HAPPY TO SERVE: THE ROLE OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

IN JOURNALISM JOB SATISFACTION

_____

A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

_____

by

MATTHEW DULIN

Tom Warhover, Thesis Supervisor

JULY 2018

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School,

have examined the thesis entitled

HAPPY TO SERVE: THE ROLE OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

IN JOURNALISM JOB SATISFACTION

presented by Matthew Dulin,

a candidate for the degree of master of arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

_____

Professor Tom Warhover

_____

Professor Ebony Reed

_____

Professor Keith Greenwood

_____

Professor Julius Riles

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTERS

LST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Journalism jobs have experienced significant changes in recent years. From adding multimedia skills in expectations during the era of convergence, to the current demand for audience engagement skills, practitioners have seen the demands on their work grow exponentially as resources are being dramatically reduced. While this has been shown to be a recipe for burnout, this study seeks to understand the motivational properties of new skillsets and tasks. Through the job characteristics model, used in previous eras to study "job enlargement," where workers are assigned multiple tasks as a way to improve productivity and satisfaction, the value of audience engagement as a tool to provide enhanced feedback and perceived significance is explored. Social capital theory helps explain how a news worker who employs more audience engagement in their work may experience better job outcomes compared to one who does not. A relationship is indeed found through a survey of news workers (*N*=110) across the industry, demonstrating that audience engagement contributes positively to the job characteristics model for some journalists. These findings have implications for newsroom managers, who may be able to apply the job characteristics model to further enhance work outcomes and job satisfaction through intelligent job enlargement.

Introduction

It's not easy being a journalist these days.

Under pressure to "adapt or die," news organizations and news workers have scrambled and stumbled toward an age of reclaimed relevancy, or at least toward another day without layoffs. From early forms of multimedia partnerships such as Tampa's News Center, a "temple of convergence" putting TV, web and print newsrooms in one building (Colon, 2000) to the "digital-first" gospel of John Paton (Kirchner, 2011) to the "audience-first" approach being adopted at the *Financial Times* and elsewhere (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016), the role of the journalist and news worker has been in a state of rapid, disruptive redefinition for over 20 years. Though the journalism workforce is considerably smaller — shedding 39 percent of its jobs from 1994 to 2014 (Mitchell, Holcomb, & Weisel, 2016) — the demand for more compelling content and improved audience relationships has only increased as legacy print organizations try to hold onto loyal readers and build new ones on digital platforms.

This pressure has spurred a wide range of job redefinition strategies with disrupting effects on the workforce: multimedia journalism, content sharing, citizen journalism and outsourcing (van Weezel, 2009). Undoubtedly, the nature of the work has changed, and on some level, being a journalist means something vastly different today than it did a generation ago. Meanwhile, despite the loading up of skills and education needed to be proficient producers and editors of news, salaries in many cases have not expanded to compensate. Moreover, "despite starter salaries being so low, the

competition to be a journalist has never been greater, with the requirement of not only a degree but a postgraduate certificate" (Cushion, 2007, p. 127).

Continuing the trend of loading up skills on the journalism trade, the advent of social media platforms, sophisticated web publishing tools and digital analytics all added even more potential duties to master. Some of these practices have brought up similar questions from the convergence era, when some journalists were being asked to produce audio, video and text-based content: Who does what job, and what takes precedence? In that era, some journalists confronted changes in the workplace, such as having print journalists work alongside TV producers, referred to as structural convergence (Gordon, 2003) while others were expected to become "Inspector Gadget" journalists, a single reporter-producer who could churn out media for multiple platforms (Dailey, Demo, & Spillman, 2005). Unlike the broadcast-print-web skill dynamic that challenged newsrooms in this period, the emergence of audience engagement has brought the editorial and business functions of news organizations into an era of collaboration — or competition — as the "job" of developing audiences has become paramount. An emphasis on the newsroom's role in audience engagement and development was a core feature of *The New York Times* Innovation Report. Its first two recommendations were "Make developing our audience a core and urgent part of our mission," and "Collaborate with business-side units focused on reader experience" (Sulzberger, 2014, p. 6). The rise of audience development as an industrywide priority has also created new turf battles and ethical questions about who owns the audience and how the relationship should be used (Moses, 2017).

"Audience engagement" is a broad term, encompassing a wide set of practices that vary depending on an organization's business model, goals, capabilities and market position. That said, pinning down an agreed-upon definition of engagement eludes many professionals, even ones who work in the same office: In a survey of digital media workers, 54 percent said their organization does not have a shared definition of engagement (Carr, 2016). And yet a similar share of news managers in a separate study indicated that "increasing levels of engagement" would be a top priority in 2016 (Newman, 2016).

As the importance of audience engagement has risen, the complexity of journalism jobs has increased. What has occurred is yet another tremendous redefinition of what is expected of newsrooms in the digital age. Not only are formerly print-focused organizations now housing multimedia teams and operating a "feed the beast" web content strategy, they are now either adding audience engagement editors or are expecting newsroom producers to be more heavily involved in audience interaction (or both). Those who have taken positions with responsibility for increasing audience engagement have become, as one industry observer put it, "the newest most important person in newsrooms" (Moses, 2014).

Job change and redefinition are not new phenomena. Disruption and downsizing have affected many industries, and the study of these dynamics has given researchers and managers some ways to mitigate the negative effects on the people who do the work. Well-established job change and job satisfaction theories provide a lens to study how the emergence of audience engagement may have the potential to make or break a journalist's experience on the job. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to identify whether and to

what extent news workers' use of audience engagement is contributing to higher satisfaction with their work. The findings can help guide newsroom managers in deciding how to assign and share audience engagement duties across different roles and individual preferences and how to maximize the job-satisfaction gains by amplifying those practices intelligently.

Before undertaking a study, the first step is to lay out the important components that contribute to the dynamic of journalism job satisfaction and the role that new audience engagement tasks may have on it. The literature on job satisfaction in other industries as well as in journalism yield useful insights, but also show that opportunities exist for further study of what the work of journalism actually means for the people experiencing it. Further, the literature will also help ground this study in the job characteristics model, a tool for examining which aspects of a job are motivating (or exhausting). It will also explore the concept of social capital, which can explain how audience engagement may especially be well suited for enhancing job satisfaction by enhancing an individual's capacity to influence others or complete tasks. From there, a study will determine whether evidence exists for a connection between audience engagement and job satisfaction.

Literature Review

How did the industry get here? A look at the emerging influence of audiences on journalism, a craft undergoing digital disruption, as well as the theoretical concepts behind job satisfaction and social capital, informs the study.

From "digital first" to "audience first"

In the early 2000s, convergence was the dominating feature of journalism management research (and practice) as the industry grappled with an evolving media environment. At the time, loss of journalism quality was a common concern cited by studies of converging newsrooms. Smith et al. (2007) found that one in four journalists at mid-market newsrooms felt that convergence reduced the quality of their journalism. In a survey by Huang, et al. (2006), 38 percent of editors and news professionals agreed that quality would deteriorate when cross-platform work had to be performed. In one case study, however, journalistic quality remained relatively stable where workers retained their specializations in their native media format, but worked in cross-functional teams (E. Huang, Rademakers, Fayemiwo, & Dunlap, 2004).

These developments coincided with sudden, devastating declines in advertising revenue — from $49.3 billion in 2006 to $23.9 billion in 2011 (Mitchell & Rosenstiel, 2012) — on top of an economic recession and a fundamental shift in media consumption patterns toward mobile devices and social networks. Rather than a tool for strategic growth, convergence became a survival strategy. "Adapt or die" became a common refrain (Smolkin, 2006).

