

8-2017

## **Job Satisfaction in the Digital Age: A Qualitative Study of Social Responsibility and Burnout in Local Television News Reporters**

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Job Satisfaction in the Digital Age:  
A Qualitative Study of Social Responsibility and Burnout in Local Television News Reporters

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Journalism

by

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University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, 2013

August 2017  
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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

This is an exploratory study of job satisfaction, burnout, and social responsibility among local television news reporters with three years of experience or less. Through in-depth qualitative interviews, this study applied existing theory while exploring the factors that influence job satisfaction and burnout in local television news reporters. This study explored whether local television journalists feel they are able to meet the normative professional standards outlined in the social responsibility theory as their work demands increase with rise of digital media and one-man band expectations. The job satisfaction levels of the participants in this study varied. Those with higher job satisfaction levels reported having better relationships with management and colleagues. Because the participants in this study have worked in the news industry for three years or less, they have not experienced the prolonged stress that defines burnout. However, all participants showed early signs of burnout, particularly in the exhaustion component.

*Keywords: job satisfaction, burnout, social responsibility, local television news*

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## **Acknowledgments**

I owe a huge amount of gratitude to my thesis committee for their guidance in the process of writing this thesis: Dr. Raymond McCaffrey, Dr. Rob Wells, and Dr. David Christian. This would have been a far more difficult process without your suggestions and counsel. Thank you for everything. I would like to thank the participants in this research for their time and honesty, and for trusting me with stories from their professional lives. I am hopeful that your stories lead to a better understanding of the work you do in local television newsrooms. Thank you to the entire journalism faculty at the University of Arkansas for your encouragement and unwavering support throughout the years. I have learned a great deal from each of you, and your investment in my education has, without question, made it possible for me to succeed. I want to thank my dear friends and colleagues in the University of Arkansas Center for Ethics in Journalism for their constant encouragement as I worked on my master's degree: Dr. Raymond McCaffrey, Bobbie Foster, Jesse J. Holland, and David Handschuh. You all are some of the brightest people I know, and your support has been crucial to my success. Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for being a source of support in every way over the last few years. You mean the world to me.

## **Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Tom and Carol Welter, who have provided endless support of my professional and personal endeavors. I could not have made it through this process without your unwavering encouragement. Thank you. I love you both more than you will ever know.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

A 2014 study of 900 television news workers determined that 19% intended to leave the TV news industry within the next five years, and 33.6% were unsure if they would continue their careers in journalism (Reinardy, 2014, p. 862). Of these participants, those with one to five years of professional experience were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than those with more experience, and 29% of those who planned to leave the business worked in the 51-100 market size. The most common reason for plans to leave were low pay, family issues, and issues with work quality. Those intending to pursue another career had significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than those who planned to stay in television news. Reinardy's (2014) study is one of few recent studies examining how job satisfaction levels among television news workers correlates with experience level and market size, though only 15.5% of participants were reporters. The roles of television news reporters are quite different, however, than those of other positions in the newsroom, so it is important to study job satisfaction by examining the unique challenges faced by this specific group of journalists rather than grouping them in with other newsroom employees. For example, television news reporters are more consistently working as one-man bands/multimedia journalists, performing the duties of reporter, producer, cameraman, and video editor (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 133; Potter, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2012). In fact, 39% of news stations in the United States reported using one-man bands/multimedia journalists in 2012 (Papper, 2012). These reporters have more responsibility to publish content on multiple platforms than ever before (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 133; Potter, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2012;). The difference in newsroom roles is also evident in the pay: in 2015, the median salary for multimedia journalists (or one-man band reporters) was \$32,500 in markets 51-100 and \$29,500



in markets 101-150 (Papper, 2015). By contrast, the median salaries for news anchors was \$75,000 in markets 51-100 and \$60,000 in markets 101-150. Since pay was cited as a determining factor in the decision of television journalists to leave news, it is essential to examine job satisfaction of television news reporters/multimedia journalists by taking a more focused approach on this population of TV news workers. Much of the existing literature addressing job satisfaction in journalism focuses on newspaper employees. Although the work is similar, broadcast journalists face different challenges with pressures to meet the deadlines that contribute to the daily average of five hours and 30 minutes of on-air news (Reinardy, 2014, p. 856). As previously mentioned, there is a limited amount of current research explaining the effects of the increased workload for local television news reporters. Literature is especially limited in addressing these effects in small to mid-size local television news markets, where a majority of broadcast journalists begin their careers.

The ability to uphold traditional journalism values and professional standards have been associated with increased job satisfaction for journalists (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002, p. 663; Pollard, 1995, p. 683). Because quality of work and the desire to fulfill professional journalistic standards are factors that influence job satisfaction, examining the social responsibility theory in relation to job satisfaction will be useful, particularly when evaluating whether or not television news journalists feel they are able to uphold the tenets of the theory. The theory asserts that journalists should have high professional standards of information dissemination, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance - leading to coverage which would avoid the encouragement of violence and harm to minority groups, while also seeking to reflect diversity and give the public access to a wide variety of viewpoints (McQuail, 1987). Despite growing work demands, the staff sizes have remained unaffected, leaving workers to feel overloaded by responsibilities, citing

diminished work quality as a consequence (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 143). Additionally, pressure to compete with news organizations on social media has led reporters to participate in a type of online pack journalism, leading to less original and accurate reporting (Chadha & Wells, 2016, p. 1027; Bruno, 2011). It will be important to examine how the evolving digital landscape has affected television news reporters' perceived abilities to uphold the tenets of the social responsibility theory as they face what Reinardy & Bacon (2014) call a time famine: too much to do in too little time.

The addition of more airtime, multi-screen content, social media requirements and one-man band obligations have changed the routines of television journalists without accounting for the support needed to avoid employee burnout (Reinardy, 2013, p. 36). As a result of these changes, local television news reporters are facing a heavier workload in addition to the existing stressors of the job, including deadlines, difficult sources, audience demands, and exposure to traumatic events (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014; Filak & Reinardy, 2011; Beam & Spratt, 2009). Journalists under these conditions are susceptible to burnout, which is a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job and is associated with decreased job satisfaction and work quality (Filak & Reinardy, 2011; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Burnout differs from job satisfaction, because it does not focus on the relationship with work itself, and being satisfied in a job does not mean a person will experience low indicators of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 416; Reinardy, 2013, p. 25). In other words, burnout is concerned with the connection between the self and the job focused primarily on the effects of stress, while job satisfaction is simply the degree to which a person likes or dislikes their job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Pollard, 1995, p. 682). Because it is associated with job satisfaction and diminished work quality, it is important to reach a deeper understanding

of burnout in the local television news industry, especially as it applies to reporters.

The purpose of this study is to examine job satisfaction of local television news reporters in the small to mid-size news markets. The social responsibility theory will be tested to determine whether or not the ability to uphold its principles is an important factor in the job satisfaction of local television news reporters. Furthermore, the concept of burnout will be examined, determining whether or not local television news reporters are experiencing any of the three components of the phenomenon. If any of the three components are present, this study will examine the specific stressors leading to either exhaustion, cynicism, and/or inefficacy.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Job Satisfaction

When asked about their intentions to remain in the television news industry, less than half (47.4%) of television news workers said they would continue in the profession (Reinardy, 2014, p. 862). Nineteen percent said they planned to leave the industry within the next five years, and 33.6% said they were unsure. Those who planned to abandon the profession had significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than those who planned to stay in television news. Job satisfaction has been found to impact how television news journalists perceive the quality of their work (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 143). Job satisfaction is broadly defined throughout literature, but Pollard (1995) said job satisfaction is essentially the degree to which employees enjoy their work (p. 682). The concept is a “synthesis of the social and work-related attributes, values, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions that determine the meaning of and motivation for work” (Mueller & McCloskey, 1990, as cited in Pollard, 1995, p. 682). Job satisfaction is the extent to which work contributes to need fulfillment or contentment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p.416).

There are several factors which contribute to job satisfaction for journalists, including technological changes, profit emphasis, newsroom management, quality of work, and an emphasis on traditional journalism values (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002, p. 663). In fact, a journalist’s sense of the professional and ethical norms of social responsibility is a defining characteristic of competent performance, and when a journalist is more professional (i.e. he or she can practice autonomy, control, and responsibility in his or her role), he or she is more likely to experience higher job satisfaction than less professional coworkers (Pollard, 1995, p. 683,

690).

