MOVING UP OR MOVING OUT:

NEW JOB DEMANDS, ABILITY TO COPE AND BURNOUT AMONG

TELEVISION NEWS PRODUCERS AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

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Master of Arts

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by

SHANNON PASSON

Jennifer Reeves, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

MOVING UP OR MOVING OUT:

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presented by SHANNON PASSON,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism,
and hereby certify that, in their opinion is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Jennifer Reeves

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Professor Margaret Duffy

_____

Professor Randy Reeves

_____

Professor Victoria Johnson

_____

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Introduction

Work hard. Pay your dues. Tell meaningful stories. These are essential work ethics in any newsroom and admirable qualities in any journalist, but something has changed.

Diminishing revenue, cutbacks and layoffs are making newsrooms look increasingly different. In many cases, media companies are opening new revenue streams, increasing content, yet still reducing the workforce. It is these do-more-with-less marching orders that may have some television journalists feeling a little out of step.

Journalists often encounter formidable demands on their time, their strength and even their emotions. They are seldom lacking desire to work hard or desire to excel, but that desire may be eroded by increasingly intense work demand; ratings pressure; low pay and long hours. Job satisfaction becomes a tipping scale — for some the demands begin to outweigh the benefits, leading to unhealthy job strain, stress and eventually burnout.

In looking at the problems of job dissatisfaction, Maslach and Leiter (2005) seem to sum it up best when they point out that most mismatches between people and their work fall into one of six areas of organizational life:

Workload — too much work, not enough resources

Control — micro-management, lack of influence, accountability without power

Reward — not enough pay, acknowledgment or satisfaction

Community — isolation, conflict, disrespect

Fairness — discrimination, favoritism

Values — ethical conflicts, meaningless tasks

All of these problems may be present in a television newsroom, but one in particular has been a hot topic — workload in the face of shrinking newsroom workforces.

Organizers discussed the trend at the 2008 UNITY, Journalists of Color Convention. One Unity writer's assessment:

> The impact of turnover and layoffs has hit many working journalists hard. Some feel overwhelmed by increased workloads and having to juggle multiple things at once. (Hester, 2008, p.2)

Burnout is a problem that can hit people working in any newsroom role, but producers and executive producers are so central to putting together the entire body of work, the newscast, that their role and its relationship to job stress is of great concern. Observers worry that good, creative, experienced people are burning out and leaving the business.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between newsroom stressors and burnout in local television news. Specifically, the research examines how a changing media industry economy, increased work demand and decreased newsroom resources, contribute to burnout and intention to leave among producers and executive producers. In addition, the study seeks to understand how longevity in the business, or veteran journalist status, may affect ability to cope with job stress.

In-depth interviews with journalists designed to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions of job dissatisfaction and its origins were evaluated to help answer the research questions at hand.

The responses of the study participants were compared to the primary components of the Maslach Burnout Inventory and Karasek's Job Demand Control model. The analysis is qualitative, therefore the MBI is not used as a psychometric tool, but rather as a way of organizing and understanding the data.

There are three primary components within the Maslach Burnout Inventory that provide the means for analysis: Emotional Exhaustion; Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. Maslach and Leiter's Six Areas of Organizational Life: Workload; Control; Reward;

Community; Fairness and Values; serve as a way of describing the organizational challenges in more detail.

Karasek's Job Demand Control model completes the picture as the data are analyzed against its two components of Demand and Control. This comparison offers greater depth when examining the coping skills of producers versus executive producers, given the difference in control that may be afforded with greater decision-making latitude.

Definition of terms:

Local television news is defined as television news produced in one of the 210 designated market areas as measured by Nielsen Media Research.

Producer is defined as a journalist who performs the task of preparing a newscast for broadcast or transmission.

Executive Producer is defined as a middle manager charged with overseeing production of newscasts.

Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment among individuals who work with other people (Maslach, 1993).

Stressors are defined as variables within the workplace that cause stress among individual employees, such as work overload or interpersonal conflict (Leiter, 1993).

Intention to leave is defined as consideration of voluntary withdrawal from the organization and the industry (Wright and Bonett 1993).

Review of the Literature

Defining Burnout

Burnout is not a case of the blues. It is what Maslach and Leiter (2005) call a chronic problem. That chronic problem first became the focus of work stress research in the 1970s. Freudenberger (1974) was the first researcher to call the syndrome "burnout". It is essentially a way of describing a loss of energy, a "wearing out" due to the pressures of work (Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981).

Groundbreaking research on burnout by Maslach and Jackson culminated in the researchers' 1981 introduction of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The Maslach Burnout Inventory, or MBI, became the leading measurement of burnout in the workplace. The psychometric analysis was first developed as a way of measuring burnout among human service workers. Maslach and Jackson chose the field for their first test of the MBI because human service professionals (social workers) are embroiled in intense, emotionally-charged dialogues with clients, thereby causing chronic stress and, in turn, burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

At the time, Maslach and Jackson defined burnout as, "A syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently

among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind." (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p.99)

The definition of burnout has since been broadened to include more than "people-work" and extended to include more occupations. Until 1996, the Maslach Burnout Inventory had been criticized for its limited applicability, making it an ill-fitting measure for occupations other than human services (Schaufeli & Taris, 2005). That changed with the development of the new, broader MBI-GS, the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach & Jackson, 1996).

The new MBI-GS defines burnout as:" a crisis in one's relationship with work, not necessarily as a crisis in one's relationship with people at work." Ashforth and Lee (1997) offer a narrative that characterizes the experience of burning out:

> What is expected of me? Are the demands reasonable? How should I behave? Am I performing well? What am I feeling? Is it good or bad? Normal? Temporary? (p.706)

Despite evolving descriptions, the theoretical definition of burnout is still very much in play. Organizational psychology researchers have not agreed, for the most part, that burnout has been defined at all (Shirom, 2005). Burnout has gone from buzzword to a legitimate psychological phenomenon, spawning countless studies in

the span of 35 years, but there is still much debate over what burnout is and how to break it down into manageable, and comprehensible, parts.

Measuring Burnout

The Maslach Burnout Inventory divides the syndrome into three components:

Emotional Exhaustion — feeling emotionally drained by one's contact with other people

Depersonalization — negative feelings and cynical attitudes towards the recipients of one's service or care

(Reduced) *Personal Accomplishment* — a tendency to evaluate negatively one's own work

The Maslach Burnout Inventory has been tested across industries and across cultures. It is considered the gold standard of burnout measurement. (Schaufeli & Taris, 2005) Though there are many critics of the MBI, it remains the most successful psychometric scale for examining burnout (Richardsen & Martinussen, 2004).

Criticisms of the MBI

Knowledge in the field of burnout research is still fairly new and theoretical contributions are changing the original conceptions of burnout (Gorter, Albrecht, Hoogstraten & Eijkman, 1999). Some

researchers argue that the MBI has too many components for measurement; some believe that the components are poorly worded between positive and negative phrasing and others say that burnout should be quantifiable. In other words, there should be a hard and fast number score that would identify someone as either burned out or not burned out, depending on where they fall on the scale, above the cut off or below. The MBI has no such number. It has the three components for measurement, but they are not viewed with equal weight or importance. There is no aggregate, combining the components into a tidy measurement.

Schaufeli, Bakker, Schaap, Kladler & Hoogduin (2001) developed clinically validated cut-off scores, but the method is not yet widely used. Perhaps the reason there is no easy way of quantifying the sum of the components is that burnout, by its nature, is a complex psychological condition that defies simple math.

Arguments over how to interpret MBI data center around whether there is a relationship between the three components of the MBI and, if so, how is it measured? The search for a causal relationship between the factors is revealing in terms of the cyclical relationship between the components. More importantly the coping strategy associated with burnout, depersonalization or withdrawal, is a dysfunctional coping mechanism that leads to more emotional

exhaustion (Taris, Le Blanc, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2005). In a separate study of the MBI-GS, researchers find that they cannot pin down causal factors of burnout, or of the three dimensions of burnout established in the model (Taris, Schreurs & Schaufeli, 1999).

The biggest argument remains over the dimensions themselves — what they should be, what they should not be.

The three dimensions are seldom considered to be too few, with a notable exception. One study divided the three-factor model of the MBI into five factors to study burnout among managers. Researchers divided both emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment into two factors each, hoping to deepen understanding of those two components (Densten, 2001). Some argue that including a larger number of burnout characteristics may invite a laundry list of symptoms to find a home under the heading of burnout (Schaufeli & Taris, 2005).

In that vein, the MBI is most commonly criticized for having too many dimensions. Most occupational psychologists seem to agree that emotional exhaustion is the key component and should remain in that capacity. Depersonalization (or cynicism in the MBI-GS) is widely accepted as important to the measure, partly because reducing the measurement of burnout to a single factor of exhaustion is not making any distinction from fatigue, thereby making burnout redundant

(Schaufeli & Taris, 2005). In a sense, it would cease to exist as a distinct phenomenon.

Sonnentag (2005) suggests bringing in aspects of disengagement from work during non-work hours. This idea of recovery time affecting detachment from work during off time may be particularly applicable to journalistic work, since journalists often work long hours and work on stories from home, reducing their down time.

The third component, sense of personal accomplishment, or professional efficacy gets the most negative attention. Its necessity seems to be in hot dispute. The primary reason for this is that some believe it is not an appropriate measure of burnout, partly for its perceived lesser significance as a symptom and partly for its quality of limiting burnout research to the workplace (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen & Christensen, 2005).

Not the Only Game in Town

It is the limitation to the workplace that became one contention upon which a new model for measurement was built, The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. The measure developed three scales: personal burnout; work-related burnout; and client-related burnout (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen & Christensen, 2005).

Though this new model is arguably an update to the MBI, it may not be an appropriate tool for measuring burnout among journalists. Burnout in the newsroom is, by definition, a work-related problem and this model focuses heavily on personal aspects of burnout, as well as client-related burnout, which is also a less desirable fit with journalistic work.

