

SOLO JOURNALISM AND NEWS ROUTINES: USING THE HIERARCHICAL
INFLUENCES MODEL TO STUDY THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL
INFLUENCES OF SOLO JOURNALISM IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

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ABSTRACT

Justin C. Blankenship: Solo Journalism and News Routines: Using the Hierarchical Influences Model to Study the Organizational and Individual Influences of Solo Journalism in Local Television News
(Under the direction of Daniel Riffe)

Solo journalism, as conceptualized in this dissertation, is a particular work practice in local television news. It requires that news reporters gather information, write copy, record video/audio footage, and edit narrative news stories by themselves. Traditionally, those jobs have been performed by at least two trained professionals. While the practice has existed in some form since the earliest days of television news, it has grown in popularity, particularly in larger media markets in the United States. Using the Hierarchical Influences Model as a framework, this study examined solo journalism from an organizational, routine, and individual level of analysis. Institutional theories from sociology, specifically isomorphism and decoupling, were used to examine the organizational antecedents of solo journalism. Research from organizational studies was used to examine the effects of solo journalism on the routinization of news work. And theories from the organizational behavior field, specifically job characteristics theory, role theory, and burnout, were used to examine the effects of solo journalism on the individual journalists. This dissertation utilized a mixed-method design. It used qualitative in-depth interviews with local television news directors ($N= 12$) to examine organizational research questions. It also used a quantitative survey of front-line reporters ($N= 222$) to answer routine level and individual level research questions and hypotheses.

The findings of the interviews indicated that several news directors, particularly those in medium- and small-sized markets, felt some form of pressure from their superiors to hire more solo journalists, but this pressure did not meet the traditional definition of coercive isomorphic pressure. Findings regarding possible mimetic and normative pressures were also mixed. Additionally, there was some evidence that news directors have different expectations of solo journalists compared to news crews, but it is unclear if this leads to a decoupling of nominal and actual practice in the traditional sense. The findings of the quantitative survey show few significant relationships between solo journalism and measures of routinization and autonomy. Additionally, a proposed mediated relationship among solo journalism, role overload, and burnout was not supported by the data. Possible explanations for this lack of support and future directions for research are discussed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

DMA	Designated Market Area- The geographic area where the population generally receives the same television and/or radio broadcasts. The DMAs used in this dissertation were based on the Nielson Company's list of ranked television markets in 2015.
H	Hypothesis- for efficiency, when making reference to one of the proposed hypotheses in the main text of the dissertation (ex: H1a).
ND	News Director- this abbreviation is used to denote the specific news directors interviewed for the dissertation. These abbreviations is used to ensure confidentiality.
RQ	Research Questions- (same as above) for efficiency, when making reference to one of the proposed research questions in the main text of the dissertation (ex: RQ1a).
VO/SOT	Voice Over/Sound on Tape- a story format in television new which generally consists of a short video montage and a segment from a recorded interview. The accompanying script is read by the anchor. This story form is generally considered less time consuming than the standard reporter news package.
α	Alpha value- in this instance, a measure of reliability that several indicators are measuring a single concept and/or construct (Cronbach's alpha).
β	Beta score- in this dissertation, standardized beta coefficients are reported in the main text to indicate an individual variable's predictive ability within a linear regression model.
p	p -value (significance level)- represents the probability that an observed result of a statistical test is an outlier. A smaller p -value indicates a more statistically significant finding. A p -value of less than .05 is the generally recognized standard in the mass communication field for statistical significance.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction: The Growth of Solo Journalism

Every year, Bob Papper of Hofstra University has conducted a survey of local television stations for the Radio Television and Digital News Association (RTDNA). While several factors like revenue and the number of stations producing news have fluctuated over the last few years, one trend has remained consistent: the hiring of “solo journalists” (Papper, 2015; 2014; 2013; 2012). In his latest survey, solo journalists were the second most common new hire, tied with reporters and behind only producers (Papper, 2015). Additionally, according to data from the Pew Research Center’s *State of the Media* reports in 2011 and 2012, over two-thirds of stations use solo journalists and over 30% of news directors in medium-to-large markets said they “mostly used” solo journalists to cover the news (Potter, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2011; 2012).¹ These data, along with the RTDNA staffing survey results, appear to confirm what many in local television news already suspect: solo journalists are the future of local television news.

