A Copy-Editor and Their Audience: The Usage of Singular *They* in the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald

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Abstract

The usage of the pronoun *they* in reference to a singular antecedent has risen in acceptability in both speech and writing. Style guides created for writing and publishing often reject this usage in order to uphold prescriptive grammar rules. On Yale University's campus, administrative changes that push for a more progressive and inclusive campus occur year after year. The language practices and role on campus of two student publications, the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald, were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative methods. A corpus analysis of each publication revealed a higher incidence of singular *they* in the Yale Herald over the Yale Daily News. Interviews with editors at both publications contextualized this data and showed that subject matter, tone of writing, and journalistic professionalism of each publication could explain the results. Further syntactic inquiry into the examples found in the corpus as well as interviews with more varied members of each publication remain to be seen.

"When a contravention of convention is particularly successful, when its utility becomes evident to a number of people, then it may well become conventional itself. Thus new conventions arise and old conventions die." – Frank Smith, Writing and the Writer

1. Introduction

The usage of the 3rd person pronoun *they* in reference to a singular antecedent has risen in acceptability in both speech and writing (Balhorn 2004, Bjorkman 2017, Bradley et. al. 2019, LaScotte 2016). Despite this, there is still pushback when singular *they* constructions are used in formal and/or professional settings. Established style guides for formal writing, such as the Associated Press (AP Stylebook n.d.), used for journalism, or Chicago Manual of Style (The Chicago Manual of Style Online, n.d.), used for work in the humanities, all contain different rules regarding how singular *they* should be used. The majority of these guides do not accept singular *they*, except in cases where the pronoun is being used to refer to an individual who personally identifies with *they/them* pronouns. Prescriptivism is upheld by rules like these, where acceptability in written language unfortunately lags behind progressivity and acceptability in spoken language.

The copy-editing practices of two student publications at Yale University, the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald, are investigated in this essay. Each publication's views on singular *they* are compared and contrasted with the text they actually publish to elucidate the culture of each publication in the greater context of Yale's campus culture. Progressive changes have been made on Yale's campus in recent years. Regarding pronouns, in Spring 2019, Yale began to allow students to change their gender identity to non-binary on administrative forms, as well as specify what their preferred pronouns are (Stannard 2019). These are progressive and politically liberal pushes for change on campus, and are used to contextualize the environment that the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald are functioning within. Each publication was studied through a corpus analysis of their published material and a qualitative review of the culture of the publication through interviews.

Section 2 of this essay gives a history of singular *they* as well as linguistic accounts of its existence. It summarizes studies that show the pronoun *they* is socially perceived as a gender-

neutral pronoun and describes syntactic accounts of why that is true. Section 3 describes the practice of copy-editing and why style guides exist. This section also notes what the rules for using singular *they* are in various style guides. Section 4 gives a descriptive timeline of progressive changes made at Yale University since 2016 and gives background and history on the Yale Daily News and the Herald. Section 5 outlines the methodology of the corpus analysis and the interviews. Section 6 contains the corpus data and is further broken down into subsections that focus on different variables in the corpus, such as quotations or genre of writing. Section 7 details themes that emerged from interviews from editors of each publication. The two publications were compared and these themes were used to contextualize the corpus results. Section 8 concludes and calls for further research on this topic.

2.   Background on Singular *They*

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) tracks the usage of *they* with a singular antecedent at as far back as the year 1375, shown in Middle English and Modern English (1).

> (1) Hastely hiȝed *eche* . . . *þei* neyȝþed so neiȝh . . . þere william & his worþi lef were liand i-fere
>
> "*Each man* hurried…till *they* drew near… where William and his darling were lying together.

<div align="right">(Baron 2018)</div>

Additional examples are provided by the OED in every century following up to current day, and may have existed in the centuries prior to 1375 as well: "Since forms may exist in speech long before they're written down, it's likely that singular *they* was common even before the late fourteenth century" (Baron 2018). Our modern-day usage of singular *they* may be following the same pattern; because singular *they* is accepted and common in informal speech, its increased usage in writing is demonstrating the same phenomenon.

Those who follow prescriptive rules that insist on the ungrammaticality of a plural pronoun to refer to a singular antecedent echo the 17th century concerns of singular *you. You* was once a plural pronoun while *thou, thee,* and *thy* were the singular forms (Baron 2018). In

the 17th century, *you* began to replace these forms as the singular pronoun. While *you* became the mainstream acceptable singular pronoun, it continued to be seen as formally unacceptable in writing and grammar school. As seen in Modern English, *thou, thee,* and *thy* have been completely phased out and *you* is used ubiquitously. Seeing the same issues arise about singular *they* hints at the possibility of it becoming as accepted and unremarkable as singular *you* in the future.

A review of the Oxford English Dictionary's (2002) corpus looked for uses of *they* with *every-* antecedents (*everyone*, *everybody*) in comparison to uses of generic *he*[1]. The analysis included all quotations in the OED from the 16th to 20th century. The amount of data from each century varied, with some having a limited sample size, but nevertheless, the 20th century shows that 45% of the examples use *they* over *he*, while only 23% do so in the 17th century (Balhorn 2004). This study shows that the usage of singular *they* has increased in each century. While this only showed singular *they* with *every-* antecedents, the range of acceptability in different forms of singular *they* has followed this same increase, such as the rise of recognition of preferred pronouns, such as the non-binary pronoun "they" in professional environments (Darr & Kibbey 2016, Human Rights Campaign n.d.).

Balhorn (2004) tackles the question of why English speakers have, for centuries, accepted a construction that seems to violate number agreement. He argues that indefinite phrases such as *everyone* in (2) are grammatically singular, denoted by singular verbal morphology, but are "notionally plural" and indicate a group of potential referents.

(2) *Everyone* takes *their* time finding a seat.

(Balhorn 2004, 79)

The same explanation can be used for indefinite pronouns like *someone, somebody*, etc., which could theoretically refer to one of an infinite number of referents. When *they* is used instead

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[1] Generic *he* originated from Latin grammatical rules which had masculine gender, unrelated to human gender or sex, as "more worthy" than feminine or neuter gender. Grammarians of English in the eighteenth century co-opted this to use masculine gender as generic despite the lack of grammatical gender in the English language (Baron 2016).

of generic *his* or *his or her*, the pronoun is agreeing with the number of the plural intended referent instead of the singular antecedent NP.

The usage of *they* in a sentence like (3) as opposed to generic *he* allows the NP *the student* to remain unspecified for sex/gender.

(3) If *a student* is getting a low grade, *they* might want to go talk to the teacher.

(Balhorn 2004, 79)

He/him/his pronouns can no longer be seen as unspecified for gender, and attached to them is the inherent property of maleness. Balhorn uses the pair of sentences in (4-5) to demonstrate that singular *they* and generic *he* are not equivalent.

(4) Somebody called while you were out and *they* said *they*'d call back later.
(5) Somebody called while you were out and *he* said *he*'d call back later.

(Balhorn 2004, 84)

Sentence (5) shows sex as a "salient property" and creates the inference that the *Somebody* on the phone is known by the speaker, while the *Somebody* in (4) is read as generic and unknown. *Somebody* is unspecified for sex while *he* is specified as male, creating a disjoint in gender agreement that creates the interpretation that the speaker knows more than what is encoded in the utterance. When *Somebody* is co-referenced with *they*, both pronouns are unspecified for sex or gender and the generic reading stands.

Overall, Balhorn (2004) argues that while social influences may be encouraging the rise of singular *they* acceptance today, the attested examples from as far back as the 16th century show that the grammaticality of singular *they* is due to "internal development in the language." Generic *he* can no longer be interpreted as generic or gender-neutral and singular *they* has taken its place, both in attested examples, as seen with the survey of the OED, and in judgments of interpretation, as seen in the difference between (4) and (5).

Bjorkman (2017) also has a syntactic account of why singular *they* is widely accepted. She states that the pronoun *they* is the "elsewhere" case of English pronouns that occurs in

the absence of ɸ-features that would license a different pronoun, as shown in (6). Bjorkman uses gender and pluricity as features to define pronouns and does not include a person feature.

(6) ɸ-Features

- [FEM][SG] ⟷ *she*
- [MASC][SG] ⟷ *he*
- [INANIMATE][SG] ⟷ *it*
- *Elsewhere* ⟷ *they*

(Bjorkman 2017, 7)

To license *they*, both [MASC] and [FEM] features must both be [-], meaning neither are present, which gives the reading that the referent is not overtly masculine or feminine, but instead indicates that the gender of the individual is "unknown, nonspecific, or otherwise indeterminate" (2017). Bjorkman proposes ternary as opposed to binary gender, with a distinction between masculine, feminine, and null.

However, *they* can still be used for referents of a known gender, such as in examples (7-8), not assuming that the referent identifies with *they/them* pronouns.

(7) I just saw the lead actress, and I really love their costume.
(8) Janet left their sweater here.

(Bjorkman 2017, 10)

Bjorkman proposes that speakers who accept such examples, what she calls "innovative speakers," no longer have a contrast between gender on pronouns and that [MASC] and [FEM] features become optional as <MASC> and <FEM>, which she calls "semantically interpretable yet optionally specified" (Bjorkman 2017, 10). Therefore, a referent like *actress* or *Janet* has syntactic associations with female gender, but innovative speakers have the option to either mark the following pronoun as <FEM>, or leave it unmarked and use *they*.

