or concept map, of the group's work, allowing for perspectives and expertise to be collected in cluster maps showcasing relationships among and divergence within CoP perspectives (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Cycle 1. Within the initial cycle of the action research study, the three distinct groups forming the CoP participated in two introductory and exploratory sessions. Three high school journalism educators and student media advisers currently involved in rural school settings joined three retired student media advisers and former journalism teachers serving as teacher mentors in the same state. These six individuals were joined by three university staff and faculty who currently direct a state's high school press association or high school media outreach

organization embedded in a university setting. The first meeting, an online meeting using Zoom (Version 6.0), encouraged interaction through introductions of the nine CoP participants, while also examining the topic to be explored, namely the current state of university engagement with rural schools and the journalism and student media programs in those rural schools. I assumed the role of facilitator and invited each of the CoP participants to share their expertise on the topic. The CoP determined the data, expertise, and research to be shared at the following meeting. The second meeting, also online using Zoom, brought into focus an examination of currently available data. This meeting yielded a needs assessment discussion related to journalism in rural schools and university engagement with those rural schools. Both meetings were scheduled for 1 hour each. Semi-structured individual interviews, also scheduled for 1 hour with each CoP member, then took place during this cycle. These eight interviews sought to capture the three constituencies' views on barriers and facilitators to the state of scholastic journalism in rural schools.

Cycle 2. In the study's preliminary stage of Cycle 2, CoP members engaged with concept mapping, a process resulting in a visual representation of ranked and categorized responses to those actions that CoP members determine should emerge from knowledge gained in Cycle 1. This concept mapping method concluded with point maps and cluster maps reflecting the relationships among CoP member contributions in defining most appropriate actions to be taken to address the problem of practice. In Cycle 1, the CoP studied existing research and shared their own perspectives and expertise with one another and with the facilitator. In Cycle 2, they engaged in this concept mapping approach, giving voice to their various and varied contexts and perspectives. The first virtual meeting of this intervention stage represented a brainstorming session, and the second meeting engaged sorting and rating of action statements related to the

needs assessment. This sorting and rating resulted in a series of maps that plot relationships of CoP-generated suggestions on next steps, or actions to engage university outreach with rural schools. The concept mapping approach ensured all perspectives were valued and integrated into cluster maps of action items (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Role of the Researcher

My role in the study extended my role as director of a university-based scholastic journalism association to that of researcher-as-instrument. I joined the other university-based scholastic press directors participating in the CoP, and we positioned ourselves to seek knowledge from the educators and mentors, also participating in the group. As both a participant and facilitator, I needed to account for any perception of authority or of expectations, so that active and unrestrained collaboration could result. As a scholastic press director on a university campus, I defined my role in the study to ensure that other members of CoP viewed me as a participant serving in the role of facilitator, not leader. To ensure legitimacy and validity of data and analysis, instruments were pilot-tested and subject to expert review. I engaged in journaling and reflection at each step of the process, and I sought to employ member checking throughout (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I needed to mitigate bias through peer, participant, and expert review as I collected and analyzed the study's data. My positionality as a researcher in a study examining outreach and engagement was especially salient to the integrity of the data analysis process. Declaring and defining my background was important. I needed to be mindful of personal biases, such as those related to rural school communities, as I am a product of one such community. I am also a product of scholastic journalism, having participated in it as a high school student and engaged with it through graduate study. I needed to ensure that my lived experience in a rural setting did

not cloud my view of others' experiences, whose may not mirror my own. Scholastic journalism was an integral part of my high school educational experience, affording me an outlet for expression and an opportunity to explore leadership and responsibility. I needed to remember that not everyone views the field in the same manner. My ties to the field have continued throughout my career, as I have worked in university outreach and engagement on two campuses for almost 3 decades. My interest in scholastic journalism outreach and engagement is one that is informed through my longstanding ties to the field, but that interest and focus was one I needed to interrogate throughout this study.

Participants

Participants in this action research study represented three distinct groups associated with the field of scholastic journalism, or high school journalism. These individuals included three rural high school journalism teachers advising student media outlets, three retired high school journalism teachers and/or student media advisers serving as teacher mentors through university-based outreach services, and three university staff/faculty leading university-based scholastic journalism outreach offices or associations. The high school journalism teachers and the mentors were all based in the state of North Carolina.

The three rural high school journalism educators in the state of North Carolina were current high school journalism teachers and/or current high school student media advisers. These three teachers were employed in rural schools, with "rural" being defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (2023) locale classifications. The three scholastic journalism mentors were also based in the state of North Carolina. These mentors were former high school journalism teachers and/or high school student media advisers. These three mentors completed mentor training through the national scholastic journalism association that coordinates the

national mentoring project. These three scholastic journalism mentors were formally associated with North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, which coordinates their mentor assignments and pairs them with mentees, who are high school journalism teachers or student media advisers with fewer than three years of experience, all residing in the state of North Carolina. The three scholastic journalism or media or press association directors were all current employees at universities that house, operate, or fund an affiliate organization, program, or center currently engaged in outreach to the high school journalism community in each university's respective state. One of the three was the researcher as participant; the remaining two were from states within the same region as North Carolina. These three university employees were classified as full-time university employees who direct their state's respective scholastic journalism association. One of the three had a faculty appointment. That scholastic press association director with faculty appointment directs a state scholastic journalism organization based within an academic unit.

Data Sources

A variety of qualitative data sources were collected and analyzed to lend depth to the data reflecting participants' perceptions, backgrounds, and lived experiences. This variety of data sources also yielded insight into meaning making and knowledge gained in the collaborative action research format. The breadth and depth of data sources supported the validity and reliability of the study.

Community of Practice Meeting Documentation

CoP meetings consisted of two, 1-hour virtual meetings, and both meetings made use of Zoom and its availability and familiarity. All three groups comprising the CoP participated in both meetings. The two CoP meetings were recorded on Zoom, and transcripts were generated

from each Zoom recording. Transcripts were reviewed against the meetings' video and audio files, to ensure reliability of transcribed content and to format content for coding purposes. Any identifying references related to participants were removed, and resulting generated transcripts were further examined for reliability by triangulating field notes journal entries, providing a rich context approach to meeting transcripts by establishing setting, tone, and interaction notations. The first 1-hour CoP meeting in April 2024 focused on introductions of the nine CoP participants and an exploration of the topic. The second meeting in May 2024, intentionally scheduled within 1 month of the first, turned to an examination of current data and research on the CoP topic. CoP participants determined sources of this data and research, suggesting data and research after the introductory meeting. This second meeting then shifted the CoP toward a 1-hour virtual discussion on Zoom, this one generating a needs analysis discussion of rural scholastic journalism programs and university-based engagement with those journalism programs.

Field Notes Journal

To ensure accuracy and to add contextual value to the two CoP meeting transcripts, I maintained a field notes journal during each meeting to yield observational data on meeting agendas, interactions, comments, questions, commentary, tone, and results. Generating this field notes journal allowed me to serve in a researcher-as-instrument manner and to maintain meeting notes and field notes of the interactions and conversations among participants. The journal allowed for clarifying notes and designated explanations of CoP meeting conversations and interactions. The journal and its reflections contributed to the number of data sources available for triangulation. The field notes data became supplementary and complementary to the CoP meeting transcripts, providing a separate source of contextual meeting data adhering to ethical standards of identity protection, while also allowing for an integration of that data into CoP

meeting transcripts as margin notes of nonverbal content (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). This nonverbal content strengthened meeting transcript data by providing background information intended to explicate transcript data.

The field notes journal data was collected in an outline format and used for both CoP meetings in Cycle 1. This outline (Appendix C) required title; date; participant descriptions; and setting (weather, geography, current events, time of day, and location). The outline also included a chronology of nonverbal interactions throughout the CoP meeting. Each outline concluded with a critical reflection space for me as researcher-as-participant to record immediate reactions at the conclusion of each of the two meetings (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017).

Semi-Structured Interviews

At the conclusion of Cycle 1 of this CoP, two CoP meetings were conducted, yielding transcript and field note data generated from both. I then conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with each participant in the CoP to gain insight into their perceptions and their descriptions of rural scholastic journalism program barriers and facilitators. I conducted these individual interviews on Zoom following an interview protocol (Appendix E) specific to this rural scholastic journalism study and derived from what was, at the time, an ongoing study by a scholastic journalism research group (Hill et al., 2024). As a member of that research group, I conducted pilot testing of the protocol and field-tested portions of the instrument. Expert review and feedback were ongoing throughout the study, contributing to the review and preparation of interview items to strengthen validity of the instrument. A subsequent formal expert review of the protocol draft was completed, with commentary from three scholars in the scholastic journalism field (see Appendix E).

Table 1*Semi-Structured Interview Questions as Related to Research Questions*

Part	Interview Item	Research Question
Demographic and Introductory Items	<p>What do you/did you teach? How long have you been teaching/working in scholastic journalism? What journalism experience or preparation did you have before you started teaching/advising journalism (or directing a scholastic journalism association)? What teaching certifications do you have? Do you belong to any journalism education or K-12 education organizations?</p> <p>Tell me about the school where you teach/taught (or university where you are based): Where is/was it located? How many students? What is/was the demographic makeup of your student population?</p> <p>Describe your reaction to the community of practice meetings. Do you feel a community is forming? If not, what do you recommend? What outcome(s) do you envision? Do you foresee a positive result from joining together?</p>	1, 2
1	<p>How do you describe the state of scholastic journalism in your rural school? Or in rural schools generally? How do you think other people generally think of the state of scholastic journalism in rural schools?</p> <p>Does a journalism program in a rural school benefit from any unique advantages, in comparison to a journalism program in another type of school? What are those advantages?</p> <p>Does a journalism program in a rural school face any unique challenges, in comparison to a journalism program in another type of school? What are those challenges? What is your reaction to this statement? High school journalism plays a unique role in a rural school, as compared to a school in a different community. How so?</p>	1, 2
2	<p>What are the greatest strengths of your program? What are the greatest strengths of rural scholastic journalism programs generally? Where do you find the greatest sources of support for your scholastic journalism program? What are those sources of support?</p> <p>Does your journalism program have ties to university resources? Or to local media resources? If so, how and to what extent?</p> <p>What are the greatest areas of need in your program? What are the greatest areas of need in rural scholastic journalism programs generally?</p> <p>You have mentioned XXXXX as an area of need. Are there other resources that you wish your program had access to? How could scholastic journalism organizations based on university campuses best work with or assist rural high school journalism programs?</p>	1, 2, 3
3	<p>Have you taken courses or participated in workshops in journalism that count toward continuing education?</p> <p>If you were able to take a class or attend a workshop in journalism, what topics would you want to learn about or teach others?</p> <p>Have you or your students participated in scholastic journalism programs in your area, such as workshops or conferences? If you and your students were able to attend a workshop or conference in journalism, what topics would you want to learn about or teach others at the conference?</p> <p>What role does money play in engaging with workshops, conferences, and other such programming? If money were no object, are there other barriers that might prevent you from taking your students to such events? How are scholastic journalism field trip opportunities like these perceived (by teachers, students, administrators)? How do school district field trip policies affect scholastic journalism field trip participation?</p>	1, 2, 3

Concept Mapping

At the conclusion of the first cycle of the action research study, the introduction of Cycle 2 involved a concept mapping of knowledge gained in Cycle 1 and generated in Cycle 2. An interactive online concept mapping interface collected, synthesized, and positioned into graphic presentation each participant's contributions. This exercise allowed participant data to generate a visual representation of meaning making and "reconceptualize such issues in ways that clearly identify the interrelationships among all of the significant elements" (Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021, pp. 184-185) that emerged from the CoP meetings.

For the purposes of this study, proprietary statistical software that collects and visually maps brainstorming data and participant rankings of that data was used. The company groupwisdom™ makes available a web-based application that allows for interactive brainstorming and then participant interaction with the generated brainstorming data, yielding resulting data analysis both visually and descriptively. Training for researchers is offered throughout the year in eight-session increments. I completed the company's training sessions during a 4-week period in summer of 2023. Training sessions were interactive ones hosted by the company president, the director of research, and various researchers, including those who have conducted concept mapping studies. The eight sessions covered drafting of the brainstorming focus prompt, analysis of data, and interpretation of results. The sessions featured homework assignments that allowed access to the concept mapping interface with researcher practice sessions.

This group concept mapping approach, using this groupwisdom.com platform, was conducted during two meetings of the CoP in Cycle 2. During the first meeting of Cycle 2 in June of 2024, within one month following the Cycle 1 meetings, the nine participants

representing the CoP's three distinct groups, met on Zoom for group concept mapping instructions. CoP participants were given individual links and passwords to the concept mapping site, where they maintained these individual accounts for this two-part knowledge-generation process. To complete the first portion and first meeting, the nine participants logged into the Group Wisdom site online, completed demographic information, and responded to a focus prompt related to Action Research Question 3: What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs? The nine CoP participants engaged in this online brainstorming activity, generating feedback to the prompt, "Based on your experience, one way for a university to engage more fully with rural high school journalism programs is..." Each participant was asked to generate multiple responses, ideally between seven and 10, with the goal of generating approximately 80 statements from brainstorming data. The generation of brainstorming data allowed for the option of including supplementary statements from the CoP meeting transcripts or from this study's literature review, if additional data had been needed to amass enough statements.

At the conclusion of the brainstorming session, I reviewed the brainstorming data and eliminated redundancies and outliers among the statements. For the second meeting of Cycle 2, the nine CoP participants met on Zoom for the final and fourth meeting of the CoP. They received instructions on logging back into their portal with their individual accounts, and they were then asked to spend 1 hour sorting all the focus prompt responses, contributed by all nine participants, into categorized groups or themes. They were then asked to name their groups or sorts. Finally, they were asked to rate all focus prompt responses according to their perception of importance and current presence.

Results of the participants' sorting and ratings then generated point maps placing each brainstorming statement in relationship to one another using multidimensional scaling. The point maps were then used to generate cluster maps, using hierarchical cluster analysis that groups and separates brainstorming data into thematic representations, illustrated by the resulting geometric shapes. The rankings participants gave the brainstorming responses were then used to generate a cluster rating map, illustrating how the CoP participants perceived the importance or current presence of actions to be taken. These cluster rankings then produced pattern match data, illustrating, for example, how each group within the CoP designated the importance of actions to be taken. Finally, the groupwisdom.com software generated a go-zone graph of the brainstorming response statements, categorizing the responses into quadrants that revealed group consensus and differentiation on actions to be taken that were deemed important, but not currently in practice (Cook & Bergeron, 2019; Kane & Trochim, 2007; Rosas & Kane, 2012; Rosas et al., 2022).