There have been several terms in the trade and academic literature that have been used to describe what this dissertation refers to as “solo journalism.” In this analysis, solo journalists are news professionals who are expected to gather information, write stories, record the audio and video elements necessary for those stories, and edit everything together by themselves. Within the specific work design of local television newsgathering, this is contrasted with the traditional “news crew” that consists of a reporter who gathers information and writes a script, a

¹ Admittedly, these data from Pew are slightly out of date. However, more recent versions of the State of the Media report have not included data related to solo journalism.

videographer who records the audio and video elements of a story, and sometimes a separate video editor (Tuggle, Carr, & Huffman, 2014). These “solo journalists” have been called multimedia journalists (or MMJs), video journalists, mobile journalists, backpack journalists, and, more colloquially, “one-man bands.” The term “solo journalist/journalism” was chosen for this dissertation because it best encapsulates what is unique about this work design: the *singular* nature of this form of news work (Bock, 2013). Solo journalism is not new in local television news. It has been a staple of small market television news work for decades. However, Potter, Matsa and Mitchell (2012) reported that over 15 % of stations in the top 25 television markets rely *mostly* on solo journalists to gather news, a marked increase from just a few years before.

Solo journalism is not limited to local television news. The larger trend of media “convergence” has and continues to change the way journalism is done at newspapers, radio stations, national television networks, and online news organizations (Bardoel, & Deuze, 2001; Deuze, 2005; Erdal, 2011; Huang, Rademakers, Fayemiwo, & Dunlap, 2004; Jacobson, 2011; Singer, 2004). Additionally, the growth of solo journalism is a global phenomenon, with many news organizations in Europe and other regions embracing the trend (Erdal, 2011; Urrsel, 2001; Wallace, 2013; 2009). However, this dissertation specifically analyzed solo journalism among local television news organizations in the United States for several reasons: a lack of in-depth quantitative research on the subject, the increasing utilization of solo journalists in local television as described earlier, and the importance of television news as a source of information for local and regional communities (Matsa, 2015). The geographic restriction is due to potential cultural and economic disparities among news organizations in different countries. Additionally, the US local television news industry is a sort of “closed-system” for news workers, with

journalists often taking multiple jobs across the country throughout their career, but rarely internationally (Berkowitz, 1990; Tuggle, Carr, & Huffman, 2014).

Solo journalism has been discussed in the trade and industry press. Some in the industry have lauded organizations implementing solo journalism as forward-thinking pioneers looking beyond traditional ways of doing things (Drew, 2010; Grant, 2008; M. Malone, 2009; Rosenblum, 2008; “Reporter in a backpack,” 2006; Strauss, 2008; Whitney, 2005). However, others have viewed the trend as detrimental to quality journalism. They argue that if you ask a person to “do it all,” inevitably, reporting and/or production quality will suffer (Hickey, 2002; Kumar, 2010; Kurtz, 2011; R. Malone, 2008; Stone, 2002). Specifically, Penniman (2009) argued in *Nieman Reports* that it is difficult for one person to “embody all that is necessary for [solo journalism],” which includes an eye for visual aesthetics, the ability to write and narrate a compelling story, and the meticulous attention to detail required of all news reporters (p. 26).