Just like Balhorn (2004), Bjorkman uses grammatical properties to account for why English speakers accept some forms of singular *they* easily, and why more innovative uses are

growing in acceptability. She works off of the assumption that *they* is unmarked for gender and plurality entirely in order to account for its usage with a singular referent.

Bradley et. al. (2019) conducted an experiment to demonstrate that socially, the pronoun *they* is considered gender-neutral. The experiment consisted of participants reading a description of a hypothetical "scholarship applicant" that was only labeled with "Student A" or "Student B" and no name. Applicants were referred to as one of the following: *they*, *he*, *she*, *ze*, or *the student*. After reading the description, participants chose a photo of the person they thought was being described out of three possibilities: an individual perceived as masculine, an individual perceived as feminine, or an individual who did not appear female or male (the "non-binary condition").[2]

This experiment showed that *they* is perceived as gender-neutral, as participants chose an equal amount of masculine, feminine and non-binary presenting individuals when they encountered singular *they*. The authors also asked participants if they were familiar with someone who uses *they*/*them* pronouns, and suggest that "even those who don't know someone who goes by 'they' interpret it as gender-neutral, suggesting it may be a 'naturally occuring' option for gender-neutrality and nonbinariness" (Bradley et. al 2019).

While Balhorn (2004) and Bjorkman (2017) focused on the grammatical properties of singular *they* instead of social influences, this experiment shows the presence and acceptability of singular *they* in a social context. They show the acceptability of the pronoun in a singular form without any need for a linguistic background to justify it. Singular *they* has been in use since the 1400s when referring to an indefinite referent; however, this experiment goes beyond this usage to show that *they* can be used for a singular referent and can be used as a generic gender-neutral pronoun.

Singular *they* has been seen as controversial and ungrammatical by prescriptivists because of its supposed inability to refer to a singular entity without violating number concordance. However, as described in this section, there are many different semantic and

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[2] The photos' perception of masculine/feminine/non-binary was established in a previous study by Bradley (2019).

syntactic explanations for its singular, gender-neutral usage. Singular *they* is not only an acceptable grammatical phenomenon, but it is also a socially accepted term and can be a possible natural option to integrate into the language as a gender-neutral pronoun.

3.   What is Copy-Editing?

Copy-editing is a common practice for newspapers, magazines, journals, and other text-based sources, whether published on paper or online. The term "copy-editing" can include any combination of practices including editing spelling, grammar, and punctuation; editing written content for clarity; fact-checking; ensuring that the adequate level of professionalism is used depending on the what medium is publishing it; and/or returning the piece to the author to rewrite, add to, or clarify their writing.

Copy-editors often follow a specific style guide, such as the Associated Press (AP) style guide, often used for journalism, or Chicago Manual of Style, the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide, or the Modern Language Association (MLA) style guide, often used for academic papers and journals. Each of these style guides sets standards for formal writing in grammar, punctuation, formatting, and citations. The goal of copy-editing is to ensure consistency across published works in a newspaper, journal, website, etc. By following a style guide with rules, copy-editors ensure that they uphold the publication's professionalism and provide the audience with comprehensible material. However, some rules in these style guides remain outdated and could easily be broken without compromising a published work's formality.

While there is a divide in how formal English should be written versus how casual English is spoken, there are many instances of rules existing in style guides that call common utterances in standard English ungrammatical. In *Strategic Copy Editing* (2004), a guide to copy-editors on AP style conventions, career copy-editor John Russial gives many of these examples. Russial claims that the word *tasked* in example (9a) is legal jargon and the sentence should instead be rewritten as (9b).

(9) Legal Jargon

    a. Six years ago, the deputy district attorney was tasked with prosecuting child-abuse cases.

    b. Six years ago, the deputy district began prosecuting…

(Russial 2004, 52)

A goal of copy-editing is to guarantee clarity, so Russial suggests a simpler option, even if (9a) would be intelligible. Another grammatical error that Russial points out is the "dangling modifier," where a phrase in a sentence refers to an unstated referent (10).

(10) Dangling Modifiers

    a. As Los Angeles Mayor, Tom Bradley's appointments were controversial.

    b. As Los Angeles Mayor, Tom Bradley made some controversial appointments.

(Russial 2004, 18)

In (10a), the literal meaning of the sentence would be that the *appointments* were the Mayor of Los Angeles, which is resolved in (10b).

In both of these examples, the "ungrammatical" sentence would be accepted in spoken English and, debatably, would not be a glaring mistake upon reading. To keep consistency and professionalism, however, style guides have kept these rules unchanged to sustain formal written grammar. Nonetheless, just as spoken language evolves, the norms of written language have the potential to evolve as well. Even though the usage of singular *they* is rapidly rising in spoken acceptability, as explained in Section 2, writing conventions have not all followed suit. While most style guides have come to recognize the use of singular *they* in reference to someone who identifies with gender-neutral pronouns, the usage of *they* in reference to a singular referent of unknown gender is not always accepted.

The MLA Style guide does not accept the usage of singular *they* with a singular referent of unknown gender. The Chicago Manual of Style and the AP Stylebook both accept the usage of singular *they* in this case, but suggest using it sparingly, and using a different word choice if possible. In (11a-b), suggested alternatives to the use of singular *they* in (11) are demonstrated.

(11)   The participant will indicate their preference.

   a.   *Participants* will indicate their preference.

   b.   The participant indicated *a* preference.

<div align="right">(Lee 2015)</div>

In October 2019, the APA Style guide announced that the all usages of singular *they* would become fully accepted. They note that many alternatives exist, like (11a-b) above, if a writer does not want to use singular *they*, but recognize that using singular *they* is completely acceptable in speech and is "inclusive of all people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender" (APA Style n.d.).

Style guides differ in how they suggest dealing with singular *they*; the majority of them are lagging behind social practices of recognizing singular *they*. As shown in the review of the Oxford English Dictionary (2002) and the various syntactic accounts for singular *they*'s acceptability (Balhorn 2004, Bjorkman 2017) shown in Section 2, the acceptability of singular *they* in speech and some writing is evident. Because of this acceptability in speech, similarly to the acceptability of the examples in (9a) and (10a), the usage of *they* in formal writing may not even be detected as singular by the average reader.

Some scholars suggest that a successful copy-editor does not need to be as strict as the style guide they follow. In *Style Manual: For Authors, Editors and Printers*, an Australian manual providing guidance in publishing, the author states that "when copy editing… an experienced editor will follow the house style intelligently rather than impose it rigidly" (DCITA 2002, 258). The MLA Style guide also notes that "if a consensus emerges on a singular generic personal pronoun, [they]'ll most likely incorporate it into [their] usage" (MLA Style Center, 2018). This shows that style guides recognize the evolution of speech and want their guidelines to agree with those, but only in formal contexts. If the goal of copy editing is consistency and clarity, not all rules must be enforced to ensure that, and formality can be retained by incorporating features of language, such as singular *they*, historically found as acceptable in speech. While copy-editing is a valuable step in the publishing process, the rigidity in which it

upholds prescriptivism is a barrier that can easily be broken down in order to include gender inclusivity and progressive language into formal writing.

4. Yale's Campus and its Publications

4.1. Yale's Progressive History

Throughout the years, Yale University has made administrative changes to attempt to combat structural gender inequality. For example, in Spring 2016, the University decided to name one of its new residential colleges after Pauli Murray, a civil rights activist and Yale alumna. This was the first college to be named after a woman. In Spring 2017, after long protest from students and student groups on campus, Calhoun College was renamed after another prominent Yale alumna in the field of computer science, Grace Murray Hopper. Spring 2017 also saw the announcement of co-ed housing becoming available for rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Students had previously been allowed to have mixed-gender suites, but not mixed-gender bedrooms. This decision allowed students who either do not identify along a gender binary or are transgender to be allowed to room with any other student without having to gain individual approval from their residential college dean. In Fall 2017, the University announced that it would no longer employ the terms "freshman" or "upperclassman" and instead use "first-year" and "upper-level," respectively. This was a push for gender-neutral language in formal correspondences. Finally, in Spring 2019, Yale implemented a three-way distinction of gender in the student information system: "M" for male, "F" for female, and "N" for non-binary. Along with this, students can also insert what pronouns they prefer in the student information system. This showed an implementation of technology to accommodate and affirm different gender identities on campus, for both undergraduate and graduate students.

While these changes did not all happen immediately after the first call for change, Yale has shown a pattern of progressive change that attempts to follow the needs and wants of the student body. The majority of Yale students, according to a survey to the Yale College Class of 2022, identify as liberal or politically to the left and often push for changes regarding gender, racial, and/or financial equality on campus (Bysiewicz & O'Daly 2018). However, although

the overarching perception of campus climate is very liberal, there are various groups of thought on campus that are represented by the student body. There are numerous different publications on campus that cover different opinions, viewpoints, news, etc. that span all ends of the political spectrum. The two publications in focus of this essay, the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald, will be analyzed to determine their greater role in the campus climate and the way they use language to fulfill that role.

4.2. Yale Daily News

The Yale Daily News was founded in 1878 and is a daily college newspaper. They publish a newspaper every day, Monday through Friday, that contains an article in each of six sections: Opinion, University, City, Sports, SciTech, and Culture. A Weekend section is also published on Fridays and there is a less frequent publication, the monthly YDN Mag, which is more free-form and includes creative writing pieces.

