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More Than Just a Job: Exploring College Media Advisers' Experiences in Student Development and Higher Education

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MORE THAN JUST A JOB: EXPLORING COLLEGE MEDIA ADVISERS'
EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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the Graduate School of
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Communication, Technology and Society

by
Blythe K. Steelman
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Accepted by:
Dr. Darren Linvill, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

College media advisers are an incredibly involved type of staff member, often serving as a "cultural navigator" for their students and the organizations they advise. As used throughout this study, Strayhorn's (2015) term cultural navigator indicates someone who works to guide students through an educational experience or life-chapter. As such, this concept frames the research presented in this study. This research looks at the experience of being a college media adviser, including challenges and functions of the position, through the use of a qualitative phenomenological study. Twelve self-identified college media advisers located across the United States were interviewed. From these interviews, 10 themes were identified (in relation to three research questions) as important for advising college media. The first question looks at the adviser's specific experiences, including (1_a) *The position involves preparing students for the future*, (1_b) *Advisers aid in student success*, and (1_c) *Advising is more than "just a job"*. The second research question focuses on challenges that advisers experience: (2_a) *The job is always changing*, (2_b) *Past experience, not education, prepares you for this role*, and (2_c) *The structure of the position lacks consistency*. Finally, the third research question examines specific functions of the college media adviser position: (3_a) *Building relationships with students is integral*, (3_b) *The position involves being a counselor*, (3_c) *National organizations serve as a cultural navigator*, and (3_d) *You have to let the students be in charge*. Each of these themes were analyzed and yielded significant statements from advisers to offer an understanding of the place they hold within the college media organization.

DEDICATION

This manuscript, first and foremost, is dedicated to my parents, Eddie and Christy. I could not have made it through graduate school without either of you. It is only with your continued love and support that I have achieved what I have. You are everything I hope to be someday and being your daughter has been the biggest adventure and blessing of a lifetime. Thank you for being my biggest fans and loving me through all of my lovable—and even more unlovable—moments.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my late grandparents, George, Sr. and June Steelman. The two of you loved me unconditionally and were always there for me while I was growing up. I keep you in my heart always.

In addition, this work is also for my baby sisters Kensey and Karley. I am so proud of and humbled by the young ladies you have become. I know we have our differences and do not always see eye-to-eye, but you push me to be my best and I hope you know you are both capable of doing whatever you set your minds to.

This research is devoted to all of the people who invest their lives in advising college media organizations—most importantly, the 12 individuals who took time out of their busy schedules to talk to a young graduate student with aspirations and dreams of her own for advising college media. The world of college media is a truly special place, and this endeavor and the people I talked to along the way have only reinforced that belief. Finally, this project was inspired in part by someone who deeply inspired me and motivated my love for teaching and working with students; Dan Reimold, you are forever missed and the college media world will never be the same without you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have a longer-than-this-page-allows list of people who should be thanked for supporting me and guiding me through this project; most notably is my adviser, Dr. Darren Linvill. You have been all I could have asked for in an adviser—a mentor, a teacher, someone to bring me back down to earth when my ideas get a little too big, a phenomenology/higher education expert, a friend—and I am eternally grateful. Thank you for supporting my out-of-the-box research idea and being just as enthusiastic about it as I have been. I would be remiss if I did not thank my committee members, Drs. Travers Scott and Lori Pindar. You are both such an inspiration to me and I cannot thank you enough for the knowledge and expertise you contributed to this project. I know it is cliché, but I could not have formed a more perfect committee for myself.

I'm not sure if there is a level of debt beyond "forever indebted," but if there is, that is where I am with my best friends, Ann and Whitney. To the former, you are my ride or die. I hope when we are old and gray, we still have the same inside jokes and uncanny ability to know what the other is thinking about or going to say. Whitney, you've been my best friend and confidante for almost a decade now. Thank you for being the Meredith to my Cristina and just a FaceTime call away. I can't imagine what life would be like if we still hated each other over a boy.

Finally, thank you to all of the friends I have made during this program who have turned into family. MACTS has been one of the most enriching and fulfilling experiences of my life, and most of that credit goes to the people I have been surrounded by. Mr. Freeman, Catie, Amanda, Meredith, Emily, and Katie—thank you for keeping me sane

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through this crazy adventure and for reminding me that the journey is just as important as

the destination. In the words of the esteemed Leslie Knope, you are all "beautiful,

talented, brilliant, powerful muskoxen."

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

College media is a budding research area for communication scholars. These organizations are critical for students studying media production (i.e., journalism, broadcast, etc.), because they are viewed as "testing grounds for methods of content production and audience integration" (Terracina-Hartman & Nulph, 2016). This is a topic that is particularly dear to me, as college media shaped and defined my undergraduate experience. I learned countless skills, including writing, copy editing, graphic design, and management. At the helm of these educational and extracurricular experiences was our organization's adviser. College media has been studied in a variety of ways, including comparisons of online journalism versus print journalism (Bergland & Hon, 2009) and overall newsroom operations (Kopenhaver, 2015). However, little research exists that focuses specifically on the adviser to college media organizations. As such, this study looks at the overall experience of advising college media organizations.

Defining College Media

College media organizations are diverse entities; research regarding these organizations supports this claim, as Parish suggests:

Student media programs are a diverse lot…so we could compare apples to apples, I went in search of such programs—looking to find more Jonathans, shall we say. I did not find a single other Jonathan that was just like our program. If you'll pardon the analogy, I found one Red Delicious, one Granny Smith, one Braeburn, one Gala, and some that seemed so different as to be oranges and mangoes and

plums. Not a bushel of any of them, but generally one or a few of each kind.

(2005, p. 2)

College media traces its roots to 1799 with the first college newspaper, the *Dartmouth Gazette*. Less than a hundred years later, the first daily college newspaper, the *Daily News of Yale University*, was established (Kopenhaver, 2014).

The world of college media has changed quite a bit since that time. As Reimold (2014) states, "Collectively, advisers, educators and student journalists are witnessing or participating in the biggest shift in college media since campus newspapers appeared in modern form in the mid-to-late 1800s" (p. 1). Previously, media outlets were known only in their traditional formats. For instance, Kopenhaver (2014) stated that newspapers have historically been print-only products. However, all media organizations are undergoing a shift to products and services that span many platforms: print, online content, multimedia and video content, etc., more commonly known in the media world as convergence (Wotanis, Richardson, & Zhong, 2015). This shift to a more converged newsroom—whether it is for the newspaper, TV station, radio station, yearbook, or campus magazine—mimics the shift of professional newsrooms, where the mentality has also become one of backpack journalism, or a one-person-can-do-it-all place (Kopenhaver, 2014).

While there is little written history about the establishment of various college media organizations across the country, there are five generally recognized types of organizations: newspapers, yearbooks, magazines, television stations, and radio stations

(College Media Association, 2015). For the purposes of this study, each participant advises at least one of these types of organizations.

College media organizations saw a surge in production rates in 2005, but a 2014 survey by Kopenhaver found that there were significant changes in college media across all campuses throughout the United States. The student newspaper, the most popular form of college media, is typically a weekly print product (42 percent of respondents advise weekly newspapers), with a circulation of 1,001 to 5,000 copies per week. Only 12 percent of the survey respondents advise daily newspaper organizations. Some organizations are beginning to drop the print portion of their product entirely and opt only for an online publication. The organization's largest funding source is advertising, and most student newspaper organizations operate on a budget of $50,000 or less. However, since this survey was completed in 2009, revenues have seen a decrease across the board. As newsrooms have started to produce content across multiple platforms, daily or weekly online editions have also emerged alongside traditional print college newspapers. These online newspapers typically generate a small advertising revenue as well (Kopenhaver, 2009, 2015). Also a typical print product, the campus magazine is increasingly general interest-themed (45 percent of respondents) and prints two to three times per year on most campuses. The largest percentage of respondents (35 percent) who advise magazines responded printing more than 49 pages per issue. Many of these organizations operate on budgets of less than $5,000, which is primarily funded by student activity fees. (Kopenhaver, 2015).

Operating with a budget of $50,000 or less, the typical college yearbook is published with 300 or fewer pages. College yearbook organizations receive most of their funding from student activity fees, but, like newspapers, also carry advertising. The revenue for these organizations have significantly decreased, though. In 2009, 27 percent of yearbook advisers reported working with a budget of $100,001 to $300,000, but in the 2014 survey that number dropped to 9 percent (Kopenhaver, 2009, 2015).

Just as traditional print products have seen a decline during the convergence shift, college media organizations like campus radio and television stations have both seen a decline, too, though it is primarily in the form of funding and budgetary matters. The typical campus radio station operates for 19 to 24 hours per day on a small budget of less than $10,000, which is primarily funded through general university funds. The campus television station broadcasts for less than 12 hours per day, and 51 percent of organizations who participated in the survey reported an operating budget of $5,000 or less in revenue. In addition to their on-air content, many organizations have also begun to incorporate online components, including digital news content and social media accounts (Kopenhaver, 2009, 2015).

It is clear that college media organizations have an established presence on college and university campuses. While these organizations may—and frequently do—face setbacks with their university administration (e.g., funding or holding advisers responsible for the content published), college media organizations find themselves supported monetarily and socially by a number of large outside organizations, including the country's oldest and largest college media organization the Associated Collegiate

Press (ACP); the College Media Association (CMA), which serves as a resource and adversary for college media advisers); and the Student Press Law Center (SPLC), which advocates for student journalists' and their advisers' rights.

Advising College Media

An adviser for college media is primarily a teacher; they have afforded to them the largest classroom on a college campus and one of the most important opportunities to educate their students and peers about the First Amendment, media law, and media literacy. By offering critiques and feedback on their students' work, in addition to arranging small or large-scale training sessions for any number of topics related to college media, college media advisers are primarily educators (Inglehart, 2015). The adviser is also there as a mentor and advice-giver, as well as someone who encourages their students to take the lead and be in charge of the students' media content and production processes. They are there to defend their students, but also to teach them how to deal with complaints from campus community members when they arise (Inglehart, 2015). In fact, according to *College Media Review* (2015), few jobs can be more challenging—or more rewarding—than that of the student media adviser.

As the functions of college media have evolved, so has the role of a college media adviser. Over the last three decades, a growth in professionalism has been seen in connection with college media advising. Simmons (2009) states,

> Advisers to the nation's student media are critical to the future of the profession
> and to the future of quality student media. Student media advising is a

professional career path and must be recognized as such by all concerned,

especially employers. (p. 26)

Even with this growth in professionalism, it is still hard to pinpoint the exact roles

and responsibilities of the college media organization adviser. Killam (2005) writes that

the job of advising a college media organization is never-ending, but explaining the job

itself is also never-ending. Turner builds on this claim in 2008, positing that the best

advisers are hands-on with their students and that the role of an adviser is "part counselor,

cook, parent, educator, and travel agent" (p. 9). Whereas the position of adviser was once

a short-term one, the role now sees more longevity, with more than one-fourth of advisers

holding their position for 15 years or longer (Kopenhaver, 2014). Previously, most

advisers were only in their position for an average of three years (Kopenhaver).