Yet another new model that has emerged is the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI). This measure grew out of the Maslach scale, but diverges on the issue of the third component, personal accomplishment. The OLBI drops the third component and limits the scale to the first two, exhaustion and disengagement (Halbsleben & Demerouti, 2005). The OLBI is very new and, as of yet, relatively untested.

Demanding Work, Control and Burnout — The Karasek Model

To understand how burnout happens, it is best to understand how workplace stressors fit into the picture. No one burns out in a vacuum; individual personality characteristics may certainly play a role in who copes well with workplace stressors and who cannot handle stress (Maslach, 1982). That said, the chief workplace stressors that contribute to burnout are workload and role stress (Miller, Zook & Ellis, 1989).

This is where the Maslach Burnout Inventory dovetails with another key work stress theory, Karasek's Job Demand Control Model.

Karasek's JDC model fits with other stress and burnout models, but offers one intriguing difference — control. This model introduces the idea that job stress and job satisfaction are negatively impacted by an inverse relationship between demands of the job and decision-making latitude. The higher the demand and lower the control over decision-making, the more likely the worker suffers from mental strain and job dissatisfaction (Karasek, 1979). This model is an interesting theoretical framework for examining the difference in burnout between those with a lower level of responsibility (producers) or a higher level of responsibility and decision-making latitude (executive producers).

A subsequent breakdown of the two factors of the JDC, job demand and control, shows that demand and control may not be equally important as predictors of burnout (Rafferty, Friend, Landsbergis, 2001). The job demand has a role in all of the dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, but control does not. There is no significant correlation between decision authority (control) and emotional exhaustion (Rafferty, Friend, Landsbergis, 2001).

Though this model may be a good fit for examining the differences in stress among people with different levels of decision-making latitude found in a television newsroom, the JDC model is

criticized for not defining job demands in a way that may be applicable from industry to industry (de Jonge, Mulder & Nijhuis, 1999). Even so, a review of the JDC literature places workload under the job stressor, thus job demand umbrella, and workload may be a key stressor in newsrooms.

Soderfeldt, Soderfeldt, Ohlson, Theorell & Jones (2000) took it one step further with the development of Sense of Coherence (SOC), in relationship to the JDC model. SOC sought to understand the psychophysiological changes job strain may create. The researchers find that pressure on the job raises the presence of stress hormones like cortisol in the blood stream, further contributing to the body of evidence linking job strain to pathology.

The prevailing theory of what causes performance fatigue and emotional exhaustion is rooted in job demand. Job demand is important, not just in the level of demand, but the frequency with which those excess demands occur (Zohar, 1997). Zohar calls the frequency of demanding episodes "hassle density" and theorizes that there may be a reciprocal relationship between burnout and hassle density, rather than a linear causality. The more burned out a person is, the more the hassle density score may increase because the person may perceive more episodes as demanding (Zohar, 1997).

In the field of journalism, hassle density may be altered by increased workload, due to cutbacks by layoffs or attrition industry-wide.

Burnout and Job Performance

There are the detriments of the individual struggle with burnout, but what about the organizational struggle? How does burnout affect job performance? A 2006 study measuring the components of the MBI against job performance shows mixed results. Job performance goes down with greater exhaustion. Job performance also goes down with greater depersonalization. Conversely, there is no strong evidence that job performance suffers with reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Studies to establish that relationship are inconclusive (Taris, 2006).

Nearly ten years earlier, researchers compared the same set of variables, albeit with a different methodology, and came up with a link between job performance and emotional exhaustion, but not enough to tie job performance quality to either depersonalization or diminished personal accomplishment (Wright & Bonnett, 1997).

When job performance is weighed against job stress, but not burnout, there is more empirical evidence of a link. The relationship between job stress and job performance is of note because with

increased job stress, perception of job performance goes down (Westman & Eden, 1992).

Turning Over Burnout

There is a well established link between job satisfaction and turnover (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979), but another aspect of the equation is what's on the other side. Is the stress relieved by changing jobs or occupations? Wright and Bonnett (1992) find that employees suffering from job stress who leave voluntarily are more likely to feel less stress in their new positions or new careers.

Maslach and Leiter (1988) wanted to know how burnout affects organizational commitment and found that there is a significant relationship between burnout, turnover and the interpersonal environment of the workplace. In fact, all of the factors are related, in that negative supervisor interactions can lead to either burnout or intention to leave. Likewise, a burned out employee may be buoyed by interpersonal support from colleagues and renew organizational commitment, regardless of other negative environmental variables.

Miller, Ellis, Zook and Lyles (1990) wrapped all of these issues up together by examining the problems of burnout in the workplace and occupational commitment. The researchers drew a line between communication variables like participation in decision making to

burnout to job satisfaction and, finally, to occupational commitment or intention to leave.

Though turnover can be devastating to a newsroom and a company, retaining a burned out employee may be just as damaging.

Avtgis, Thomas-Maddox, Taylor and Patterson (2007) wanted to know how the three factors that comprise employee burnout syndrome, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feelings of failure influence the expression of organizational dissent. They find that burnout does affect an employee's expression of feelings of dissatisfaction, but positively. The results of their study reveal what they call a "paralysis" of expression (Avtgis, Thomas-Maddox, Taylor & Patterson, 2007). They note that when burned out employees keep quiet about dissatisfaction in the workplace, it is a form of "learned helplessness." Further, and more important to the question of retaining or losing employees, the researchers urge organizational communication scholars to push for more investigations of burnout because:

> the relational and communicative manifestations can be just as psychologically devastating as exiting or being fired from an organization.
>
> (Avtgis, Thomas-Maddox, Taylor & Patterson, 2007, p.101)

A Slow Burn or Quick Ignition?

An interesting question when examining burnout in two newsroom groups, producers and executive producers — does more time on the job affect occurrences of job strain?

Bradley (2007) uses Karasek's JDC model to guide him through an examination of teachers. The sample is made up of new teachers versus teachers with job tenure. The results show mixed support for Karasek's theory. The new teachers are more likely to suffer from job strain if they have less control, decision-making latitude. The Karasek effect is only evident among new teachers, not among the tenured ones (Bradley, 2007).

The variables that contribute to burnout are so varied that it is difficult to establish at what point in a career it is most likely to happen. Cordes, Dougherty and Blum (1997) note that burnout doesn't have an on/off switch. A person doesn't generally wake up one day burned out when they weren't the day before. This is an especially important observation when framing the development of burnout within the context of a career timeline.

A ten-year study to pinpoint the effects of burnout over the course of a career finds that burnout experienced in the beginning of a career is not as likely to have long-term consequences for the employee, but burnout later in a career tends to have a more serious impact (Cherniss, 1992).

The big difference between a burnout examination of managers versus non-managers is that interaction with subordinates adds to emotional exhaustion (Lee & Ashworth, 1993). It tends to add an additional layer of work stress.

Just as the role of manager can lead to work stress, the behavior of managers can have the same effect on subordinates. Supervisors can influence feelings of uncertainty among subordinates, which may lead to dissatisfaction and, finally, turnover intention (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994).

Powers (1991) looked at job satisfaction among news staff members through the lens of leadership style. Evaluating the effects of two different leadership styles among News Directors, Powers wanted to know whether different leadership behaviors would influence staff buy-in on group goals. Though Powers' study focused on News Directors, this question may be relevant to other newsroom leaders, middle managers like executive producers, included.

Powers (1991) finds the variables are interdependent — the better leadership style, the better job satisfaction, the greater goal agreement. But also, the greater goal agreement and success, the greater job satisfaction, and potentially, independent of leadership style.

The Antithesis of Burnout — How to Get Engaged

Burnout research primarily focuses on what burnout is and how it develops, but another important area of the discussion is how to cope with burnout. Different coping mechanisms seem to affect burnout differently. These coping mechanisms are not just a reaction to burnout, but play a role in whether burnout develops or continues (Leiter, 1991). Escapist coping — avoiding the problem and failing to find solutions or disbelieving the solutions exist — tends to contribute to burnout, whereas control coping — or solution oriented coping — tends to be helpful in avoiding burnout (Leiter, 1991).

Sometimes decreasing the negative aspects of work is not possible, so it is important to increase the positives to build engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Maslach and Leiter note that:

> When burnout is counteracted with engagement, exhaustion is replaced with enthusiasm, bitterness with compassion, and anxiety with efficacy. (p.44)

They advise trying to identify where the mismatch lies between a person and a person's work. This can be done by the employee or by management. The company should step in and address the problem, whether it is burnout in one individual or risk of burnout in an entire staff.

Burnout comes from the social environment in which people work. That is why the responsibility lies with the workplace to recognize the human side of work and address those needs, before burnout takes hold (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Despite the breadth of work in the field of burnout research, what it is missing is a unified theoretical framework for future research. An integrated model simply does not exist (Lee & Ashford, 1993).

Journalists and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been an ongoing concern in the fast-paced; high-demand world of television news. News coverage is often a race to beat deadline and to beat the competing stations — to get the story on first. If news coverage is a race and journalists are the runners, sometimes there isn't time to find out if there are any injuries on the way to the finish line. Some people just don't make it.

Kalter (1999) interviewed Poynter Institute Instructor, Jill Geisler and Geisler observed:

> We are all trying to do way too much news with way too few people. A lot of us are running on empty ... (for producers) there's almost a bottomless pit of demands. (p.32)

For the reasons above — the pressure to get it right and get it on air fast with often paltry resources — job stress and burnout are an inherent risk. Those paltry resources are often a result of cost-cutting

measures in newsrooms, a business practice that affects the editorial process. The injection of business concerns into the editorial domain has left some journalists disillusioned (Beam, 2006).