Data Collection

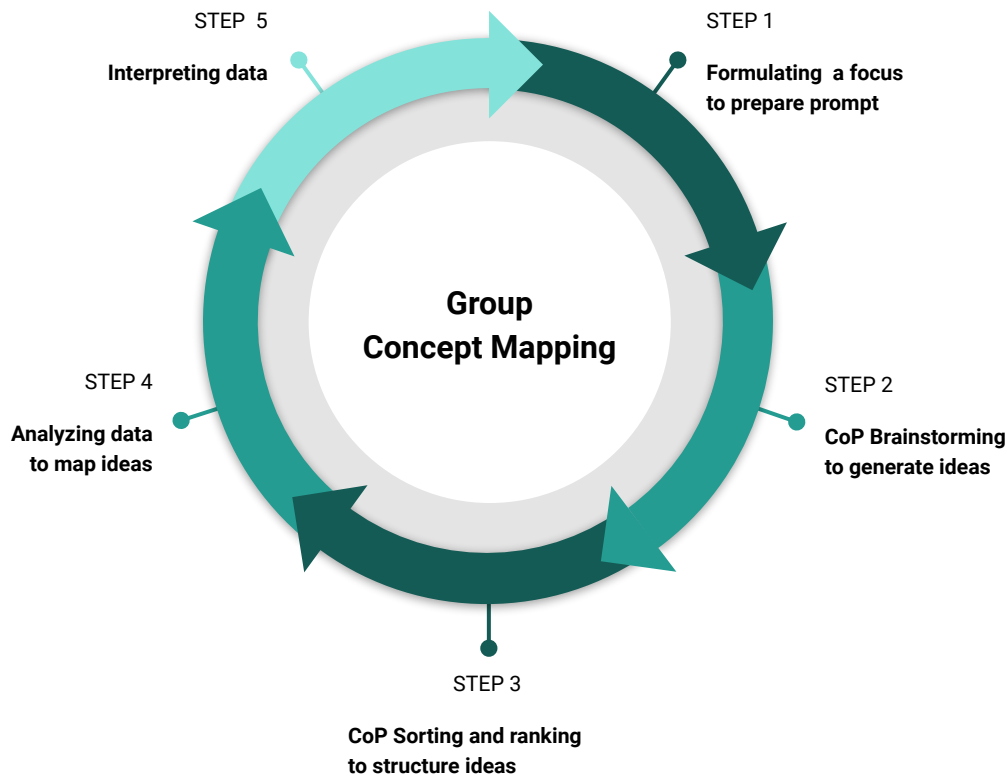
For Cycle 1 of this action research study, participants engaged in CoP knowledge-gathering and acquaintance-making meetings that were recorded and transcribed. Participants then reviewed transcriptions to ensure accuracy. These two meetings took place in April of 2024, with the goal of then launching Cycle 2 at the end of the study design. As a research participant, I maintained a field notes journal at each of these meetings. I also conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E) with each participant, and I then asked each participant to review their respective transcript.

For the launch of Cycle 2, CoP participants synthesized their Cycle 1 findings through group concept mapping. They engaged in this online interactive activity yielding graphic

representations of the CoP focus on scholastic journalism in rural schools and university-based outreach and engagement opportunities with those schools. Figure 3 illustrates the five-step process of this CoP concept mapping endeavor, with group concept mapping foundations and processes as outlined and defined by Trochim (1989), Kane and Trochim (2007), Rosas and Kane (2012), and Rosas and Ridings (2017).

Figure 3

Group Concept Mapping Process



Note. This overview of group concept mapping is based on “Digital Transformation and Middle Managers’ Leadership Skills and Behavior: A Group Concept Mapping Approach,” by M. Henderikx & J. Stoffers, 2023, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, para. 11. CoP = community of practice.

Step 1 of this data collection process involved the drafting of the writing prompt to generate the CoP's ideas, knowledge, and data. Based on this action research study's problem of practice, the prompt asked the nine participants to contribute their ideas and unique perspectives in relation to actions that should be taken to address the problem of practice. Step 2 employed the prompt in an interactive, online brainstorming exercise. The nine CoP participants were asked to finish the prompt at least seven and up to 10 times, resulting in numerous action statements or ideas. The purpose was to yield a variety of action steps from the CoP's diversity of perspectives, and to result in saturation. At this stage, I generated statements as a participant and also assumed my role as researcher in examining the statements and removing redundancies and outliers, with the goal of assembling at least 80 statements, a minimum number recommended for a group concept mapping exercise (Trochim & McLinden, 2017). Step 3 reconvened the CoP and revealed all resulting statements. Each CoP participant was asked to sort all statements into similar groups and to name each of these groups, or sorts. Instructions for this sorting exercise required CoP participants to create more than one group, to make certain each group had more than one statement and to avoid placing a statement in more than one group. After sorting the statements, the CoP participants rated the importance of each statement, using a 4-point Likert scale, with 4 representing *very important*. In Step 4, I used the proprietary software in examining the emerging clusters and determining the final number of thematic clusters according to the CoP-generated sorts and ratings. The multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis produced point maps, with points that created cluster maps of thematic groupings. In the case of this action research study, these thematic clusters represent actions to be taken in relation to the problem of practice. This step also resulted in two-dimensional maps that showcase CoP-generated ratings of importance of these resulting thematic clusters. In the final stage of group

concept mapping, Step 5 engages an interpretation of the data, an examination of thematic clusters of action steps and the CoP's examination of such action steps.

Data Analysis

Action Research Question 1

How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools? To analyze data from the interviews, CoP meetings, and field notes, I coded transcripts using a priori and emergent coding as described by Saldaña (2021) and guided by Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning framework. Codes were categorized and examined so that themes related to descriptions of barriers and facilitators emerged.

In the researcher-as-participant role, I coded the data in two rounds. In the first round, I focused on the following a priori codes: *transportation, expense, isolation, trust, distance*. These codes were derived from the literature review in Chapter 2 and from what was then, the ongoing original pilot study examining scholastic journalism teacher insights. These a priori codes found in CoP meeting transcripts, field notes journal entries, and semi-structured interviews were color-coded in the coding platform MAXQDA, eventually revealing alignments as both barriers and facilitators. In a second round of coding, I focused on emergent coding of these three sources of data, examining the relationships and thematic ties from the first round.

Action Research Question 2

After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism educators in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association directors and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools? Applying the hybrid thematic method of data analysis allowed for the examination of multiple sources of data

collected during a period of two months in Cycle 1 (Table 2). Sources of data related to this research question included semi-structured interviews, field notes, and CoP meetings. Inductive and deductive analyses were employed, so that I compiled field note observations and transcript data and developed conclusions to this research question informed through emergent coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Mertler, 2017). Two rounds of coding took place, using the MAXQDA coding platform to synthesize all documents and to color-code a priori and emergent codes, producing code counts for each.

Action Research Question 3

What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs? CoP meetings encouraged a storytelling format to yield transcript data with emergent themes informing the next steps of action research's cyclical approach. Analysis of the CoP concept mapping data further enhanced the hybrid thematic analysis. The concept mapping analysis and resulting visual representations informed and illustrated a next-steps approach. Group concept mapping inherently integrates an action-oriented approach, allowing participants to create their own data and then participate as decision-makers in examining and classifying it (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). The use of concept mapping here concluded with colorful visual representations of the CoP's results, with two-dimensional models illustrating thematic clusters of actions to be taken, showcasing hierarchy according to rank and evaluation by CoP participants. CoP-sorted action statements and their relationship to one another were represented as points on a map. This qualitative data produced by the CoP brainstorming session was quantitatively analyzed with groupwisdom.com's proprietary software, using multidimensional scaling and hierarchical

cluster analysis. The multidimensional scaling resulted in a point map of corresponding focus prompt statements, with hierarchical cluster analysis resulting in an array of polygraphs, a diversity of thematic shapes based on these points and the relationship of the CoP-generated statements. This mixed-methods approach, visually generating action steps to be taken, can be analyzed through a resulting stress value, a statistical value indicating goodness of fit of CoP participation and representation, of the resulting data and the resulting sorting of that data, should the stress value fall between 0.205 and 0.365 (Rosas & Kane, 2012). Two additional types of maps also provided analysis, one a go-zone map in four quadrants corresponding to action statements placed according to CoP ratings of importance and current presence. These go-zone maps form these quadrants with mean values of CoP-rated importance and current presence, values on the x- and y-axis. These go-zone maps illustrate, within one corresponding quadrant, actions to be taken that are deemed by the CoP to be of high importance but not currently present. Another map visually represents the pattern matching ladder diagram, pairing CoP ratings of an action item in regard to its importance vs. its current presence, also allowing a statistic of correlational value of importance of an action and the current presence of it, producing a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Table 2*Action Research Questions, Data Sources, and Data Analysis*

Evaluation Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis
How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?	Semi-structured individual interviews CoP Meetings Field Notes Journal	A Priori and Emergent Coding Hybrid Thematic Analysis
After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism teachers in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association leaders and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?	Semi-structured individual interviews CoP Meetings Field Notes Journal	A Priori and Emergent Coding Hybrid Thematic Analysis
What action should emerge from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?	Semi-structured individual interviews CoP Meetings Field Notes Journal Concept Mapping	A Priori and Emergent Coding Hybrid Thematic Analysis Multidimensional Scaling and Cluster Analysis

Note. Concept mapping was employed at the conclusion of Cycle 1. CoP = community of practice.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions***Delimitations***

This action research study had delimitations inherent in the structure and purpose of the CoP approach. These delimitations included the setting, participants, and methods. I delimited the study to a small number of teachers and mentors affiliated with scholastic journalism in only one state, and I included university outreach directors focused only on scholastic journalism.

This CoP number of participants ($n = 9$) is lower than the minimum range ($n = 10-20$)

recommended for group concept mapping (Trochim, 1989). I included qualitative data in this study, another delimitation that introduced the potential for bias in my data analysis, coding, and conclusions. I mitigated such bias through pilot testing of semi-structured interview questions, member checking of interview transcripts, and triangulation of all data. Access to the proprietary group concept mapping software constitutes a possible barrier to access for other researchers in future studies. This could be mitigated through an individual concept mapping study design using statistical software or through a qualitative concept mapping study design.

Limitations

The qualitative portion of this study yielded contextually transferable results, but those results were not generalizable. The trustworthiness of the study was, therefore, of utmost consideration in the collection and analysis of data. Other limitations of the study included my perceptions of that qualitative data, as well as participant perceptions of the study's focus. The compressed time element in this study was also a limitation, creating a barrier of time within which participants launched the CoP. Time constraints based on participant classroom schedules were also a factor. These limitations were mitigated through the focused design and intentional method of the study.

Assumptions

The action research study design incorporated assumptions about participants' willingness to collaborate with others and about their desire to do so. I also assumed here that the participants would be truthful, forthcoming, and honest. Other assumptions related to participants' desire to explore this topic area and their willingness to consider university-based outreach related to scholastic journalism. I also assumed, through the CoP format, that scholastic journalism teachers, along with university-based scholastic journalism mentors and directors,

would find value in collaborating with each other and would find value in each other's expertise. I assumed participants' honesty and openness to ensure validity and reliability of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure trustworthiness of this study and of this researcher, transparency was a key component of this project. Open communication was an important hallmark of this study. I freely shared the objectives of the study with the participants, and I clearly communicated the format of this action research study. This openness was paired with careful consideration of the confidentiality necessary to protect the participants. That confidentiality was considered during all stages of the study. The needs, the privacy, and the wishes of the participants centered the approach to confidentiality and respect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Institutional Review Board approval from William & Mary was sought and secured, along with the permission of my unit at my university. Participants were fully aware that their involvement was completely voluntary and that they had complete control over their decision to take part in this action research study (see Appendix C). Data collection procedures, along with intended uses and purposes, were freely shared with participants. Access to transcripts was offered to them, and updates on the progression of the research project was also provided. To ensure reliability of the study, careful attention was paid to consistency of format, of coding, and of design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This action research study convened three groups associated with scholastic journalism—scholastic press association directors, high school journalism educators, and mentors/retired high school journalism educators—to explore university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs. The first stage of the action research cycle investigated a needs analysis of rural scholastic journalism programs within a community of practice (CoP) structure. The CoP was intended to encourage voice and participation within a structured setting and established parameters. Chapter 3 detailed this CoP plan and composition, along with the brainstorming exercises within the concept mapping method employed to yield data on actionable steps to be taken as a result of knowledge gained.

The following three action research questions guided the study:

1. How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?
2. After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism educators in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association directors and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?
3. What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?

In this chapter, findings are presented within the chronology of the study and in the order of the research questions. Data sources employed here include transcripts from the first two CoP

meetings, field notes from each of those two meetings, semi-structured interviews with eight participants, and then brainstorming data generated and analyzed during the final two CoP meetings. The CoP was a group of nine, including the researcher as participant. Six of the nine were White women, one was a Black woman, and two were White men. Eight of the nine had at least one master's degree, with one holding a doctorate. Seven of the nine had or had previously maintained a teaching certificate or license on the secondary school level. One person was in year one of advising a student publication outlet, a yearbook.

Community of Practice Structure

The four virtual CoP meetings spanned 3 months, April through June of 2024. Calendar invitations to the first two meetings included optional pre-reads, short documents with information on respective CoP topics. Those first two meetings featured guest speakers who were asked to address specific topics related to scholastic journalism in rural schools, each in 15-minute segments. After the first meeting, participants suggested guest speakers and pre-reads for subsequent meetings. CoP participants introduced themselves to one another in the first meeting and began a discussion on scholastic journalism and rural schools. One person was unable to attend the first meeting but agreed to be interviewed beforehand so that a video introduction could be shared with the CoP. That participant then met afterward to view the recorded version of that first meeting. Another participant who missed the second meeting also sent a prepared document as a pre-read and agreed to meet afterward to view the recording of the meeting. Semi-structured interviews with each participant followed the second meeting of the CoP. The final two CoP meetings engaged participants with the proprietary brainstorming software, groupwisdom.com, yielding the concept mapping data of action steps to be taken.

Guest speakers included Peter Bobkowski, professor/Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University; Michael Cline, state demographer of North Carolina; Jerry Johnson, professor of rural education at East Carolina University; and Anita Brown-Graham, founder and director of ncIMPACT. Bobkowski (2024) detailed census data on the presence of scholastic journalism in rural public K-12 schools, illuminating the decline of newspaper/online news outlets in those schools. Cline (personal communication, April 29, 2024) summarized 2020 U.S. Census data on North Carolina's concentration of rural counties, with 78 of the state's 100 counties classified as rural. He explained state resource allocations that follow population data, referencing the density of the rural population of North Carolina, while indicating the impact of the state's decrease in school-age population in those areas. Johnson (personal communication, May 13, 2024), co-author of *Why Rural Matters 2023: Centering Equity and Opportunity*, explained asset mapping of rural schools and communities and advocated for the value and role of rural schools: "Rurality in and of itself is not a barrier. ... Oftentimes the biggest challenges that rural schools and communities face in realizing their potential is operating in policy contexts that don't understand rural communities, that don't understand rural strengths." Brown-Graham (personal communication, June 3, 2024) referenced North Carolina as a rural state and described a web of initiatives created within and by rural communities through UNC-Chapel Hill's ncIMPACT, with special emphasis on community-driven, not university-determined initiatives.

The intentional CoP structure followed the Wenger et al. (2002) seven principles outlined in Chapter 2:

1. Design for evolution.

The CoP was designed to foster an organic continuity, as one participant explained: “I feel very certain that after we finish this, I could email any of the other people in that, and they would, they would be more than happy to help in any kind of way.”

2. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives.

The CoP created opportunities for contributions from those within and outside of the CoP. Three CoP members interviewed educators outside of the group and reported back during subsequent CoP meetings. One interviewed a journalism teacher in a rural school, one who had established programs in two Southern states: “If you...had a new teacher coming into a rural school, what would you suggest to that person? And he said to find out what it is that the school specializes in, like, what are their strengths?”

3. Invite different levels of participation.

CoP members assumed different participation levels as the community developed and were reminded that their participation was voluntary. One mentor interviewed a rural journalism educator and submitted multiple pre-read options, while another who was new to the field of scholastic journalism initially listened while others discussed and presented.

4. Develop both public and private community spaces.

Interactions were at the whole group and one-on-one level. At the suggestion of one of the CoP participants, break-out rooms in Zoom were used to allow members of the CoP to have one-on-one conversations in the third meeting.