As convergence efforts attracted the attention of scholars, so did the concerns of news workers. As early as 2004, Singer's assessment of journalists in newspaper-TV partnerships found signs of worry about workload. News websites increasingly required constant "feedings" per day whereas the newspaper required only one per day. Meanwhile, reproducing content for TV completely unsettled print journalists' routines, as the hunt for visuals and writing for broadcast demanded more time and energy. Smith,

Tanner, and Duhe's 2007 survey of local television news workers in medium-sized markets revealed a raft of tensions. Some of the open-ended responses from journalists spoke to the pressures of convergence work. "We're maxed out," said one. "More manpower is needed." Said another: "Convergence places a lot more responsibility on my shoulders. I have far more work to do here than if my station did not practice convergence" (p. 568). Another discovery in the study: All of the TV stations had websites for cross-publishing their work, but only half had staff dedicated to managing the site. This could only be accomplished by increasing the workload in other positions around the station. Four years later, Robinson (2011) heard similar complaints in a multi-newsroom study where convergence work was causing strain. "These things they want us to do? They are not my job. No one is paying me any extra to do this extra work," said one reporter (p. 1133). Robinson observed that the normal routines of journalism — interviewing, reporting, writing — were being crowded with additional tasks such as taking photos and updating a blog. When asked to start doing video, one reporter said: "All I can think is: I wrote 10 stories last week. I have five due this week, plus three reviews, plus two blogs. When am I supposed to do video?" (p. 1134)

Although convergence demanded more from journalists no matter their "home" medium, the literature also suggests that some saw these new tasks as an opportunity to learn and grow, motivating them toward higher levels of job performance (Singer, 2004). This move toward multiple skills was seen as a positive step away from "assembly line" journalism where workers had little say over the final product and toward a model where a single journalist could affect more than one aspect of production (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008). This shift demanded a high level of versatility in the workforce, and Saltzis and

Dickinson note that journalists were not always flexible, for two reasons: It is more difficult to train an established professional in a new skill than it is to train a new hire with no experience, and established journalists are not willing to change or abandon practices that made them successful in the first place. Given the industry's state of affairs, however, change was not an option. "Today's media worker, to survive, has to have a working knowledge of more than her immediate duties. To function effectively within a value network, she must also understand the roles of those around her and how they fit together" (Deuze, Elefante, & Steward, 2010, p. 230).

Of course, mere survival is not ideal; workers who endure layoffs and redefined roles are often left in untenable situations. Reinardy's survey of layoff survivors showed that those lucky enough to keep their jobs faced increasing workloads and expansion of job duties. (2010) One respondent told Reinardy: "We are expected to produce more with less support from our supervisors who have taken the attitude that we should be happy to just have a job" (p. 13). It's not surprising, then, that a follow-up study found indicators of burnout among journalists: rising rates of exhaustion and cynicism accelerated by a declining sense of accomplishment (Reinardy, 2011).

It was in this climate that news organizations began to expand efforts to reconnect with audiences through the very platforms that in many ways had helped accelerate its demise — web and social media — and adopt strategies to incorporate more reader feedback and contributions (Brems, Temmerman, Graham, & Broersma, 2017). The availability of sophisticated analytics tools provided insight into reader preferences and habits online; social media platforms created new ways to connect and respond to audiences; emerging practices allowed journalists to listen in on social media

conversations and harvest content from citizen producers. These new demands meant even more skills had to be adopted by already stressed news workers.

Job enlargement: what happens when jobs get bigger

Of course, journalism is not the first profession to go through such disruptive and substantive changes. Organizational studies have shown that managers who question the efficiencies of industrial division of labor can increase output, product quality and job satisfaction by adopting more skills and expanded job duties. The theory of "job enlargement" refers to this phenomenon, a horizontal expansion of related tasks. In its original context, it looked at how assembly line workers could improve performance and satisfaction by being assigned more tasks and autonomy in the process. It is not the same as job enrichment, or vertical job loading, which is more like developing a deeper specialization or taking on a higher-level coordinating role (Maxwell, 2008). In the literature, job enlargement is generally seen as a strategy to reduce costs in the long term, with higher employee engagement and motivation. In the journalism context, job enlargement might look like a reporter being tasked with writing a story, taking his or her own photos, post their stories into a content management system and edit their own copy, giving them full accountability over the process. Job enrichment would be like a general assignment reporter developing a specialty or beat that they become an expert in.

A working definition of job enlargement proposed by Kilbridge (1960) is salient to our study: "the expansion of job content to include a wider variety of tasks" (p. 357). An important point of clarity offered by Kilbridge is that enlargement requires an expansion of the types of tasks involved, not simply more of the same kind of tasks. The

second feature is the expansion of worker freedom over setting the pace and method of accomplishing the goal. Finally, the worker obtains more responsibility for the quality of the final product, for better or worse. (He notes that to ensure product quality, regular inspections should be conducted.) In his 1960 case study, Kilbridge discovered job enlargement's chief benefit: cost savings. Despite costing more time on the front end to train a new worker, the salary savings was significant over time. With sufficient training and support, job enlargement could maximize efficiency in a production-oriented organization. As an added benefit, giving employees more work but also more control over the work also contributed to increased satisfaction and motivation, as workers became more vested in the process (Conant & Kilbridge, 1965).

Some studies hinted at the need for a more nuanced view, however, suggesting that growing tasks can backfire. Bishop and Hill (1971) found that job enlargement outcomes may be influenced by the perception of workers' status in the organization. To take this into account, managers must consider other methods of engaging workers besides expanding their list of responsibilities. Extending this work, McClelland and Campion found increased employee satisfaction, more mental engagement, and greater chances of catching errors when workers were given more duties along with more autonomy. (1991) The study clarified that enlarged jobs can benefit the individual as well as the organization. From a motivational standpoint, enlarged jobs were more likely to lead to higher employee satisfaction, less "mental underload" — i.e. boredom — and fewer mistakes. The organizational impacts with these gains echo those of earlier scholars: higher training costs and the likelihood of higher compensation (or at least an expectation of it) for the newly skilled workers. An important caveat, according to

McClelland and Campion: to be successful, job changes should be linked to organizational goals, and priorities need to be made clear, because not all goals can be pursued simultaneously. Bottom line: To create a more satisfied workforce, job changes have to be about more than cutting costs or being more efficient (1991).

Moreover, when Campion & McClelland revisited their work (1993), they determined that job enlargement by way of additional tasks had limited benefits and more negative outcomes, whereas "knowledge enlargement" provided positive outcomes, especially when compensation rewarded employee's efforts to expand skills.

There is a fine line where division of labor hinders the organization; that's where job enlargement, when applied strategically, can correct for inefficiency. Adding too many duties can backfire. Task difficulty might be a critical factor: Chung notes, "It is necessary to design a job to contain an optimal level of task performance difficulty in order to elicit work motivation" (1977, p. 115). Too difficult, and the worker becomes discouraged: "Overly enlarged jobs are not motivating because they require more skills and abilities than workers possess."

Indeed, the literature on journalism jobs gives ample evidence to support a common-sense hypothesis: As work demands increase, burnout also increases, especially when they are tied to workload and an individual's perceived effectiveness. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has been used in a variety of fields to evaluate levels of exhaustion, cynicism and efficacy as forces that interact and possibly lead to burnout tendencies. Efficacy, for example, is a potent antidote for exhaustion. Some of the predictive variables identified as contributors to burnout: work overload, control of job resources to do the job, a lack of reward, social support from colleagues, perceptions of

organizational justice (or lack thereof), and a conflict of personal and job values. These forces would work against efficacy and exacerbate levels of exhaustion and cynicism about the organization (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009).

In a study of sports editors, the MBI determined that most sports editors experience moderate levels of burnout tendencies (Reindary, 2008). It also found that "overload" was a significant predictor of exhaustion and could contribute to cynicism. Overload, as defined in that study, was the perception of having too many tasks to accomplish in the time allowed, putting work quantity and quality in conflict. Reinardy notes that this amplifies the pre-existing stressors native to newspaper work: "physical anxiety of deadlines, unusual hours and excessively long workdays" in addition to fear of being scooped, anger from uncooperative sources, and conflict.

On a broad level, journalists report feeling less satisfied in their jobs. The "American Journalist in the Digital Age" report (Willnat & Weaver, 2014) recorded the lowest level of survey participants saying they were "very satisfied" since 1971, and higher levels of respondents saying they were dissatisfied. In the same report, journalists indicated a lessened perception that they were autonomous in deciding which stories to pursue. A majority of journalists acknowledged that social media had become a big part of their job for reporting and audience engagement (69 percent indicated they used social media to engage with audiences), but they did not see it making them more productive — only 25 percent agreed with this statement. These results indicate there is widespread strain on journalists and that the adding-on of responsibilities may not be helping the situation.