Additionally, there has been growth in the number of college media advisers. This is

evidenced by the number of members in organizations such as CMA; in 2001, there were

544 registered college media advisers, but that number jumped to 804 in 2005

(Kopenhaver & Spielberger, 2006).

An eight-survey series by Kopenhaver (distributed in 1984, 1987, 1991, 1995,

2001, 2005, 2009, and 2014) looked longitudinally at roles, responsibilities, working

conditions, compensation, and status of college and university media advisers in the U.S.

In 2009, Kopenhaver found the largest group of survey respondents reported that they

advise newspapers only, with the second largest group advising all media. However, this

changed in the 2014 survey, where the largest group of survey respondents reported

advising both a print newspaper and the organization's respective online components (Kopenhaver, 2014).

While the roles and responsibilities are not clearly pinpointed, and advising college media organizations varies based on the differences of each particular university, a 2009 survey by Reinardy and Filak indicates that college media advisers are not experiencing burnout in their roles. The study used the Maslach Burnout Inventory and surveyed 244 college journalism advisers. The advisers surveyed indicated moderate rates of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but also reported high levels of personal accomplishment. Eighty-five percent of the advisers in the study had professional newspaper experience and the researchers speculate that the professional experience assists advisers in coping with college newsroom stress (Reinardy & Filak, 2009).

Definitions

For the purposes of the current study, this section defines certain terms that will be used throughout this thesis. Some readers may find the terms unfamiliar as they refer to certain contexts or processes.

- College media: This term will be used throughout this study to broadly refer to any of five major college media organizations: student-run newspapers, yearbooks, magazines, radio stations, and television stations.
- Adviser: While the term *adviser* can refer to a variety of different adviser positions in higher education, I use the term to denote a faculty or staff member who works directly with one or multiple college media organizations.

- Mentor: A learning relationship between a more experienced person [adviser] and a less experienced person based on modeling behavior and shared dialogue (DeCoster & Brown, 1982).

- ACP: Associated Collegiate Press, the oldest and largest national organization for college media organizations in the United States. ACP promotes the standards and ethics of good journalism as accepted and practiced by print, broadcast, and electronic media in the United States.

- CMA: College Media Association, established in 1954 as the National Council of College Publications Advisers. CMA has more than 800 members from coast to coast and "represents the people who advise the nation's collegiate media newspapers, yearbooks, magazines, and electronic media" (CMA, 2015).

- SPLC: Student Press Law Center, established in 1974. This organization is "an advocate for student First Amendment rights, for freedom of speech online, and for open government on campus" (SPLC, 2015). This organization provides free information, training, and legal assistance to student journalists and advisers.

Summary

This chapter introduced the need for further research about advising college media organizations. Through outlining the scope of college media organizations and discussing the current research on advising these groups, it is clear more research is needed in order to fully understand the experience.

Future chapters in this thesis provide in-depth discussions of related literature, the methods used during the research design and execution, and the themes that emerged during data collection.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the major areas of research related to my study: advising, student organizations, phenomenology, and phenomenology in higher education. The literature on advising will provide a scholarly look at the profession from both academic and student organizations standpoints. From there, a brief overview of the history and importance of student organizations is discussed. For the purposes of this literature review, "student organizations" refers collectively to any group of social student organizations on a collegiate campus. The section on phenomenology will detail the theoretical history and major tenets of the framework used for data collection and analysis in this project. Finally, I will present current scholarly research that utilizes a phenomenological approach to study higher education issues. It is important to see which particular experiences in higher education have been detailed through research, as to better situate my own study. This study is interdisciplinary in nature, weaving together research from the fields of communication, higher education, and student affairs. This interdisciplinary nature is reflected in this chapter; the connections drawn between these areas ultimately lead to the final section of this chapter, the introduction of my research questions for this study.

Advising

Scholarly research on advising is widespread; most available research deals exclusively with academic advising and one-on-one student-adviser relationships. The research is expansive and covers a number of different approaches to studying advising

(Applegate, 2012; Barker, 2011; Briggeman & Norwood, 2011; Scharber, 1997; Thompson, 2013).

However, as higher education has expanded beyond focusing solely on academic development, so has research that focuses on advising. Love (2003) said that as a general role, advising is thought of as "the universal task in student affairs, because it exists at the foundation of much of the work [professionals] do" (p. 507). This is not new, though; Gaw noted in 1933 that "advising is not an extraordinary or unusual phenomenon . . . [rather] it is the most common occurrence on any campus" (p. 180).

Formal advising was introduced to higher education in the 1870s, with the beginning of the elective system (Frost, 1991). This kind of advising focused solely on providing one-on-one guidance to students, and, to present, academic advising has continued this trend. However, the term "advising" or "adviser" can now refer to one of two types of faculty-student interactions: academic and that of student organizations.

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) defined academic advising as:

> a developmental process which assists students in the interpretation of their career goals and in the development of educational plans for the completion of these goals. It is a decision-making process in which the adviser serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning, the constant review of academic progress, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary. (2015)

In contrast, Dunkel and Schuh (1998) outlined a second type of advising that is also present in higher education settings; they wrote that the role of the adviser for a student organization is an individual responsible for providing both a learning environment and the opportunity to learn how to manage large budgets and limited institutional liability for student programming. In this second type of advising, the adviser is tasked with balancing both student development and institutional interests. Based on these delineations, each type of advisement is necessary in developing students, but they hold very different roles.

  Roles in advising. In order to better understand what college media advisers face in their own advising endeavors, it is important to examine the body of scholarly advising literature available. In looking at the overall role of advising—whether it is academic or in other capacities—Light (2001) said that it is complex and "may be the single most underestimated characteristic of successful college experience" (p. 81). Research supports the idea that advising is made up of various complex roles, and researchers emphasize that an adviser's role depends on the individual, the campus environment, and the student organization (Bloland, 1967; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Marcelis Fochtman, 2006).

  Bloland (1967), who is often said to be the first to address advising in student organizations, defined three major functions of the adviser: (a) maintenance functions, (b) group growth functions, and (c) program content functions. The first function, maintenance, emphasizes protecting the group and ensuring the organization does not engage in risky behavior. Group growth functions allow the adviser to improve the

operation and effective of the organization, in an effort to enable the group to move toward its goals. Finally, the adviser can assume an educational emphasis within their role to provide expertise during program content functions.

In 1987, McKaig and Policello began to note a connection between burgeoning student development theory literature and advising student organizations. This led to their identification of the development-oriented function as part of the adviser's responsibilities. To accommodate the changing landscape of advising, they added three new functions to Bloland's (1967) existing three: (1) product-oriented functions, (2) development-oriented functions, and (3) linkage-functions. The first, product-oriented functions, focuses on the tasks that advisers complete related to the organization fulfilling its purpose. Next, development-oriented functions address the connections to student development theory and include the adviser providing opportunities that support individual and overall group development. Finally, the linkage-functions allow the adviser to assist the organization in making connections to its past and to its home institution.

Dunkel and Schuh (1998) are commonly cited in outlining the major roles of the adviser: mentor, supervisor, teacher, leader, and follower. As we have learned more about advising in various higher education capacities, though, the position has come to encompass more responsibilities. Linkous (2006) expanded Dunkel and Schuh's list to include acting as a trainer, visionary, information resource, facilitator, conflict manager, and department liaison.

As Linkous (2006) showed through his research, the adviser's role is not static. In fact, it is ever-changing, and evolves as the organization evolves. To loosely define the major changes an organizations goes through, Banks and Combs (1989) developed a four-phase model that encompasses both the changes of the organization and the adviser's role during each: chartering, where the adviser guides the students in the organization by telling them what to do and how to do it; introduction, during which the adviser uses persuasion, explanation, and clarification to sell the students on appropriate actions; growth, where the students who are part of the organization began to establish their identity within the organization and the adviser encourages students to participate in decision-making processes; and maturing, the phase in which the adviser becomes a facilitator and delegates decision-making authority and responsibility to the students in the organization.

One of the biggest roles the adviser takes on is also that of an educator. McKaig and Policello (1987) spoke to this teaching role, stating that the adviser use "knowledge of their group's development and group dynamics to guide [the advisers] behavior in relation to groups with which they work" (p. 47). Dunkel and Schuh (1998) also wrote that group advising involves elements of teaching; responsibilities such as group roles, meeting facilitation, leadership, and group problem solving are all topics the adviser can focus on teaching the organization. Regardless of which specific skills the adviser teaches within the organization, Dunkel and Schuh stressed that advisers should "develop [their] own philosophy of advising and advising style within the philosophical frameworks of the campus" (p. 225).

Because advising encompasses many areas and characteristics, Schulenberg and Linhorst (2008) said advisers should have a wide variety of skills, including student development, communication theory, and knowledge of academic disciplines. According to Kramer (Lowenstein, 2005/2009), there are nine principles of effective advising: (1) engage the student; (2) provide personal meaning to students' academic goals; (3) collaborate with others or use the full range of institutional resources; (4) share, give, and take responsibility; (5) connect academic interests with personal interests; (6) stimulate and support student academic and career planning; (7) promote intellectual and personal growth and success; (8) assess, evaluate, or track student progress; and (9) establish rapport with students. The aforementioned principles

Advising student organizations. The literature available on advising student organizations is limited. What is available exists primarily to serve as a handbook or guide for the profession. To this end, Bloland (1967) was the first to address the role of advising student organizations in higher education:

> An attempt to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of directing student learning out of the classroom situation—working with the college student on his own ground to achieve basic ends. It is intended to be used as a handbook or manual for advisers to student organizations and committees, providing faculty and staff advisers with a rationale to undergird their work, and to advance techniques for implementing this rationale. (p. 1)

This both acknowledges the complexity of the adviser's role and argues in favor of the adviser also fulfilling a teacher, one who facilitates learning outside of the classroom.

DeAngelis (1999) echoed this sentiment, stating that advising a student organization provides "direction for students in their leadership role, [and] it is an opportunity for an individual to help guide students through their collegiate experience" (p. 1).

Similarly, Strayhorn (2015) introduced the concept of "cultural navigation" within higher education, which guides a large portion of the framework and discussion in this study. Culture is defined as "shared attitudes or patterns of behaviors characteristic of a particular social group or collective that distinguishes it from another" (p. 58). Culture encompasses any transmitted ideas, acts, rituals, or customs of a group or collective. Higher education, Strayhorn contends, is a culture. There are specific customs and rituals associated with the higher education setting that may not be understood outside of the culture's collective. Within the collective of higher education, specific organizations also create their own culture. College media, like higher education and other groups, is a culture. It has its own customs, rituals, terminology, and beliefs associated with it.

Before one can understand the culture of a particular group, they have to be part of that cooperative. A socialization process must occur—a socialization process that is aided by the cultural navigator. Strayhorn categorized the cultural navigator as someone who "strives to help students move successfully through education and life" (p. 59). Cultural navigators, according to Strayhorn, understand the culture in question. They know the code of conduct, language, and values, amongst other pertinent factors. Strayhorn (2015) extrapolates,

Like a high-tech global positioning system or "GPS," cultural navigators do more than merely tell someone where to go; they show them via demonstration,

illustration, or simulation of possible paths. Cultural navigators in higher

education help guide students until they arrive at their academic destination or at

least until they are comfortable steering while their cultural navigators act as

guides on the side and keep them on their path (p. 59).

