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The State Response to Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier

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Tyler J. Buller*

ABSTRACT

Student journalism was dealt a significant blow in 1988, when Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier gave school officials a license to censor any student speech inconsistent with a school’s “pedagogical concerns.” Scholars and advocates have long argued that Hazelwood has allowed widespread censorship of stories criticizing school officials and articles concerning controversial topics like sex, drinking, and drug-use. In the aftermath of Hazelwood, nine states have adopted so-called “anti-Hazelwood” statutes and regulations that place additional protections between student journalists and school officials. These anti-Hazelwood measures have a mixed track record and are rarely litigated. Until now, there has been virtually no data exploring whether the measures affect student newspapers’ content and in fact work to secure a free and vibrant student press. This Article presents an original study that attempts to quantify the effectiveness of anti-Hazelwood measures by comparing the content of student newspaper editorials in states with and without anti-Hazelwood statutes or regulations. Based on the resulting data, anti-Hazelwood statutes appear to be working and result in students publishing a greater quantity of editorial content, as well as a higher proportion of editorials that criticize school officials or tackle controversial subjects.

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Comments, criticism, and questions are all welcome; the author can be reached at tyler.buller@gmail.com.
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3. Student newspapers in Tinker states include significantly more editorial content than student newspapers in Hazelwood states.  

4. Hazelwood newspapers and those from code-states have significantly more editorials that focus criticism on writers’ peers (other students) than Tinker newspapers.  

5. The Tinker newspapers included significantly fewer debate editorials than either the Hazelwood newspapers or code-state newspapers.  

6. Code-state newspapers are more similar to Hazelwood newspapers than Tinker newspapers states in terms of editorial content.  

D. Discussion  

1. The significantly higher number of total editorials published in Tinker states, and the corresponding higher proportions of controversial editorials and editorials criticizing school officials, all support anti-Hazelwood statutes having a positive effect on student journalism.  

2. Two unanticipated findings—that Tinker states have a significantly smaller proportion of peer-criticism editorials and debate editorials that avoid taking a stand on an issue—also support anti-Hazelwood statutes having a positive effect on the content of student newspapers.  

3. Administrative codes providing student-press rights appear to be largely ineffective.  

4. Hazelwood-state newspapers still have value and are not devoid of worthwhile content.  

5. Numerous avenues for additional research into the effectiveness of anti-Hazelwood statutes remain and are necessary for a more complete understanding of the statutes affect student journalism.  

CONCLUSION
INTRODUCTION

It’s hard to predict what an average member of the public might think when they hear the word “student newspaper.” To students, their newspaper might be a creative outlet, a way to share and develop opinions, or a useful line on the resume for impending college applications.1 To many principals, superintendents, and school board members, student newspapers may be little more than an annoyance, just another student club, or perhaps even the rallying point for a group of unruly students intent on second-guessing school officials’ decisions.2 And to far too many adults and community members, the image that comes to mind is an amateurish publication, filled with fluff news and pun-ridden innuendos.3

Contrary to what some critics might claim, student journalists are doing work that matters. Student reporters uncover corruption4 help hold government officials accountable to taxpayers and the public,5 and bring to light important issues that would otherwise go unreported.6 They allow students to develop academically, professionally, and socially.7 And they give voice to a group of developing citizens who are often disenfranchised from voting in elections, holding office, or otherwise engaging in mainstream political discourse.8

Across the country, there are two very different standards for what student journalists are free to write about and when school officials can punish these students for speaking their minds. Because of developments in federal

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2 See Michael Murray, I Didn’t Always Think Well of the Student Press, THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR, March 2008, available at http://www.splc.org/pdf/aasafreepressarticle2.pdf; M. Chester Nolte, The Student Press and Ways You Can Control It, AM. SCH. BD. J., March 1978, at 35, 35 (“Before you get crushed, mashed and vilified by your student newspaper, here are a few pointers . . .”); see also infra note 322 and accompanying text (discussing administrators’ desire for control over many aspects of student publications); infra note 15 and accompanying text (discussing numerous examples of censorship by administrators); Martinson & Kopenhaver, infra note 70, at 163.


4 See infra notes 36–37 and accompanying text.

5 See infra notes 38–39 and accompanying text.

6 See infra notes 43–48 and accompanying text.

7 See infra Part I.B. (Student Journalism Benefits Students Academically).

8 See infra Part I.C (Students Are the Future of the First Amendment).
constitutional law and related state statutes, the amount of protection afforded to student journalists varies from state to state.\(^9\) One group of students (those residing in what I refer to as “Tinker states”) has the same level of protection the Supreme Court afforded Mary Beth Tinker when she wore a black armband to school 40 years ago in protest of the war in Vietnam.\(^10\) These Tinker-state newspapers can only be censored if they publish unprotected speech (like libel or obscenity) or school officials reasonably forecast the publication will cause a material and substantial disruption.\(^11\) The other group (in what I refer to as “Hazelwood states”) has far less protection and their student publications can be censored any time school officials’ actions are “reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns.”\(^12\) This Article explores the differences between the two groups of student newspapers by drawing on litigation concerning states’ so-called anti-Hazelwood statutes and conducting an original study comparing the editorials of Tinker-state student newspapers and their Hazelwood-state counterparts.

In Part I, I briefly lay a foundation for why the student press matters and why the freedom of student journalists is worthy of our attention. There is strong evidence that student journalism directly benefits students by improving academic achievement, allowing students to serve a watchdog function over taxpayer-funded public schools, and inculcating values crucial to being an engaged citizen, like an appreciation for free speech and government transparency. These benefits, I argue, are worth fighting for through measures like anti-Hazelwood statutes because today’s students will become tomorrow’s engaged citizens and voters, responsible for safeguarding our democracy.

Next, in Part II, I sketch the broad contours of student-press law under the federal First Amendment. The First Amendment’s protection of student speech was at its peak in 1969’s \textit{Tinker v. Des Moines}, when the Court famously held that students do not shed their rights at the schoolhouse gate.\(^13\) But nineteen years later, the Court removed most student newspapers from the protection afforded by \textit{Tinker} and gave schools a license to censor student publications.\(^14\) Seeing the threat Hazelwood posed to student journalism, state legislators quickly responded with statutes designed to blunt the effect of Hazelwood and protect the student press.

As I discuss in Part III, seven states have adopted so-called anti-Hazelwood

\(^9\) In addition to state-by-state variations in student-press law, individual school districts can also provide increased free-speech protections for students. This Article, however, focuses on statewide efforts to combat censorship through either state statutes or state agencies’ administrative regulations.


\(^11\) See id. at 506–14.


\(^13\) Tinker, 393 U.S. at 506 (1969).

\(^14\) See Part II.B infra.
statutes that provide greater protection to student journalists than the federal First Amendment. Two states’ administrative codes also arguably provide similar levels of protection, though their impact is less certain. Unfortunately, these statutes and regulations are often deeply flawed. As I discuss in Part IV, anti-Hazelwood statutes are only litigated in the rarest of circumstances and they are each plagued by substantive problems, such as the frequent mootness of students’ claims, difficulties in maintaining standing to sue, and a potential for school officials to justify censorship premised on the murkiest of grounds.

Against this backdrop, one might wonder: Is the state response to Hazelwood working? The original study discussed in Part V provides at least a partial answer to that question. While the existing research on whether anti-Hazelwood statutes have had an effect on student journalism is mixed, few of these studies looked solely at the content of student newspapers, and no study—until this one—has made an inter-group comparison between newspaper content in Tinker and Hazelwood states.

Following a specific methodology, I acquired nearly 1800 editorials from randomly selected high school newspapers and coded those editorials based on their content. After analysis using tests of statistical significance, the results indicate that Tinker-state newspapers have significantly more editorial content than Hazelwood-state newspapers and proportionally more critical editorials, editorials on controversial topics, and editorials specifically criticizing school officials and policies. Meanwhile, states with administrative codes are more similar to Hazelwood states than Tinker states, with a significantly lower number of critical and controversial editorials and a significantly higher number of editorials that take school officials’ side and criticize fellow students.

I conclude by placing these results in a broader context and argue that the data show anti-Hazelwood statutes are largely working. The increased criticism of school officials and larger number of controversial editorials in Tinker states indicate the student press is better able to fulfill its watchdog function, develop today’s students into tomorrow’s engage citizens, and promote the free flow of student ideas when protected from administrative censorship. I suggest pursuing adoption of anti-Hazelwood statutes in more states is a worthwhile goal, though perhaps little would be accomplished from pursuing administrative regulations. Finally, I draw out additional areas where more research and additional data will improve our understanding of the student press and the interplay between state statutes, constitutional freedoms, and scholastic journalism.

I. WHY THE STUDENT PRESS MATTERS

Although one might hope that this Part would be unnecessary, school
officials’ repeated attempts to squelch the student press suggest that, indeed, someone must make the case for a robust and free student press. As discussed below, three broad rationales undergird any discussion for why we should care about the student press. While not exhaustive (by any means), these three rationales drive the discussion about why the student press has value and is worthy of our attention and protection. First, student journalism correlates strongly with students’ academic success. Second, student journalists serve an important watchdog function over one of the largest taxpayer-funded entities in the country: the nation’s public schools system. And third, high school students are the future of the First Amendment and student journalism helps ensure that today’s students treasure free speech and will continue to do so as tomorrow’s citizens.

A. Student Journalism Benefits Students Academically

The academic rationale for student journalism is very simple: students engaged in student journalism “earn higher grade point averages, score better on the ACT college entrance examination and demonstrate better writing and grammar skills in college” than peers not participating in journalism activities. Scholastic journalism also goes beyond the number-driven side of student achievement, developing sound cross-disciplinary skills in how to manage a staff, work with others, communicate effectively, and stand by your words. These benefits accrue to students whether they choose to pursue

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15 For hundreds of instances where school administrators have attempted to silence student speech, see the Student Press Law Center (SPLC)’s archived “news flashes,” available at the SPLC’s website, http://www.splc.org/news/newsflash_archives.asp (last accessed May 15, 2012).


18 No one has made the case for student journalism more powerfully than its champions at the Student Press Law Center. As SPLC Executive Director Frank LoMonte has explained: Name something that an employer – any employer – wants in a young employee. Analytical thinking? Clear writing? Sensitivity to deadlines? This should be starting to sound familiar – because it’s the package of skills that
careers in journalism, or not. If we can all agree that better grades, improved writing, and the ability to work as part of a team are goals of the public school system—and I have no doubt we can—then student journalism done right is representative of a quality education.

But the benefit to students’ education ripples beyond the direct benefits that flow to student journalists themselves. The student readers of these publications benefit as well, from exposure to new ideas, by developing (hopefully) lifelong habits as a news consumer, and dialoguing about their education. Student journalists themselves report fulfilling an important information-providing role for fellow students, on topics as diverse as the school’s extracurricular activities, teenage driving, the struggles of gay students, gang-related violence, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even principals agree that giving students the opportunity to discuss these topics can be beneficial to the school community. The student press is in a unique position to “enable students in a public high school to receive the information they need to make their own choices about such issues and concerns.”

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19 See JOURNALISM EDUCATION ASS’N, supra note 18, at 43–45. Of course, many former high school student journalists do go into careers in journalism and reap these benefits, as well as a professional leg-up due to their student-press experience. Id. at 57–61.

20 See Clark & Monserrate, supra note 1, at 428 (“[P]ublishing a high school newspaper can . . . spark discussions of politics that extend beyond the classroom—particularly politics as they are more broadly understood to include working out multiple competing interests within the context of a diverse society.”).


22 See J. Marc Abrams S. Mark, End of an Era? The Decline of Student Press Rights in the
these issues can range from the serious to the entertaining, there is no denying that student publications offer an opportunity for students to debate ideas and share information in a way virtually no other medium can.

B. Student Journalism Serves a Watchdog Function for School Officials

The public has a vested interest in the public schools—how they’re being run, what our children are learning, and how our tax dollars are being spent. Local school officials make decisions that range from the purchase and sale of real estate, to the hiring and firing of countless employees, to what languages will be taught and how prepared our students will be for the workforce or higher education. Some would even say that local school boards are where some of the nation’s most important governing takes place.25

American taxpayers’ financial investment in the public schools is massive. In the aggregate, states and local school districts spend more than $600 billion dollars on K-12 education annually—the equivalent of nearly 16 percent of the total federal budget26 or nearly 5.5 percent of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).27 Among these dollars, more than 90 percent come from state and local sources: from local property taxes, fees, and proportionally dispersed statewide taxes.28 If for no other reason than to see where its tax dollars are going, the public has a tremendous interest in the management of public schools and the actions of school officials.

Yet despite the importance of public schools—for educating our children, as a massive expenditure of government resources, and as a vehicle for safeguarding our values—few adults pay close attention to the work of local school leaders. Although exact data is hard to come by, most estimates place turnout in local school board elections at between 20 and 30 percent of eligible voters,29 and some states have even reported average turnout has dropped well


25 No less an authority than fictional President Josiah Bartlet has made this observation, decrying apathy in local elections because “[a]ll [bad candidates] have to do is, bit by bit, get themselves on the Boards of Education and city councils. ‘Cause that’s where all the governing that really matters to anybody really happens.” See THE WEST WING, “THE MIDTERMS,” NBC Universal (Oct. 18, 2000).


27 Public Spending on Education, Total (% of GDP), WORLD BANK, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS (last accessed May 15, 2012). The most recent figures are for 2007 and 2008, both at 5.5% of GDP. Id.


29 See Christopher R. Berry & Jacob E. Gersen, The Timing of Elections, 77 U. Chi. L.
below 10 percent.\textsuperscript{30}

While voters’ apathy toward local matters is nothing new, the digital revolution and changes in the news-media landscape have helped put school governance and the acts of school officials even further out of the public’s mind. Across the country, traditional print media continues to suffer financially, cutting back on coverage and downsizing news-reporting staffs.\textsuperscript{31}

In many cases, reporters from local television stations and newspapers that historically covered school events and served as watchdogs over school officials have disappeared or been reassigned. One estimate suggests that just 1.4 percent of total mainstream media coverage is devoted to education.\textsuperscript{32}

Fortunately, one group remains interested in what is happening in our public schools: the students themselves. Today, there are more high school student newspapers than there are commercial weekly and daily newspapers combined.\textsuperscript{33} If you look around the audience at your local school board meeting, it would not be surprising that the most common—and perhaps only—reporter you encounter is a student, writing for one of the nation’s 12,000 student publications.\textsuperscript{34} These student journalists fulfill a crucial function, as “[a]dults need candid, uncensored student journalism if they are to have any idea what is going on inside the schools they support.”\textsuperscript{35}

Many students have ably fulfilled this role, sounding the alarm on misdeeds by school officials or exposing facts about the school environment that would otherwise go ignored. An investigative story published in \textit{MavLife}, the La Costa Canyon High School newspaper, brought to light irregularities with student-activity fee expenditures that ultimately led to additional administrative oversight and new regulations to safeguard student monies.\textsuperscript{36}
Student reporters in a Dallas suburb conducted a similar investigation into a school vendor’s contract for gang-related intervention programs, eventually “uncover[ing] years of false claims, unfulfilled contracts and unsubstantiated statistics.”37 Student reporters in Larkspur California turned their attention to the local police and investigated reports of police officers stopping teens without probable cause; the trove of data uncovered by the students eventually prompted a grand jury investigation into teens’ treatment by law enforcement.38 And a 2010 story in the Foothill, California Dragon Press brought to administrators’ attention that a convicted sex offender had been employed by both a vendor that repaired school printers and a school fundraising company, and had apparently been on campus on numerous occasions.39

Students are also able to report on what’s happening on the ground floor of public education by virtue of their unparalleled access to sources and in-school information. Since at least the mid-1850s, student journalism has provided a window into the public schools that would not have otherwise been possible.40 Often it is only through the work of these student journalists that community members and school officials become aware of the problems and trends that

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40 Since at least 1847, student journalists have been drawing attention to the deteriorating condition of public schools and the necessity of public funding to fulfill the promise of their education. See WILLIAM J. REESE, THE ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL 86 (Yale University Press 1999). Even in the 19th Century, student newspapers strove to cover controversial topics, such as underage drinking. Id. at 173.
face the young people. Sometimes, school officials even take this information to heart and make improvements that benefit all students’ education.

High school reporters for the *Paly Voice* in Palo Alto, California, opened a school community’s eyes to widespread violent and sexually motivated hazing rituals among the school’s athletic teams. One of the more grotesque experiences uncovered by the students involved the football team allegedly requiring an underclassman to eat a cake covered in the upperclassmen’s pubic hair. A local CBS affiliate and the local daily newspaper quickly picked up the *Paly Voice*’s story, prompting reactions from school board members, administrators, and faculty.

Student journalists writing for the *Rampage* in Rockville, Maryland wrote a detailed exposé about local gang activity that had previously gone unreported due to fears of retaliation. The student reporters relied on student-sources not available to the general media, well as information from government officials, and worked tirelessly for months. After publication, the students earned praise from local police, who had documented a decrease in gang-related violence and attributed it to the students’ articles.

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41 For readers interested in precisely what students were writing about at the turn of the 19th Century, *The Lowell*, a national-award-winning high school newspaper in San Francisco, California, provides a fascinating archive of its back issues, dating to 1898. See *Archives, The Lowell*, [http://www.thelowell.org/archive/](http://www.thelowell.org/archive/) (last accessed August 9, 2012). Of particular note, readers with their own high school newspaper experience might be reassured to find that, more than a century past, student journalists were confronted with a student body lacking school spirit, a handful of slacking student reporters, and a tension between whether to report the news, publish more literary pieces, or allow students to use the newspaper as a “means to vent to their spite.” *Masthead, The Lowell* (Lowell High School; San Francisco, California), January 1898, at 15, available at [http://www.thelowell.org/archivepdfs/01.1898%20thru%2004.1898.pdf](http://www.thelowell.org/archivepdfs/01.1898%20thru%2004.1898.pdf).


44 See id.


46 The entire package, including pieces by Ben Austin, Amanda Gonzales, Ben Bloom, Tom Chalmers, and Mandy Dols—is available at the Student Press Law Center’s website, [http://www.splc.org/pdf/RAMPAGE.pdf](http://www.splc.org/pdf/RAMPAGE.pdf). The articles were originally published in the February 22, 2008, edition of the *Rampage*.


48 Id.
These are but a few examples of the kind of intrepid reporting that flourishes when the student press is freed and allowed to report on important issues—even when their reporting casts school officials in a negative light or makes people uncomfortable. Stories like those outlined above allow students to provide a window into the ground floor of public education and hold the men and women running our schools—teachers, administrators, school board members—accountable.

C. Students Are the Future of the First Amendment

The third, most far-reaching reason to care about the student press is that public high school students are literally the future of the First Amendment.49 The survival of free speech depends not just on our Constitution as interpreted by today’s judges, but also on whether we succeed at passing our constitutional values onto the next generation.50 By many measures, we are failing.

Over the last decade, survey results have consistently shown that between one-quarter and one-half of high school students believe the First Amendment “goes too far in the rights in guarantees.”51 More than a third of students graduate high school without ever receiving classroom instruction on the First Amendment and more than three-quarters graduate without any training in journalism or related skills.52 In 2011, just 12 percent of students believed flag-burning to be constitutionally protected and nearly a third believed the government should be able to require newspapers and websites to obtain government approval before posting stories.53 And since 2004, an average of 38.5 percent of respondents self-reported taking the First Amendment “for granted.”54 This data may even paint an overly rosy picture in light of demographic trends, as emerging scholarship has unearthed wide race- and wealth-based gaps in youths’ civic knowledge.55


50 See Michael Rebell, Tinker, Hazelwood and the Remedial Role of the Courts in Education Litigation, 69 St. John’s L. Rev. 539 (1995) (“Traditionally and historically, a prime mission of schools, especially in the United States, has been to inculcate values. This was just accepted, almost without comment or discussion, throughout American history.” (footnote omitted)).