In his 2006 survey of U.S. Journalists, Beam finds that journalists' perceptions of their organization's goals — business or journalistic — are significant predictors of job satisfaction. They tend to be more satisfied with their jobs if they perceive a significant commitment to journalistic quality (Beam, 2006).

There is also an important distinction between reasons for job satisfaction among supervisory and non-supervisory workers. Supervisors are less likely to believe that their organization values profits over good journalism, but if they perceive that type of imbalance, they are more likely to be negatively affected by it than the teams they supervise (Beam, 2006).

Beam (2006) finds that the most significant factor for understanding job satisfaction among journalists is working conditions. The most satisfied journalists believe they have both autonomy in their work and influence over the decision making process in the newsroom.

Pollard (1995) also underscores the importance of autonomy and influence in the job satisfaction equation. Pollard finds that news workers value control and responsibility. His study finds newspaper workers have greater job satisfaction than those in television. One

reason for this result may be that newspaper workers have greater autonomy; whereas television workers are more limited by time schedules and technology (Pollard, 1995).

Additionally, Pollard (1995) points out that television journalists are younger and less experienced than newspaper workers as a group and that their careers tend to be brief. He calls for more research into why television journalism careers are short and how that relates to job satisfaction.

Reinardy (2006) used the Maslach Burnout Inventory to understand job satisfaction among sports journalists, a career with many of the same demands found in news. He finds that sports journalists generally love the job but hate the demands on their time. They have a severe work-family conflict, brought on by time away from family to commit to the demands of sports coverage. They suffer from emotional exhaustion and depersonalization but have a higher sense of personal accomplishment.

The findings were further supported when Reinardy (2007) followed up with in-depth interviews with newspaper sports editors. The study reveals that while the work-family conflict is firmly in place, the perception of organizational support can improve the job satisfaction picture.

Journalism — characterized by deadline pressure and competition for the best stories — is a stress-machine in many ways. Kalter (1999) calls it, "a superheated combination of intense competition, deadline pressure, long hours, and low pay with the product of one's labors played out in public and carrying real stakes." (p.30)

What Producers and Executive Producers Do

Producers and executive producers are cut from the same cloth. An Executive Producer is essentially a producer who is also a supervisor of the content and coverage in multiple newscasts, as well as a supervisor of personnel. In most cases executive producers supervise a team of producers, so there is a supervisor/subordinate relationship between the two job roles.

For the purposes of this description, executive producer and producer job descriptions should be viewed as virtually the same, just at different levels. Producers have an enormous amount of control over content, more so than many of the on-air journalists because they are responsible for the entirety of the product (Smith, 2002).

Smith (2002) points out that the amount of hats a producer wears are so varied that a great producer, what he calls a power producer, acts as "journalist; news writer; production expert;

promotional writer; team leader; researcher and lawyer/ ethicist." (Smith, 2002, p.13)

Technology has had a major influence on the job of producer — good and bad. With new technology comes more efficient ways of working, but some of those ways may reduce the editorial creativity of producers. Now, producers are writing stories, creating graphics, posting web content and, in some cases, editing video (Lazarski, 2007). There are so many mechanics involved that the time for critical thinking may be reduced.

Producing by the Numbers

Industry data show some trends in both content changes and pay, but there is no direct correlation between more work and less pay. They exist as two separate phenomena. Staff decreases are up or holding steady, while hours of local television produced are at an all time high. In 2007, local TV news content increased to a record high. In 2008, it looked like that number was holding steady (Papper, 2008).

Ten years ago, producers were primarily responsible for the components of their own newscasts: good stories; live shots; packages; lots of video (Smith, Tanner & Duhe, 2007). Now it's a whole new world.

An increase in convergence among media partners, in this case, local stations producing content for other forms of media — newspapers, websites, radio, other television stations (Papper, 2008). Pay in 2007 increased by less than 1%, while inflation increased by 3.2%. That means that the living wage for television news journalists actually decreased (Papper, 2007).

From Producer Shortage to Job Insecurity?

Ten years ago, even five years ago, television news managers were buzzing about a producer shortage (Trigoboff, 2001). It was difficult to come by experienced producers, especially in smaller markets. It is still difficult to come by experienced producers, but the difference is — most newsrooms need fewer of them. Newsrooms are cutting positions for both producers and executive producers.

The industry is in flux, with a changing economy forcing tough staffing decisions. News managers may now be buzzing about quality over quantity, more than ever, and the word layoffs is on many lips. In an RTNDA/Hofstra University survey of television news staff changes since January of 2008, the numbers were not encouraging. 28.6% of newsrooms decreased their staffs; 22.1% increased staffing and 49.4% made no staff changes (Papper, 2008).

Papper (2008) characterizes the problem this way:

> Most years, the percentage of stations with increases would be 10 percent higher, and the percentage of stations with decreases would be at least 10 percent lower. This year, there were more layoffs than additions, far more people were cut than added, and some of those layoffs involved dozens of people at one time. In a number of cases, station cuts outside of news meant that the spared newspeople had to pick up the slack. (p.1)

There were also fewer jobs available to new journalists entering the workforce (Dudley, 2007). Many journalism school graduates are now choosing work outside the field – nearly half of all graduates. In 2000, two-thirds of Journalism graduates were working in the field (Dudley, 2007).

Age and Tenure in Coping with Stress

There may be fewer jobs, but maybe not fewer opportunities. For better or for worse, television news producers are generally moving up quickly. A high level of responsibility in a producer's early twenties is not uncommon. Young producers often find that once they have one producing job under their belts, the next one comes easily. It is becoming increasingly common for second jobs to be big opportunities — big shows (key time slots) in big markets (top ten) (Smith, 2000).

The down side of this trend is that young producers may not earn respect as easily from veteran (older) journalists in the newsroom. This extends beyond the editorial process, the age

differential is a factor in producer/director communication as well, which can cause stress and job dissatisfaction in both groups (Adams, 2007).

There also may be differences in how journalists of different ages handle job stress. In a study of job burnout among newspaper editors and reporters, Cook, Banks and Turner (1999) find that older editors and reporters have a significantly lower level of emotional exhaustion than their younger counterparts. The older journalists may have either developed better coping skills than the younger journalists or the journalists who are affected by burnout have already left the business before becoming veterans (Cooks, Banks & Turner, 1999).

The idea of an exodus of journalists before they reach the prime of their careers is supported in the findings of Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes and Wilhoit (2007). They discovered that journalists under the age of 25 tended to be happier in their jobs than those in the next age group (25-34), opening speculation about a failure among media organizations to retain younger journalists.

An Uneasy Feeling

A recent survey of journalists shows anxiety and pessimism about the future of the field (Wilson, 2008). Schudson and Doukopil (2007) offer some hope by pointing out that newsroom staffing is a

fluctuating process, with growth in the 1970s, stability in the 1980s and some decline in the 1990s, the cuts the industry is experiencing now are sure to be followed by another period of growth as the industry recovers. Even though one might predict growth in the future, that makes it no less scary for newsrooms dealing with layoffs right now.

Research questions

R1 How do television news producers and executive producers cope with job stress?

R2 Does greater responsibility and/or longevity as a television journalist give journalists greater coping skills against burnout?

R3 How are job demand and job control related to producers' perception of job stress and burnout?

R4 How do work stressors such as workload and long hours affect intention to leave?

Method

Interviews with Journalists

To gain a better understanding of risk of burnout among producers and executive producers and the factors contributing to job dissatisfaction, a qualitative approach revealed more about the questions at hand. It allowed for greater depth of insight and interpretation of meaning through the participants' points of view (Kvale, 2009). A series of in-depth interviews with producers and executive producers conducted both in-person and by telephone sought to explain the job stress and burnout phenomenon in the television news industry.

The researcher attempted to describe the phenomena through the perspectives of the respondents and probe new areas of interest based on interviewee responses. In this approach, the data collection and evaluative processes overlap at times to allow for small adjustments in direction based on what early interviews revealed about the area of inquiry (Gibbs, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Though there was room for emergent design, the line of questioning remained as consistent as possible to assist in establishing themes in the evaluation process.

Sampling

Using the numbers provided by Pew (2008), the number of journalists working in local newsrooms is about 19,500. Of the average 35 staff members per television station, the number of producers and executive producers on staff vary widely, based on the market size, number of hours of television produced and coverage philosophy. Because there are so many variables contributing to a calculation of the number of working producers and executive producers, there's no formula for getting an accurate number for the target population.

The sample size for this study is small, based on the idea of quality over quantity. The long interviews yielded a greater amount of information from fewer respondents. A sample size of ten has been chosen for this study. Because of the small sample size, the results of the study are not generalizable to the entire population of television producers and executive producers.

The station sample and the producer sample is nonrandom and purposive. The participants must be producers or executive producers to be included and the sample size is too small to ensure appropriate participant choices from a random sample.

Selection of participating stations was limited to the top fifty markets. The reason for this is that stations in markets 50 or above are more likely to have both producers and executive producers. The smaller markets have more anchor-produced shows and few, if any, executive producers. Only network affiliates from ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox are represented in the sample. The reason for this is that those network affiliates more consistently have news programming produced within those stations and not by an outside party.

The sample is not stratified to reflect the demographic makeup of newsroom staffing. The actual breakdown of gender and age, for instance, is not available to establish a clear picture of how the sample should be stratified.

The researcher interviewed pairs of executive producers and producers from each of five television markets to control for differences from market to market. One producer and one executive producer from each market were interviewed. The interviewees were not necessarily coworkers and were, in nearly every case, from different stations within the market.

The cities, or markets, for in-person interviews were chosen partially for geographic convenience to the researcher (within the parameters established above). The telephone interviews were conducted in markets considered out of the researcher's traveling

range. The five U.S. television markets were selected to achieve geographic and market-size diversity: Philadelphia, PA (DMA 4); Orlando, FL (DMA 19); Portland, OR (DMA 22); Columbus, OH (DMA 32); Albuquerque, NM (44) (Nielsen Media Research, 2008).