Therefore, in looking at college media organizations, advisers could—and

should—be seen as the cultural navigators of the organization.

Higher education literature has shown there are significant benefits for

undergraduates who are engaged both in and outside the classroom, particularly those

who join student organizations and engross themselves in the college or university

experience (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

However, Banks and Combs (1989) noted that the success of the organization

itself often depends on the faculty adviser, as they play a pivotal role in the development

of the organization and its' students. If this is the case, it is crucial to note the training and

on-the-job experience advisers receive before entering their advising positions. Despite

this, it has been shown that while consistent standards of practice exist for student affairs

practitioners, little exists for advisers (Averill, 1999; DeSawal 2006).

If advisers are not offered adequate resources for training, then how do they come

to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their position? Dunkel and Schuh (1998) posit

that a limited number of training options exist for student organization advisers. Dunkel

(2004) states that "advisers usually rely on the observable experiences they had as an

undergraduate student working with their organization's adviser as the sole basis for how

they currently advise an organization" (p. 2). DeSawal (2007) echoes this, finding that

student organization advisers often look back on their own experiences as members of student organizations in college or high school, in order to better do their job. Zachary (2000) cautions against this approach, noting that the student organization adviser should base their approach to advising on the needs of the students in their organization rather than their own past experiences or observations. However, many also learn through a trial-and-error process or on-the-job experiences (DeSawal, 2007). But regardless of past experiences or the amount of training offered, most everyone who advises an organization learns their roles by simply advising the organization (DeSawal, 2007).

Adviser and advisee relationships. It is safe to say that research on advising shows the profession of advising runs much deeper than simply providing advice to students. Using the adviser-advisee relationship simply to provide advice is counteractive to student development, according to Komives and Woodward (2003), who proposes the relationship then turns into a unidirectional relationship in which one person who has more knowledge just tells another person what to do. Instead, they suggest advising should be seen as a "helping relationship between two people and a dynamic process of mutual discovery and self-determination" (p. 507). To foster student development, the adviser should help students not only identify their choices, but also help them take responsibility for the choices they make. The goal of the advising relationship then, according to Komives and Woodward, is to generate learning, growth, and self-determination, as well as sharing information, opinions, and one's accumulated wisdom.

The adviser-advisee relationship is one that higher education researchers have consistently chosen to study (Cesa & Fraser, 1989; Paul, Smith, & Dochney, 2012;

Rawlins & Rawlins, 2005). Stickle (1982) wrote that "the faculty advising system is one of the principal ways provided for accomplishing improvement in faculty-student interaction" (p. 262). Several studies over the past two decades have specifically examined the relationship between an adviser and their individual advisees (Hughey, 2011; Mansson & Myers, 2012; Nadler & Nadler, 1999; Paul, Smith, & Dochney, 2012; Rawlins & Rawlins, 2005; Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). Research supports the idea that students are looking for an interpersonal relationship through advising, though researchers have presented different ideas for how the relationship should function (Taylor, Jowi, Schreier, & Bertelsen, 2011). Dunkel and Schuh (1998) even state that "although advising style is important, the values and philosophy that undergird it are critical factors in developing relationships with students" (p. 226).

Nadler and Nadler (1999) contend that this particular relationship is best examined and viewed from a developmental standpoint; using Knapp and Vangelisti's (1984) stages of relationship development, they discuss the points of relationship development between an adviser and advisee. Starting out initially as strangers during a student's first year of college, the relationship progresses as the student feels more comfortable talking to the adviser about what they are facing academically and personally.

Rawlins and Rawlins (2005) examined the process of academic advising as friendship, noting that the relationship should intersect between a dyadic, personal friendship in which both parties feel comfortable talking to and sharing information with

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one another, and a civic friendship born out of Aritstotle's notion that both individuals

should be mutually wishing one another goodwill and success with their endeavors.

Paul, Smith, and Dochney (2012) support the idea that academic advisers wear

several hats and fulfill an educative role with their advisees. In educating and advising

their students, advising should be seen as servant leadership. In examining advisers and

their relationships with students, Paul, Smith, and Dochney developed a specific set of

constructs that make up the adviser as a servant leader: listening, empathy, healing,

awareness, persuasion, foresight, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to the

growth of people, and building community.

While a vast majority of the literature on adviser-advisee relationships focuses on

academic advising, Kuh's (1995) research on out-of-classroom advising experiences

found that students experience increased feelings of affirmation, confidence, and self-

worth through informal faculty-student interactions beyond the academic setting.

Oftentimes these interactions are seen through involvement in student organizations,

which contribute to an attainment of knowledge and the further development of academic

skills. These out-of-classroom interactions and experiences can therefore lead to a

tremendous impact on students' development.

A large body of literature also examines the perception of the relationship and

advising process from both the adviser and advisee standpoint (Barnes, Williams, &

Archer, 2010; Bitz, 2010; Bloom, Propst-Cuevas, Hall, & Evans, 2007; Fullick, Smith-

Jentsch, & Kendall, 2013; Noy & Ray, 2012). Because the relationship between an

adviser and advisee is one of the most important ones developed during college, studies

contributing to a more effective understanding of positive and negative perceptions and attributes can lead to a greater understanding of student success in higher education.

Katz and Hartnett (1976) state that the advising and mentoring process is undeniably the most important component for graduate students; however, many graduate students report that despite the importance, the advising process is their biggest disappointment with their graduate experience. A grounded theory study conducted by Bloom, Propst-Cuevas, Hall, and Evans (2007) finds that graduate students perceived the characteristics of demonstrated care for students, accessibility, role models in professional and personal matters, individually tailored guidance, and proactive integration of students into the profession to be most helpful with their adviser. A 2010 study by Barnes et al. echoes several of these perceived characteristic needs, concluding that a set of doctoral students perceived accessibility, helpfulness, socializing, and caring as the most positive traits of the advising process, while inaccessible, unhelpful, and uninterested were the most negative perceived traits.

In looking at the importance of adviser-advisee relationships, whether they are academic-based or facilitated through student organizations, Dunkel and Schuh (1998) state, "Faculty and staff members who have worked with student groups and organizations can identify many students who attribute their success to the relationships they have developed with their adviser. This relationship may continue for many years" (pp. 42-43).

Overall, the literature on advising students in higher education settings is widespread and covers many diverse factors, including the nature of the relationship and

what the role entails. The widespread nature of this research area is one of its'

downfalls—it is inconsistent and scattered across scholarly fields. The need for a

narrower focus on lived experiences of advising is necessary.

Student Organizations

Involvement on the college campus can take many forms, "ranging from joining a

social club to playing first clarinet in the touring concert band, to writing for the student

newspaper, to collaborating with a faculty member on a research project, to competing in

intercollegiate athletics" (Kuh & Lund, 1994, p. 6). According to Dunkel and Schuh

(1998), student governments, Greek letter organizations, honors and recognition

societies, student military organizations, sports organizations, departmental

organizations, special interest organizations, and residential student organizations are

among the typical types of organizations found at colleges and universities.

The establishment of student organizations can be traced back to Harvard College

with the organization of literary and social societies (Harding, 1971). These clubs focused

on academic thought and educational rigor and soon began to pop up at both Yale and

Princeton Universities. Gieser (2010) wrote that these organizations were "one of the first

extracurricular activities of the early American colleges. It was a student created space

where members gathered to explore intellectual concerns, refine oratory skills, and enjoy

social companionship" (p. 1).

With these organizations gaining popularity, the Yale Report of 1828 brought

widespread attention to the topic of extracurricular activities, by positing "By the end of

the nineteenth century, specifically at Yale, there was real concern over which was really

more fundamental, which more important, the curriculum or the extra curriculum" (Rudolph, 1962, p. 144). Eventually, in 1906, the Carnegie Institute of Technology established the first board of student activities, which oversaw student organizations (Tarbell, 1937).

In 2012, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education defined an effective university student activities program as one that includes social, cultural, multicultural, recreation, governance, leadership, group development, campus and community service, and entertainment programs. Among these stipulations is also the requirement for an adviser.

Engaging in campus activities and organizations has shown considerable benefits for students. Abrahamowicz (1988) said, "It may be concluded that participation in student organizations seems to lead to greater involvement in the overall college experience. Involvement of this nature and to this extent is likely to result in a higher quality educational experience" (p. 237). Abrahamowicz (1988) went on to claim that "student organizations and related activities provide educational and developmental benefits generally unattainable in the classroom" (p. 237).

Phenomenology

The world around us is full of phenomena, ranging from emotional to physical health, to technological phenomena (Moustakas, 1994; McPherson, 2002). Moustakas posits that phenomena are the "building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge" (1994, p. 26). Philosophers and scholars have long been interested in studying and conveying the essence of human experience with these varying phenomena.

Phenomenology is an area of theory concerned primarily with experience (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Because phenomenology provides a framework for a researcher to study lived experience, it is marked as both a philosophy and methodological approach, in which a researcher engages with a small number of subjects to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). There are three primary philosophical assumptions associated with phenomenology: the study of lived experiences of an individual, the individual's experiences were conscious ones, and that the research is purely a description of those conscious experiences, as opposed to an explanation (Creswell, 2013).

Historical foundations. Phenomenology, taken from the root word "phenomenon" and the Greek word *phaenesthai*, facilitates an examination of the "essence of the lived experience," or how individuals perceive situations and particular phenomena in the world around them (Moustakas, 1994). The term *phenomenology* is said to have been used as early as 1765 in Kant's writing and other philosophical texts. Kant (1966) wrote about three distinct sources of knowledge through which individuals come to gain their knowledge of objects or phenomena: sense (empirical perception of phenomena), imagination (Kant described this as necessary to "arrive at a synthesis of knowledge"), and apperception (an individual's consciousness of the identity of objects or phenomena). Though Kant addressed phenomenology in his writings through these concepts, it was better known in the context under which Hegel wrote about phenomenology. Hegel understood phenomenology as "knowledge as it perceives to

consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, is often championed as the father of phenomenology, though several other philosophers and scholars have contributed to the field. Heidegger, for instance, both drew from and distanced himself from Husserl's teachings on phenomenology, in order to establish a more existential phenomenological approach. Existential phenomenology is closely related to both interpretivism and hermeneutics (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Heidegger argues against Husserlian thought in his 1927 text *Being in Time* that "consciousness is not separate from the world of human existence" (Dowling, 2007, p. 133).

Merleau-Ponty drew from both Husserl and Heidegger while forming his approach to phenomenology. He published *Phenomenology of Perception* and, like Husserl, believed that original awareness is important in phenomenological approaches. He also contributed the idea of four different existential frameworks that are native to the basic structure of the "lifeworld"; the lived space existential, the lived body existential, the lived time existential, and the lived human relation existential (Dowling, 2007).