51 FOFA 2011, supra note 49, at 12.

52 Id. at 15.

53 Id. at 29.

54 Id. at 30.

Student journalism is not an instant panacea to these depressing statistics. But it is a starting point. Time and time again, we have seen that “[l]earning about the First Amendment from a textbook isn’t enough.” Students need to engage with the First Amendment in activities, classes, and their daily lives. Survey data shows that students who easily imagine the First Amendment applying to them—to their ability to express unpopular opinions or to listen to music with offensive lyrics—support protection for those activities. On the other hand, when faced with activities removed their daily lives—like flag-burning or professional newspaper publication—students’ support plummets. One way to bridge this divide is to involve more students in First Amendment activity. For example, students who receive instruction in scholastic journalism through coursework or writing for a student publication are between six and eight percent more likely to support First Amendment protections for musicians, unpopular viewpoints, and professional publications. In other words, by exposing students to First Amendment values, student journalism substantially increases the likelihood those students will come to cherish and respect the First Amendment.

Ensuring today’s students remain stalwart guardians of the First Amendment is particularly crucial in light of declining support for free speech among the adult public. For nearly fifteen years, the First Amendment Center has surveyed American adults for its annual State of the First Amendment (SOFA) report. These numbers have changed over time and remain in flux today, sometimes shifting in response to major events. For example, support for the First Amendment—and civil liberties more generally—plummeted after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. For the first and only time in the survey’s history, nearly half—49 percent—of Americans reported they believed the First Amendment goes too far, and 40 percent of respondents


57 Between 2004 and 2011, an average of 83% of students supported First Amendment protection for expression of unpopular ideas, and an average of 68% supported musicians’ use of offensive lyrics. See FOFA 2011, supra note 49 at 13, 16.

58 Between 2004 and 2011, an average of just 54.5% of students supported First Amendment protection from prior restraint for newspapers, and an average of just 15% supported First Amendment protection for flag-burning. See id. at 13.

59 Id. at 16.


62 Id. at 2
went on to say that newspapers should not be allowed to “freely criticize the U.S. military about its strategy.\textsuperscript{63}

These numbers have largely rebounded in intervening years,\textsuperscript{64} but the state of the First Amendment remains grim. One in three Americans cannot name a single right enshrined in the First Amendment.\textsuperscript{65} Only 17 percent named “freedom of the press” as one of those rights.\textsuperscript{66} And 18 percent of respondents still believe the First Amendment goes too far.\textsuperscript{67} These numbers should give pause to all Americans who hold the First Amendment dear, as we depend at least as much on public support for free speech as we do on courts, lawyers, and judges.\textsuperscript{68} Improving civic literacy among today’s high school students is one important avenue to stemming this tide and ensuring the First Amendment remains relevant to the citizens of today and tomorrow.

Allowing students to live the First Amendment, rather than merely reading abstract First Amendment texts or listening to lectures, also helps ensure the next generation of students will take their dedication to free speech with them when they walk out the schoolhouse gate. Increasingly, though, the actions of school officials leave them with the opposite lesson.\textsuperscript{69} Students faced with

\textsuperscript{63} Id. at 2–3.
\textsuperscript{64} See supra note 60 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{66} Id. at 5.
\textsuperscript{67} Id. at 5.
\textsuperscript{68} No one has put it better than Judge Learned Hand, who noted in a 1944 speech:
I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it...

\textsuperscript{69} As Justice Brennan wrote in his Hazelwood dissent:
Instead of teaching children to respect the diversity of ideas that is fundamental to the American system, and that our Constitution is a living reality, not parchment preserved under glass, the Court today teaches youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes. The young men and women of Hazelwood East expected a civics lesson, but not the one the Court teaches them today.


There is also empirical evidence that student journalism breeds these democratic values; for example, it should come as no surprise that “[s]tudents who participate in a school newspaper have more positive views of the First Amendment.” See Mark Hugo Lopez, Peter Levine, Kenneth Dautrich & David Yalof, Schools, Education Policy, and the Future of the
administrative oppression, rampant censorship, and instructions to only report “good” news take with them life-long beliefs that the First Amendment is little more than words on a page, occasionally paid lip-service when convenient for government officials. This point can be made no better than it was by David Martinson and Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver in 1992:

Teachers can talk all day about the need to take an active role in preserving democracy in America. They can even require that students memorize the entire U.S. Constitution. If, however, students see that teachers and administrators do not respect the most basic of the rights contained in that Constitution, all the rhetoric and all those exercises in rote memorization will constitute further evidence of the hypocrisy that young people too often see as characteristic of much of the “adult world.”

Unfortunately, few of these concerns related to students’ First Amendment education are limited to that one civic concept. Fault lines run throughout American civics knowledge, raising serious questions about the health and durability of our democracy. Young people’s voting rate has gradually declined over the last half-century. Americans 18–24 report the lowest rates of volunteerism with nonprofits, government agencies, and civic organizations of all other age groups. And, on the most recent national standardized test, roughly three-quarters of American students failed to achieve a proficient score in “civic knowledge.”

A free student press is one of the most promising vehicles for repairing the abysmal state of students’ civics knowledge. As retired Justice Sandra Day O’Connor has often said in recent years, “Knowledge about our government is

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First Amendment, 26 Political Comm. 84, 93 (2009).


Voter turnout among 18–24 year-olds in the 2008 General Election was the highest since 1972. Id. It is unclear whether this might reflect a reversal of the trend or may be more a reflection of that year’s candidates. In any event, turnout in 2010’s congressional races was in line with previous turnout rates of roughly 20 to 30% among 18–29 year-olds. See The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, The Youth Vote in 2010: Final Estimates Based on Census Data 1 (2011).

Fault Lines Report, supra note 71, at 22.

not handed down through the gene pool.” 75 We have to teach our civic values to the next generation—and student journalism allows students to learn these values in a hands-on, empowering environment. Writing for student publications “affords young people a sense of a collective and shared public culture” that is crucial to revitalizing civic participation, 76 allows students to improve and take ownership of their own education, and helps develop civic literacy by giving students a means to hold government officials accountable for their actions. In short, student journalism holds tremendous promise: for students, the state of civics knowledge, and the vibrancy of our democracy. Unfortunately, as discussed in the following sections, today’s student press is endangered and often faces an uphill battle in the courts when fighting to secure their autonomy and freedom from censorship.

II. THE STATE OF STUDENT-PRESS LAW

Over the last century, the path of minor students’ constitutional rights has taken a number of turns, for better and worse. Although there are only a handful of cases concerning student speech from the turn of the 20th Century, virtually all “these early efforts to win the right of free speech [for students] were fruitless.” 77 Courts sanctioned everything from the paddling of students who criticized teachers in off-handed, off-campus remarks 78 to the suspension of students who criticized school officials in the local newspaper 79—all in the name of in loco parentis.

Eventually, students’ free-expression rights arrived on the Supreme Court’s doorstep in a series of cases that dealt with students’ refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with their classmates. First, in Minersville v. Gobitis, the Court held in 1940 that students could be disciplined—and even expelled—for refusing to recite the Pledge. 80 But just three years later, the Court reversed course in West Virginia v. Barnette, holding that the First Amendment included protection from compelled speech, allowing public school students to refuse to say the Pledge or other affirmations with which they might disagree. 81 Barnette was the first explicit recognition of public school students’ rights to free expression and would prove valuable precedent when the Court’s landmark

75 E.g., GUARDIANS OF DEMOCRACY REPORT, supra note 74, at 14.
76 Clark & Monserrate, supra note 1, at 418.
77 LAW OF THE STUDENT PRESS, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. 23 (3d ed. 2008).
78 Id. (discussing Lander v. Seaver, 32 Vt. 114 (1859)).
79 Id. at 23 (discussing Slate v. Dist. Bd. of Sch. Dist. No. 1, 116 N.W. 232 (Wis. 1908) and Tanton v. McKenney, 197 N.W. 510 (Mich. 1924)).
student-speech case was handed down twenty-six years later.\textsuperscript{82}

A. \textit{Tinker}: Students Do Not “Shed Their Rights at the Schoolhouse Gate”

The Supreme Court’s first significant treatment of student-speech rights arose out of relatively straightforward facts from the public schools in Des Moines, Iowa. Three students in the Des Moines Independent School District—Mary Beth Tinker (13), her brother John Tinker (15), and their friend Christopher Eckhardt (15)—planned to wear black armbands to school in protest of the war in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{83} Upon hearing of the Tinkers’ plans, Des Moines school officials met and “adopted a policy that any student wearing an armband to school would be asked to remove it, and if [he] did not . . . suspended until [he] returned without it.”\textsuperscript{84} Between December 16 and 17\textsuperscript{85} of 1965, all three students wore armbands to school, were suspended by their building principals,\textsuperscript{86} and did not return until after their planned protest had run its course.\textsuperscript{87} The students soon filed a section-1983 action in federal court, claiming their First Amendment rights had been violated.

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa dismissed their claim after an evidentiary hearing, finding that the schools’ authority to punish students for what they say “should not be limited to those instances where there is a material or substantial interference with school discipline.”\textsuperscript{88} The district court’s decision was affirmed in a three-sentence \textit{per curiam} opinion by an equally divided \textit{en banc} panel of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.\textsuperscript{89}

The Supreme Court granted \textit{certiorari} and reversed, famously noting that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or

\textsuperscript{82} See \textit{LAW OF THE STUDENT PRESS}, supra note 77, at 23–24.


\textsuperscript{84} Id. at 405 (quoting \textit{Tinker}, 393 U.S. at 504)).

\textsuperscript{85} Christopher Eckhardt and Mary Beth Tinker wore their armbands on December 16, 1969. Brief for the Petitioner at 8, 1968 WL 94383, \textit{Tinker}, 393 U.S. 303 (1969). John Tinker, believing school officials should have an opportunity to respond to the students’ claim that the policy banning armbands was unconstitutional, did not wear his armband until December 17, after the president of the Des Moines school board had refused to convene an emergency board meeting to hear the students’ grievance. Id. at 81; \textit{see also} Transcript of Oral Argument, \textit{Tinker}, 393 U.S. 303 (1969).

\textsuperscript{86} Id. at 405.

\textsuperscript{87} In support of then-Senator Robert F. Kennedy’s proposed “Christmas-day truce,” the students had planned to wear the armbands from roughly mid-December until after New Year’s Day. \textit{See id.} at 405–06.


\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.}, 383 F.2d 988 (8th Cir. 1967).
expression at the schoolhouse gate." The holding of the case—often now referred to as the “Tinker standard”—permits censorship of student-speech only when speech (1) materially and substantially disrupts school operations; (2) is reasonably forecast by school officials to cause such a disruption or infringement on the rights of another; or (3) invades the rights of another. The Court found that the school had failed to meet its burden on any of the three circumstances, holding that student-speech that results in “some discussion outside of the classrooms, but no interference with work and no disorder,” could not be proscribed by school officials.

Since Tinker was handed down in 1969, it has remained good law, and has yet to be overturned. But Tinker’s powerful declaration of students’ freedoms has been weakened, eroded, and often relegated to the sidelines. First, in 1986’s Bethel v. Fraser, the Court established an exception to Tinker that permitted a school to punish a student for an “offensively lewd and indecent [student-council nomination] speech” given to a captive audience. A similar exception was crafted in Morse v. Frederick in 2008 for speech that is “reasonably viewed as promoting illegal drug use.” But both of these exceptions are narrow. In light of both Fraser and Frederick, Tinker remains

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91 Id. at 506, 513–14.
92 Id. at 514. Of note, there was evidence that John Tinker’s armband had caused students to make “unfriendly remarks to [him] about the arm band,” but neither party seriously contended that these comments were disruptive. See Brief for the Petitioner at 8, 1968 WL 94383, Tinker, 393 U.S. 303 (1969); accord Brief for the Respondents at 5–6, 1968 WL 94384, Tinker, 393 U.S. 303 (1969) (noting that several of John’s friends made fun of him at gym, in the locker room, and at lunch; but none of the comments were threatening or otherwise disruptive). Counsel for the Tinker children conceded at oral argument that there was some lunchroom conversation about Mary Beth’s armband, as well. See Transcript of Oral Argument, Tinker, 393 U.S. 303 (1969) (“[T]here was by the way some conversation between [Mary Beth] and other students in the lunch room about why she was wearing the armband and whether or not she should be wearing it.”)
93 See generally Erwin Chemerinsky, Students Do Leave Their First Amendment Rights at the Schoolhouse Gates: What’s Left of Tinker?, 48 DRAKE L. REV. 527, 529 (2000) (“[I]t is hardly surprising that at least one federal court of appeals has concluded that subsequent Supreme Court cases cast doubt on whether Tinker remains viable and whether students retain free speech rights. There simply are hardly any Supreme Court cases in the past thirty years protecting students’ constitutional rights.”); Mark Yudof, Tinker Tailored: Good Faith, Civility, and Student Expression, 69 ST. JOHN’S L. REV. 365, 366 (1995) (“Although [later Supreme] Courts have not specifically overruled Tinker, Tinker’s progeny have greatly altered the holding set forth by the Warren Court.”); James M. Henderson, Sr., The Public Forum Doctrine in Schools, 69 ST. JOHN’S L. REV. 529 (1995) (arguing that Tinker has fallen into disuse, in the context of students’ rights to communicate religious speech).
95 Morse v. Frederick, 551 U.S. 393, 403 (2007).
the default rule, excepting narrow classifications of lewd or drug-promoting speech. As discussed below, though, Hazelwood dramatically shifted the legal landscape for student newspapers, imposing a new—more school-official-friendly—default standard.97

B. Hazelwood: A Retreat from Tinker and a License to Censor

In the spring of 1983, Cathy Kuhlmeier, layout-editor of The Spectrum student newspaper, had overseen production of a four-page newspaper that included articles about student pregnancies and how parental divorce affected students.98 Immediately before distribution of the issue, and without informing Kuhlmeier or the other student editors, the Hazelwood East High principal literally cut two articles out of the newspaper.99 Kuhlmeier and two other student editors filed suit in federal court for the Eastern District of Missouri alleging that the school district had violated their First Amendment rights.100

The district court rejected the students’ claim, finding that The Spectrum was not a public forum, but instead “an integral part of Hazelwood East's curriculum.”101 In support of that finding, the court noted that students received a grade and academic credit for their work on the paper, that the curriculum guide described the class as a “laboratory situation,” and that the journalism adviser had regularly maintained control over many aspects of the production process.102

The students appealed to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, which reversed, holding that The Spectrum was “a public forum because it was intended to be and operated as a conduit for student viewpoint.”103 The Eighth Circuit justified its conclusion on the basis that “students chose the staff members, determined the articles to be written and printed, and determined the content of those articles” and that the newspaper and school district’s policies (regardless of occasional practices to the contrary) supported strong student control over the editorial process.104

101 Id. at 1465.
102 Id. at 1465–66. It is worth noting that the adviser for the issue of The Spectrum that gave rise to this case was essentially a substitute, hired to finish out the remainder of the school year because his predecessor had left the district. Id. at 1458.
103 Kuhlmeier v. Hazelwood Sch. Dist., 795 F.2d 1368, 1372 (8th Cir. 1986).
104 Id. at 1372–74 (8th Cir. 1986). There is some disagreement between the Eighth
The school district then appealed to the Supreme Court, which reversed, holding that *The Spectrum* was not a public forum and that censorship would be permitted “so long as [school officials’] actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns.” The Supreme Court’s finding regarding *The Spectrum*’s forum status largely discounted board policies that granted broad freedoms to students, instead relying on the authority possessed by the journalism adviser—for example, that he had “selected the editors of the newspaper, scheduled publication dates, decided the number of pages for each issue, assigned story ideas to class members, advised students on the development of their stories, reviewed the use of quotations, edited stories, selected and edited the letters to the editor, and dealt with the printing company.” Based on the subject matter of the articles slated for publication, the Court reasoned, the school could have reasonably concluded that students had failed to master “those portions of the Journalism II curriculum that pertained to the treatment of controversial issues and personal attacks, the need to protect the privacy of individuals . . . and the legal, moral, and ethical restrictions imposed upon journalists within school community.” Because *Hazelwood* is so deferential to school officials—essentially a rational basis review, rather than *Tinker*’s more searching scrutiny—these vague justifications were found to be “reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns” and sufficient to justify censorship.

The Court’s decision in *Hazelwood* was widely seen as a victory for school administrators seeking more control over student publications and as a devastating blow to the student press.

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106 *Id.* at 268.
107 *Id.* at 276 (internal citations and quotations omitted).
108 See Chemerinsky, *supra* note 93, at 538.33
110 Felder, *supra* note 97, at 451. Examples of predictions that *Hazelwood* would be the end of quality high school journalism abound. See, e.g., Jeffrey D. Smith, Comment, *High School Newspapers and the Public Forum Doctrine*: Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, 74 VA. L. REV. 843, 860–61 (1988) (“Educators, armed with the broad discretion afforded to them by *Hazelwood*, may limit school newspapers to mundane matters and cause students to ignore important, though controversial, issues.”); Wohl, *supra* note 97, at 9 (“The impact of the *Hazelwood* decision has been, as its critics feared, to cause a significant increase in the number of incidents of high school censorship and, in general ‘a blight on the world of scholastic journalism.’”) (internal citation omitted); David L. Martinson, *The Front Line: Hazelwood: The End of the “Hidden Curriculum” Charade?*, THE HIGH SCHOOL JOURNAL, Feb.–March 1992, at 131, 131 (“January 13, 1988 [the date *Hazelwood* was decided]. That is a day — in some minds at least — that will almost rival December 7, 1941, as ‘day that will live in infamy.’”); J. Marc Abrams & S. Mark Goodman, *End of an Era? The Decline of Student
censorship of high school newspapers is widespread.111 Among the more
telling survey results, 33 percent of principals and 20 percent of advisers
believe “articles in which quoted sources criticize the school board should
never appear in the student newspaper,”112 63 percent of principals believe
advisers should prevent publication of articles that “may embarrass the
school’s administration,”113 and 40 percent of student-editors reported not
covering important stories out of fear they would not be allowed to print
them.114 Surveys immediately following Hazelwood also show school officials
were aware of the new tool placed in their arsenal, as 18.9 percent of Missouri
principals planned to “look more closely at student publications” following the
decision,115 and more than 94 percent of Texas high school principals
expressed agreement with the increase in control afforded by Hazelwood.116
In the same vein, a survey conducted one year after Hazelwood revealed that 23
percent of advisers believed their students were less likely to report on
controversial news, and 17 percent less likely to criticize school officials, than
they had been a year earlier.117 Another 12 percent of advisers surveyed in the
same study reported that prior review had been implemented at their schools
after Hazelwood when it had not been the school’s policy or practice before the

728 (1988) “Although [Hazelwood] appears to be a tsunami that has wiped out all that existed
before...”); Hazelwood: Experts React to Decision Against Freedom for Student Journalists,
STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Spring 1988, at 3 (“[Hazelwood] will create cafeteria
journalism. Students will choose only the most innocuous subjects to write about and won’t
challenge or discuss topics that are important to them . . .”).

111 See, e.g., CAPTIVE VOICES, THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HIGH
SCHOOL JOURNALISM (J. Nelson ed. 1974); Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver & J. William Click,
High School Newspapers Still Censored Thirty Years After Tinker, 78 JOURN. & MASS. COMM.
Q. 321, 327 (2001) (three quarters of surveyed advisers and principals reporting newspaper is
censored); Thomas W. Dickson, Self-Censorship and Freedom of the Public High School
Press, JOURNALISM EDUCATOR, Autumn 1994, at 56, 61 (more than a third of advisers and
student-editors report censorship of editorials based on subject-matter); J. William Click &
Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver, Principals Favor More Discipline Than a Free Press, JOURNALISM
EDUCATOR, Summer 1988, at 48–51 (more than two-thirds of principals believe harmful
stories should be censored, “even though these articles may not be libelous, obscene or
disruptive”).