Most academic research on solo journalism has analyzed the topic by conducting interviews, observing, and/or surveying solo journalists in and out of the newsroom. The research stream began in earnest with Cottle and Ashton’s (1999) case study of BBC regional news organizations in Great Britain (comparable to local television newsrooms in the United States) after the broadcaster invested a significant amount to revamp those departments with an emphasis on “multi-skilled” (solo) journalists. They pointed to “normative concerns” about increased time pressurization and the “superficial” nature of solo journalism among reporters (p. 22). Other researchers have also found that, at least according to the reporters themselves, solo journalism is more stressful to the reporter and has a detrimental effect on the quality of reporting (Avilés, León, Sanders, & Harrison, 2004; Blankenship, 2015; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedas, 2014; Smith, Tanner, & Duhe, 2007; Wallace, 2009). Some

have pointed to a lack of control and autonomy among solo journalists (Bock, 2011; Dickinson & Bigi, 2009; Martyn, 2009). Conversely, Cummings (2014) argued that, in theory, solo journalism should create *more* autonomy by giving journalists more direct control over every aspect of news production.

The argument by Cummings (2014) raises an interesting issue. In a profession like journalism that values independence, why are the findings related to solo journalism so dire? Why do trade publication writers and academic researchers typically find an increased reliance on solo journalism resulted in negative outcomes both for content and reporters? The existing literature, while valuable, provides few definitive answers. Though many of the studies listed above are descriptive in nature, with little theoretical backing to explain their findings, one common theme is that multi-skilling and solo journalism have an impact on the *routines* of news production (Avilés et al., 2004; Blankenship, 2015; Bock, 2013; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013). Routines are the everyday practices that workers, in this case, journalists, use to do their jobs as efficiently as they can (Becker, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). These routines do not exist or originate in a vacuum. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to conduct a multilevel analysis of solo journalism in local television news production that further explored the routines associated with solo journalism, their antecedents and their consequences.

The Hierarchical Influences Model: A Framework for Analysis

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) have proposed a theoretical framework that facilitates multi-level research on media production with their Hierarchical Influences Model. This model posits five levels of influence on media content: social systems, social institutions, media organizations, routine practices, and individual characteristics. It argues that each of these levels has an impact on media content and that their impact is hierarchical. The *individual* media

worker, and his or her specific characteristics, has the most direct impact on content. But that worker often must work with certain *routine practices* based on professionalized norms, practical constraints, and structural patterns. Those patterns or practical constraints are often determined by the *media organizations* that journalists work within. Those organizations are often subject to regulation or influence by *social institutions* like governmental bodies or market forces. Finally, those regulating institutions work within a larger *social system*, the broad, sometime taken-for-granted assumptions situated within a particular culture or cultures.

If one assumes that solo journalism necessitates a unique set of routines and practices in news production, this model suggests two additional avenues of analysis, the organizational influence on these routines and the routine's influence on the individual. However, the Hierarchical Model only provides a framework for studying media production. It helps explain how various aspects of media production work together, but it does not provide more theoretically substantial explications on the nature of those aspects. Therefore, this study utilized theories from the fields of organizational sociology and organizational behavior (psychology) to explore the influence of solo journalism on news production. At the organizational level, new institutional theory from sociology was used to understand why solo journalism is being adopted at news organizations and how its implementation can impact the routines of television news production. At the individual level, job characteristics theory (JCT), which explores how specific job characteristics lead to motivation and satisfaction; role theory, the social dimension of work; and burnout, which results from increased stress, cynicism, and inefficacy, were used to examine how the routines associated with solo journalism impact the journalists themselves.