The Opinion section contains articles written by students who wish to express their opinion about a topic. Opinion pieces can either be submitted by a student or other member of the Yale community or written by students who run weekly columns at the News. It is the only section that takes submissions from individuals who are not reporters with the News. The University section reports on news about Yale, from administrative news to current events on campus. The City section covers news in the New Haven, Connecticut area. The Sports section has articles about past sporting events or reporting about sports related topics. The SciTech section reports on science and technology news, mostly coming out of current research in various institutions at Yale. The Culture section reports on the arts and often reports on performances and/or exhibitions around campus. The Weekend section has "reviews and articles about arts and culture" (Yale Daily News n.d.).

The Yale Daily News is a prominent news source on campus that is often the first point of contact for current events on campus and in New Haven. The newspaper is printed and distributed in common spaces across campus, such as dining halls, and has newspaper boxes on the streets around campus. The publication is partially printed in color and partially printed

in black and white, and publishes a full color "Sports Monday" insert on Mondays. The News also sends a daily email with online content which is the same as the print version.

   4.3. The Yale Herald

The Yale Herald was founded in 1986 and brands itself as "Yale's most daring publication." The Herald publishes one weekly copy every Friday and, prior to Spring 2020, had eight sections: Fronts, Features, Culture, Opinion, Reviews, Arts, and Inserts. A SciTech section was added in Spring 2020. Occasionally, not every section is represented, but most publications each week include at least one article per section.

   The Fronts and Features sections include longer pieces of reporting. Fronts is named so because the pieces correspond to the cover art of the publication and they are longer on average than Feature pieces. The Culture section has reporting about arts and cultural phenomena as well as essays that reflect personal views about those topics. The Opinion section includes articles written by students on campus that express their opinions. Reviews has a variety of writing styles, from poetry to longer essays, that focus on expressing an opinion about some phenomenon, event, idea, etc. The Arts section includes reporting about the arts, including interview transcripts with artists as well as reporting on pieces of art and architecture around campus. The Inserts section contains short comedy pieces and/or cartoons. The SciTech section covers topics related to science and technology, either through reporting or through personal reflection on those topics.

   The Herald is a popular publication on campus and is known for its variety of content it produces. The Herald can be a source of comedy, personal narratives, or news reporting about Yale or New Haven, and does not have the same strict reporting as the YDN. Additionally, any student on campus can write for the Yale Herald if they wish to do so, either by picking up a pitch for an article provided by the Herald, or pitching an idea themselves to the Herald staff. The Herald is a printed newspaper that is also distributed in common spaces around Yale's campus. The Herald is printed in color and its pages are embellished with decorative borders, backgrounds, illustrations, etc. The Herald also has a website that publishes digital copies each week.

5. Methods

To investigate the usage of singular *they* in both the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald, I used both a corpus analysis and qualitative interviews.

For the corpus analysis, I compiled the same number of articles from each section of each publication until the word count approximated 100,000 words. An equal number of articles from each section (as opposed to an equal amount of words from each section) was chosen in order for each section's word count to comprise approximately the same amount of the corpus as it would comprise of the entire archive of the publication. For the Yale Daily News, I took 13 articles from each section and for the Yale Herald, I took 11 articles from each section. I then filtered through every usage of *they*, *their*, *them*, and *themselves/themself* and took count of each one that was used with a singular antecedent. Within those examples I differentiated which had a generic antecedent (12), which had an individual antecedent (13), and which had an antecedent who identified with *they/them* pronouns (14).

> (12)   I have reflected on what it might be like for *someone* in a wheelchair to be told that sitting for over six hours per day is worse for *them* than smoking.
>
> > (Knight 2019)
>
> (13)   He spoke bitterly about *the worker* who brought forward the lawsuit, likening *their* case to reaching a hand out to beg for money.
>
> > (Lewis 2019)
>
> (14)   [*Emmett McMullan*] thought the vigil was "beautiful" when first attending TDoR in New Haven and decided to get more involved, *they* said.
>
> > (Davidson & Rockwell 2019)

Examples (12) and (13) are what I will refer to as "grammatical" singular *they* and example (14) is what I will refer to as "identity" singular *they*.

I also noted whether the instance of singular *they* was used in subject, object, possessive, or reflexive position, denoted by *they*, *them*, *their*, and *themselves/themself* respectively. The subject matter, genre of writing (creative versus reporting) and whether or not the piece was opinion-

based were all taken into consideration to compare the frequency of usages of singular *they* between the Yale Daily News and the Herald.

I conducted an interview with staff from both the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald to ask about their copy-editing practices, style guide usage, and general style and tone of their publication. I also inquired about the publication's role on campus and their relationships with the student body and the campus climate. For the Yale Daily News, I interviewed the four current copy-editors in a group interview, and for the Yale Herald, I interviewed the current Features Editor and general contributor for the Herald. She is also the Associate Editor of the YDN Mag column. All attempts to reach out to current and former editors-in-chief of the Yale Herald were unsuccessful.
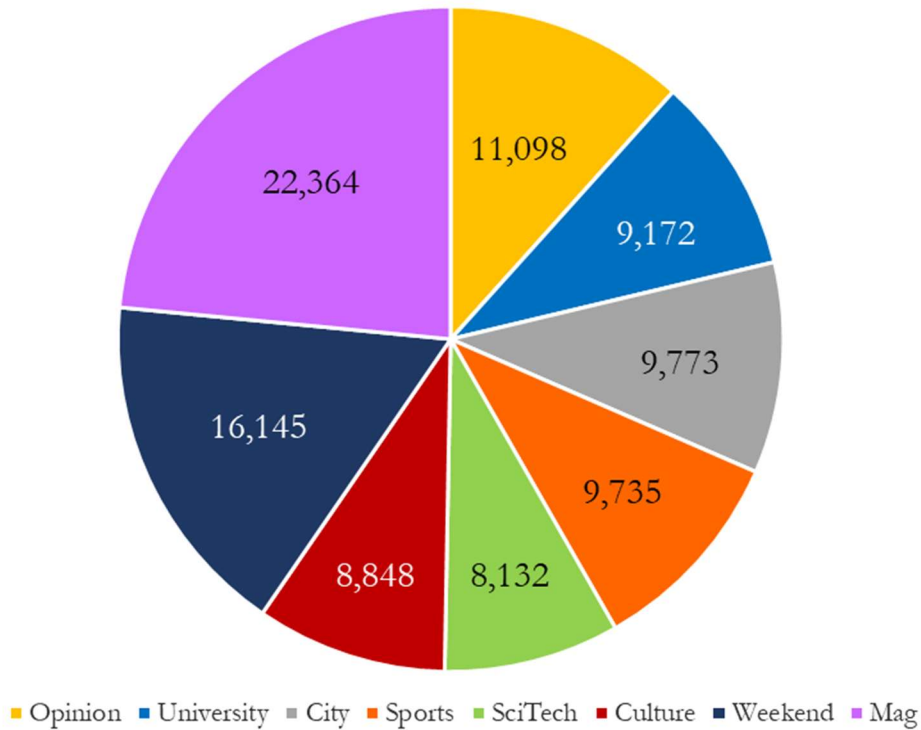
6. What Gets Published: Corpus Analysis

6.1. Overview

The corpus of the Yale Daily News is comprised of 95,267 words. 13 articles were complied from each of the eight print sections of the YDN: Opinion, University, City, Sports, SciTech, Culture, Weekend, and Mag (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Distribution of Words Across Sections of YDN

Because articles in different sections of the YDN have different average word counts, each section does not comprise the same percentage of the total corpus (Table 1).

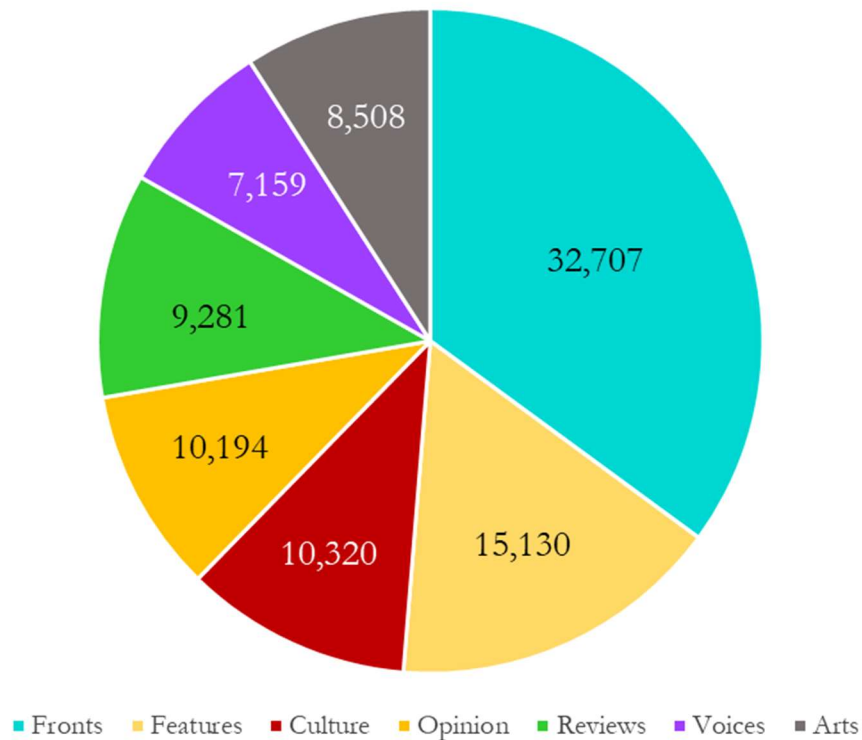| Table 1.	Average words per article	Percentage of total corpus
Opinion	854	11.6%
University	706	9.6%
City	752	10.3%
Sports	749	10.2%
SciTech	626	8.5%
Culture	681	9.3%
Weekend	1,242	16.9%
Mag	1,720	23.5%

Weekend, Mag, and Opinion on average had the longest articles. These three sections are the only sections that are not a part of the News' daily reporting, which is comprised of University, City, Sports, SciTech, and Culture. Weekend and Mag allow for more creative

writing, and Opinion pieces can be submitted by students who do not work as reporters for the YDN. These three sections comprise over half of the total corpus (52%).