The rise of social media and the one-man band reporter has led to higher pressure and work demands, leading television news workers to have concerns about the quality of their work (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014). Social media/online obligations and increased workloads were a few of the reasons why concerns about quality were voiced among the 81% of news workers who reported working differently than they did a few years ago (p. 133). This raises questions about the quality of journalism and the ability of the public to stay informed in an age of an ever-increasing dependency on social media for news (Mitchell & Holcomb, Pew State of the News Media, 2016). Since, as previously mentioned, the ability to produce quality work and uphold the tenets of traditional journalism are key indicators of job satisfaction, it is important to analyze the current trends in digital media using the theoretical framework of the social responsibility theory.

### **Social Responsibility**

The social responsibility theory is based on a set of principles designed by members of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1947 in response to the need for compromise between those who wanted government regulation over media content and those who felt the media should have complete autonomy from the government (Davis, 1990; Baran & Davis, 2015, p. 62, 73). The commission's report called for "a free and responsible press," outlining ethical standards of journalists, later evolving into normative journalism values such as the concept that the media should act to serve the good of the public (Ellis, 2012, p. 126; Baran & Davis, 2015, p. 62). The theory asserts that journalists should have high professional standards of information dissemination, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance - leading to coverage which would avoid the encouragement of violence and harm to minority groups, while also seeking to reflect diversity and give the public access to a wide variety of viewpoints (McQuail,

1987). McQuail (1987) said as part of this construct, the public should be given rights to reply, and the media is accountable to the public. While the theory still guides the ethical practices of most media outlets, Baran & Davis (2014) said it will need to be revised as media progresses, since it only applies to certain forms of media, such as radio and print journalism (p. 61). By looking at current literature, one can analyze whether or not the media is truly taking on the role of the fourth estate of government by “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable” (Baran & Davis, 2015, p. 71).

Literature shows the growing demand for digital news on multiple platforms could be limiting journalists’ ability to uphold the standards outlined in the social responsibility theory, which could be attributed to cost-cutting measures at news outlets and increased workloads caused by technological changes, leading news workers to “face a time famine: too much to do in too little time” (Pickard, 2010; Chadha & Wells, 2016 cited Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 133). Scholars also attribute this to the continued trend of pack journalism and the impact of social media accuracy and autonomy (Breen & Matusitz, 2008; Bruno, 2011; Chadha & Wells, 2016).

**Print journalism.** The rise of the internet gave consumers free access to news and entertainment, decreasing the value of newspaper content (Perez-Latre, 2014, p. 1107). Nearly 16,000 journalism and newspaper jobs were lost in 2008 and nearly 15,000 in 2009, in addition to a 9% decline in the average number of daily newspapers, suggesting a systemic crisis in the industry (Paper Cuts, 2010 & Plambeck, 2010 as cited in Pickard, 2010, p. 406). The 2008 financial crisis paired with the growing consumer use of the internet created “a need for daring solutions [...] in a context with fewer resources to cope with change [...] without sacrificing the principles of the journalistic profession,” but Pickard (2010) said, “the ruthless drive to slash

operating costs translates to fewer beats, less investigative reporting, more syndication, and overall homogenization - all trends that eviscerate quality journalism and local cultural production” (Perez-Latre, 2014, p. 1107; Pickard, 2010, p. 406). The new solutions Perez-Latre focused on are those which require journalists to take on additional roles while continuing to carry out the role of traditional journalist, while Pickard focused on the consequences of job consolidation, creating more responsibilities for the reporter, thus diminishing the journalist’s capacity to achieve the high standards of journalism as outlined in the social responsibility theory.

**Broadcast journalism.** Television journalism faces similar difficulties. Surveyed television journalists said they are now expected to “do more with less” (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 141). With added responsibilities and unaffected staff sizes, more work is demanded with the same amount of people to complete the tasks, leading to less “time devoted to edited story packages” and shorter average story lengths, which are signs that less in-depth journalism is being produced (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 135-136). These assertions are problematic for social responsibility, because it means journalists are not upholding the responsibility to “reflect diversity and give the public access to a wide variety of viewpoints” (McQuail, 1987).

Journalists and scholars agreed that technological changes and increased workloads are resulting in negative changes for journalism standards. Social media and online obligations are requiring additional multimedia skills of journalists both in television news and print journalism, such as online community management and content curation (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 133; Bakker, 2012, p. 627). As a result of the pressure to develop content for multiple platforms, more television news stations are turning to multimedia journalists, or “one-man bands,” to fulfill the duties of reporter, producer, camera operator and video editor. Thirty-nine percent of newsrooms

in the United States using them as of 2012 and 70% using them ‘mostly’ or ‘some’ (Potter, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2012; Papper, 2012). A television journalist participating in the study said they were told it was more important to get their story on the web than to finish the assigned TV story. Another said more responsibilities have led to a change in their job role, such as updating the web, tweeting, updating Facebook, and preparing for more than just the six and 11 o'clock shows (p. 141). Reinardy & Bacon (2014) said an unintended consequence of additional work duties could lead to a diminished quality of journalism (p. 134).

**Print and broadcast journalism.** While the daily job roles look different between print and broadcast journalism, the literature supports the idea that both print and broadcast journalists have faced significant technological changes in their jobs, which has led to an increased workload at the cost of high production value (Perez-Latre, 2014, p. 1107; Pickard, 2010, p. 406; Reinardy & Bacon, 2014, p. 135-136). Scholars have argued that increased workloads have led to higher-pressured working environments caused by changes in technology, which have “had a detrimental effect on news production” (Chadha & Wells, 2016, p. 1021 cited Cottle & Ashton, 1999). In a study examining the effects of production value on perceived media credibility, stories higher in production value were deemed more credible than the same stories presented with lower production value (Cummins & Chambers, 2011, p. 737). The rise of technology is therefore creating a ripple effect: the demand placed on journalists attributed to the technological changes is leading to lower quality journalism, which is affecting the perceived credibility of the media.

In Pew’s 2009 State of the News Media report<sup>1</sup>, 57% of surveyed journalists said the internet is “changing the fundamental values of journalism” rather than “transferring those values online,” with 45% citing a loosening of standards and less careful reporting as the cause. In this

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<sup>1</sup> This is the most recent Pew report discussing this issue with journalists.



study, an editor and content manager for both online and print newsroom operations said it is “pressing journalists to produce without the same degree of reflection and verification.” In the same report, another surveyed journalist said getting the news out first has become the priority, rather than checking accuracy before posting online, which they said is weakening journalism’s credibility. In fact, a 2016 Gallup poll showed trust in the media dropped to an all-time low, with 32% of Americans saying they had a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media (Swift, 2016). Bucy (2003) said credibility can be conceptualized by ideas of “accuracy, bias, fairness, and completeness of information,” which reflect the standards outlined in the social responsibility theory, making the declining credibility of the media a problem not only for journalists but for their consumers (p. 249). It is a problem these consumers are seeking to solve, looking for “substitutes to satisfy their need for information and understanding” (Perez-Latre, 2014, p. 1101).

Although the credibility of journalists is being questioned as what appears to be a result of emerging media, research shows 65% of U.S. adults learned about the 2016 presidential election from digital sources, with 44% using social media to obtain their information (Mitchell & Holcomb, Pew State of the News Media, 2016). While it is not the industry standard to “tweet first and verify later,” there are media outlets pushing for this, violating the social responsibility standard of accuracy (Bruno, 2011). This makes the rising use of social media for news is problematic for journalists and consumers alike. In a rush to get news out first, reporters are neglecting the standards of social responsibility, and in an effort to match the social media content of competitors, journalists begin participating in Twitter coverage, which closely reflects practices of pack journalism (Chadha and Wells, 2016, p. 1027).

Pack journalism has been an issue for decades, but evidence for this practice on the

internet is fairly recent. Pack journalism is defined by Breen & Matusitz (2008) as being characterized by members of large media outlets traveling in groups - or packs - to retrieve the same news content from the same sources, often comparing notes and using the same reporting methods. Pack journalism calls for media members to follow trends of other news outlets, and in the instance of Twitter, “the relentless pressure from editors to not ‘miss anything’ caused reporters to often lean in the direction towards following leading voices or trends, resulting in potential loss of original reporting and homogenization of coverage,” which mimics traditional pack journalism as defined by Breen and Matusitz (Chadha & Wells, 2016, p. 1027; Breen and Matusitz, 2008). This is problematic for social responsibility, as studies have found that disinformation spreads faster and wider than related corrections on both Twitter and Facebook (Mantzaris, 2016).