Countering burnout: efficacy, feedback and meaningfulness?

The job characteristics model provides a tool for researchers to explore issues such as autonomy, motivation, and job satisfaction. The model was developed in part to attempt to measure the effects of job design, which includes enlargement and enrichment (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). It attempts to explain how the tasks of a job affect work attitudes and behavior. The model works from a typology of five characteristics, which in turn influence three psychological states and produce desirable outcomes. (Figure 1)

Those psychological states — *experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results* — contribute to a worker's overall motivation and satisfaction, and should also be apparent in the final outcomes of their labor. The five job characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. *Skill variety* refers to "degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee." *Task identity* is about whether the job entails completion of a "whole" identifiable unit of work, say for example, an article or a page layout. *Task significance* speaks to the perceived importance of the work in terms of how much of an impact it has on people either internal or external to the work environment. *Autonomy* is the degree of freedom the employee enjoys in determining how they go about the job. Finally, *feedback* refers to the ability of the employee to receive direct and clear information about their performance on the job, either through observation or knowledge of results; for example, a reporter can see his story on air or in print and assess its merits, or as we'll explore in this study, they can seek out audience feedback or try to determine other external impacts from their work (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

In a meta-analysis of job characteristics studies, Fried and Farris (1987) concluded that the model could be used to reliably predict the psychological states of employees. The study also found that a focus on job feedback could provide the most broad-based benefits to an organization, as it was the only job characteristic positively correlated to all psychological states and outcomes. The theory itself is rooted in job strategies applied to job redesign and the rethinking of what a "job" should be. Managers looking to enhance productivity can turn to the theory in search of answers to the "why" behind individual worker preferences and the impact of task assignments (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975). This supports the idea that feedback can be a critical feature to emphasize when looking for ways to restore or improve job satisfaction.

In the journalism context, job enlargement might look like one of these hypothetical situations:

1) A copy editor is hired to edit and refine articles primarily for print publication. Then the editor is cross-trained to design pages, and now must edit and design, but the additional work is outweighed by the feeling that the editor now has more say over the final product from end to end, which feels satisfying. Next, the editor is asked to handle web posting and social media for the content he is packaging for print. The editor feels good because he's learning new skills that will keep him employable and versatile, and he's having a greater impact on the product overall. He feels more capable and confident about future challenges.

2) A sports reporter is hired and produces a few articles a week. As the web production becomes emphasized, he's now producing many more articles and

starts becoming active on Twitter. Because of layoffs, there are fewer editors

seeing his stories before they go out, so he has to take on more self-editing

tasks and exercises more autonomy about what gets published and when. The

reporter has access to his analytics and begins to learn what content is worth

spending time on and what is not. When he shoots photos or videos with his

phone to share on social media, his audience engages with him, and this

makes him feel more relevant and more valuable to his newsroom.

In both cases, jobs expand with potential upsides for the journalist, though the specter of

burnout and the potential for error remains high. The question is, to what extent do these

enlarged jobs and their outcomes ring true in the real world? And does the role of this

audience engagement work that has been added help create an overall more satisfying

job?

A way forward: Can the audience save our souls—and our jobs?

Of course, managers are not using job enlargement at traditional news

organizations in the post-convergence landscape as an intentional motivational tool —

they are often using it as a crisis-mitigation strategy for declining newsroom staffs and

adapting to new audience preferences. Therein lies a huge management challenge —

embracing these changes could be empowering, but they could also further strain the

newsroom workforce (Deuze, Elefante and Steward 2010). Market conditions have

forced managers' hands, and jobs have changed for all journalists. Deuze et al. encourage

media managers to embrace a new world of overlapping skills and competencies, and call

for new research to address how managers can make that happen in an effective way, rather than dwell on the changes themselves. And of course, the answers must be reconciled against the trend of harvesting, especially among publicly-traded newspaper companies, where cost-cutting and layoffs are intended to maximize operating margins rather than enhance product quality (Meyer 2009).

In some circles, audience engagement has been noted as a practice that aligns with journalism practice and may improve their satisfaction with their work, though this goal is secondary to delivering economic benefits to news organizations through increased audience size, and thus potentially improving advertising and subscription revenue. The research in this area lacks robust, data-driven studies, one researcher found. Jennifer Brandel, founder of the audience engagement platform Hearken, told a researcher that its business model was built on the insight that audience engagement was a better way of doing journalism: "So I haven't like gone to get data beyond my own experience, and the experiences I'm hearing from other reporters who are having these relationships, but from my experience as a reporter, getting to work with a member of the public was really meaningful for them" (Nelson, 2018, p. 537). But, as Nelson's study concludes, little empirical data exists to support that audience engagement in fact produces better journalism or better journalists. This has not held back the company necessarily, as he concludes: "As my fieldwork suggests, a number of journalism stakeholders innately believe that if news publishers pay closer attention to understanding and communicating with their audiences, they will find revenue they desperately need while providing impactful, public service journalism" (p. 540). After that paper's publication and resulting publicity, Brandel wrote that her approach to engagement does have real-world

results in terms of increased audience size, revenue and subscriptions (Brandel, 2018).

That said, no study of engagement has addressed its influence on journalists' job

satisfaction aside from anecdotal evidence.

Audience engagement strategies in many newsrooms may have taken the form of

job enlargement, as more tasks are being incorporated into journalism workflows that

were not previously assigned to that role, and as new positions are being created to assist

and direct those efforts—i.e. audience engagement or social media editors. As a set of

tasks, audience engagement might contribute to the components of *feedback* and *task*

significance and other attributes of the job characteristics model, which provides an

opportunity to apply job motivation theories to understand what is happening to the

workforce of the Fourth Estate. If media managers hope to retain talent but also

continually add new expectations and evolve to meet audience needs, it behooves the

researcher to explore that dynamic.

By enhancing these features of the job characteristics model, in turn the worker's

experienced meaningfulness of the work would be expected to also increase, according to

the model. Studies have shown that job enlargement can be as effective as, if not more

effective than, pay increases when job satisfaction is the goal. In a study of teachers' job

enlargement programs, it was shown that merit-pay programs tended to standardize

teaching while job enlargement increased the variety and range of instructional practice,

resulting in better motivational outcomes. A critical insight: "The sense that one is

accomplishing a personally meaningful task is a fundamental intrinsic reward. That

reward is increased when the organization facilitates the teacher's effort to accomplish

the task" (Firestone, 1991, p. 285). The role of meaningful work as an aspect of job

satisfaction was further explored in a three-part experimental study. Researchers found that even work that may not have initially been considered meaningful can be seen as such by way of reframing the task itself: "Our findings indicate that even the most meaningless task can be imbued with meaning when it is attached to a significant, prosocial cause" (Allan, Duffy, & Collisson, 2018). This study billed itself as the first to use an experimental approach to show how leveraging task significance can increase the perception (and perhaps by extension, the reality) that work is more meaningful.

Defining "audience engagement" and its influence

As has been noted, a widely agreed-upon definition of audience engagement and its goals is elusive. Industry and academic research, however, point to a few common skillsets. In professional practice, journalists tend to participate in audience-related tasks in two main spheres: 1) using web analytics reports, and 2) social media interaction and monitoring. While audience engagement may encompass much more—from moderating events to streaming live video on Facebook — recent studies have recognized the prevalence of social media use and analytics as becoming standard journalism practice (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Nelson, 2018; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2017).

Prior to the digital age and having readily available statistics on reader behavior online, many communications workers did not have very clear ideas about their audience. In fact, in many cases it was observed that media producers had an image in their heads of an audience, one that may or may not exist in reality (McQuail, 2010). This was not a major concern for some media producers, because the audience in reality does not become formed until after the media production is broadcast or published. This is no

longer an ideal approach to creating news products. Because of commercial pressure to capitalize on ephemeral online audiences or build loyalty with existing readers, news producers have to spend more time thinking about the audience.