The daily reporting sections average around the same length (around 700 words). Because they are written by student reporters that work with the YDN, they are expected to have a similar format and most likely all follow around the same word count requirement.

The corpus of the Yale Herald is comprised of 93,291 words. 11 articles were taken from 7 print sections of the Herald: Fronts, Features, Culture, Opinion, Reviews, Voices, and Arts (Figure 2). SciTech was not included because of its recent addition and lack of articles, and Inserts was not included because it often include images and short jokes.

Figure 2.

Distributions of Words Across Sections of Herald

Same as the Yale Daily News, the sections of the Yale Herald do not all have articles with the same average word count (Table 2).

Table 2.	Average words per article	Percentage of total corpus
Fronts	2,973	35.1%
Features	1,375	16.2%
Culture	938	11.1%
Opinion	927	10.9%
Reviews	844	9.9%
Voices	651	7.7%
Arts	773	9.1%

The different sections of the Herald had more discrepancies in average word count between them. Fronts and Features averaged the longest and are known as long-form reporting pieces. Fronts are twice the length of Features on average, despite them having the same content. These two sections alone comprise more than half of the entire corpus (51.3%).

Culture, Opinion, and Reviews articles average around the same length (900 words). Voices and Arts are the two shortest sections on average, both comprising less than 10% of the corpus each.

Herald sections cannot be delineated as easily as YDN sections can; however, Voices, the shortest section on average, is the most free-form in content and can include poems and experimental writing, which may explain why it has the lowest average.

The YDN and the Herald both have Opinion and Culture sections. The Herald's articles in those two sections are longer on average than those articles in the YDN. The YDN's Opinion articles comprise more of the YDN corpus than the Herald's Opinion articles do for the Herald corpus. The YDN's Culture articles comprise less of the total YDN corpus than the Herald's Culture articles do for the Herald corpus.

6.2. Grammatical Singular *They*
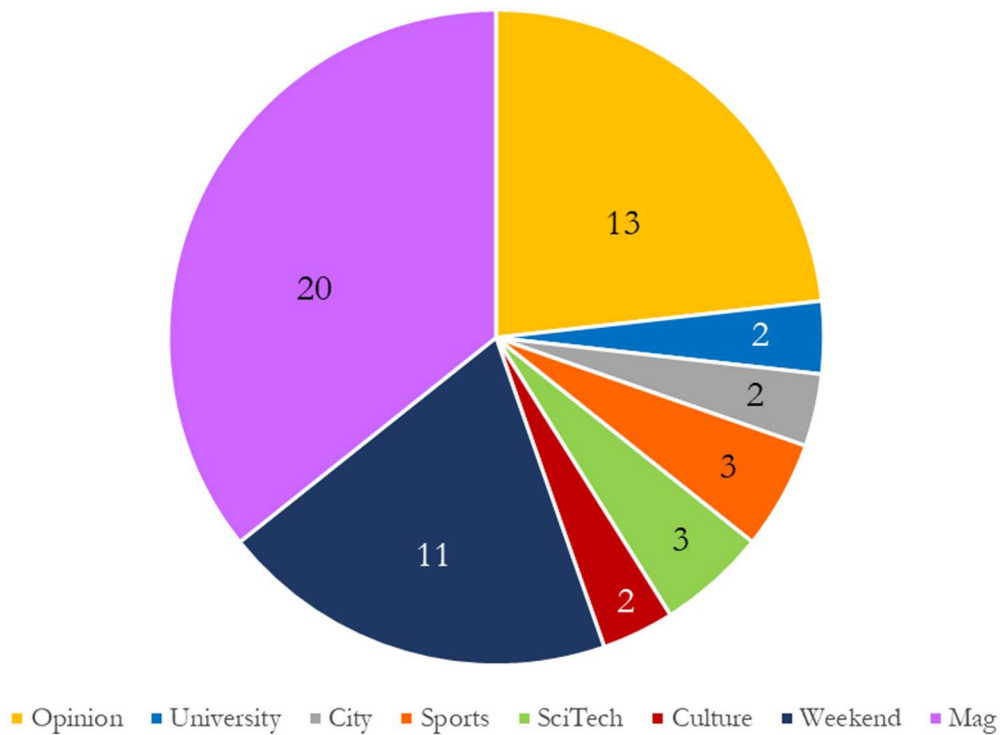
6.2.1.   Overview

Of the 761 total instances of *they*, *them*(*self*/*selves*), and *their* in the corpus, the Yale Daily News had 56 instances of grammatical singular *they*. Table 3 shows the total number of all instances of *they*/*them*(*self*/*selves*)/*their* in each section of the YDN and the number of instances of grammatical singular *they*. The third column shows the percentage of instances of grammatical

singular *they* within each section's total number of *they* pronouns. The final column shows the percentage of the total number of instances of grammatical singular *they* that each section represents. This second column is visualized in Figure 3.

Table 3.	Total # of they/them/their	# of instances of grammatical singular *they*	Percentage of section's they/them/their	Percentage of 56 total examples
Opinion	71	13	18.3%	23.2%
University	65	2	3.1%	3.6%
City	82	2	2.4%	3.6%
Sports	99	3	3.0%	5.4%
SciTech	71	3	4.2%	5.4%
Culture	65	2	3.1%	3.6%
Weekend	114	11	9.7%	19.6%
Mag	194	20	10.3%	35.7%

Figure 3.

Distribution of Grammatical Singular *They* in YDN

- Opinion
- University
- City
- Sports
- SciTech
- Culture
- Weekend
- Mag

As was seen in Figure 3 and Table 3, not every section of the News comprises the same percentage of the corpus. This can be a contributing factor to why some sections have more examples of singular *they* than others.

Mag, for example, has double the amount of words in the corpus than the Opinion section (22,364 vs. 11,098). Paralleling that, it also has slightly more than double the amount of *they/them/their* pronouns than the Opinion section (194 vs. 71). However, the percentage of those instances that are singular in the Opinion section is greater than in Mag (18.3% vs. 10.3%). Additionally, there is only a 4.9% difference between what the Opinion section comprises of the singular *they* examples versus all examples in the section, as opposed to Mag having a 25.4% difference. This shows that of the times that a *they* pronoun is used, it is more likely to be singular in Opinion than in Mag.

This can also demonstrate that while one section may have more examples of singular *they*, it may not be because that section uses the pronoun more, but because it comprises more of the total content that the Yale Daily News publishes. This is shown in Table 4: a comparison of how much of the corpus the section comprises and how much of the total singular *they* examples the section comprises.

Table 4.	Percentage of total corpus	Percentage of total examples	Ratio of Examples : Corpus
Opinion	11.6%	23.2%	2
University	9.6%	3.6%	0.38
City	10.3%	3.6%	0.35
Sports	10.2%	5.4%	0.53
SciTech	8.5%	5.4%	0.64
Culture	9.3%	3.6%	0.39
Weekend	16.9%	19.6%	1.16
Mag	23.5%	35.7%	1.52