5. Focus on value.

The CoP was intentionally structured, but allowed for culture to emerge, such as this director acknowledging the expertise of the teachers in the CoP:

I'm learning, learning things about what it's like to be on the advising side, in a different way. I mean, I work with advisers all the time, but to have more intimate conversations, to hear some of their anecdotes and that type of thing is helpful for me to put things in a greater context.

6. Combine familiarity and excitement.

Engagement was created within the CoP through outside voices and perspectives, with one mentor commenting on the guest speakers: "I have enjoyed tremendously the speakers, you know, the researchers and the scholars that you have brought in presenting their research and...accurate and current statistical information to us."

7. Create a rhythm for the community.

A structure and routine developed, as participants realized that they would receive pre-reads in their calendar invitations each time, and that they should be open to suggesting other readings or other speakers.

A summary of participants' assessment of the CoP meetings can be found in Table 3.

Table 3*Participant Assessment of Community of Practice Meetings by Subgroup*

Subgroup	Excerpts
Educators	<p><i>I think for me the best way to really make something feel like a community is more talking. ... Having the guest speakers is really good. But the way for us to feel like it's a community is gonna be from having us engage more with each other.</i></p> <p><i>Well, I'm delighted. ... I feel that there's always a need to have a community of like-minded people. It's been refreshing for me, because in our school district we're [journalism teachers] either in an English department or ... in CTE. So we really are by ourselves. There is no real connection. So it's refreshing to me to be able to be in a close community environment with like-minded people.</i></p> <p><i>You can already tell that kind of those common denominators of being involved in education kind of links everybody together. I think, at the very core, it will give those of us in it, who are still in education, people to lean on, to bounce ideas off of, and even some support from. ..., I feel very certain that after we finish this, I could email any of the other people in that, and they would, they would be more than happy to help in any kind of way.</i></p>
Mentors	<p><i>I have enjoyed tremendously the speakers, you know, the researchers and the scholars that you have brought in presenting their research and ... accurate and current statistical information to us. ... I think that's an excellent part of this collaborative, you know, community. ... I hope that the outcome is that there are some new opportunities for some of these students in, you know, in rural schools, and that we, that there's more opportunities that are created by institutions of higher learning for students.</i></p> <p><i>Well, I have never been a part of anything like that, and the title scared me. I thought, 'What do I have to contribute to this? I don't know.' But it's extremely interesting, and I like the, I like the information that the guests have given us. ... Even though [one guest speaker] has such high praise for rural schools, there's, there are really so many problems, and especially right now, with so many cuts looming.</i></p> <p><i>I think it's been really interesting. Like I told you I was really fascinated by [one guest speaker]. The whole idea of it not, of rural schools not having a disadvantage academically because of the lack of tracking. And I really thought about that a lot. When I went to [name of rural high school], we had two levels of English. We had general and college prep. But [name of school in town], one county over in a very urban school, had seven levels of each English class.</i></p>
Directors	<p><i>When I first saw the faces, I thought, 'I'm the outsider because I'm the maybe this old native of [name of state] and more at the college level.' But I've really enjoyed this. ... I'm just enjoying the group and look forward to building even more community over the next couple of sessions.</i></p> <p><i>As an introvert, I don't like them, but, as a teacher, I've used breakout groups in Zoom a little bit, and that does, I think, stimulate some, some person-to-person brainstorming.</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, I mean, I'm finding them interesting and educational. I'm learning, learning things about what it's like to be on the advising side, in a different way. I mean, I work with advisers all the time, but to have more intimate conversations, to hear some of their anecdotes and that type of thing is helpful for me to put things in a greater context.</i></p>

Data Analysis

Coding

As described in Chapter 3, the initial round of coding involved the search for a priori codes relevant to rural schools and rurality (*distance, expense, isolation, transportation, trust*) derived from the literature review in Chapter 2. These five a priori codes were consistently found in the scholarship related to rural schools and rurality, such as *Why Rural Matters 2023: Centering Equity and Opportunity* (Showalter et al., 2023). These a priori codes reflected patterned data within the literature's intersection of rurality and rural schools. The coding process employed here involved a repetitive, line-by-line review of the 75 pages of data. This data was reviewed initially on printed pages to generate familiarity.

Focused and repeated readings of the study's 12 transcripts yielded patterns of meaning in five additional emergent codes (*community, connection, size, staffing, support*) relative to the generated data and the focus on scholastic journalism in rural schools. While the five a priori codes provided an initial foundation for examining and interpreting the data, emergent codes were needed to review and to condense meaning from all of transcripts. These five emergent codes were necessary because of the breadth of data related to journalism and university engagement. Repeated reviews of the data allowed for the patterns of data to emerge and to inform these final five codes described in Table 4.

Table 4

Emergent Codes and Codebook Descriptions

Emergent Codes	Codebook Descriptions
Community Connection	Binding teachers, students, and residents through a sense of place Establishing links to those in journalism, media, higher education, and one's own community
Size	Population density or square miles related to a rural community/school
Staffing	Teachers, publication advisers, and journalism educators
Support	Being or feeling acknowledged, appreciated, and/or assisted; tangible evidence of assistance

When these final 10 codes were determined sufficient in providing a basis for interpretation and categorization of the data, I developed a codebook to use as a guide in the formal coding process. The codebook contains a short description of the 10 codes, examples of phrases or references that might reflect each code, and an actual excerpt from the data corresponding with each code. The definitions provide a guide for each code, based on how I defined the code as it relates to the study's intersection of scholastic journalism, university engagement, and rural schools. Coding for these a priori and emergent codes meant searching for the words themselves, as well as related examples, such as the a priori code of *distance* also including references to "far away" and "removed." See Appendix F for a codebook of these 10 a priori and emergent codes, including examples and excerpts.

MAXQDA software was used to digitally code all transcripts, allowing color coding of the 10 a priori and emergent codes, with associated notes and comments on the hybrid thematic approach. Subsequent rounds of coding transitioned from a priori and emergent codes to categories among those codes. Categories were captured in physical posters of codes and relationships among the codes. Codes and categories were then grouped into resulting thematic relationships, yielding the study's themes as outlined in response to each of the study's three

research questions. Table 5 reflects the MAXQDA code counts of the 10 codes, with totals distinguishing between a priori and emergent.

Table 5

A Priori and Emergent Code Counts

Code	Semi-structured interviews (8)	CoP Transcripts w/ Field Notes (2)	Total
A Priori			
Distance	37	10	47
Expense	36	14	50
Isolation	38	10	48
Transportation	25	7	32
Trust	27	6	33
Emergent			
Community	52	9	61
Connection	84	19	103
Size	57	23	80
Staffing	41	11	52
Support	53	12	65
Document Totals	450	121	571

Note. A total of 75 pages of transcript data was coded from the following sources: two CoP meeting transcripts, two CoP field note sets, and eight semi-structured interviews. CoP = community of practice.

Concept Mapping

In the third meeting of the CoP, an interactive online prompt collected brainstorming data as a collection of statement responses from each CoP participant. In the fourth and final meeting of the group, participants themselves then analyzed the CoP’s brainstorming data by sorting that data into groups and rating the data by importance and current presence. The proprietary software groupwisdom.com, used in this concept mapping exercise, then organized the data into cluster map options for visual representations of the CoP’s analysis.

Action Research Question 1: *How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?*

This action research question focuses on the experts in the field, the current high school journalism teachers and student media advisers among the CoP. These three educators represented the three geographic regions of North Carolina: the Mountains, the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain. One worked in the news industry for 2 decades before becoming a high school journalism teacher, one had not advised a student publication until the current academic year, and one had taught high school journalism for 8 years. Coded thematic data related to this research question emerged from semi-structured interviews with questions in four topic areas, as well as CoP meeting introductions and discussions. Table 6 summarizes these themes with frequency data.

Table 6*Emerging Themes and Frequency Within Educator Subgroup for Research Question 1*

Theme	<i>f</i>	Excerpts
Barriers:		
Pressure to Promote and Conform	2/3	<i>I think kids do that more often in rural schools because there are fewer opinions. ... They feel like there's a pressure to be maybe religious, or to have a certain political belief. ... They self-censor more often and are worried about that pushback.</i>
Financial and Logistical Impediments	3/3	<i>We don't have public transportation. We had a big, nice Mac that the school system quit supporting for upgrades. And so it's just sitting there as a relic.</i>
Competing Student Obligations	3/3	<i>They're committed [to scholastic journalism]. It's just that they are also committed to whatever those part-time jobs are.</i>
Curricular Challenges	2/3	<i>Well, let's see where we can tuck the program.</i>
Facilitators:		
Teacher as Champion	3/3	<i>[The success of the scholastic journalism program] really just depends on the culture that the teacher creates and fosters.</i>
School as Champion	3/3	<i>We get a lot of support from other teachers.</i>
Community as Champion	2/3	<i>Our local cable company and Internet company used to be a huge mentor for us, because they have a TV studio ...</i>
Student Leadership Opportunities	3/3	<i>I think it really offers kids a chance to shine in in a small town. It's making, giving kids responsibility and holding them to it. And it's just giving them opportunities to truly be the leader.</i>
Scholastic Journalism Support Network	3/3	<i>Undoubtedly the state organization. That's where I learned almost everything foundationally.</i>

Barriers***Pressure to Promote and Conform***

The emergent code *size*, the second most prevalent with 80 code counts, revealed categories related to size of the school and size of the community and, most important, the proximal nature of the relationships that result in a rural area defined by its size. Residents in

rural areas experience the size of the town and the size of the school in a way that uniquely affects relationships between and among student journalists and residents. These relationships, we see in the transcripts, inform this thematic analysis of what is antithetical to journalistic principles, namely a pressure that student reporters feel to cheer for the local community, to share only good news, and to avoid topics that do not align with prevailing political and religious views of a community when “there’s no anonymity,” one educator said. Two of the three educators discussed the burden that this places on student journalists, as well as the publication adviser. One detailed resulting self-censorship:

I think kids do that more often in rural schools because there are fewer opinions. ... They feel like there’s a pressure to be maybe religious, or to have a certain political belief. ...

They self-censor more often and are worried about that pushback.

In a smaller rural community, the shared approach of promoting the town or school is a shared unspoken language, and any deviation from that shared ethos can be considered a slight, or an indication that one is not proud to be in community with others. This prevailing pressure becomes a challenge for student journalists, who want to please authority figures in their rural schools and communities.

Financial and Logistical Impediments

Operating a student media outlet in a rural school entails a measure of organizational balance amid teacher and student responsibilities, with transcript data from all three educators reflecting this theme. Codes *transportation* and *expense* informed the theme illuminating financial challenges affecting access to scholastic journalism classroom technology, advertising revenue, and field trip transportation, as well as news coverage challenges when students do not have access to transportation after school hours. One educator referred to his rural county and

school population “being spread out,” explaining, “We don’t have public transportation.”

Competing Obligations

In a rural school setting, student connection to co-curricular activities and classes, such as scholastic journalism, can translate to a balance of time and obligations. “Students in rural areas spin many plates, if you will. Your quarterback is an editor and plays baseball and is in [Distributive Education Clubs of America],” one educator wrote in the chat during the second CoP meeting. Students with after-school jobs in rural areas face especially challenging opportunities to participate in journalism as a reporter, photographer, or producer during those out-of-school hours:

- “They’re committed [to scholastic journalism]. It’s just that they are also committed to whatever those part-time jobs are.”
- “You see a lot of kids in rural areas having to leave school at 3 o’clock and go to work in order to, if not support their own extracurricular activities, even supporting, helping the family.”

Curricular Challenges

One barrier faced by scholastic journalism in rural schools is its placement within the school curriculum and schedule. “We function primarily as a club,” one educator explained, reflecting on the program’s place and stature in the school. “Well, let’s see where we can tuck the program,” this educator said about departmental assignment. Another described efforts to protect the journalism class and students’ expression rights: “I shouldn’t have to advocate as much as I do.”

Facilitators

Emergent code counts for *connection* (103) and *support* (65) reflect the prominence of the overarching theme of champions in three parts:

Teacher as Champion

All three educators referenced their role in assuring their scholastic journalism program's continuation and success, two through earnest fundraising and through defense of their students' free expression rights:

- “[The success of the scholastic journalism program] really just depends on the culture that the teacher creates and fosters.”
- “Just having to inform people about student media and be that educator to adults, as well.”

School as Champion

All three also revealed the need for an atmosphere of support within the school setting, with emphasis on support from administrators:

- “We get a lot of support from other teachers.”
- “We get a lot of strong support from the athletic department.”
- “I feel really supported by administration. But I’m the kind of person who, like I’m gonna go up and talk to administration, build a relationship. And I’m gonna advocate for my kids.”

Community as Champion

Feeling supported by the local community emerged as a theme with two of the three educators, who described the community's role in the health of their scholastic journalism program:

- “Having that extra 30 minutes with lunch attached to it has really been a good support from our admin to allow them to get out into the community and we actually sold ... over \$11,000 worth of ads this year, which was over about \$2,000 what they had done in the past.”
- “Our local cable company and Internet company used to be a huge mentor for us, because they have a TV studio, and before Covid, we would go over there and film, and we would be able to use their TelePrompTer and just get like video package information from them.”

Student Leadership Opportunities

The smaller size of rural school communities can translate into leadership opportunities for student journalists, two of three educators indicated in transcript data:

- “I feel like in a rural place, it’s smaller, it’s more insular. So news programs and athletic teams and things like that become that community for those kids.”
- “I think it really offers kids a chance to shine in in a small town.”
- “I teach leadership now at school because of my leadership experience with journalism. And now our entire county is trying to implement it.”

Scholastic Journalism Support Network

The three educators described scholastic journalism network support that they have found pivotal to their scholastic journalism programs:

- “Undoubtedly the state organization. That’s where I learned almost everything foundationally. Whenever I took over my program, ... I was given a piece of paper with some passwords and some like basic instructions. ... I had no one else who did newspaper. I had to talk to my other, my yearbook advisers in the county. But going

that summer after my first year to [North Carolina Scholastic Media Institute], I found out what a newspaper program could be and should be.”

- “Through my yearbook rep. ... He’s been amazing. I mean, if I send him a text, he calls back.”

Action Research Question 2: *After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism educators in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association directors and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?*

This action research question explores the effect of the CoP meetings on those who work in service to scholastic journalism—scholastic press directors on college campuses and retired high school journalism educators who serve as mentors to new teachers. Of these six participants, including the researcher as participant, five have lived in or taught high school journalism in a rural community. Two were once high school journalists in a rural community. The scholastic press directors were from southeastern states, and the mentors each represented one of the three geographic regions of North Carolina, lending statewide perspectives from the Mountains, the Piedmont, and the Coastal Plain. Table 7 summarizes these subgroup themes with frequency data.