Analytics have indeed made the audience a more influential part of news decision-making. One study acknowledged that as this area of focus grows, news managers and producers may tend to follow a marketing perspective rather than a public service orientation when making news decisions and allocating resources (McKenzie, Lowrey, Hays, Chung, & Woo, 2011). Regardless of use, there is a hunger for this data among newsroom staffs. A report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism observed: "Journalists today not only *need* analytics to navigate an ever-more competitive battle for attention. Many journalists also *want* analytics, as an earlier period of skepticism seems to have given way to interest in how data and metrics can help newsrooms reach their target audiences and do better journalism" (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016). This data-driven approach to considering the audience has become normalized in many newsrooms. Hanusch and Tandoc (2017) found a correlation between use of analytics and an increased value placed on consumer orientation, which in turn could affect short- and long-term editorial decisions: "Seeing the number of unique visitors to the site, the number of views a page gets, and the amount of time readers spend on a story, among others, easily and regularly, could be socializing journalists into prioritizing these metrics" (p. 14). The adoption of a metric-oriented approach to audiences and journalism decisions has the capacity to demotivate some journalists, however, as Min (2016) notes: "This analytics and algorithms-driven journalism neglects the crucial role

that journalism has in deliberately bringing people together around a shared sense of vital issues" (p. 578).

Indeed, a public or civic orientation, which some journalists have, has been shown to be correlated with less audience interaction. A 2016 study viewed audience engagement and social media use through the lens of how journalists perceived their role. For example, journalists who saw themselves as "populist mobilizers" or "entertainers" were more likely to prioritize proactive engagement by asking questions and creating conversations with the audience, while "public service" journalists were more likely to take a more passive approach. The study also noted that journalists at smaller news organizations were likely to highly value face-to-face and one-to-one interactions (such as taking calls or responding to emails) above social media as better ways to engage with audiences (Holton, Lewis, & Coddington, 2016). Adding another perspective, one respondent in the study de-emphasized relationships but valued public involvement in the work: "I don't really think about having a relationship with readers. I think about providing good journalism and doing what it takes to make our newspaper more relevant, which involves allowing readers to have some input or getting input from the general public." This attitude suggests that some journalists believe that audience engagement is "outside the scope of their role" (p. 856).

Holton, Lewis and Coddington's 2016 study may offer the most salient insights into how journalists identify audience practices on surveys. Their study identified journalists who said they felt a need to be "more available to audiences" — such as sharing stories on social media and inviting feedback. Others considered themselves "always on respondents" who purposefully allocated more time to connect with readers

on social media and constantly absorbed their feedback. More traditional journalists, on the other hand, appreciated social media's role in pushing news out, but saw audience interaction as having a physical presence, like being visible in coffee shops and town halls. These journalists feel they have "actual conversations with people [that produce] much more constructive discussion than trying to engage people online" (p. 854). However, the study also concluded that there is a segment of journalists who see no need to do any form of engagement.

Audience engagement, social capital and job satisfaction

Why would audience engagement—including social media use and audience analytics—affect job satisfaction? The audience has always been part of the mass media equation, but including them in the process of producing journalism has not always been at the forefront of industry practice, but researchers have noted that as digital media has shifted power to audiences, organizations are embracing an audience-focused approach in search of greater success, with a reliance on digital metrics as a proxy for understanding audience attitudes and preferences throughout the news production process (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018).

Aside from employer-provided incentives, there may be a deeper reason why journalists who are in touch with their audiences feel more effective. Social capital is a concept that speaks to the influence of social networks, civic engagement and trust in others — put succinctly, "it is the set of cooperative relations between social actors that facilitate solutions to collective action problems" (Requena, 2003, p. 332). Social capital is understood to have two forms, bridging social capital, which refers to the resources

derived from social network relationships, such as the acquisition of new information, and bonding social capital, which is related to social and emotional support from strong relationships (Putnam, 2001). Studies have sought to understand the influence of these concepts on job satisfaction and how new social media tools have been leveraged to amplify the social capital of individuals.

Requena (2003) studied social capital specifically with the context of the workplace from the perspective that organizations provide the best potential for where trust and cooperation have the most impact on achieving larger goals. The study found that "social relations on the job, commitment to the company or organization, communication and possibilities of influence are all elements that explain a large portion of the total variance of satisfaction and quality of life in the workplace" (p. 356). However, this study spoke mostly to the power of internal relationships within the organization, not necessarily those with external clients or audience members. Also, social media was not studied specifically, but the role an individual's capacity for greater organizational influence plays in improved satisfaction outcomes is important.

A study specifically on the use of Facebook among workers across several industries and professional ranks explored the link between bridging social capital, social media use, and job outcomes. The researchers found that online bridging social capital had a significant impact on job performance, while bonding social capital influenced job satisfaction. The effects of bridging social capital stemmed from an increased pool of social resources provided by social media use, while bonding social capital was associated with workers' ability to communicate and foster cohesion at the workplace (L. V. Huang & Liu, 2017). These findings suggest that, in the context of audience

engagement, the extended social network ties available to journalists through social media and access to accurate audience information can improve their ability to discover novel insights about the audience and act upon them, thus increasing their capacity to produce effective journalism and their influence over editorial decision-making. It makes sense within the social capital theory that greater access to social resources increases the potential to be more influential. Indeed, in one study, investing time and effort into developing a personal brand on Twitter had benefits for journalists and may give them more relevance, as "building a strong connection with the audience can be an optimal way to create customer loyalty" (Brems et al., 2017, p. 456). Given the role that feedback and meaningfulness play in the job characteristics model, it stands to reason that social capital may arise from audience engagement in a way that enhances journalists' job satisfaction.

The questions at hand

Having established that, after surviving the trials of media convergence, journalism is now undergoing a process of being redefined once again — from "digital first" to "audience first," an opportunity now exists for the researcher to step back and look at how this new image of a journalist is taking shape and how it may affect what people in the role experience and what managers may expect of them. The job characteristics model has been shown to be effective at evaluating the motivating properties of jobs that have experienced change, and the social capital theory provides a plausible mechanism to explain how audience-engaged journalists may be more likely to thrive in their careers.

In addressing the hypotheses below, a study was designed to identify how audience engagement practices lend themselves toward fostering higher levels of job satisfaction attributes among journalists. If a relationship is found, it may be evidence that some behaviors and habits of "audience first" journalists can be adopted by more members of the profession, increasing their resiliency and their value in the news business.

H1. Audience engagement tasks will contribute to higher levels of perceived feedback from the job among journalists.

H2. Audience engagement tasks will contribute to higher levels of task significance among journalists.

H3. Audience engagement tasks will contribute to higher levels of internal motivation among journalists.

H4. Audience engagement tasks will contribute to higher levels of perceived meaningfulness from the work.

H5. Audience engagement tasks will contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction among journalists.

Methods

To confirm or challenge these hypotheses, the study must be able to capture indicators of both audience engagement task involvement as well as job satisfaction. To accomplish this, a quantitative approach was selected in order to be able to find relationships across a wide range of workers' experiences. To construct the survey instrument, Elements of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) developed by Hackman and

Oldham (Oldham, 1976) were used to gather insight into perceived job satisfaction and motivation. Because the actual JDS is an extensive questionnaire intended to help guide job redesign efforts across multiple disciplines, the survey used in this study borrowed only a few elements from the job characteristics model that focused on the influence of "perceived meaningfulness," as that is the area where audience engagement might play a larger role — specifically with regard to *task significance* and *feedback*. In addition, it gathered indicators of general satisfaction and internal motivation. The survey for this study borrowed directly from a draft of the instrument outlined in Hackman and Oldham's *Work Redesign* (1980) with modifications. In its original application, the JDS was used to provide scores to calculate the motivating potential score (MPS) of a job. Because the objective of this study was not to evaluate all of the characteristics of journalism jobs, the questionnaire used only part of the calculus outlined by Hackman and Oldham that applied to the defined hypotheses, and an overall MPS was not calculated as part of this survey.