112 Kopenhaver & Click, supra note 111, at 328 (emphasis added).
113 Id. at 328.
114 Thomas W. Dickson, Self-Censorship and Freedom of the Public High School Press,
JOURNALISM EDUCATOR, Autumn 1994, at 61.
115 Thomas W. Dickson, Attitudes of High School Principals About Press Freedom After
116 Renfro, P., Renfro, B., and Bennett, R., Expectations of Change in the High School
Press After Hazelwood: A Survey of Texas High School Principals, Newspaper Advisers, and
Newspaper Editors, 4 SOUTHWESTERN MASS COMM. J. 64, 65 (1988).
117 Jim Patten, High School Confidential: The Alarming Aftermath of the Hazelwood
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decision. In spite of alleged limits on the reach of Hazelwood, the decision has operated as a broad license to censor. While the opinion’s language suggests it would only apply to non-public-forum student newspapers, it is not clear that any student newspapers would qualify as a public-forum under the Court’s analysis. At least one commentator has determined that “[n]o case after Hazelwood seems to have found that a student newspaper constitutes a public forum.” Given that the Supreme Court rejected the students’ argument that the Hazelwood Spectrum was an open forum—despite protective school board policies and strong student control over the editorial process—it is difficult to imagine exactly what set of circumstances would result in a finding that a student newspaper had been opened up as a public forum.

Although it is difficult to quantify exactly how much Hazelwood has spurred censorship of high school newspapers, data from the Student Press Law Center (SPLC)—the nation’s only organization dedicated solely to the

118 Id.
120 Hazelwood Sch. Dist. v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 260, 281 (1988) (Brennan, J., dissenting) (“The Court today casts no doubt on Tinker’s vitality. Instead it erects a taxonomy of school censorship, concluding that Tinker applies to one category and not another.” (discussing majority’s distinction between forum-statuses)).
121 Felder, supra note 97, at 441–42. My own review of subsequent case law has not revealed a district court concluding a high school newspaper was a public forum, either. However, at least one district court has held that certain school newspapers may be limited public forums and fall outside the reach of Hazelwood. See Dean v. Utica Community Schools, 345 F.Supp.2d 799 (E. D. Mich. 2004) (finding school district violated students’ First Amendment rights when censoring story about allegedly toxic fumes emanating from school bus facility).
  School sponsored student publications will not restrict free expression or diverse viewpoints within the rules of responsible journalism. School sponsored publications are developed within the adopted curriculum and its educational implications and regular classroom activities.
Id. at 1455. Similarly, Board Policy 348.5 provided:
  Students are entitled to express in writing their personal opinions. The distribution of such material on school property may not interfere with or disrupt the educational process. Such written expressions must be signed by the authors.
Id. at 1455.
123 Kuhlmeier v. Hazelwood Sch. Dist., 795 F.2d 1368, 1372 (8th Cir. 1986) rev’d, 484 U.S. 260 (1988) (“The students chose the staff members, determined the articles to be written and printed, and determined the content of those articles.”).
rights of student journalists\textsuperscript{124}—suggests a fairly dramatic shift in the years following the decision. One of the SPLC’s primary functions is its student-press hotline, where attorneys and staff members take calls from student journalists regarding claims of censorship.\textsuperscript{125} In 1988, the year before Hazelwood was decided, the SPLC received just 548 calls. That number had more than doubled—to 1,600—in 1999\textsuperscript{126} and the SPLC received roughly 1,900 calls per year in 2010 and 2011.\textsuperscript{127} While far from dispositive, there is little doubt that Hazelwood has played at least some part in the massive increase in calls reporting censorship of student publications.

III. THE STATE RESPONSE TO HAZELWOOD

The movement to counter Hazelwood’s threat to student journalism began immediately following the decision in the spring of 1988.\textsuperscript{128} Within four months, at least six states had proposed bills to combat Hazelwood’s new standard for censorship of the scholastic press.\textsuperscript{129} Bills have been introduced in dozens of states since, but tragically few of these efforts have run the full legislative gauntlet and been signed into law. One writer estimates that 83 percent of attempts to enact a student-press law have failed during the legislative process or due to gubernatorial veto.\textsuperscript{130}

At the state level,\textsuperscript{131} student-press protections have been included in both

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{125} See Contact Us, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT., http://www.splc.org/legalassistance/legal_request.asp (last accessed May 18, 2012). Over the past few years, the SPLC has also started taking online-only requests. These online-only requests are aggregated and counted in the same way as calls. See id.

\textsuperscript{126} Mark Goodman, Freedom of the Press Stops at the Schoolhouse Gate: The Consequences of Student Press Censorship Could Be Devastating, YOUTH JOURNALISM, NIEMAN REPORTS, Spring 2001, at 47–49.

\textsuperscript{127} E-mail from Frank LoMonte, Executive Director for the Student Press Law Center (May 6, 2012) (on file with author).

\textsuperscript{128} Legislation Reversing Hazelwood’s Effect Being Considered in Several State Houses, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Spring 1988, at 5–6.

\textsuperscript{129} Id. at 5–6. Another state had joined the race to combat Hazelwood by the Fall of 1988. See Seven States Scramble to Overcome Hazelwood, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Fall 1988, at 6–9.


\textsuperscript{131} This Article does not address local school districts’ anti-Hazelwood or general pro-student-press regulations and board policies. There is no known national database of such regulations, but the Student Press Law Center does publish a model school board policy that imposes the Tinker standard, consistent with language appearing in the anti-Hazelwood statutes. See generally Student Press Law Center Model Guidelines for High School Student Media, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT., http://www.splc.org/knowyourrights/legalresearch.asp?id=6
\end{footnotesize}
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statutes and administrative regulations. As discussed below, seven states have enacted legislation that restores at least some of Tinker’s protections to student journalists. Two more states have adopted somewhat nebulous administrative regulations that—at least arguably—provide similar protection.

A. Seven States Have Adopted Anti-Hazelwood Statutes that Restore the Protections of Tinker to Student Publications.

Following Hazelwood, seven states have adopted new statutes—or modified laws already on the books—to explicitly reject the degradation of students’ free-speech rights. As discussed below, six of the seven statutes generally follow the structure of the first student-press law in California. The remaining state, Massachusetts, has a substantially different statute that provides less specificity and has been interpreted somewhat differently.

1. The California Model (Six States)

To understand the California model of student-press statutes, it is important to first understand the history of the California Student Free Expression Law. The original California statute pre-dated Hazelwood and was adopted in 1971, just two years after Tinker. From the outset, courts have held that the statute embodied at least the protections afforded students by Tinker, if not more. The statute’s current form was adopted in 1976 as Education Code 48907, though it would be more than a decade before that statute would be litigated in a reported case. Finally, just two weeks after Hazelwood was decided by the Supreme Court, the California Court of Appeals held that Section 48907 provided broader protection than the federal First Amendment and that “[t]he broad power to censor expression in school sponsored publications for pedagogical purposes recognized in [Hazelwood] is not available to this state’s educators.”

(last accessed April 15, 2012).

134 Palermo, supra note 132, at 37–38; CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48907 (2012). As discussed below, the California statute was amended in 2008 to include an adviser-protection provision. See Part IV.B infra.
135 Palermo, supra note 132, at 38.
136 Leeb v. Delong, 243 Cal. Rptr. 494, 497–98 (Cal. Ct. App. 1988) (“If [Hazelwood] were specifically applicable in California, little more would have to be said. But it is not. Section 48907 of the Education Code and California decisional authority clearly confer editorial control of official student publications on the student editors alone, with very limited exceptions.” (internal footnote omitted)).

In its current form, the California statute reads:

(a) Pupils of the public schools, including charter schools, shall have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press including, but not limited to, the use of bulletin boards, the distribution of printed materials or petitions, the wearing of buttons, badges, and other insignia, and the right of expression in official publications, whether or not the publications or other means of expression are supported financially by the school or by use of school facilities, except that expression shall be prohibited which is obscene, libelous, or slanderous. Also prohibited shall be material that so incites pupils as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations, or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

(b) The governing board or body of each school district or charter school and each county board of education shall adopt rules and regulations in the form of a written publications code, which shall include reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of conducting such activities within its respective jurisdiction.

(c) Pupil editors of official school publications shall be responsible for assigning and editing the news, editorial, and feature content of their publications subject to the limitations of this section. However, it shall be the responsibility of a journalism adviser or advisers of pupil publications within each school to supervise the production of the pupil staff, to maintain professional standards of English and journalism, and to maintain the provisions of this section.

(d) There shall be no prior restraint of material prepared for official school publications except insofar as it violates this section. School officials shall have the burden of showing justification without undue delay prior to a limitation of pupil expression under this section.

(e) “Official school publications” refers to material produced by pupils in the journalism, newspaper, yearbook, or writing classes and distributed to the student body either free or for a fee.

(f) This section does not prohibit or prevent the governing board or body of a school district or charter school from adopting otherwise valid rules and regulations relating to oral communication by pupils upon the premises of each school.

(g) An employee shall not be dismissed, suspended, disciplined, reassigned, transferred, or otherwise retaliated against solely for acting to protect a pupil engaged in the conduct authorized under this section, or refusing to infringe upon conduct that is protected by this section, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, or Section 2 of Article I of the California Constitution.\footnote{Cal. Educ. Code § 48907 (2012).}

Portions of this statute have been incorporated into every other enacted anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statute, with the exception of Massachusetts.\footnote{Wohl, supra note 97, at 20 (1992).} Each of the
California-model statutes—Iowa, Colorado, Kansas, Arkansas, and Oregon—includes two components. First, each includes a positive statement declaring students’ statutory free-speech rights. Next, the statutes detail an explicit list of materials that may be censored or restrained: those that are obscene, libelous, slanderous, incite others to lawless action or to violate lawful school rules, or are reasonably forecast to cause a material and substantial disruption to the orderly operation of the school. Two statutes—Arkansas and Oregon—also permit censorship of publications that cause an unwarranted invasion of another’s privacy, and Colorado permits censorship of gang-related speech. All of the California-model statutes, with the exception of

140 CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48907 (West) ("Pupils of the public schools, including charter schools, shall have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press..."); IOWA CODE ANN. § 280.22 (West) ("Except as limited by this section, students of the public schools have the right to exercise freedom of speech, including the right of expression in official school publications."); COLO. REV. STAT. ANN. § 22-1-120 (West) ("[S]tudents of the public schools shall have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press, and no expression contained in a student publication, whether or not such publication is school-sponsored, shall be subject to prior restraint except for [speech exempted by statute]."); KAN. STAT. ANN. § 72-1506 (West) ("The liberty of the press in student publications shall be protected."); ARK. CODE ANN. § 6-18-1203 (West) ("Student publications policies shall recognize that students may exercise their right of expression. . . . This right includes expression in school-sponsored publications, whether such publications are supported financially by the school or by use of school facilities, or are produced in conjunction with a class, except as provided [by statute]."); OR. REV. STAT. ANN. § 336.477 (West) ("[S]tudent journalists have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press in school-sponsored media, whether or not the media are supported financially by the school or by use of school facilities or are produced in conjunction with a high school class.")

The Colorado statute’s provision is somewhat anomalous, in that courts have found that the general pronouncement of student-speech rights at the beginning of the statute is essentially surplusage and that the remainder of the statute applies only to student “publications.” See Corder v. Lewis Palmer Sch. Dist. No. 38, 568 F. Supp. 2d 1237, 1248 (D. Colo. 2008) ("Were this provision intended to encompass all kinds of speech, including oral speech, the statute need only reference ‘expression’ and the inclusion of ‘publication’ would be surplusage"); aff’d, 566 F.3d 1219 (10th Cir. 2009).

141 As discussed in Part IV.E below, whether the statutes regulate materials that are profane or obscene as to minors is an open question.

142 As discussed in Part IV.F below, there is ambiguity as to the statutes’ use of “encourage” versus “incite.”

143 See supra note 140 and accompanying text (quoting statutes).

144 See ARK. STAT. § 6-18-1204(3) (regulating “[p]ublications that constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy, as defined by state law."); OR. REV. STAT. § 336.477(4)(b) ("Nothing in this section may be interpreted to authorize expression by students that . . . constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy."). There are no reported cases interpreting the invasion-of-privacy provisions of either statute.

145 COLO. REV. STAT. ANN. § 22-1-120(8) ("Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the promulgation or enforcement of lawful school regulations designed to control gangs.").
Arkansas, also require advisers to ensure publications are consistent with standards of journalism and English,\textsuperscript{146} and half fully immunize school officials from liability when they act pursuant to the statutes.\textsuperscript{147}

Courts in California, Colorado, and Iowa have all recognized that these statutes serve to codify the \textit{Tinker} standard in response to \textit{Hazelwood}, requiring material and substantial disruption in order to justify government censorship of student speech.\textsuperscript{148} Commentators also widely agree that the

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Iowa Code Ann.} \textsection 280.22 (“Journalism advisers of students producing official school publications shall supervise the production of the student staff, to maintain professional standards of English and journalism, and to comply with this section.”); \textit{Kan. Stat. Ann.} \textsection 72-1506 (“Review of material prepared for student publications and encouragement of the expression of such material in a manner that is consistent with high standards of English and journalism [does not violate the statute.]”); \textit{Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann.} \textsection 22-1-120 (“This section shall not prevent the advisor from encouraging expression which is consistent with high standards of English and journalism.”); \textit{Cal. Educ. Code} \textsection 48907 (“It shall be the responsibility of a journalism adviser or advisers of pupil publications within each school to supervise the production of the pupil staff, to maintain professional standards of English and journalism, and to maintain the provisions of this section.”); \textit{Or. Rev. Stat. Ann.} \textsection 336.477 (“This subsection does not prevent a student media adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to the student journalists.”).


\textsuperscript{147} The Iowa statute has the most detailed provision, providing that:

\begin{quote}
Any expression made by students in the exercise of free speech, including student expression in official school publications, shall not be deemed to be an expression of school policy, and the public school district and school employees or officials shall not be liable in any civil or criminal action for any student expression made or published by students, unless the school employees or officials have interfered with or altered the content of the student speech or expression, and then only to the extent of the interference or alteration of the speech or expression.
\end{quote}


The Kansas, Oregon, and California statutes do not include comparable provisions. \textit{See generally Ark. Code Ann.} \textsection 6-18-1201–1204 (West); \textit{Or. Rev. Stat. Ann.} \textsection 336.477 (West); \textit{Cal. Educ. Code} \textsection 48907 (West). However, even absent such a provision, it is likely that liability would follow control, which the statute places squarely in students’ hands.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Lopez v. Tulare Joint Union High Sch. Dist.}, 40 Cal. Rptr. 2d 762, 771 (1995) (“The only reasonable interpretation of Senator Rodda’s comments is that section 10611 constitutes a statutory embodiment of the \textit{Tinker} and related First Amendment cases at that time.”); \textit{Corder v. Lewis Palmer Sch. Dist. No. 38}, 566 F.3d 1219, 1236 (10th Cir. 2009) (“It appears [the Colorado statute] was passed by the Colorado legislature in the wake of \textit{Hazelwood} and the concern regarding its impact on student newspapers.”); \textit{Lange v. Diercks}, 2011 WL 5515152 at *9 (Iowa Ct. App. 2011) (“When the United States Supreme Court identified a constitutional distinction between “educators’ ability to silence a student’s personal expression” (like that in
statutes serve as an explicit rejection of *Hazelwood* in favor of some form of the *Tinker* standard.\(^{149}\)

2. The Massachusetts Model (One State)

Unlike the long-standing mandatory California statute, Massachusetts’ student-press law was originally enacted as a local-option statute long before the *Hazelwood* case began working its way through the courts.\(^{150}\) It includes a positive statement of statutory rights—“The right of students to freedom of expression in the public schools of the commonwealth shall not be abridged”—with only one permitted justification for censorship: speech that causes “any disruption or disorder within the school.”\(^{151}\) Following *Hazelwood*, legislators acted to make the statute mandatory, rather than optional, but made no other substantive changes.\(^{152}\)

The Massachusetts statute has been given fairly detailed treatment by the Massachusetts courts. In *Pyle v. South Hadley*, the First Circuit certified a question to the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) of Massachusetts concerning the statute.\(^{153}\) In answering the certified question, the SJC held that the statute...
codified *Tinker*, did not incorporate subsequent Supreme Court case law such as *Bethel v. Fraser*, and did not contain an exception for proscribing any category of lawful speech that is not disruptive. Essentially, the SJC found that the Massachusetts statute fixed students’ free-speech rights permanently in 1969, at the height of the First Amendment’s protection for public high school students.

**B. Two States—Washington and Pennsylvania—Have Administrative Codes that May Provide Greater Protection from Censorship than Hazelwood and Federal Law**

In addition to state legislatures’ statutory responses, two states—Washington and Pennsylvania—have promulgated administrative rules that at least arguably provide students with greater free-speech protection than current First Amendment case law.

Washington’s administrative code codifies a series of student rights that parallels the federal Bill of Rights, including that “[a]ll students possess the constitutional right to freedom of speech and press . . . subject to reasonable limitations upon the time, place, and manner of exercising such right.” This provision is entirely untested in the courts. The Student Press Law Center has taken the position that the code section “may provide students attending Washington public high schools with added protection against administrative censorship.” Such a position likely reflects an interpretation of the statute that would have it codify student-speech rights as they existed when the section was enacted in 1977 and thus imposes the *Tinker* standard. But another reasonable interpretation might be that the statute was written to reflect the evolution of “the constitutional right to freedom of speech and press,” which would impose the *Hazelwood* standard, as well as restrictions present in *Bethel v. Fraser* (concerning lewd and indecent speech) and *Morse v. Frederick* (concerning speech that advocates illegal drug use) for modern litigation.

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154 *See supra* Part II.B (discussing *Bethel v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986), and *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007)).
155 *Id.* at 871–72.
156 The administrative code section includes language that loosely mirrors the federal First, Fourth, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, and also guarantees a right to be free from “unlawful inference in [students’] pursuit of an education.” *Compare* WASH. ADMIN. CODE § 392-400-215 (2012) with U.S. CONST. amend I, IV, V, and XIV.
160 *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007) (upholding discipline of student for unfurling
The Pennsylvania administrative code more clearly codifies the *Tinker* standard, permitting students the right to free speech “unless the expression materially and substantially interferes with the educational process, threatens serious harm to the school or community, encourages unlawful activity or interferes with another individual’s rights.”

The code section also imposes on students “the responsibility to obey laws governing libel and obscenity and to be aware of the full meaning of their expression” and “the responsibility to be aware of the feelings and opinions of others and to give others a fair opportunity to express their views.” Like the Washington code section, the Pennsylvania administrative code sections pertaining to student speech have not been litigated or widely discussed, although the Student Press Law Center has taken the position that the regulations “should provide student journalists attending Pennsylvania public high schools with added protection against administrative censorship.”

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162 22 PA. CODE § 12.9(c)(1).
163 22 PA. CODE § 12.9(c)(2).
164 The Third Circuit has referenced this administrative code section twice in passing, both times without analysis. First, in the *Blue Mountain* case, the court simply mentioned the statute as guiding school regulations before ultimately upholding discipline of a student for speech reasonably forecast to cause a material and substantial disruption under *Tinker*. See *J.S. ex rel. Snyder v. Blue Mountain Sch. Dist.*, 593 F.3d 286, 306 (3d Cir. 2010), reh’g en banc granted, *opinion vacated* (Apr. 9, 2010). Similarly, the code section was referenced without analysis in a footnote in *Walker v. Leonard*, concerning a student’s right to circulate a petition during school hours. See *Walker-Serrano ex rel. Walker v. Leonard*, 325 F.3d 412, 415 n.2 (3d Cir. 2003).
165 There was, however, a brief public discussion of the protection afforded by the Pennsylvania administrative regulation in 2002, when state board of education members proposed to give school officials broader power to control the student press. See generally Rhea R. Botja, *Pa. Board Mulls Tighter Reins on Student Press*, EDUCATION WEEK, January 16, 2002, at 5. Although the proposed changes were not adopted, the suggestion that school officials wanted to bring the state “more in line with court rulings bolstering school administrators’ authority over student newspapers” suggests that the statute does in fact codify *Tinker* and serve an anti-*Hazelwood* function. See id. (internal quotation marks omitted).