Breen and Matusitz sought to convince scholars and media professionals that pack journalism does not serve the public’s best interest and therefore stands in direct opposition to the social responsibility theory. Breen & Matusitz (2008) cited information explaining the negative ethical implications of pack journalism: “increased invasion of privacy into celebrities and citizens who become the focus of news events, a reduction of independence in news reporting, the potential hazard of lost credibility in the content of news reported by packs, and economic and fiscal mismanagement. Importantly, not only can such unethical journalism risk the physical safety of those being covered, but it can also disseminate information, that can adversely, and sometimes permanently, affect people's reputations.” These ethical implications of pack journalism are in contrast to the principles of the social responsibility theory, and as Breen & Matusitz (2008) explain, these are some of the reasons journalists practicing pack journalism have failed to meet professional journalism standards.

The scholars illustrate the damages brought on by reporters' abandonment of social responsibility and engagement in pack journalism by referring to coverage of the Michael Jackson sexual molestation case and the Scott Peterson murder trial. In the Michael Jackson case, Breen & Matusitz (2008) assert that the positive portrayal of Jackson versus the negative portrayal of the accusers via the groupthink of pack journalists swayed the opinions of jurors. In Peterson's trial, Breen & Matusitz (2008) say that pack journalists engaged in unethical behavior, including "reporters swarming around Mark Geragos, the tampering and muddling of evidence, the invasive and unnecessarily negative investigation of the retired judge, the journalistic abuse of the poignant, emotional eruptions from the victim's relatives, and the harsh, even inhuman and monstrous, depiction of Scott Peterson," ultimately leading to Peterson's conviction. Breen & Matusitz (2008) argue that these examples prove why it is important to refer back to the social responsibility theory as a guideline for accountability, and that without it, journalists - and especially those engaging in pack journalism - will continue to mislead the public and sensationalize news stories in such a way that may be damaging.

The lessons here could easily be applied to social media, since the need to match the competitor tends to dictate the coverage of events, much like the previous examples of traditional pack journalism. For example, Chadha & Wells (2016) spoke to a reporter about Twitter coverage, who said, "varied coverage of critical issues was often replaced by stories in which reporters were 'basically confirming conventional wisdom about something.'" Referring to the coverage of Russia's actions in the Ukraine, he [the reporter] said that the view that Putin's response arose out of concerns regarding growing Western influence close to Russia's borders was largely discounted in US media. As he put it, "whether or not you agree with this view, no one is really exploring these other points of view" (p. 1028). Because this type of groupthink

does not provide the public with diverse points of view, it does not meet the ethical standards of social responsibility.

If social media and growing technological work demands are changing the way journalists report the news in a manner consistent with the social responsibility theory, it is important to study whether or not these journalists are satisfied with their jobs. Pollard's (1995) study showed that social responsibility was an indicator of job satisfaction, and Reinardy & Bacon (2014) found that job satisfaction was a predictor of work quality, although television journalists are now expected to do more with less time (p. 142, 143). For this reason, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

- RQ 1: What factors influence job satisfaction for local television news reporters?
- RQ 2: Do local television news reporters feel they are able to uphold the professional and ethical journalism standards outlined in the social responsibility theory?
- RQ 3: Are local television news reporters satisfied with their jobs?

### **Burnout**

Reinardy & Bacon's (2014) findings that being overworked and having more social media obligations prompted participants in their study to complain about poor work quality (p. 143). A concept associated with work quality and job satisfaction is job performance, which is affected by burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 406). Burnout "is associated with decreased job satisfaction and a reduced commitment to the job or organization" (p. 406).

Workers experiencing burnout are shown to be less effective at work and demonstrate lower productivity (p. 406). Since the work demands present in Reinardy & Bacon's (2014) research are affecting the ability to produce quality work, and the ability to produce professional, quality

work affect job satisfaction levels of journalists, it is important to go beyond studying job satisfaction and social responsibility by examining whether or not television news reporters are experiencing burnout (p. 143; Pollard, 1995, p. 690.).

Burnout is the prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 397). Burnout is different from job satisfaction, because it does not focus on the relationship with work itself, and being satisfied in a job does not mean a person will experience low indicators of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 416; Reinardy, 2013, p. 25). In other words, a person can still show signs of burnout while simultaneously reporting that they are satisfied with their jobs. The explanation for the three dimensions are explained by researchers as follows:

“The three key dimensions of this response are an overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. The exhaustion component represents the basic individual stress dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources. The cynicism (or depersonalization) component represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout. It refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job. The component of reduced efficacy or accomplishment represents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 399).

For journalists, the causes of stress can be deadline-oriented, the fear of getting scooped, trouble with sources, demands from management, audience demands, and more (Filak & Reinardy, 2011, p. 244). The addition of more airtime, multi-screen content, social media requirements and one-man band obligations have “altered news routines without providing the necessary support to avoid employee burnout” (Reinardy, 2013, p. 36). Another stressor contributing to burnout in journalists is the exposure to traumatic events. Beam and Spratt (2009) said, “Much of the information about stress and trauma effects, although anecdotal, indicates that journalists can

have profound reactions to covering death and injury” (p. 423). In an exploratory study of trauma symptoms among newspaper journalists, researchers found that 70% of respondents felt stressed out after covering a traumatic event (Simpson & Boggs, 1999).

These stressors are consistent with Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter’s (2001) model of the six domains of a person’s work environment associated with burnout: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (p. 414-415). The idea behind this model is that when one of these domains is thought to be a mismatch with the employee’s connection between the self and the job, thus violating a psychological contract, the employee can begin to experience signs of burnout (p. 413-415). Each of these domains is associated with one of the three dimensions of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and/or inefficacy. The domains, in summary, are defined as follows:

- Workload: A mismatch in workload is found as excessive overload, the wrong kind of work, and emotional work, and is generally most related to the exhaustion dimension of burnout.
- Control: A mismatch in control is usually associated with lack of control over resources needed to do work and lack of autonomy. A mismatch can also occur when an individual is given too much responsibility without the capacity to fulfill the responsibility. This is most generally related to the inefficacy dimension of burnout.
- Reward: A mismatch in reward occurs when people receive insufficient financial, social, or intrinsic rewards, and is closely associated with the inefficacy dimension of burnout.
- Community: A mismatch in community occurs when people lose a sense of

positive connection with colleagues.

- Fairness: A mismatch in fairness occurs when the worker perceives a lack of fairness in the workplace, and “exacerbates burnout in at least two ways” by causing exhaustion and cynicism.
- Values: A mismatch with values occurs when people feel their job requires them to act in a way which is unethical or inconsistent with their personal values. It also occurs when personal goals do not align with those of the organization (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415)

Based on the research presented in this literature review, it is evident that journalists are exposed to stressors that could fall into these six domains. In addition to the questions addressing job satisfaction and social responsibility, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

- RQ 4: Are local television journalists experiencing signs of burnout?
- RQ 5: If local television journalists are experiencing signs of burnout, what specific stressors are they reporting?

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methods**

#### **Interview Design**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with six television news reporters from the Tulsa and Fort Smith-Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers news markets. Tulsa is ranked as market number 58, and Fort Smith-Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers is ranked as market number 99 (Nielsen, 2017). Interviews were conducted from April 2017 to June 2017. This method was chosen for the advantages it provides, such as the opportunity to gather details and accurate responses to sensitive issues (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 142). In-depth interviews also allow the interviewer to establish rapport with participants, making it “easier to approach certain topics that might be taboo in other approaches” (p. 142). Although the participants were asked the same basic set of questions, this approach allowed the researcher to follow up with questions based on the respondent’s answers, which is common practice using this method (p. 142). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in settings chosen by participants in an attempt to obtain greater depth and detail (p. 214). The format of the interviews were a hybrid between the structured interview in which standardized questions are asked in a predetermined order, and an unstructured interview, which is comprised of broad questions that allow the researcher to ask further questions to seek required information for the study (p. 213). The purpose of taking an initial structured approach was used to achieve consistency during interviews in an effort to find common trends among participants; while the follow-up questions allowed for greater detail in responses (p. 123, 143, 213). The interviews ranged in duration depending on the length of responses, lasting anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes.