Table 7*Emerging Themes and Frequency Within Director/Mentor Subgroups for Research Question 2*

Theme	<i>f</i>	Excerpts
Barriers:		
Distrust of the Media	4/6	<i>So I don't think that that journalism is high on their list, unfortunately, and I do think that there is some skepticism, I will say, in rural communities. There's a great deal of skepticism about journalism and news and universities. I don't think that they feel like it's [uses air quotes] 'for them.'</i>
Socioeconomic Divide	6/6	<i>I wanted to take them places. I wanted to show them things that I knew ... they wouldn't have opportunities for.</i>
Transportation	4/6	<i>There's limited school buses. Often the routes are longer. Often the routes include K through 12 on the same route.</i>
Finding & Keeping Teachers	5/6	<i>You know, attracting, first, that adviser or teacher, and then money to keep that person there, I think, is also a challenge.</i>
Facilitators:		
Teacher as Key	6/6	<i>It doesn't matter where they're from. The teacher and their passion is what drives it.</i>
Community as Champion and Family	6/6	<i>The rural families are, you know, a really strong support, and there's a lot of school pride.</i>
Unique role in School - Community News	5/6	<i>I think the greatest strengths are, I think, the stories. The storytelling has a different color, a different flavor. ... It's not necessarily something that we would see or hear in other types of schools. ... It adds a different, you know, nuance ... to their stories. And I think it's clear when something comes from a student who is really closely tied and understands that, you know, understands the community.</i>

Barriers***Distrust of the Media***

The a priori codes *trust* and *isolation* emerged from rurality literature, with resulting categorical relationships leading to an examination of the public's regard for journalism and for those students in rural communities who engage in reporting and writing news. Two of the three mentors discussed at length this current climate for journalism in rural areas:

- “So I don't think that that journalism is high on their list, unfortunately, and I do think that there is some skepticism, I will say, in rural communities. There's a great deal of

skepticism about journalism and news and universities. I don't think that they feel like it's [uses air quotes] 'for them.'"

- "I encounter some different types of opinions and different types of attitudes ... about, you know, about journalists ... and whether or not they're truthful."
- "I think there's an idea that that it's all [air quotes] 'big city stuff.' It's all like it's ... sort of above them and not about them."

Socioeconomic Divide

All mentors and directors acknowledged a socioeconomic divide in rural communities and its influence on scholastic journalism and its influence on those who teach in and report from rural schools. One mentor referenced her career-long preference to teach in rural schools, while pointing to challenges faced in those schools. She gave a personal reflection of an assets-based approach to the rural school community, before listing for the CoP specific and unique circumstances faced in those schools, where she was a yearbook adviser to students who could not afford to purchase a book until their senior year and where she once learned a parent did not plan to purchase a senior ad in the yearbook because that parent did not want to embarrass the graduating senior by purchasing a smaller size than others. When she approached administration with a plan to make all ads the same size, the principal declined her proposal and purchased a full-page ad for his child. Transcript data from the subgroup of mentors portrayed especially specific examples of the divide:

- "I wanted to take them places. I wanted to show them things that I knew ... they wouldn't have opportunities for. My [colleague] had two players on his team who never saw the ocean. They were 17 years old, and the ocean is in [the county where the school is]. But it's not on the, not on the western side of the county. ... Their

families didn't think that was important. ... And just things like that that really tug at your heart in rural schools.”

- “We had a principal who piled us in a bus and took us all around, showing us exactly where our students lived. And seeing the conditions that a lot of our students lived in was a little bit shocking and very understandable how and why they acted the way they did in the classroom.”
- “One, two, or maybe all of my folks said that funding is a challenge. When something needs to be cut, it's often the journalism program.”

Transportation

The theme of *transportation* is one that reflects the participants' perspectives and their connections to scholastic journalism. While it was an a priori code, it did not ultimately emerge as a theme among the educators. Instead, it emerged as a theme among those who direct outreach programs that invite schools to travel to their respective university campuses:

- “Transportation is definitely one that pops in my head. There's limited school buses. Often the routes are longer. Often the routes include K through 12 on the same route. So they're having a limited school buses. And that can often pose barriers to students attending our programs.”
- “If they didn't get our mailings early summer, and there were maybe a new adviser ... just finding out about us. ... And it was, you know, a month and a half away. That's still not enough time for them to order the, reserve the buses.”

Finding and Keeping Journalism Teachers

The thematic analysis here revealed the mentors' focus on teacher turnover, or the effect of the departure of a journalism teacher and a school's inclination to end a program when a teacher leaves a school:

- “They can't draw publication advisers because they're not areas that our young people want to go live or can afford to live. ... There's not a lot of housing for young teachers. So attracting quality publication advisers would be a problem.”
- “And then the other one is, of course, keeping a qualified and well-trained instructor/adviser.”
- “If you are ... a single mother, and you're at a rural school, and you're looking down the road at city schools who have advisers who are leaving and you see that extra \$4,000 supplement or signing bonuses. ... Yeah, it's liable to get really messy this summer.”

Facilitators

Teacher as Key

Scholastic press directors were especially adamant in declaring the student media adviser/high school journalism teacher as the single greatest determinant in a rural scholastic journalism program's success. These university-based association directors expressed a deference to K-12 teachers in their semi-structured interviews:

- “I think it's just really dependent on the teacher.”
- “I feel like some of these questions are probably better suited for those on our panel that are now or are former teachers.”

- “It doesn’t matter where they’re from. The teacher and their passion is what drives it.”

Community as Champion and Family

The connective tissue of a school and community was highlighted by this theme that also originated from the *connection* and *support* codes:

- “Maybe just being a bigger fish in a smaller pond can give students maybe a little bit more sense of pride and achievement. You know, if you’re the editor in chief of a smaller staff in a rural school, that’s quite possibly more work and more esteem and more affirmation than maybe a larger school.”
- “The rural families are, you know, a really strong support, and there’s a lot of school pride.”
- “So there’s a tight connection between the students and the elders and the business owners and the organizations in their community.”
- “You get to know the students so much better. You get to know their families more. And the teachers and the students become a family.”

Unique Role in School-Community News

This theme emerged in transcript data referencing a public service/storytelling role of student journalists in a rural community, extending that role to one that can or has changed over time as local news outlets have shuttered in many rural areas. Five CoP participants in these two subgroups of six positioned scholastic media outlets as having a unique role in school and community news:

- “They can more easily define their community.”
- “So there might be ... this aspect of interviewing being maybe a little bit easier.”

- “The majority of rural schools tend to be heavily yearbook, those who are members with us. And those yearbooks seem to reflect a lot of community.”
- “I think that clear understanding of, of their community, would be their biggest advantage. And the credibility in that community: their parents, their grandparents.”
- “I think the greatest strengths are, I think, the stories. The storytelling has a different color, a different flavor. ... It’s not necessarily something that we would see or hear in other types of schools. ... It adds a different, you know, nuance ... to their stories. And I think it’s clear when something comes from a student who is really closely tied and understands that, you know, understands the community.”

Action Research Question 3: *What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?*

This final action research question galvanized a CoP participant focus on producing, sorting, ranking, and analyzing brainstorming data on actionable steps to take, following the study’s needs analysis of barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools. In the third virtual meeting of the CoP, participants each logged into a groupwisdom.com individual account with an interactive format requesting that they indicate their subgroup in the study (educator, mentor, or director) and then provide 7–10 responses to the pilot-tested prompt, “From my perspective, one thing that would enhance university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs is...” From the 84 generated statements, 75 final action items resulted after a review of data to eliminate redundancies. See Appendix G for a list of the 75 statements.

One week later, in the fourth and final virtual meeting of the CoP, participants logged in to their individual accounts and were then prompted to sort the 75 statements into groups:

In this activity, you will categorize statements into piles according to your view of their meaning. To do this, you will sort each statement into piles in a way that makes sense to you. Group the statements on how similar in meaning they are to one another.

After sorting the brainstorming data, CoP participants were prompted to rate the 75 statements on a 4-point scale as to importance and current presence:

- On a scale of 1 to 4, please rate how relatively important you think each idea is toward enhancing university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs.
- On a scale of 1 to 4, please rate each idea individually on the extent to which you think your geographic area or the place where you work currently demonstrates or experiences the idea in practice.

The proprietary software then employed multidimensional scaling to convert the qualitative brainstorming data in a similarity matrix grid into quantitative representations of statement relationships. A point map resulted, showcasing the CoP-generated statements positioned in relationship to one another, with numbers corresponding to the brainstorming statements in Appendix G. Figure 4 illustrates the 75 action statements on display in a point map.

Figure 4

Point Map



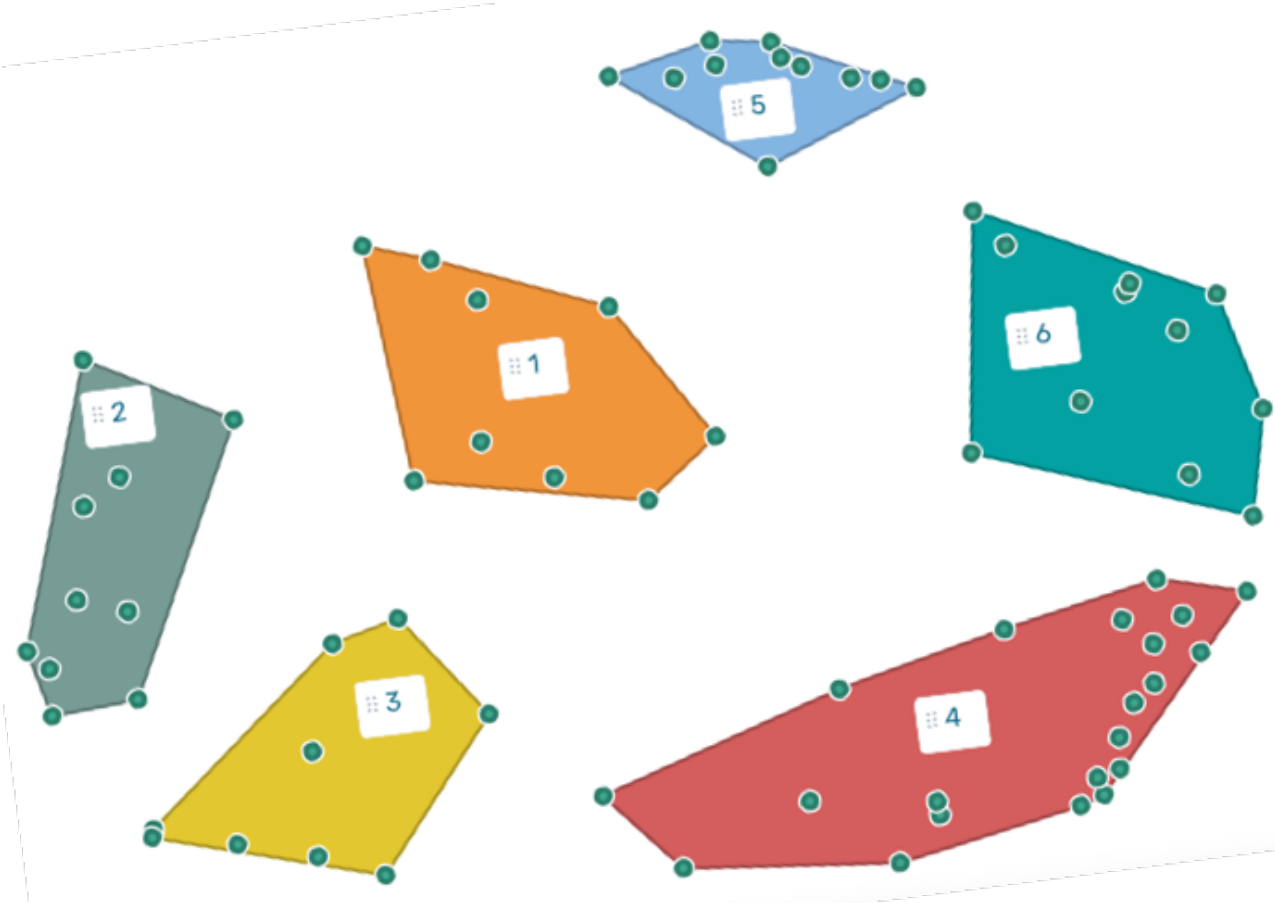
Note. Each dot represents one of the CoP-generated brainstorming statements. Each number corresponds to the statements in Appendix G.

A goodness of fit statistic, stress value, indicates the relationship between the similarity of the brainstorming data and the resulting distances between pieces of that data on the point map in Figure 4. The point map is formed from data in a binary matrix grid, assigning relationships among brainstorming statements and reflecting how many times each statement was sorted similarly by each participant. This grid is then converted into points in space through the arbitrary placement of the first statement, Point 1, and then a web of concentric circles guiding the placement and reflecting relationships with each of the remaining statements as sorted by each participant. In Figure 4, for example, Point 7 on the far-left side of the point map

corresponds to Statement 7 in Appendix G: “Host a social media site where rural scholastic journalists can collaborate with one another.” Point 74 on the far-right side of the map corresponds to Statement 74 in Appendix G: “Let state scholastic press associations conduct workshops, etc., at school districts in rural areas.” The placement of these points on the point map reflects the absence of relationship between them. In the study’s similarity matrix grid, in fact, in the box where these two statements intersect is a “0.” No single CoP participant sorted them together. The stress value statistic reflects how closely aligned this placement of relationships in invisible concentric circles then aligns with x, y coordinates of the points in a distance matrix. Stress value for group concept mapping is between 0 and 1, with 0 indicating better fit. Group concept mapping has an average stress value of 0.28, in a range 0.205 and 0.365 (Rosas & Kane, 2012). Values above 0.365 are deemed discrepant, indicating a lack of relationship between distance of points on the map and the similarity matrix used to place the brainstorming data in relationship to one another. The stress value in this concept map is 0.322, indicating a goodness of fit within the accepted range.

Group Wisdom software visually showcases consensus among the group using hierarchical cluster analysis to determine clusters of the CoP’s brainstorming data. In action research, these clusters equate to proposed interventions. Determining the number of clusters is an iterative process, with the final number determined in this study by the researcher as participant. Multiple solution clusters were considered, with the final cluster set chosen to reflect consensus, while also capturing the distinction among the clusters of data. Figure 5 is the resulting cluster map, reflecting the CoP’s action items for Research Question 3: What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?

Figure 5
Cluster Map



Note. This cluster map arranges a visual display of six areas of consensus among the CoP. The points in this map are the same points in Figure 4, aligning with the same statements in Appendix G. Table 8 names and summarizes each of the six clusters.