If each section is assumed to have a proportionate distribution of singular *they* examples compared to its word count, the percentages in the first two columns would be equal for each section. However, this is not observed. The third column entitled "Ratio of Examples:Corpus" shows the proportion that each section's singular *they* examples have in comparison to the corpus. A value of one would denote that a section's singular *they* examples comprise the same

percentage of total examples as its words comprise the total corpus. The closer the value is to one, the closer that section's percentages are. If the value is below one, singular *they* is underrepresented in the section; if the value is above one, singular *they* is overrepresented in the section. For example, the Opinion section's ratio is 2; this means that singular *they* examples in Opinion comprise two times the amount of total examples than the word count comprises of the corpus.
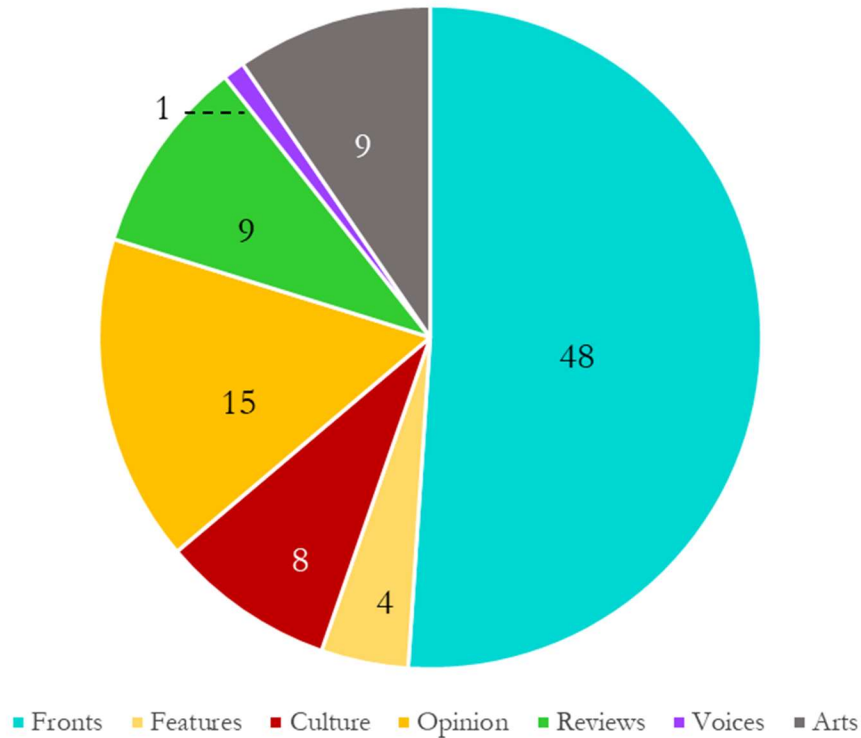
If each section is assumed to have the same distribution of singular *they*, Opinion, Weekend, and Mag (the non-daily reporting sections) would be expected to have the most instances, which is observed. However, these sections represent much more of the singular *they* instances than they do the corpus, with ratios of 2, 1.16, and 1.52 respectively (Table 4). Daily reporting sections represent much less of the singular *they* instances than the corpus. Additionally, within the daily reporting section, Sports and SciTech represent more of the singular *they* instances than University, City, and Culture (although the difference is only three examples versus two).

Of the 916 total instances of *they*, *them(self/selves)*, and *their* in the corpus, the Yale Herald had 94 instances of grammatical singular *they*. The same breakdown as shown for the YDN earlier is shown in Table 5. The second column is visualized in Figure 4.

Table 5.	Total # of they/them/their	# of instances of grammatical singular *they*	Percentage of section's they/them/their	Percentage of total examples
Fronts	403	48	11.9%	51.1%
Features	142	4	2.8%	4.3%
Culture	56	8	14.3%	8.5%
Opinion	119	15	12.6%	16.0%
Reviews	81	9	11.1%	9.6%
Voices	58	1	1.7%	1.1%
Arts	57	9	15.8%	9.6%

Figure 4.

Distribution of Grammatical Singular *They* in Yale Herald

Legend: Fronts, Features, Culture, Opinion, Reviews, Voices, Arts

(Pie chart values: 48, 4, 8, 15, 9, 1, 9)

Similarly to the YDN, not every section's examples in the Herald comprises the same percentage of the total corpus. For example, the Culture and Arts sections only have 8 and 9 instances of singular *they*, respectively. However, those sections have less *they* pronouns overall, and those instances comprise around 15% of the total number of all *they* pronouns in each section. Fronts has the largest number of singular *they* instances at 48, but those instances only represent 11.9% of the total *they* pronouns at 403. Culture and Arts have a smaller number of words and pronouns than Fronts, but those pronouns are more likely to be an instance of singular *they* than they would be in Fronts.

A comparison of how much of the corpus a section comprises and how much of the total singular *they* examples a section comprises is shown in Table 6.

Table 6.	Percentage of total corpus	Percentage of total examples	Ratio of Examples : Corpus
Fronts	35%	51.1%	1.46
Features	16.2%	4.3%	0.27
Culture	11.1%	8.5%	0.77
Opinion	10.0%	16.0%	1.6
Reviews	10.9%	9.6%	0.88
Voices	9.1%	1.1%	0.12
Arts	7.7%	9.6%	1.25

Because the styles of reporting and genre are more variable in the Herald, there is not as clear of a distinction as to why each section presents as it does. Fronts, Opinion, and Arts have a higher representation in the instances of singular *they* than they do in the total corpus. Voices has the greatest difference between the two, with a ratio of 0.12, but, as seen in Table 5, the percentage of the total examples approximately the same as the percentage that those examples comprise of total *they* pronouns (1.1% vs. 1.7%).
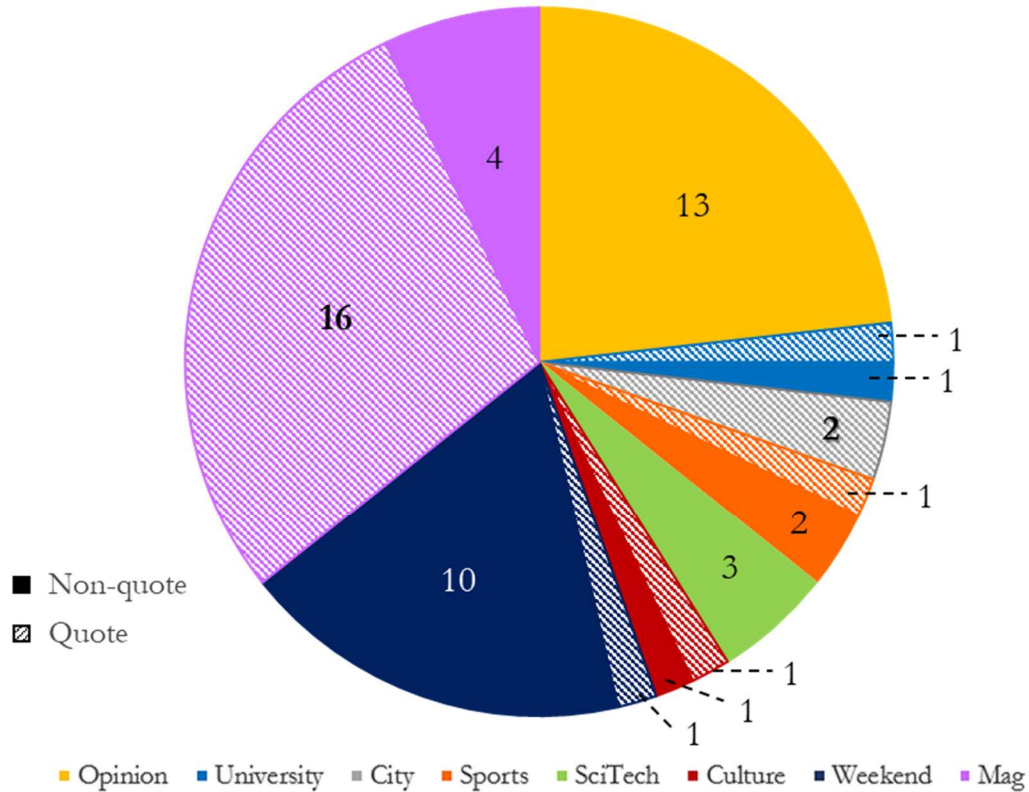
6.2.2. Quotations

In terms of editing, writers choose the quotations they want to include in their piece, but including an instance of singular *they* represents the source's speech pattern and not the writer's personal writing style.

Out of the YDN's 56 total instances of singular *they*, 22 were contained in a quote. The instances of grammatical singular *they* can be separated within each section of the Yale Daily News depending on whether they were written by the author or stated in a quote from a source interviewed for the piece (Figure 5).

Figure 5.

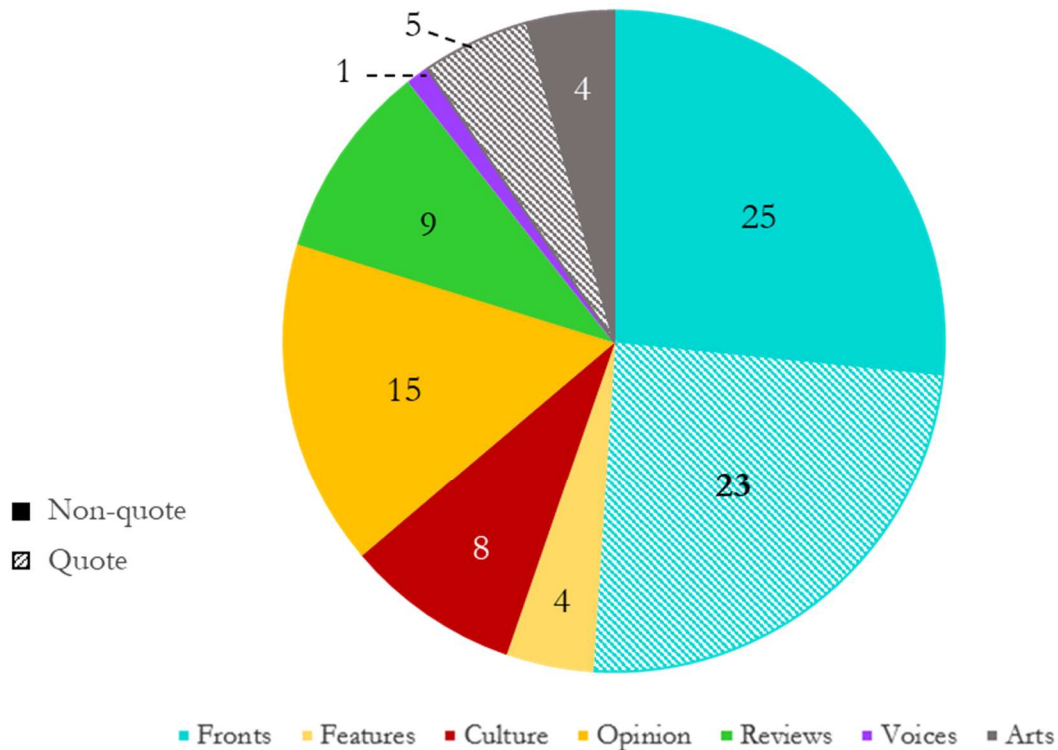YDN: Usage of Grammatical Singular *They* in Quotes

SciTech and Opinion were the only sections that did not have any instances of singular *they* in a quote. The City section's only examples of singular *they* were contained in quotes. University, Sports, Culture, and Weekend all had one example contained in a quote. This is notable for University and Culture, because they each only have two instances of singular *they*, and for Sports, because it only has three instances. For Weekend, only one instance is contained in a quote, while ten instances are still present. Finally, for Mag, the majority of instances are contained in a quote, with only four instances being content from the writer.

