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The MMJ became a McJob:

The McDonaldization of Multimedia Journalism

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**Abstract:**

Broadcast news corporations want to make the Multimedia Journalist (MMJ) a vital part of their future employee structure. This study examines the present use of the MMJ method in television news production. A sample of television news professionals, from all DMA markets, were surveyed. The results show expertise in one skill is not required, but overall ability to complete tasks is desirable. This need is leading toward a "McDonaldization" of the profession. TV managers give new hires minimal training and work is routinized. The MMJ is becoming a "McJob"; attracting young workers with transitional goals for future career employment opportunities.

**The MMJ became a McJob:****The McDonaldization of Multimedia Journalism****INTRODUCTION**

The success of the MMJ or multimedia journalist can be said to be in a mythical state at present. There is the technological deterministic belief among many news corporations that the multimedia journalist will become the most utilized method of newsgathering (Steensen, 2011, p. 311). The argument for the change in production methods comes from the belief that technology enables the shift in work production. Corporate ownership is amending the methods of newsgathering in local television news stations. Technology may be the reason for the change in worker skill sets, but economics is cited as the catalyst. During the last decade, the threat of multi-platform competition and declining viewership has inspired innovations in news production. The implementation of the Multimedia Journalist (MMJ) is one example of how corporations are impacting journalism at the local level.

George Ritzer (1998) created a metaphor of a fast food restaurant to describe evolving methodologies of journalism focused on efficiency, predictability, control, and calculation. He believed it was a symptom of modernity and a cultural trend toward convenience. Ritzer coined the term “McDonaldization” to describe the encroachment of business tactics into journalistic practice. The creation of the Multimedia Journalist or MMJ was not needed. It seems to be a counter intuitive response for the increased need

for products and production. The increase of platforms and competition was viewed as a threat, and news corporations decided, using Franklin's description (cited in Allan, 2005, p. 138), news should no longer be a culinary feast of elaborate creation but simplified into a McNugget sized meal.

Consumer demand and consumer behavior change with the multi-platform methods available. The audience is changing rapidly, and the media practices change with it. "Media convergence has nothing to do with technology or architecture. It has everything to do with the mindset" (Quinn, 2004, p. 119). The introduction of the Internet and other media, into newsrooms, stimulates the acceptance of new requirements. The consumers wanting news 24-hours pose the requirements, seven days a week, online and available when they want. New positions are created to allow for flexibility and expanded coverage necessary to remain competitive with the new demands (p. 119).

Originally, the concept of the MMJ inspired ideas of increasing the staff and broadening the reach of the news organization (Hemmingway, 2006) Technology innovation is believed to be the incentive for the widespread use of MMJ. However, new technologies could have created specialists or 'crafts' individuals similar to the past evolutionary stages of technology. However, the marketplace influenced the implementation of the MMJ. Economic and technological considerations seemed to perpetuate the notion one person eliminated redundancies. Instead of increasing specialization the creation of the MMJ allows for broadening roles and more demands. The one worker's valorization rises and with it the value of their work. With the increase in competition and less profit, the innovation of the MMJ offsets the loss of revenue by downsizing newsroom staff and

demanding 'multi-skilling' of the remaining employees (Aviles et al., 2008, pp. 221-231). By combining existing jobs, and multiplying the number of MMJs of a news staff, the result could be more diverse news stories and broader community reach. If the news stations kept all their employees and trained them, they could create more news for multiple platforms and lessen the burden on the individual employee. Alternatively, the utilization of the MMJ could result in cutting the number of news gathers in half. Ultimately, TV stations and their corporate owners try to maintain the same number of production units whether they are traditional reporting crews or the MMJ. The MMJ method is used to maximize a minimal staff with the impetus of giving more work to individuals. The MMJ became a reagent to lower operational costs.

Hemmingway (2006) and Lee (2015) view the challenges to modern journalism are in the processes of acquiring news. "The quest for speed is a double-edged sword (Lee, 2015, p. 205)." The ability to perform quality journalism is threatened by the resistance to change to both the performance of journalism and the technology utilized by journalists. The balance of speed, practice, and technology requires an evaluation of the actors (Hemmingway, 2006). The actors or forces impact the efficiency of producing news. Work routines and technologies change the 'news work' and the 'news texts' (Erdal, 2011, p. 214). This study looks at the 'news work' as television news organizations find strategies to deal with convergence.