Table 8*Cluster Map Legend with Names, Numbers, Descriptions, and Sample Statements*

Cluster Name	No.	Cluster Description with Sample Statements
Work with State/District Leaders	1	Statements direct action toward informing state- and district-level education leaders on scholastic journalism: <i>Work with rural school district and curriculum leaders to help administrators see a need for enhanced scholastic journalism programs.</i> <i>Give administrator/district guides on legislation that may affect student journalism programs.</i>
Connect Rural Programs	2	Statements concentrate on connections with and within the rural community: <i>Provide training opportunities for first-time media advisers in rural areas.</i> <i>Begin a “community” of journalism teachers—both college & high school—to share ideas.</i>
Seek Teacher/ Adviser Involvement	3	Statements focus on teacher involvement and professional development: <i>Link schools without scholastic journalism programs to other schools in their area that have them.</i> <i>Ask teachers to identify their programs’ needs and then provide workshop content that matches those needs.</i>
Set Higher Education Priorities	4	Statements here link higher education resources to rural schools: <i>Have university professors mentor rural scholastic journalism programs.</i> <i>Develop connections between community colleges in rural school districts to offer journalism courses.</i>
Find Funding/ Scholarships/ Stipends	5	Statements coalesce around addressing funding inequities: <i>Develop a stipend program for rural scholastic journalism teachers, similar to the stipends athletic coaches receive.</i> <i>Provide start-up funding support for school news programs.</i>
Leverage Scholastic Journalism Partnerships	6	Statements seek collaboration among scholastic journalism organizations: <i>Leverage already existing university-affiliated programs, such as 4H, in rural areas to reach students through workshops and/or unique writing or design contests.</i> <i>Work with sponsors, such as yearbook publishers, to create free enrichment opportunities for scholastic publications in rural areas.</i>

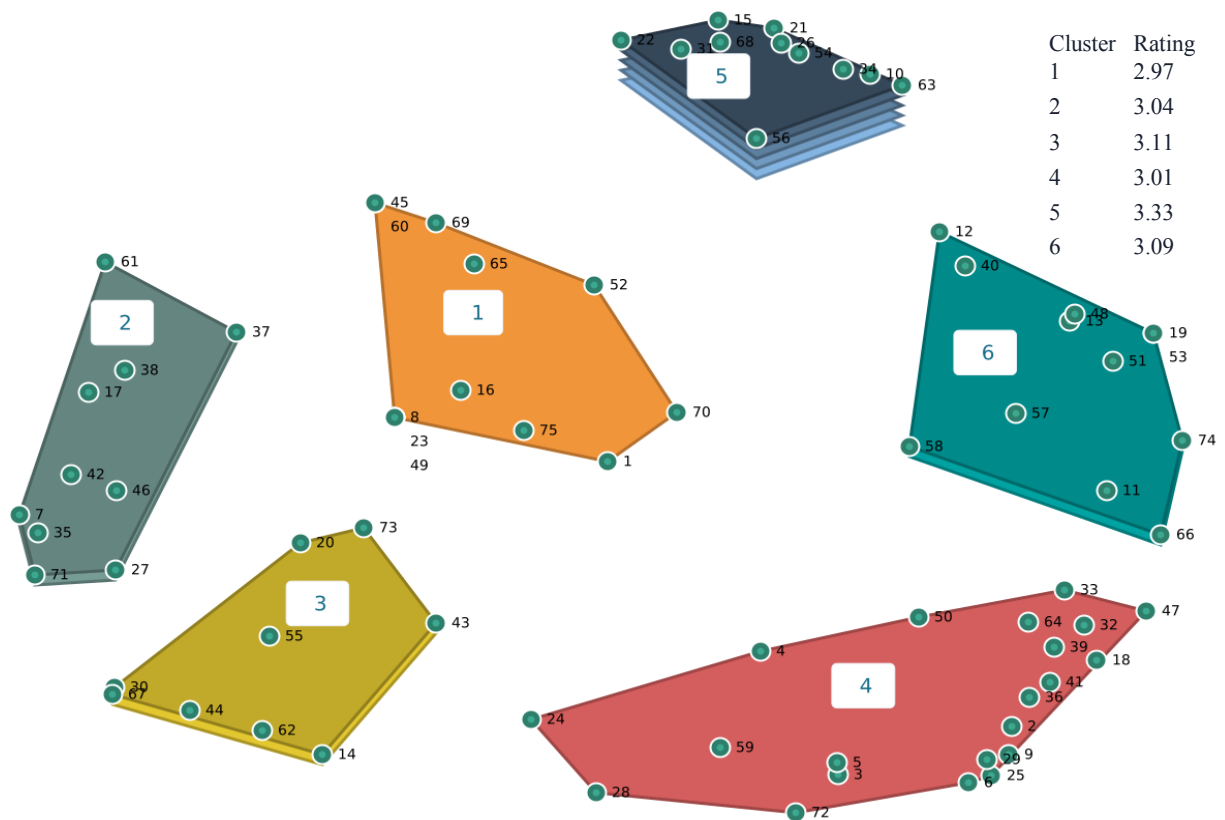
Cluster Rating Map

Ratings data from the brainstorming analysis session in the fourth meeting of the CoP further inform these six areas of consensus by ranking them in order of importance, as indicated from the 4-point Likert scale that CoP participants used to indicate importance of each action statement. These cluster ratings lend a hierarchy to the action plan this concept map provides. In

Figure 6, the ranked importance of *Cluster 5: Find funding/scholarships/stipends*, as rated by the CoP, is visually apparent.

Figure 6

Cluster Rating Map



Note. This cluster rating map with Likert scale average ratings provides a visual display of six areas of consensus, with layers of differentiation indicating which clusters the CoP deemed most important.

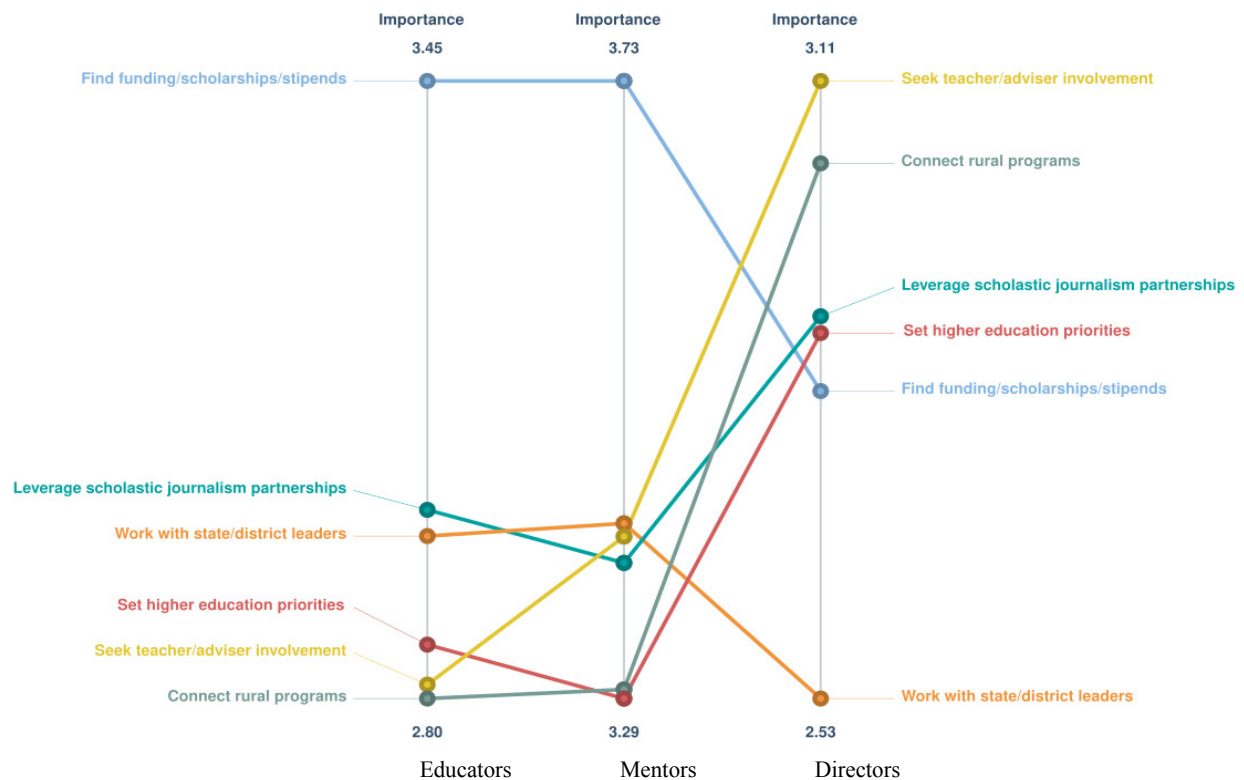
Pattern Matching Subgroup Comparisons

Ratings data from the brainstorming analysis session in the fourth meeting of the CoP also yields subgroup comparisons on action steps to be taken to address university engagement

with rural scholastic journalism programs. A ladder graph representation of the six clusters illustrates through relative pattern matching how the educators, mentors, and directors rate and rank the six clusters according to importance. See Figure 7 for a visual representation of subgroup comparisons.

Figure 7

Pattern Match on Importance Rating of Clusters by Subgroup



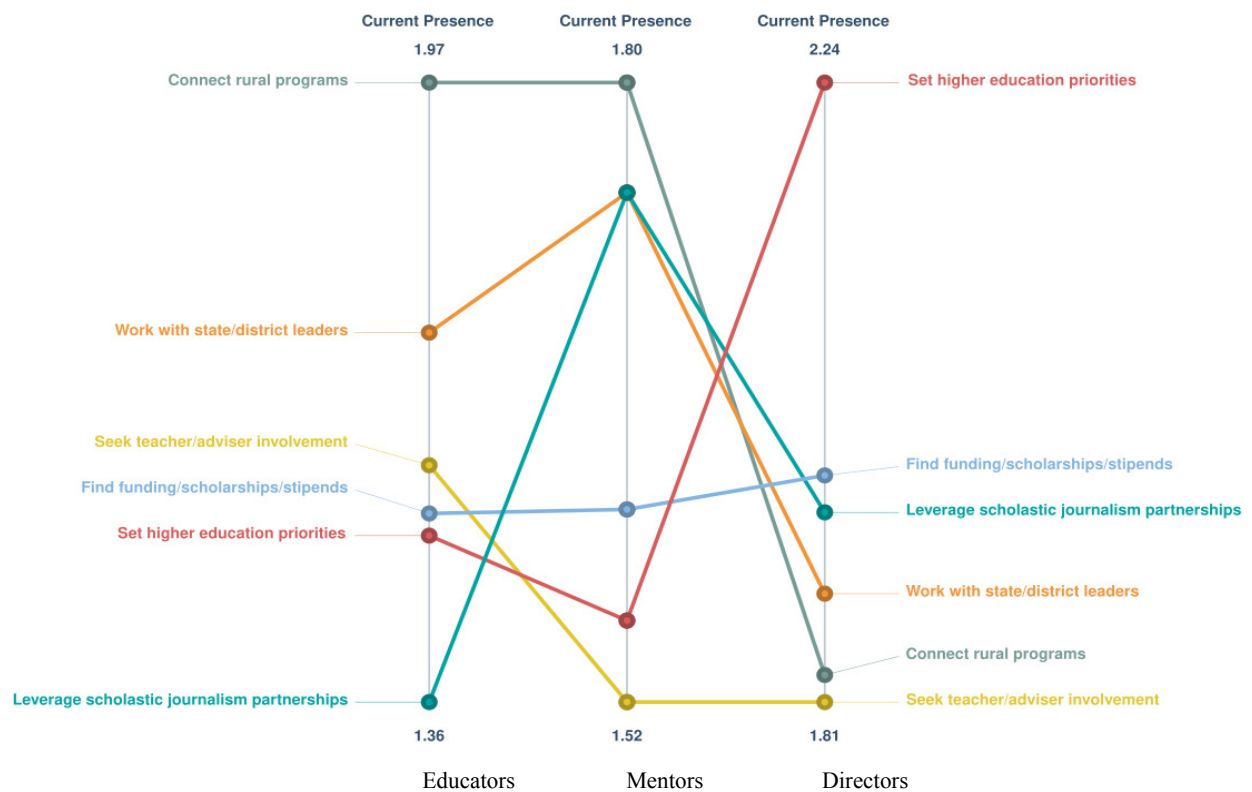
Note. This pattern match arranges a visual display of the study’s subgroup comparisons of the six-cluster concept map ratings. Note the rating for *Cluster 5: Find funding/scholarship/stipends* among educators and mentors vs. the rating of that same cluster by scholastic press association directors.

Ratings data on the current presence of the brainstorming initiatives produced by the CoP reflects by subgroup the degree to which individuals in that group deemed brainstorming

suggestions to be already in existence or already underway. Relative comparisons of the ratings produce a pattern match ladder graph that illustrates ratings of current presence for each of the six clusters. See Figure 8 for these comparisons.

Figure 8

Pattern Match on Current Presence Rating of Clusters by Subgroup



Note. This pattern match reflects subgroup comparisons of the current presence of brainstorming action items, revealing how CoP participants rated the suggested action steps/brainstorming data to be currently available or in existence. Note the rating for *Cluster 4: Set higher education priorities* among educators and mentors vs. the rating of that same cluster by scholastic press association directors.

These pattern maps show relative alignment of educator and mentor subgroups in assigning action items to follow the study’s needs analysis. The consistency of these two

subgroups in Figure 7 contrasts in stark manner with ratings of the scholastic press directors. For example, members of the CoP currently or formerly in the high school classroom, the educators and mentors, ranked the action items in the “Find funding/scholarships/stipends” cluster as most important, yet that same cluster falls to fifth place for the scholastic press director subgroup. The director subgroup rated “Seek teacher/adviser involvement” as most important, but teachers ranked that one fifth, and mentors, third. The director subgroup ranked “Connect rural programs” as second most important cluster of action items. Educators ranked that one last.

This contrast continues in an examination of the current presence ratings in Figure 8. Again, educator and mentor subgroups showed consistent ratings of their top-ranked cluster deemed already in existence. These two subgroups ranked “Connect rural programs” as their highest rated cluster of action items already occurring. Yet the scholastic press directors rank that cluster as fifth of six. This discordant pattern match conveys the difference between scholastic press directors’ perception of initiatives in their field, ranking “Set higher ed priorities” first in current presence, as compared to educators and mentors who both ranked that one as fifth of six. These pattern match findings triangulate to transcript data with one scholastic press director deferring to the other subgroups in the CoP:

Again, I feel like some of these questions are probably better suited for the those on our panel that are now or are former teachers. They’re in there every day, and mine are just observations. I mean, I can make some, draw some conclusions, or make some assumptions based on material. ... But I’m just not in the schools to know.

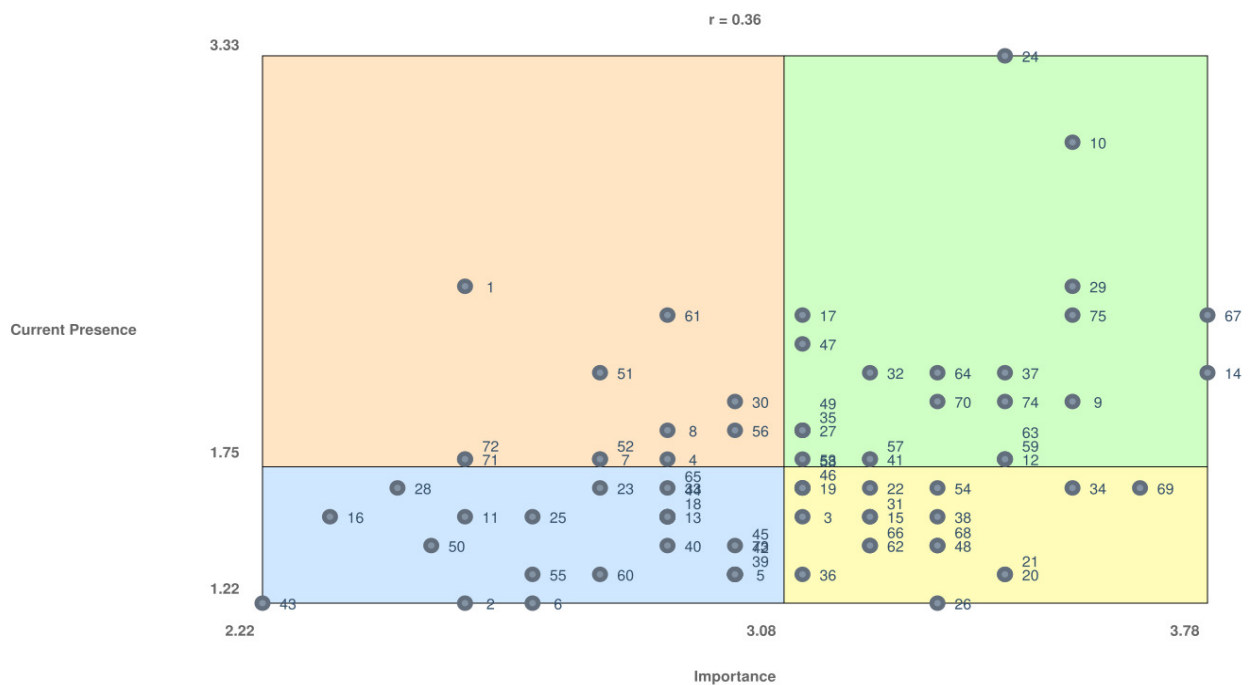
Go-Zone Direction Toward Action

Participants in this study rated all 75 statements in the group brainstorming activity. The CoP-generated data takes the form of an action plan visual in a go-zone map, placing the CoP

brainstorming data in four quadrants established with the mean values of CoP-rated importance and current presence values on the x- and y-axis. The Group Wisdom software color codes the upper quadrant as the default green go-zone, the quadrant reflecting those action items that are currently present and important. For this study, however, the yellow zone is the go-zone. This yellow quadrant contains brainstorming data the group deemed important, but not currently present.