Establishing Trust

There was some sensitivity involved in the interview questions. The researcher asked television journalists to talk about how they really feel about their workplace. The intensive interview, by its nature, probes the feelings, motivations and experiences of the interviewees (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). For some journalists, talking about issues surrounding job dissatisfaction is a direct violation of the culture present in many newsrooms that calls toughness a prerequisite and workaholic ways a virtue. For this reason, making the respondents feel comfortable that their privacy is protected was essential.

To ensure the participants' ability to speak openly, the researcher assured each respondent confidentiality. Each interviewee is only identified by job title. Any other identifying details were removed from responses. There is not an option for total anonymity because of the importance of job position in evaluating the data. Participants were made aware of these descriptors upfront, before agreeing to participate in the study.

Questions

This study is grounded in two theories of job stress and burnout: The Maslach Burnout Inventory and Karasek's Job Demand Control Model. The questions explore the primary components of each of these theories.

The MBI describes burnout as a combination of three primary factors and each of these will be explored in the study: emotional exhaustion; depersonalization; (reduced)personal accomplishment. The questions were designed to get to the heart of these issues by asking, for example, about how producers and executive producers feel about their work and about their jobs in the course of their workday. Gaining some insight into study respondents' level of emotional exhaustion was the goal of questions regarding attitudes toward work. Detecting depersonalization is the focus of questions about concern for quality of work and overall energy and effort put forth in the workplace. The issue of personal accomplishment is at the center of questions about producers' and executive producers' perceptions of their own work and whether the quality of their work has changed. The broad range of open-ended questions is an attempt to gain some perspective from a number of different angles on the same issue. The goal was to see how the components of the MBI

come into play in the work lives of the study participants. Though, the components of the MBI are explored through the work experiences of the producers and executive producers, there was no intent to diagnose burnout among the respondents. Used as a psychometric index, the MBI can be a tool for diagnosing the syndrome. Its use here is strictly theoretical. The components are explored as potential aspects of these journalists' work experience and are used to discuss the issues of job stress and burnout in the workplace, but not to identify the level of burnout present among the sample.

The questions take one step further into more specific aspects of work that may contribute to the three primary components of burnout by deriving some of the inquiry from the (2005) observations of Maslach and Leiter. The six issues they identify that contribute to job satisfaction are: workload; control; reward; community; fairness; values. The questions designed for this study are instructed further by these categories. Some questions directly explore workload; control; reward and fairness. The issues of community and values are not directly explored in the proposed questions, but there may be some insight into these issues in the responses to some of the open-ended questions. For instance, the question, "what do you like about your job?" may illicit responses concerning the reasons journalists do what

they do, which may have an indirect link to both journalistic values and sense of community.

Karesek's Job Demand Control model also figures prominently in the proposed questions. The JDC model has some common ground with the MBI, specifically in the issue of demand as a potential causal factor contributing to burnout. Though the issue of control is not part of the MBI, it is part of the description of the elements of job satisfaction offered later by Maslach and Leiter. In this way, these two larger theories, the MBI and the JDC, are in agreement. For the purposes of this study the JDC offers more depth of understanding in exploring how demand and control work inversely to contribute to overall job stress and burnout. According to Karasek, higher demand or hassle density, in concert with a perceived lack of control or decision-making latitude, can contribute to job dissatisfaction. The questions include an exploration of perceived job demand and control over work quality and workload. The question of decision-making latitude may play a role in the perceived differences between the work of producers and executive producers, given that executive producers may generally have more decision making latitude.

In Appendix A, there is a list of the questions. This list is incomplete in that the researcher asked follow-up questions based on the interviewee responses. In addition, as Wimmer and Dominick

(2000) advise, questions evolved as the research developed and the interpretive nature of the study dictated exploration of emerging ideas. The questions are designed to provoke discussion of workplace stressors and to gain a better understanding of the causes and the consequences of workplace stressors in relation to the MBI and JDC theories.

Recording the data

With permission from each respondent, both in-person interviews and telephone interviews were captured using a digital recorder. The researcher also took notes, as Creswell advises, in case of equipment failure (Creswell, 2009).

Disclosure

Because the role of the researcher is central to the intensive interview method, the researcher disclosed background information that may be relevant to the participant's understanding of the potential for bias (Creswell, 2009). In this case, the researcher's background as a television producer and executive producer in both medium and large markets is an important disclosure. This disclosure seemed important ethically, but it also may have had desirable effects in terms of establishing rapport with the participants. Television news is a cloistered environment in many ways and the work is extremely

specialized. Because of this, there may be a generalized sense that few would understand the work of a television news producer unless one has performed that role. The researcher's background was also beneficial in navigating the lingo unique to news. Like many specialized fields, the language includes terms that are difficult to understand outside the industry.

Evaluating the data

The constant comparative technique is the most appropriate for finding the meaning in the data gathered during the in-depth interviews. The roadmap for the investigation followed the steps described by Wimmer and Dominick (2000):

1. Comparative assignment of incidents to categories
2. Elaboration and refinement of categories
3. Searching for relationships and themes among categories
4. Simplifying and integrating data into coherent theoretical structure (Wimmer & Dominick, 200, p. 107)

A more specific description of the steps to analyzing the data comes from a pattern established by Creswell (2009). The researcher transcribed the interviews and arrange the data into large categories. After going though the material to get a broad sense of recurrent themes, there was the process of drilling deeper into the details to

gain a better understanding and a more finely tuned interpretation of the data.

Once the broader themes had been established and the data were available, the researcher coded the data into 22 categories to come up with meaningful themes (Creswell, 2009).

Rather than using predetermined codes and fitting the data within those categories, the researcher developed the codes based on the data as they emerged.

Lee (1999) suggests coding by frequency of certain words, phrases or ideas to suggest a taxonomic structure. This was useful as a second layer within the theoretically predetermined structure established in the components of both the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Job Demand Control model. In other words, the researcher used a process of categorical analysis to develop smaller sub-categories of themes that may fit within the broader theoretical context, or larger categories. For instance, under the MBI component of emotional exhaustion as a category, one might find smaller themes derived from responses about participants' feelings at the end of a workday or overall attitude toward work. As the researcher found commonality among many responses and coded them as one theme, the next step was to analyze whether those emergent themes fit (or did not fit) into the theoretical structure. There was no expectation

that every theme fit within the components of the MBI and the JDC. Instead, the researcher found context for some of the themes in theory and context for other themes in the literature covering television industry practices.

As Gibbs (2007) suggests, the researcher offers thick descriptions of respondents' feelings and observations about their relationships with work.

In the completed qualitative narrative, the goal is to evaluate the themes to arrive at a larger sense of meaning – to gain a deeper understanding of the problems of workplace stress and burnout among producers and executive producers in local television newsrooms.

The Data

Interviews with ten producers and executive producers from five different television markets revealed complex relationships with their work and with the field of television news itself. Though the specific characteristics of those relationships are unique to each individual, there are many shared work experiences among participants and many common threads among their responses.

A Profile of the Participants

To understand the nature of the respondents' experiences, it is first important to understand who they are and where they have been. The interviewees were selected from five U.S. television markets: Philadelphia, PA (DMA 4); Orlando, FL (DMA 19); Portland, OR (DMA 22); Columbus, OH (DMA 32); Albuquerque, NM (44) (Nielsen Media Research, 2009).

Of those journalists selected, five were producers, the other five were executive producers. The least experienced journalist had been producing for three years. The most experienced producer had been producing for 17 years – much of that as an executive producer. Six of the participants had been producing more than ten years. All ten

producers and executive producers have spent their entire careers in the television news industry.

While job titles of a respondent may be noted in the data, names and other identifying details will be excluded for the purposes of confidentiality.

Burnout

Of the ten journalists interviewed, one producer considered herself burned out. Perhaps more interesting is the fact that half of the interviewees believed that they had been burned out at one time and had overcome it. Still others believed, whether they had been burned out in the past or not, that it is nearly inevitable in their future, as a natural result of many persistent work stressors found in producing television news.

Though this study does not seek to diagnose burnout in the journalists interviewed, their perceptions of their own past, present or future experience with burnout yielded some interesting observations.

First the journalist who did consider herself burned out talked about why her stress level has reached the burnout level, she said the stress is cumulative, it never goes back to square one:

> There are the nightmares. One of the hardest parts about working in news is getting it out of your head. You know, you go home and you don't want to talk about work and you don't want to think about work, but it's still there.

One executive producer described a past bout with burnout and what it felt like to her:

> I could barely go to work. I didn't want to go. It wasn't fun anymore. I was just exhausted all of the time. I wasn't getting any feedback, except for what I did wrong. One thing about our business, nobody ever tells you anything good. When you hear it enough, you pretty much decide, I can't do anything right, why even try? So you pretty much just walk through the day, just getting it done. Not doing what you know you can.

The same executive producer goes on to describe why she was so surprised to get to the point that she considered leaving the business:

> I can remember being overtired, overworked, overwhelmed, never to the point that I just didn't want to do it anymore. I wasn't sure I wanted to do it anymore.

Still another producer questioned whether he should be a producer after his experience in a newsroom that he felt was poorly managed:

> It was an awful place to work. It was just really tough. They just keep you down. I would have panic attacks because I would get blamed for things I didn't do. Half way through my time there, I just thought, am I in the right position? Am I doing the right job?

He overcame that uncertainty and went on to his next producing job and he is much happier now, but notes that he has accepted that news is a very stressful and demanding business. For him, how he is treated in the workplace is key. Respect seems to make the difference.

There were four producers and executive producers who felt burnout was unlikely for them right now. Some of them were certain it would happen at some point. Others thought it could happen under certain circumstances, but also thought they had a strategy for coping if the time ever came, even if that strategy included leaving the business. For most, leaving the business would not be their first reaction. If they felt there was no salvaging their careers in news, they would want to make a carefully considered jump to something better, not a rash escape at all costs.