At least one unpublished thesis (by a Master of Arts in Journalism candidate) has taken the position that the Pennsylvania code incorporates portions of both *Tinker* and *Hazelwood* because it provides for administrative review of student newspapers. See Jill Marano Strainic, *High School Publications Demonstrate Higher Quality When Students Control Content* (December 2007) (unpublished manuscript), available at http://www.jeapressrights.org/2008documents/2008ResponsibleJ/2008point4communication/2007-StrainicPaper.pdf (“The Pennsylvania Code (2005) speaks to both the Tinker and Hazelwood decisions . . . While it allows the wearing of armbands and buttons consistent with the Tinker case, it also states that schools will follow the precedent set in Hazelwood, outlining
of construction might guide an understanding of this code section.

IV. PROBLEMS WITH ANTI-\textsc{Hazelwood} STATUTES

These statutes share not only a common genesis as a response to \textit{Hazelwood}, but also a number of substantive flaws and weaknesses that potentially limit their effectiveness and ability to safeguard students’ free-speech rights. These discrete problems include difficulties in enforcement, vulnerabilities to indirect censorship, mootness of claims, and murky language concerning standards of journalism, profanity, and incitement—all of which are discussed below.

In addition to the narrow issues that individually plague a handful of statutes, each and every one of the statutes also share a common concern: as a group, anti-\textsc{Hazelwood} statutes have seen little—and in some cases, no—litigation. Iowa’s statute has only been substantively litigated in one case,\textsuperscript{167} while the California\textsuperscript{168} and Massachusetts\textsuperscript{169} statutes have each been litigated in just a handful. The Arkansas, Kansas, and Oregon statutes have yet to be relied on in a single lawsuit, while the Colorado statute has seen only marginal treatment in a federal graduation-speech case.\textsuperscript{170} The scarcity of case law likely shapes the practical effectiveness of these statutes, as both students and administrators often lack clear guidance from the courts about the construction and application of student-press laws. Yet, even in the handful of states where these statutes have been addressed in-depth by the courts, significant flaws and concerns have been made readily apparent. As discussed below, these weaknesses may raise serious questions as to whether the statutes can fulfill their intended purpose of safeguarding students’ rights.

\textsuperscript{170} See \textit{Corder v. Lewis Palmer Sch. Dist. No. 38}, 566 F.3d 1219, 1235–36 (10th Cir. 2009) (finding the Colorado statute applied only to student publications, rather than all student speech).
A. Enforcement: Nearly All Statutes Lack Independent Enforcement Mechanisms and Statutory Requirements that Local School Districts Adopt Consistent Guidelines Often Go Ignored

Without a mechanism for effective enforcement, student-press laws remain but words on a page, doing little to ensure students are actually free from administrative censorship. Of the seven statutes and two administrative-code provisions, just one—Oregon’s statute—provides a penalty for violations.\(^{171}\) As a result, students are forced to rely on a state’s general declaratory-judgment statute or seek injunctive relief, rather than bringing a self-contained cause of action that arises solely out of a student-press statute. This adds a further measure of uncertainty to the litigation calculus by complicating the pleading process and adding another headache for students attempting to decide whether to bring a claim.\(^{172}\)

Unlike most civil-rights claims, the state-law rights conferred by student-press statutes are not easily vindicated in the federal courts. Section 1983 of the United States Code—the most common statutory cause-of-action to vindicate civil rights claims—only permits actions to remedy deprivations of rights under federal law or the federal constitution.\(^{173}\) This means that, if school officials violate a student’s statutory free-speech rights, but not federal law (as would be the case when administrators censor pursuant to Hazelwood in a state with an anti-Hazelwood statute), students cannot obtain federal

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\(^{171}\) Compare CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48907 (West); IOWA CODE ANN. § 280.22 (West); COLO. REV. STAT. ANN. § 22-1-120 (West); KAN. STAT. ANN. § 72-1506 (West); ARK. CODE ANN. § 6-18-1203 (West); MASS. GEN. L. ANN. ch. 71 § 82 with Or. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 336.477 (West); see also Palermo, supra note 132, at 69 (published before Oregon adopted its anti-Hazelwood statute).

\(^{172}\) See Buller, supra note 96, at 647 (“Both the Iowa and Colorado statutes lack any explicit independent-enforcement . . . This effectively leaves aggrieved students in the dark, unsure of exactly where to turn for vindication of their rights.” (footnote omitted)).

\(^{173}\) Title 42 section 1893 of the United States Code (commonly referred to as “section 1983”) provides:

Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory or the District of Columbia, subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress, except that in any action brought against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such officer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless a declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable. For the purposes of this section, any Act of Congress applicable exclusively to the District of Columbia shall be considered to be a statute of the District of Columbia.

relief,\textsuperscript{174} and must instead turn to often-underutilized state civil-rights statutes.\textsuperscript{175} And even then, students may be severely limited in the relief they can seek.\textsuperscript{176}

While six of the seven statutes lack a mechanism for judicial enforcement, five of these statutes (Kansas being the exception) provide a mechanism for local, school-level enforcement by requiring school boards to adopt guidelines consistent with the statutes’ requirements.\textsuperscript{177} Because school board policies “carry the force of law for public employees, students, or visitors on school property,”\textsuperscript{178} students could appeal to school officials and elected school board members for enforcement. Unfortunately, there is significant evidence that school districts have, in practice, utterly failed to comply with statutory requirements and some have even adopted policies that directly conflict with student-press statutes.\textsuperscript{179} Although there is limited evidence as to whether schools’ noncompliance with statutes is willful or ignorant, at least one study suggests that, among administrator preparation programs, not even school-law instructors (most of whom have graduate-level degrees) are aware of student-press anti-	extit{Hazelwood} statutes.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{174} Lovell v. Poway Unified Sch. Dist., 90 F.3d 367, 370 (9th Cir. 1996) (citing Hallstrom v. City of Garden City, 991 F.2d 1473, 1482 n.22 (9th Cir.) and Brown v. Nutsch, 619 F.2d 758, 764 (8th Cir.1980)). In Lovell, the Ninth Circuit reversed a magistrate’s award of damages and attorneys’ fees under section 1983 for a school district’s violation of a student’s rights under the California anti-	extit{Hazelwood} statute. 90 F.3d 367 at 373.

\textsuperscript{175} See Understanding Student Free-Expression Laws, supra note 146, at 30.


\textsuperscript{177} See supra note 140 and accompanying text. It is unclear why Kansas’ statute does not include a similar provision. See KAN. STAT. ANN. §§ 72.1504–1306. Neither the House or Senate Journals for Kansas SB 62 (1991)—the bill that eventually became the Kansas anti-	extit{Hazelwood} statute—reveal any discussion related to school boards’ adoption of guidelines.

\textsuperscript{178} Edwin C. Darden, Policy, the Law, and You, AM. SCH. BOARD J., April 2008, at 54, 54.

\textsuperscript{179} See Jeri Christine Okamoto, Prior Restraint and the Public High School Student Press: The Validity of Administrative Censorship of Student Newspapers Under the Federal and California Constitutions, 20 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 1055, 1103 (1987); Bruce L. Plopper & William D. Downs, Jr., Arkansas Student Publications Act: Implementation and Effects, JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION EDUCATOR, Spring 1998, at 74, 78–82 (reporting that as many as 29% of Arkansas school districts have failed to promulgate policies as required by statute and, among districts that did promulgate policies, 51% unlawfully granted final control of student publications to school officials).

\textsuperscript{180} Brian Schraum, Trained to Censor?: A Student of Student Expression Issues in Missouri Principal Preparation Programs (2010) (unpublished thesis), at 42, available at https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10355/9265/research.pdf?sequence=3. Schraum’s study also includes a wealth of other qualitative information about administrator-preparation courses, including a discussion of their syllabi and how they approach the decisions in 	extit{Tinker}, 	extit{Hazelwood}, and other important First Amendment cases. See id. at 39–47. Of particular note, Schraum notes that the take-away message regarding students’ rights from most of these administrator-preparation programs is: “Principals have total control over school
In sum, the anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes are difficult to enforce through litigation, leaving compliance largely up to the whims of individual school boards and school administrators. This raises serious questions about whether statutory commands to abstain from censoring student publications have any bite for administrators intent on silencing the student press.

\textbf{B. Indirect Censorship: Anti-\textit{Hazelwood} Statutes Largely Target Only Direct Censorship, Providing Students Limited Protection from Indirect Censorship}

Censorship takes many forms. It can be overt, like when the principal cuts pages out of a newspaper. Or it can be indirect, when a principal retaliates against a journalism adviser or a school board cuts funding for a publication. By their plain language, most anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes are targeted at ending only the most direct censorship, and are not easily adapted to combat subtler, more insidious attempts at silencing students.

One of the most widely discussed examples of indirect censorship is retaliation against journalism advisers. Across the country, school officials—left unable to censor students directly—apply pressure to the students’ journalism adviser through reprimands, threats of transfer or discipline, or even outright termination.\textsuperscript{181} Yet the vast majority of student-press statutes are silent as to adviser-retaliation. Only California and Arkansas’ statutes contain explicit adviser-protection provisions,\textsuperscript{182} while Iowa courts have found at least some implicit protection against adviser-retaliation emanates from the state’s statute.\textsuperscript{183} I have addressed the problems associated with vindicating advisers’ rights elsewhere,\textsuperscript{184} but suffice to say, the ability for school administrators to reach around student-press statutes by punishing advisers instead of students is a massive statutory gap with significant consequences for students and advisers. And, as with all forms of censorship, adviser-retaliation undermines the First Amendment’s guarantees by chilling students’ speech.\textsuperscript{185}

Yet retaliation against advisers is not the only form of indirect censorship students face.\textsuperscript{186} Particularly at the college level, tales abound of university newspapers. See \textit{Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier},” \textit{Id}. at 51.

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{See generally} Buller, \textit{supra} note 96, at 617–18 (discussing common forms of adviser-retaliation).

\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Id}. at 643–44 (discussing KAN. STAT. ANN. § 72-1506(d) (2008); CAL. EDUC. CODE. § 48907(g) (2008)).


\textsuperscript{184} \textit{See generally} Buller, \textit{supra} note 96.

\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Id}. at 619 (“No matter the source, censorship chills student speech, teaching students that fully exploring their freedom of expression will result in consequences to them or their teachers.”).

\textsuperscript{186} According to student-press advocate Frank LoMonte, newer, more subtle forms of censorship “involve[] pressure indirectly applied: changes to the governance structure of the
administrations and student governments attempting to control the student press through budget cuts and funding restrictions. These concerns may be just as prevalent at the high school level—perhaps even moreso, given the complex machinations of public school funding at the local level. It would not be surprising that many of these attempts to de-fund student newspapers go unreported due to public (and news media) apathy toward local government or because they are buried in the pre-text of budget cuts mandated by economic slowdowns.

The inability to combat indirect censorship is a substantial weakness for most of the anti-Hazelwood statutes. Indirect censorship—like adviser-retaliation and budget cuts—is just as effective at silencing student-speech as taking scissors to a newspaper article, yet these statutes do little to protect students’ rights from administrators with the creativity or ambition to circumvent existing statutory safeguards.

C. Mootness: Most Statutes Do Not Prevent Students’ Claims From Becoming Moot Upon Graduation

Anti-Hazelwood statutes also lose much of their punch when, in the rare case where students can rally the resources needed to litigate a case, lawsuits student newspaper, reassignment (or outright firing) of the faculty adviser, or crippling cuts to the publication budget. These tactics may be subtler than leaning over the student editor's shoulder and pressing the delete key, but they are no less effective.” Frank D. LoMonte, Student Journalism Confronts A New Generation of Legal Challenges, HUM. RTS., Summer 2008, at 8.

187 Student Governments Use Money to Control Student Newspapers, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Spring 1996, at 31; Fighting Over the Purse Strings: Student Senate Attempts to Control Finances of Newspaper, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Winter 1995–96, at 23; Queens Paper Survives Struggle for Student Government Funding, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Fall 1992, at 35; see also Joyner v. Whiting, 477 F.2d 456 (4th Cir. 1973) (retaliation against university publication by withholding publication funding). Censorship at a public college, as with a public high school, implicates the First Amendment when public monies or other resources fund publications.

The Journalism Education Association has also documented use of school budgets as a form of indirect censorship affecting student newspapers, although numerical data regarding the frequency of these problems is not available. See JOURNALISM EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, supra note 18, at 18–19.

are dismissed as moot because students lack standing. Standing has been a particularly egregious barrier for students who graduate as their cases wind their way through the federal courts.\textsuperscript{189} In one notable case, the Supreme Court of the United States even \textit{sua sponte} declared students’ First Amendment claims moot when the Court learned at oral argument that the student–plaintiffs had graduated; the mootness issue in that case had not been briefed by the students or the school district, or raised in the courts below.\textsuperscript{190} Although state statutory claims are not necessarily bound by the requirement of Article III standing,\textsuperscript{191} state courts remain unlikely to be receptive to claims for relief that have been mooted or where no injunctive relief is possible.\textsuperscript{192}

As plaintiffs, student journalists are unique, in that the entire staff of a given student publication is virtually guaranteed to turn over every four years due to routine graduation.\textsuperscript{193} The window shrinks even further if one assumes that newspaper leadership positions (such as a student editorial board) are likely upper-classmen, and the editor-in-chief is quite likely to be a graduating senior. Under these circumstances, the window of time in which a student’s statutory free-speech claim survives is months at the longest, or as short as weeks when a principal censors a newspaper’s senior- or graduation-edition. It is beyond unlikely that students could litigate their claims in such a narrow timeframe.

Student-press attorneys have suggested that students may be able to game

\textsuperscript{189} See, e.g., \textit{Lane v. Simon}, 494 F.3d 1182 (10th Cir. 2007) (finding college students lacked standing to pursue federal claim after graduation); \textit{Sapp v. Renfroe}, 511 F.2d 172, 176 (5th Cir. 1975) (finding graduation mooted challenge to school ROTC guidelines even under “capable of repetition, yet evading review” doctrine); \textit{Jones v. Indiana High Sch. Athletic Ass’n, Inc.}, 16 F.3d 785, 789 (7th Cir. 1994) (finding challenge to high school athletic-eligibility requirement was moot following plaintiff’s graduation); \textit{Harper v. Poway Unified Sch. Dist.}, 318 F. App’x 540, 541 (9th Cir. 2009) (holding federal cause of action asserting state-law rights was also mooted by graduation of plaintiffs).

\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Bd. of Sch. Com’rs of City of Indianapolis v. Jacobs}, 420 U.S. 128, 129, 95 S. Ct. 848, 850, 43 L. Ed. 2d 74 (1975) (“At oral argument, we were informed by counsel for petitioners that all of the named plaintiffs in the action had graduated . . . it seems clear that a case or controversy no longer exists between the named plaintiffs and the petitioners . . . .”).

\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Contra Lane v. Simon}, 494 F.3d 1182 (10th Cir. 2007) (finding college students lacked standing to pursue federal claim after graduation); see generally \textit{Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife}, 504 U.S. 555, 560–61 (1992) (on Article III standing).

\textsuperscript{192} E.g., \textit{Barcik v. Kubiaczyk}, 873 P.2d 456 (Or. App. 1994) (finding plaintiff student journalists lacked standing on appeal because they had graduated before the district court entered a judgment in their favor), \textit{aff’d in part}, 895 P.2d 765 (Or. 1995) (holding plaintiff student journalists lacked standing with the exception of a student who had disciplinary notices placed in his record); \textit{but see Leeb v. Delong}, 198 Cal. App. 3d 47, 51–52 (Cal. Ct. App. 1988) (holding otherwise because the “constitutional issue raised is of continuing public interest and likely to recur in circumstances where, as here, there is insufficient time to afford full appellate review”).

\textsuperscript{193} \textit{See} Buller, supra note 96, at 630.
state or federal standing requirements by substituting current editors as named plaintiffs, suing for damages, filing a class-action suit, or alleging that censorship has caused actual harm to the parties. But it is unclear whether many, or any, of these tips have practical value for high school students. Every student-editor is unique and it would not be surprising to find that some editors are uninterested in pursuing censorship claims on behalf of their predecessors—especially in a situation where the challenged censorship resulted in the replacement of one student-editor with another who is more in line with administrators’ interests. Students are also unlikely to seek monetary damages, given the limited financial assets of student publications and students’ virtually unanimous desire to seek injunctive relief: often an order to prevent censorship and allow distribution of a student publication. While some advocates remain optimistic, it is unclear whether any of these strategies will actually increase students’ access to the courts under these statutes.

One state, however, has addressed this weakness head-on. California amended its student-press laws in 2008 to explicitly confer standing on aggrieved student journalists even after they have graduated. Although this provision has yet to be tested in the courts, its straightforward language suggests that it may combat the problem of standing in most circumstances.

D. Murky Justifications for Censorship: Several Statutes Permit Censorship of Publications that Do Not Meet “Standards of Professional Journalism”

Five of the seven enacted anti-Hazelwood statutes give school officials the power to regulate student publications based on a vague and ill-defined justification: to ensure student speech is consistent with “professional

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194 Robert Corn-Revere, Rory Eastburg & Micah Ratner, *Keeping Your Case Alive After Graduation*, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT. REP., Winter 2008–2009, at 35. The authors also suggest that an incorporated college newspaper may be able to join the suit as an entity, but this avenue is likely not available to most high school newspapers. *See id.*

195 Note, *Obscenity, Profanity, and the High School Press*, 15 WILLAMETTE L. REV. 507, 526–27 (1978–79) (suggesting “manipulation of the staff structure of a school publication by administrators and faculty advisers to ensure that editorial positions are filled with students who will not embarrass or challenge administrative policies.”).

196 *Id.* at 35.

197 This section, enacted in 2008, provides:

A pupil who is enrolled in a school at the time that the school has made or enforced a rule in violation of subdivision (a) may commence a civil action to obtain appropriate injunctive and declaratory relief as determined by the court. Upon motion, a court may award attorney’s fees to a prevailing plaintiff in a civil action pursuant to this section. *CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48950(b) (2012).*
standards of English and journalism.” These provisions raise practical problems of proof—exactly who determines “professional standards of English and journalism”?—and offer an easy cover to administrators who seek to silence otherwise protected speech.

The most glaring problem with including the standards-based justification for censorship is that courts are terribly ill equipped to determine exactly what “professional standards of English and journalism” are. A lack of institutional experience at least partially explains why every court to address these provisions has done so only in passing. In both California and Iowa cases, appellate courts have skirted the issue of journalism standards by relying on rules of error preservation—rules that themselves are designed to ensure judges have an adequate record on which to base their decisions. It is not difficult to imagine a scenario in which parties put on a “battle of the experts” to establish what the standards of English and journalism require and whether a given publication complies with those standards. The resulting fact-finding from that testimony is unpredictable at best, given the nebulous

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198 IOWA CODE ANN. § 280.2; KAN. STAT. ANN. § 72-1506; COLO. REV. STAT. ANN. § 22-1-120; CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48907; OR. REV. STAT. ANN. § 336.

199 As explained by Judge Linda Gemello, writing for the California Court of Appeals: We note that [Leeb] did not take into account the language in section 48907 authorizing journalism advisers “to maintain professional standards of English and journalism.” Under that language, educators may well be able to exercise some of the control over student speech in school newspapers permitted under [Hazelwood]. The issue was not raised by the parties and we need not decide how the authority conferred to schools under the “professional standards” language in section 48907 differs from the authority recognized in [Hazelwood].

Smith v. Novato Unified Sch. Dist., 150 Cal. App. 4th 1439, 1453, 59 Cal. Rptr. 3d 508, 517 (2007) (internal citations omitted). Judge Mary Tabor, writing for the Iowa Court of Appeals, came to a similar conclusion by drawing on the reasoning of Judge Gemello’s opinion: Although Diercks and the District mentioned section 280.22(5) [concerning professional standards] in the district court, they did not explain how these publications failed to meet the standards of journalism and English. On appeal, they cite Smith v. Novato Unified School District, for the proposition that a similar statutory provision in the California code “may well enable educators to exercise some of the control over school speech in student newspapers under [Hazelwood].” But the California court did not decide the “professional standards” issue because the parties did not raise it. We similarly conclude this record does not properly present the issue for our review.