Figure 9

Go-Zone Map



Note. This go-zone map illustrates the CoP-generated action plan, placing brainstorming data in quadrants ranking importance and current presence.

This map yields a statistic of correlational value of importance and current presence, producing a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of 0.36, one of moderate strength in relationship. The yellow quadrant, the go-zone, contains 19 action items that the group deemed

important, but not currently present in university-related engagement with high school journalism programs in rural schools. Table 9 includes the brainstorming statements from this yellow quadrant, this study’s go-zone.

Table 9

Go-Zone Statements as Action Items

Statement	Statements Rated High Importance, Low Current Presence
3	Have university professors conduct district/regional professional development for advisers.
15	Earmark funding for outreach to meet schools where they are.
19	Share with local news networks in rural areas updates and information on scholastic journalism.
20	Link schools without scholastic journalism programs to other schools in their area that have them.
21	Provide start-up funding support for school news programs.
22	Encourage schools and school boards to offer financial support for academic field trips and travel.
26	Offer funding for technology upgrades throughout a region.
31	Develop a stipend program for rural scholastic journalism teachers, similar to the stipends athletic coaches receive.
34	Explore transportation funding sources for rural school field trip opportunities.
36	Develop connections between community colleges in rural school districts to offer journalism courses.
38	Connect with rural schools that do not have scholastic journalism to find out why that is the case.
46	Look for ways to create networks for rural student journalists across the state -- and even across state lines.
48	Work with entities such as a nationally prominent company that hosts high school news sites, to make the launch of a journalism program in a rural school a real possibility.
54	Help rural programs complete grants for equipment/printing costs/etc.
58	Seek the help of yearbook company representatives in connecting universities with the yearbook advisers they work with.
62	Program workshop sessions targeted to rural journalism students.
66	Design specialized journalism programs targeted to rural schools and bring these programs to the schools.
68	Provide transportation scholarships to help rural schools visit universities for workshops or school visits.
69	Work with rural school district and curriculum leaders to help administrators see a need for enhanced scholastic journalism programs

Summary of Findings

Data from this mixed-methods study form an action plan for university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs. The CoP frame employed here coalesces perspectives from three closely connected, yet distinctly different, groups. Results reflect the influence and impact of the journalism adviser, represented by the scholastic journalism educator subgroup, on the viability and sustainability of scholastic journalism programs in rural schools, with the scholastic press director subgroup expressing deference to the expertise of the subgroup's perspective on barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools. Emergent themes in the study's needs analysis of scholastic journalism in rural schools reveal the pivotal role the journalism adviser/educator plays, as well as the challenge of recruiting and keeping a journalism adviser/educator in a rural school setting. Other themes inform the influence of the rural community on the viability of a scholastic journalism program, ranging from providing the advertising base for the financial sustainability of a program to being in conflict with less-than-favorable community-based content in student journalists' reporting. The community theme forms a foundational examination of the ties that bind teachers to a place, while also illuminating the financial considerations that endanger their ability or willingness to stay in a rural community. The community theme is further apparent in the concept mapping data, the visual displays of actions to be taken as a result of the study's examination of scholastic journalism in rural schools. Go-zone results reflect a consensus for university engagement with rural schools that communicates to educational leaders in rural areas the value and impact of scholastic journalism while also finding technology and transportation funds for those schools and harnessing organizational capital available in rural areas, such as nearby community colleges.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

This action research study focuses on the interaction between university-based engagement and rural scholastic journalism programs, generating knowledge around barriers and facilitators to inform engagement that advances high school journalism in rural schools. For rural scholastic journalism programs, this study situates within the scholarship that illuminates academic advantages through scholastic journalism, found more often in well-resourced suburban schools (Bobkowski et al., 2017; Dvorak et al., 1994). For university-based scholastic press associations, the study fits within Boyer's (1990) literature on higher education engagement, espousing higher education's duty "to fulfill its social compact with the public" (Hrabowski & Weidemann, 2004, p. 19) while "valuing the voice and active participation" (Maruyama, et al., 2023, p. 10) of those within university-school partnerships.

As theorized, extending Bandura's (1977) social learning to situated learning within the community of practice (CoP) frame allowed the study's nine CoP participants to connect their distinct experiences inside and outside of the classroom toward the creation of new knowledge employing concept mapping's brainstorming interchange, preserving voice and inviting interaction (Kane & Trochim, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Trochim, 1989). Despite the more than century-long ties between the high school journalism classroom and university-based scholastic press associations, a void of scholarship exists related to those engagement ties. This study suggests a scholastic journalism university-school framework for further exploration of this longstanding university engagement model, focusing here on the opportunity to examine

inequities, such as university-based scholastic press association engagement with rural schools (Norris & Martin, 2021; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Scholastic journalism's census data on suburban, urban, and rural schools calls us to this study (Bobkowski, 2024; Goodman et al., 2011).

Summary of Major Findings

The study's findings capture a needs analysis of rural scholastic journalism programs, detailing the barriers and facilitators to those programs. This snapshot of rural scholastic journalism reflects a community theme in tension, a theme of support for scholastic journalism competing with one seeking conformity in content. Findings reveal the determining role of the journalism educator, while parsing the challenges to retaining those educators in rural communities, amid the financial and curricular barriers to sustaining rural scholastic journalism programs themselves. The foundation for a plan of action in university-based engagement with these programs is informed by recommendations from the study's three subgroups—educators, mentors, and scholastic press directors. Concept mapping results visually capture the CoP's brainstorming data on suggested action plans, reflecting both consensus and differentiation.

Summarized here are the study's major findings, organized within the study's chronology and according to the study's three research questions. A discussion of those findings follows, along with implications for policy and practice. Recommendations for university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs precede recommendations for future research related to engagement and scholastic journalism. Table 11 connects the findings and recommendations to the study's supporting literature.

Action Research Question 1: *How do high school journalism educators in rural schools describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?*

Thematic variety conveys the asset-driven facilitators to rural scholastic journalism, as well as the breadth of challenges these programs face. Code counts reflect the intersection of *size* (80), *connection* (103), and *support* (65). Findings align with scholastic journalism research on journalism civic self-efficacy and the academic advantages of the field, coupled with the place attachment and inherent inequities of rurality (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; National Rural Education Center, 2022).

Obligations, Expectations, and Logistics

Scholastic journalists in rural schools “spin many plates,” as one teacher said, stretching themselves in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular pursuits. When these student reporters pursue their journalism, they do so as young people who are actively involved in their rural communities and closely integrated within those communities. They feel and experience the feedback and outcome of their journalistic work, sometimes with a pressure to promote the school and community and to avoid content deemed controversial. “They self-censor more often and are worried about that pushback.” This outcomes-based work ties to journalism civic self-efficacy scholarship and development of voice and agency (Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Bobkowski & Miller, 2016; Cybart-Persenaire & Literat, 2018). Scholastic journalism competes to exist within this rural school setting, alongside other curriculum choices and placements and amid the financial requirements to operate a scholastic journalism program. Financial concerns range from student journalists not having after-school transportation to lack of resources for design and production software and hardware (Showalter et al., 2023).

Teacher and Community Networks

Color codes for *connection* (103) and *support* (65) dominated the transcript data, mirroring the dominant role student media advisers and journalism teachers have in rural scholastic journalism. The journalism teacher determines the viability and sustainability of a scholastic journalism program in a rural school. These educators teach a specialty curriculum alongside few other district colleagues, and they are tasked with running a business operation within the school while encouraging journalistic coverage of that school community. The rural community's influence on that scholastic journalism program provides the advertising base for its existence, along with local media outlet support. Scholastic journalism associations, based on university campuses, also form a web of interaction and networking with K-12 schools, established more than a century ago (Bowers, 2009; Freedom Forum, 1994; Hines, 1984; North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, 2016). This network counteracts the isolation that rural educators can feel (Inouye et al., 2023) and recognizes the leadership of student journalists, also cited by the teachers as an advantage of scholastic journalism in a rural community.

Action Research Question 2: After participating in a community of practice (CoP) with high school journalism educators in rural schools, how do scholastic journalism association directors and mentors describe the barriers and facilitators to scholastic journalism in rural schools?

Findings here allow for an influence of CoP participation on subgroup descriptions of barriers and facilitators, and the findings also retain distinction among subgroups according to frequency count here and triangulated concept mapping data found later in the study (Kane & Trochim, 2009). The subgroup of mentors, all retired high school journalism teachers, shared 68

years of scholastic journalism teaching and student media advising experience. None of the three scholastic press directors had taught full-time in a high school setting.

An Economic and Media Divide

The two subgroups confirmed a distinct socioeconomic divide within the rural community and its influence on scholastic journalism. This influence on recruitment and retention of scholastic journalism teachers is notable, considering available housing and supplementary teacher stipends. The impact on the students extended to the impact on a resource-challenged school setting. “When something needs to be cut, it’s often the journalism program.” The divide can affect scholastic journalism in specific ways, such as the rite-of-passage purchasing of yearbooks. A focus here, by scholastic press directors, distinguishes transportation as a significant indicator of the socioeconomic divide. School bus restrictions and driver shortages both associate with access to scholastic press association workshops and events, thus closely associate to scholastic press directors organizing those events. Rurality and engagement literature points to a determined asset-focused approach, but that literature also acknowledges this theme’s present and persistent influence (Carnevale et al., 2024; Lichter & Schafft, 2017; Tieken, 2014). The mentor subgroup also called attention to the influence of a rural community’s specific disregard for media through distrust of it and the environment that creates for student journalists. Trust is also a theme synthesized in rurality and engagement literature (Flanagan et al., 2007; Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Teacher and Family

Both subgroups confirmed and echoed the pivotal role of the teacher in the scholastic journalism classroom and as student media adviser, with one scholastic press director explaining, “The engagement with us is always dependent on the teacher.” The teacher-as-partner in

engagement also highlights the family environment that mentors conveyed in describing facilitators. “You get to know the students so much better. You get to know their families more. And the teachers and the students become a family.” That family ethos in the rural community ties scholastic journalism to a storytelling ethic, revealing a unique type of news coverage. “The storytelling has a different color, a different flavor.” That storytelling connects student journalists to their communities, reflected in literature on university-school partnerships (Ohlson et al., 2020; Tieken, 2014).

Action Research Question 3: *What action(s) do scholastic journalism educators, directors, and mentors recommend from this CoP to ensure more inclusive university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs?*

Concept mapping collects, assembles, and positions data in a visual display of relationship, then hierarchy, then comparison, and, finally, go-zone action plans. Findings take the form of the study’s concept maps, summarizing CoP data for this action research study’s next-step intervention. Findings visually extol a university-school engagement partnership in which voice and agency inform decision-making (Maruyama et al., 2023; Moskal & Skokan, 2011; Norris & Martin, 2021). In this study, next steps in university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs center around a collection of six clusters of action statements, with the highest rated cluster focused on securing funding for scholastic journalism. Action items within this funding cluster include providing start-up funding for rural scholastic journalism programs and developing a stipend program for rural scholastic journalism teachers.

Pattern match ladder graphs displaying the relative ranking of the study’s six clusters by subgroup reveal a distinction between the rankings by scholastic press directors and the rankings by both educators and mentors/retired educators. Alignment of mentors and educators is

apparent, revealing a differentiation in this university-school partnership, a differentiation noted in engagement research exploring the boundary spanning roles of university staff assigned to higher education's engagement work (Harden & Loving, 2015; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). These visual displays of difference between those who are now teaching or who have previously taught in K-12 schools, contrasted with those who work on university campuses in K-12 engagement, reflects the apparent influence of the lived classroom experience, but the differences also place into color-coded reality a concerning lack of awareness of K-12 needs and frustrations by those in scholastic press association leadership. The gulf between the scholastic press association director rankings of what is currently present as opposed to the mentor and educator rankings of what is currently present expands beyond a mere crisscrossing of rankings. The disparity reveals a wide expanse between what engagement leaders think and what K-12 educators need, and the disparity reflects the competing obligations of university engagement staff within the higher education system. These competing obligations in the higher education community can distance those tasked with engagement from the very communities they serve. The differentiation herein also informs the go-zone concept map compiling action items according to CoP consensus rank of most important and not currently present. Findings here reveal a next-step approach toward communicating the value of scholastic journalism to school district leaders and toward finding and securing funding to launch and maintain scholastic journalism programs.

Discussion of Findings

Understanding Engagement Partners and Communities

Findings guide university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs based on knowledge gained through this mixed-methods study. These findings teach us the

importance of understanding and respecting our engagement partners and the value of gaining insight into the communities tied to our engagement work. The role of the high school journalism educator is pivotal to any university-based engagement in scholastic journalism, and even more so in the rural school setting. These educators determine the existence of scholastic journalism programs and work in environments similar to those of university-based engagement staff and faculty who serve as scholastic press association directors. Like journalism teachers in rural schools whose work extends throughout the school community, but who have few colleagues in that community, scholastic press directors also work in a similar “irony of isolation” (Harden & Loving, 2015, p. 10) within the university setting while serving a statewide audience. These boundary spanning roles define university staff who lead without positional power, yet who represent the university to their engagement partners and communities. The recognition of these parallels among school and university engagement partners informs a two-direction model of cooperation going forward (Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, 2010). A similar recognition of the role community plays in engagement is apparent in this study. The rural community is a unique part of the scholastic journalism experience in rural schools. Understanding the role that community plays is inherent in engaging with that community. Journalism in a rural school setting happens primarily in concert with the school day, between the hours during which transportation to and from school is provided; access to event coverage outside of those hours stretches the capacity of the scholastic journalism program in rural schools. Journalism in these rural school settings is a lived experience. Student reporters live their words and images. “There’s no anonymity,” as one educator said. Rurality literature points to this interaction of place and story, as engagement principles urge responsive listening to and

awareness of communities served (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Kellogg Commission, 1999; National Rural Education Association, 2022; Ohlson et al., 2020; Showalter et al., 2023; Tieken, 2014)

Understanding Engagement Resources and Communication

Findings also provide a path forward for a better understanding of how resources are perceived and allocated within a school-university partnership and how communication influences such a partnership. One of the Kellogg Commission's (1999) seven principles guiding engagement is devoted exclusively to resources (see Appendix B). These guiding principles still serve as a beacon today in engagement literature, urging an examination of available and sufficient resources (Hrabowski & Weidemann, 2004; Norris & Martin, 2021; Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Within the rural school community, available funding and resources for student journalism have a very real and direct effect on that journalism. A yearbook adviser stipend represents an amount of comparison and appreciation with respect to the stipends of other educators in that school. Updated and available technology represents the difference between audio editing software available in a fixed classroom space as opposed to students trying to load it onto their school-issued laptops. This impact of resources is apparent in the study findings, especially when socioeconomic issues influence participation.