### Literature Review

Ben Scott (2005) believed capitalism is the major catalyst for changes in news production, “Left without sufficient funds from the primary market – selling audiences to advertisers – they (television news stations) are forced to think of ways to make the news itself a commodity worth buying” (p. 98). Pamela Jackson (2009) identified the conflict between capitalism and journalism as a clash between “an amoral force against an ethical agency” (p. 147). She expresses her dissatisfaction of media ownership by using commodification theory to explain how corporate media has an inclination toward the “complete commodification of news” and claims capitalism has no social consciousness (p. 147). Many new employees in television news station are oblivious of the cultural shifts, due to their age, and are unaware of journalistic practices before the Internet. Since the arrival of Internet platforms, methodologies are created to increase workload and create more products without hiring new employees to do the job. The introduction of multi-platform distribution could have led to the expansion of staff to supply the platforms. Increases in staff size did not occur instead job requirements multiplied. The Multimedia Journalist was the result.

Multimedia journalism is accepted today, in what Marx and Engel (1848) would consider 'seeping commodification.' Seeping commodification is described as capitalism's need to revolutionize the means of production resulting in influence on the social forms as well. The new mode of production of the MMJ is changing the social groups inside newsrooms. Dobek-Ostrowska et al. (2015) view journalistic cultures as a complex mix of journalistic values, practices, norms and media products (p. 45). Bourdieu (1998)

would argue that ownership is not important to the 'journalistic field' because of a 'code of ethics' journalists maintain (p. 70) and the journalism they create.

It is not unusual for the free press in a democracy to be challenged by the restraints of economics. Journalism is unlike many businesses because there is no inventory or products placed on shelves and there is no open market for news stories similar to groceries, albeit there are arguments the future innovations may provide such amenities. It is information to tablet or TV. If the future of television news is dependent upon the liquidity of corporate shares and market strength, then there may be doubts about the compatibility between the owner's demands and the workers' ethical responsibility. Jackson (2009) joins the voices of McChesney and Scott (2005) in a rebuke of the current tide of corporate ownership of local television news. They each believe the rising expectations of capitalism do not give corporations an excuse for neglecting the social responsibility of the press. Capitalism does not have a social consciousness and therefore immune to the moral responsibilities of the 4<sup>th</sup> Estate. Moral failure results when the news conceptualizes itself as just another commodity bought and sold in a capitalist economy resulting in a negative impact on democracy (p. 147).

McDonaldization of jobs begins with the consumer becoming a part of the labor process. In 2017, the New York Times offered buyouts to newsroom staff to reduce the number of editors. New York Times publisher, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. defended the action by saying, "Our followers on social media and our readers across the Internet have come together to collectively serve as a modern watchdog, more vigilant and forceful than one person could ever be. (Snider, 2017)." Television news welcomes their audiences to help

in the news gathering process by offering tips, stories, videos, photos, etc. that was once the duty of trained staff. Any platform for journalism is susceptible to the application of McDonaldization.

Multiple platforms increase the need for sources and consumer participation. In 1998, Ritzer identified the future role of Internet content providers as major contributors of the McDonaldization Thesis. The patron/customer/client becomes part of the labor process. There is no longer a clear distinction between worker and patron. Patrons have become unpaid workers who perform tasks that would otherwise have to be done by paid employees. They do it largely on their own and create a secondary workforce to be exploited to enhance profits (Ritzer, 1998, p. 7). Others disagree with Ritzer's assertions and claim there are larger forces at play. Smart (1999) believes the changing ways of living transform the habits of customers and the material does not classify as work but residue social activity. They may both be right regarding media work. Consumers are looking for easily accessed bits of continuously updated information, and corporations are seeking to standardize production methods to lower costs in a fast food delivery motif. It is in that context we see the modern television newsroom. The television newsroom is in a state of McDonaldization in both the way news is consumed, and in the way, the news is produced. Ritzer's (1998) 'McDonaldization Thesis' can be applied to new means of consumption. The thesis promotes the idea that nothing is "safe from McDonaldization as long as there are material interests that push it and stands to benefit from its expansion" (p. 6).