200 Cf. Verizon Communications, Inc. v. F.C.C., 535 U.S. 467, 522 (2002) (“[B]attles of experts are bound to be part of any ratesetting scheme, and the FCC was reasonable to prefer TELRIC over alternative fixed-cost schemes that preserve home-field advantages for the incumbents.”) (concerning competing expert testimony on highly technical communications issue).
nature of “standards” in journalism education. But even in a hypothetical state with unimaginably detailed standards of journalism, the standards provisions likely remain unworkable. Statutes designed to protect student journalists cannot reasonably be constructed in a manner that would allow otherwise protected student speech to be censored because a journalism adviser did not teach enough lessons about em-dashes, apostrophes, or semi-colons.

To give school officials the benefit of the doubt—that is, to assume they are more concerned with providing for students’ academic growth than silencing speech critical of administrators or school policy—it may make sense to allow school officials to censor speech that does not meet certain minimum thresholds of English and journalistic standards. It makes sense to allow schools to require students writing for the newspaper learn the fundamentals of grammar, spelling, and how to report factually accurate information. And it makes sense that schools want to instill basic values of journalism ethics in student reporters. Unfortunately, if even a fraction of reported cases of censorship are accurate, school officials are much more likely to create a situation where “all a principal . . . has to do to kill a story or editorial he or she doesn’t like is to label it ‘poorly written’ or ‘inconsistent with the shared values of civilized social order.’”

The Lange case from Iowa provides a strong cautionary tale of the dangers that arise when a school official—or even a district court judge—is placed in

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201 For an example of state standards related to student publications see generally STUDENT PUBLICATION STANDARDS, INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (2008), available at http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/curriculum/studentpublicationsstandards1.pdf. Unfortunately, many states’ academic standards fail to detail specific standards for journalism education. For example, in states that have adopted “common core” standards, journalism is not even mentioned among English Language Arts standards, even though journalism courses can be used to meet core-standards requirements. See generally COLORADO HIGH SCHOOL PRESS ASSOCIATION, JOURNALISM IS THE NEW ENGLISH (February 2011), available at http://www.chspaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Journalism-is-the-new-English.pdf (discussing English Language Arts Standards, COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE, http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards (last accessed April 22, 2012)).


Precisely this kind of justification was in play when The Statesman, an award-winning high school newspaper in Illinois, faced numerous acts of censorship in 2009 and 2010. Muzzling Students, THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, November 26, 2009, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2009-11-26/news/0911250926_1_student-journalists-administrators-story. School officials ultimately defended their censorship by criticizing the students’ use of anonymous sources and claimed that it was not appropriate to report on illegal activity, such as underage drinking. Id. A Statesman package concerning teens “hooking-up” was similarly criticized by school officials for being “irresponsible, unbalanced and lacking in news value,” despite the Chicago Tribune’s praise for the coverage. Id.
the position of determining whether student journalism meets appropriate standards of English. In *Lange*, the student newspaper at issue was an April Fool’s parody-edition of the Waukon Senior High School newspaper, *The Tribe-une*. By any measurement, this edition of *The Tribe-une* was not a pinnacle of journalistic excellence. Among its many satirical and parody stories, it included a digitally created photo of an infant smoking a cigarette, a satirical story about a methamphetamine lab found in a biology classroom, and a story quoting students about their (presumably exaggerated) aspirations of becoming exotic dancers.

During depositions, the school district’s superintendent indicated that he justified censorship of the newspaper in part based on his opposition to the “parody, satire type of reporting, editorializing, whatever” that the students had engaged in. Not in so many words, the school district advanced the claim that parody—at least of the type practiced by the Waukon Senior High students—did not meet professional standards of journalism or English. Yet the letters of reprimand issued to the newspaper’s adviser do not mention disagreement over style or journalistic standards, but rather highlight the school’s belief that the material was “inappropriate, “had a negative impact on the [school district],” and “offended” members of the community. It would

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204 See generally id.

205 Deposition of Dave Herold, Lange Appendix at 103. In the interest of providing the full context of Superintendent Herold’s remarks, the questions surrounding that statement (asked by Lange’s trial attorney) read:

Q. Okay. Would you point out to me, starting at page 1 there, which articles are objectionable to you?

[HEROLD]. First, the first article that is the most objectionable to me in regard to the articles there are a few that are more than others. I don't care for the totality of the - and I don't agree with the parody, satire type of reporting, editorializing, whatever.

Q. So you just object to that style.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

Id. at 102–03.

206 The Allamakee School District issued two letters of reprimand to adviser Ben Lange, both of which were eventually expunged by court order. See *Lange v. Diercks*, 2011 WL 551515 at *12* (Iowa Ct. App. 2011). The first letter, dated August 8, 2008, read:

This document records an incident that had a negative impact on the [school district]. The incident happened in April of the 2007-2008 school year and involves the April 2, 2008, “April Fools” edition of the Waukon Senior High School Tribe-une (Tribe-une) and the high school journalism class. Numerous inappropriate text, comments and articles were created, edited, and printed in this edition. A previous discussion of appropriateness concerning the Tribe-une newspaper was discussed at an earlier with Mr. Lange.

A multitude of people from within our school district and a neighboring
be naïve to assume that *Lange v. Diercks* was an anomaly, and that other school officials would not seek to suppress otherwise lawful student speech based on perceived deficiencies in “journalism standards.”

Against this backdrop, the best understanding of the statutes’ standards-of-journalism component is likely that a school should only be authorized to require students writing for an official student publication to correct gross problems of grammar, spelling, or inadequate research.\(^\text{207}\) Essentially, these provisions should operate to ensure journalism advisers are able to do their job: to provide students advice on sound principles of journalism, English, and writing, without requiring students to accept every suggested comma or line-edit to escape censorship.\(^\text{208}\) Much like a coach provides student-athletes advice on how to play—without running out onto the field and ripping the football from a receiver’s hands—these statutes should be understood to give students the breathing room they need to learn, with the advice, support and assistance of advisers.\(^\text{209}\) Until courts come to this conclusion, however, students in states with “standards” provisions should be vigilant against school officials’ attempts to abuse the statute to backdoor censorship of controversial

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\(^{207}\) Cf. *Smith v. Novato Unified Sch. Dist.*, 59 Cal. Rptr. 3d 508, 521 (2007) (“[The California statute] likely authorizes journalism advisers to restrict the publication of student writings that are ungrammatical, poorly written, or inadequately researched.”).

\(^{208}\) *Smith v. Novato Unified Sch. Dist.*, 59 Cal. Rptr. 3d 508, 522 (2007) (“[The statute] permits schools to engage with student journalists regarding the linguistic and journalistic merits of their work.”).

\(^{209}\) The author cannot take credit for the coaching analogy; it is often relied on by journalism advisers explaining their role to those unfamiliar with scholastic journalism. See, e.g., *Q&A, ADVISER AND STAFF*, Fall 2004, at 20-21, available at http://er.bhusd.edlioschool.com/ourpages/auto/2011/11/14/54353681/Adviser%20and%20Staff%20(Fall%202004).pdf (quoting Colorado adviser Jack Kennedy); *September 2010 Podcast: Tyler Buller, Former School Board Member in Johnston, Iowa, and Leslie Shipp, Newspaper Adviser at Johnston High School, Discuss Local Policies that Can Help Protect Student Press Rights*, *STUDENT PRESS L. CENT.* (Sept. 2010), http://www.splc.org/podcasts/Sept10podcast.mp3, at 13:00 (Iowa newspaper adviser Leslie Shipp makes the analogy between advising in coaching in a podcast).
topics or unpopular viewpoints.

E. Profanity and Other Less-than-Obscene Speech: Whether School Officials May Regulate Speech that is Merely Profane or Obscene as to Minors is an Open, Unresolved Question

Courts have yet to conclusively settle whether profanity in official student publications can be regulated pursuant to anti-Hazelwood statutes’ provisions allowing censorship of obscene materials. The case that has come closest to resolving the issue—Lopez—ignored a district court’s finding that four-letter words were obscene within the meaning of California’s student-press statute, instead affirming censorship of a video\footnote{The court split on whether the video qualified as an official school publication or a curricular component more akin to a homework assignment. \textit{Lopez v. Tulare Joint Union High Sch. Dist.}, 34 Cal. App. 4th 1302, 1330–48 (1995) (Ardaiz, P.J., concurring in the result).} on the basis that the profanity did not meet professional standards of English and journalism.\footnote{See \textit{Lopez v. Tulare Joint Union High Sch. Dist.}, 34 Cal. App. 4th 1302, 1325–27 (1995).} The Lopez court’s holding likely does not extend to statutes other than California’s, however, given the appellate court’s extensive reliance on two pieces of the statute’s legislative history: testimony by educators sponsoring the bill who believed the statute permitted regulation of profanity\footnote{See \textit{id.} at 1324–25.} and the legislative defeat of a prior version of the California bill “after a senator charged that the bill would open the door for students to proliferate four-letter words in their newspapers.”\footnote{Jeri Christine Okamoto, \textit{Prior Restraint and the Public High School Student Press: The Validity of Administrative Censorship of Student Newspapers Under the Federal and California Constitutions}, 20 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 1055, 1165 n. 206–07 (1987).} Absent similar history undergirding other states’ statutes, it is unclear whether the reasoning of Lopez reaches beyond the borders of California.

Should courts read these proscriptions on obscenity in light of federal law—and at least one commentator has decried such an approach—\footnote{Palermo, supra note 132, at 60. Palermo notes that a student could wear Cohen’s jacket (“Fuck the Draft”) without repercussions in an anti-Hazelwood-statute state, so long as the jacket was not submitted as part of a curricular endeavor (like a sewing class). \textit{See generally Cohen v. California}, 403 U.S. 15 (1970); \textit{contra Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser}, 478 U.S. 675, 682 (1986) (citing \textit{Thomas v. Bd. of Educ.}, Granville Central School Dist., 607 F.2d 1043, 1057 (2nd Cir. 1979) (“[T]he First Amendment gives a high school student the classroom right to wear Tinker’s armband, but not Cohen’s jacket.”)).} the issue of profanity may be guided by Bethel v. Fraser, which permits schools to regulate speech that is “offensively lewd and indecent” and presented to a captive audience of students.\footnote{\textit{Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser}, 478 U.S. 675, 685 (1986) (“We hold that petitioner School District acted entirely within its permissible authority in imposing sanctions upon [a student] in response to his offensively lewd and indecent speech.”).} Or, applying Tinker-era precedent, courts may
find school officials cannot regulate profanity unless it rises close to or near the level of obscenity. Recent Supreme Court developments may also signal a movement away from imposing special rules on the First Amendment rights of minors. In *Brown v. EMA* (2011), the Court invalidated a California statute that restricted the ability of minors to purchase video games based on the games’ violent content. In evaluating the Court’s case law regarding minors and obscenity, Justice Scalia (for the majority) found the reach of those cases to extend only to speech with a sexual component. In light of *Brown*, then, it would appear that profane speech may yet be protected, so long as it is not of a sexual nature.

This area of law remains unsettled and the take-away lesson for student journalists is likely to think carefully about the use of profanity and four-letter words in student publications. While many courts would likely find profanity to be protected speech, that outcome is not a certainty. And, perhaps more importantly, unless profanity is necessary or crucial to the reporting of a story, its use may give the impression that student journalists are going for shock value, rather than truth-telling.

**F. “Incitement” versus “Encouragement”: The Reach of the Statutes for Speech Concerning Unlawful Activity is Unsettled**

All six California-model statutes, with some variation in precise language, provide for censorship of student speech that may cause students to commit unlawful acts, violate school rules, or be disruptive. Among the statutes, there are at least four different standards used to determine when speech that may result in unlawful acts may be censored. The Arkansas statute requires that speech “incites” unlawful acts before censorship is permitted. In contrast, the Iowa and Kansas statutes permit regulation of speech that merely encourages unlawful acts, while the California, Colorado, and Oregon

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216 See Note, *supra* note 195, at 516–19 (collecting cases and arguing profanity cannot be regulated consistent with *Tinker*).


218 *Id.* at 2735 (discussing *Ginsberg v. New York*, 390 U.S. 629 (1968)).

219 It does not require a font of creativity to imagine a litany of four-letter or otherwise “profane” words devoid of sexual implications.

220 ARK. STAT. ANN. § 6-18-1204(4) (permitting regulation of “Publications that so incite students as to create: (A) A clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises; (B) The violation of lawful school regulations; or (C) The material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.”).

221 IOWA CODE ANN. § 280.22 (West) (permitting regulation of “Materials which encourage students to do any of the following: (1) Commit unlawful acts; (2) Violate lawful school regulations; (3) Cause the material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.”); KAN. STAT. ANN. § 72-1506 (West) (“Publication or other expression that . . . commands, requests, induces, encourages, commends or promotes conduct that is defined by
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The statutes require a “clear and present danger” of unlawful acts or disruption.222 The Massachusetts statute requires that an actual disruption take place before censorship is permitted.223

The Arkansas courts have not had an opportunity to construe the meaning of its incitement requirement. However, the California statute also requires that speech “incite” disruption—albeit in the context of inciting a clear and present danger. If the California courts are any indication, the use of “incite” in a student-press statute is unambiguous, and will be guided by its normal dictionary definition.224 To incite is “to instigate, persuade, or move another to commit a crime”—in other words, speech directed at achieving a particular unlawful result.225

The Iowa and Kansas statutes’ proscription of materials that “encourage” students to commit unlawful acts is potentially broader. However, the only case to construe either provision has interpreted “encourage” comparably to the California courts’ treatment of “incite.” The Iowa Court of Appeals—narrowly interpreted “encourage” to find that the statute only regulated speech if the students “actually advocate[ed] their peers take some action.”226 This narrow interpretation may also have been fueled by school officials’ inability to detail how the parody edition of the student newspaper at issue encouraged unlawful acts. At various points, the school district in Lange v. Diercks claimed a digitally created photo of an infant with a cigarette encouraged illegal activity,227 that the name “KeySux High School” (referring to a neighboring school district) violated the statute by “putting kids at odds with each other and their friends,”228 that a student’s statement that he “wanted to meet Jay Z”229

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222 COLO. REV. STAT. § 22-1-120(3)(d); OR. REV. STAT. ANN. § 336.477(4) (West); CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48907(a).

223 MASS. GEN. LAWS ANN. ch. 71, § 82 (West).

224 See generally Smith v. Novato Unified Sch. Dist., 59 Cal. Rptr. 3d 508, 520 (2007). The Smith court also noted that, “The [California] Legislature's choice of the verb “to incite” likely resulted from the frequent use of “incite” and “incitement” in the United States Supreme Court's “fighting words” cases. Smith, 59 Cal. Rptr. 3d at 520 n. 6. As a result, Supreme Court case law concerning incitement—such as Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire, 315 U.S. 568, 571–72 (1942)—may provide guidance when construing these statutory provisions.


228 Deposition of David Herold, Lange Appendix at 113; Deposition of Daniel Diercks, Lange Appendix at 177–78.
because he is a gangster” encouraged illegal activity, that re-naming the student newspaper (normally The Tribe-une) the “Bribe-une” encouraged bribery, and that a student’s quote that he would “like to go to a Chippendale's tryout [after graduation]” all encouraged illegal activity. Against these far-fetched justifications for censorship, it is not surprising that

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230 The context of the district’s position concerning the student wanting to meet Jay Z is worth repeating in full here:

Q. Is there anything else, I guess, besides this picture, because what I hear you telling me – you correct me if I’m wrong – which you believe encourages the students to commit an illegal act?

[DAVID HEROLD]. There is a picture two-thirds down to the bottom of the page in regard to a student who is – “If you could meet any famous person, who would it be and why?” And that student says, “Jay Z because he is a gangster.”

Q. Okay. So a student quoted as wanting to meet someone, does that, in your opinion, encourage students to commit an illegal act?

A. It means to me he would like to meet him because he’d like to be like him.

Q. Well, let’s separate something here. You’ll agree that’s a quote from [a student]; correct?

A. Yes.

Q. That the paper printed a quote.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you see the printing of a quote by someone as concurrence by the paper with the content of that quote?

A. I see the paper has a responsibility.

Q. I would, too. But my question was, do you see the printing of a quote of an individual the paper [interviews] as the paper itself condoning or encouraging what is contained in that quote?

A. It depends on the instance. In this instance, my answer would be yes.

Q. So once you again, you think quote is the publication intending to encourage criminal activity.

A. I think that this newspaper printed those that they wanted to print to do that, yes.

Lange Appendix at 125–27; see also Deposition of Daniel Diercks, Lange Appendix at 210–11.

231 Deposition of Daniel Diercks, Lange Appendix at 178–79.

232 Deposition of Daniel Diercks, Lange Appendix at 192–94. In deposition, the principal admitted, in response to a question, that “publication of the word ‘Chippendale’s’ in [his] opinion encourage[d] students to come into the school and take off their clothes.” Id. at 194.

As Judge Tabor helpfully informed readers of her opinion in a footnote, “The Chippendales are a ‘cast of exotic male dancers’ who provide ‘Broadway-show like performances across the United States and around the world.’” Lange v. Diercks, 2011 WL 5515152 at ___ n. 6 (Iowa Ct. App. 2011) (citing In re Chippendales USA, Inc., 90 U.S.P.Q.2d 1535 (2009)).
the Iowa Court of Appeals would narrowly construe the word “encourage” to avoid abuse by school administrators seeking to post-hoc legitimize otherwise impermissible censorship of student speech.233

Interestingly, the California, Colorado, Oregon, and Massachusetts statutes appear to place an even higher burden on school officials to justify censorship than Tinker would require. Tinker only requires school officials demonstrate a reasonable forecast of material and disruption; school officials need not wait until such a disruption is imminent or actually occurring.234 While a reasonable forecast is not justified by “undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance” or a “mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint,”235 courts are likely to defer to an administrator’s forecast so long as it is buttressed by some factual inquiry from which reasonable minds could predict a material and substantial disruption.236 In contrast, the Colorado, California and Oregon statutes237 would impose the

233 The school district’s motivation for punishing Lange, the journalism adviser, is well established by the two letters of reprimand that were placed in Lange’s personnel file. See supra note 206 and accompanying text (discussing reprimands for “inappropriate” newspaper that was produced “in poor judgment”).

234 LAW OF THE STUDENT PRESS, supra note 77, at 25 (“[S]chool officials need not wait until a disruption actually occurs before they can limit student expression.”); see also Lowery v. Euverard, 497 F.3d 584, 591–92 (6th Cir. 2007) (“Tinker does not require school officials to wait until the horse has left the barn before closing the door. Nor does Tinker require certainty that disruption will occur.” (internal citations and quotations omitted)).


236 See, e.g., Butts v. Dallas Indep. Sch. Dist., 436 F.2d 728, 732 (5th Cir. 1971) (“As to the existence of [disruptive] circumstances, [school officials] are the judges, and if within the range where reasonable minds may differ, their decisions will govern. But there must be some inquiry, and establishment of substantial fact, to buttress the determination.”); Defoe ex rel. Defoe v. Spiva, 625 F.3d 324, 336 (6th Cir. 2010) (forecast of disruption reasonable when supported “by the racial violence, tension, and threats occurring in [the school district,] as well as the fact that the Confederate flag is a ‘controversial racial and political symbol.’”); cert. denied, 132 S. Ct. 399 (U.S. 2011); LaVine v. Blaine Sch. Dist., 257 F.3d 981, 989 (9th Cir. 2001) (“Forecasting disruption is unmistakably difficult to do. Tinker does not require certainty that disruption will occur, but rather the existence of facts which might reasonably lead school officials to forecast substantial disruption.” (internal citations and quotations omitted)).