Nearly everyone who was interviewed attributed burnout or possible burnout to losing passion for the job or lacking new challenges. One executive producer described a scenario that could lead to burnout for her:

> If I don't move, if I stay here as an EP for many more years, I think there's a risk because, even though the stories change and the breaking news changes, if I'm not growing, if I'm not leading in different ways and facing new challenges, I think I could burn out. I don't see it happening soon, but if I don't have an opportunity to continue to grow, I think I would.

This was a common refrain among the interviewees who described themselves as the most satisfied by their work. They have a love for what they do. If that love wasn't there, they would be at risk for burnout.

There was a strong opinion among most of the respondents that, not only were they at risk for burnout in the future, but everyone in the business of television news is at risk.

> I think I'm always at risk for burnout. I think anyone in this business is at risk for burnout.

Though lack of challenge was the primary reason cited for risk of burnout in the future, the ones who considered themselves burned out now or in the past, were more likely to say that other work stressors were the culprit. The reasons seemed to be a combination of hours, workload, family demands, pressures of the job and treatment by management.

Hours

There was a clear division between the producers and executive producers on the subject of hours. Producers tended to be much more frustrated about the amount of hours they worked and the toll it takes on their lives. One producer explained what she dislikes most about her job:

> The long hours, not getting to take a lunch break, having to work holidays, having to work even if you're sick because if you don't someone else is going to have to work an even longer day ... you can't leave work early because you have that deadline every day at the end of your day and you can't come to work late because it makes it harder to meet the deadline. Even, say, having a doctor's appointment is almost impossible.

The issues described above were common complaints among the producers. One producer describes the pace as draining:

> I get tired of not having holidays off like the rest of the world. I get tired of 10 or 11 hour days. You know you want to do a good job, so you'll go in much earlier and work much harder.

Not having holidays off was a repetitive theme, as were long work days and lack of time to eat. Many of the producers felt that their days were so busy and pressure-filled that they didn't have time to go to the bathroom when they needed to. Additionally, many of the producers said that the hours they work now are family unfriendly and would make it impossible to care for a child in the future, should they start a family.

The executive producers echoed those sentiments, in many cases, on behalf of the producers they now work with. Many of them mentioned that they know the producers never leave their desks and (if they are hourly) do not report the amount of hours they actually work on their time sheets due to anti-overtime pressure, therefore they do not get paid for the time they put in. One executive producer pointed out that it's the same for her (though she is salaried):

> The company says I'm working a forty-hour week. I have never worked a forty-hour week - never. I don't think it's that they want you to work overtime. It takes 60 hours a week to do what needs to be done. Thursday I worked 14 hours and I still had more that I needed to do.

For the executive producers' part, it wasn't that they did not work long hours. The responsiveness their role requires means a lot of hours logged both in the newsroom and at home. They tended to

express more acceptance of how the hours affected their own lives, and more concern for how it affected those of their producers. Part of this difference may also be the nature of the work they do versus that of producers. Because producers are putting together the mechanics of a newscast and are dealing with a heavier load of details and deadlines, they do their jobs at more of an intense, micro-level. One producer, with tears in her eyes, described it as running for her life every day. In contrast, executive producers are dealing with the big picture and coordinating a lot of different areas of the work. For this reason, though their hours of work may be just as long and full of just as many problems, being a layer above the minutia, may be enough to change their attitude toward the hours they put in.

Workload

The issue of workload broke down much the way the discussion of hours did, most of the producers felt that the workload has heavy for the amount of time they had to accomplish it and the amount of resources provided. One producer took on a project in addition to her newscast and found herself working what amounted to two jobs:

> I was having to take a lot of my free time, my days off, hours after the shows and coming in early, whatever time I had available, just to get the work done because of scheduling. They never scheduled me for the time I was supposed to have when given the job responsibility.

Another producer lamented, "I'm only one person and I can't do it all myself."

Producers also felt that they were not compensated fairly for the amount of work they put in, "While my work load is increasing, my pay certainly isn't."

The amount of resources figured prominently in the workload equation:

> It may just be a factor of the time, the day and age, but I think the resources factor is big, especially in local news and I think it's going to make a big difference because I see it as a move to do more with less – on every factor; on the reporter front; on the photographer front. Even in larger markets, people are becoming one-man bands. I think it becomes a resource issue where you're pushing people to do more with less, but they still want to put out a high quality product, you're almost asking your employees to choose. You know, do you put out your best quality product or do you just deal with what you have. And we don't get that choice on our level because we can't set the budget, we can't set what they're willing to spend money on, what the staffing and resources they're willing to give and I think that's becoming a much larger issue, definitely, and I think it's become more advanced over time and it's reaching a fever pitch.

The phrase "do more with less" was used by more than half of the producers and executive producers interviewed. Many of them described it as a mantra of sorts that is now permeating the industry's approach to resource allocation. The effect for many of the respondents is that they are forced to make up the difference. One tenacious producer said she is simply not willing to let fewer resources get in the way:

> It's bare bones on the weekend, but we're still putting out the exact same product, so it's a lot more stretching and relying on yourself and doing more yourself and forcing it to get done. The staff isn't there to do it for you.

The staffing question is one executive producers are dealing with every day. An executive producer says he can't see making do with many fewer people:

> It's hard to imagine having anyone expendable. We have *just* enough reporters. We have *just* enough photographers. We have *just* enough people, that if anybody gets sick or goes on vacation for a long period of time, it doesn't throw a wrench into the scheduling machine. We just don't have any fat to cut.

Still other executive producers say there isn't fat to cut, but more cuts are likely to come industry-wide and more creative staffing solutions have become a reality. Many shops are hiring more multi-media journalists who can shoot, write and edit their own work, eliminating the need for reporter-photographer teams. Others are experimenting with cooperative agreements between competing stations to gather stories with fewer resources. Still others are doubling up producers on shows to accommodate cuts through layoffs or attrition.

All of these trends mean fewer staff members and, whether directly or indirectly, added workload for producers and executive producers. In addition to the added workload, the pressure may increase further with the addition of more hours of coverage. One

executive producer said it's hard to see how it can be done, but it's not hard to see that it may have to be:

> We're on so much now as it is, I mean I can't even see doing more news, but I think that's what's coming down the road, adding more newscasts .... I think there's an opportunity to add more newscasts and more responsibility for the people who work on those newscasts with less resources. It's going to be constant, it's just going to feel like it never ends and I think that's a real concern because that means a lot more opportunity to get things wrong.

Most of the respondents, especially the executive producers saw the trend toward reduced staffing and the do-more-with-less formula as a permanent way of doing business. Further, some said that when the industry is asking producers to do more newscasts in a day and it is working, why wouldn't that continue? For some the resulting attitude is one of defeat:

> We are all doomed to work with the very minimum, which is why we all work 10 and 11 hour days.

Some producers pointed out that they don't complain about workload because they don't want to be perceived as whiners. Though most producers felt that their stations could not cut any more producers, economic concerns made them fearful of "rocking the boat".

In turn, that workload is taking its toll on producers and executive producers, leading to exhaustion in some cases.

Exhaustion

Producers and executive producer used adjectives like draining, mentally taxing, creatively taxing, tiring and so exhausting that one producer said it just becomes a question of reaching the finish line:

> I was exhausted, honestly, I was absolutely exhausted. So it came to a point where you look at it like, what do I have to get done? It's not a matter of being at your most creative or being at your best it's a matter of just getting stuff done.

One executive producer described himself as less tired in his role now than when he was as a producer:

> I have fewer days when I just come home and collapse on the couch from exhaustion than I did when I was a show producer.

That seemed to be the consensus among executive producers, but while being an EP may not be as physically draining, the mental toll can be especially acute:

> I'm pretty exhausted to be honest. I'm so tired of looking at the computer. I'm so tired of thinking, talking, I just want to be quiet. When I leave the newsroom, I don't want to talk on the phone. I don't want to deal with people.

Exhaustion in its many forms was one of the most pervasive issues the producers and executive producers are struggling with, made intractable, in some cases, by the cumulative stress of producing news.

Stress

By all accounts, the producers and executive producers interviewed thought their jobs were more stressful than most. When

asked to rate the stress of their jobs on a scale of one to ten, the group rated its cumulative stress at a seven, but in almost every case, the interviewees pointed out that that number frequently rises a lot higher.

Roughly half of the producers and executive producers said they try not to take the stress home with them at the end of the day, but when they make a mistake, it's a whole different story. Some described having work dreams and nightmares. Others said worry about work kept them awake at night. One executive producer describes it this way:

> When I make a mistake, I take it home. I take it home. I chew on it. I dream about it. I wake up thinking, 'oh my gosh'. Yes, very concerned. Any mistake, I live with it. I beat myself more than anyone else could.

Several of the producers and executive producers thought breaking news was one of the sources of stress, but they thought that was a good thing. They thrive on the adrenaline rush of being in the control room. One EP calls it invigorating, "you're going nonstop, you don't have a chance to breathe". One producer likes being in the control room, but he describes the stresses of breaking news this way:

> When you're in the control room and you have three different managers standing behind you and they're all saying we should do this and you should go here and they're all kind of saying different things. And you're the one at the helm. The anchors are in your ear saying where are we going? And the reporters are trying to talk to you in the field. It's just really stressful.

The same producer says he believes that because this business "brings you to the breaking point" so often, the secret to insulating producers against the damaging effects of that level of stress is the influence of managers who understand that danger and can provide an environment in which producers feel appreciated for their contributions.

Several of the producers made a point to say that moving up in market size increased the pressure and stress because the stakes are higher, but it is a kind of stress they welcome. They were excited to rise to the challenge of new responsibility and greater expectations.