According to Salaz (2014), Braverman was proposing an alternative view of American capitalism that was in line with Marx's first principle that the interests of capital and labor are fundamentally opposed. Work is steadily cheapened, deskilled, and degraded (p. 299). This assertion can be applied to the multimedia journalist who went from a specialized skill to generalized execution of tasks. The incentive is not to pay crafts individuals for a finished product but hire unskilled workers and dictate to them exactly how to perform their job.

There are arguments against the assertion that deskilling is not a degradation of work. The deskilling leads to adaptive practices that are not standardized and the skill sets are altered, not diminished. Leider (1993) found that while management looks to streamline production, the reality is different. The work place becomes chaotic because low pay leads to high attrition. Meanwhile, there is a constant number of new workers rushing into the profession without mentoring. The labor process is standardized, but workers find ways to circumvent the standardization, making it unique to their methods. There are limits to the routinization of service work (p. 30). The MMJ may be closer to the model of a traveling salesman. The MMJ frequently travels without the monitoring and guidance of the corporate office.

The process of McDonaldization can lead to the creation of "McJobs" whereas work is a relegated process of speed and inventory. Efficiency involves 'the choice of the optimum means to a given end' (Ritzer, 1993, p. 35). Maximizing the hours an employee works to create as many products as possible and serve the customer as fast as possible. Work is

simplified to de-skill the employee and increase efficiency. The de-skilled work requirements are supported with rationalization within the companies on all levels.

News managers want calculability of their employee's work. The work hours are measured in product forms such as the news package, vo/sots, vo, online news, and social media posts. The work is counted and quantified to make sure the MMJ is increasing valorization. Many MMJs will complain about the expectations because it leads to what Ritzer (1993) believes is a desire to measure their value of quantity over quality (pp. 62-82).

Braverman saw worker's autonomy as a function of skill (Smith, 2015, p. 230). He believed there is a relationship between skill, job autonomy, knowledge, and control. Braverman did not believe that increased formal education of the workforce did does not translate into increased skill levels. He believed that was a myth and that production, not training, was central to capitalism.

Rowlinson & Hassard (2001) challenged Braverman's assertions about deskilling by stating that the tendency of separating conception and execution from each other. Conception is concentrated on smaller groups of employees while most of the workers in the executing phase are increasingly meaningless. Post-Taylorist work does not have the division of design and execution, and in this sense, production has evolved. There are many arguments that Labor Process Theory lacks the complicated multi-actor relationships of modern technologically driven labor (p. 87).

Many researchers view the changes in the news gathering model as economically driven. Scott (2004) and others warned that there are alterations to work structures in news organizations in response to economic and financial concerns of corporations owning the news organizations (p. 205), (Anderson, 2004), (Pavlik, 2004). The new production techniques form because of the converging media (Hemmingway, 2008, Dupagne & Garrison, 2006, Koldozy, 2006). Killebrew (2005) declared that the economic pressures at the time and in the future would cause the industry to change the production process. The changes are occurring at all local television stations in every market.

Smith (2015) relies on Marx's view of the labor process as a transformation process. Labor power of the worker enters a production process in which labor is realized to produce a tangible commodity or service that contains a use and exchange value (p. 114). There is also a surplus value that employer takes as a reward. Management balances the skills required to produce surplus value. Higher skills can mean not only increased productivity but also higher costs. The levels of skills are important to both managers and workers.

Reaching skill levels appears to be redefined by the tasks of the multi-media journalist (Aviles et al, 2008, pp. 229-230) and expertise rises the valorization of the employee. More labor from an individual will increase their value to the company. Braverman (1974) detailed the Labor Process theory as a way to describe the surplus value of workers under capitalism invisible to workers. Braverman viewed "deskilling" as a way to enslave workers into a production process and saw evidence of the deskilling on the shop floor among blue-collar workers. He predicted that one day the white-collar jobs

would similarly be affected. O'Doherty et al. (2001) criticized Braverman, and they contend that Labor Process Theory is subjective in its application and use. The standardization and deskilling of labor articulate the essential dynamics of capitalism of securing growth of capital at the expense of an increasingly impoverished and degraded working class (p. 113).

There are three dominant characteristics in Labor Process Theory: the concept of the social relations of the production, the idea of managerial control and the notion of deskilling through the restructuring of work. (Littler, 1990, Thompson, 1989). The application of Labor Process Theory to the multimedia journalist reveals the relationships between management and the workers. The fear of layoffs, "de-layering," and downsizing, once confined to the working class, is now a constant anxiety of managers and knowledge workers (Jaros, 2001, p. 35).