To measure audience engagement, the survey drew inspiration from the census of the profession conducted by Weaver and Willnat (2014), which asked questions about workload, specific duties and tasks, and attitudes toward audience engagement. As the industry grapples with an agreed-upon definition of what constitutes "audience engagement," this survey asked about the use of analytics, reading and interacting on social media and to what degree workers had the opportunity to engage with the audience. This allowed respondents to consider what they do in their jobs that fit these questions to evaluate how their own concept of audience engagement influences their perception of their jobs. The survey did not measure specifically how respondents felt

about audience engagement; it merely asked to what extent it was involved in their work. A copy of the full questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

The independent variable was audience engagement. The dependent variables are *feedback*, *significance, meaningfulness*, *satisfaction* and *internal motivation.* To calculate each, the scores were averaged for each metric to create a composite variable. Table 1 outlines how each item was mapped to a variable.

For each variable in this model, 5 was the highest possible score and 1 was the lowest. Scores for each variable were averaged to see what we learned about our sample specifically from the audience engagement questions. So for example, looking at the *audience engagement* variable, the average represents an overall measure of audience engagement work and attitudes, with higher scores indicating a greater use of audience engagement in the respondent's job. Similarly, a high score on satisfaction would be indicative of someone who is more satisfied with their work. Therefore, to test the hypotheses, the analysis looked for positive correlation between variables using linear regression (Frey, L., Botan C. & Kreps, 2000, p. 357) — for example, high scores of *audience engagement* are expected to correlate with high scores of *meaningfulness* and *satisfaction*, as prescribed by the hypotheses. Demographic data collected in the survey in Section 5 was used to control for other factors that might affect job satisfaction and audience engagement ratings.

The instrument was administered via email, with data collected through a Qualtrics survey. The survey was distributed through listservs and social media platforms for the Online News Association and the Society for Professional Journalists. To increase participation rates, the survey offered the option to respondents to enter a drawing for an

incentive prize. To protect the confidentiality of the responses, however, the drawing

submission was not tied to their survey responses. Because the intent was to collect data

from a wide range of journalists in order to examine the role of audience engagement in

many contexts, the survey was not targeted specifically to those who might practice

audience engagement as part of their given job title, for example, social media editors and

audience analysts.

Participants

A link to the web-based questionnaire was distributed via social media posts and

an email to 917 people identified from a database of U.S.-based journalists provided by

LeadershipMedia. A total of 136 respondents opened and initiated the survey, 88 from

social media and 48 from email. As it is not known how many people saw each social

media post, a response rate cannot be calculated. The email response rate was 5.2%. That

response rate is in line with expectations set by similar web-based surveys (Holton et al.,

2016).

The demographic questions provided some insight into the survey sample. The

median age was 32, and the gender skewed female with 62 percent of responses.

About half (51.9%) of responses were from newsrooms with 1-25 employees;

24% had 26-50; 8.7% had 51-75 and 4.8% had 76-100, leaving 10.6% with newsrooms

with over 100. While these are not exact numbers in terms of newsroom size—

respondents were asked to guess the size of their newsrooms—it gives us the sense that

we did reach a sample from a wide range of newsroom operations. When it came to type

of newsroom, the top three media identified were newspaper (47.6%), web (27.6%) and

magazine (14.3%). Respondents also supplied the department/section that their job fell under, with the vast majority sitting in a news department (78.3%) followed by arts/entertainment (6.6%), business (3.8%) and sports (1.9%). The remaining respondents responded "other" and supplied a range of departments, including science and photo. Respondents also provided their job titles directly. When these were coded into simple categories, 40 held editor or producer-level titles, 18 had social media, digital or audience-related editor/producer titles, 37 held reporter/writer titles, 7 had photo/video/multimedia titles and 2 identified as educators. The remainder of the respondents did not provide a title. Job rank ranged from executive-level to interns.

Results

After downloading the survey data from Qualtrics, it was imported into SPSS for statistical analysis. Prior to analysis, incomplete responses were removed, resulting in a final $N=110$. Answers were grouped according to the variables defined above — *audience engagement* as the independent variable, and *feedback*, *significance, internal motivation, meaningfulness,* and *satisfaction* as dependent variables, drawing from the job characteristics model. The responses were grouped by variable name, and reverse-coded answers were re-scored. The scores then were averaged to generate a composite score for each variable.

The data for each variable were subjected to reliability tests, which identified some potential problems with questionnaire items. The *audience engagement* variable consisted of five items from the questionnaire, with $\alpha = .36$. By removing two items from the model, $\alpha = .72$ was achieved. The items removed two agreement statements, "The job

itself is more difficult because of expectations to engage with the audience," and "I would like my job more if I didn't have to engage with the audience." Both were intended to be reverse-coded responses to help measure the effect of cynicism and burnout for audience engagement tasks. These items were re-tested with other items to find a better fit, but they did not improve the alpha scores for any of the measures, therefore these items were ultimately not applicable to the study.

Feedback consisted of three items. The reliability test yielded $\alpha = .79$. *Significance* consisted of three items, $\alpha = .70$. *Internal motivation* consisted of three items, $\alpha = .72$. *Meaningfulness* consisted of two items, $\alpha = .67$. This being a below ideal *alpha* range, the measure must be treated with caution. *Satisfaction* consisted of four items, $\alpha = .72$.

While one of the variables was potentially problematic, linear regression was used to evaluate the potential effects of engagement on each variable. Age and gender were used as control variables.

H1 suggested that audience engagement would predict higher levels of feedback. A regression analysis found support for this expectation ($F(3,97) = 5.463$, $p < .05$) with an R^2 of .145. Audience engagement had a positive effect on feedback, $\beta=0.34$.

H2 suggested audience engagement would explain higher levels of perceived significance of the job. A regression analysis ($F(3,97) = 3.844$, $p < .05$), with an R^2 of .106, showed that participants' audience engagement activity had a positive association with significance, $\beta=0.23$.

H3 suggested that audience engagement would predict higher levels of internal motivation. A regression analysis did not yield a statistically significant relationship (F (3,97) = 0.373, p >.05) with an R^2 of -.019.

H4 suggested that audience engagement would predict higher levels of meaningfulness about the job. A regression analysis found support for this connection (F (3,97) = 3.559, p < .05) with an R^2 of .099. Participants' reported level of meaningfulness was associated with higher levels of audience engagement, β=0.23 points.

H5 predicted that audience engagement would increase overall job satisfaction. A regression analysis found a statistically significant, positive relationship (F (3,97) = 2.361, p < .05) with an R^2 of .039 and β=0.08.

Discussion of results

With the exception of internal motivation, audience engagement was associated with higher reported levels of every aspect of the job characteristics model that was tested—significance, feedback, meaningfulness and satisfaction all had a statistically significant relationship with audience engagement as a job task. The lack of a relationship seen in the internal motivation scores could be in line with Chung (1977) who noted that overloaded, overcomplicated jobs might not be motivating because they "require more skills than the workers possess" (p. 115). It could also speak to how journalists' perception of their role influences how and why they engage with audiences—or choose not to (Holton et al., 2016). Nevertheless, this study found evidence for a positive relationship between audience engagement and the job characteristics of journalists, especially in the domains of feedback and significance.

That feedback would be enhanced through audience engagement makes intuitive sense — both analytics and media provide forms of third-party feedback on one's work performance. Being more aware of how one's work is performing as well as how many people engage with it might also be contributing to higher levels of perceived significance — the perceived importance of the work. Audience engagement had the greatest predicted impact on feedback (β=.34) and the greatest share of the variance in the relationship (R^2=.145) than all of the other variables, suggesting that the feedback aspect of the job characteristics model is perhaps the most influenced by audience engagement activity.

That significance and meaningfulness had similar explanatory variance (R^2=.106 and R^2 of .099, respectively) and similar effects (β = .23) may speak to how these variables interact in the original job characteristics model, in which task significance is a core component of the psychological state of experienced meaningfulness. The effects of audience engagement on these two measures could be explained in part by enhanced bridging social capital. Knowledge of the effects of the journalism in terms of people served would affect a worker's perception of the importance of their work, and journalists who can consistently engage these larger audiences in turn can have greater organizational influence. The meaningfulness variable had the weakest consistency, possibly attributed to the fact that we used an abbreviated form of the JDS that removed some components that might contribute to meaningfulness, such as task variety. The positive relationship between audience engagement and meaningfulness, however, is an encouraging sign that these tasks can indeed improve the experience of doing journalism.