Closely related to Heidegger's existential approach, van Manen (1990) is cited for establishing the hermeneutical approach to phenomenology. Under this approach, van Manen posits that research is oriented toward the lived experience and focuses on interpreting various "texts of life." Van Manen's approach does not include a specific methodological approach, but rather views phenomenology as an interplay between six different factors. The hermeneutical approach sees phenomenology as "not only a

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description, but . . . an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the researcher 'mediates' between different meanings) of the meaning of the lived experiences" (van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 2013).

Transcendental phenomenology. While several approaches within phenomenology were discussed in the previous section of this literature review, this study utilizes a transcendental approach to phenomenology.

Transcendental phenomenology is credited to Husserl. In developing a transcendental approach, Husserl was influenced by the writings of both Kant and Descartes (Moustakas, 1994), and the methodology found within the transcendental approach draws heavily from the *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology* (Giorgi, 1985), as well as procedures utilized even earlier by Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1976). Moustakas demonstrates these procedures and techniques in his own contributions to phenomenological research (1994).

The transcendental approach is characterized most heavily by the idea that it is truly the study of "the appearance of things," or of phenomena just the way we see them. Husserl held that any phenomenon is an appropriate place to begin a phenomenological reflection; our challenge as researchers then is to take that appearance of the phenomenon and extract the essences of experience and meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

Husserl's reading of Descartes ultimately led to the formation of one of the most central concepts within the transcendental approach: researchers should have the ability to bracket their own personal experiences with a phenomenon, or take part in what is known as *Epoche,* before moving forward with data collection. This concept, ideally,

would allow the researcher to begin collecting data and information without "suppositions" and gives the pursuit of knowledge the utmost attention (Moustakas, 1994). *Epoche* itself is a Greek word that translates to "staying away from or abstaining." This process of bracketing any prior experience with a phenomenon then allows us as researchers to enter a phenomenon with a fresh perspective or eye, as well as with a naïve or pure consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the idea of "transcendental" in this approach takes on the meaning of "in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34).

Moustakas himself admits that a true state of *Epoche* or bracketing is rarely achieved in full, and I would be hard-pressed to argue that claim. I feel as though human nature does not necessarily allow us, researcher or not, to truly bracket all prior experiences with a phenomenon. Moustakas writes that "though epoche is rarely perfectly achieved, the energy, attention, and work involved in reflection and self-dialogue, the intention that underlies the process, and the attitude and frame of reference significantly reduce the influence" (p. 90).

One of the biggest limitations and critiques of utilizing phenomenology is in fact the process of bracketing personal experience. An interpretive approach would argue that this is not at all possible, while the transcendental approach argues that it is indeed possible and highly recommended. A researcher could potentially struggle with forging their way into the research study without being burdened by prior experiences; this struggle could limit their ability to achieve a pure or naïve consciousness while collecting and analyzing data.

It is clear to see that a phenomenological approach adds richness and depth to the understanding and discussion of a lived experience. Approaches like phenomenology focus "on the wholeness of the experience rather than solely on its objects or parts." Additionally, these approaches regard data (often first-person accounts and descriptions of experiences) as critical in understanding human behavior (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology and Education

Education has been studied under a wide variety of research perspectives; however, choosing a phenomenological approach allows for depth in our understanding of advising student media in higher education settings. The first-hand account of participant experiences contributes to an understanding of the selected phenomenon that could not be achieved in quite the same way by using a different approach. As such, former higher education studies that have utilized a phenomenological approach are critical to guiding and situating my own.

Several studies have looked at classroom experiences in higher education settings. For instance, Delgado's 2012 hermeneutic phenomenological study examines student experiences with instructor power in the classroom. By interviewing 15 graduate education students, the researcher found that how interpersonal relationships between the instructor and students were structured in a higher education classroom essentially shaped how the students perceived the instructor's power. Positive relationships between the instructor and students contributed to students attributing certain exercises of instructor power to particular traits of the instructor instead of systemic exercises of power. Delgado (2012) ultimately posits that, according to the participants, higher education is

not about what you know, but about knowing how to play the game. Similarly, Linvill and Havice (2011) studied students' perceptions of instructor political bias in the classroom, using phenomenology to first establish major themes and findings that they then used in a large-scale quantitative study. The common experiences reflected how participants perceived their professors in the classroom and how they responded to and felt about the experience. Students talked about how they felt the political views of the professor guided classroom discussions and dictated which students were more likely to be able to openly participate in class. They also reported feeling as if they were not "receiving the full benefits of the educational experience and often felt cheated as a result" (p. 490). These findings were supported by the quantitative survey later distributed.

Crawley, Fewell, and Sugar (2009) studied the transition from face-to-face classroom interactions to online teaching and interaction. Participants noted that the transition to online spaces was technologically difficult, but allowed for more interaction, a stronger focus on engagement, and an advanced demonstration of intellectual engagement by students, which could not have been facilitated in a face-to-face classroom interaction. Similarly, Kang (2012) examined the experience of being trained as an online faculty member. Dominant themes emerging in the participant responses included viewing training as an opportunity to transfer knowledge and skills necessary for conducting quality online instruction, removing the barriers that prevent faculty from teaching online, and transforming traditional faculty members into qualified online faculty members.

Still other experiences in the classroom have been studied, including the integration of faith and learning (Sites, Garzon, Milacci, & Boothe, 2009) and the experiences of first year freshman learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Dubose, 2014).

Many studies have been directed at understanding the experiences of students in higher education settings; a 2011 study by DuPre reveals how undergraduate women at a predominantly white institution view leadership, where the researcher notes that amongst the plethora of literature available about women in higher education, what is missing are the actual voices of women describing their experiences. Greasley and Ashworth (2007) based their examination of student approaches to studying off of the *Approaches to Studying Inventory* (ASI) and found through in-depth interviews with students that approaches to studying are "much richer than can be encapsulated by noetic descriptions of 'depth' or 'superficiality'" (p. 819).

Closely related to this study, prior phenomenological studies have looked at the experience of academic advising in higher education settings. Kuba (2010) examined the perception and role of peer advising, finding six common themes amongst undergraduate students: peer advisers were available, the receiving of first-hand advice about courses and professors based on peer advisers' personal experiences, peer advisers' primary role was to provide academic support and reassurance, peer advisers are used as both resources and outlets for additional resources, informal peer advising augmented formal peer and professional advising, and peer advisers provided more realistic and holistic advising than faculty advisers.

Nadler (2007) used the metaphor of building a house throughout her study of academic advising. Through interviews, observations, and group conversations, Nadler described the academic and personal "building" between advisers and students throughout a student's college experience, taking special note of the context of each advising session. Similarly, Barker and Mamiseishvili (2014) studied the process of transitioning into a shared model of academic advising, finding that students expressed four common themes: evaluation of adviser trustworthiness based on perceived professional responsibilities, preference for a personalized advising relationship, apprehension about the unknown, and reliance on previously developed advising expectations.

Research Questions

Research has shown that students involved in co-curricular activities typically report a greater overall satisfaction with their college experience (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rudolph, 1962). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) wrote that the overall picture of student satisfaction "appears to stem from students' total level of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are mutually reinforcing and relevant to a particular educational outcome" (p. 647). Reflective of the research available about the impact of campus engagement and its influence on students, it is clear that the overall experience is enriched when students are more actively engaged in purposeful out-of-class activities. Therefore, it is assumed that student organizations and other opportunities for campus involvement outside the

classroom are necessary. But without faculty and staff advisers, these opportunities would cease to exist.

Prior research has discussed the importance of advising student organizations (Bloland, 1967; DeSawal, 2007; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998). However, each student organization functions differently, with various needs and purposes. Because college media represents a faction of these co-curricular activities and serves as a place for professional development and educational outcomes, it is necessary to understand the process of advising these organizations. Furthermore, if higher educational professionals who work in advising roles are seen as cultural navigators, it is important to know how they aid in the socialization process for a particular culture. Despite these needs, there is a lack of research on the overall picture and experience of advising college media. As such, the following research questions were posed:

RQ$_1$: How do college media advisers describe their experiences of advising their organizations?

RQ$_2$: How do college media advisers describe the challenges of advising their organizations?

RQ$_3$: How do college media advisers describe the functions of their position?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

To fully answer the research questions presented in the previous chapter and capture the essence of the experience of advising college media, this study employed a phenomenological approach. This perspective allowed the experiences of the research participants to be understood on a rich, in-depth level.

This chapter explores the research method employed for this study. The first section looks at phenomenology as a research method, and then the chapter moves to discussion of the qualitative sampling strategy and data analysis techniques used. Within this chapter I also clarify my own position and experiences with college media and advising.

Phenomenological Methods

The questions encouraged individuals to share their personal experiences and stories, which Creswell (1998) writes is an aim for conducting qualitative research.

Moustakas (1994) writes that a phenomenological study facilitates an examination of the essence of the lived experience, or how individuals perceive situations and particular phenomena in the world around them. Generally, the goal is to reduce individual participants' experiences to a description of the universal essence of the phenomenon being studied. There is value in utilizing phenomenology as a methodological approach, because its focus is on letting participants' voices be heard instead of the researcher making presuppositions or interpretations of the data.

This study, as previously talked about in the literature review, utilized Moustakas's (1994) approach to transcendental phenomenology. While I later discuss the process for collecting and analyzing data within this approach, a brief overview of the basic steps for applying phenomenology as a method include determining whether or not a phenomenological approach is the best fit for the research study, determining what phenomenon will be studied, recognizing and specifying the broad assumptions of phenomenology as a field, data collection, data analysis (which includes horizonalization and developing specific clusters of meaning), development of textural and structural descriptions, and finally, describing the universal essence of the experience.

One of the basic tenets associated with phenomenological research is the process of *Epoche*, or bracketing prior experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). I attempted not to let my own experiences guide my data collection process or analysis. This process is supposed to allow the researcher to clear their mind of preconceived notions about the phenomenon being studied. While Moustakas (1994) acknowledged that perfect *Epoche* is rarely achieved, he wrote that the effort and energy used during the process can "significantly reduce the influence" (p. 90). In the following paragraph I will briefly outline my own subjective position within this research study.

I began working in college media as a sophomore in college. I started as a volunteer reporter for my university's student newspaper and by the time I graduated from college, I had worked as a staff and beat reporter and in two different editorial positions. Throughout my time with college media, my organization's adviser was always

there to inspire, critique, and help me in whatever ways possible. I saw several of the challenges and obstacles I perceived they faced as the adviser, but I also saw successes.

I am particularly vested in the experience of this position because I have, on a small level, experienced a taste of what it has to offer. During my final semester of college my adviser took a position with a news organization, leaving our organization with an interim adviser who visited once a week to make sure operations were still running. But the weekly one-on-one meetings that were once filled with mentoring and advice were gone. The regular critiques of our work were no more. I could not walk down the hall of the newsroom to ask a legal question or what my adviser thought about a particular headline or story idea. Instead I found myself as the person that editors and reporters were coming to with legal questions. I took on the role of post-publication critiques. As one of the lone veterans in the organization, I found myself forced to step up and push harder to keep the newspaper at its best. It was difficult; without a doubt, it was one of the most difficult situations I have found myself in. But even on that small scale, balancing the responsibilities of student journalism with college media adviser, I found those four months to be some of the most rewarding of my life. So, while the roles of student participant and professional adviser are vastly different, my prior experience and background in college media provided me with the foundation needed to truly understand and capture the essence of the experiences of my study participants.