The social relations of production between manager and employee can lead to worker resistance and acquiescence as there are mutual amounts of paradigm repair and social advancement. The social relations are boundaries for the labor processes of restructuring work and the control imperative. It is possible to comprehend the current state of television newsrooms within corporate owned stations by applying Gaines and Domagalski (1996) approach to Labor Process Theory. The control imperative is converting labor power into profit, in the case the multimedia journalist labor power; the valorization increases with the restructuring of the work and the cheapening of the process. Television workers may not fit into the description of factory workers because their work is collaboration, but off the shop floor of the newsroom, there is continuous

tension to treat labor as a commodity while maintaining cooperation between worker and manager. Managers may issue demands of time and output and grant workers some autonomy, but ultimately the desires of the corporation override the intentions of the middle manager.

### **Methodology**

This study took a grounded theory approach in analyzing quantitative and interview data. Grounded theory approach enables theoretical elaborations but forbids forming a hypothesis before data analysis (Barbour, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Drawing from the literature discussion, data analysis and observation of multimedia journalists, I proposed the following research questions and hypotheses:

**RQ1:** What is the proliferation of the multimedia journalism model into television newsrooms?

In the context of Labor Process Theory, this study looks at the increase of the multimedia journalist as a shift in work practice and adjustments to the valorization of the journalist. A grounded theory approach is used to address the research question. The intent of this study is to evaluate the phenomenon, causal conditions, and action strategies of the multimedia journalist on local television news organizations.

A Qualtrics survey of 39 questions was created, IRB approved, and distributed via the Facebook group page, Storytellers. The Facebook group of 11,767 members representing a community of television journalists. Their website [tvnewstorytellers.com](http://tvnewstorytellers.com) is a resource for journalism education. Their mission statement on their website defines their role as a place where, “Journalists frequent the community to mentor, share stories, discuss ethics and inspire each other.”

The survey collected quantitative data on age, gender, specific work requirements such as writing, editing, and videotaping as well as the television designated market area where the participants work. 289 participants responded to the survey. They were given opportunities to give personal feedback, and the qualitative data was collected and coded by similar key words.

172 of the 289 respondents considered themselves to be television multimedia journalists. The MMJs represented 132 television markets in the United States.

The survey measured the phenomenon of the MMJ in local television news by asking specific questions about the job responsibilities of the MMJ. The participants were asked questions to establish the numbers of MMJs in the respondents’ newsrooms, the ratio of traditional reporters to MMJs in their newsrooms, additional work requirements such as social media and online reporting, and managerial preferences for using the MMJ to cover particular types of stories.

Respondents were encouraged to discuss their observations and experiences. The intent of the discussion questions was to formulate qualitative data to find the causal conditions applied to their individual experiences as MMJs. The causal conditions were coded based on the frequency of similar response, resulting in key words, “quality, quantity, burnout, gender, and safety.”

**H1:** Age and experience is a factor in the proliferation of the MMJ.

There are scientific revolutions in longevity and retirement that are allowing individuals to live longer; unfortunately, employees are more vulnerable in elder years. Many television employees find themselves too old to work but too young to retire. Older journalists costs more and often are the first to be offered buyouts (Maharidge, 2016, p. 22) Downsizing often includes incentives to encourage early retirement. Younger employees are eager to join the profession and provide employers a steady flow of candidates. Ciutiene et al. (2015) suggests to avoid possible challenges in population aging, organizations should pay more attention to recruitment (p. 395).

**H2:** An MMJ produces multiple stories per day, repurposing the story for social media and is required to update the story via pictures and posts on social media.

The theoretical prediction focuses on the effect of the working model on employees. Action strategies for employees and the company may be used to lessen the consequences of long-term stress. Retaining workers for extended periods of time or within the

definition of 'careers' at one place of work is not the intention of McDonaldization as wages are meant to have a limited ceiling. Braverman (1975) concluded that businesses expected minimal costs to produce products. The working conditions are created to increase productivity. The code word "burnout" is used to measure the causal conditions of the MMJ at local television newsrooms.