## Recruitment and Data Collection

The participants were recruited through referral by a network of reporters known to the researcher through professional work as a television news reporter. This sampling method is called snowball sampling, and it allows the researcher to contact a few qualified people who then refer the researcher to friends, relatives, or acquaintances (Wimmer & Dominick, p. 96-97). No interviews were conducted with reporters with whom the researcher had a relationship beyond what would be described as an acquaintance in an effort to protect the integrity of the research. Management was not notified of the interviews to protect participants from retribution. Each respondent was asked to provide basic demographic information, such as age, number of years worked in the industry, education level, gender, and ethnicity. Four female reporters and two male reporters participated in the interviews, with an ages ranging from 23 to 27. Participants' experience levels ranged from three months to three years in the journalism industry (see Table 1 for basic demographic information of the participants).

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of Years in Journalism Industry</b>
1	25	3
2	25	3
3	24	.25 (3 months)
4	23	.42 (5 months)
5	23	.5 (6 months)
6	27	3
<b>Average</b>	24.5	1.7
<b>Range</b>	4	2.75 (2 years, 9 months)

Each respondent was asked the same basic set of questions and asked to elaborate based on their responses. Two of the questions asked were adapted from the Quality of Working Life studies,

and were used in Pollard's (1995) study of job satisfaction in news workers (p. 684). These questions were:

- If a good friend told you s/he would be interested in a job like yours, what would you tell them?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?

Other questions written by the researcher inquired about motivations, social media obligations, perceived quality of work, perceived job satisfaction, pay, and workload. The questions included, but were not limited to:

- Why did you decide to become a journalist?
- To what extent do obligations to publish news on social media channels impede what you would regard to be quality journalism?
- To what extent has work interrupted your personal or family time?
- How long do you plan to continue your career in journalism?

A full list of questions is available in Appendix B. The interviewer asked respondents to elaborate on several of the responses, most commonly asking them to explain what it is like to be a one-man band reporter or multimedia journalist. The interviewer concluded all interviews with the question, "Is there anything I did not ask that you would like to add?"

All participants signed an informed consent form, which stated the purpose of the research, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of information. The interviews were recorded using an audio device and transcribed. The audio files and transcriptions are stored on a secure external hard drive. To protect the anonymity of participants, they were referred to by number: Respondent One, Respondent Two, etc. This protocol was approved by the University

of Arkansas Office of Research Compliance International Review Board, IRB Protocol #17-02-463. A copy of this protocol is available in Appendix A.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using the constant comparative technique (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 123). After transcribing each interview, the researcher followed the process which consists of “(1) comparatively assigning incidents to categories, (2) elaborating and refining categories, (3) searching for relationships and themes among categories, and (4) simplifying and integrating data into a coherent theoretical structure” (p. 123).

To categorize responses, the researcher relied on the definitions of job satisfaction, social responsibility, and burnout as presented in literature. The researcher differentiated responses about job satisfaction from burnout by evaluating the content based on definitions. Responses about job satisfaction primarily referred to whether or not the respondent was referring to enjoyment of the job (Pollard, 1995, p. 682). Responses about burnout were categorized as such for the referral to the effects of the job on their relationship to self (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415). Responses about social responsibility were categorized as such if they referred to quality of work in the sense of information dissemination, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance (McQuail, 1987). Primarily, to expand upon existing literature, the researcher looked for how responses reflected the ability to uphold the standards of social responsibility with digital demands, such as social media and one-man band reporting.

### **Limitations**

While the methods chosen to conduct this research have been beneficial in gathering detailed information, there are some limitations. Because in-depth interviews typically use smaller samples, it is difficult to generalize the findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 142).

The smaller samples are generally a result of time required to arrange interviews with participants who are professionals (p. 143). In this study, the researcher attributes the small sample size to the hours worked by media professionals and the inability to control recruitment as a result of snowball sampling. Many of the prospective participants did not return phone calls, but the response rate is impossible to determine, because it is unclear how many attempts were made by the qualified respondents who were providing referrals.

While the sample size is limited, the depth of the interviews and data analysis provides rich information, giving insight into these particular participants' work experiences (Wimmer & Dominick, p. 142). Past research provides no indication of an ideal sample size for in-depth interviews, however, smaller sample sizes were used in Harrington's (2003) study of *All My Children's* portrayal of homosexuality and in Lewis's (2008) study of journalists who had faced consequences for plagiarism accusations (as cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 142). Harrington's used a sample size of 12 and Lewis used a sample size of eight.

A disadvantage of the in-depth interview is also the potential for the interviewer to unintentionally present a bias through the nonverbal communication (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 142). This study had the potential to face this problem, since the researcher's personal experience in the television news industry could be reflected in presentation of questions and nonverbal cues. Additionally, although respondents were no more than acquaintances, all respondents were aware of the researcher's former professional experience in the television news industry, which could lead them to answer questions in a different manner.

The researcher would argue, however, that her experience in the television news industry helped her build rapport with her participants and gave her access to participants through her professional network. Using a nonrandom sample is typical for in-depth interviews and can elicit

responses that might not be available using another method (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 142). Additionally, the researcher's experience enhanced her knowledge of the industry which helped her formulate relevant questions to the research.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

As previously mentioned, television news reporters in small to mid-size markets face different challenges than those of newspaper reporters. Most of the research about job satisfaction and burnout in journalists has been focused on newspaper journalists with many of the studies using a quantitative approach. By using the qualitative method of in-depth interviews, the researcher in this study was seeking to find a greater amount of detail about the unique nature of the television news industry and its impact on job satisfaction and burnout.

Six interviews were conducted in the Tulsa and Northwest Arkansas news market, which provided the researcher the ability to conduct interviews face-to-face. The researcher analyzed the interviews using the Grounded Theory, which involved comparing responses to one another and finding categories and themes (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014, p. 123). The categories and themes that emerged provided answers to five research questions. The findings will be discussed by addressing these questions. The first three questions address job satisfaction and its relationship to the tenets outlined in the social responsibility theory, while the last two address issues of burnout in local television news reporters.

#### **Job Satisfaction**

The research questions addressed in this section are as follows:

- RQ 1: What factors influence job satisfaction for local television news reporters?
- RQ 2: Do local television news reporters feel they are able to uphold the professional and ethical journalism standards outlined in the social responsibility theory?
- RQ 3: Are local television news reporters satisfied with their jobs?

When asked if they were satisfied with their jobs (RQ 3), two respondents said they were very satisfied:

- “I love it. I feel privileged to work at my station.”
- “I’m really satisfied.”

Both participants said they plan to continue pursuing a career in journalism for the rest of their lives. One said, “I definitely see no end in sight, and I don’t want to do anything else. I can’t picture doing anything else... I feel like I’m just a journalist at heart.”

Three participants indicated that they were fairly satisfied:

- “Pretty satisfied. It is a job. It’s cool, and it’s unique, but it’s not all like glitz and glam and you know looking all sharp... there’s no perfect job.”
- “I’m pretty satisfied, but there’s room to be more satisfied.”
- “It’s really tough in the business to look at it [job satisfaction] overall, because you don’t know what each day is going to bring... I would say it’s fairly satisfying... I can’t say it’s satisfying, I can’t say it’s not at all... it depends on the day.”

Of these three participants, one said they would continue working as a television news reporter for five years or less, and the other two said they would reevaluate after their contracts expire. One hopes to leave television news and begin a career in sports journalism, while another could see themselves “getting into other aspects of journalism, like more lifestyle stuff.” The third participant indicating that they were fairly satisfied said, “It’s what I want to stick to at this point in my life,” but their continuation in the profession would depend on a better schedule and less work as a one-man band reporter.

Lastly, one reporter said they were dissatisfied with their current job, but loved the profession as a whole. They said, “My station has had a bunch of issues. It has been kind of a

disaster since I went there, so I am unsatisfied.” Although they are dissatisfied with their current job, this participant said they plan to work in the television news industry forever. They said, “I was asked the other day, ‘What else would you be doing?’ and I have no idea... I just love it. I really do.”

In the case of these six television news reporters, it appears that there is not a universal answer to RQ 3, however, the responses indicate that job satisfaction is dependent on a number of factors. The themes that emerged regarding factors that influence job satisfaction (RQ 1) include:

- management and colleagues,
- quality of work,
- work schedule,
- and the nature of the job.