While other approaches to phenomenological research do not outline specific procedures for approaching the study of phenomena, transcendental phenomenology

does. I followed the major procedures of Moustakas' (1994) approach to conducting phenomenological research.

First, I had to determine if my research question was best suited to be answered with a phenomenological approach. Because conveying the experiences of college media advisers was at the forefront of my research interests, I decided to move forward with my chosen research perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas' procedures, in accordance with Creswell's (2013) description of phenomenology, aim for answers to two broad questions: "What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?" and "What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" While other questions can be asked, these two general questions center on gathering data that contributes to both the textural and structural descriptions of the experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It is important to reiterate that the aforementioned questions are not the research questions at hand for this study, but rather they helped shape and guide the research questions. Each of the three questions guiding this study were developed *based* on Moustakas' and Creswell's procedures.

Data Collection

Interview participants. In order to answer my primary research questions, I chose to conduct one-time, in-depth interviews with 12 participants. IRB approval was obtained before study participants were recruited and interview times were established.

According to Creswell (2013), criterion sampling is best for completing phenomenological research. Criterion sampling is used as a form of purposeful sampling

and allows the researcher to select "information-rich cases for study in-depth" (Patton, 1987, p. 52). Criterion sampling differs from other approaches by outlining a set of specific characteristics that participants must meet before being included in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I recruited participants by first establishing contact with several college media advisers at the ACP/CMA National College Media Convention in Austin, Texas to discuss my study. This convention is one of the largest gatherings of college media organizations and advisers throughout the calendar year.

Following Moustakas' (1994) recommendations for criterion sampling, I developed a pre-interview questionnaire to email to advisers, as well as a statement that described the nature of the study (Appendices B and C). The statement and questionnaire were both circulated via the CMA email listserv twice. The call for participants was also sent directly to individual advisers after contact information was gathered from public university and college directories. Willing participants were asked to respond to the pre-interview questionnaire to establish if they met essential criteria for the study: (1) currently a professional college media adviser at a college or university in the United States, (2) they had been advising college media for at least one year, (3) interest in understanding the nature of the experience, (4) a willingness to participate in the interview process, and (5) permission to audio record the interview and publish the findings.

Twelve eligible individuals completed the pre-interview questionnaire and were contacted via email to set up a time for a one-on-one interview, which was set for a time

that was most convenient for the participant. Due to the individual location of the

participants, none of the interviews were conducted physically face-to-face. Two of these

interviews were conducted face-to-face via Skype webcam, one was conducted via

FaceTime video chatting, and the remaining nine were all held on an audio-only

telephone call.

The 12 participant volunteers were comprised of four women and eight men, with

varying ranges of experience and length of time in the role (Table 1).

Table 1. Qualitative interview demographics

Participant	Age	Years Advising	Gender	Interview Length
01	61	1	Male	0:27:02
02	58	2	Female	0:38:29
03	64	30	Female	0:19:00
04	40	12	Female	0:20:51
05	59	3	Male	0:15:50
06	54	15	Female	0:20:28
07	54	28	Male	0:31:39
08	61	17	Male	0:25:26
09	63	28	Male	0:42:36
10	60	4	Male	0:17:01
11	57	19	Male	0:36:00
12	50	24	Male	0:16:30
Mean	**57**	**15 years**		**0:26:00**

Each interview was semi-structured, with room for follow-up questions if needed. Participants were provided with a written description of the study and a copy of the informed consent document prior to the start of the interview. The interview protocol (Appendix A) included three types of questions: *grand tour, example,* and *prompt,* as recommended by Leech (2002). Grand tour questions were used to allow participants to answer the questions as they pleased. Example questions allowed me to probe participants for additional information that illustrated responses given to specific subjects. Finally, prompt questions guide the participant to address subjects not yet discussed (Leech, 2002). The individual interviews were all audio-recorded, with the shortest interview lasting 15 minutes and 50 seconds and the longest interview lasting 42 minutes and 36 seconds. The median interview time was 26 minutes. I later transcribed each interview verbatim for data analysis.

Interview Analysis

After reaching saturation in my data collection process, I created a log for each interview that detailed shifts and important points of conversation, saving the files in a Word-format on my password-protected computer. Names and identifying information of participants were removed from all transcripts to ensure anonymity of the participants.

I read through the data sets several times, looking for specific statements of meaning, sentences, or quotes from participants. This process is identified by Moustakas (1994) as horizonalization. Significant clusters of meaning were also developed in this stage of the research process. From these clusters and significant statements, I then wrote both a textural description and structural description of how participants experience

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advising college media (which follows in the next chapter). The textural description depicts what the participants experienced, while the structural description provides insight into the context or setting that impacted the participants' experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Finally, following the composition of the textural and structural descriptions, I concluded by writing a description that captures the *essence* of the phenomenon. This passage of the research presents common experiences or themes of the participants and should allow a reader to "come away from the phenomenology with the feeling, 'I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that'" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

Validation Techniques

As outlined by Creswell (2013), there are eight prominent strategies for validating qualitative research, however, this study only employed one technique: member checking. Member checking is the process of taking analyzed data back to the study participants in order to verify that the information and findings are accurate (Creswell, 2013).

To further validate my qualitative data analysis, the data analysis portion of this study was supervised by a senior faculty member with practiced experience in phenomenological research and data analysis.

This chapter has outlined the methods guiding the current study. A detailed description of the data collection and analysis processes was presented. The results of the aforementioned analysis are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of the current study. The purpose of this qualitative research endeavor was to answer three primary research questions:

RQ$_1$: How do college media advisers describe their experiences of advising their organizations?

RQ$_2$: How do college media advisers describe the challenges of advising their organizations?

RQ$_3$: How do college media advisers describe the functions of their position?

The qualitative data used in the analysis were comprised of 12 volunteer participants. Each self-identified their current professional position as an adviser to at least one college media organization out of the following: student newspaper, student yearbook, student television station, student radio station, and student magazine. The median number of organizations advised was three and a half. The participants included eight men and four women, all of whom varied in age, experience, and length of time spent advising (Table 1.1).

Per the method described in the previous chapter of this study, a list of significant statements was generated from the 12 interviews conducted with participants. From these statements, meaning units and theme clusters were established. Ten themes were established from the statements that serve to answer the three research questions for this study. Themes (1$_a$) *The position involves preparing students for the future*, (1$_b$) *Advisers aid in student success*, and (1$_c$) *Advising is more than "just a job"* all specifically relate

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to the first research question; themes (2$_a$) *The job is always changing*, (2$_b$) *Past experience, not education, prepares you for this role*, and (2$_c$) *The structure of the position lacks consistency* each detail challenges that advisers have experienced, as per research question two; and themes (3$_a$) *Building relationships with students is integral*, (3$_b$) *The position involves being a counselor*, (3$_c$) *National organizations serve as a cultural navigator*, and (3$_d$) *You have to let the students be in charge* explore the final research question, functions of the job. Each of these 10 themes also contributed to a greater understanding of how advisers serve as the cultural navigator for their respective organizations.

Themes 1$_a$, 1$_b$, and 1$_c$ all center around the general experience of advising college media organizations and address the first research question of this study. The participant advisers described at length the rewards they find in working with students (i.e., aiding success and more than "just a job"), but also spoke to the changing landscape of media and media consumption both in the commercial industry and college media collective, which affects their experiences.

Themes 2$_a$, 2$_b$, and 2$_c$ all focus on specific challenges that accompany advising college media organizations (i.e., the second research question in this study) Theme 2$_c$ in particular—*the structure of the position lacks consistency*—details the experiences of advisers and frustrations that come with having no clear-cut job description and finding your place from university to university.

Finally, the remaining four themes each detail participant advisers' descriptions of the functions of their position, which addresses this study's final research question While

the assumed roles of budgeting and running the day-to-day operations fall to the adviser, this set of themes goes beyond surface-level job functions to describe duties that are not always quite as obvious to those outside of the culture.

Data Analysis

Following Creswell's (2003) procedures for phenomenological analysis, I first transcribed my interviews verbatim. I spent a significant amount of time reading and re-reading the transcripts in order to familiarize myself with the data. Once I felt comfortable proceeding, I highlighted statements I found particularly striking or significant. At this point I took each statement and grouped them with similar statements, making sure there was no overlap or repetition in quotes. An initial set of meaning units were established between myself and a senior faculty member with experience in phenomenological analysis. These meaning units were grouped according to the primary research questions (i.e., experiences, challenges, and functions).

The initial meaning units shifted during the data analysis process as more time was spent with the interview transcripts and significant statements. A final set of 10 themes (or meaning units) was established. Each theme section in this chapter will contain a description of the theme and verbatim quotes from the interviews that exemplify the meaning unit, but Table 2 offers a quick look at each of the themes and exemplary significant statements. Following the expanded discussion of the themes, a textural and structural description of the phenomenon is presented.

Table 2. Qualitative themes and evidence from significant statements identified in data.

Theme	Significant statements from participants
1a: Preparing students for the future	"I believe in the value and importance of student media. I'm very passionate about helping student media find a path to a prosperous future."
1b: Aiding in student success	"My role as adviser is to make sure that everyone in this newsroom succeeds. And that means I am in charge of teaching them how to do their jobs, training, advanced training, and then I'm here when they need me."
1c: More than "just a job"	"It's a very fulfilling job. Well, it's not a job to me. To me, it's very much been my calling since I was editor-in-chief of my college newspaper."
2a: The job is always changing	"Is there a typical day for a media adviser? I mean, you think things are going to go one way and then all hell breaks loose."
2b: Past experience—not education	"I know how to do news. I know that because of my work experience. Everything I talk about in here is the result of experience, either sad—often sad—but also successful experience."
2c: Lack of consistency	"I have worked at four different universities and I have worked under every one of the primary organizational structures that exists…journalism school…private 501(c)3 corporations [with a] board of directors…Student Affairs, [where] I report to the Director of Student Affairs."
3a: Building relationships	"I think the other challenge is not one you fight, but one you develop; it's to maintain a good relationship with students."

Table 2. Qualitative themes and evidence from significant statements identified in data (continued).

3_b: Being a counselor	"Being the heavy when bad news needs to happen…my job is to be the bad guy and to let them play and be the good guys."
3_c: National organizations	"The only thing I would say is that College Media Association has been a lifejacket and lifesaver for me over the years and it's through CMA that I learned how to do what I'm doing now."
3_d: Students in charge	"It's truly the student journalists who are running the show and I often say that I work for them."

Themes

This section offers a discussion of each of the 10 themes and expands upon the quotes presented in Table 2. Themes 1_a, 1_b, and 1_c look exclusively at advisers' experiences in their role; themes 2_a, 2_b, and 2_c detail the challenges of working as a college media adviser; and themes 3_a, 3_b, 3_c, and 3_d describe the functions of the college media adviser position.