In school-university partnerships, mutual understanding and awareness of resources is important, and it represents how partnerships are navigated. Study findings reveal a distinct difference in scholastic press directors' perception of bus transportation needs, as opposed to educators' and mentors.' For example, once made aware of school bus drivers and bus availability, informed directors could see how these impact attendance at their events on university campuses. Concept mapping embraces these differences in perception and produces visuals that communicate the consensus that results. Concept mapping provides a conceptual

model for understanding a more informed approach to university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs, addressing a gap in engagement literature distinguishing one-direction outreach (inviting schools to workshops) and two-direction engagement (entering into a school-university partnership; Kane & Trochim, 2007; Roper & Hirth, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann 2008). This study's concept mapping findings include a go-zone assignment to communicate the value of scholastic journalism (Bobkowski & Cavanah, 2019; Bobkowski et al., 2017; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Goodman et al., 2011; Marchi, 2011) to rural school district leaders. Communication in a school-university partnership is an act of overcoming barriers such as power dynamics, pride, and codes. Knowledge flow theory explains that communication in a school-university partnership must be shared knowledge, not knowledge held tightly by an elite structure, such as higher education norms. Faculty research is specifically referenced in engagement literature as knowledge that must overcome the barrier of distrust that can result from coding schemes, such as academic research vocabulary and conceits (Havelock, 1969; Weerts, 2005). Sharing the academic value of and civic engagement links to journalism education will be an exercise in harnessing engagement communication reward value.

Community of Practice Frame

This scholarship on knowledge flow theory, along with situated learning theory, inform the CoP frame used in this study (Bandura, 1977; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021; Wenger, 2010). Findings reveal a three-subgroup community that coalesced to examine, study, learn, create, and then share knowledge through concept mapping brainstorming software. The three subgroups represented three important and distinct areas of the field of scholastic journalism and of school-university engagement. Current scholastic press directors on university campuses joined current K-12 journalism educators, along with three former

journalism educators now serving as teacher mentors. Video recordings were used to maintain community when a CoP participant needed to miss a meeting. This was not a regular occurrence and did not interrupt the community, and instead introduced elements such as a CoP participant sending an informational packet to share when absent, reflecting that participant's wish to remain a part of the community on that date. The community dynamic was one of information sharing toward the shared goal of conducting a needs analysis of rural scholastic journalism programs. CoP members associated with rural schools participated with a readily apparent regard for the study content. Others who were not as familiar contributed interview data from their own individual interviews of rural scholastic journalism teachers. While these activities and contributions reflected the community that formed, the subgroup distinctions remained and were on display in concept mapping results. These areas of distinct difference in Figures 7 and 8 reflect important findings about scholastic press director rankings of actions to be taken that conflict with the relative alignment of educator and mentor data. The educator and mentor data remain in relative alignment, signifying the distinct difference in decision making between those who are in or have been in a K-12 classroom and those who are on university campuses making decisions related to outreach and engagement with those classrooms.

In revisiting the Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) three-part CoP frame and this misalignment of the scholastic press directors with the current and former educators, the *domain* of this CoP—the group's shared dedication to scholastic journalism—most certainly inspired the group to meet, to explore, and to coalesce. The *community* of the group, the second part of the CoP frame, led to a mutual regard for each other's areas of expertise. The *practice* of the group, the third element of the CoP frame that moves knowledge gained from the CoP back into each CoP member's setting, revealed this CoP's weakness, visually apparent in the pattern

match discrepancies in Figures 7 and 8. This third element of the frame presents an opportunity for further exploration and study, informing recommendations and further research.

Misalignment With Literature

The hybrid thematic analysis employing a priori and emergent codes revealed a misalignment with literature in this study. A priori codes from this study’s rurality and engagement literature did not adequately accommodate transcript data from this CoP. The a priori codes were insufficient in capturing the facilitators to rural scholastic journalism programs. Inductive emergent codes were a necessary addition to the original a priori codes in examining the 75 pages of transcripts, field notes, and interviews. These emergent codes more readily revealed facilitators, the strengths of rural community and its ties to the storytelling ethic of scholastic journalism. The rurality and engagement literature informed the a priori codes that captured the barriers, while the emergent codes allowed a more asset-oriented approach to the data analysis. Table 10 delineates the a priori and emergent codes, with a final code count in Table 5 reflecting the prevalence and importance of the emergent codes in the data analysis.

Table 10

A Priori and Emergent Codes

A priori	Emergent
Distance	Community
Expense	Connection
Isolation	Size
Transportation	Staffing
Trust	Support

This prevalence can perhaps be attributed to the unique context of the study. These emergent codes allowed for an examination of transcript data from a uniquely constructed CoP with diverse perspectives. The study's three subgroups had not previously been simultaneously studied in a similar manner, and the study's rural focus represented a unique context within engagement literature. The resulting 10 a priori and emergent codes allowed a more complete analysis of the study's data.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings in this study and the study's visual array of concept maps inform application within the higher education setting, but the visual display of disparities within the pattern matching maps informs a cautious approach toward implementation. A Cycle 2 reconvening of the CoP would allow for more exploration of these disparities. Applying the current data, however, in a real-world format reflects the researcher-as-participant and scholar-practitioner approach of this study. An important declaration here is a reminder of the researcher-as-instrument effect and my "occupational positionality" (Sabnis & Wolgemuth, 2023, p. 3743). As a scholastic press director interpreting study findings and implications, I bring to this study my own preconceptions formed during my 3 decades in higher education engagement work. The importance here is in realizing the effect and influence of that work and my need to be transparent in how it informs these policy and practice interpretations (Peshkin, 1988; Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). Four recommended courses of action follow, summarized with related literature in Table 11.

Table 11*Recommendations Based on Study Findings*

Findings	Related Recommendations	Supporting Literature
Need to communicate academic value of scholastic journalism	Create a communication plan that regards knowledge flow in school-university partnership.	Bobkowski & Cavanah, 2019; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Havelock, 1969; Weerts, 2005;
Need to find funding to launch and sustain scholastic journalism programs in rural schools	Produce asset maps of resources within the school and university communities.	Hrabowski & Weidemann, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Norris & Martin, 2021; Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008
Need to recognize pivotal role teacher plays in rural scholastic journalism program	Conduct engagement capacity review of engagement partners.	Harden & Loving, 2015; Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, 2010
Need to understand unique role of scholastic journalism within rural community	Reconvene CoP to investigate Cycle 2 of action research study.	Bandura, 1977; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021; Wenger, 2010

Note. CoP = community of practice.

Recommendation 1

Create a Communication Plan. Within the far-left quadrant of this study’s go-zone map rests this call for action: “Work with rural school district and curriculum leaders to help administrators see a need for enhanced scholastic journalism programs.” This data point (69) is the one action CoP participants deemed most important and most absent. This call to convene district leaders in promotion and support of scholastic journalism first requires a communication plan that responds to this study’s exploration of the academic advantages of scholastic journalism and the engagement literature on knowledge flow among and between engagement

partners (Bobkowski & Cavanah, 2019; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Havelock, 1969; Weerts, 2005). Evidence on the value of scholastic journalism is abundant and available, but a communication plan conveying academic research must respond to the engagement literature that cautions against the language barrier presented by that academic research. This communication plan must follow a strategic communication storytelling approach and package the material in a visually appealing manner. The academic advantages of scholastic journalism must speak to education leaders through an engagement lens and not represent another assignment from outside of the school community. Sharing and distributing such a communication plan should employ an analysis of school district and scholastic journalism gatekeepers, determining those at the school district and higher education journalism education levels deemed most influential in their respective information ecosystems. This communication plan should also reach beyond the schools and universities and extend to journalism education scholars and school board leaders.

Recommendation 2

Produce Asset Maps of Resources. This study's hierarchical cluster analysis, resulting in a visual display of brainstorming data, yielded six groups of related brainstorming, six options for areas of action and focus. A cluster rating map then revealed that the one cluster the CoP deemed most important was the one mobilizing a search for funding. The "Find funding/scholarships/stipends" cluster contains action statements that call for teacher stipends, student scholarships, grant funding, start-up funds, and travel funds. The persistent need is clear, but the path toward action is not so clear. Engagement literature that references relationship and resource management informs this recommendation for asset mapping of school and university resources (Hrabowski & Weidemann, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Norris & Martin, 2021;

Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Applying the Kellogg Commission test (see Appendix B) to scholastic journalism and higher education engagement would allow an asset mapping exercise to inform this engagement partnership and to reveal planning and implementation to follow.

Recommendation 3

Determine Engagement Capacity of Partners. One of the persistent findings in this study pointed to the influential role of the high school journalism educator/student media adviser in determining the viability of a scholastic journalism program in a rural school and whether that program engages with the scholastic journalism network outside of that school, specifically a university-based state scholastic press association. Boundary spanning scholarship presents parallels to the role of the scholastic press association director within the university setting. Both engagement partners face an “irony of isolation” (Harden & Loving, 2015, p. 10), in work settings without peers. Both are tasked with roles that place them in relationship with the larger community outside of their immediate settings. In the university setting, the scholastic press director, as boundary spanner, supports higher education outreach and engagement work in a decentralized manner with no university-wide committee or support structures (Harden & Loving, 2015; Weerts, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, 2010). In the high school setting, student media advisers teach journalism in a similarly decentralized manner. The unique position of these university partners, as educator and director, supports the need for an engagement capacity analysis to inform the path forward for school-university engagement in scholastic journalism.

Recommendation 4

Reconvene Community of Practice to Determine Intervention. The CoP in this study completed Cycle 1 of this action research study. Participants attended CoP meetings, did outside research, suggested speakers, and interviewed rural scholastic journalism teachers. They attended four CoP meetings and participated in semi-structured interviews. The interaction among the three subgroups informed the study's findings in important ways, especially among current and former educators. In order to take into consideration the unique role of the rural community in affecting school-university engagement, the final recommendation is to reconvene the CoP in the same three-subgroup manner in order to determine the next steps, Cycle 2 of the action research study (Bandura, 1977; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021; Wenger, 2010). Doing so will preserve the community already formed and advance the knowledge gained. The CoP could then examine the concept mapping results and seek consensus on next steps in the implementation spiral (Stringer & Ortiz Aragón, 2021).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study yielded important findings on school-university engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs. These findings have informed policy and practice recommendations and produced a conceptual framework of concept map guidance for action. Further studies are warranted, however, with a description of future research provided here.

Brainstorming Data Analysis

Group concept mapping proprietary software yields bridging values and spanning analysis showing relationships among individual pieces of data. Bridging values, for example, are available for each statement within a cluster on the cluster rating map. These values from 0 to 1 show relationships among data according to the value of the data sorted with and around it on a

point map. A spanning analysis map shows how frequently statements are sorted with every statement in the point map, showcasing relationships of data in ways that further inform school-university engagement by indicating with weighted lines the strength or weakness of such relationships. The visual array of lines linking all data points in a spanning analysis could therefore be used to yield relationship barriers and facilitators among action items in cluster maps.

Needs Analysis of Scholastic Press Associations

A dearth of scholarship on scholastic press association outreach and engagement calls for this future study examining barriers and facilitators to this unique area of higher education engagement, one whose history aligns with the establishment of journalism and media programs on college campuses. Engagement scholarship, such as the Kellogg Commission (1999) Seven-Part Test provides a frame for this study. This needs analysis would complement the findings of this study and inform K-12 engagement.

Textual Analysis of Student Media

The unique school-community relationship in this rural school setting calls for an examination of the journalism produced in that rural school setting, one that explores the lived experience of the student journalist through words and images in yearbook copy, broadcast scripts, and newspaper articles. Knowledge flow theory informs an analysis of community engagement, while rurality scholarship informs a community storytelling ethos (Ohlson et al., 2020; Tieken, 2014; Weerts, 2005). Such a textual analysis would further explore the barriers and facilitators of this engagement study.

School Finance Equity Framework for Co-Curricular Programs

Findings in this engagement study direct action toward scholastic journalism program funding. An examination of journalism as a co-curricular opportunity through the lens of a school finance equity framework would inform resource allocation models available to scholastic journalism programs in rural schools. An investigation of funding models would help to illuminate the influence of fundraising, advertising base, and community support.

Summary

Findings outlined within the chronology of this study and implications of those findings have informed these concluding recommendations for university-based engagement with rural scholastic journalism programs. Findings indicate a robust community support network for scholastic journalism programs, yet an equally demanding array of challenges to the journalism classrooms and student media outlets in those rural schools. Recommendations from this study seek to encourage policies and practices that advance university engagement with scholastic journalism through informed relationship, one that recognizes the unique and disparate environments in which high school journalism instruction and higher education engagement exist.

A recognition of that validates a recommendation to illuminate the engagement capacity of the rural scholastic journalism teacher within the K-12 community and the boundary spanning role of scholastic press directors within the higher education community. Recommendations on future research specific to rural scholastic journalism programs focus on further exploring scholastic journalism in rural schools through textual analyses of existing scholastic media, such as broadcast scripts, yearbook copy, and newspaper articles. Other areas of future research

include an extension of the concept mapping data, along with the investigation of school finance funding models with respect to co-curricular resource allocation.

This action research study has yielded foundational evidence of scholastic journalism's role related to rural schools and foundational direction to guide the engagement work of scholastic press associations with those rural schools. The guidance is of value to scholastic press associations, such as North Carolina Scholastic Media Association, encouraging an engagement mission that goes beyond conferences and contests and seeks to connect with schools toward benefit and partnership. Implementation of the study's recommendations advances this foundational work toward further support of the most important outcome—encouraging and supporting student media outlets that encourage and support student expression.

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APPENDIX A

LOGIC MODEL

Inputs		Implementation		Outcomes		
Needs	Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short Term	Long Term	Impact
<p>Journalism programs are disproportionately populated with white, affluent, female students, and these journalism classes are found predominantly in better-resourced suburban schools (Bobkowski et al., 2017; Bobkowski & Rosenthal, 2021; Goodman et al., 2011). Yet research shows students in rural schools could directly benefit from journalism's link to community engagement (Marchi, 2011).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ University-based scholastic journalism outreach organization ■ Access to rural educators in the state ■ Mentoring program associated with university-based outreach ■ Access to university-based rural services programming ■ Access to national scholastic journalism educators in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Form community of practice among scholastic journalism educators in rural schools representing eight regions of the state ■ Incorporate current and former scholastic journalism mentors in a collaborative CoP ■ Design intervention focused on addressing inequalities in scholastic journalism presence in rural schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Findings related to scholastic journalism's role in rural schools ■ Findings related to university-based outreach and its role in serving scholastic journalism in rural schools ■ Findings related to needs of scholastic journalism educators in rural schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase in professional growth of educators ■ Decrease in isolation of rural educators in scholastic journalism ■ Increase in rural educators' awareness of scholastic journalism resources ■ More informed university-based outreach to rural schools ■ More informed university-affiliated mentoring of educators in rural schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase in stature of existing scholastic journalism programs in rural areas of the state ■ Increase in links between university-based outreach services and scholastic journalism programs through greater participation in outreach programs and services ■ Increase in number of scholastic journalism programs in rural schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Network of scholastic journalism educators in rural schools ■ Directing of resources in an informed manner to increase presence of high school journalism programs in rural schools ■ Addressing inequities in university-based scholastic journalism outreach
<p>Assumption: If rural high school journalism teachers participate in a scholastic journalism CoP, isolation will diminish, and trust will increase as professional growth occurs.</p>						

APPENDIX B

KELLOGG COMMISSION SEVEN-PART TEST DEFINING AN ENGAGED INSTITUTION

Seven guiding characteristics seem to define an engaged institution. They constitute almost a seven-part test of engagement.