237 Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-1-120(3)(d) (permitting regulation of speech “that creates a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts, the violation of lawful school regulations, or the material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school or that violates the rights of others to privacy or that threatens violence to property or persons.”); Or. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 336.477(4) (West) (permitting regulation of speech that “So incites students as to create a clear and present danger of: (A) The commission of unlawful acts on or off school premises; (B) The violation of school policies; or (C) The material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school...”); Cal. Educ. Code § 48907(a) (“Also prohibited shall be material that so incites pupils as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations, or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.”).
“clear and present danger” standard, which requires that the speech be a proximate cause of an imminent harm. This is a much higher hurdle and would likely require stronger evidence of causation regarding the forecasted disruption than an analysis under Tinker. The Massachusetts statute may even go a step further and eliminate any potential for prior restraint by school officials, instead requiring they wait for student speech to actually cause disruption or disorder within the school.

The significant differences in the burden placed on school officials by the varied statutory language highlights the impact of the sparse track record for litigation under anti-Hazelwood statutes. Cautious administrators—particularly in Oregon, Massachusetts, and Colorado—might think twice about censoring speech that could have been regulated under Tinker, as a reasonable forecast may be insufficient justification for censorship under state law. Similarly, school officials considering prior review of materials that incite unlawful action in Iowa and California may be given more latitude than their counterparts in other states, but risk further developments narrowing the statutes’ scope if justifications for censorship stretch school officials’ credibility with the courts.

V. ARE THE STATE RESPONSES WORKING?

Against the landscape of deficiencies, weaknesses, and flaws discussed above, it might be fair to wonder: Why bother having anti-Hazelwood statutes at all, if they are so plagued by problems? This Part aims to answer that question, first by surveying existing studies on the effect of anti-Hazelwood statutes and then presenting the methodology, findings, and implications of an original study evaluating the content of student newspapers across the country.

For purposes of the following discussion and study, this Part divides the nation’s states into three categories based on the status of students’ free-press rights: Tinker states (where some form of the Tinker standard is imposed by a

238 The “clear and present danger” analysis originates in an opinion by Justice Holmes in Schenck v. United States, 249 U.S. 47, 52 (1919) (affirming convictions of leaflet-distributors inducing persons to refuse to cooperate with the draft during wartime).

239 E.g., United States v. Alvarez, 617 F.3d 1198, 1215 (9th Cir. 2010) cert. granted, 132 S. Ct. 457 (U.S. 2011) (Schenck’s [clear-and-present danger analysis] require[s] that any restricted speech be uttered under circumstances likely to be the proximate cause of an imminent harm within the scope of Congress’ legitimate reach.”).

240 MASS. GEN. LAWS ANN. ch. 71, § 82 (West) (“The right of students to freedom of expression in the public schools of the commonwealth shall not be abridged, provided that such right shall not cause any disruption or disorder within the school,” (emphasis added)).

One federal court has indicated that a reasonable construction of the statute would permit restriction of disruptive speech prospectively, as in Tinker. See generally Westfield High Sch. L.I.F.E. Club v. City of Westfield, 249 F. Supp. 2d 98, 111 (D. Mass. 2003). However, no Massachusetts state court has explicitly addressed the question as of yet. See id. at 110–12.
state statute), Hazelwood states (states lacking a student-press statute or comparable administrative-code sections), and code states (states with an administrative code that arguably provides enhanced student-press rights).

A. Existing Studies

Existing research concerning the differences in student journalism between Hazelwood and Tinker states has largely focused on survey data. A 2000 survey conducted by Mark Paxton and Tom Dickson investigated differences in attitudes among advisers in Tinker versus Hazelwood states and revealed mixed results. The survey found that advisers in Tinker states were less likely to believe high school students were too immature to be responsible journalists and less likely to believe the adviser (rather than students) should be responsible for decisions about content. But, on the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference in advisers’ attitudes about whether they should review copy, correct misspellings, or allow administrative censorship of stories that resulted in negative publicity for the school district. As described by the authors, the overall findings of the survey “suggest that advisors in states with scholastic freedom of press laws and those in states without such laws are remarkably similar . . .” The biggest difference between the two groups, at least as revealed by the study, was that principals in Hazelwood states were significantly more likely to have read the contents of a student publication before it went to press and more likely to have censored or demanded a re-write of a student-written editorial. In a similar vein, another study found that advisers believe students are somewhat more willing to self-censor their publications in Hazelwood states.

241 See Mark Paxton & Tom Dickson, State Free Expression Laws and Scholastic Press Censorship, JOURN. & MASS COMM. EDUC., Summer 200, at 50. As the authors note, one limitation of their study was the small number of Tinker states at the time of publication. Id. at 58. In 2007, Oregon enacted its student-press statute, bringing the total number of Tinker states to seven. See ORE. REV. STAT. § 336.477 (2007).
242 Paxton & Dickson, supra note 241, at 55.
243 Id. at 55. This is consistent with the results in an unpublished study conducted in 2004, which found that student-press laws correlate with a change in principals’ practices, but not a change in advisers’ practices. See Vaugh G. Rudy, A Study of the Relationship Between State Student Free Expression Laws and the Perceived Scholastic Journalism Practices in Public High Schools in the United States, at 64–72 (2004) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with author), available at http://wvuscholar.wvu.edu:8881/exlibris/dtl/d3_1/apache_media/L2V4bGlcmnL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWNoZV9tZWRpYS82OTI5.pdf.
244 Paxton & Dickson, supra note 242, at 57.
245 Id. at 56.
246 Vincent F. Filak, Scott Reinardy & Adam Maksl, Expanding and Validating Applications of the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale: Self-Censorship and Media Advisers’ Comfort Level with Controversial Topics, 86 JOURN. AND MASS. COMM. Q. 368, 377–79 (Summer 2009). It is worth noting that in Filak, Reinardy, and Maksl’s study, the authors
Two studies have explored the effects of student-press laws by testing the impact of changing student-press standards on a single population over time. The first study, by Professor Carol Lomicky, was published in 2000 and focused on editorials published in an anonymous Midwestern high school’s student newspaper during the eight years before and after the Hazelwood decision. Lomicky found significant differences in the types of editorials published before and after Hazelwood. The number of critical editorials decreased from 40 to 12, while the number of editorials appealing to causes and written for entertainment increased significantly. The topics discussed also shifted from a criticism of school policies and personnel decisions to “safer issues,” like crowded hallways, homecoming activities, and student parking. The second study, by high school journalism adviser Jennifer Garner and journalism professor Bruce Plopper, was published in 2010 and investigated a stratified sample of Arkansas public high school student newspapers published before and after enactment of Arkansas’s Student Publications Act. The Garner and Plopper study found no significant change in the number of controversial editorials or news/feature stories published after implementation of the Arkansas anti-Hazelwood statute. What differences the study did reveal were hypothesized to be due to school size (urban versus rural) and the level of training and experience for the schools’ journalism advisers. A related study by Plopper provides some context for these findings, noting that “student press laws may not have much effect on student press censorship” given the proliferation of censorship in Tinker states, the lack of adviser-awareness about anti-Hazelwood statutes, and

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248 Id. at 469.
249 Id. at 469–71.
250 Id. at 470–72.
252 The Garner and Plopper study identified “controversial” pieces as those that covered drugs/alcohol, sex or sex-related issues, violence, criticism of personnel, criticism of policies, and other. Id. at 11.
253 Id. at 13.
254 Id. at 13–15.
255 Bruce L. Plopper & William D. Downs, Jr., Arkansas Student Publications Act: Implementation and Effects, JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION EDUCATOR, Spring
many districts’ failure to comply with requirements of the Arkansas Student Publications Act.\footnote{\textit{Id.} at 78 (reporting 26\% of advisers were unaware of Student Publications Act).}

In the aggregate, the data from these surveys is mixed. In terms of newspaper content, the Lomicky study (finding editorial content at a single high school changed following \textit{Hazelwood}) seems at odds with the Garner and Plopper study (finding little difference in controversial coverage before and after enactment of a student-press statute). Similarly, the survey data revealing little difference among attitudes of advisers and student-editors between \textit{Tinker} and \textit{Hazelwood} seems at odds with reported differences in the attitudes of principals and other school officials. As many writers in this area have noted, more data is needed to better gauge whether anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes are having the intended effect of allowing student journalism to flourish in the absence of censorship by school officials.\footnote{See, e.g., Paxton & Dickson, \textit{supra} note 241, at 58; Lomicky, \textit{supra} note 247, at 474; Dickson, \textit{supra} note 115, at 173.} To that end, the study described in the following subsections was designed to provide additional data concerning differences between student newspapers in \textit{Tinker} and \textit{Hazelwood} states.

\textbf{B. Methodology}

In order to create a dataset that offered insight into whether the anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes materially affected the content of student newspapers, I designed a study involving a content analysis of student newspapers from \textit{Tinker} states, \textit{Hazelwood} states, and states with speech protections in an administrative code. Content analysis is “a research method that uses a set of procedures to make inferences from text.”\footnote{ROBERT PHILIP WEBER, BASIC CONTENT ANALYSIS 9 (2nd ed. 1990). Weber’s short book provides a concise and introductory account of content analysis for a reader with limited scientific or statistical background.} The inferences drawn from text can be about a variety of topics, such as the author of the message, the intended audience, or the message’s content.\footnote{\textit{Id.}} Here, the selected items were editorials published in public high school student newspapers between 2008 and 2011 and the inferences drawn were regarding the content of the editorials.

To determine the universe from which my sample of student newspapers
would be drawn, I used the database of student media maintained by My High School Journalism, an initiative of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. In March of 2012, the database included roughly 3,800 student newspapers from across the world: 2,722 in Hazelwood states, 837 in Tinker states, and 228 in code states. I then used a random-number generator to create a list of 25 newspapers in each of the three categories. Private schools were manually removed and replaced with a randomly selected replacement public school. Public charter schools were not excluded, as they are generally subject to constitutional restrictions on state action.

I chose to rely on internet-available newspapers rather than solely print copies due to logistical issues in acquiring print-editions of student newspapers and the belief that internet-available newspapers would be more accessible for readers of this study. Admittedly, there is likely some selection bias resulting from use of internet-available newspapers. It would not be surprising if smaller, less sophisticated student newspapers were less likely to have an online presence. However, because whatever bias was introduced by relying on internet-available newspapers applies with equal force to all three samples, it is unlikely that this bias had a disparate impact among the Tinker-, Hazelwood-, and code-state samples.

After determining the sample of newspapers, I used a standardized method to obtain items for analysis. First, I searched the link that accompanied the database entry on the My High School Journalism website. Next, I conducted a Google search using the student newspaper’s name, the name of the high school, and the city and state of publication. Finally, I conducted a search on Issuu, a digital publishing website that includes PDF copies of many high

261 See generally About Us, MY HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM, http://www.hsj.org/content.cfm?CmsPagesID=192 (last accessed April 19, 2012). The site provides “[f]ree online hosting and a content management system for youth-generated news, connected to more than 4,000 student news outlets.” Id.


263 The random-number generator used for this study was the integer-set creator at http://www.random.org. Original printouts from the generator are on file with the author.


265 Many student newspapers print only a few thousand copies of each issue and only distribute locally. Unlike with major daily newspapers, it is uncommon—if not virtually unheard of—to find publicly accessible microfilm of student newspapers.

266 One recent study suggests that only roughly one-quarter of student newspapers have an online component. See Goodman et al., supra note 33, at 3.

267 For example, for the Bear Buzz (the first newspaper in the Tinker sample), the search terms used were: “Mount Shasta” AND “California” AND “Bear Buzz” AND “Mount Shasta High School.” See Appendix A.
school and college student newspapers, using the same terms as the Google search.268

Items included for analysis—which I refer to as “editorials”—included any items that appeared on editorial or opinion pages, were marked as editorials or opinions, or clearly appeared to be editorial or opinion pieces.269 Sports columns, editorial mastheads270 feature columns, commercial reviews,271 editorial cartoons,272 letters to the editor, and advice columns were all excluded from the final analysis. Guest pieces by non-students were excluded, while guest pieces by students were included.

All items were published during 2008, 2009, 2010, or 2011. The selected timeframe spans four years to include the full range of an election cycle (on the assumption that elections and campaigns may affect editorial content) and reflect the most recent four full calendar years (on the assumption that more newspapers have published online in recent years). The study did not draw boundaries for the timeframe at academic years due to inter-state variation in school start-dates and varying publication cycles (whether monthly, bi-weekly, or at some other frequency).

Before collecting the data, I designed a rubric for categorizing editorials.273 I placed each editorial in one of seven categories,274 as follows:

268 “Issuu is the leading digital publishing platform delivering exceptional reading experiences of magazines, catalogs, and newspapers.” About, ISSUU, http://issuu.com/about (last accessed April 15, 2012).
269 Some student newspapers did not caption pages by topic, such as by including “news,” “feature,” or “opinion” at the top of the page. For newspapers without these cues to categorization, any pieces that appeared to be opinion pieces—such as by taking a position on an issue or reflecting on events using personal pronouns (“I think” or “it’s my opinion that”)—were included. I erred on the side of inclusion.
270 A masthead, “[a]lso called flag[, is] a statement printed in all issues of a newspaper, magazine, or the like, usually on the editorial page, giving the publication's name, the names of the owner and staff, etc.” RANDOM HOUSE UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY (2012).
271 Such reviews often focus on movies, restaurants, books, video games, or other forms of entertainment. Many, but not all, publications separately laid out pages for reviews and other opinions.
272 Unlike other excluded items, many editorial cartoons do indeed take a position on controversial topics and have occasionally been the cause of censorship by school officials. See, e.g., Appeals Court: N.Y. School Can Censor Cartoon in ‘Forum’ and Independent Newspapers, STUDENT PRESS L. CENT., http://www.splc.org/news/newsflash.asp?id=2222 (last accessed April 20, 2012). For purposes of this study, however, it would have been nearly impossible to categorize cartoons in the same way as text. Cartoons often include subtle, multifaceted messages rather than a single overriding tone, are more likely to be ambiguous in meaning, and—particularly for student newspapers—can be difficult to understand without context and familiarity with school events.
273 See Appendix B.
274 The categories used in this study are a modified version of the categorization relied on in Lomicky, supra note 247.
Editorials of praise (indicating approval of another person or group’s conduct or behavior)
Editorials of criticism (indicating disapproval)
Entertainment editorials (pieces that did not take a position on any particular issue or topic, but were written to entertain or motivate readers)
Informational editorials (pieces that did not take positions, but provided information to students about a topic or issue)
Cause-appealing editorials (calls-to-action for students to support an issue or engage in some conduct)
Debate editorials (which provided equal space to discuss the pros/cons of a particular issue or topic or included brief statements by a number of students)
Other (all other editorials, such as reflective pieces that discuss personal experiences without an overriding theme)

The editorials of praise and editorials of criticism were both subcategorized based on the focus of the praise or criticism. These editorials were coded depending on whether the praise/criticism targeted the school (including curriculum, facilities, school rules, and school officials), state and local government (including city, county, and state), the national government, or international entities.

Entertainment editorials were subcategorized into seasonal editorials (such as Christmas or Valentine’s Day-themed pieces, or pieces about prom and graduation), humorous editorials (such as satirical or joke pieces), and other editorials.

Debate editorials were subcategorized into man-on-the-street editorials (a collection of quotes from students or staff responding to a particular question), pro/con editorials (where one student took a position favoring an issue and another student took a position against it), and other debate editorials.

Independent of the categorization for type of editorial, each item was also coded for whether it discussed a controversial topic. Five categories of controversial topics were included in the analysis as follows:

- **Drugs/Substance Abuse** (relating to illegal drugs, tobacco, or alcohol)
- **Race** (relating to topics such as illegal immigration and race-related stereotypes or discrimination)
- **Religion** (relating to students’ religion as well as the role of religion in public schools)

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Tobacco and alcohol are grouped with illegal drugs (like marijuana) because use and possession of tobacco and alcohol are illegal for the vast majority of high school students.
• Sex (including homosexuality, birth control, teenage sex and pregnancy, abortion, and sex education)
• Crime/Violence (including gang-related activities, vandalism, capital punishment, and in-school fights and violence).

The list of topics to code as “controversial” is a synthesis of topics deemed controversial in other studies, the topics principals have described as likely to result in censorship, topics litigated in censorship cases, and topics that are commonly associated with censorship reported to the Student Press Law Center. Pieces that covered more than one controversial topic were coded based on which topic dominated the piece (such as by comprising a higher word-count or using more forceful language). Pieces that addressed the legalization of illegal substances were categorized for drugs/substance abuse, rather than crime/violence.

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276 See, e.g., Filak, Reinardy & Maks, supra note 246, at 374 (rating willingness to self-censor articles about sex, substance use/abuse, and misdeeds); Garner & Plopper, supra note 252, at 11 (coding stories about drugs/alcohol, sex or sex-related issues, violence, criticism of personnel, criticism of policies, and other as “controversial”).

277 Dickson, supra note 115, at 171 (reporting that 60.8% of principals might suppress pieces about sex; 56.8% for pieces about drugs; 41.9% for pieces about student pregnancy).


Before beginning the coding process, I formed five tentative hypotheses that would support anti-*Hazelwood* statutes having an effect on the content of student newspapers:

1. *Tinker*-state newspapers would include proportionally more critical editorials than *Hazelwood*-state newspapers.
2. Among the critical editorials, *Tinker* newspapers would have a greater proportion of editorials criticizing school administrators than *Hazelwood* newspapers.
3. *Tinker* newspapers would publish more editorials on controversial topics than *Hazelwood* newspapers.
4. *Tinker* newspapers would publish a proportionally smaller number of informational and entertainment editorials than *Hazelwood* states.
5. *Tinker* states would publish a proportionally larger number of cause-appealing editorials.

I also hypothesized that the code-state sample would be more similar in content to the *Hazelwood* sample, on the theory that administrative regulations provide a less publicly known, less positive, and ultimately less effective grant of rights than a state statute.\(^{280}\)

Using the rubric included at Appendix B, I manually coded and reviewed each item. To the extent possible, the identity of the student newspaper was obscured during the review process\(^ {281}\) and editorials from each group were mixed. While it is always possible that subconscious researcher bias may have crept into the coding process, these measures mitigated that possibility. After coding each item, I input the results to a Microsoft Excel document. Following minor data cleanup (typo-correction, ensuring each item was only coded into one category, etc.), I exported pivot tables for each sample. These tables are reproduced in Appendix C and form the basis of the results section below. A table of the newspapers included in each sample and the number of items acquired from each newspaper is included at Appendix A.

I then took the compiled data (in substantially the same form as it appears in Appendix C) and prepared to run statistical tests to determine what differences between the samples, if any, were statistically significant. Because all three samples were independent, drawn from simple random sampling, and consisted of more than ten items, a test of the difference of proportions was used. To run the relevant calculations, I used R, a popular open-source statistical calculation environment.\(^ {282}\) I tested for whether proportions between

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\(^{280}\) See Part II.B supra.

\(^{281}\) In some cases, although the school and newspaper name were removed from the items reviewed, the location of the newspaper was apparent from editorial coverage, such as when pieces focused on state legislatures or governors.

\(^{282}\) *R* is a free software environment for statistical computing and graphics. It compiles
each of the samples were significant at the .05 level—in other words, whether the differences were significantly different with 95 percent confidence. The results of the statistical tests are included in Appendix C and discussed below.

C. Results

On balance, the data confirms that anti-Hazelwood statutes have had a statistically significant effect on the content of student newspapers’ editorials. The data support (with 95 percent confidence) my hypotheses about editorials of criticism, editorials criticizing school officials in particular, and editorials on controversial topics, but refuted my two hypotheses about entertainment and cause-appealing editorials. In other words, the anti-Hazelwood statutes appear to be effective in permitting students to write editorials on controversial topics and be critical of school officials, but have little effect on the likelihood of students to write informational, entertainment, or cause-appealing editorials.

1. Student newspapers in Tinker states publish proportionally more editorials of criticism, editorials specifically criticizing school officials and the school environment, and editorials on controversial topics than their counterparts in Hazelwood states.