The same breakdown of written content versus singular *they* contained in a quote is shown in Figure 6 for the Yale Herald. Out of the Herald's 94 instances of singular *they*, 28 examples were contained in a quote.

Figure 6.

Herald: Usage of Grammatical Singular *They* in Quotes

Instances contained in quotes were found only in the Fronts and Arts sections, with each being split around in half, quotes versus non-quotes. Fronts are thorough pieces of reporting and require strong sourcing about the topic, therefore quotes are going to comprise a large part of each article in Fronts. For Arts, I attempted to not include articles that were interviews; however, there were not enough articles that were not interviews to maintain an equal number of articles per section. Therefore, some Arts articles were entirely quotes, as they were verbatim interviews between the writer and an artist.

Comparing the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald, there are many more instances of singular *they* coming from the writers of the Herald than those of the YDN. More sections in the YDN utilize singular *they* quotes than the Herald, even if the overall number of examples, quote or non-quote, is more in the Herald. 39.3% of the YDN's and 29.8% of the Yale Herald's singular *they* instances are contained in quotes.

6.2.3. Reporting, Opinion, Creative Writing

Each article that the singular *they* examples were found in were tagged *yes/no* in each category of reporting, opinion-based, or creative writing (Table 7). Reporting was defined as a fact-based piece that read as informative and written in standard or formal English. Opinion was tagged if the piece expressed any personal views or encouraged a certain political agenda. Creative Writing was tagged if the piece was fiction and/or if the writing style was non-standard, such as poetry or with the use of sentence fragments. Each of these categories could overlap.

Table 7.		Reporting		Opinion		Creative Writing	
	Total	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
YDN	56	28	28	24	32	6	50
Herald	94	67	27	25	69	11	83

Even though the YDN has more sections that are reporting based, the instances of singular *they* found in the YDN are split evenly between being contained in a reporting article and a non-reporting article. The articles marked as being opinion-based came solely from the Opinion and Weekend section, and all other sections had only factually based writing or fiction pieces.

The YDN does not have many outlets for creative writing and this is reflected in the results. The Creative Writing examples found in the YDN were only contained in the Weekend and Mag sections. The examples in the Herald were only found in the Opinion and Voices sections. For the Herald, even though the writing style is more free-form than the YDN, the majority of examples are contained in reporting style articles and non-opinion articles. This shows that although not many of the examples from the Herald were in a Creative Writing piece, the Reporting pieces of the Herald are less journalistic and reflect more of the writer's voice although it is still factually based.

For example, the Herald has Reporting pieces about Instagram influencers and the New Haven Party Bike, which are not conventional journalistic topics but can still be

researched and reported on. These topics would not easily fit into any of the YDN's delineated sections which cover different parts of the university and New Haven; therefore, those who write for the Herald have more creative freedom in choice of topic.

6.2.4. Grammatical Role

Each instance of singular *they* was tagged for its grammatical role (Table 8): subject, object, possessive, and reflexive, which correspond to *they*, *them*, *their*, and *themself/selves*, respectively.

Table 8.	Total	Subject	Object	Possessive	Reflexive
YDN	56	27	8	19	2
		48.2%	14.3%	33.9%	3.6%
Herald	94	28	22	41	3
		29.8%	23.4%	43.6%	3.2%

The YDN and the Herald have about the same amount of singular *they* in the subject form, despite them having a large difference in total number of instances. The percentages in the table show the difference between the two publications; almost 50% of examples in the YDN are in subject form while only around 30% of examples in the Herald are in subject form.

The lack of instances in subject form in the Herald is seemingly replaced with far more examples in the possessive form. 10 percent more examples in the Yale Herald are found in the possessive form than in the YDN. Both publications have little representation of the reflexive in singular form, and their percentage of total examples is approximately the same.

6.2.5. Indefinite Pronouns

As shown in Section 2, singular *they* with an indefinite pronoun such as *somebody, everybody, no one,* etc. is widely accepted in spoken English. 28 of the 56 instances of singular *they* found in the Yale Daily News had an indefinite pronoun as its antecedent. This accounts for exactly 50% of all instances. 41 of 94 instances of singular *they* found in the Herald had an indefinite pronoun as its antecedent. This is slightly less than half of all instances (43.6%).

6.2.6. Generic vs. Individual Antecedents

The antecedents for each instance of singular *they* were classified as either "generic" or "individual" (Table 9). "Generic" was tagged if the antecedent was a person, definite or indefinite, that did not refer to a specific, identifiable individual (12-13). "Individual" was tagged if the pronoun referred to a person or source that exists (14)

Table 9.	Total	Generic	Individual
YDN	56	51	5
Herald	94	87	7

Both publications have many more generic examples than individual examples. The YDN has slightly more individual examples than generic overall, with 5 out of 56 (8.9%) compared to the Herald's 7 out of 94 (7.5%). This shows that it is not common for singular *they* to be used for a referent of a known gender in the YDN nor the Herald.

6.3. Identity Singular *They*

Of the 761 total instances of *they*, *them(self/selves)*, and *their* in the corpus, the Yale Daily News had 4 instances of identity singular *they*. These four instances were spread across two different articles, shown in Table 10.

Table 10.	# of instances of identity singular *they*	Grammatical Role		Genre
Opinion	2	2 Possessive		Opinion
City	2	1 Possessive	1 Subject	Reporting

The Opinion article was a reframing of a protest on campus carried out by an individual with *they/them* pronouns. Neither of the two instances of identity *they* were contained in a quote, and the individual themself was not a source for the piece. As the section title suggests, the genre of this piece was opinion-based; while it referred to an event that happened on

campus, it was not factually based and reflected the personal views and experiences of the writer only.

The City article was about a celebration of Transgender Day of Remembrance in New Haven. Neither of the two instances of *they* were contained in quotes. Each instance of identity *they* referred to a different person who used *they/them* pronouns and both were quoted as sources for the article. The genre of this piece was reporting; it was a description of an event and used sources to express others' personal opinions without inserting the writer's ideas.

Of the 916 total instances of *they*, *them(self/selves)*, and *their* in the corpus, the Yale Herald had 21 instances of identity singular *they*. These 21 instances were spread across four different articles (Table 11).

Table 11.	# of instances of identity singular *they*	Grammatical Role			Genre
Fronts	16	11 Subject		5 Possessive	Reporting
	1	1 Subject			Reporting, Opinion
Features	1	1 Subject			Reporting
Opinion	3	1 Subject	1 Object	1 Possessive	Opinion

The first Fronts article was about a business organization on campus made for LGBTQ+ students. None of the 16 instances in this article were contained in quotes. All 16 instances referred to one person, who was a source for the piece who used *they/them* pronouns. The genre of this article was reporting, because it was a discussion of this organization on campus and sourced different opinions about it without inserting the writer's ideas.

The second Fronts article was about whiteness and queerness in Charlottesville, Virginia. The one instance of identity singular *they* was not contained in a quote. The pronoun referred to the writer's friend who used *they/them* pronouns. The genre of this article was both reporting and opinion, because the piece did include sourcing and factual information while still using personal experience and ideas as the guiding narrative.

The Features article was about Juuls, or nicotine e-cigarettes, and how they have become the newest addiction danger to youths. The one instance of singular *they* was not used in a quote, and referred to one source who identified with *they/them* pronouns. The genre of this article was reporting, because the piece sourced multiple opinions about the topic and did not express an opinion from the writer.

The Opinion article was about a drag troupe on campus and the writer's experience meeting and performing with them. One of three instances was contained in a quote, but was inserted by the writer to allow for pronoun agreement (15).

(15)   For another member, Xuan, DC '18, drag has been "an irreplaceable part of discovering, inhabiting, and displaying [*their*] trans identity."

(Klebanoff 2018)

Two of the instances referred to an individual in the troupe, and one of the instances referred to another individual (shown in [15]). As suggested by the section title, the genre of this piece was opinion, because the article works through the writer's own ideas and experiences.