1. Responsiveness. We need to ask ourselves periodically if we are listening to the communities, regions, and states we serve. Are we asking the right questions? Do we offer our services in the right way at the right time? Are our communications clear? Do we provide space and, if need, be, resources for preliminary community-university discussions of the public problem to be addressed. Above all, do we really understand that in reaching out, we are also obtaining valuable information for our own purposes?

2. Respect for partners. Throughout this report we have tried to emphasize that the purpose of engagement is not to provide the university's superior expertise to the community but to encourage joint academic-community definitions of problems, solutions, and definitions of success. Here we need to ask ourselves if our institutions genuinely respect the skills and capacities of our partners in collaborative projects. In a sense we are asking that we recognize fully that we have almost as much to learn in these efforts as we have to offer.

3. Academic neutrality. Of necessity, some of our engagement activities will involve contentious issues whether they draw on our science and technology, social science expertise, or strengths in the visual and performing arts. Do pesticides contribute to fish kills? If so, how? How does access to high quality public schools relate to economic development in minority communities? Is student "guerrilla theater" justified in local landlord-tenant disputes. These questions often have profound social, economic, and political consequences. The question we

need to ask ourselves here is whether outreach maintains the university in the role of neutral facilitator and source of information when public policy issues, particularly contentious ones, are at stake.

4. Accessibility. Our institutions are confusing to outsiders. We need to find ways to help inexperienced potential partners negotiate this complex structure so that what we have to offer is more readily available. Do we properly publicize our activities and resources? Have we made a concentrated effort to increase community awareness of the resources and programs available from us that might be useful? Above all, can we honestly say that our expertise is equally accessible to all the constituencies of concern within our states and communities, including minority constituents?

5. Integration. Our institutions need to find way to integrate their service mission with their responsibilities for developing intellectual capital and trained intelligence. Engagement offers new opportunities for integrating institutional scholarship with the service and teaching missions of the university. Here we need to worry about whether the institutional climate fosters outreach, service, and engagement. A commitment to interdisciplinary work is probably indispensable to an integrated approach. In particular we need to examine what kinds of incentives are useful in encouraging faculty and student commitment to engagement. Will respected faculty and student leaders not only participate but also serve as advocates for the program?

6. Coordination. A corollary to integration, the coordination issue involves making sure the left hand knows what the right hand is doing. The task of coordinating service activities whether through a senior advisor to the president, faculty councils, or thematic structures such as the Great Cities Project or "capstone" courses clearly requires a lot of attention. Are academic

units dealing with each other productively? Do the communications and government relations offices understand the engagement agenda? Do faculty, staff, and students need help in developing the skills of translating expert knowledge into something the public can appreciate.

7. Resource partnerships. The final test asks whether the resources committed to the task are sufficient. Engagement is not free; it costs. The most obvious costs are those associated with the time and effort of staff, faculty, and students. But they also include curriculum and program costs, and possible limitations on institutional choices. All of these have to be considered. Where will these funds be found? In special state allocations? Corporate sponsorship and investment? Alliances and strategic partnerships of various kinds with government and industry? Or from new fee structures for services delivered? The most successful engagement efforts appear to be those associated with strong and healthy relationships with partners in government, business, and the non-profit world.

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study to examine high school journalism/student media in rural schools and university outreach and engagement with those rural scholastic journalism programs.


I understand that current high school journalism teachers in rural schools, former high school journalism teachers now serving as teacher mentors, and current scholastic press association directors on university campuses, will be asked and will have the opportunity to participate in a community of practice (CoP). I understand that my participation in the study is purposeful and voluntary. Data collection will be ongoing throughout the cycle from April 29, 2024, until June 30, 2024. Data collection methods will include an online brainstorming exercise called concept mapping. All members of the CoP will also have the opportunity to participate in semi-structured interviews that are to be conducted one to one between the participant and researcher.

I understand that the interviewer has been trained in the research of human subjects, my responses will be confidential, and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I understand that the data will be collected using video and audio recording and then transcribed for analysis. Information from the audio recording and transcription will be safeguarded so my identity will never be disclosed. My true identity will not be associated with the research findings. I understand that there is no known risk or discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time. I agree that should I choose to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the study that I will notify the researcher listed below, in writing. A decision not to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher, the College of William & Mary generally or the School of Education, specifically.

If I have any questions or problems that may arise as a result of my participation in the study, I understand that I should contact Monica Hill, the researcher, at phone number 919-962-4639 or email at mihill@wm.edu. I understand that I may also contact Dr. Tom Ward at 757-221-2358 or EDIRC-L@wm.edu or tjward@wm.edu. My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Participant

Date



Signature of Researcher

April 23, 2024

Date

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY the W&M PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2024-04-29 AND EXPIRES ON 2025-04-29.

APPENDIX D

FIELD NOTES JOURNAL OUTLINE

Date:

Title/Topic of Meeting:

Setting:

Description of Location

Geography of Place

Time of Day

Weather

Current Events of the Day/Recent News Items

Participant Descriptions:

Chronology of Interactions During Meeting:

Critical Reflection

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What do you/did you teach? How long have you been teaching/working in scholastic journalism? What journalism experience or preparation did you have before you started teaching/advising journalism (or directing a scholastic journalism association)? What teaching certifications do you have? Do you belong to any journalism education or K-12 education organizations?
2. Tell me about the school where you teach/taught (or university where you are based): Where is/was it located? How many students? What is/was the demographic makeup of your student population?
3. Describe your reaction to the community of practice meetings. Do you feel a community is forming? If not, what do you recommend? What outcome(s) do you envision? Do you foresee a positive result from joining together?
4. How do you describe the state of scholastic journalism in your rural school? Or in rural schools generally? How do you think other people generally think of the state of scholastic journalism in rural schools?
5. Does a journalism program in a rural school benefit from any unique advantages, in comparison to a journalism program in another type of school? What are those advantages? Does a journalism program in a rural school face any unique challenges, in comparison to a journalism program in another type of school? What are those challenges?
6. What is your reaction to this statement? High school journalism plays a unique role in a rural school, as compared to a school in a different community. How so?

7. What are the greatest strengths of your program? What are the greatest strengths of rural scholastic journalism programs generally? Where do you find the greatest sources of support for your scholastic journalism program? What are those sources of support?
8. Does your journalism program have ties to university resources? Or to local media resources? If so, how and to what extent?
9. What are the greatest areas of need in your program? What are the greatest areas of need in rural scholastic journalism programs generally? You have mentioned XXXXX as an area of need. Are there other resources that you wish your program had access to? How could scholastic journalism organizations based on university campuses best work with or assist rural high school journalism programs?
10. Have you taken courses or participated in workshops in journalism that count toward continuing education?
11. If you were able to take a class or attend a workshop in journalism, what topics would you want to learn about or teach others?
12. Have you or your students participated in scholastic journalism programs in your area, such as workshops or conferences? If you and your students were able to attend a workshop or conference in journalism, what topics would you want to learn about or teach others at the conference?
13. What role does money play in engaging with workshops, conferences, and other such programming? If money were no object, are there other barriers that might prevent you from taking your students to such events?

14. How are scholastic journalism field trip opportunities like these perceived (by teachers, students, administrators)? How do school district field trip policies affect scholastic journalism field trip participation?

APPENDIX F

CODEBOOK

Code	Description	Examples	Excerpts
Community*	Binding teachers, students, and residents through a sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family atmosphere ▪ Feeling appreciated ▪ Know one another ▪ Pride 	<i>They are the bee's knees in the community.</i>
Connection*	Establishing links to those in journalism, media, higher education, and one's own community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reaching out ▪ Working with ▪ Resources 	<i>...they come on board and get involved.</i>
Distance	Miles, space, and time that affect engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Far away ▪ Removed ▪ Nearby 	<i>We are, you know, so far away, and we're smaller.</i>
Expense	Budgeting and financial matters related to doing journalism and making connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Afford ▪ Financing ▪ Technology 	<i>I could only take, you know, students who could afford to pay to go ...</i>
Isolation	Being or feeling removed from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only one ▪ Out there 	<i>I don't have partners ... other people in the building.</i>
Size*	Population density or square miles related to a rural community/ school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smaller class sizes ▪ Curriculum ▪ Close-knit 	<i>... the possibility of a small, knit, close-knit community</i>
Staffing*	Teachers, publication advisers and journalism educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher ▪ Adviser ▪ Educator 	<i>... the engagement with us is always dependent on the teacher</i>
Support*	Being or feeling acknowledged, appreciated, and/or assisted; tangible evidence of assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentor ▪ Technology ▪ Administration 	<i>Through my yearbook rep. ... I mean, if I send him a text, he calls back</i>
Transportation	Mode of travel, such as school buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School bus ▪ Drivers ▪ Can't go 	<i>That's still not enough time for them to order and reserve the buses.</i>
Trust	Being or feeling comfortable in relation to others; or lack of that confidence/comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skepticism ▪ Political ▪ Self-censor 	<i>There's a great deal of skepticism about journalism and news ... and universities.</i>

APPENDIX G

BRAINSTORMING STATEMENT SETS

Number	Cluster 1: Work with state/district leaders
1	Share information on the educational value of field trips.
8	Encourage rural community newspapers to host a scholastic news column/monthly page to showcase student writing.
16	Ask the rural schools to help create the standards for scholastic press association student media contests.
23	Work with local news organizations to host high school students as "guest writers."
45	Lobby legislators from rural areas about the importance of scholastic journalism in schools.
49	Encourage local media outlets to seek out ways to support scholastic journalists.
52	Reach out to school administrators and social studies teachers about the importance of using scholastic journalism as a vehicle for civics instruction.
60	Meet with state leaders to revisit journalism curriculum and the "place" for journalism programs (career and technical programs vs. English programs).
65	Give administrator/district guides on legislation that may affect student journalism programs.
69	Work with rural school district and curriculum leaders to help administrators see a need for enhanced scholastic journalism programs.
70	Create opportunities for schools near one another to pool resources/instruction.
75	Provide access to ready-to-go curriculum/notes/activities for rural scholastic advisers and other instructors.

Cluster 2: Connect rural programs	
7	Host a social media site where rural scholastic journalists can collaborate with one another.
17	Support a wide variety of student media opportunities beyond the traditional yearbook and newspaper.
27	Begin a "community" of journalism teachers- both college & high school- to share ideas.
35	Maintain a discussion list with rural advisers to stay up to date with their needs (funding, curriculum, etc.)
37	Promote the importance of "community" journalism in rural areas.
38	Connect with rural schools that do not have scholastic journalism to find out why that is the case.
42	Show rural advisers how to make a school website a real asset in communities that have lost their professional media outlets.
46	Look for ways to create networks for rural student journalists across the state -- and even across state lines.
61	Offer special summer fellowships for journalism teachers in rural programs.
71	Have regional adviser socials two or three times a year at restaurants/bars/etc.

Cluster 3: Seek teacher/adviser involvement	
14	Ask teachers to identify their programs' needs and then provide workshop content that matches those needs.

- 20 Link schools without scholastic journalism programs to other schools in their area that have them.
- 30 Invite more rural scholastic journalism teachers to be instructors at scholastic press association events.
- 43 Create contest categories for rural journalism.
- 44 Assist school districts in developing professional development opportunities for advisers/teachers.
- 55 Extend scholastic press association mentorship programs beyond the current three-year span.
- 62 Program workshop sessions targeted to rural journalism students.
- 67 Provide training opportunities for first-time media advisers in rural areas.
- 73 Pair programs across the state for feedback loops and small communities so students can engage with each other.

Cluster 4: Set higher education priorities

- 2 Have university professors mentor rural scholastic journalism programs.
- 3 Have university professors conduct district/regional professional development for advisers.
- 4 Ask rural alumni to go into high school classrooms and promote journalism careers.
- 5 Take a small team of collegiate journalists to the high school classrooms for a help session.
- 6 Host "A Day in the Life" on rural collegiate campuses for high school student journalists to shadow college journalists.
- 9 Take journalism to them by holding workshops at colleges and universities in rural areas.
- 18 Allow higher education faculty members the time and resources to connect with rural school programs.
- 24 Provide summer programs that students from around the region could attend.
- 25 Send professors to the high schools to promote their college programs.
- 28 Offer high school teachers the opportunity to sit in on some journalism classes on college campuses.
- 29 Host high school journalism classes on college campuses for workshops.
- 32 Invite other universities in the state to become involved in growing scholastic journalism opportunities in rural schools.
- 33 Provide a web of university-level journalism resources that rural schools might connect with.
- 36 Develop connections between community colleges in rural school districts to offer journalism courses.
- 39 Seek out roles for community colleges to play, such as their employees trained in public relations and journalism.
- 41 Ensure access to university resources related to scholastic journalism within a manageable radius of the rural schools.
- 47 Partner with other universities to "share the load" - work together to use each other's strengths and enhance the programs/outreach offered.
- 50 Research and develop AP (advanced placement) courses in journalism and media.
- 59 Go to the schools themselves to offer instruction on site in rural schools.

- 64 Educate communications/journalism departments at universities about the need for providing opportunities for engagement with scholastic journalism programs.
- 72 Provide more one-on-one contact between college professors/teachers and classroom teachers.

Cluster 5: Find funding/scholarships/stipends

- 10 Offer need-based scholarships for teachers and students to attend university conferences or summer camps.
- 15 Earmark funding for outreach to meet schools where they are.
- 21 Provide start-up funding support for school news programs.
- 22 Encourage schools and school boards to offer financial support for academic field trips and travel.
- 26 Offer funding for technology upgrades throughout a region.
- 31 Develop a stipend program for rural scholastic journalism teachers, similar to the stipends athletic coaches receive.
- 34 Explore transportation funding sources for rural school field trip opportunities.
- 54 Help rural programs complete grants for equipment/printing costs/etc.
- 56 Tap into the resources of other national organizations that could offer support for rural programs.
- 63 Work with for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to generate grants and funding for programs.
- 68 Provide transportation scholarships to help rural schools visit universities for workshops or school visits.

Cluster 6: Leverage scholastic journalism partnerships

- 11 Leverage already existing university-affiliated programs, such as 4H, in rural areas to reach students through workshops and/or unique writing or design contests.
 - 12 Work with sponsors, such as yearbook publishers, to create free enrichment opportunities for scholastic publications in rural areas.
 - 13 Develop partnerships with key players already involved with schools in these rural communities, such as local libraries, Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
 - 19 Share with local news networks in rural areas updates and information on scholastic journalism.
 - 40 Offer outdated/replaced university equipment to rural schools as part of a training/exchange program.
 - 48 Work with entities such as a nationally prominent company that hosts high school news sites, to make the launch of a journalism program in a rural school a real possibility.
 - 51 Ask local [rural] journalists speak at workshops in their areas.
 - 53 Visit opportunities to partner with local media organizations and rural schools.
 - 57 Work with state press associations (i.e., non-scholastic) to hold workshops in their [rural] areas
 - 58 Seek the help of yearbook company representatives in connecting universities with the yearbook advisers they work with.
 - 66 Design specialized journalism programs targeted to rural schools and bring these programs to the schools.
 - 74 Let state scholastic press associations conduct workshops, etc., at school districts in rural areas.
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VITA

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Education

- 2025 Executive Ed.D.
Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership
The College of William & Mary
- 1998 Master of Education
Secondary School Language Arts
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- 1997 Master of Arts
Journalism
The University of Alabama
- 1991 Bachelor of Arts
Journalism
Auburn University
Minors: Education Studies, English and Spanish

Experience

- 2002-Current Director, North Carolina Scholastic Media Association
North Carolina College Media Association
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- 1995-2002 Director, Alabama Scholastic Press Association
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