These themes support the findings of Daniels & Hollifield (2002), which said key indicators of job satisfaction in journalists were technological changes, profit emphasis, newsroom management, quality of work, and an emphasis on traditional journalism values (p. 663). While technological changes and profit emphasis were not mentioned in the interviews, the other three components of Daniels & Hollifield’s (2002) findings were supported.

**Management and colleagues.** Five out six reporters indicated that management and colleagues played a significant role in job satisfaction. Two reporters indicated that they were highly satisfied with their jobs, and attributed their satisfaction, in part, to support from management. One of these reporters said they feel supported by management, and their colleagues encourage them to excel, which is the reason this reporter is satisfied with their job. They said:



“I have the freedom and feel comfortable going to my boss with a [story] idea that’s not even necessarily hard news but something that I just think is a good story, and I just feel comfortable pitching that to my boss... I love it. I feel privileged to work at my station. I honestly believe it’s one of the best stations in the country... and if it were up to me, I would be at this station for several years. I don’t consider it to be a stepping stone, even though it’s a mid-size market, I don’t want to go to a top 25 in a couple years even if I have the opportunity to, because I believe I am with an incredibly talented group of journalists. When I walk into the newsroom, I could look four different ways, and know that the whole newsroom is full of Emmy-award-winning journalists – people who are serious about journalism. There’s decades of experience in my newsroom. I know I can turn to people for advice – as someone who has only been in the business for less than three years. I think that’s the biggest key: I have a room full of passionate, experienced journalists.”

Another participant who had only worked in the news industry for less than six months said a key factor for their job satisfaction was that their managers were supportive and provided constructive feedback:

“I am employed there, but not micro-managed... I love that they have met me where I’m at, and they are trying to push me past that... And that’s really amazing to have a team like that – that will sit with you after every newscast and go over your story and your voicing and your writing.”

Three reporters indicated that they were fairly satisfied with their jobs, and better relationships with management and colleagues was one factor they said they would change about their job.

When asked what would make their current job ideal, one participant said:

“Working with more humble people. I would say, generally, that’s a problem in newsrooms everywhere... People can get pretty big heads, because they are on TV, and people tell them every day how cool that is and how special they are... and if people realize that we’re all still people at the end of the day, and each person is an individual and not just an extension of their job... if we weren’t just seen as content providers but seen as actual people... I think that would make it a lot more enjoyable.”

Another participant summed up these thoughts by saying:

“I think the people you work with is the biggest thing. If you could work with the perfect group of people – the perfect set of producers, managers, directors, and photographers, then that would be cool. Honestly, any frustrations I have stem from that. It’s not the job itself, I can’t get upset with that, because sometimes it’s the people that you’re dealing with.”

Finally, a reporter who indicated that they were unsatisfied with their job said that high turnover rates within management roles and constant change in the newsroom led to morale issues:

“They could never get things together, and they had a hiring freeze for the longest time. There was just no way we could get better, because no one was on the same page, and it was just really awful. It was really frustrating, and I feel like it really got in the way of me being able to excel as much as I wanted to, as much as I expected to.”

**Quality of work.** The ability to produce quality work was a motivating factor in job satisfaction for all participants in this study, and four of the six interviewees said quality was limited by time constraints and heavy workloads as a result of having to work as one-man band reporters. Five of the six reporters were expected to work as a one-man band reporter or multimedia journalist at least occasionally. One reporter was expected to do this 100% of the time, and another reporter estimated that they work in this capacity 95% of the time. Another reporter said they work in this capacity, on average, about three days a week (60%), while another works as a multimedia journalist about 50% of the time. Finally, one participant said they work in this capacity only about once every two weeks, or 10% of the time. These work expectations are explained in Table 2.

<b>Table 2</b>	
<i>Estimated Percentage of Time Worked as a One-Man Band Reporter (or MMJ) Per Week</i>	
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Estimated % of Time Working as One-Man Band Reporter</b>
1	60
2	0
3	50
4	100
5	95
6	10
<b>Average</b>	<b>52.5%</b>

This supports Reinardy & Bacon's (2014) findings that television journalists are now less satisfied with their jobs because of the increased usage of one-man band reporters, which they found led to concerns about diminished quality of work (p. 133) One participant said they would enjoy their job more if they had a cameraman with them, because it would increase the quality of the work:

“I know the industry is moving toward more MMJs [which are multimedia journalists or one-man band reporters], but I think for me, I would prefer to have a cameraman every day... it would make it a lot easier to focus on the reporting part of it, because when you don't you're spread so thin. You're thinking about, 'Oh I have to get all these shots,' and 'I have to save time to edit,' and I've noticed when I have a camera man, he or she can be editing, and I can be writing another script while he or she is editing, but when you're alone you can't do that. It's more efficient to have a cameraman, for the quality, and it's safer.”

Another participant said for them to continue to feel satisfied in their job, it is important for them to produce quality work:

“To be satisfied with my job overall, I have to have a story probably every three to four weeks to kind of inspire myself, to be like, 'I'm really proud of this story. I know I did my best, and I liked the way it turned out, and I want to show this to my parents.' I need a story like that every couple weeks to kind of say, 'It's all worth it in the end,' because it is, but sometimes you need to be reminded of that.”

This same participant reported being highly satisfied with their job, because they were able to achieve this goal of work quality. It is important to note that this is the participant who reported that they never have to work as a one-man band reporter at their current station. Another participant, who indicated that they were fairly satisfied with their job said it is rewarding to see their work come into fruition – especially after working as a one-man band reporter – but admitted that time constraints diminished the quality of their work:

“The whole deadline thing is always looming above your head... you're always kind of compromising [in terms of quality]. The only area you can't really afford to be compromising in is in timeliness, because the news is happening now, you have to be reporting it now. But you know, if I could get out there and get all artistic and shoot my package like I'm shooting a feature film or something, I'd love to be able to do that... so

let's say you get all your shooting knocked out really fast, well okay, that's good, maybe it frees up a little time for writing. And you know, an interview that can't talk to you until later in the day, it kind of cuts down on time for editing, so it always feels like you're having to compromise a little bit, unfortunately, just kind of on day to day things. 'Make slot, not art,' I've heard before, and that's kind of the way it feels sometimes."

Each of these responses mentions a passion for producing quality work as an indicator of job satisfaction, while the responses suggest that the demands of working as a one-man band reporter makes reaching this high quality more difficult. As previously mentioned, the participant who said they are able to produce quality work and felt satisfied in their job was never required to work as a one-man band reporter, while others who reported being fairly satisfied with their jobs were working as one-man band reporters.

***Social responsibility, quality, and social media.*** Reinardy & Bacon's (2014) research showed that increased social media obligations were adding to the workloads of broadcast journalists, leading to a diminished quality of work. While all participants in this study were required to post stories on social media as part of their job, none felt it affected the quality of work directly. All participants, however, felt that social media obligations added to the overall workload, but each said the quality of the story took precedence. All participants expressed the importance of "exposing the truth" and reporting accurately as the first priorities over posting on social media. One respondent said:

"There have been times when I didn't do it [post on social media], because my live shot takes precedence. Forget about social media. But they [management] do want you to post on social media. I kind of take the route of – my TV things is most important. I try to do social media, but yeah, it does slow you down. It takes time to make sure it's right before you post it... I would rather not break the story and have it right than be the first one to break it and have something wrong."

Another participant said social media allows them to get the information to the public faster, but they focus on accuracy first:

“I am so careful about every sentence, every punctuation mark I put on social media, because I don’t want anything I say to be wrong. I’m almost paranoid about it. I’d rather be accurate than first, but it would be wonderful to be first and accurate.”

A third participant said social media obligations do not detract from the quality of the story, but rather, it helps them beat the competition:

“Digital is everything now, and that’s the way you get your stories out first, so I don’t think it impairs the quality. It’s mandatory now. You can’t not do it. You can’t win without tweeting something first, right away... or you do a Facebook live and you talk about what you’re working on, and that kind of gets it out there first. But I don’t think it does anything to the quality.”

As discussed in literature, the drive to beat the competition on social media can lead to a lack of social responsibility through a type of online pack journalism, which can detract from original reporting and can lead to factual errors in reporting (Chadha & Wells, 2016, p. 1027). While the participants in this study did not report an effect on quality, two of the six reporters said social media helps them “keep tabs” on what other stations are doing. One participant said, “It helps knowing what you might have missed. If another station has something, it’s like, ‘Oh, we don’t have that. They have that, and we need to get on that.’” The other respondent also said social media helps them know if another station is covering the same thing or if they missed something but said, “I never get story ideas from other stations. It’s more about keeping tabs on what everyone else is doing.”