That audience engagement also predicted a slight increase in satisfaction is an interesting result given the amount of cynicism around these activities and the low satisfaction levels reported in other studies. However, the relationship that this study discovered was a weak one, with the lowest degree of impact (β=0.08) and share of the variance (R^2=.039). This may be expected, as there are many more factors affecting job satisfaction, including several items of the job characteristics model that were not included in this questionnaire. However, it is clear that, as it was shown to be a positive contributor to several job characteristics, audience engagement itself is not necessarily having an adverse effect on satisfaction. It could be the case that the benefits supplied in terms of enhanced feedback and significance are tempered by increased workload and other factors, resulting in a weak effect on overall satisfaction. This weak relationship could also be a result of the mixed attitudes towards audience engagement observed in previous studies and industry reports.

There is a possibility that reverse causation could explain the relationship — that satisfied journalists are more likely to participate in audience engagement practices. This study did not apply an experimental approach where jobs could be analyzed before and after a change in duties, for example, surveying reporters who had no audience engagement tasks, then following up after a new requirement to add them is implemented. Therefore, identifying a definite cause of the observed change in job characteristics seen in this study was not as clear as it would be in a more robust study. Moreover, the sample size was small and does not include large numbers of broadcast journalists, whose approach to audience engagement may differ and thus affect the job outcomes explored in this study. Because the survey was administered online and

received most of its responses from social media, the sample may have skewed in favor of engagement practices; it could also be that already satisfied journalists are more likely to respond to surveys. Some of the variables had weak alpha scores, possibly as a result of the small sample, thus the insight from those measures should not be considered foolproof. Also, this study combined both analytics and social media tasks under the umbrella of audience engagement, but these practices might have been better to have been studied separately, which then might have found that one or the other has a stronger effect on satisfaction, for example. Further, the broad concept of audience engagement lacks an agreed-upon industry definition, as has been noted, which may contribute to survey respondents' disparate responses to some of the items on the questionnaire. A more strict, defined approach to one aspect of audience engagement may have yielded stronger evidence of a relationship.

Conclusions and future direction

The world of news media work continues to undergo rapid transformation. This study comes a time when the audience has more power than ever before to dictate the fortunes of news providers. In this dynamic, which shows no signs of relenting, media managers need to deeply understand not only their audiences, but also how front-line producers interact and listen to that audience. In some cases, the dynamic might be seen as highly satisfying to journalists who crave doing work that has meaning and impact; in other cases, being constantly connected to the audience's whims and reactions may be exhausting and disempowering.

This study attempted to yield useful insights into this dilemma and suggest ways for managers to think about how audience engagement work plays a role in the overall experience of being a journalist today. This study found evidence that audience engagement activity does have a positive relationship with several aspects of job satisfaction, when viewed through the job characteristics model, but the overall weak relationship suggests room for potential growth and additional research. While these findings may validate newsrooms' decisions to require engagement activities across the board, such an approach should consider the job characteristics model to deliver better outcomes for workers as well as audiences. From the results of this study, several approaches could be adopted by newsroom managers (Table 2), which are reinforced by comments received in response to an open-ended question on the survey, "What comes to mind when you think about audience engagement?" Particularly, managers might see that emphasizing the attributes of feedback and significance, and empowering workers to maximize those attributes, provides an effective boost to morale.

This study also affirmed that the job characteristics model has further utility for research into how changed jobs can be better understood. There is room for more journalism job research especially using this model, as it is relatively unused in the literature within the industry. It is clear that several, if not all, journalism roles have experienced a form of job enlargement, but aside from decreased overall satisfaction and increased burnout, which makes them ripe for applying a job-design approach for identifying what attributes are positive for workers and which are not. The study also built on previous job characteristics model findings, especially with respect to the role of enhancing task significance and feedback. By extending the job characteristics model to a

new field of worker experience, especially one that has elements of not only industrial-era assembly-line production, but also creative processes and public service, this study potentially adds more validity to the model and to aspects of the JDS as an instrument for identifying important aspects of job design.

Future studies could take the concepts of the job characteristics model even further. Studies could explore the potential for expanded autonomy that might result from having greater exposure to audience data. Because this study did not address negative effects, such as cynicism and burnout, further research could explore the additional workload and negative effects related to audience engagement tasks. Previous studies of other tasks have suggested that additional tasks can indeed contribute to those outcomes. Better insight into the potential pitfalls of audience engagement practices can help management reduce the "bad" and amplify the "good" effects on news workers, as well as organizational goals. Because many traditional news organizations tie their digital revenue model to web traffic metrics and subscriptions, another study could look into how organizations' business models or culture influence audience engagement outcomes. One might ask, for example, whether workers are more highly motivated at newsrooms with a bigger focus on subscribers instead of other metrics as a marker of success, or compare journalists' satisfaction in nonprofit newsrooms to their counterparts in for-profit enterprises. Further study is also needed to better define how "wins" ought to be defined in audience engagement, which will help managers to develop ways to incentivize behaviors that contribute to those outcomes and communicate the impact of those wins on the bottom line to upper management.

As an attempt to extend the study of job characteristics and apply them to newsroom jobs—an approach that is unique in the journalism research literature—this study offers additional insight into the potential that an "audience-first" mindset might bring to the journalists who have survived the disruptions of "digital-first" and "convergence." The application of job characteristics, social capital and other models will help researchers and industry leaders alike manage the newsrooms of the future.

Bibliography

Allan, B. A., Duffy, R. D., & Collisson, B. (2018). Helping others increases meaningful work: Evidence from three experiments. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *65*(2), 155–165. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000228

Bishop, R. C., & Hill, J. W. (1971). Effects of job enlargement and job change on contiguous but nonmanipulated jobs as a function of workers' status. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *55*, 175–181. Retrieved from http://10.0.4.13/h0031135

Brandel, J. (2018). Looking for evidence that audience engagement helps newsrooms? Here you go. Retrieved May 3, 2018, from https://medium.com/we-are-hearken/receipts-1bc3d35a88bf

Brems, C., Temmerman, M., Graham, T., & Broersma, M. (2017). Personal Branding on Twitter: How employed and freelance journalists stage themselves on social media. *Digital Journalism*, *5*(4), 443–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1176534

Campion, M. A., & McClelland, C. L. (1991). Interdisciplinary examination of the costs and benefits of enlarged jobs: A job design quasi-experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *76*(2), 186–198. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.2.186

Campion, M. A., & McClelland, C. L. (1993). Follow-up and extension of the interdisciplinary costs and benefits of enlarged jobs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *78*(3), 339–351. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.3.339

Carr, C. (2016). Define the Jargon: Audience Engagement. Retrieved July 2, 2017, from https://blog.parse.ly/post/3973/define-jargon-audience-engagement/

Cherubini, F., & Nielsen, R. K. (2016). Editorial Analytics : How News Media Are Developing and Using Audience Data and Metrics. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, 1–45.

Chung, K. H., & Ross, M. F. (1977). Differences in Motivational Properties between Job Enlargement and Job Enrichment. *Academy of Management Review*, *2*(1), 113. Retrieved from http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=4409178&site=eds-live&scope=site

Colon, A. (2000). The Multimedia Newsroom. *Columbia Journalism Review*, *39*(1), 24–27. Retrieved from http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=3079131&site=ehost-live

Conant, E. H., & Kilbridge, M. D. (1965). An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Job Enlargement: Technology, Costs, and Behavioral Implications. *ILR Review*, *18*(3), 377–395. https://doi.org/10.1177/001979396501800307

Cushion, S. (2007). Rich Media, Poor Journalists. *Journalism Practice*, *1*(1), 120–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780601078910

Dailey, L., Demo, L., & Spillman, M. (2005). The Convergence Continuum: A Model for

Studying Collaboration Between Media Newsrooms. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, *13*(3), 150–168. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15456889ajc1303_2

Deuze, M., Elefante, P., & Steward, B. (2010). Media Work and the Recession. *Popular Communication*, *8*(3), 226–231. Retrieved from 10.1080/15405702.2010.493428

Ferrer-Conill, R., & Tandoc, E. C. (2018). The Audience-Oriented Editor: Making sense of the audience in the newsroom. *Digital Journalism*, *6*(4), 436–453. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1440972

Firestone, W. A. (1991). Merit Pay and Job Enlargement as Reforms: Incentives, Implementation, and Teacher Response. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *13*(3), 269–288.