Outline of Dissertation

The next chapter of this dissertation will review relevant academic research relating to television news production in general, routines in both organizational studies and news production, job characteristics theory, role theory, and burnout. Then, Chapter 3 will outline the proposed theoretical argument about the relationships among various organizational, routine, and individual level concepts and solo journalism and propose several research questions and hypotheses related to those theoretical arguments. Chapter 4 will explain the various methods used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The organizational-level questions were explored using several in-depth qualitative interviews of local television news directors. The routine-level and individual-level research questions and hypotheses were tested using a quantitative survey of individual television reporters. Chapter 5 will review the findings based on data gathered from both the interviews and survey and relate them to the proposed research questions and hypotheses. Finally, Chapter 6 will discuss the findings as they relate to the proposed theoretical model and attempt to draw several conclusions about solo journalism. A visual representation of the theoretical model can be found in Appendix 1. Tables of the quantitative results of the journalist survey can be found in Appendix 2. The interview script and journalist survey can be found in Appendix 3 and 4 respectively.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Before analyzing a concept, it is important to have an understanding of the previous research that may be relevant. To that end, the following chapter will review previous literature on television news production. It will also review the research on routinization, both in organizational studies and news production. Next, it will review literature on isomorphism and decoupling from sociology and literature on job characteristics, role theory, and burnout from the organizational behavior field.

Television News Production

In order to understand the impact of solo journalism, we must first understand and review the research on how news is produced, specifically in the context of local television. Starting with David Manning White's (1950) study of gatekeeping, the mid-twentieth century saw a flurry of research on news as a practical accomplishment (e.g., Altheide, 1976; Breed, 1952, 1955; Epstein, 1974; Fishman, 1982; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1972, 1973, 1978). The focus of these works was varied. Some examined how news workers were socialized into their occupations (Breed, 1952, 1955), the relationship between journalists and their sources (Sigal, 1973), or why certain topics are covered and others are not (Altheide, 1976; Epstein, 1974; Gans, 1979). But the one common thread among these varied projects was that the process of "making news" was much more complicated than most thought. Journalists were not simply holding a mirror to the world, as many would have the public think. The processes used to gather information and present it to an audience had a significant influence on content.

Most of the scholars cited above looked at news production at newspaper and network television news. Research that specifically examined production of local television news concentrated on a few topics: the role of technology in decision making, the importance of market considerations, and increased routinization of the production process. Looking at the role of technology, Kanis (1991) noted that the visual nature of television news has an impact on decisions made in newsrooms. Reporters were encouraged to cover stories that had compelling visual elements (i.e., fire or crime scene) over others (city council meetings, political issues, etc.). In addition, the impact of Electronic News Gathering (ENG) and Satellite News Gathering (SNG) technologies was studied. Researchers found that news managers felt they needed to “get their money’s worth” out of new technologies and were likely to cover stories that would allow them to “show off” these new tools (Kanis, 1991, p. 72). Stations with access to national and international satellite feeds were more likely to include these non-local stories in their newscast (Cleland & Ostroff, 1988; Jacobs, 1990). While Jacobs (1990) believed that eventually the “novelty” of these new tools would wear off, Tuggle and Huffman (1999) surveyed local television reporters and found that many believed that live reporting and other technological factors had an undue impact on news decisions.

Another research stream in television news production involved its relationship with the market. Arguing that the priorities of the market (e.g., making a substantial profit, producing content that appeals to the widest possible audience) are generally incompatible with the professional goals of journalism (e.g., informing the public, holding those in power accountable), McManus (1994) noted three specific ways that local television news practices were driving journalism toward a more market-driven model. First, TV news did not have the same “professional [journalistic] tradition” as newspapers and radio. Second, television programs

made money solely by selling advertising, unlike newspapers, which could offset some of those costs with subscription fees, thus strengthening the ties between television stations and advertisers. And finally, television news, with its complicated and often expensive equipment, was a resource-intensive proposition that required a significant capital investment. Additionally, McManus described local television markets as oligopolistic in structure, meaning that there were only a few competitors in each market and the cost of entering the market was very high. This structure did not allow the open competition that would lead to high-quality production driven by strong competition, according to market theory.