In summary, the participants reported that social media has not had an effect on the quality of their work, and that the tenets of social responsibility are an important part of job satisfaction. These findings support Pollard’s (1995) research that said a journalist is more likely to be satisfied in their job when they are able to uphold these standards (p. 683, 690).

Additionally, participants who worked as one-man band reporters felt they could produce higher quality work if they had a cameraman on a regular basis.

**Work schedule.** The work schedules of each participant varied, but only one participant worked a shift close to normal business hours. Two participants worked the dayside/weekend shift, which includes shifts on three weekdays and both weekend days from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on the weekdays, and 1:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on the weekends. One participant worked the nightside/weekend shift, which includes shifts on three weekdays and both weekend days from 1:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. for all shifts. Two participants were morning/weekend reporters, which includes shifts on three weekdays and both weekend days from 3:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for all shifts. One participant worked the weekday dayside shift, which includes shifts Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The shifts can be seen in Table 3.

<b>Table 3</b>			
<i>Shifts Worked by Participants and Explanation of Shift Schedules</i>			
<b>Shift Title</b>	<b>Number of Participants Working Shift</b>	<b>Weekend Shift Hours</b>	<b>Weekday Shift Hours</b>
Dayside/Weekend	2	1:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m., Saturday/Sunday	9:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m., Three weekdays
Nightside/Weekend	1	1:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m., Saturday/Sunday	1:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m., Three weekdays
Morning/Weekend	2	3:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Saturday/Sunday	3:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Three weekdays
Dayside	1	None	9:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m, Monday-Friday

Though they acknowledged that it would be unrealistic to expect normal business hours in their profession, when participants were asked what would make their current job ideal, five out of six said a better work schedule. The only participant who did not take issue with their schedule worked the dayside shift. One respondent who works the nightside/weekend shift said:

“If you work dayside, you’re free for dinner, but everyone else, it seems like everyone else in other professions are free for dinner, so if you’re not on that shift [dayside], you might miss out on a lot of things... Holidays, especially if you’re in a market far away from your family, even if you get a day off for a holiday, that’s not enough time to go home and come back before you have to be at work again. So it’s just kind of hard because you do miss out on that kind of stuff.”

Another participant said they would have a better work/life balance if they had “different days off or different hours.” Another participant who works the morning/weekend schedule discussed the difficulties they face with their work schedule:

“The schedule definitely interferes with stuff. My only days off right now are Wednesday and Thursday, which is smack-dab in the middle of the week. Because I work 3:00 a.m. to noon, when my friends will be going out on a Friday, having a drink or whatever, I’m like, ‘it’s 9:00, time to go home and go to bed and get four more hours of sleep before I have to get up in the morning.’”

Another participant who works the dayside/weekend shift said that work has interrupted personal or family time a “significant amount,” specifically because their schedule differs from those of friends and family. They said, “When you work Saturday and Sunday, seeing family isn’t really in the cards unless you take vacation or switch [shifts] with someone.” Finally, a participant who works the nightside/weekend shift said working weekends has “impacted [their] personal life a lot.” They said:

“I had to work weekends in my last market, too... and you know, I can’t go home on the weekends to see my family. I could go on my days off, but they’re working. So it does impact that quite a bit.”

In summary, five out of six reporters said they would enjoy their jobs more if they had a better schedule.

**Nature of the business.** The researcher chose to categorize this theme as “nature of the business” because it includes the basic motivations for this specific group of local television journalists to continue their work in television news. All six participants said it is important to be “passionate” about the work to maintain some level of job satisfaction. Five of the six

participants said they enjoyed the work they do because it's something different every day, and they liked meeting new people through their work. One participant said:

“Do I enjoy what I do more than just sitting in a cubicle crunching numbers all day? God, yes. I like going out in the field and interacting with people. That part of the job is really satisfying... There's time when you have little touching stories and meet sweet, kind, loving people that you probably wouldn't have otherwise... There's really rewarding aspects of it and really awesome stories you get to tell and people you get to meet, and you get to experience the joy of that stuff firsthand.”

This participant said these types of experiences offset the days where it seems like the less satisfying parts of the job are weighing down on them. Another participant said, “I think one of the coolest things is getting to meet people all the time, getting to do something different every day – different stories that impact people.” Another participant said:

“I think it's fun, because I don't like doing the same things every day. No day is the same. I like meeting new people and getting to tell stories about different people from all walks of life and being able to inform the public about what's happening in the community.”

## **Burnout**

As previously mentioned, burnout is different from job satisfaction, because burnout focuses on the connection between the self and the job, while job satisfaction is based on how much or how little employees feel they enjoy their work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415; Pollard, 1995, p. 682). When analyzing responses, the researcher looked for themes that matched the three components of burnout as defined by Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001): exhaustion, inefficacy and cynicism. As previously discussed, experiencing one of these components of burnout is a result of a mismatch in one of six domains: workload, fairness, control, reward, community, or values (p. 413-415). This section will discuss the themes found in responses related to the research questions addressing burnout:

- RQ 4: Are local television journalists experiencing signs of burnout



- RQ 5: If local television journalists are experiencing signs of burnout, what specific stressors are they reporting?

The present research shows that all six of the participants in this study experienced some signs of burnout, with the highest emphasis placed on signs of exhaustion from the workload. All six participants reported signs of exhaustion, and the following themes and the correlating domain mismatches were found in their responses:

- excessive work (workload mismatch),
- exposure to trauma (workload mismatch),
- and lack of fairness (fairness mismatch).

All six participants experienced signs of the inefficacy component of burnout. The following themes and the correlating domain mismatches found in these responses were:

- trouble finding sources and/or stories (control mismatch),
- not enough time to produce quality work (control mismatch),
- low pay (reward mismatch),
- and insufficient intrinsic or social rewards (reward mismatch).

Three of the six participants experienced signs of the cynicism component of burnout. The following themes and the correlating domains found in these responses were:

- issues with comments about physical appearance (values mismatch),
- management's lack of vision for the future (values mismatch),
- lifestyle change when relocating (values mismatch),
- and a loss of positive connection with coworkers (community mismatch),

In the responses about burnout, the average amount of time spent talking about workload mismatches were 55%, fairness mismatches were talked about at an average of 1.5% of the time,

control mismatches were talked about at an average of 11.6% of the time, reward mismatches were talked about at an average of 25.5% of the time, community mismatches were talked about at an average of 1.2% of the time, and values mismatches were talked about at an average of 4.5% of the time. To calculate these averages, the total number of responses categorized as burnout were first counted for each person. Each response was categorized based on how it compared to the six mismatch domains of burnout (See Table 4).

<b>Table 4</b>						
<i>Responses Indicating Mismatch Per Domain of Burnout</i>						
	<b>Mismatch Domain</b>					
	<i>The numbers in parentheses indicate responses categorized as domain mismatch/total number of responses categorized as burnout.</i>					
	<b>Workload</b>	<b>Fairness</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Reward</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Values</b>
Respondent 1	64% (7/11)	9% (1/11)	9% (1/11)	9% (1/11)	0	9% (1/11)
Respondent 2	67% (4/6)	0	0	33% (2/6)	0	0
Respondent 3	57% (8/14)	0	21% (3/14)	21% (3/14)	0	0
Respondent 4	50% (7/14)	0	29% (4/14)	7% (1/14)	7% (1/4)	7% (1/14)
Respondent 5	50% (2/4)	0	0	50% (2/4)	0	0
Respondent 6	44% (4/9)	0	11% (1/9)	33% (3/9)	0	11% (1/9)
<b>Average:</b>	55.3%	1.5%	11.6%	25.5%	1.2%	4.5%

This means the most amount of time, on average, was spent talking about the exhaustion component of burnout. The inefficacy component of burnout was talked about the second most amount of time, on average, and the cynicism component was talked about the least amount of time, on average.

**Exhaustion.** All six participants talked about having an excessive workload in their responses. All participants were asked how much time they spend researching stories off the clock per week. The average answer was about five and a half hours per week, ranging from 2 and a half hours per week to 12 hours per week. One participant said:

“I do an extra hour at night when I get off. I go through all our emails throughout the day, because you don’t really get time to check those... I would say five to seven. Looking for stories can definitely impede on personal time, because you’re thinking, ‘I want to do

something after work, but I really need to find something for tomorrow, so I can't."