Producers also viewed stress as a reality of working in news. One said, a lot of the stress comes from uncompromising expectations for the quality of the work:

> It's a stressful business. If you were in news and you didn't have that, there's probably something wrong, you probably don't care enough. If you don't feel any stress at all, then you're just coming in and painting by numbers.

The stressors are in many ways linked to the demands of the work. The demands include deadline pressure, quality control, completing tasks, working fast and honing a very specific set of skills.

Demand

The demands of producing television news are so persistent and so immovable that for some interviewees, they defy description. One executive producers sums it up:

> I would describe it as demanding. I think it's going to get more and more demanding, but hopefully I'll get better at it. It's pretty demanding. When you wake up and go to bed thinking about your job, it's demanding. When you come in and you have 58 emails and they all need something, it's pretty demanding. I don't know how to describe it, yeah, demanding!

Another executive producer described exactly what he thinks it takes to meet the demands of televisions news and how the roles of producer and executive producer differ:

> I think being a TV producer requires a variety of unrelated skills, especially being a show producer, you need to have good journalistic sense and you need to be able to write, then there's the logic game of figuring out how to put the rundown together, where the reporters should go and how everything is going to get done. Then there's the math game of being in the control room and making sure the timing all works out and then there's the personality part where you need, even when things are crazy, to scream and yell directions in the control room and maintain a calm demeanor when talking to an anchor over IFB. I think the demands are really varied. You need to be able to operate under pressure and operate - a bunch of different skills. As an executive producer, add to that the demands of personnel issues, yet another component that has nothing to do with putting three newscasts on.

Everyone agreed that for both producers and executive producers, the demands are very high. The work is fast-paced. The hours are long. The expectations are high. And for some who would describes themselves as perfectionists, it is difficult to make themselves or anyone else happy:

> It's hard to be a lot of things to a lot of people and you're not going to make everyone happy. Trying to accommodate everything, trying to get everything in there somehow. That's probably the hardest thing.

Though every single respondent believed that the demands of news are extremely high and it is a sliding scale when it comes to meeting those demands, the issue of control yielded far more mixed results.

Control

For the producers and executive producers interviewed, control is an issue that is perceived differently, interpreted differently and viewed with varying degrees of importance. For the majority of the study participants, degree of control one has in the news process is entirely dependent on the influence of external variables like breaking news. No one can control when news breaks. Gutting an existing coverage plan because more news comes up is an everyday occurrence. For one producer, the unpredictability of news is a source of frustration:

> It's like every day you come in with a plan and there are a million things to disrupt it and you have to keep doing things over and over and over again. Some days you're just spinning your wheels a lot, trying to get it done and make it good. I think if I left, I think I'd probably go for something where I knew what I would be doing walking in the door.

That is one of the control issues that caused work stress among some of the producers, the idea that all of their hard work goes

to waste when other news trumps what they've already done. For others, they thrive on the unpredictability. For them, that is what makes news work great.

The kinds of control issues above are in response to the very nature of journalistic work, but there are other control issues that are far more changeable, such as decision-making latitude. In this area, many of the producers felt that they did have some control over content, but in most cases, would like more. More than that, they wanted those decisions to be supported more consistently after the fact. One producer expressed frustration that she has to be a manager of people involved in her show without having the true authority of a manager:

> As a producer you'll have to take responsibility for everything, even if you have no control over it. That's a tough pill to swallow and that's one of the hardest lessons you learn as a producer.

The executive producers, in contrast, felt that they had control over content and the support for their decisions. Most of the time, they felt that they had control of the variables that one can control in the ever-changing environment of news. That said, one executive producer was frustrated that she lacked control over some of the resource factors that would allow for better coverage:

> I feel kind of handicapped because, in the position I'm in right now, I can't get accomplished what I want to accomplish with the show - what the show could be.

Another control issue that comes up goes back to the hours issue – it is control of time and how that influences perception of the life/work balance.

Life/Work Balance

The issue of a perceived imbalance between the demands of news work and the demands of life played prominently among the participants.

Those who were thinking about having a family in the future saw news work as wholly incompatible with the prospect of caring for children. Many felt that desire to have a family would be one of the most likely reasons to leave the industry. Only one of the participants in the study had a child already, yet another was about to. In the first case, the mother of one said that having a family had changed her relationship with work, but the demands were workable for her. The other, a producer with a child on the way, believes that she will have to find other work:

> These hours aren't going to work for having a tiny baby. How am I going to continue to do this job?

For others who see a family in their futures, they see their news career as terminal based on that:

> I don't see myself doing this in five years. I want to start a family and I don't want to do this with a family. I don't think I could do this with a family.

Raising children is not the only family aspect of the life/work balance that participants are dealing with. In many cases, news puts a strain on marriages. Two respondents believed that news was a factor in the dissolution of their marriages. One said, "I think my career killed my marriage, absolutely it did." Another said the failure of her marriage was a wake-up call that if she was to stay in news, she needed to handle her job stress differently. Still another said that job stress nearly ended her marriage. She was going through some extreme job stress as a producer and could not leave it at work. In all three cases, they attributed the effect on their marriages to preoccupation with the stressors at work.

An additional strain that news seems to put on news workers is the effect of moving frequently on building a life. News work, especially television news work, is a career in which moving from city to city, market to market, is a common career building technique. For this reason, many people find that their tenure in any given city can be short and that has an impact on building the social support we all need. One producer describes it this way:

> It was a lot of moving around in a short amount of time. It was hard because you meet people, get into relationships, friendships, romantic relationships and people don't really understand why you're doing this.

Finally, the issue that seems to affect just about everyone interviewed, regardless of their life situation, is the simple inconvenience of news hours. An executive producer describes news as her whole life. She says she is married to news and adds that if she ever did get married and wanted to have a family, she would need to reconsider her work in news. Without a family, she still finds news takes a toll on her personal life:

> I feel that I have to figure out ways to go to the gym and figure out ways to do the things that are pretty basic for a lot of people.

It was the consensus among those interviewed that it is difficult to have a "normal" life in news. That word "normal" was used again and again. The participants wished they could do "normal" things like "normal" people.

Reward

The personal sacrifices outlined above beg the question, what's in it for them?

What are the rewards of working in news?

The answers are varied and may also be revealing in terms of the personality profile of a news worker. It seems to take a certain type of person to work in news. Those personality traits come out strongly when asking a television news producer or executive producer

to tell you why they do it. More than half of the respondents mentioned fear of boredom as one of the motivations for choosing news as an occupation. One executive producer said:

> If I had to go into a regular office and have a planned out day with this meeting and that meeting - I'd be bored to death.

Many of the respondents could not imagine themselves in a regular nine to five desk job. In fact, that was a common refrain among the producers as they evaluated job stress. They acknowledge they deal with an excessive amount of stress in their jobs, but almost every study participant said "I don't know what else I would do."

It is almost as though the stresses of the job, for some of these journalists, are as much reward as they are risk. But while the adrenaline rush, thrill a minute aspects of covering news figured prominently in what draws people to news, they also seemed to be part of what can fuel the exhaustion that can turn to burnout.

The more temperate rewards people talked about were being the first to know what is going on and covering something different every day.

Being on the front lines of history was also a major advantage for one executive producer who travels to cover big stories. He said that, for him, the biggest reward of the job is traveling for stories that make him marvel at the gravity of moment. For instance, he was

there when President Barack Obama gave his acceptance speech on election night. He was in New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Another executive producer says she lives for those big story days:

> I love being in the know about what's going on. I love being able to shape what stories people get .. the way we cover it.

The biggest payoffs to working in news, according to the study participants, are the personality-driven ones. Competition for stories, the excitement of great coverage, the adrenaline rush, the "beat the clock, beat the competition" thrill of news.

The financial payoffs got mixed reviews. Across the board, producers felt they were underpaid for the amount of work they do. For executive producers, the pay was good, or at least satisfactory.

The reward found in a sense of accomplishment also got mixed responses. Some producers and executive producers felt that their sense of accomplishment comes from knowing that there is something tangible they can point to and say, "I did that". One producer says when there are good days, it is clear what she accomplished:

> I feel, unlike most people in most jobs, I think I have a deadline on a day to day basis and I get extreme satisfaction out of the fact that I leave work at 7am and have proof, solid evidence, that I accomplished this today.

Others felt that their own perfectionism or the difficulties of producing with resource limitations made it hard to point to a day's work and feel a sense of accomplishment. Without enough days with a sense of accomplishment the result can be defeating and depersonalizing, according to one producer:

> Sometimes I'm just so glad to be done with it and going home that I don't really care at all whether I accomplished anything at all.

Finally, sense of community, was a driving force for many in the study. It was a formidable motivation for coming to work, doing their jobs and doing their jobs well. One producer said the people she works with are what she really likes about her job:

> When you're dealing with the same issues, you tend to get together and team up and, we all get along very well.

In a business that thrives on competition within a market and, certainly, within a station, sense of community can make or break a work environment. For the producers and executive producers who took part in this study, most of them benefit from camaraderie among those on their job level, and in some cases, station-wide.

Coping

Coping mechanisms producers and executive producers employed, both positive and negative, covered a wide range of

approaches. Responses covered everything from a healthy exercise routine to complete emotional detachment.

By far, the most popular form of coping with the stressors of news was escapism. Several people mentioned needing to step away from anything even remotely related to television news. Many people said they do not watch television news when they are not at work. Though there is a general expectation that a person will keep up with news even in down time, they said they had to stop because the news junkie habit led to a level of stress they found intolerable. It is a protective choice to escape the work mentality, explains one producer:

> I reach my limit when I leave work. I can't, I don't watch it on my weekends or on my days off and I don't watch at night anymore. So when I go home, I want to separate myself from work because I am generally pretty drained and just over it.

Many of the respondents were able to unwind by exercising, socializing or having an alcoholic drink. Massages were popular too, but one producer noted that she was so knotted up with stress that the masseuse could not believe she is as young as she is.