**H3:** MMJs work under extreme physiological and psychological pressures to perform.

'Burnout' is an issue for many MMJs. The workload on MMJs can be overwhelming. MMJs need to be proficient enough with technical skills to be efficient while using their social skills with interviews, news events, and dealing with the public while performing their jobs. Workers who are given low organizational support result in higher levels of burnout than those with high organizational support. A large part of the stress appears to be organizational in nature (Lawal, 2017, p. 2). MMJs work alone and often feel disconnected.

### **Findings:**

Management views workers' skills by what benefits the organization. The perception focuses on workers' attitude, commitment, and motivation and task competence (Thursfield, 2000:85). Workers learn in five stages. The employee progresses from novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. It is by moving through these stages that skills and experience are acquired. It must be acknowledged that the



evidentiary findings of this study may be based on workers who have not gone through the entire set of stages and are not considered expert workers. Similarly, the perceptions of the workforce by management may lead to misconceptions of skill as the management elicits the cooperation and consent of employees, which is necessary to the production of surplus profit and managers' performance at work.

**H1:** Age and experience is a factor in the proliferation of the MMJ.

93% of the MMJs in this survey are under the age of 36. 63 of the 130 MMJs are 18-25 years of age. 114 of the 132 (86.36%) MMJs have seven years or less experience in television news. 23% of the MMJs have no more than two years experience in television journalism. 37.6% have no more than three years of experience.

“Bigger markets want to hire journalists out of college because it’s cheaper (you get what you pay for) and I think this is a detriment to the station and the news reporter. (MMJ, Paducah, Kentucky).” It appears the rise of employment for recent college graduates is rising and the percentage of older employees at local television stations is falling.

The majority of MMJs are young women. 56% of all the respondents were female. Of the 132 respondents, considering themselves an MMJ, 95 were female (71.9%). The majority of those who did not identify as an MMJ were male (46 males to 12 females). Overall 107 of the respondents were female, and 81 were male.

67.72% of the respondents believe the implementation of the multimedia journalists has become the dominant method of news production. However, 64.89% say they prefer the traditional crew of reporter and photographer over the MMJ method.

The MMJ method was considered a small market mode of production because it minimized costs and staff. The less experienced TV reporter would work in a small market as a “one-man band” and after gaining experience would move to a larger market where they would work in traditional crews. “The MMJ format does not work well in large size markets. I have colleagues who are MMJs in mid-size markets that do efficient or extremely efficient work. (Television News Photographer, Top 10 DMA).” The large markets have different issues than smaller markets, mainly in transportation to and from a news story. An MMJ can not work while driving but a traditional reporter can make phone calls and write scripts while the photographer drives. “The expectation to do everything simultaneously. Sometimes I feel pressured to email or text while driving. The station wants Facebook live, Tweets, and station web updates by 2 pm (we don't have a mobile app so to publish to web we need to be in front of a computer). At the same time were expected to communicate with sources and managers. I can't do all these things on my phone at once and drive place to place! The most important thing to our managers is finishing two stories by deadline and not having overtime. (Female MMJ, age 18-25, New Orleans).”

News stations are hiring younger MMJs with lower salaries. “Low salaries lead to inexperienced reporters in larger markets than they should be working in. (Male,

Television Photographer, Baltimore, MD).” The lack of experience of the MMJs does not help the efficiency of their work. “MMJ is the model, but very few people care to master it. It's looked at as something that's lesser than a reporting job. Management tends to pay MMJs less. (Female MMJ, Denver).”

Safety concerns in larger cities are a threat to the MMJ. “Newsrooms are requiring many MMJs to report in dangerous situations without backup. Solo liveness are a terrible idea, no matter what neighborhood you're in. It's impossible to focus on anything but the camera, which could be you in danger. (Female MMJ, age 26-35, Washington, DC).” “Management doesn't always take safety into concern. I don't think MMJs should be doing live shots alone. - Role models for women MMJs- there really aren't a lot of of older women one man banding and I worry it's because companies haven't supported them (what happens if a woman is pregnant, has safety concerns? I feel management is not sympathetic to those concerns). (MMJ Female, age 26-35, New York City).

**H2:** An MMJ produces multiple stories per day, repurposing the story for social media and is required to update the story via pictures and posts on social media.