Another participant said, "[My work/life balance] isn't very good. I work a lot. When I'm off work, I'm still working, but I'm trying to find balance, because I'm realizing that you cannot do this job if you never stop doing this job." A third participant said, "I do feel like I'm working all the time." Additionally, one participant said it is not uncommon for them to work 13 to 14-hour days.

In addition to the amount of time spent working off the clock, the workload while on-the-clock was reported as "overwhelming" by five out of six participants. One participant who works as a one-man band reporter said the tasks can lead to exhaustion:

"It can be overwhelming, the amount of stuff you have to get done... Literally, it can be physically exhausting carrying the camera across long distances with the camera, tripod, and a live backpack... Your mind is just split in so many different ways. Like, how are you going to do the story, interviewing the people, shooting, logging sound, writing, editing."

As discussed in the job satisfaction section, five of six participants in this study said they wanted better work hours, and all participants said it can be stressful to constantly think about the checklist of items they have to complete as reporters. Because these respondents indicated feelings of stress as a result of excessive work overload, these responses were categorized as a workload mismatch.

The exposure to trauma has also led to feelings of exhaustion for two out of six participants. One participant said:

"You have to see a lot of terrible things. It's sad enough watching it on the news, but when you're actually there, and you meet the people that just lost their loved ones, you see the body on the ground. That kind of stuff on the regular is pretty dark and it has to affect you to some degree."

The other participant reporting feelings of exhaustion as a result of exposure to trauma said:

"It's kind of grim sometimes... I don't know if I want to put myself in those types of

situations for a really long period of time... I don't know if I'm the one that wants to be covering kids drowning or the dad sexually abusing his kids. It's tough... You're very unnaturally in touch with very tough stories in a frequency that's really unnatural... that would be the thing that would stop me – not necessarily the stress level or the workload, but really kind of the content that's covered. I don't know if I want to deal with the psychological, emotional burden of it forever... It's the stuff that whenever you close your eyes at night you think about, whether you want to or not.”

These findings support Beam & Spratt's (2009) research that reporters covering traumatic events, such as death and injury, can experience reactions congruent with stress. When looking at the workload mismatch domain of burnout, one of the defining characteristics is emotional work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415). This is why the researcher chose to include these responses in the exhaustion category of burnout.

One reporter indicated the need to be available to the station at all times, because they are the least tenured reporter. They said newer reporters tend to get called in more:

“If you haven't been at the station long, you feel like maybe you have to pay your dues a little bit and go in and work. I feel like the managers maybe try to call the less experienced people to come in before they call the veterans. A lot of times I just feel like I need to go in if I'm called in.”

This response was categorized as a fairness mismatch, which is most commonly associated with the exhaustion component of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415). A lack of fairness in the workplace can also lead to cynicism (p. 413-415).

**Inefficacy.** All six participants indicated signs of experiencing the inefficacy component of burnout. All six respondents said they would like to be paid more. One participant who is working in their first job said:

“It is a really hard job for how much you get paid, which is not that much at a market 100 TV station. It's not a lot, especially for what is required of you, the stress level, the looming deadline, the pressure, the scrutiny... you know, it's a hard job. There are jobs that pay just as much that are way, way, easier, I think. You're running nonstop from the time you get in to the time you get out. You're always driving, sometimes getting out and getting hot and sweaty and having to fact check... it's hard for not that much money. More pay would definitely help. It would make it feel more worthwhile.”

One participant working in the Tulsa market said they are making enough to cover their expenses now, but had to rely on their family for financial support in their first job (which was in a smaller market). They said, “I had to have some help – I had to have my parents help me out financially because I was making so little that I actually couldn’t pay my bills, and food and everything.”

Another participant said they make enough money to cover their expenses, but they would like to make enough money for savings. Another respondent said it can be frustrating to “have friends making 15 to 20 thousand more to do much less work.” Another participant said their pay is not sufficient to cover their expenses but said, “I’m very proud of my pay for someone straight out of school. Would I like to be paid the same in three or four years? I would like more money.”

These responses were categorized in the inefficacy component of burnout, because they supported the mismatch in the domain of reward (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415). This mismatch occurs when people receive insufficient financial, social or intrinsic rewards. Two of six respondents indicated a lack of intrinsic rewards, and one of six indicated a lack of social rewards. One participant said it is rewarding to tell good stories, but feels those stories go unnoticed as a result of physical appearance:

“It bothers me that I can work eight hours on a story and at the end of the day someone comments on my looks. It bothers me that I throw my heart into this, keep myself up at night from the stories – you know just making sure everything turned out okay and that it was correct and it was the story that needed to be told – and then for someone to say, ‘Oh you’re so pretty,’ and that’s the only thing they remember about me is so annoying... I thought the other day, ‘I’ll be successful in this business when I get more comments on my stories than my looks.’ I don’t know if that’s achievable, but that’s what I hope.”

Another participant said high turnover rates at their station required them to fill in for several shifts, but they did not experience intrinsic or social rewards for the extra work:

“I felt like I wasn’t getting any opportunities out of it, and I’m never one to not step up to the plate when my team needs me, but I felt like I wasn’t being supported, so that’s what makes it harder... Working in news these days isn’t easy. Everyone is overworked,

undervalued, and underpaid. There's not a lot of money in this industry, and you're working holidays all the time, and you have a lot of overtime."

The domain of control mismatch was indicated by four of six respondents. Four of these respondents said there is no time to produce all the tasks required of them. One participant said:

"You may have web producers breathing down your neck a little bit [about posting on social media]: 'Yeah, you need to be more active on Facebook, blah blah blah,' when at the same time, you're having to deal with a lot. You're busy shooting, editing video, having to interview people, and it's one extra thing... The more stuff you have to do, the harder it is to work around that deadline, and social media is one of those things. That's one thing I'm kind of having to force myself to do: posting on social media, being more interactive on Facebook, taking pictures and stuff."

Another participant said working as a one-man band reporter limits their ability to do everything required to produce quality work:

"Sometimes I wish I had a little longer to edit that package, but a lot of times I don't have time to mess around, because I'm by myself, and I have to move on to the next story that's due for the next show."

These responses support Reinardy & Bacon's (2014) findings that television news reporters are facing a "time famine: too much to do in too little time" (p. 133). It also supports Reinardy's (2013) findings that the addition of more airtime, multi-screen content, social media requirements and one-man band obligations have changed the routines of journalists without providing necessary support to avoid burnout (p. 36).

Two out of six respondents said they had trouble finding stories or getting people to talk to them on the record. One participant said, "You have to set up the interviews, and so much is out of your control, because some people will say, 'I'm only available at three o' clock,' or 'I'm only available at five o' clock,' so it's just really hard to juggle all of that." The other participant said:

"Our job, so much, we rely on other people. People have to talk to us every day, and you can have those days where it's just tough to get people to talk. It's just miserable, because people are putting up a fight or just not really wanting to talk... and you have to beg them

every single day to go on camera. It's just like, man, I hate relying on other people. You can't be totally self-sufficient, in that way, every single day. It can just be really tiring to think, 'Man, no one is talking to me today, but I have to get someone.'

These responses support the claim that trouble with sources can be a cause of stress for journalists (Filak & Reinardy, 2011, p. 244).

**Cynicism.** Three out of six participants showed signs of the cynicism component of burnout, although factors contributing to this component were talked about far less than those of inefficacy or exhaustion. Three participants talked about issues leading to a values mismatch, but they were different categories for each participant. The values mismatch was categorized by whether or not participants had to sacrifice personal values or goals on behalf of their job, or if their values or goals did not match up to those of their organization (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415). One participant said having to move for their job was a huge sacrifice because it required a lifestyle change, one said they had to develop thick skin because there was pressure to maintain a certain physical appearance, and another said they wanted their personal career goals to be more aligned with those of the station. On the topic of lifestyle change, the participant said:

“Smaller markets are the hardest ones, because you're not used to it. You're sacrificing so much by being in that town where you don't know anyone, and you're not used to that lifestyle... and your job is hard on top of that, and it's just a lot.”

On the topic of physical appearance, the participant said:

“There are no ugly people on TV, so I think that can definitely affect a lot of people in the business, because you have to stay that way. I know they bring people in who tell you what looks good, what doesn't, what you need to change, things like that. It's another thing you have to have thick skin for. Your looks absolutely matter.”