Some journalists felt the need to take a moment to cope with stress during the workday. One producer described his reaction to a stressful coverage day:

> I actually had to sit in control room for a good ten minutes. I just stayed there because I was so overwhelmed with stress, that I actually had to decompress. I couldn't get up and go back to my desk, I had to just sit there. It's one of those times that you feel the pressure

> behind your eyeballs. There's so much pressure, that your heart is just going nonstop and when it finally stops, it's like getting off a treadmill after ten miles at max speed. So I had to sit there and just decompress.

Other producers describe a process of internalizing "the freak out factor". A producer says there are lots of time when she wants to freak out, but:

> I just keep myself calm and take deep breaths and know it's going to be over in a minute.

Another producer notes that she does a good job of internalizing her stress, but it comes out at times. She says she is prone to snapping at people when she cannot keep the stress in check.

It can be a balancing act to deal with the emotions inherent in work that provoke stressful situations. An executive producer says it is a bit of a roller coaster:

> It's different every day. It really is. The level, the weight of it is different every day. Some days I feel like how am I ever going to get this done? How am I going to come up with a solution? How in the world can they expect me to do this? I just can't imagine how I'm going to do it. Some days I have a better handle on it.

It is that roller coaster that seems to require such a breadth of coping mechanisms among the producers and executive producers. What works for one person simply won't work for the next.

Shaking off the stress of the day, by all accounts, is paramount to surviving long term in news. As many of the respondents put it, they "leave it behind."

Longevity

The executive producers interviewed had strong opinions about what would have happened if they had not moved up. In all cases, they said, had they not had the opportunity to advance, they would not still be producing. One executive producer explained:

> It was just too intense for a long time and that was great for me for a long time. I loved doing it, but after you've produced thousands of shows, the novelty wears off a little bit. I got to the point where there wasn't anything I hadn't seen.

Another EP was not alone in calling it a job that is better suited to someone younger:

> I loved being a show producer and I miss it, but I think it's a younger person's job. I've worked with a couple of people who were show producers in their 40s and even early 50s and I just thought I don't want to be like that, I don't want to be 45 and banging my head against the desk because of all of the reasons that show producers bang their heads against the desk - I'd rather do it for the reason executive producers bang their heads against their desks.

Conversely, the majority of the producers thought they were more likely to get out of the business entirely, rather than take on the role of executive producer.

The producers also thought their jobs were more stressful now than they were earlier in their careers for one key reason:

> Now I know more. There are more things to think about. Before, I didn't really know what I was doing, so I didn't stress out as much about stacking or how something was written because it was how I knew how to do it. Now it's never quite right.

Though the producers, with one exception, felt their jobs had become more difficult and more stressful, they also felt that they coped better with the stress than they did earlier in their careers. This was also true of executive producers. Every respondent felt that they had improved their coping skills over time.

Some executive producers thought that there was a strong difference between who they were as producers and who they are now:

> I was very stressed out and I don't think I was doing a very good job and I don't think I was coping very well, so I had to learn to make it work and figure it out. And I think I've got it down now.

Another executive producer wished she could go back and tell her 23-year-old self what she knows now about coping:

> I used to get a lot more worked up about it, but I think one of the things is that as you get older, you mellow out and you understand how to handle things better and you understand how to internalize things or rationalize things or let things go or whatever it is. I don't notice it impacting my life the way it has in the past or when I was producing.

Still another executive producer explained that when he was a producer, he was stressed out and worried every day about how everything he did on the job reflected on him in the eyes of others. He worried more about the development of his career.

Overcoming burnout

For the people who said they were burned out at one point in their careers or for the person struggling with it now, overcoming burnout seemed to illicit varied approaches among the respondents. The attitudes were different, but the result was the same. In every case, the people who had experienced burnout in the past changed jobs. One executive producer explained that she had to get out if she was to have any chance at happiness:

> Once I start feeling that burnout, I start looking for another job. I start looking for another job within this business. I moved around a lot and that just helps with the burnout because with every new job, there were exciting new opportunities or had a new energy about it, so that was always a good motivator to stay in the business.

Another executive producer talked about what kept her going when she thought about leaving the business:

> I knew somewhere there was a new challenge. I remembered how much I used to love it. I knew it was there somewhere, I just had to find it.

Yet another executive producer detailed his plan for handling burnout if he experiences it. He would only leave his station or his company as a last resort. Before taking any drastic action, he would go to his supervisor and brainstorm ways to reenergize his work routine and minimize stressors that may be contributing to the problem.

The producer who calls herself burned out did opt to change jobs, but she did not get the reenergizing result she hoped for:

> You know that changing stations or location or managers or people around you, none of it changes. Every station is the same. No matter where you go, it's the same job with the same type of people and it doesn't change. People complain about bad stations and I say it's not going to be any different anywhere else.

For her, the burnout is more advanced and she is hoping to leave the business once she finds a suitable alternative career.

Conclusions

Interview responses from ten working television producers and executive producers reveal the long hours, heavy workload and high levels of stress news workers are dealing with every day. The sometimes extreme newsroom working conditions require intense, prolonged mental focus. They require tireless dedication. They require, in some cases, an almost superhuman ability to work at a dead run all day long. With all of this, it is important to note, the unsinkable, unflagging and undaunted tenacity that almost every one of these journalists projected in their attitudes toward work. There is a quality in the personalities of these producers and executive producers that exudes toughness. Though the working conditions may be extremely difficult and, by nearly all accounts, put news workers at risk of burnout, these journalists love what they do.

With that in mind, how does existing burnout theory help them keep doing what they love?

The Maslach Connection

The data from interviews with producers and executive producers can be compared to Maslach's theories in two different ways – an examination of how the responses fit within the components of

the Maslach Burnout Inventory and how they compare to the Six areas of Organizational Life, forwarded by Maslach and Leiter.

First, a look at news work and the MBI:

Emotional Exhaustion

The phenomenon of feeling drained appeared to be fairly common among the producers and executive producers in this study. Exhaustion comes in many forms. Emotional exhaustion seems to be a cumulative result of prolonged exhaustion, maybe a result of physical and mental exhaustion working in concert, or perhaps just an extreme of either. Maslach (1982) described the role of overload as a factor in exhaustion and burnout:

> Many different job settings that are burnout-prone have one thing in common – overload. Whether it be emotional or physical, the burden that exceeds the person's ability to handle it is the epitome of what we mean by stress. Too much information is pouring in, too many demands are being made, and it is all occurring too fast for the person to keep up with it. (p.38)

The description above could easily be referring to the working conditions in news. Newsrooms are, by their very nature, prone to the overload of information and demands.

Every respondent made some reference to being tired, exhausted, drained or depleted – just in varying degrees.

Most of the comments on the topic of exhaustion were in reference to either workload itself or the demands of the job – news

workers have to do a lot of work in a very short amount of time on a daily basis. For the study participants, it was not just the demands of breaking news, it was the demands of every day news work that contributed to exhaustion.

The most significant finding in this area is that all of the news workers interviewed experienced exhaustion.

Depersonalization

Maslach defines depersonalization as a cynical attitude toward work or those you serve in your work. The interviews revealed, for the most part, a very buoyant attitude about news work from most of the participants. There were a few exceptions to this and those responses often focused on a mismatch between the values of journalism and the business of journalism. Several of the respondents described feelings of disillusionment over what they perceive as a profits over purpose mentality. The executive producers, in particular, were the most likely to point out this conflict. Many felt increasing cynicism over the business side of journalism and said that it was only becoming more pronounced during the recession. Even with the cynicism, though, every respondent who expressed concern over the values of the industry had clearly accepted the values mismatch and had made some degree of peace with it in their professional lives, chalking it up to "the way it is."

The respondents who expressed concern over the business side of journalism seemed to have a cynical attitude, but could not be characterized as having a depersonalized view of their work as a whole. The balance of those attitudes toward every other aspect of news work was mostly positive. The only exception was the person who perceived herself as burned out. Her hopelessness and a seemingly intractable sense of defeat fit with the characteristics of depersonalization, chief among them, lacking the energy to care about her work.

Personal Accomplishment

Reduced personal accomplishment, or a feeling that the quality of ones own performance is diminished, was not a common struggle among the respondents. In every case, the interviewees felt that the quality of their work had increased as they gained more experience. The most significant finding in this area was that some respondents felt that diminished resources affected the quality of their work, but none felt that their individual accomplishment had declined in any way.

Six Areas of Organizational Life

These are the six factors that Maslach and Leiter (1997) identify as having the most influence over our perceptions of our work. All six

had a role in this study and now play a role in the analysis of the findings.

Workload

Maslach and Leiter (1997) define workload as the extent to which demands are manageable or overwhelming.

For the producers and executive producers interviewed for this study, the issue of workload was the most significant among the work stressors cited. The only challenge to that came from the issue of hours worked and, in many cases, the complaint about hours was not as much a result of unusual hours, but more that there were too many demands for the amount of hours in the day. This, again, goes back to workload. The findings here seem to suggest that the demands of news work can be overwhelming.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) describe a way of doing business that can have dangerous results for employees and seems to have some parallels to news:

> In their scramble for increased productivity, organizations push people beyond what they can sustain. It is hard to find relief at work. Restful moments between events are gone. Each demand rolls without break into the next. There is no time to catch your breath. Organizations seem to be testing the theory that people can work flat-out forever. But, with no time to recover, people soon find that their exhaustion just builds. Additional demands might be manageable if they are given more resources; extra support or equipment can turn increased demand into an opportunity. But instead, the current scramble for survival often results in a shortage of resources. (p.38-39)

The phenomenon described above shares many characteristics with descriptions offered by participants in this study, right down to the difficulty breathing.

This study finds heavy workload seems to have the most effect on job stress and risk of burnout.