54% of the respondents in this study believe the workload of the MMJ is too much for one person and only 2.87% believe the workload is not an issue. Workload is similar for all MMJs according to our survey. Market size did not indicate an increase or decrease in expected output. The workload on a daily basis involves four individual products. The news package (PKG), the VO/SOT, the VO, and an ONLINE version of their story. On

average, an MMJ creates 1 PKG, 1 VO/SOT, and 1 ONLINE story. Smaller markets have a slight increase in their output, mostly online stories. 93% of the 132 MMJ respondents are expected to post pictures to social media, like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Snapcha. Facebook (51.54%) and Twitter (33.85%) are the most popular apps. “Quantity over quality. We're pushed to do more stories, more angles, more live shots, and it makes the quality, and often the storytelling suffers. (Female, 18-25, Wichita, KS)”

The workload creates anxiety for many of the respondents. Some of the inexperienced MMJ (18-25-year-olds) are being routinized, and in the process of improving their skills, the MMJs are often overwhelmed. “I'm exhausted every day. And I feel like my quality of work suffers cause I'm doing the job of 6 people. (Female, 18-25, Scranton, PA)”

Ruggerio (2004) believed that ‘competently crafted news content is contextualized in media frames and constructed through persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion’ (p. 95). Many MMJs feel the pressures to perform different skills quickly and efficiently lead to a lack of interpretation that leads to habits of selection, exclusion of points of view and emphasis on the dominant perspective. “If it's a busy day and I turn three separate pkg plus live shots, and Facebook lives, I need another pair of hands, so the product won't look like crap. Burn out. I'm a storyteller. I am passionate both behind and in front of the lens. But too many hours spent gathering news for ten different platforms wears me out. (Female, 26-35, Knoxville, TN)”

Efficiency is essential and excellent time management skills are required for many MMJs and other journalists. The 24/7 news cycle and multiple platforms require many versions of the same story to be reproduced to fit the medium. Many journalists feel quality suffers when they have an obligation to produce so many products quickly. “Speed is placed high, and quality suffers sometimes. There are many platforms to feed, and it can be overwhelming. (Male, 26-35, Knoxville, TN)”

Today’s journalist is expected to be maintaining a social media presence while on the job as well as creating ‘speed-driven journalism’ (Lee, 2015). The traditional tasks are required of an MMJ, but the non-traditional tasks are filling in production roles when needed, especially live production. Posting on Facebook and Twitter is a common practice and a requirement of the MMJ and is widely adopted for news coverage (Hermida, 2010). The MMJ copes with the exchanges of traditional and non-traditional tasks by creating routines. Many times technology such as social media changes the conventions of the profession (Lowrey, 2006) and in the adaptive process individuals are expected to take on the new and old methodologies. The rise of digital technology “contributes to the industry’s obsession with speed,” and journalists are expected to “do more at a faster pace, giving rise to new expectations and practices in the news industry. (Lee, 2015, p. 217).”

“There are a lot of issues. The responsibilities of a single person are out of control. The expectations are so much higher and typically quality goes to the wayside. It’s out of control. (Female, 18-25, Ashland, KY)” The necessity for more products with fewer journalists, especially MMJs who work alone, highlights the counter-intuitive

nature of hiring and supporting the MMJ model instead of the traditional crew.

Many MMJs view the use of MMJs as a managerial decision and not a journalistic decision. “The problem is news managers (many of whom who have no real field experience) have the same deadlines and production asks for MMJs as 2-person crews. Inexperienced news managers are a widespread problem in news--which is part of how they get suckered into producer-vision or consultant-vision. (Male, Over 36, Washington, DC).”

64.89% of the respondents prefer the traditional crew of reporter and photographer over using the MMJ method. 23.94% of the respondents prefer the MMJ model. 53% of those who prefer the MMJ model are 18-25 years of age. “There is no time to efficiently or effectively MMJ 99.9% of the stories we are sent to cover. There is so much news, too much land mass and traffic to get there, and not enough hours in the day before your live shot or package is due to do "one man bands", or MMJ work. Trust me, it doesn't matter how organized you are. They prefer quantity or quality, the majority of the time in large markets. In my opinion, traditional crews work best in big markets and network television news hand down. With the traditional formula, you are giving yourself, your story, your newsroom and your viewing audience, more of a chance to be efficient, effective and impactful on each news story. (Female, age 36-over, Top 10 DMA).”