On the topic of career goals and management, the participant said:

“[In my next job] I'm looking for a place where managers have been there for awhile and are from there -a more family-like atmosphere with a better idea of what they're doing and a strong vision of what they want in a newsroom.”

The community mismatch was indicated by one participant. Community mismatch occurs when there is a loss of positive connection with colleagues (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 413-415). The same participant who said they had to develop thick skin about appearance also said managers have been harsh about pitched story ideas and the finished product:

“You have to have very thick skin on many, many levels, because people will rip you pretty good about things... news directors, assignment editors, producers... they’ll rip your story if they don’t like it, if you messed up or something... So they’ll rip you if you’re not coming up with good story ideas, if things aren’t looking good on the air.”

This statement was categorized as a community mismatch, because the respondent indicated that negative treatment from colleagues based on performance led to feelings of stress.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

The main purpose of this study was to obtain in-depth information about how growing work demands of local television news journalists were affecting their attitudes toward their jobs. This study specifically focused on reporters who had been working in the journalism industry for three years or less in television news markets with size rankings of 58 and 99 (Nielsen). This allowed the researcher to explore factors affecting job satisfaction and symptoms of burnout in reporters who were at the beginning of their careers. This particular population was important to study since previous research showed that television news workers with five years of experience or less were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than those with more experience, and 29% of those who planned to leave the business worked in markets with size rankings of 51-100 (Reinardy, 2014). Much of the existing research on job satisfaction in journalism focuses on either newspaper journalists or a mixed sample of television news workers in different roles. With the rise of the one-man band/multimedia journalist, it was necessary to acknowledge the difference in factors influencing job satisfaction based on the specific conditions of local television news reporters.

#### **Job Satisfaction**

When answering the question of whether or not local television news reporters are satisfied with their jobs, the answer was dependent on the participant and the factors affecting that person. Two said they were satisfied, three said they were fairly satisfied, and one said they were dissatisfied. Those who said they were fairly satisfied said they were unsure if they would continue their careers in television news, while those who reported they were highly satisfied and not satisfied said they wanted to continue working as television journalists for the remainder of

their professional careers. Each of the responses for those who were unsure said it depends on a number of factors. By asking these questions in an interview rather than by using a survey, the responses provided more information about what factors would improve jobs and ultimately lead television news reporters to plan for continued careers in the industry.

Four themes emerged as factors influencing job satisfaction: management and colleagues, quality of work, work schedule, and nature of the job. The category “nature of the job” was used to describe basic motivations for pursuing a career as a television news journalist.

It is clear through the interviews that management and colleagues made a significant impact on job satisfaction levels. Support from management and peers positively affected job satisfaction, while unpleasant experiences with coworkers and management had a negative effect on job satisfaction levels. The two reporters who said they were satisfied in their current position worked at the same news station, and both said they loved it because they felt supported by management and their peers. High turnover in management and lack of organization/support in management was reported as negatively affecting job satisfaction. The implication here is that newsroom managers at local television news stations should seek to create a work environment where employees feel supported. This would help improve morale and prevent employee turnover, despite career aspirations to move up in markets.

Five out of six participants said they would like a better work schedule, although they acknowledged this would be unrealistic in the journalism profession. The only participant who did not mention they would like a better work schedule worked relatively normal hours, from 9:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. This is an unavoidable part of the job for most television news reporters, so if this affects satisfaction negatively, it would be of interest to

explore how television news reporters with more years of experience have learned to cope with the irregular work schedule.

Quality of work was a factor affecting job satisfaction for all participants, and four out of six said quality was negatively affected by heavy workloads involving one-man band obligations. The social responsibility theory was useful in the analysis of responses, as participants associated quality with accuracy and the exposure of truth. All participants said they valued accuracy over beating competition by posting first on social media. Although they did not perceive social media as a threat to quality, there could be indirect consequences of obligations to post on social media while working as a one-man band since it adds to the overall workload. This workload can lead to a compromise of quality in an effort to meet deadline. All of the responses are of great importance to a television news industry that is increasingly relying on the one-man band. If the one-man band were eliminated, the final product could be of greater quality, and reporters would have more time to get accurate information to their audiences on social media. Greater quality and the ability to share accurate information with social media audiences would uphold the tenets of the social responsibility theory, and reporters would have higher job satisfaction levels.

Participants said the general nature of the job had a positive impact on their job satisfaction levels. They said being passionate about storytelling and meeting new people is what helps offset the negative aspects of the job. Additionally, they said they enjoyed that the job allowed them to do something different each day. This is important in exploring the motivations driving local television news reporters to continue their work, even if they are reporting other factors leading to low job satisfaction levels.

## **Burnout**

When addressing questions about burnout, it was critical to rely on the definition developed by Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001). More specifically, the definition provided a way to categorize the responses by way of the mismatch domains contributing to the three components of exhaustion, inefficacy, and cynicism. It was also helpful in differentiating responses about burnout from those about job satisfaction. Burnout responses were categorized for how they reflected effects of work on the person's sense of self as a result of stressors, whereas job satisfaction responses were categorized for their indication of either liking or disliking the job. It was especially helpful to analyze the responses as they compared to the mismatch domains of workload, fairness, control, reward, values, and community. When work causes the person to feel a mismatch in one of these domains, signs of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, inefficacy) are said to occur (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

The definition seems to emphasize a prolonged exposure to domains of mismatch connected with the three components of burnout. Because this study is focused on television news reporters with three years of experience or less, it would be a stretch to say they were experiencing the burnout phenomenon. However, it is notable that all six participants experienced symptoms indicating at least one of the components of burnout. While these participants may not be fully experiencing the phenomenon, they could easily be on the path to burning out based on the information shared in this study.

This leads to an important question for consideration in local television newsrooms: If local television news reporters are showing signs of burnout within the first three years of their careers, how can newsroom managers provide support to prevent them from completely burning out?

Excessive workloads, lack of reward, and exposure to trauma were the most discussed topics attributed with domains of mismatch leading to symptoms of burnout. The changing economic state of media outlets has been associated with more work required of television news reporters in less time, which means it is unlikely that television news reporters will see a change in workload and/or compensation. This presents problems for newsroom managers who desire to keep their employees engaged and prevent them from burning out. This research found that participants in this study appreciated support from management. Perhaps, then, it would be useful if newsroom managers placed a stronger emphasis on developing a positive work culture where employees feel supported to offset the negative feelings associated with excessive workloads, lack of reward, and exposure to trauma.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The findings in the present study cannot be generalized and are not a representation of all television journalists' job satisfaction levels at the beginning of their careers. The research presented here can, however, provide a foundation for future research on job satisfaction in local television news journalists. The information is also useful in providing a picture of what it is like to work as a reporter in small to mid-size television news markets.

The social responsibility theory was useful in addressing questions about the quality of work and motives of reporters as they apply to job satisfaction, however, future studies should focus on other theories more closely related to the concepts of job satisfaction and burnout.

The interview responses in this study provided a depth of information that could not have been found in a quantitative survey, and the responses provided a detailed explanation for participants' feelings about their work. Future research is needed to expand the number of responses, which would help generalize the findings. While the researcher believes the interview

method provided invaluable information, future research could improve upon this method by supplementing it with a survey.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approved Protocol



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Christi Welter  
Ray McCaffrey

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 17-02-463

Protocol Title: *Television News Reporters and Job Satisfaction*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 03/09/2017 Expiration Date: 03/08/2018

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 20 participants.** If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

- How many years have you worked in the journalism industry?
- What is your highest level of education?
- Why did you decide to become a journalist?
- How often, on average, do you work as a one-man band reporter/multimedia journalist?
- On average, how many stories are you expected to produce daily?
- How do you feel your workload affects your ability to produce what you would regard to be quality journalism?
- On average, how many hours do you spend researching stories off the clock per week?
- Are you paid overtime or given comp time?
- Do you ever have a regularly scheduled day free from all work?
- To what extent do obligations to publish news on social media channels impede what you would regard to be quality journalism?
- Approximately what percentage of your time is used to feed your organization's social media channels?
- How does social media guide your coverage of stories?
- How much freedom do you usually have in selecting the stories you work on?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?
- If a good friend told you he or she would be interested in a job like yours, what would you tell them?
- Is your pay sufficient to cover expenses?
- To what extent has work interrupted your personal or family time?
- Overall, how would you rate your work/life balance?
- How long do you plan to continue your career in journalism?