Frey, L., Botan C. & Kreps, G. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods*. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Fried, Y., & Ferris, G. R. (1987). The Validity of the Job Characteristics Model: a Review and Meta-Analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *40*(2), 287–322. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1987.tb00605.x

Gordon, R. (2003). The meanings and implications of convergence. *Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism*, 57–73.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *60*(2), 159–170. Retrieved from 10.1037/h0076546

Hackman, J. R., Oldham, G. R., Janson, R., & Purdy, K. (1975). A New Strategy for Job Enrichment. *California Management Review*, *17*(4), 57–71. Retrieved from http://groupbrain.wjh.harvard.edu/jrh/pub/JRH1975_7.pdf

Hanusch, F., & Tandoc, E. C. (2017). Comments, analytics, and social media: The impact of audience feedback on journalists' market orientation. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 146488491772030. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917720305

Holton, A. E., Lewis, S. C., & Coddington, M. (2016). Interacting with Audiences. *Journalism Studies*, *9699*(May), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1165139

Huang, E., Davison, K., Shreve, S., Davis, T., Bettendorf, E., & Nair, a. (2006). Facing the Challenges of Convergence: Media Professionals' Concerns of Working Across Media Platforms. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, *12*(1), 83–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856506061557

Huang, E., Rademakers, L., Fayemiwo, M. a., & Dunlap, L. (2004). Converged Journalism and Quality: A Case Study of The Tampa Tribune News Stories. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, *10*(4), 73–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/135485650401000407

Huang, L. V., & Liu, P. L. (2017). Ties that work: Investigating the relationships among coworker connections, work-related Facebook utility, online social capital, and employee outcomes. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *72*, 512–524. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.02.054

Kilbridge, M. D. (1960). Reduced Costs Through Job Enlargement: A Case. *The Journal of Business*, *33*(4), 357–362. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2350917

Kirchner, L. (2011). John Paton's Big Bet. *Columbia Journalism Review*, *50*(2), 43–47. Retrieved from http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=63269298&site=ehost-live

Maxwell, J. R. (2008). Work system design to improve the economic performance of the firm. *Business Process Management Journal*, *14*(3), 432–446. https://doi.org/10.1108/14637150810876715

McKenzie, C. T., Lowrey, W., Hays, H., Chung, J. Y., & Woo, C. W. (2011). Listening to News Audiences: The Impact of Community Structure and Economic Factors. *Mass Communication & Society*, *14*(3), 375–395. Retrieved from http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,uid&db=ufh&AN=60610590&site=ehost-live&scope=site

McQuail, D. (2010). *Mass Communication Theory* (Sixth). Sage Publications, Ltd.

Min, S. J. (2016). Conversation through journalism: Searching for organizing principles of public and citizen journalism. *Journalism*, *17*(5), 567–582. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884915571298

Mitchell, A., Holcomb, J., & Weisel, R. (2016). State of the News Media Report 2016. *Pew Research Center*, 1–118. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejoc.201200111

Mitchell, A., & Rosenstiel, T. (2012). *State of the News Media 2012*. *Pew Research Center*.

Moses, L. (2014). The newest important person in newsrooms: audience-development czars - Digiday. Retrieved June 23, 2017, from https://digiday.com/media/meet-audience-development-czars/

Moses, L. (2017). As audience development grows, publishers question who should own it - Digiday. Retrieved June 23, 2017, from https://digiday.com/media/audience-development-grows-publishers-question/

Nelson, J. L. (2018). The Elusive Engagement Metric. *Digital Journalism*, *6*(4), 528–544. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1445000

Newman, N. (2016). Digital News Project 2016. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. Retrieved from http://media.digitalnewsreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Newman-Predictions-2016-FINAL.pdf

Oldham, G. R. (1976). Job characteristics and internal motivation: The moderating effect of interpersonal and individual variables. *Human Relations*, *29*(6), 559–569.

Powers, M., & Vera-Zambrano, S. (2017). How journalists use social media in France and the United States: Analyzing technology use across journalistic fields. *New Media & Society*, 146144481773156. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817731566

Putnam, R. D. (2001). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*.

Simon and Schuster.

Reinardy, S. (2010). Downsizing Effects on Personnel: The Case of Layoff Survivors in U.S. Newspapers. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, *7*(4), 1–19.

Reinardy, S. (2011). Newspaper journalism in crisis: Burnout on the rise, eroding young journalists' career commitment. *Journalism*, *12*(1), 33–50. Retrieved from 10.1177/1464884910385188

Reindary, S. (2008). Survey Measures Burnout In Newspaper Sports Editors. *Newspaper Research Journal*, *29*(2), 40–54. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=33065572&amp%255Cnlang=de&site=ehost-live

Requena, F. (2003). Social capital, satisfaction and quality of life in the workplace. *Social Indicators Research*, *61*(3), 331–360. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021923520951

Robinson, S. (2011). Convergence Crises: News Work and News Space in the Digitally Transforming Newsroom. *Journal of Communication*, *61*(6), 1122–1141. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01603.x

Saltzis, K., & Dickinson, R. (2008). Inside the changing newsroom: journalists' responses to media convergence. *Aslib Proceedings*, *60*(3), 216–228. https://doi.org/10.1108/00012530810879097

Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2009). Burnout: 35 years of research and practice. *Career Development International*, *14*(3), 204–220. https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430910966406

Singer, J. B. (2004). Strange bedfellows? The diffusion of convergence in four news organizations. *Journalism Studies*, *5*(1), 3–18. Retrieved from http://works.bepress.com/jane_singer/14/

Smith, L. K., Tanner, A. H., & Duhe, S. F. (2007). Convergence Concerns in Local Television: Conflicting Views From the Newsroom. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *51*(4), 555–574. Retrieved from http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=28791426&site=ehost-live

Smolkin, R. (2006). Adapt or die. *American Journalism Review*, *28*(3), 16.

Sulzberger, A. G. (2014). *Innovation Report*. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20082

van Weezel, A. (2009). Organizational Changes in Newspaper Firms and Their Relation to Performance. *JMM: The International Journal on Media Management*, *11*(3/4), 144–152. Retrieved from 10.1080/14241270903278868

Willnat, L., & Weaver, D. H. (2014). The American Journalist in the Digital Age: Key Findings, 27.
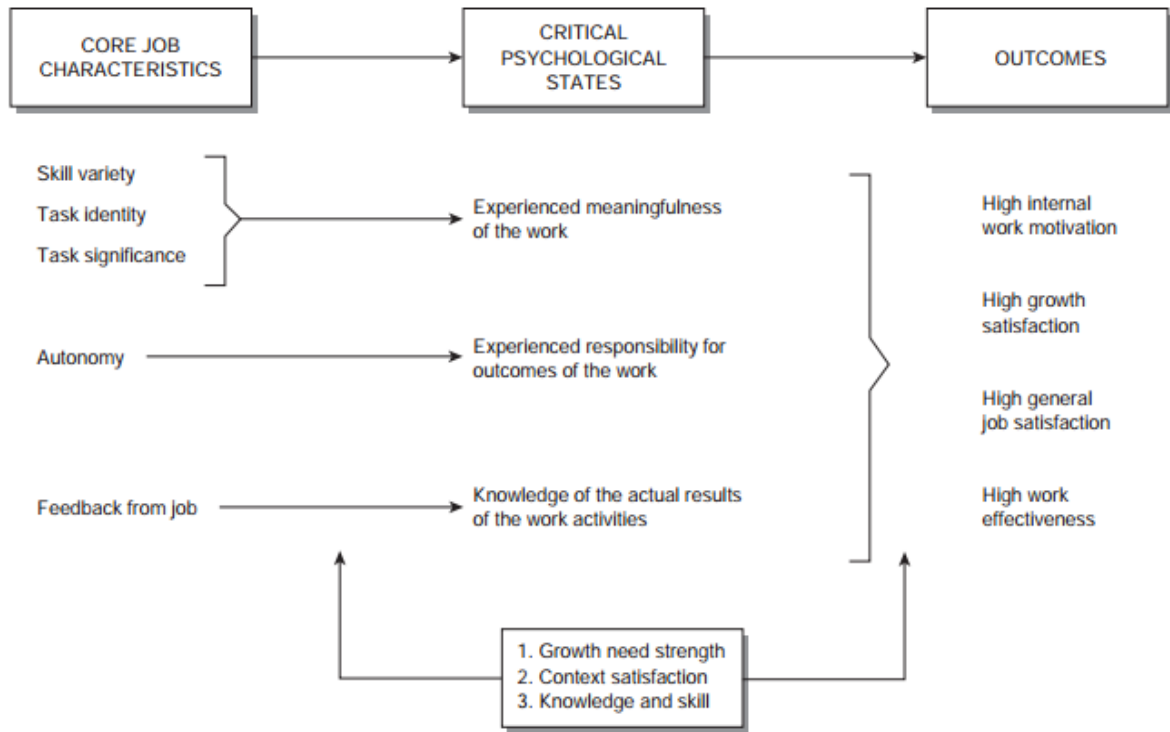
Appendix A — Job Characteristics Model