Theme 1_a: The job involves preparing students for the future. Media consumption and production has changed drastically over the last several years, and it continues to change daily. Participants spoke to this notion by describing their experiences with advising students in such a way that they are prepared for what they will experience after graduation. Participants did not necessarily describe this experience as a challenge; rather, they are excited about the opportunities for growth and where the media world is going. One participant said:

The other aspect is making sure they're prepared for this brave new world they're

going into, because it is vastly different than the world I went into in 1975 when I

graduated from college and started working. It's a world where things are still so

exciting. I don't know how you could get a better job than being a journalist.

Excitement for the future was a common sentiment with the people interviewed:

We're laser-focused on the future and, having said all of that, frankly, I'm kind of

excited about it. It's an opportunity to be progressive and really reflect the kind of

contemporary values that a student attending a place like [*university redacted*]

should come to expect. I think it's a disservice for them to show up here if we're

just pumping out 1987 to them. That's crazy. Or even 1997 or 2007. They should

be involved in opportunities that are going to propel them into the kind of future

they are going to encounter when they leave here.

Again, several participants noted that this experience is not one they fear or see as a

challenge, but rather an experience they embrace and are excited about. In order to stay

prepared and in a place where they can serve as the cultural navigator for their students,

many individuals expressed that part of their daily routine is consuming media, testing

new trends across social media and production, and engaging in conversations with

students and other professionals. They do these things because, as one participant stated,

they are "passionate about journalism and about where the industry and profession are

going."

Theme 1b: Advisers aid in student success. One of the most talked-about points

throughout my interviews was the notion of "coaching" students to success. Advisers

described their own personal philosophies with finding the balance of being a coach within the organization:

> I think it means being the coach. You know, on the football field the coach of the [*team redacted*] isn't playing the game. He isn't out there on the field – he is on the sidelines coaching, giving advice, telling players what they did well, [and] telling players what they need to work on.

I asked participants to loosely define their role with students and advising, which often led to the sentiment that they see themselves as "less of an authoritative figure" as one participant described it, and more like the coach of the team:

> To use the sports analogy, it's the coach on the sidelines yelling in plays and hopefully not throwing in chairs on the court or whatever, but they're not going in and actually playing the game.

> Rather than rigidly confining this theme to the idea of coaching, though, I often found that advisers described their experiences with working with students to also include the high regard that they hold their students in:

> I've often said, "Put me on any campus in America, spin me around three times and challenge me to find the best and the brightest students, and I'd go straight to the student newspaper." They're just talented, they're dedicated, and they care about what they do.

Furthermore, they talked about "coaching" and working with students who do not necessarily study media production outside of the organization:

My belief is centered around the idea that all students should be welcomed into this program, regardless of their major or their previous interests – partly because we just need to recruit more people, but also because I think there's so much to learn within student media that's applicable to a variety of postgraduate professions.

Theme 1c: Advising is more than "just a job". The purpose of the current study is to examine how college media advisers describe the various experiences they have faced in their job. While the aforementioned and yet-to-be discussed themes illustrate that there are indeed experiences to be discussed, most participants point-blank stated that their role as the adviser to their respective organization does not feel at all like a job. Many of them discussed their satisfaction with the role, with one adviser stating that "if this [the job] was gone, my life would not be nearly as complete."

First and foremost, working with students was described as the biggest factor in making the position feel less like work and more like play. Participants talked about the high-caliber students they work with from semester to semester, calling them "some of the most talented students in the university":

The most rewarding thing are the students. They have so much enthusiasm, so much life, and so much desire and ambition. They're so much fun to work with that while much of my job is spent dealing with the various bureaucracies that have to be navigated to keep the machine operating, the thing that keeps me happy and in this place after 19 years are the students.

Second to the students, the college environment goes a long way in making the position feel exciting and different from other careers:

> On a weird other personal level, though, it's great to work in a college environment. You never have to grow up. There's something about living your life on a semester-by-semester cycle. What a great thing to be involved in a lifestyle where you live like a student and are surrounded by people who never grow old, because every year they're replaced by more people who are exactly the same age.

While the next three themes look at the challenges that advisers described, the idea that advising college media is not just another run-of-the-mill job was very much present and continued throughout the remainder of my interviews with each participant. As one participant described it, "it's like the greatest job in the world because it's really not a job."

Theme 2ₐ: The job is always changing. The first major challenge described by participants encompasses the idea that, as a college media adviser, no two days are the same. Participants described this experience as one fueled by the nature of media production (e.g., breaking news can occur at any moment of the day, any day of the week), but also driven by the changes that are happening daily in the media world. As one participant stated, college media advisers typically face days that are "very much by the seat of [their] pants" and they have "little control over things." Even in this challenging state, many still explicitly said this very theme is the "appeal" of the job—no two days are the same:

I love advising the student newspaper because it's always different. My job

literally changes every day and even though I've been advising for many years

now, there's always new issues. Sometimes it's that someone on campus doesn't

like a story, sometimes there are ethical issues, there are legal issues…I mean,

certainly there are certain things that crop up again and again and again, and yet it

feels different every time. I never know what's going to happen when I go into

work. Or when I go home, for that matter.

When used in this theme (more so than the following two themes), the word 'challenge'

carries with it a more positive tone, one where the participants seem to enjoy the

uncertainty and the opportunity for a fresh start each day:

Certainly students' media consumption is not the same as it was when I was a

student. And so we need to update our products and our workflow and our

thinking and our business model to reflect that, and I'm enjoying that and

enjoying working with the students on meeting those challenges.

In the last quote the participant makes it known that while day-to-day changes are

certainly a challenge, it is an enjoyable experience instead of a hassle. Most, if not all, of

the participants described this same sentiment, demonstrating that this role is unlike other

advising positions.

Theme 2$_b$: Past experience, not education, prepares you for this role. I asked

two distinct questions during the personal interviews (Appendix A): "In what ways, if

any, has your *education* prepared you for your role as an adviser?" and "In what ways, if

any, has your *past work experience* prepared you for your role as an adviser?" I began by

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asking the former in each interview and while a few participants spoke at length about their education and the experiences they had as a student, the more common response was that it was the past work experience—not education—that prepared them for this position. That response alone would prompt a detailed description of former experiences as a reporter, as a business manager, and as a consultant (among other professions), often yielding it unnecessary to ask the latter question.

"My education prepared me for my time as a journalist—my time as a journalist prepared me for my role as an adviser." This description from one participant outlined the greater role that past work experience played in shaping their advising career. While the majority of the individuals agreed that their work experience was more important to their current profession than their education, many said this does not negate the education they received. It is simply that the position calls for more than just an education-based knowledge of the field. For example:

> I think it's more the experience than the formal education. My experience as a
> reporter and being on the job for different dailies throughout the U.S. did a better
> job preparing me to be an adviser to [*university redacted*] student media. Not that
> the education and degrees didn't help me and weren't valuable; with what I do it
> is much less theory and much more practical. And it's that practical, practice
> aspect that takes over.

Similarly:

> I think there are two aspects of education. There is the classroom form of
> education and then the practical experience that comes with having been a

professional reporter and having experienced enough different kinds of stories to

relate what I experienced to what the students are going through. So, it's not so

much of a theoretical basis, but it's one in which I have encountered issues that

they will encounter, and the more they know about these issues of working

relationships, deadlines, and source quality, the better able I am to do my job.

This theme explores the ways that past work experience contributes to a better

understanding of participants' current position as a college media adviser. While advisers

did describe education as being important, most definitively stated that their experience

in previous professions was more beneficial for both themselves and the students they

advise.

       Theme 2c: The structure of the position lacks consistency. This theme presents

what was arguably discussed most as a trial that college media advisers face. There seems

to be a major lack of consistency with this profession. Many advisers described reporting

to various administrators within their respective universities, if they report to anyone else

at all. College media programs are also housed in different areas of the university; some

organizations are part of student affairs' divisions, some are part of journalism schools,

and some are private corporations (see Figure 1). Funding for these organizations can

come from any number of sources, and funding is often inconsistent. There is not, as one

participant described it, "a one-size-fits-all job description" for anyone who works as a

college media adviser:

       I have worked at four different universities and I have worked under every one of

       the primary organizational structures that exists. At [*university redacted*] we were

part of the journalism school and I reported to the dean of journalism. Here at [*university redacted*] and at [*university redacted*], we're private 501(c)(3) corporations and I report to a Board of Directors. And at [*university redacted*] we were part of student affairs and I reported to the director of student affairs.

Figure 1. Typology of various organizational structures.
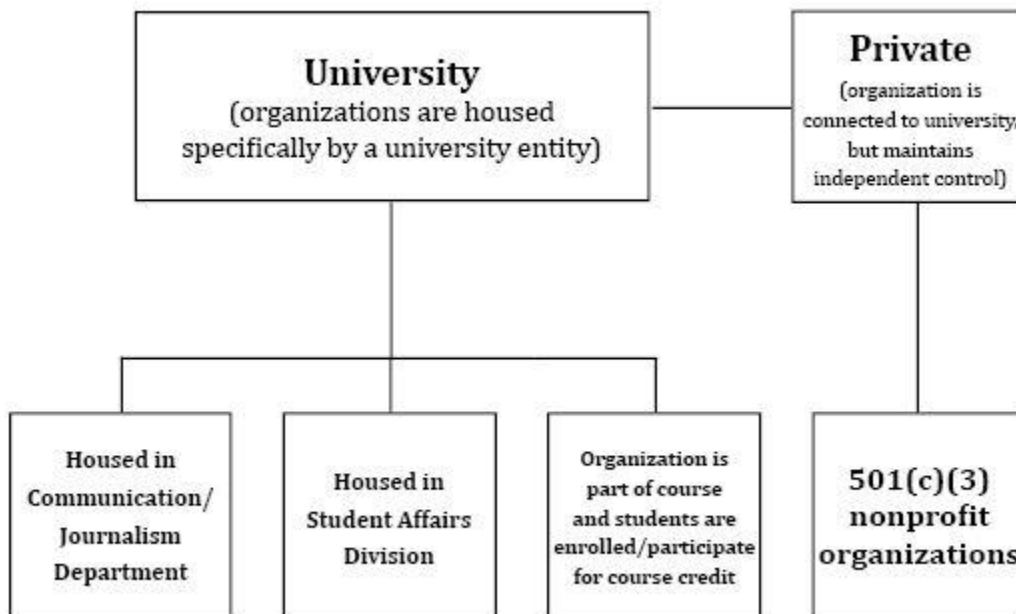
The figure above illustrates a breakdown in the primary structures that several of the participants referenced. While organizations housed in a communication or journalism department, the student affairs division, or operating in exchange for course credit can be classified as independent, they all fall under part of the university structure; those that identify as private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations maintain independent control of their products, funding, and operations while still holding ties to the university.