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As depicted in Figure 1 above (previous page), three of my five hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of anti-
Hazelwood statutes were ultimately supported by the data to a degree of statistical significance. First, the Tinker newspapers had a significantly greater proportion of critical editorials: 32.41% (329 items) in the Tinker sample, compared to 26.51% (149 items) for Hazelwood newspapers.\textsuperscript{283} Second, the Tinker-state newspapers were significantly more likely to focus that criticism on school officials than Hazelwood newspapers, with nearly half (48.33%, 159 items) of the critical Tinker editorials focusing on the school, compared to roughly one third (35.57%, 53 items) in the Hazelwood sample.\textsuperscript{284} Third and finally, Tinker-state newspapers covered controversial topics significantly more often, at 13.30% of editorials (135 items) for Tinker newspapers, compared to just 8.90% of editorials (50 items) for Hazelwood newspapers.\textsuperscript{285}

Qualitatively, the editorials of criticism focused on the school revealed students taking a stance on a wide variety of issues. Students criticized aspects of the school experience that ranged from school disciplinary rules,\textsuperscript{286} to curriculum,\textsuperscript{287} to the parking situation,\textsuperscript{288} to perceived deficiencies in standardized testing,\textsuperscript{289} to the dress code.\textsuperscript{290}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{283} See Appendix C. All percentages reported in the body of the text, as well as in Appendix C, are rounded to the nearest one-hundredth. Values used in calculations in R were not rounded and were instead the raw value of the number of coded editorials divided by the total number of editorials for each sample.

\textsuperscript{284} See Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{285} See Appendix C.


\textsuperscript{288} Sarah Fitzgerald, More Parking Spots for Students, PANTHERBOOK (Franklin High School; Franklin, Massachusetts), November 16, 2011, pantherbook.org/oped/2011/11/16/more-parking-spots-for-students/.


In the *Tinker* sample, sex-related topics were the most frequent controversial subject, at 28.15% of all controversial editorials. The remainder was relatively equally divided among editorials concerning drugs/substance abuse, race, religion, and crime/violence. Sex-related editorials also featured prominently in *Hazelwood* newspapers, comprising 42% of the controversial-editorial sample. In both samples, these editorials covered topics that ranged from same-sex marriage, to abortion, to discussion of sex education and the risks of sexually transmitted diseases.

2. *Tinker-* and *Hazelwood*-state newspapers include remarkably similar proportions of informational, entertainment, and cause-appealing editorials.
The fourth hypothesis—that Tinker-state newspapers would have comparably fewer entertainment and informational editorials—was not supported. As depicted in Figure 2, the data show that both samples contain remarkably similar proportions of entertainment, informational and cause-appealing editorials.\textsuperscript{297} Differences among these proportions between the Hazelwood and Tinker samples were not statistically significant.

For editorials coded as entertainment, both samples included roughly half seasonal editorials\textsuperscript{298} and one-third motivational editorials,\textsuperscript{299} with the remainder comprising humorous and other editorials.\textsuperscript{300} For both samples, seasonal editorials were largely concerned with holidays.\textsuperscript{301}

\textsuperscript{297} A combined 26.60\% of the Tinker sample consisted of entertainment editorials (16.06\%) and informational editorials (10.54\%). The corresponding value for the Hazelwood sample is 24.92\% for entertainment editorials (13.35\%) and informational editorials (11.57\%). See Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{298} Seasonal editorials comprised 50.31\% of the Tinker entertainment-editorial sample and 54.67\% for Hazelwood states. \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{299} Motivational editorials comprised 35.58\% of the Tinker entertainment-editorial sample and 38.67\% of the corresponding portion of the Hazelwood sample. \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{300} The remaining 6.67\% of the Tinker sample entertainment-editorials were humorous, while the remaining Hazelwood entertainment-editorials were split between 7.36\% humorous editorials and 6.75\% other entertainment-editorials. \textit{Id.}

homecoming/prom, and other recurring yearly events. The motivational editorials typically encouraged other students, such as by urging them to study hard or put effort into standardized tests, while humorous editorials covered wide-ranging topics, from mocking the Twilight film series to jokes about sophomores’ inability to park their cars, to satirical pieces lampooning the Tea Party. The uncategorized entertainment-editorials reflected an eclectic collection of writing, from tips on how to survive a zombie attack to an obituary for an eraser.


Fast Forward: Your Transcript is You, RAMPAGE (Southeast Polk High School; Runnels, Iowa), August 24, 2011, at 2, available at http://www.se-polk.k12.ia.us/district/publications/rampage/2011-08.pdf (“High school is our last chance to show what we’re made of and what we’re capable of doing . . . We must try our best and challenge ourselves to create the future we want.”); Jocelyn Jensen, As Senioritis Plagues Loy Norrix: Make a Plan to Stay on Track, KNIGHT LIFE (Loy Norrix High School; Kalamazoo, Michigan), April 211, at 4, available at http://issuu.com/tparko/docs/51.4.11.


Mark Leiffert, Death by Sophomore, RAMPAGE (Southeast Polk High School; Runnels, Iowa), April 23, 2008, at 3, available at http://www.se-polk.k12.ia.us/district/publications/rampage/200804.pdf (“One thing is certain: If you drive a car and park in the Southeast Polk parking lot, you will get in an accident and you will die.”) This editorial, of course, parodies an oft-quoted line from hit film Mean Girls (Paramount Pictures 2004) (“At your age, you're going to have a lot of urges. You're going to want to take off your clothes and touch each other. But if you do touch each other, you will get chlamydia . . . and die.”).

Andrea Nemecek, The Politics of the Tea Party, THE TORCH (John F. Kennedy High School; Cedar Rapids, Iowa), April 10, 2010, at 8, available at http://issuu.com/kennedytorch/docs/aprilissu ("I've decided to leave the political party that has fought for the middle class in a thoughtful, civilized manner for a party that is fighting for a vague idea in a violent, angry, illogical manner. If you still doubt the Tea Party, ask yourself: 'How's that hopey, changey thing working for you?'").

Anna Romero, During A Zombie Attack, Please Follow Me, THOMAS JEFFERSON JOURNAL (Thomas Jefferson High School; Denver, Colorado), November 18, 2010, www.tjjournal.com/2010/11/18/during-a-zombie-attack-please-follow-me/ (“It’s not likely you’re going to have to use this guide any time soon (as the soonest predicted zombie apocalypse is in 2012), but it’s always best to err on the safe side and keep a baseball bat nearby.”).

Sabrina Neria, Billie the Purple Eraser, THE SAGA (Pleasant Valley High School; Chico, California), November 3, 2008, at 5, available at http://my.hsj.org/Portals/2/schools/
Both the Tinker and Hazelwood newspapers also included approximately the same percentage of informational editorials, comprising 10.54% of the Tinker sample and 11.57% of the Hazelwood sample. These editorials did not take a position on any particular issue, but instead provided readers with information, such as detailing the dangers of caffeine, summarizing election results with little or no commentary, or explaining why gasoline prices were increasing.

The fifth hypothesis—that the Tinker-state newspapers would include proportionally more cause-appealing editorials—was not supported by the data either. The two samples contained very similar proportions of cause-appealing editorials, comprising 18.92% of editorials in the Tinker sample and 16.37% of editorials in the Hazelwood newspapers. For both samples, the causes addressed by students ranged from serious issues—like global warming, cyberbullying, and abortion—to more whimsical topics—like urging students to wear deodorant, the merits of hating on Justin Bieber, and the perceived appeal of dating “bad boys.”

For all three groups—entertainment, informational, and cause-appealing editorials—the differences between Tinker and Hazelwood samples were less than three percent. This variation is minor, is not statistically significant and

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219/editions/0db3e969-7f66-4721-a7a3-7f3e0677504b-Issue%203%20Combined.pdf.

310 See Appendix C.


314 See Appendix C.


317 Lee, supra note 295.


321 The differences among entertainment, informational, and cause-appealing editorials
lends limited support for the fourth and fifth hypotheses concerning the effect of anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes.

3. Student newspapers in \textit{Tinker} states include significantly more editorial content than student newspapers in \textit{Hazelwood} states.

\textbf{Fig. 3 – Quantity of Editorials in \textit{Tinker}, \textit{Hazelwood}, and Code-state samples}

One unanticipated result, as depicted in Figure 3, was that \textit{Tinker}-state newspapers included significantly more editorial content than \textit{Hazelwood}-state papers. The \textit{Tinker} sample ultimately consisted of 1,015 editorials from twenty-two different newspapers, while the \textit{Hazelwood} sample consisted of 562 editorials from twenty papers.\textsuperscript{322} The distributions are also highly dissimilar. The \textit{Tinker} sample averaged 46.14 items per newspaper with an online presence, with a median of 27 items, and a standard deviation of 50.71.\textsuperscript{323} The \textit{Hazelwood} sample averaged 28.1 items per newspaper with an online presence, with a median of 18, and a standard deviation of 28.39.\textsuperscript{324} Put descriptively, this means that newspapers from \textit{Tinker} states contained nearly twice as many items per newspaper than those from \textit{Hazelwood} states, and \textit{Hazelwood}-state newspapers were less variable (more consistent) than \textit{Tinker}-state newspapers.

\begin{itemize}
  \item between the \textit{Hazelwood} and \textit{Tinker} samples is not statistically significant at either a 90 percent or 95 percent confidence interval.
  \item See Appendix A.
  \item See \textit{id.}. Descriptive statistics were calculated solely based on the number of newspapers that contained at least one item. In other words, newspapers with no online presence or zero editorials were not included.
  \item See \textit{id.} See supra note 323 and accompanying text for information concerning statistics.
\end{itemize}
4. *Hazelwood* newspapers and those from code-states have significantly more editorials that focus criticism on writers’ peers (other students) than *Tinker* newspapers.

![Proportion of Peer-Criticism Editorials in Tinker-, Hazelwood-, and Code-State Samples](image)

A second unanticipated result, as depicted in Figure 4 above, came from a statistical analysis of the proportion of editorials of criticism that focused on students’ peers. This was the only comparison, throughout all of the calculations in this study, where there was a statistically significant difference between all three groups. As depicted in Figure 4 above, *Tinker* newspapers had a significantly lower number of peer-criticism editorials than *Hazelwood* newspapers and code-state newspapers, and the difference between *Hazelwood* and code-state newspapers was also statistically significant, all with 95 percent confidence. Many of these editorials take the “side” of school administrators as students reprimand their peers for activities like loitering in the halls, relying on Sparknotes instead of doing their English

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325 In the *Tinker* sample, there were 59 editorials criticizing students’ peers, which comprised 17.93% of critical editorials. See Appendix C.

326 In the *Hazelwood* sample, there were 41 editorials criticizing students’ peers, which comprised 27.52% of critical editorials. See Appendix C.

327 In the code-state sample, there were 18 editorials criticizing students’ peers, which comprised 43.90% of critical editorials. See Appendix C.


329 Sparknotes, should any reader be unfamiliar, is an online source of information about literature and academic textbooks that many students rely on in completing (or instead of completing) their assigned coursework. See generally About Sparknotes, SPARKNOTES, http://www.sparknotes.com/about/ (last accessed July 30, 2012).
5. The Tinker newspapers included significantly fewer debate editorials than either the Hazelwood newspapers or code-state newspapers.

Another unanticipated statistically significant result concerned the debate editorials. As depicted in Figure 5 above, the Tinker newspapers included 112 debate editorials, which made up just 11.03% of the total Tinker sample, while the Hazelwood sample included 97 debate editorials, or 17.26% of the total Hazelwood sample. This difference is significant with a 95 percent confident interval. Similarly, the code-state sample included a significantly greater proportion of debate editorials (36 editorials, or 20.34% of the code-state sample) than the Tinker sample, though this number is not different from the Hazelwood sample in a statistically significant way.

These debate editorials all involved two or more students taking opposing sides (or multiple different viewpoints) on a given issue. In other words, the students presented two or more competing arguments regarding an issue, without the newspaper staff taking a position. For example, many student newspapers include “man-on-the-street” packages that involve a newspaper.

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332 See Appendix C.
staffer asking a series of persons a question, such as whether they support a major sports franchise moving to the state, if they favor a tax on soda to fund healthcare initiatives, or what their ideal gift on the Twelfth Day of Christmas might be. Similarly, other pieces are structured as “pro vs. con” packages, where two students take opposing viewpoints, such as arguing for and against same-sex marriage or debating abstinence versus safe sex. The common theme among these editorials is that, instead of the editorial staff taking a stance on a particular issue (e.g., in favor of same-sex marriage), the staff presents both sides in an attempt at objectivity.

6. Code-state newspapers are more similar to Hazelwood newspapers than Tinker newspapers states in terms of editorial content.

Qualitatively, the code-state and Hazelwood-state newspapers were largely similar. Both contained proportionately fewer editorials of criticism focusing on the school than Tinker-state newspapers, and proportionately more editorials focusing criticism on students’ peers. Both also contained significantly fewer editorials on controversial topics than Tinker-state newspapers. In fact, the only editorial-type subgroup where there is a statistically significant difference between the Hazelwood newspapers and

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333 Generally the persons interviewed were students, but sometimes faculty or other school staff were also included.

334 Class System: Should Kansas Become Home to an NHL or NBA Franchise?, THE PATRIOT (Shawnee Mission South High School; Overland Park, Kansas), November 2008, at 10, available at http://my.hsj.org/232780 (respondents were one student from each grade at the high school).

335 Would You Pay a “Soda” Tax to Fund Health Care Reform?, THE SAGA (Pleasant Valley High School; Chico, California), November 16, 2009, at 6, available at http://my.hsj.org/Portals/2/schools/219/editions/c8dd8b00-c980-4baf-bf86-fd02b8e08b24-Issue%203%20Volume%2045.pdf (respondents were one student from each grade).

336 The Last Bark: On the 12th Day of Christmas, What Would You Want Your True Love to Give You?, THE CARTHAGINIAN (Carthage High School; Carthage, Texas), Dec. 17, 2010, at 8, available at http://issuu.com/jquick/docs/december_issue (open viewer and scroll to page eight). Respondents for this piece included one student from each grade and two members of faculty. See id.

337 Pham and Devreux, supra note 294.


339 In the Tinker sample, 48.33% of critical editorials targeted the school; for the Hazelwood sample: 35.57%; and for the code-state sample: 26.83%. See Appendix C.

340 Only 17.93% of Tinker critical-editorials focused on peers, compared to 27.52% for Hazelwood newspapers and 43.9% for code-state newspapers. Id.

341 Among the Tinker sample, 13.30% of editorials were controversial, while only 8.90% of the Hazelwood sample and 6.78% of the code-state sample covered controversial topics. See id.
those from code-states is for editorials coded as “other”—and that *Hazelwood* states had significantly more editorials that did fall into the other categories offers little support for there being much of a difference between these two groups.

In terms of editorial quantity, the code-state sample is also much more similar to the *Hazelwood* newspapers than the *Tinker* sample.\(^{342}\) The code-state sample yielded items from just fourteen of the twenty-five randomly selected newspapers, for a total of 177 editorials.\(^{343}\) This is much closer to the 562 editorials in the *Hazelwood* sample than the 1,015 editorials collected from *Tinker* newspapers.\(^{344}\) The distribution of code-state editorials among newspapers with an online presence is also consistently low, with a mean of 12.64 editorials per newspapers, a mean of 7.5, and a standard deviation of 12.07.\(^{345}\)

### D. Discussion

Amidst the ocean of numbers and qualitative examples discussed above, a consistent narrative emerges concerning anti-*Hazelwood* statutes: they make a difference in the editorial content of student newspapers. The increased number of critical and controversial editorials in *Tinker* states suggests that these students are less subject to censorship and can operate independent of school officials’ interference. Similarly, the unanticipated finding that *Tinker* newspapers were less likely to criticize their peers and more likely to take a position on an issue, rather than presenting both sides without taking a stand, support that anti-*Hazelwood* statutes are effective at freeing the student press. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of code states, where it appears the presence of a pro-student-press administrative-code section has little or no impact on students’ editorials. Yet, even in states where students do not have the benefit of an anti-*Hazelwood* statute, this study is proof positive that a great many students continue to work toward producing quality journalism, in spite of laws that heavily favor school officials. This study has established a solid foundation for further research into the efficacy of anti-*Hazelwood* statutes and, as discussed below, more data will help us to understand this area of the law even better.

1. The significantly higher number of total editorials published in *Tinker* states, and the corresponding higher proportions of controversial editorials

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\(^{342}\) See Fig. 3 supra.

\(^{343}\) See Appendix A.

\(^{344}\) Id.

\(^{345}\) See Appendix A. See supra note 323 and accompanying text for a discussion of the methodology for calculating these descriptive statistics.
and editorials criticizing school officials, all support anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes having a positive effect on student journalism.

If we accept a few key assumptions—that better, more free student journalism results in more critical editorials and covers more controversial issues—the inescapable conclusion from this study is that anti-\textit{Hazelwood} statutes are effective at improving student journalism, despite the statutes’ many flaws and limitations.

The most direct beneficiary of the statutes, of course, appears to be students. In the aggregate, \textit{Tinker} newspapers published nearly double the number of editorials than \textit{Hazelwood} newspapers.\textsuperscript{346} This means, putting aside any values-judgment about the content of their editorials, \textit{Tinker}-state student journalists were expressing themselves more often and were more frequently engaged in public discourse. For many students, scholastic journalism provides one of terribly few outlets for intellectual stimulation, the debate of ideas, and the mass transmission of information to their peers during the school day.\textsuperscript{347} These publications provide a valuable outlet for students to explore their political and social identities, to obtain information that may have a very direct impact on their lives (such as frank information about birth control or underage drinking),\textsuperscript{348} and dialogue with their peers. This ultimately helps fulfill what is widely accepted as a core goal of the public education system: to train young people to become independent thinkers, contributing members of society, and informed citizens.\textsuperscript{349}

Looking beyond the sheer quantity of editorials in \textit{Tinker} states, the data also reveal \textit{Tinker} newspapers were significantly more likely to write editorials critical of school administration or on controversial topics than their \textit{Hazelwood}- or code-state counterparts. While students certainly benefit from the ability to criticize and improve aspects of their education, school districts also reap benefits from this student feedback. The increase in editorials

\begin{footnotesize}
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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnotesize 346 In sum, \textit{Tinker} newspapers published 1,015 editorials, while \textit{Hazelwood} newspapers published just 562. See Appendix C.
\item \footnotesize 347 Undoubtedly there are other spaces in which teens might congregate (like social media networks or even a local mall), but none where the debate is so open, with so many voices (from a wide array of peers and faculty) than the public schools.
\item \footnotesize 348 It would not be surprising, for example, to find that many students obtained a more direct, practical education concerning contraceptives from a spread in the student newspapers than in a sex education class. Similarly, students might be far more likely to make cautious choices about underage alcohol use if the student newspaper widely reports on the sometimes-fatal consequences of binge drinking.
\item \footnotesize 349 \textit{E.g.} Wohl, supra note 97, at 7–8 (“A central goal of a public school is to train young minds to be contributing, thinking members of society. It is simply wrong to believe that by restraining student speech and thought, it will either make that thought or speech disappear, or will have any generally beneficial effects.”); see also Part I.C supra (Students are the Future of the First Amendment).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
focusing on the school environment is a valuable indicator that a less-restricted student press helps foster a dialogue between school officials and students that allows both to take ownership in the educational enterprise—hopefully with the goal of improving the academic enterprise. In some cases, student criticism may even provide valuable feedback to administrators considering changes in policy or curriculum—after all, who better to report on a school board’s impact on students than the students themselves? In a society that embraces democratic values, one can only hope that these benefits outweigh administrators’ desire to suppress unpopular viewpoints or the voices that are most critical of school personnel and policies.

Yet another group that benefits from a free student press is society at large—particularly stakeholders in the public school system that are not present in the schools with any serious frequency. A free student press can ably fulfill its watchdog function through editorials critical of school spending, curriculum, and school officials’ actions. For many voters and taxpayers, such as young adults without children or retirees whose children graduated long ago, the only window they have into the happenings of the local high school is through student publications and occasional commercial media coverage. The significant number of editorials criticizing school officials indicates that students are providing valuable feedback on the education process to stakeholders throughout the school community.