However, there was still a significant amount of competition within television news markets and some scholars were not as dire in their analysis of its impact on news quality as McManus. Research by Lacy, Atwater, and Quin (1988) found that levels of competition in television markets actually led to an increase in news budgets. Because the news departments, and specifically news anchors, were often seen as the “face” of a television station, it was important to ownership that their news departments be sufficiently funded. However, they identified some possible negative consequences. The importance placed on the anchors, and the increase in salary, often came at the expense of salaries for front-line news workers such as reporters, producers, and photographers (Busterna, 1988). Additionally, Powers (1993) noted that because producing newscasts was cheaper than carrying network programming, local stations were increasing their “news hole,” or the amount of time dedicated to local news. Often, though, they did not add the necessary staff to produce content for that additional time, increasing the demands on current news workers.

These findings on the role of technology and the market also inform research on routinization within local television news production. Specifically, Berkowitz (1990, 1991, 1992)

discussed how technological and time constraints in television news made crews more likely to “typify” a story, so that journalists and managers knew what equipment would be needed and how much time would be needed to report on it. Looking specifically at time constraints, Kanis (1991) argued that because TV news reporters had less time to complete their stories, there was not as much time to research or vet claims made by sources. They were therefore less likely to question them. More recent research noted that having less time to report, referred to as a “time-famine,” means TV journalists must focus on efficiency over depth, and this usually results in lower-quality reporting (Barnhurst, 2011; Reinardy & Bacon, 2014).

Though it precedes much of the research cited above, Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade’s “The News Factory” (1980) provided what may be the most thorough examination of how television news work is shaped by technology, market forces, and routines. As suggested by the title, these researchers argued that local TV news work was more like a highly routinized assembly-line factory rather than a more “professionalized” craft model in which educated journalists rely on specialized knowledge and work with a high degree of independence. Bantz and his co-authors broke down the local television news process into five distinct stages. The first stage was story ideation, in which management and reporters gathered and pitched possible story ideas. The second stage was task assignment, in which news crews (the reporter and videographer) were assigned to a specific story or stories, often even if the reporter had not proposed that particular idea. The third stage involved assembling/structuring materials. During this stage the news crew left the station to gather the necessary elements (information, interviews, additional video/audio footage) needed to present the assigned story. Crews were often developing the structure of the story while still gathering material, instead of after all elements were gathered. Fourth, the crew assembled those elements into a cohesive video news

story with recorded audio and images. Finally, that story and the other assigned news items were presented during a live broadcast.

Bantz et al. (1980) believed that this routinized method of news production resulted in three problematic consequences. First, there was a lack of flexibility in their workflow. For example, if a story was not easily categorized using existing news values during the ideation phase, it was unlikely to be assigned. Or, if sources were not available to the crew during the “assembling/structuring materials” phase, it was unlikely they would be included in the piece at all. Second, there was a lack of personal connection to news stories. Because crews were often assigned to stories they did not originate, and often did not work on stories over a longer period of time (often no longer than a single day), reporters had a difficult time forming relationships with sources or gaining expertise on specific issues. Finally, this “industrialized” model of news work put an emphasis on productivity over quality. The authors found a culture in TV newsrooms of “never missing slot.” Crews were held in high regard if they could “turn” a story quickly, regardless of the depth of reporting involved.

Solo journalism and news production.

One common theme in the research cited above was the importance of work practices in journalism, especially in television journalism. With that in mind, research into solo journalism began in earnest about 15 years ago, and these early studies were generally based on case studies of specific newsrooms. They noted that the implementation of new technology (e.g, smaller cameras and more user-friendly editing equipment) and job descriptions (solo journalism) resulted in a change in work practices (Avilés et al., 2004; Cottle & Asthon, 1999; Wallace, 2009). They also point to conflict between those changing practices and the “professional identities” of television journalists (Cottle & Ashton, 1999). Some of these case studies found

journalists who resented being asked to incorporate new skills into their repertoire (Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Wallace, 2009), while others welcomed the perceived autonomy of having a hand in every aspect of creating their news stories (Avilés et al., 2004; Dickinson & Bigi, 2009).