7.   The People Behind the Publication: Interviews

I interviewed the four current copy-editors of the YDN, Trevor '21, Wendy '22, Brian '22, and Fran '22, and the current Herald Features Editor and YDN Mag Associate Editor, Sariya '22[3]. I asked the same questions in each interview, with a few specialized questions regarding each publication. The answers given illuminated the large differences between each publication, and a few major themes emerged regarding their editing practices, tone of writing and creative freedom, and relationship to Yale's campus climate[4].

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[3] All interviewees' names have been changed.
[4] I acknowledge that because I have limited correspondents from each publication and their answers came from personal experience, they may not reflect the views of every individual at the publication or the publication itself.

7.1. Editing Practices

Each publication has standards for editing and follows a style guide.

The Yale Daily News uses an in-house style guide that was developed by former copy-editors at the News. However, it has not been updated for awhile and the News is currently working to publish a new edition, which would only be the 3rd edition since its founding. Trevor noted that because there are gaps in the style guide due to its outdatedness, the YDN defaults to AP Style if a rule is not stated in their current in-house edition. If the AP Style Guide also does not resolve the stylistic issue, the copy-editors then do, as Brian says, "whatever the Washington Post does," which also has its own in-house guide.

When a piece is written by a reporter at the YDN, the article first goes to the editor of whichever desk they are writing for, i.e., a City desk reporter would first send their piece to the City Editor. The piece would then be sent to the Managing Editors, who are the highest editing desk that look over all articles at the YDN prior to the Editor-in-Chief. The Copy-Editors at the News are the "last line of defense" before the piece is officially published. They "check for last minute grammar mistakes, content errors, possible name mistakes," and sometimes fact-check the article.

The copy-editors emphasized that they are strict in following their style guide. The YDN has specific rules as to how to use apostrophes, em- and en-dashes, and not using the Oxford comma. Trevor, Wendy, and Fran all mentioned that their goal as copy-editors is to "maintain the paper's professional integrity" and ensuring consistency. The YDN has a lot of power in making information accessible on campus, and Wendy noted that part of her job is to ensure the language of the publication remains accessible and does not exclude any group of people from the News' dialogue.

When asked about singular *they* and how it is treated in editing, the copy-editors noted that there is no existing rule in the YDN style guide about it. And, although the AP Style Guide does not accept singular *they* and recommends rewording around it, the copy-editors accepted the example sentences (16-17) that I provided and noted that they would not edit it out.

(16)   Somebody called while you were out and they said they would call back later.

(17)   Everyone took their seat before the movie.

In fact, the only correction offered was a change by Brian from *seat* to *seats* in order to have number agreement with *their*.

Wendy noted that pronouns are rarely used at all in reporting, and when referring to a source, their name will mostly be used, with an occasional pronoun. When asked about how an anonymous source would be reported on, Wendy said that they would be repeatedly referred to as "the anonymous source," with no pronoun.

In terms of *they/them* pronouns that refer to an individual who identifies with those pronouns, there is also no rule in the in-house style guide regarding this issue. However, one of the changes being proposed for the new edition is how to proceed. There were mixed answers about how they currently report on such individuals, and that it is still a point of contention because of the possibility of compromising the clarity of the article or violating the prescriptive grammatical rule of number concordance. This type of pronoun usage is accepted in Opinion pieces, but "there's no set rule on news articles… [whichever copy-editor] is in for the night would go to management [and] we would have a long discussion on what to do." All four copy-editors noted that they would most likely allow this usage of *they/them*, but it is not as fully accepted by them as grammatical singular *they*.

The Yale Herald also has its own in-house style guide created by a former editor-in-chief. This seems to be the only style guide used by the Herald in their editing process. Because any student can write for the Herald at any time, and because the Herald only publishes once a week as opposed to every day, the editing process does not have the same hierarchy as the YDN. When a student proposes a piece or accepts a call to write from a pitch, the editor of that section will meet with them to discuss the Herald's stylistic and journalistic expectations. The student submits their draft on Monday of the publishing week, so that multiple editors at the Herald can suggest edits. The final piece is due on Thursday of publishing week, and the student will meet again with Herald staff for in-person editing before the final edition is published on Friday. Because writers for the Herald are not official reporters, another step of

collaboration must take place to ensure the piece will fit into the Herald. This process is a more personal approach to editing, as edits regarding the style guide are made, as well as suggestions for content and reaching out to sources.

Sariya emphasized that the Herald is "more [flexible] than other campus publications in terms of style." Despite this, they still have specific rules, such as using the Oxford comma or noting a student's class year in a certain way, i.e. Chloe Gonzalez PC '20. She felt that the editing process was less of a practice in ensuring consistency, and more of ensuring coherent story structure in articles and ensuring that enough research was done to cover the topic.

When asked about singular *they*, Sariya noted that the Herald style guide did not have any rule covering pronouns at all. When the same example sentences were mentioned as above (16-17), she was sure that it would be allowed and not noted in editing.

Regarding individuals who identify with *they/them* pronouns, Sariya stressed that the Herald is conscious of identity politics and makes efforts to respect pronouns. There was no mention of a rule in the style guide or a need to add one.

There is less of a professional, journalistic nature to the Herald's writing style and more of an emphasis on expression and voice. Therefore, many of Sariya's answers did not have direct references to her role as Editor, but more so to her role as a member of the Herald staff generally. Maintaining the tone of free expression at the Herald seems more important than small editing details.

The Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald fill different roles on campus as student publications, and their editing practices follow that pattern. The Yale Daily News is an independent journalistic organization; the News is not institutionally affiliated with Yale University, and has its own advisory board, lawyers, endowment, etc. The News values their professional integrity as would any prominent journalistic organization, like the Washington Post. The Yale Herald is not traditional journalism in the same sense; they encourage the writer's voice to come through in their piece and prioritize thorough reporting over professionalism.

Because of the Yale Daily News' priority of creating and following rules for consistency, their consideration of singular *they* is bureaucratic. The grammatical usage of singular *they* is not considered a pressing issue, but the usage of *they/them* pronouns by an individual is a current consideration to add to their new style guide edition. Although the four copy-editors find no issue with using it, there is a motivation to include it in the style guide to avoid confusion for copy-editors to come. The Yale Herald, however, stresses the importance of accepting all identities and respects pronouns without needing to create a strict rule stating so. There is also no need to limit pronouns in writing at the Herald. This demonstrates the push for free expression over professionalism.

7.2. Tone, Genre, and Writing

As implied in their editing practices, the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald publish different styles of writing.

Wendy stated that the Yale Daily News publishes two genres of writing: "the normal weekday articles are more formal, like professional journalism style. Whereas Weekend, there's a lot more liberty and freedom to pursue creative writing outlets." Brian, the editor for YDN Mag, said the same for Mag as was said for Weekend. The weekly reporting articles are often shorter, more factually based and fall into the strict, professional editing style. However, Weekend and Mag, as well as Opinion pieces, are meant to convey more of the author's voice, similar to how all pieces in the Herald are. Trevor described writers for the Weekend as "[pushing] the boundaries of what is acceptable for writing… they try to be progressive with their writing." To Trevor, this kind of writing falls outside the bounds of the journalistic style of a credible news source that the YDN has curated since its beginning. Writing choices that may otherwise be viewed as "ungrammatical" are allowed into Weekend and Mag for emphasis or tone, and the strict rules followed by the copy-editors are flexible when it comes to creative writing. Trevor also noted that Opinions are not necessarily in the same genre as Weekend or Mag; they often use a similar writing style akin to the YDN's reporting, but may include different stylistic writing choices that would be accepted by editors because they are opinions.

The YDN also has many more staff members than the Herald, partly because of the various stages a piece must go through before being published, and because of the frequency of publishing. Students volunteer to join the board, but they are still governed by the Yale Daily News as an institution.

The Yale Herald brands itself as "Yale's most daring publication;" it does not attempt to publish reporting similar to the YDN and encourages the kind of boundary-pushing of the Weekend and Mag sections of the YDN. Sariya expressed that she believes people go to the Yale Herald for "an eclectic mix of things" and describes the "spirit" of the Herald as "chaotic and weird." She still noted that different sections have different tones, but none of them evoke professional writing of the YDN's caliber. For example, the Voices section publishes poetry and creative writing, and seemingly has no rules on grammar and punctuation as long as it serves a purpose for the piece. Articles can be written about a variety of topics that may not be seen as valid reporting in the YDN, such as "GHeav sandwiches" or a writer "going to a museum and [writing about] their ruminations." The Features section was said to be the strictest about technicalities, because they are meant to be factually based. Overall, Sariya repeatedly described all sections as "much voicier than other publications," implying that the writer's voice is expected to shine through instead of be suppressed by professional expectations.

The Herald has much less staff than the YDN and works more as a team to determine how they want each issue to be before publishing. The Herald is student-run and is not independent from Yale. The staff is free to make their own decisions about what they want in the newspaper, and can make changes to its look or content whenever they would like.

Because of the difference in editing practices and tone and genre in the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald, the disparity in the number of instances of singular *they* can be contextualized. Per 100,000 words, the Herald has almost twice the amount of instances of singular *they*. Because the Herald's editing style does not follow traditional journalism standards, the usage of pronouns is not as discouraged in writing as it is in the YDN. This

could account for the higher number of instances because pronouns would not be seen as an issue that should be worked around or edited out.