The publication of more editorials on controversial topics also shows that anti-Hazelwood statutes are working, as these are the kind of topics often censored when students lack protection. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from the subject matter of students’ controversial editorials, as these often mirror national trends, but students’ editorials on policies like Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, the election of the nation’s first African-American president, and the efficacy of high schools’ sex education programs suggest that students are engaged in the same national discourse as many of their adult counterparts, and their voices should be valued.

The demonstrable effectiveness of the statutes, despite their many limitations, may also suggest that the statutes have a cultural effect; in other words, the statutes’ mere existence may affect norms and make administrators more tolerant of a free student press, even if the statutes are rarely litigated or students are often unsuccessful in the courts. Although it is difficult to place

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350 See supra Part I.B (Student Journalism Serves a Watchdog Function for School Officials).

351 Lomicky, supra note 247, at 473 (“Subjects about which students select to editorialize . . . frequently relate to the shifting currents of news.”); Garner & Plopper, supra note 251, at 16 (“[Differences in editorial coverage] may have been driven by what the national press was reporting rather than by greater press freedom.”).

352 One key reason why statutes left un-litigated may be successful at creating pro-journalism norms is that many school officials likely perceive the prospect of being hauled into
a value on our cultural beliefs, demonstrating to our developing citizens that government is tolerant of dissenting speech, and that democratic society relishes debate, is a worthwhile endeavor.

2. Two unanticipated findings—that *Tinker* states have a significantly smaller proportion of peer-criticism editorials and debate editorials that avoid taking a stand on an issue—also support anti-*Hazelwood* statutes having a positive effect on the content of student newspapers.

The first unanticipated finding, that *Tinker* newspapers have a significantly smaller number of peer-criticism editorials, supports the overall hypothesis that anti-*Hazelwood* statutes have had a significant effect on editorial content. It would make sense that, in a *Hazelwood* or code-state, where students are less protected from censorship, they would be more likely to take the side of administrators and criticize their peers instead. This is consistent with the content of many of these editorials, as students take their peers to task for violating school rules or for academic laziness.\(^{353}\) Similarly, it would make sense that in a district where students are more protected from censorship, they would be more likely to take the “side” of students, instead taking administrators to task for their shortcomings.\(^{354}\) However, to be perfectly candid, the even greater number of peer-criticism editorials in the code-state sample (compared to both the *Hazelwood* and *Tinker* samples) is somewhat puzzling. As discussed above, the code-state sample largely falls somewhere between the *Tinker* and *Hazelwood* newspapers—though there are far more statistically significant differences between the *Tinker* and code-state samples than the *Hazelwood* newspapers. Yet here, the code-state newspapers show a much greater proportion of peer-criticism than the *Hazelwood* newspapers. Further research should look carefully at this finding to determine not only whether it can be replicated, but also what meaning, if any, should be ascribed to it.

The statistically significant difference in the number of debate editorials between samples also supports the hypothesis regarding anti-*Hazelwood* statutes’ effectiveness, albeit in a much more indirect way. That the *Hazelwood* newspapers included a significantly greater proportion of debate editorials suggests that students in *Hazelwood* states may have been less likely to stick their necks out or stake out a position on an issue, instead choosing to present both sides of an argument without passing judgment on either. Particularly district court and accused of “violating students’ rights” a public-relations disaster for the school district.

\(^{353}\) See supra notes 328, 330–331 (discussing peer-criticism editorials).

\(^{354}\) See supra Part V.D.1 (discussing higher proportion of school-criticism editorials in *Tinker* newspapers).
when the debate editorials concern controversial topics (like same-sex marriage or legalizing marijuana), it would make sense that students feel safer if they offer both sides of an argument, rather than making a claim that might ruffle feathers or risk censorship from administrators. As above, there does not appear to be any easy explanation for why code-states have an even greater proportion of debate editorials than both the Hazelwood and Tinker samples.

3. Administrative codes providing student-press rights appear to be largely ineffective.

The data revealed by this study for Washington and Pennsylvania—the two states with administrative codes offering free-speech protections—is somewhat surprising. Looking at the five hypotheses intended to measure the effectiveness of anti-Hazelwood statutes, the code-state data indicates that students produce arguably lower-quality journalism than their counterparts in states where Hazelwood is the governing standard. Code-state newspapers include fewer editorials of criticism, fewer critical editorials focused on school officials, and fewer controversial items than even the Hazelwood-state newspapers, and a statistically significant decrease compared to Tinker-state papers.355 Given the limited sample size for code-state newspapers, it may be unwise to generalize and say that, on average, all code-state student publications bear fewer indicia of quality scholastic journalism. But, at the very least, these findings suggest that having student-speech protections embodied deep within an administrative code is less effective than placing those protections in a state statute.

4. Hazelwood-state newspapers still have value and are not devoid of worthwhile content.

The data revealed here should also give pause to commentators who predicted gloomily that Hazelwood “could lead to the death of worthwhile student journalism.”356 Although Tinker states’ editorials appear to reflect “better” student journalism in the sense that they are more likely to criticize school officials and cover controversial topics, it would be a mistake to dismiss the student journalism published in Hazelwood states as without value. For every Hazelwood-state paper that publishes puff pieces about “promblem”357

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355 See Appendix B. Code-states also include substantially fewer editorials overall. See Appendix A.
356 Felder, supra note 97, at 451; see supra note 110 and accompanying text.
and trick-or-treating, there is another that critiques Hollywood’s fascination with teen pregnancy and debates the pros and cons of underage-curfew ordinances. Admittedly, many of the more controversial pieces published in Hazelwood-state newspapers may only be printed due to the hands-off approach taken by individual administrators or a tolerant school board. And it’s entirely possible that, with a change in administrative personnel or following a school board election, these papers may face pressure to editorialize on less controversial topics or print more positive pieces. But the data provided here show that the student press lives on, even in the shadow of Hazelwood.


361 For example, following a spat over distribution of an April Fool’s Day issue of the Parkway West High Pathfinder student newspaper, the principal remarked, “Students and journalists will continue to do this paper without prior review . . . Just because Hazelwood gave the right of prior review doesn’t mean we should take it.” See Felder, supra note 97, at 453 (citing and discussing articles published in Pathfinder).

362 Unfortunately, the coda to the Pathfinder story, see supra note 360 and accompanying text, belies the danger in relying on benevolent administrators. Parkway High officials eventually replaced the Pathfinder’s adviser and revised district policy in an attempt to more directly influence the newspaper. Id. at 457–58.

On balance, the literature supports the proposition that most school administrators—particularly when not reigned in by statute or case law—will be hostile to the student press. As one commentator has put it, “The risk that school authorities will be tempted to use any censorship powers they possess to suppress pointed or disrespectful criticism is a near certainty.” Leon Letwin, Administrative Censorship of the Independent Student Press: Demise of the Double Standard?, 28 S. C. L. REV. 565, 583 (1977). Surveys have revealed that a significant majority of school superintendents and principals strongly disagree with “freeing” the student press and permitting unrestrained coverage of controversial stories or stories that do not cast the school in a positive light. See generally Martinson & Kopenhaver, supra note 70, at 131, 160–62; but see Kathleen Kling, Freeing the Student Press for Their Good and Ours, THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR, April 2002, at __, available at http://splc.org/pdf/aasafreepressarticle.pdf (championing the student press).

Most school board members appear similarly disinclined to support the student press. See generally M. Chester Nolte, supra note 2, at 35 (suggesting school board members “look for the chinks between the bricks in the wall of the First Amendment”); but see Tyler Buller, Stirring the Pot: Policies That Give Your Student Journalists the Freedom to Learn Benefit the Students and the District, Too, AM. SCH. BD. J., June 2010, at 25, 26 available at www.splc.org/pdf/StirringthePot_Buller.pdf (championing pro-student-press board policies).
5. Numerous avenues for additional research into the effectiveness of anti-
Hazelwood statutes remain and are necessary for a more complete
understanding of the statutes affect student journalism.

Although this study provides valuable data that furthers our understanding
of how anti-Hazelwood statutes affect student newspapers, it would be a
mistake to think that these statutes are the only variable affecting the content of
students’ editorials. For example, one metric that this study could not account
for was self-censorship by students. There is little doubt that, in editorial board
meetings of at least some of the seventy-five sampled newspapers, students
opted against running an editorial due to a fear that they, their adviser, or the
newspaper staff would be retaliated against for what they wrote. There is even
one explicit example of self-censorship from the Hazelwood-state sample.
William Mason High School’s The Chronicle included a front-page “letter
from the editor” explaining to readers that they had opted to self-censor and
refrain from reporting about the indictment of a high school teacher who had
been accused of having sex with multiple William Mason students.363 The
students explicitly noted that the decision to censor was their own, rather than
an edict from school officials.364 A body of research that explores whether
students’ decisions to self-censor are based on journalistic ethics, fear of
reprisals from school officials, or some other factor would provide a basis for
evaluating whether self-censorship should be seen as a negative, positive, or
neutral aspect of student journalism.

Another factor that the study did not—and practicably could not—control
for was the presence of local board policies that granted student-press freedoms or particular administrators that allowed students free reign with
publications. It would not be surprising to find that content in most Tinker-
state newspapers is approximately similar to the content of a Hazelwood-state
newspaper in a district with strong student-press board policies and a
supportive principal. For example, The Globe student newspaper at Clayton
High School in Clayton, Missouri, is a consistent winner of numerous national
student journalism awards,365 yet Missouri is a Hazelwood state. One possible
mediating factor that has allowed The Globe to flourish is that its district has
effectively imposed its own anti-

Hazelwood measure by opening The Globe as a public forum and allowing student editors to make all content decisions.366

Finally, a valuable piece of scholarship that would supplement—and either reinforce or raise questions regarding—this study is research that is based on a larger sample size and includes both online and print-only student newspapers. Although the resources needed to complete such a study are substantial (likely the assistance of several paid research assistants, significant postage, and a tremendous amount of time), providing another data-set would firmly establish the reliability of this study’s findings and better settle the question of whether anti-Hazelwood statute are accomplishing their goals.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this study is the beginning of a conversation, rather than the end. The editorials analyzed here put a face on today’s student newspapers, highlighting how student journalism serves as a watchdog for the public schools and a training ground for tomorrow’s citizens. But in spite of evidence that student journalism is tied to academic success and serves civic, cultural, and democratic goals, student journalists continue to face opposition from many adults—both in-school and out. These data give at least some ammo to those of us who continue to champion the student press in the ongoing struggle with those who would rather silent dissident student voices and pretend as if there is no controversy, no corruption, and no misdeeds in the halls of our public schools.

It is well established that “if students are to learn the lessons of democracy, such as the importance of exercising the right to freedom of speech, they must live in an environment that fosters the free exchange of ideas.”367 There is no better environment to train tomorrow’s citizens than a public high school with a vibrant and free student press. For the many reasons discussed in this Article—from declining public support for First Amendment principles to the inability of commercial to hold local school officials accountable—it is more important now than ever to ensure students learn these lessons of democracy as they exit the schoolhouse gate and enter adulthood. Continued support for a free student press, such as by adopting anti-Hazelwood statutes, will ensure


students have every opportunity to learn these lessons and safeguard the future of the First Amendment.

In light of this study, advocates should feel reassured that efforts to bolster the student press and guard against government censorship do have real-world consequences that manifest in the content of student newspapers. Efforts to remain vigilant against attempts to silence the scholastic press continue to be worthwhile endeavors, with far-reaching positive consequences that reverberate throughout the public schools and beyond. Legislators, student-press advocates, and students themselves should continue to pursue a return to the protections of Tinker, be it through the courts, state legislatures, or local school boards. With the support of legislators, school officials, and the public, one can only hope that student journalism will continue to thrive and grow, so that we might all reap its benefits.

368 Cf. Buller, supra note 96 (comparing routes available to ending indirect censorship).
# APPENDIX A

## TINKER-STATE NEWSPAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>High School Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th># of editorials</th>
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## The State Response to Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier

### Hazelwood-State Newspapers

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<tr>
<td><strong>The Hornet</strong></td>
<td>Enumclaw High School</td>
<td>Enumclaw, WA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BHSTV</strong></td>
<td>Bremerton High School</td>
<td>Bremerton, WA</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tiger News</strong></td>
<td>Fairview Middle School</td>
<td>Fairview, PA</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lion's Tale</strong></td>
<td>New Hope-Solebury High School</td>
<td>New Hope, PA</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Talon</strong></td>
<td>Tumwater High School</td>
<td>Tumwater, WA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SusQ Sentinel</strong></td>
<td>Susq-Cyber Charter School</td>
<td>Bloomsburg, PA</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

RUBRIC

PRAISE/CRITICISM EDITORIALS

Editorials of Praise: Pieces that voice approval of, compliment, or support the actions or policies advocated by a person or group. Examples: complimenting students about quality the of a pep rally, approving of passage of statewide ballot proposition, lauding construction of new school facilities.

Editorials of Criticism: Pieces that voice disapproval of or criticize the actions or policies advocated by a person or group. Examples: criticizing a school district’s new tardy/absence policy, taking peers to task for littering hallways, disapproving of United States foreign policy.

Subgroups: Editorials of praise and criticism should be divided into subgroups as follows:

- **School**: focusing on the school environment, including school policies, facilities, curriculum, personnel, and actions by school officials;
- **State/Local**: focusing on state or local government, including counties, cities, and other non-school-related government bodies;
- **National**: focusing on the federal government or its officials, including the President;
- **International**: focusing on the international community or international institutions, such as the United Nations.

ENTERTAINMENT EDITORIALS

Seasonal Editorials: Pieces that do not take issue positions, but instead provide commentary on recurring yearly events, including holidays (Valentine’s Day, Christmas, etc.) and school events (prom, graduation, homecoming).

Humorous Editorials: Editorials that consist primarily of jokes, parody, or satire.

Motivational Editorials: Pieces that aim to inspire or motivate readers, such as by urging them to study hard or be the best they could be.

INFORMATIONAL EDITORIALS

Editorials that do not take a position on issues, but instead provide information to readers in a relatively objective fashion.
The State Response to Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier

CAUSE-APPEALING EDITORIALS

Editorials that urge readers to take action on some issue, such as supporting a cause (like the “Green” movement) or taking some action (“clean up your trash”).

DEBATE EDITORIALS

Editorials that provide relatively equal space to divergent viewpoints. Subcategorized as follows:

- **Pro/Con**: pieces by two or more authors that present both sides of an issue, such as the pros and cons of legalizing marijuana;
- **Man-on-the-Street**: pieces that consist solely of a collection of quotes, from multiple sources, explaining in one or two sentences their view on a given topic or questions;
- **Other**: any other pieces similar in tone that present multiple sides of an issue, without explicitly or implicitly taking a side.

CONTROVERSIAL EDITORIALS

Controversial editorials include the following subcategories:

- **Drugs/Substance Abuse**: focusing on illegal drug use, tobacco or alcohol use by students, or criminalization and other government policies concerning these activities;
- **Race**: focusing on race, illegal immigration (including the DREAM Act), stereotypes, or race-based discrimination;
- **Religion**: discussing specific religious faiths, or the intersection of religion and government (such as school prayer);
- **Sexual**: topics related to sexual activity, including birth control, pregnancy, abortion, sex education, and homosexuality (including same-sex marriage);
- **Crime/Violence**: topics related to criminal activity, violence committed by/against students, gang-related activity, vandalism, or other general-interest criminal justice editorials.
APPENDIX C

BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIALS BETWEEN HAZELWOOD-, TINKER-, AND CODE-STATE NEWSPAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Praise</th>
<th>Criticism**+</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Informational</th>
<th>Cause-Appealing</th>
<th>Debate**+</th>
<th>Other*#</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinker</td>
<td>41 (4.04%)</td>
<td>329 (32.41%)</td>
<td>163 (16.06%)</td>
<td>107 (10.54%)</td>
<td>192 (18.92%)</td>
<td>112 (11.03%)</td>
<td>71 (7.00%)</td>
<td>1,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelwood</td>
<td>28 (4.98%)</td>
<td>149 (26.51%)</td>
<td>75 (13.55%)</td>
<td>65 (11.57%)</td>
<td>92 (16.37%)</td>
<td>97 (17.26%)</td>
<td>56 (9.96%)</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-state</td>
<td>8 (4.45%)</td>
<td>41 (23.16%)</td>
<td>33 (18.64%)</td>
<td>19 (10.73%)</td>
<td>33 (18.64%)</td>
<td>36 (20.34%)</td>
<td>7 (3.95%)</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FOCUS OF EDITORIALS OF PRAISE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Govt: School</th>
<th>Govt: State/Local</th>
<th>Govt: National</th>
<th>Govt: International</th>
<th>Peer</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinker</td>
<td>15 (36.59%)</td>
<td>3 (7.32%)</td>
<td>3 (7.32%)</td>
<td>1 (2.44%)</td>
<td>7 (17.07%)</td>
<td>12 (29.27%)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelwood</td>
<td>9 (32.14%)</td>
<td>5 (17.86%)</td>
<td>3 (10.71%)</td>
<td>0 (25.00%)</td>
<td>7 (25.00%)</td>
<td>7 (25.00%)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-state</td>
<td>5 (62.50%)</td>
<td>1 (12.50%)</td>
<td>1 (12.50%)</td>
<td>0 (12.50%)</td>
<td>1 (12.50%)</td>
<td>0 (12.50%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

369 Throughout Appendix C, the asterisks appended to categories—e.g., Criticism* in the first table—reflect that the proportion of editorials of that category in the Tinker sample was of statistically significant difference than the proportion in the Hazelwood sample, at a 95% confidence interval rating. Categories that also reflect statistically significant differences between the Tinker and code-state samples are indicated with a plus sign, e.g, Criticism*+ in the first table. Categories that reflect statistically significant differences between the Hazelwood sample and the code-state sample are indicated with a number sign, e.g. Other*#, in the first table.
**Focus of Editorials of Criticism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Govt: School*+</th>
<th>Govt: State/Local*</th>
<th>Govt: National</th>
<th>Govt: International</th>
<th>Peer*+#</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinker</td>
<td>159 (48.33%)</td>
<td>11 (3.34%)</td>
<td>26 (6.08%)</td>
<td>8 (2.43%)</td>
<td>59 (17.93%)</td>
<td>72 (21.88%)</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelwood</td>
<td>53 (35.57%)</td>
<td>13 (8.72%)</td>
<td>4 (2.68%)</td>
<td>2 (1.34%)</td>
<td>41 (27.52%)</td>
<td>36 (24.16%)</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-state</td>
<td>11 (26.83%)</td>
<td>2 (4.88%)</td>
<td>1 (2.44%)</td>
<td>1 (2.44%)</td>
<td>18 (43.90%)</td>
<td>8 (19.51%)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types of Entertainment Editorials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Humorous#</th>
<th>Seasonal</th>
<th>Motivational</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinker</td>
<td>12 (7.36%)</td>
<td>82 (50.31%)</td>
<td>58 (35.58%)</td>
<td>11 (6.75%)</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelwood</td>
<td>5 (6.67%)</td>
<td>41 (54.67%)</td>
<td>29 (38.67%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-state</td>
<td>13 (39.39%)</td>
<td>18 (54.55%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (6.06%)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Topics of Controversial Editorials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Drugs/Substance Abuse</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Sex or Sex-Related</th>
<th>Crime/Violence</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinker</td>
<td>24 (17.78%)</td>
<td>27 (20.00%)</td>
<td>21 (15.56%)</td>
<td>38 (28.15%)</td>
<td>28 (18.52%)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelwood</td>
<td>6 (12.00%)</td>
<td>6 (12.00%)</td>
<td>10 (20.00%)</td>
<td>21 (42.00%)</td>
<td>7 (14.00%)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-state</td>
<td>3 (25.00%)</td>
<td>2 (16.67%)</td>
<td>1 (8.33%)</td>
<td>5 (41.67%)</td>
<td>1 (8.33%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CONTROVERSIAL EDITORIALS BY SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Number of Controversial Editorials</th>
<th>Total Number of Editorials</th>
<th>Percentage of Controversial Editorials**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinker</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelwood</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-state</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>