Figure 1

Appendix B

Table 1 — Questionnaire item coding	
Independent variable	**Survey items** (Section:Question)
Audience engagement	1:3, 1:4, 2:5, 2:6, 3:11 (reverse-coded)
Dependent variable	**Survey items**
Feedback	1:2, 2:1, 2:3 (reverse-coded)
Significance	1:1, 2:2, 2:4 (reverse-coded)
Internal motivation	3:1, 3:7, 3:9 (reverse-coded)
Meaningfulness	3:5; 3:10, 3:2 (reverse-coded)
Satisfaction	3:3, 3:4, 3:8, 3:6 (reverse-coded)

Appendix C

Table 2 — Strategies for leveraging audience engagement to enhance job characteristics

1. Demonstrate the value of using *feedback* from engagement activities to create, refine or adjust content.	"In two years no one talked to me about those numbers, what they mean, how they stack up, what we should do differently." "I engage with my audience often because it makes me better at my job."
2. Use insights from engagement to demonstrate the *significance* and impact of the work being done and whom it is affecting.	"Audience engagement and analytics are core pieces to what we do each day and help us know how we can better serve our community." "Our readers engage with us as individuals a lot … our reporters are well informed on issues that affect our readers. They care what we think."
3. Connect audience engagement to its goals and ethics to create a dialogue around the *meaningfulness* of the work and how to align them more closely.	"It is a sterile cycle. Readers and members of the community are viewed as clicks online with no regard for what print readers want to see in the paper." "Traffic has become much more important than accuracy, reporting and good writing."
4. Provide continuous training and streamlined, easy-to-use tools to ensure the tasks themselves do hinder the motivation of its journalists.	"I need to learn more and have better tools to do a better job." "I don't necessarily know what they (web and social metrics) mean and it was never really explained to me when I started."

Appendix D—Survey instrument

Informed Consent—

Q1 "Happy to serve: the role of audience engagement in journalism job satisfaction"   We are interested in understanding the role of audience engagement in journalism job satisfaction. You will be asked to answer some questions about these concepts and how they relate to your own work. Your responses will be kept completely anonymous.

The online questionnaire should take you around 15 minutes to complete, and you will have a chance to enter your email address into a separate form to be entered to win a $300 honorarium for your participation.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There are no risks to you for participating, and the information you provide will help inform newsroom management about the state of their workforce. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you refuse to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

 If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Matt Dulin at mdb62@mail.missouri.edu or call (573) 452-8835. You may also contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) with questions about your rights as a research participant at irb@missouri.edu or 573-882-9585.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

__ I consent, begin the study (1)
__ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If "Happy to serve: the role of audience engagement in journalism job satisfaction" We intereste... = I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

Section 1 —

Q9 In your opinion, how significant or important is your job? That is, are the results of your work likely to significantly affect the lives or well-being of other people?

Not significant; the outcomes of my work are not likely to have important effects on other people (1)
Somewhat significant (2)
It is significant/important (3)
Very significant (4)
Highly significant; the outcomes of my work can affect other people in very important ways (5)

Q10 To what extent does doing the job itself (not supervisors or peers) provide you with information about your work performance?

None; the job itself is set up so that I could work forever without finding out how well I am doing (1)
The job rarely provides feedback (2)
Sometimes doing the job provides feedback, sometimes it does not (3)
The job often provides feedback (4)
Very much; the job is set up so that I get almost constant feedback as I work about how well I am doing (5)

Q11 To what extent does the job itself involve interacting with your audience through social media?

Never; I could work forever without interacting with the audience (1)

Rarely (2)
I sometimes interact, but it's not part of my regular duties. (3)
Often (4)
Very much; I interact with the audience as part of my job constantly. (5)

Q12 To what extent does the job itself involve paying attention to audience metrics and analytics?

Very little; I work without paying attention to metrics. (1)
Rarely (2)
Moderately; I occasionally pay attention to metrics. (3)
Often (4)
Very much; I pay attention to audience metrics constantly and use them in my job. (5)

Section 2 —

Q13 Indicate whether each statement is accurate or inaccurate description of your job. (Not accurate at all (1), Slightly accurate (2), Somewhat accurate (3), Very accurate (4), Absolutely accurate (5))

1. The job provides many chances for me to figure out how well I am doing.
2. This is a job where a lot of other people can be affected by how well the work gets done.
3. The job itself provides very few clues about whether or not I am performing well.
4. The job itself is not very significant or important in the broad scheme of things.
5. The job itself provides many opportunities for me to be engaged with the audience.
6. The job itself is more difficult because of expectations to engage with the audience.

Section 3 —

Q14 Now please indicate how you personally feel about your job. Indicate your feelings by choosing how much you agree with the following statements. (Strongly agree (1), Somewhat agree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Somewhat disagree (4), Strongly disagree (5))

1. My opinion of myself goes up when I do this job well.
2. Most of the things I have to do on this job seem useless or trivial.
3. I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well.
4. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.
5. The work I do on this job is very meaningful to me.
6. I frequently think of quitting this job.
7. I am unhappy when I discover I have performed poorly on this job.
8. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.
9. My feelings generally are not affected much one way or the other by how well I do on this job.
10. Serving the audience makes my job meaningful.
11. I would like my job more if I didn't have to engage with the audience.

Q15 Your employer's primary medium
Newspaper (1)
Magazine (2)
TV (3)
Radio (4)
Web (5)
Other (6)

Q16 Approximate total newsroom employees (not including business/sales/marketing functions)
1-25 (1)

26-50 (2)
51-75 (3)
76-100 (4)
100+ (5)

Q17 Your age:

Q18 Your gender
    Male (1)
    Female (2)

Q19 Your job title:

Q20 Your main department
News (1)
Business (2)
Sports (3)
Arts / Entertainment (4)
Other (5) _____

Q21. What comes to mind when you think about audience engagement and analytics in your newsroom?

Q22 Almost done. If you would like to enter to win $300 for participating, enter your email address to be included in the drawing. If you are selected, you will also need to complete a W-9 to receive the payment.

Appendix E — Recruitment materials

Facebook post

Matt Dulin
20 hrs

Journalists: How is engaging with the audience affecting your job? Help me answer this question for a research study with a short survey. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete and you can enter to win $300 just for participating.

Start the survey here:
https://missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2hq4PITAN4P6bMp

Questions? Contact me at mdb62@mail.missouri.edu or 573-452-8835.

Like   Comment

Email to listserv

From: **Matt Dulin** dulinm@missouri.edu
Subject: Audience Engagement Survey - Win $300 by participating
Date: December 10, 2017 at 2:58 PM
To: Mailing Lists

How is engaging with the audience changing the work of journalists? You can help a researcher at the Missouri School of Journalism answer this question.

We have a questionnaire that will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Your responses are anonymous, and the final results will be analyzed and shared later this year to help news managers and producers shape the work they do.

Can you help? Start the survey here: https://missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2hq4PITAN4P6bMp

After taking the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter your email address to win a $300 stipend.

Thank you,

Matt Dulin
Missouri School of Journalism
(573) 452-8835
mdb62@mail.missouri.edu