**H3:** MMJs work under extreme physiological and psychological pressures to perform.

One of the results of the industrial revolution was the importance of adopting organizational practices intended to promote the efficient use of time (Pfeffer et al., 2012, p. 47). “The emphasis on cutting back on some staff means more MMJs that are expected to cover more content, lowering the quality of the stories. (Female, 18-25, Dallas, TX).”

The “one-man band” has been in existence since the beginning of television broadcasting.

A significant difference between the "one-man band" and the MMJ is the number of platforms where their work is intended to be delivered. Besides all of the steps to create a TV news story, the MMJ have other types of production requirements for social media.

The impact on the worker is an overload. “Too much load for quality work. We're expected to shoot mobile stories for the web and take slideshow photo essays, while simultaneously conducting interviews on ENG style cameras. Covering large events alone is impossible. And asking for help is useless since all other MMJ's are working on their own stories. Modern newscasts are built on the backs of underpaid and under-resourced MMJ's who are “Barnum and Bailey-ed” into thinking the job provides valuable experience, despite the fact that television news will be dead in a decade and there's no room to move up. (Male 18-25, Tyler, TX)”.

Experienced reporters see multitasking as a threat to verifying the accuracy of their stories and can ultimately lead to a loss of integrity. “Certain people will try to tell you one thing and put a spin on a story that you many not have time to check out. You’ve got to worry about that. I think at some point, if they cover a big enough story, they’re going

to have to put their foot down and say, ‘I’m not comfortable airing the story the way it is now. I’ve got to find out more.’ And that might be a difficult thing to get through to a producer or a news director, but those are the times we live in now. (Male, Over-36, Syracuse, NY)”

The pressure to create news stories quickly and multitasking at the same time are a cause for concern for many MMJs. MMJs recognize management prefers to use the MMJ for certain stories and the traditional crew for other types of stories. 132 MMJs were asked if their management had a preference in how they used them in particular situations and what types of the crew did their managers prefer to use for particular types of stories:

INSERT TABLE X HERE

It appears from the findings that management has a strong preference to use the MMJ for General News stories and is hesitant to have an MMJ produce an In-Depth story. The ability of the MMJ to create an In-Depth piece is not necessarily the issues. In-Depth pieces take longer periods of time to produce, usually with extensive interviews and other production techniques. More than likely, the preference for MMJs to work on daily assignments takes priority over In-Depth because of the need to create more content during the average news day. Respondents would like to see MMJs used in different ways than daily assignments. “If you want us tweeting, Facebook live, standup teases, going live, web scripts, vo/sots and shooting, writing and editing... it is



too much. I almost never work a normal 8 hours, even for a lighter story. (Female 26-35, Minneapolis, MN)”

The expectations of meeting deadlines and carrying a heavy workload are accelerating burnout. “Burnout” is described by Schaufeli (2008), as “exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy” (p. 175). Rahim (2016) explained job burnout as a syndrome of physical and mental health caused by prolonged exposure to stress involving emotional responses (p. 205). The symptom can lead to disillusionment about their job. There are three components of job burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. “If one-man-bands can enhance what you can do, I’d be all for it. (But) The grind of breaking news with no staffing and two stories because you know you need a vo/sot, and it’s just churn, churn, churn, no time, day in, day out, lead stories. You go nuts. (Female, 25-36, Tampa, FL).”

The intensity of the MMJ method leads to an increased amount of burnout and turnover, primarily because of the amount of work that is required of the MMJ. “If you look at how long people last, it’s not that long. The turnover is pretty big because it is a pretty intense business and we’re asking them to do twice as much as they were doing before. (Male, Over-36, Syracuse, NY).”

**Conclusion:**

The MMJ method at local television stations is not a dominant methodology, but the numbers of MMJs are growing. According to the RTNDA/ Hofstra study of 2016, the use of the MMJ is increasing with employee replacement hiring. The numbers of MMJs has risen 13.2% while the hiring of photographers and reporters is down.

(RTNDA/Hofstra, Newsroom Staffing, 2016).