The YDN and the Herald both have reporting, opinion, and creative writing pieces. The Herald is known for more creative, "voicier" pieces, but the majority of singular *they* instances were found in reporting based articles. The Yale Herald's reporting style articles have a more expressive and casual tone in their writing, while the YDN's tone remains professional. This again emphasizes that the Herald's view on pronouns in general is not an issue to be taken up in editing, and reporting based pieces do not have a guideline for how to use pronouns.

7.3. The Student Publication and The Student Body

Each publication is run by students and produces content for students. As described above, Yale's campus majority identifies as liberal and the administration has a history of making small but progressive changes to accommodate the student body's needs. The relationship between the campus climate and each publication's practices of editing, censorship, and language revealed its place on campus.

Because of the Yale Daily News' status as an independent organization governed by its own board of administrators, students who work for the News do not always have full control over what they can publish. The Yale Daily News is a tax-exempt organization and therefore must remain impartial in its reporting. This resulted in conflict when, during the 2016 presidential elections between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, the news released an official endorsement of Hillary Clinton for president. Tax-exempt organizations are not legally allowed to endorse presidential candidates. Although the staff that year wanted to express their liberal beliefs and align themselves with campus, they could not do so without receiving flack as an organization. Despite technically breaking a law with their endorsement, the News has endorsed candidates in the 2016 and previous elections without encountering legal consequences.

The Opinion section of the YDN is namely the only section of the News that is allowed to be impartial. Nonetheless, the pieces they accept are still bipartisan in nature, and they accept opinions from anywhere on the political spectrum. Trevor self-identified as a conservative, and explained that the News sometimes is perceived as predominantly liberal because of the Opinion pieces they publish; however, he noted that the lack of conservative viewpoints comes only from the lack of submissions, and not from the YDN accepting or rejecting certain opinions. The News does not shy away from publishing views in the Opinion column that may be controversial to liberal students, even if the majority of their Opinion articles seem to be aligned politically left.

Although the YDN's reporting remains impartial, the copy-editors explained that with the new edition of the style guide in the works, progressive changes are being discussed. One example of an already established change was the choice to not hyphenate ethnic terms such as African American or Chinese American. A change currently being discussed by the current board is whether or not the term *Black* should be capitalized, as well as how to report on individuals with *they/them* pronouns as discussed earlier. The copy-editors informed me that they are the ones with the constitutional power to change the style guide; while the change may be a discussion with other editors on the board, the copy-editors are the only position that can make the executive decision. The topics at the forefront for change were progressive in nature and paralleled the changes that Yale University has made. This demonstrates that the copy-editors use their role to enact positive changes and strive to be inclusive with their publishing. Although the YDN remains impartial and accommodates views from any side, it is still perceived as liberal and still aligns itself with the student body.

The Yale Herald is immensely different in how it is perceived on campus and how its staff perceives their work. The Herald is student-run and is allowed to make its own decisions about content. While the Herald also has an Opinion section, pieces in other sections often reflect the writer's own views as well. The Reviews section allows students to post their viewpoints on events, movies, music, etc. and the Culture and Arts section could also allow for that as long as the piece is on topic. Long-form reporting pieces, such as those in the

Features section, must be factually based and accurate, but could certainly be reporting with a certain angle by the writer that may not be impartial.

Sariya made a point to say that the Herald does not claim to be at all impartial and frequently takes a definitive stance on many issues on campus. She said the Herald "really thrives off of conversation around what should be changed at Yale." The Herald had an entire issue dedicated to discussing the push for Yale's divestment from fossil fuels following the climate change protest that took place at the 2019 Harvard-Yale football game. The Herald took a stance in favor of divestment and its reporting reflected that. Sariya compared the Herald to the YDN Opinion section and highlighted the difference in their purpose:

> The YDN Opinion section is notorious for trying to be bipartisan and objective enough that many voices can be articulated, and I think there's a lot of merit to that. But I think the Herald is known to skew more left, and we would never publish a piece that would make people feel uncomfortable.

While the YDN would publish an Opinion article with conservative views that may be considered controversial on campus, the Herald would not. They identify as a liberal publication and do not publish pieces from different viewpoints simply to represent more of the student body.

When it comes to an individual using *they/them* pronouns, the Herald sees reporting on them not as something to be delineated in a rule in their style guide, but simply as an exercise in respect: "We are very conscious of identity politics… that's an active priority. If someone has a certain identity, we're going to respect that." The Herald's liberal alignment feeds off of the student body and activism and uses its presence on campus to advocate for causes.

The difference in how the Yale Daily News and the Yale Herald deal with representation of political viewpoints can be used to examine the results of the corpus analysis. Because the Herald identifies as a liberal publication, it may be more likely to include articles regarding progressive issues like LGBTQ+ rights. If so, sources in this community who could identify with *they/them* pronouns are more likely to be consulted in articles. This is shown in the results of Section 6.3; only two articles in the YDN include a reference to an individual with *they/them* pronouns while the Herald has four.

More importantly, as was illuminated in Section 7.1, is the fact that the YDN encourages writers to limit the number of pronouns they use while the Herald does not. The Yale Daily News' four instances of identity singular *they* refer to three different individuals and the Herald's 21 instances refer to four different individuals. Despite having only one more referent, the Herald has 17 more instances of singular *they*. This can be explained when editing is taken into consideration. In the Fronts section of the Herald, there are 16 instances of identity singular *they* referring to only one individual in one article; this would likely not be found in a YDN article and the source's name would be used as often as possible.

8. Conclusion

The goal of copy-editing as a general practice is meant to ensure professionalism through consistency and clarity. As discussed in Section 3, there is a push in common style guides, such as the Chicago Manual of Style or the Modern Language Association (MLA), to change the rules they have in place. Chicago, MLA, and other style guides all accept the usage of identity singular *they*, but are working towards creating a rule for how to use grammatical singular *they*. MLA noted that if a universal consensus on a singular, gender-neutral pronoun arises, they would change their style guide, but until then cannot create a formal rule. The Yale Daily News treats their style guide in the same way, except their consensus must come from members on the YDN board. The copy-editors could not agree on how to use identity singular *they* because their style guide did not have a rule for it.

However, the YDN's role as a student-run publication may explain why their focus is on identity *they* and not grammatical *they*. The style guides mentioned in Section 3 had the opposite issue, in which a rule did not yet exist for grammatical *they*. Because grammatical *they*'s acceptance in speech is widespread, and the usage of *they/them* pronouns is politicized and is something that a student may encounter for the first time in college, grammatical *they* is taken for granted and not at the forefront of concern when editing.

In the greater context of Yale, the YDN is able to write objective news from its detachment from Yale institutionally. Each board of the YDN creates the tone of the newspaper, but because of its existence on Yale's liberal campus, is often perceived as liberal.

Overall, the Yale Daily News uses its language practices to uphold tenets of professionalism and parallel major news outlets like the Washington Post. Yale's campus culture inevitably influences their writing, because although they report about national and local New Haven news, it always has an inherent connection to Yale's campus and all news is produced by Yale students or members of the Yale community. Their goal is objective reporting over a wide array of topics. However, the YDN does not claim to try and push any agenda onto the student body, even if their publication unintentionally skews towards a certain side of the political spectrum at times.

The Herald does not follow any of the trends in copy-editing; while through editing they strive for coherence and clarity in their stories, pronouns do not factor into that mission. The Herald does not attempt to portray itself as journalistic and professional, and self-brands as "daring." As a student-run publication, they make their own rules and only follow their in-house style guide. Their perceptions on respecting pronouns functions as an ideology of the Herald instead of something that must be delineated in a rule in their style guide.

The Herald does claim to hold a certain political alignment and feeds off of issues on campus to drive their publication. Their ethos is more important as a publication than their professionalism, and instead of trying to parallel a certain media outlet, they are instead trying to curate the Herald as an entity.

This investigation into publishing and editing practices in student publications only scratches the surface as to what implication this data can have. While limitations for this project may not have allowed for more in-depth and focused research, I believe that the glaring differences between established style guides and in-house, student created style guides shows that rules for copy-editing can be flexible while still maintaining the integrity of a publication. The pushback against using singular *they* is prescriptivist and exclusionary; the pronoun *they* is viewed as gender-neutral and can be used to align our spoken language with our written language.

8.1. Further Research

The corpus compiled for each publication was relatively small in comparison to the entire archive that each one has. A larger analysis of each publication could give more insight into how the usage of singular *they* has evolved since each publication's inception. A more thorough, statistics-based investigation into each instance of singular *they*, in terms of their relationship to the antecedent, context, genericity, etc. could allow an in-depth syntactic account of singular *they* in these publications.

Additionally, the Herald's addition of a new section, SciTech, could create more of a comparison between the Yale Daily News and the Herald, because they now both contain a SciTech section.

Further research from this essay would also need more qualitative information and more sources who work at the YDN or the Herald, both currently and formerly. Different editors at the YDN could shed insight into the culture of the board and how they use their role that is hierarchically higher than copy-editors. Because of the Herald's more collaborative work as a board, a group interview with editors, writers, and editors-in-chief would allow them to share thoughts as a team instead of only receiving information form an individual. Qualitative studies into how unaffiliated students perceive each publication on campus would also be another layer to supplement the information in this essay and make more generalized claims about publishing practices.

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