In addition to the organizational structure lacking consistency, the mere position of advising college media also has inconsistencies. Many advisers have responsibilities

beyond advising their organizations; six of my participants described themselves as professors in journalism and mass communication departments *outside* of their role as a college media adviser, and many who currently do not teach have also been both a professor and adviser at some point in their career. The job description is varied—if it exists at all—and there are often many variables that go into each individual advising role. In talking with my participants, I learned that their job descriptions are often limited or do not fully cover the roles they feel they find themselves in. The responsibilities and job description are not proportionate for each adviser from university to university, which participants addressed:

> [It is] what you'll encounter, depending on who you talk to. It goes from that wide of a range. You'll encounter people who are more akin to what my first job was, that they're teaching whatever they're teaching—in some cases, not even journalism—and the school gives them a course load reduction or something like that, so they allot 10 hours a week or fewer to advise maybe just a newspaper or just a radio station or just a literary publication. It runs the gamut from that to people who full-time attention is directed to student media.

With the inconsistencies in structure and responsibilities also comes a discrepancy in the types of challenges and worries that advisers may face. Many participants, based on their organization's structure, described differences in budgeting and funding concerns, varying relationships with administration, and differences in what they have had to learn since beginning their position. For example:

I have friends who are dealing with "How do I make payroll?" and million-dollar

decisions. One of my dear friends [who is also a college media adviser], the

challenges and considerations he has to deal with are so distant from anything I'm

dealing with and who knew that? I never would have predicted that I would have

needed to learn how to do pretty high-level accounting and legal things…all of

the things that are involved with running a business, rather than writing stories for

a newspaper.

This theme clearly describes the widespread and inconsistent nature of this profession,

including organizational structure, professional responsibilities, and concerns that

accompany the job. This is a challenge that all of my participants acknowledged at some

point during their interview.

Theme 3$_a$: Building relationships with students is integral. Many participants

commented on the nature of building relationships with their students and its' importance

within the organization. Advisers said that they work to build these relationships by being

available to students when they are working and have questions and even by engaging

with students outside of the organization itself. One participant described how building

relationships outside of the organizations allows them to work with the students in a more

well-rounded manner:

It's all about the relationship. In fact, Saturday I took five students—actually, they

took me—to one of their houses for a barbecue. And it was just one of those times

where we have nothing but the [radio] station in common, but we don't get to

[talk about other things] when we're in the middle of work. I'm running from one

meeting to here and there, and there's just not enough time to sit down and just

shoot the breeze about the things that we like and enjoy. [That situation] allowed

me to compliment my students in a very genuine way about what I like that they

do and how I'm impressed by what they do. It was just great and now I have a

different sense of those five students. There's that relationship that allows me to

manage them in a different way.

Several participants commented on the amount of time they spend developing

relationships with their students:

I think what's often overlooked in the job description is the amount of time and

effort that you put into establishing relationships with students. Earning their

trust. Showing your respect. That sort of thing.

I think the other challenge is not one you fight, but one you develop; it's to

maintain a good relationship with students. Make sure that they are willing to

work with you, that your door is open, and that they understand what they're

doing.

In order to navigate students through their cultural experience with college media,

advisers described the necessity of building relationships with their students. As

evidenced through their descriptions in the interviews, this is often a component of the

profession that is downplayed or overlooked in the public job description.

Theme 3b: The position involves being a counselor. In building relationships

with students, advisers also defined the nature of their positions and the ways they mentor

and counsel students as they move through their time in college media organizations.

This counseling can take any number of forms—"workplace" counseling, "relationship" counseling, and mentoring students for future endeavors beyond the organization, just to name a few.

Advisers said they "run interference between editors here when that needs to happen" and that they would rather themselves be the "heavy when bad news needs to happen". Being a counselor to students involves taking on a number of functions, both positive and negative:

> I break up fights. I make people feel better when they're dealing with ethical questions. I get to be a legal adviser. I get to sometimes be a relationship adviser. I get to help them develop leadership skills. I get to watch students grow from their freshman to senior year in their skills and their confidence. I get to watch them develop friendships that I know personally, having been in college media, are going to be the ones that they hold for the rest of their lives. I fix computers and debug websites. I remind people that copy editing matters and that spelling is important. I'm here when they're having a bad day and I get to be around when they got accepted into graduate school or get really awesome internships and I get to celebrate with them.

These counseling functions were also described as going beyond just relationships and problems in the newsroom; many advisers talked about their efforts to mentor students academically and professionally in order to help them achieve success (which goes back to the second theme).

Theme 3c: National organizations serve as a cultural navigator. While I never explicitly asked participants about their involvement with national organizations like CMA, many freely spoke about the importance of the organization and the support they have received from the association throughout their time as an adviser. The organization is described by several as a "lifesaver" and "tremendous." The opportunity to network with other advisers and college media organizations throughout the country contributed to a greater understanding of their role and how to advise students within college media, advisers said:

> When I first started advising I had to learn pretty much on my own and I have to say, CMA…they were really helpful in going to the different conferences and learning about advising and talking to my colleagues and going to sessions and all that kind of stuff. I had no idea really going into advising what should be done.

Similarly:

> The one thing that CMA really helps with is the many different ways that people come into advising student media. If you're a journalist, you're coming into it with one perspective. But if you're just handed the job and you're more of a student affairs person, you may not understand the value of a newspaper or journalism to students and a community. And then if you're a professor and you're busy teaching, advising may not be your number one priority. And it's not just newspapers—there are all kinds of student media. You have a variety of people and a variety of jobs. But no matter where you're coming from, CMA is an organization that levels all of that out and can really help you.

Going back to Strayhorn's (2015) concept of cultural navigation, national organizations like CMA can be seen as (and were described by participants as) cultural navigators for the cultural navigator. CMA educated and helped socialize new—and more experienced—advisers to their role and continually provides them with the tools they need for success as an adviser.

Theme 3d: You have to let the students be in charge. While the adviser can be seen as the cultural navigator of a college media organization, they described their responsibility to let students run the operations and production of their respective organizations. Participants commented again on seeing their role more as a coach and guiding figure, rather than being the person in charge:

> In my relationship with the editors it is always important to make it clear from the beginning that it's their paper. I'm available to them, my door is always open, my phone is always available to them…but they make the decisions.

Participants acknowledged that this process is sometimes difficult, but that students work hard to make the best decisions for their organizations:

> I try very hard to let them make their own decisions. They don't want to make decisions that would get us into trouble, in terms of libel or anything like that. But I'm [always] doing my best to encourage them to do better work.

> It's showing respect for the students and their autonomy and bearing in mind that this is their newspaper. They make the decisions.

Advisers recognize the need for students to gain experience that will benefit them after they leave the organization, so letting the students "run the show" is an effort to guide

them toward such experiences. Many participants commented that even though they are seen across campus as the authority figure for the organization(s), they "work for the students" instead of the students working for them.

Description of the Experience

Following the analysis of the interview data and description of identified themes, the researcher should present a description of participants' experience in two forms: textural and structural experience. The textural description will detail *what* individual college media advisers experience or experienced in their profession, while the structural description comments on *how* the participants experience their role as an adviser. Both Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2003) advise this step happen during phenomenological research.

Textural Description

Overall, subjects of this study find their career as a college media adviser "incredibly fulfilling". Through building relationships with their students, acting as a counselor, and finding the balance between coaching "just enough" and letting the students take charge of their organizations, subjects described functions of their position that are not always addressed in a job description. Furthermore, they find several rewards in working with students, including aiding in their success by coaching them through their work and preparing them for future careers and experiences beyond college media. For most participants, this is a second—and even third—career, one they "hope to retire from" because they enjoy it so much. Advisers receive support and guidance of their own

from colleagues in the form of national organizations like CMA, where many said they "learned how to do what I'm doing now".

Structural Description

Participants consistently described the challenges of their profession lying primarily in the organization of their position. There is no standard for where college media programs are based on a university campus, nor where their funding comes from. Because advisers may have responsibilities beyond their organizations (e.g., teaching), at times their focus is not centered on college media. If participants supervise a professional staff, sometimes they are "one step removed" from working directly with students and may not have daily direct experience with the students in their organization. But no matter the structure of their role and organization, they bring knowledge and contributions from past work experiences (and inadvertently, education) that aid them in leading and advising their organizations.

This chapter described the findings of the current study. Chapter Five offers a discussion of the findings, as well as ideas for future research and limitations of the current study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The previous chapter offered a detailed look at the 10 themes identified during

this study, which directly relate to my three primary research questions. The first three

themes, (1_a) *The position involves preparing students for the future*, (1_b) *Advisers aid in*

student success, and (1_c) *Advising is more than "just a job"*, each correlate with the first

research question and look specifically at advising experiences. Themes (2_a) *The job is*

always changing, (2_b) *Past experience, not education, prepares you for this role*, and (2_c)

The structure of the position lacks consistency all fall under the second research question

and examine specific challenges that advisers experience in their role. The final four

themes, (3_a) *Building relationships with students is integral*, (3_b) *The position involves*

being a counselor, (3_c) *National organizations serve as a cultural navigator*, and (3_d) *You*

have to let the students be in charge, illustrate the final research question, functions of the

position. This chapter provides a discussion about the research questions, as well as how

the themes work to answer each research question. The limitations of this study are

acknowledged at the end of this chapter, along with a brief discussion of ideas for future

research.

Discussion

When asking participants to describe their experiences with advising college

media organizations, the response was by and large positive. Individuals called this

position their "passion" and often said they could not imagine what their lives would be

like without this job. The opportunity to help students be successful within organizations

that prepare them for future careers and opportunities is an attractive job and participants relayed this sentiment several times throughout the interviews. In order to effectively prepare students for a future in a media world that is rapidly changing, advisers readily agreed that they spend a good portion of their time involved in conversations and research endeavors that examine how to best serve and prepare students for their future. So, in answering the first research question, "How do college media advisers describe their experiences of advising their organizations?" it became clear that this career is one that does not fit neatly into a 9-to-5 time frame.

Each of the three themes that relate to the first research question (i.e., "experiences") also relate to one another. When talking about their understanding of their role, advisers often described the process of preparing students for the future and helping them be successful as a 24/7 endeavor. I do not call it a job or career, because as many participants said, this role is "more than just a job". This illustrates the intertwined nature of experiences in this position.

For the second research question, "How do college media advisers describe the challenges of advising their organizations?", only one of the three related themes was described as inherently negative. The inconsistencies related to where college media programs are housed within the broader campus organization and the varying relationships with their respective universities creates a wide range of concerns and worries for advisers, as discussed during the interviews. These worries include differences in both funding and recruiting students for the organizations, just to name two.

While there were more negatively-valenced comments surrounding that particular theme, the other two challenges were framed in a more positive light. Much like the participants described no two days of their former careers being the same, they also talked about how their newfound or longstanding career in advising college media is always changing. And for some, the education component of an adviser's past contributed to a better understanding of how to be an educator in this role, but more so than that, many stated that their past work experience was better preparation. However, I would like to reiterate that many participants said this does not negate the education they received. The majority of the participants in this study hold a Master's degree in journalism or mass communication. Some hold multiple degrees in areas like mass communication and business. While only one participant currently holds a doctorate degree, many individuals stated that their education was critical in shaping their work experience prior to advising college media. While past research (Kopenhaver, 2015) has looked at the educational status of college media advisers, it seems as though the best preparation for this career is an advanced degree in a related field like mass communication and journalism, combined with commercial work experience.