Only 10% of the top 25 markets do not use MMJs. However, 25% of the top 25 markets are mostly MMJs. Only 10.2% of the TV stations in markets 51 and higher do not use MMJs. With 151 and greater markets saying they are 82.6% MMJ only news stations (RTNDA/Hofstra, Newsroom Staffing, 2016). “Great for companies who want to cut cost - bad for quality journalism. Don't get me wrong - you can still turn a great story as an MMJ. But your attention is divided - meaning something also always suffers. And there are physical limitations as an MMJ that just cannot be replicated without a full crew. Anyone that says they can do just as good of a job as an MMJ as a competent, traditional crew, is either in complete denial or ignorant. Two is always better than one. (Female 26-35, Dallas, TX).”

The new structures do not create stability. More senior workers and higher salaried employees seem to be more vulnerable. Like a McDonald's restaurant, the employee is not expected to make the job a lifetime commitment. The impact may be a less stable work force within news organizations. The workforce, being younger, is less entrenched in a news culture.

According to Dickinson (2007), it is easier for journalism school graduates to enter the work force compared to previous generations. In 2016, the job market is expanding. 49.2% of all TV news stations have posted increases in their staff between 2015-2016 (RTNDA/Hofstra, Newsroom Staffing, 2016). The RTNDA/ Hofstra report states that in general, TV newsrooms are growing in size, but fewer stations are producing local news with increased shared news production between multiple affiliates within the same company. There are also plans for expected growth in the next few years. 42.5% of all TV news stations anticipate an increase in the size of their news staff (RTNDA/Hofstra, Newsroom Staffing, 2016).

Safety concerns rise because of increased burnout. Studies by Maslach & Jackson (1987) identified burnout symptoms with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy. Burnout can lead to the risk of injury. Ahola et al. (2013) found that employee suffering from exhaustion have a 10% increase in risk for severe injuries. And those employees who experience burnout symptoms at least once a month saw a 19% increase in their risk of serious injury as compared to those with symptoms less often. They concluded that 'burnout is a risk factor for future severe injuries' (pp. 450-457).

The MMJ is an accepted and growing method of journalism production. Efficiency is expected, and each story is calculated plus inventoried in multiple formats. McDonaldization is occurring to the profession of journalism with serious after effects. Luz et al. (2017) concluded that burnout is a defense response, even if improper, to the chronicity of occupational stress that reaches unbearable limits (pp. 238-246). Deadline pressure has always been a part of the journalism profession but is possible to say that no

other particular type of journalist was ever required to complete so much work, with so many skills, to be placed on so many formats each day than the MMJ.

### **Further Research**

Further research should examine any changes in profitability linked to the increased use of the MMJ. News profitability has been consistent since 2011. In 2014, more than 60% of TV newsrooms reported they were making a profit. Multimedia opportunities have allowed TV news stations the largest growth with the expansion of their websites. Large newsrooms with more than 50 staffers are making a profit with their websites. TV News stations in markets 26-50 are not showing a loss (RTNDA/Hofstra; The Business of News, 2015).

Corporations are consolidating their work and “hubbing” work to be distributed between the stations. TV stations are providing content for more than one TV station.

Consolidation of television stations and mutual operating agreements are increasing the number of stations with local news to a record level. 717 local TV newsrooms are supplying news to another 328 stations. There is a record number 1,045 stations running local news (RTNDA/Hofstra; The Business of News, 2015).

The last ten years have been difficult for television journalists and the television news industry. In a farewell address Mike James, Editor of NewsBlues.com lamented that during the last decade there had been an unhealthy transformation of TV news. He says,

"We've watched a handful of broadcasting companies leverage investment money to gobble up local TV stations by the hundreds, creating ownership behemoths that threaten the public interest by centralizing news production, eliminating competition and diversity. (NewsBlues.com, 2017)".

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TABLE X:

Managerial Crew Preference (132 MMJ respondents)	General News	Spot News	Feature Stories	In-Depth Stories
Reporter/Photographer	11 (8.33%)	56 (42.42%)	20 (15.27%)	75 (56.82%)
Photographer only	0 (0%)	11 (8.33%)	2 (1.53%)	0 (0%)
MMJ	96 (72.73%)	49 (37.12%)	85 (64.89%)	45 (34.09%)
No preference	24 (18.18%)	15 (11.36%)	22 (16.79%)	11 (8.33%)
Other	1 (0.76%)	1 (0.76%)	2 (1.53%)	1 (0.76%)