More recent work on solo journalism has tended to find similar mixed results. In one of the few research articles to survey a larger number of solo journalists, Perez and Cremedas (2014) found that solo journalists in larger television markets accepted the inevitability of solo journalism as a primary form of news gathering. Still, these reporters believed they were producing lower quality news stories *because* they were solo journalists. They also reported less job satisfaction, and many were considering leaving the news business all together. Other research has been similarly pessimistic. Higgins-Dobney and Sussman (2013) argued that hiring solo journalists *could* have a positive impact if it meant an increase in the number of reporters in the field. However, they believed that because solo journalism was seen as a cost-reducing measure by ownership, solo journalism meant simply replacing two news workers with one. Higgins-Dobney and Sussman (2013) and Blankenship (2015) noted that solo journalists felt that the quality of their work was suffering. News managers also felt the increase in solo journalism meant that they had to hire younger and less experienced reporters because older reporters did not have the technological skills needed or refused to accept additional work responsibilities and left the station (Blankenship, 2015).

In one of the most comprehensive explorations of solo journalism to date, Bock (2012) argued that the “body,” a reporter’s physical presence and the limitations that entails, makes solo journalism distinct from other forms of news work. Her analysis focused on “the sweaty, kneeling, camera-carrying, stair-climbing, elbow-bumping bodies of the men and women who work as [solo journalists]” (p. 197). This physicality cannot help but have an impact on the

process of reporting, she argued, but even here the results were mixed. “The singularity of practice is considered a travesty in some organizations and a form of liberation in others,” according to Bock (p. 198). Bock proposed a model for studying the process of solo journalism similar to the one detailed by Bantz et al. (1980). The five steps in her model were “1) preconceptualization of the story and its elements, 2) locating and gaining access to elements, 3) decontextualizing elements: recording them for future use, 4) narrativising elements, and 5) presenting the story” (p. 70). The second step, locating and gaining access to elements, she felt was particularly difficult for solo journalists. Gaining physical access to a location, and sometimes simply having to drive oneself to a location, could be more difficult because of the physical limitations unique to solo journalism.

Another specific aspect of reporting that Bock (2012) and others noted may be strongly impacted by solo journalism is story selection. Some have argued that increased time pressure and physical constraints make solo journalists more likely to utilize “information subsidies” provided by sources (Blankenship, 2015; Bock, 2012; Martyn, 2009). The concept of the information subsidy was developed by Gandy (1982), who argued that information sources make themselves more attractive to journalists in various ways (e.g., making themselves or other sources available for interviews, organizing news “events”). Specifically, Martyn (2009) argued that solo journalists would be more likely to rely on public relations practitioners and other official channels because it is easier than developing and nurturing other sources. Solo journalists interviewed by Blankenship (2015) noted that if a PR practitioner could arrange for “one-stop shop” stories, in which all the needed elements were located in a single place, this was seen as a much more attractive story.

However, not all research on solo journalism has been critical. Referring specifically to the assembly-line conception of television news production of Bantz et al. (1980), Cummings (2014) argued that solo journalism could help news workers move beyond those constraints and into a “post-Fordist” state of news production. By freeing reporters from the technological and organizational constraints of typical news production, solo journalists could be more like craftsmen/craftswomen, with a hand in all aspects of producing their stories. Admittedly, Cummings’ arguments were more speculative about the future of television news, rather than based on current data.

The Routine Level: Routines in Organizational Studies

Though their overall findings are mixed, one common thread in many of the studies on solo journalism is the impact on the everyday practices of television reporters (Avilés et al., 2004; Blankenship, 2015; Bock, 2012; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013). As the research by Bantz et al. (1980) and others have demonstrated, television news work may be more routinized than that of other journalistic media. What follows is a survey of literature from the field of organizational studies that examines the origination and utilization of work routines and literature specifically regarding routines in news production.