Finally, the third research question dealt exclusively with functions of advising college media organizations: "How do college media advisers describe the functions of their position?" Throughout my interviews, I was surprised at the number of individuals who either did not have a job description when they began their position or whose job description was limited strictly to controlling the budget(s) for the organizations. While advising some organizations might concern only budget management, the experiences

revealed in relation to this question clearly show that an adviser's role is much deeper than that. Of those participants who came into their position with a job description, many stated that they felt certain areas of the job were vastly underemphasized, including the time it takes to develop a relationship with students in the organization. This relationship is critical because it allows the adviser to manage the organization and mentor students on a more personal level than other advisers. Because many of the advisers' positions are devoted solely to advising and managing the organization(s), they spend a vast majority of their time surrounded by the students in these organizations (which might not be said of advisers for other types of organizations).

It is clear to see from the research presented here that advisers of college media organizations do in fact serve as a cultural navigator (Strayhorn, 2015). We can connect Strayhorn's concept of cultural navigation to the college media world by looking at the adviser and their position:

> Cultural navigators are those who know something about the new culture. They know the codes of conduct, customs, dominant values, language, requirements, rules, and traditions. Their knowledge is born of experience, mostly firsthand, which gives them the acumen and understanding to help others (2015, p. 59).

Their role is crucial to the organization, even though they work hard to let students maintain autonomy over their products. Strayhorn (2015) even acknowledges the process of letting students take control under cultural navigation: "Cultural navigators in higher education help guide students until they arrive at their academic destination or at least

until they are comfortable steering while their cultural navigators act as guides on the side and keep them on their path" (p. 59).

In fact, I would propose that the adviser's involvement and leadership continues a chain of cultural navigation that is created within the world of college media; as discussed in theme 3$_c$, national organizations like CMA are cultural navigators for the advisers of college media organizations, advisers are the cultural navigators for the student leaders within the organization, and the student leaders can serve as cultural navigators for other members. The college media organization as a whole can be a cultural navigator for the entire university community on a number of topics and issues, including First Amendment rights, media education, and current news or entertainment topics.

The current study has two key audiences that are important to note in this discussion. First, this research is most important to those interested in or currently advising college media organizations. The majority of participants have been advising for more than 10 years, which lends an experienced perspective and set of insights for others in the field. While the experiences vary for each person and the particular organizations, the themes identified in this study may certainly resonate with others who are in a media advising role or who are looking for a career in advising college media organizations.

A second key audience for this research is the university community itself. Oftentimes participants spoke to the experience of needing to continuously explain and defend their position with administrators, colleagues, and even other students. My interviews revealed that the relationship between university administration and college

media advisers is sometimes strained. One of the biggest causes for this, according to participants, is the lack of awareness and education about a media adviser's role. A few of the participants even shared that they have been fired or forced to resign from previous universities because administration felt that they were not "controlling" their organizations and the content being produced. Thus, this research could be critical for advisers who are looking to communicate their position and experiences to the university community, as well as in aiding the university community in understanding their role within these student organizations. Advisers described this understanding as crucial, because it allows them to let their students work in a truly professional environment, which only serves to benefit them after graduation. As one participant said during the interview process:

> [One of the challenges is] administrators who don't understand and dealing with administrators who need to understand that what my students do is an academic exercise. They need to interview and write stories, and they need to make mistakes in order to learn. People seem to think my reporters should be *New York Times* caliber. I have to remind them that the *New York Times* makes mistakes all the time in its paper. Nobody is infallible. So, I think that's the biggest issue, working with administrators.

On a related note, some participants also described facing various levels of control with their administration. A few advisers stated that the administration is completely hands-off and allows for independent control of the media outlets, but others are facing situations where administrators are controlling the content produced by media organizations, in an

effort to strictly control the image of the university. This just further illustrates the inconsistencies within these organizations and the need for better understanding and education.

One point I would like to note is that the identified themes do not represent the full experience that college media advisers face in this position. Participants talked at length about the various challenges they each face in their particular role, as well as their relationship with students and the university. I had several conversations about specific experiences that I truly wanted to include, but they did not seem to fit with any of the consistently identified themes. One of the more important conversations under this umbrella includes funding for college media. Even organizations that are nationally-recognized for excellence and have large budgets are struggling with their finances, according to participants: "The biggest challenge right now is making sure we have enough money to keep the doors open. And I don't necessarily have to worry about that; that's the general manager. And trust me, he worries a lot."

Going into this project, I struggled with setting aside my own preconceived notions about and experiences with college media. I was, after all, previously active within college media organizations both on my campus and at regional and national levels. I held several assumptions about the role of the adviser, based simply on my own experience and limited view of college media. Throughout this process, though, I was surprised at the inconsistent nature of college media organizations. Perhaps in the back of my mind I always knew that programs have never had a true "home" on the college campus, but it was shocking to me to hear each participant describe just how different

their campus "home" is. The college media organization might require more involvement than many other organizations across the university, but there are certainly no inconsistencies regarding where student government or Greek organizations are based. Why should it be any different for college media organizations? I believe that a more consistent structure for college media organizations would serve to alleviate at least some of the challenges that advisers currently face.

Personally, I can attest to watching my former adviser experience and struggle with many of the themes identified in this study. She was the advocate and educator we needed, the mentor when my colleagues and I were facing difficult decisions, the counselor when fights broke out in the newsroom, and the first person we would run to when something exciting or terrible happened. For instance, one night around midnight I found myself pulling printed copies of that week's issue off racks across campus alongside my fellow staff members. One mistake in a headline was going to cause a world of trouble for our organization, and as we paced around the newsroom at midnight debating what the best course of action would be, our adviser was right there with us. She was one of the first people I called when I found out about my summer internship with *USA Today* and she celebrated with me one year later after I learned about my acceptance to graduate school.

Limitations

As with any study, there were limitations present during this research. One of the first limitations is the lack of diversity in my conversations with participants about the organizations that they advise. Each of the 12 participants interviewed advises their

university's student newspaper. Seven of the participants also advise or oversee staff members who work directly with other organizations (e.g., radio stations, yearbooks, etc.), but the vast majority of conversations during my interviews centered around newspapers and print/online journalism. Differences in budget and production means for various organizations could potentially affect the data gathered or experiences shared.

Secondly, the youngest participant in this study is 40 years old (Table 1), and even they have been advising for more than 10 years. I imagine that someone in their late 20s or early 30s who is new to advising may offer different experiences. In that same vein, the majority of the participants have been advising for more than 10 years. Only four participants identified themselves as advising for less than 10 years. I did actively work to recruit advisers who were both younger and had only been advising for a short period of time (i.e., one to three years), but received no response. One reason for the large participation from an older demographic could be that, with their longstanding experience and insight, some felt an obligation to share their experiences with those who are younger, like myself. But having greater input from less experienced advisers could offer differing insights.

Future Research

Future research in the area of advising college media could close the gaps created by the limitations of this study. Further research could also contribute to a growing body of literature concerning advising college media organizations. Because there is so little research concerning the experiences of advising these organizations, it could be

beneficial to take the themes identified in this study and create a survey to examine whether or not the findings are consistent with other advisers' experiences.

Second, future research could study the experiences of students who are part of college media organizations and their perspectives on the adviser/advisee relationship. Studying it under the lens of cultural navigation with mixed methods such as participant observation and one-on-one interviews could create a more well-rounded picture of the experience of advising college media organizations and how students perceive this relationship.

I also believe, based on my own observations, as well as current news and literature, that there are some conversations and experiences that were not addressed during the interview process. Because phenomenology encourages that themes emerge organically, I was wary of including too many questions in my interview protocol that would guide the conversation in a specific direction. Many issues I am curious about never came up in conversation, and if they did, they were only discussed by one or two individuals for a short period of time. For example, I am still interested in whether or not advisers have experiences concerning diversity (both in terms of student involvement and the adviser population itself), which seems to be a big discussion in the college media world (Jeffries, 2015). This study was diverse when looking at past careers and the experiences participants have had while advising college media organizations, but it lacked racial diversity. Whether or not this is indicative of the field as a whole cannot be said, but future research should specifically examine the topic of racial diversity in advising college media organizations.

Finally, a comparison between advising college media organizations and advising other student organizations present on a college campus (e.g., Greek life, student government, etc.) could highlight the similarities and differences in advising roles. The current literature on advising—both academically and in student organizations—does not offer a clear picture of the discrepancies that come with advising various types of organizations with different purposes. Future research in this area could serve to fill in that particular gap.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Qualitative Interview Protocol

Grand tour questions. What does your role as an "adviser" mean to you?

What do you feel are the major responsibilities associated with your position?

How does your position differ from your university's written job description for the

position?

Follow-up question: Do you have a copy of your job description or job hiring ad

that you would be willing to share with us?

In what ways, if any, has your education prepared you for your role as an adviser?

In what ways, if any, has your past work experience prepared you for your role as an

adviser?

Example questions. Tell me about a typical day at your job.

Tell me what you perceive to be the biggest challenges with your job.

Tell me what you find most rewarding about your job.

Prompts. Could you say something more about that?

Tell me about an experience that exemplifies that.

Appendix B

Pre-Interview Questionnaire for Participant Volunteers

Name: _____

University: _____ **Position Title**: _____

Age: _____ **Gender**: _____

How long have you been advising college media organizations?

1-3 years   4-6 years   5-7 years   10+ years

How *many college media organizations do you advise?*

1   2   3   4   5+

What type of college media organizations do you advise (please check all that apply)?

Print and/or online newspaper	Campus magazine	Advertising/business operations
Campus radio station	Campus yearbook	
Campus TV station	Other	

Are you interested in understanding the nature of advising college media organizations??

Yes   No

Are you willing to participate in a interview regarding this experience?

Yes   No

If yes, would you be willing for this interview to be digitally recorded?

Yes			No

If yes, would you be willing for information obtained from this interview to be published (you would not be personally identified in any publication resulting from this interview)?

Yes			No

Appendix C

Consent Form

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

**A Phenomenological Exploration of College Media Advisers' Experiences in
Higher Education and Student Development**

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Dr. Darren Linvill, along with Blythe Steelman, is inviting you to take part in a research
study. Dr. Linvill is an assistant professor at Clemson University. Blythe Steelman is a
graduate student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. Linvill.
The purpose of this research is to further the understanding of the college media advising
experiences of those interviewed, including the job functions, challenges, and rewards.

Your part in the study will be to participate in an in-depth interview about your
experience as a college media advisor for your university or college. The interviews will
be recorded.

It will take you about 30 minutes to an hour to participate in this study.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study.
However, this research may help us to further understand the experience of advising
college media organizations and how the advising relationship contributes to student
development.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell
anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we
collected about you in particular. Audio recording of this interview will be destroyed no
later than one year after completion of the study; we anticipate that the study will be
completed in April 2016. If publication of this research occurs, a pseudonym will be used

in place of your real name. Research documents will be stored on the researchers' password-protected computers and file-sharing systems. Transcriptionists or other hired assistants will sign non-disclosure agreements.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.
Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Darren Linvill at Clemson University at 864-656-1567.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.