Control

Maslach and Leiter (1997) offer this description of control:

> The capacity to set priorities for day-to-day work, select approaches to doing work and make decisions about the use of resources is central to being professional ... Without control, they cannot balance their interests with those of the organization. They lose interest if they do not feel that they are making things happen. (p.42)

This description has both commonalities with and differences from the findings of this study. The shared characteristics are that decision-making latitude is important to the study participants; particularly content decisions like story selection. Resource allocation also affects the producers and executive producers heavily because of the implications for workload and overall quality of work. Where the description differs is in the lack of control inherent in news. The respondents signed up for that lack of control, so it may be less likely to cause them to lose interest in news work.

Reward

The study participants did not get into television news for the reasons one may traditionally associate with reward, pay for instance.

They got in for love of writing or the excitement of covering news or the idea that they would be integrally involved in shaping stories. For this reason, many of the study participants want to keep working in news, regardless of the reward.

Community

The findings of this study show a strong connection between a sense of community and job satisfaction. It seems that many of the journalists interviewed see positive support they get from their colleagues as a reward. Many respondents said that coworkers are what they like most about their jobs.

In contrast, some of the interviewees who believed they had been burned out in the past cited poor treatment in the workplace as one of the contributing factors. This distinct link between sense of community and job satisfaction seems especially pronounced in the news workers interviewed here.

One possible explanation for the weight placed on sense of community is that the success of news work is so heavily dependent on teamwork that, for these journalists, it is an essential ingredient in a harmonious work environment.

Fairness

Maslach and Leiter (1997) define this as the respect and fairness among people in an organization. Fairness and respect, according to

the findings of this study, play a prominent role in how respondents viewed their work.

Fairness came up repeatedly in the discussions of workload versus pay. Many producers thought that a perceived increase of workload combined with, in some cases, a pay freeze was unfair. Others thought the hours they worked were unfair. Still others accept the above conditions as a business reality and are not prone to judge those working conditions as fair or unfair.

Respect is just as important as fairness to the study participants. Lack of respect, in many cases, was viewed as intolerable. Some of the respondents who had overcome burnout believed they had experienced a lack of respect in a previous work situation and they left those jobs as a result.

Values

Values are central to the practice of journalism. That said, the values mismatches found in this study were not about ethics or coverage philosophies. Instead, the interviewees who felt out of sync, differed from their management teams on the business side of journalism. Concerns over not spending the money, not devoting the resources, to produce quality coverage were the primary sources of any values mismatch.

Job Demand and Control

Karasek's theories, in many ways, dovetail with those of Maslach and Leiter, but they take on a more simplified form. In drilling down perceptions of news work to questions of demand and control, the result is basic, but revealing.

The interview respondents were unanimous in describing the demands of their jobs as high. So demanding is news work that the responses are almost expressive of exasperation, as in, of course news work is demanding. The degree is nothing short of obvious.

Control, as explained above, is a little bit more complicated.

Karasek's theory that a high demand, low control scenario is a recipe for burnout could certainly apply to news, but does it apply here?

Karasek's theory seems ill-fitting when held up to the interview responses in this study for one key reason. The producers and executive producers knew there was a lack of control inherent in news and most had accepted that as a reality of their chosen field. Further, though they may lack decision-making latitude, control over content or even control over work flow, for the majority of the respondents here, it was not a significant stressor in comparison to the many other factors that contribute to the overall picture of job stress.

Because of the oversimplification found when comparing Karasek's theories to the results here, the theories forwarded by Maslach and Leiter more accurately describe the complex range of stressors that form a picture of both burnout and risk of burnout among television news producers and executive producers.

The Final Analysis

How do television news producers and executive producers cope with job stress?

The ways in which producers and executive producers cope can be viewed by both method and degree of effectiveness. The stressors found in producing news can be alarming in some cases. The physical, mental and emotional stress is such that the CDC calls the occupation of journalist the seventh most stressful profession, right behind professions such as stockbroker, air traffic controller and police officer (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). With such a daunting degree of stress associated with the job, it requires a rare determination.

The methods of coping include escapism; redirecting energies (in the form of healthy pastimes) and in some cases, the sheer force of will to keep a positive attitude.

There were some unhealthy ways of coping, like taking the stress home and stewing about the difficulties of the day. Some

respondents said those coping mechanisms had taken a serious toll on their lives and had shaken their relationship with their work.

The degree to which respondents coped well with work stressors was viewed as improving with time on the job.

Does greater responsibility and/or longevity as a television journalist give journalists greater coping skills against burnout?

The results here were the most unclear.

Prior scholarly research shows a relationship between age and insulation against burnout. Maslach (1982) asserts that older workers, not necessarily those with greater longevity on the job, tend to suffer from burnout less frequently:

> Younger people usually have less work experience than older ones, but it turns out that the effect of age reflects more than just the length of time on the job. 'Older but wiser' seems to be the case here – with increased age, people are more stable and mature, have a more balanced perspective on life, and are less prone to the excesses of burnout. (p. 59-60)

Though there may be evidence to support age as an insulating factor against burnout, and certainly age and longevity can go hand in hand, for the purposes of this study, the focus is on longevity in the business.

There was no discernible link between longevity on the job and better coping skills. All of the respondents felt that their coping skills had improved over the course of their working lives. With that said,

there was a tendency among producers, who as a group have fewer years experience among them, to describe work stressors as more serious. As a group, they were more likely to point out problems with workload, hours or worries about family unfriendliness of the work.

Though they were more likely to view work stressors as obstacles to job satisfaction, they were no more likely to say they were coping poorly.

How are job demand and job control related to producers' perception of job stress and burnout?

Job demand seems to be a far more important factor than job control. Though it would seem that they work in tandem to promote either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the findings of this study are that demand has a greater effect on perception of job stress and burnout than control. Control seems to be something that is lacking in the nature of news and, at the same time, is part of being a producer or executive producer. The control that comes from decision-making is, in many ways, part of the demand of the job.

The demands of the work, as a whole, are a major contributing factor to job stress and add to the overall picture of burnout. Producers and executive producers described the demands of the work as high in many different areas; demands on their time, demands on

their energy, demands on their strength and demands on their emotions. All of these demands are important stressors affecting job satisfaction and, potentially, longevity in the television news business.

How do work stressors such as workload and long hours affect intention to leave?

The findings in this area of inquiry are arguably the most significant. Workload and long hours were, by far, the most frequently cited stressors that contributed to intention to leave. The vast majority of respondents said that the hours and workload, in combination with the unsuitability of the hours and workload to having a family, were the most likely reasons they would leave the industry.

Further, some said that they already intend to leave the business for these reasons when the need arises.

Maslach (1982) underscores the importance of finding balance between work and home:

> If all of the knowledge and advice about how to beat burnout could be summed up in one word, that word would be balance. Balance between stress and calm, balance between work and home– these stand in clear contrast to the overload, understaffing, overcommitment and other imbalances of burnout. (p.147)

Finding that balance seems to be the challenge in a business that requires such intense dedication of personal and professional resources. Finding that balance is what may ultimately prevent burnout from ending great producing careers prematurely.

The Future

This research study does nothing if it does not expose fertile ground for further exploration. A more expansive study is needed to uncover the true scope of job stress and risk for burnout, generalizable to the entire news producing population.

The phenomena described in this study suggest several new areas for future investigation:

What are the stressors that are causing risk of burnout, over the population of producers?

How widespread is burnout?

How widespread is risk of burnout?

How is burnout affecting journalistic quality at television stations?

What could the industry do, what could employers do, to manage burnout and retain producers?

Some of these questions may be answered with a large sample quantitative study of working producers, but it may also be beneficial to study producers who have left the industry.

The problems uncovered in this study have only begun to illuminate the growing need for the television news industry to reexamine its work environments and reevaluate the best ways to

keep producers and executive producers inspired and, ultimately, engaged.

Appendix A

Questions

1. How long have you been a producer/executive producer?
2. When you got into this line of work, what did you think it would be like? Is it what you expected? How is it different?
3. Please describe what an average work day is like for you.
4. What do you like about your job?
5. What do you dislike about your job?
6. How do you feel about your job at the start of each work day?
7. How do you usually feel at the end of each work day? Accomplished? Irritated? Relieved?
8. Has your job become more difficult in the past 2/5/10 years? If so, what do you think has changed?
9. Do you think you have enough resources to do your job? Has the amount of resources you have to work with changed since your time on the job – in your time in the industry?
10. Do you think you get paid well for what you do? Do you think the ratio of amount of pay to workload has changed since you've been in your current job? How about while you've been in the industry?

11. Have there been layoffs or has there been talk of layoffs at your station? If so, please describe how that has affected your perspective on your work, your job security, your future with the station or in the industry?
12. Where do you see yourself job-wise in the next 2/5/10 years?
13. If you plan to get out of the news business, why?
14. How would you describe the demands of your job?
15. Do you have the level of responsibility you want? Do you want more control over content?
16. Please describe the amount of control you have over your daily work life. Do you wish you had more control over your work day?
17. How would you describe your job stress?
18. On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your overall job stress?
19. Can you give me an example of a work situation that caused you an increase in stress. How did you cope with that stress?
20. How do you usually cope with work stress?
21. Has your level of energy and effort you put into your job increased or decreased over the course of your career?
22. Do you think the quality of your work has increased or decreased over time?

23. Does your work give you sense of accomplishment at the end of the day? Does it give you this feeling more now or less now than in the past?
24. How has your degree of concern for the quality of your work changed?
25. As you get more experience in the industry, do you feel more stress than you did earlier in your career? Why is that?
26. Do you cope with work stress more effectively or less effectively than you did earlier in your career?
27. Would you consider yourself burned out? If so, how long do you think you have felt that way? What would you attribute it to?
28. If you are not burned out now, do you think you are headed for burnout? If not, what do you credit for that?
29. Is burnout enough of a reason for you to leave the industry?
30. Is burnout the most likely reason you would leave the industry?

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