The study of routines in organizational studies originated with March and Simon’s (1958) book *Organizations*. In this work, March and Simon began to move away from the “rational-actor” traditions that conceptualized behavior within and between organizations, which assumed complete knowledge of a situation and of potential consequences of every possible alternative. March and Simon instead noted that all actors within organizations act with “bounded rationality,” which meant their knowledge of a situation was almost always *incomplete*. They also noted that because of this bounded rationality, decisions would be made within

organizations to achieve *satisfactory* results instead of *optimal* results. That is, people will do what is good enough to satisfy whatever their goal is even though it may not be the “best” option. Almost 25 years later, Nelson and Winter (1982) made routines the theoretical centerpiece of their analysis of organizations. They believed that routines served the same purpose in organizations that genes served in an organism: namely, they were the building blocks of an organization. Both March and Simon (1958) and Nelson and Winter (1982) believed that routines are the result of uncertainty, both in markets and within organizations.

Scholars argued that routines designed to reduce uncertainty within organizations generally do so through two ways: control and coordination. Routines that develop within a specific part of the organization are often based on control. These routines help ensure that work processes stayed consistent and that products are delivered in a timely and reliable fashion, thus reducing the uncertainty and variability in accomplishing the overall goal of the organization (Grant, 1996; March and Olsen, 1989; Nelson and Winter, 1982). Additionally, routines that develop between different parts of an organization are often associated with coordination. These routines normalize the relations between various parts of an organization. That way a worker knows when to apply his or her particular skill or knowledge to the product, thus reducing uncertainty, preventing conflicts between different parts of an organization, and expediting work (Becker & Knudsen, 2004; Bourdieu, 1992; Heiner, 1982; Nelson & Winter, 1982).

Another key function of routines is the development of organizational memory. By developing routines associated with certain positions, it is possible for an individual to leave a position, either through promotion or leaving the organization entirely, and the organization maintain stability (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Winter 1987). In fact, Nelson and Winter went so far as to say that an organization is *defined* by its organizational memory. The physical structures of

an organization may change, the personnel within the organization may change, but the organizational memory is often what stays consistent.

Other research has examined the characteristics of routines within organizations and how they develop. According to these scholars, routines are more likely to develop in situations when there is high frequency, regularity, and time pressure associated with a task (Betsch, Fielder, & Brinkmann, 1998; Narduzzo, Rocco, & Warglien, 2000; Weick, 90; Zellmer-Bruhn, 1999, 2003). Additionally, routines are incomplete when they are communicated among workers because there must be some contextual component that will vary by situation (Suchman, 1987). Routines also vary because they are situated in specific times and locations (Barney, 1991; Hodgson, 2001; Simon, 1976). Finally, routines can develop among different groups or “communities.” They can develop among horizontally organized hierarchical communities (between managers and subordinates) or among horizontally organized epistemic communities (workers with a common task or function). Routines developed in these different communities can differ in terms of replication and inertia (Cohendet & Llerena, 2003).

Routines in news organizations.

When considering the work on routines described above, news organizations do not immediately spring to mind as prime examples. When March and Simon (1955) and Nelson and Winter (1982) both provided examples of their theories in practice, they often discussed manufacturing, or some other form of commerce where a physical product is produced and sold. News work is usually seen as the opposite of routinized. Reporters, particularly television reporters, are often covering different stories every day. Additionally, before the mid-twentieth century and the research described earlier in this section, news organizations were often believed to be producing and distributing news that was an accurate and relatively complete reflection of

the real world, as the professional norms of journalism would imply. Today, routines are seen as an important aspect of news production. Routines warrant a specified “layer” in the Hierarchical Influences Model (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). In fact, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) note that routines are so integral to news production that “news is therefore what an organization’s routines lead it to define as news” (p. 182).

One of the first to bring the sociological study of routines into the newsroom was Gaye Tuchman (1972, 1973, 1978). She understood that news workers face a great deal of uncertainty in their work and that news professionals, like any other person, are limited by a bounded rationality. She was also one of the first to conceptualize news as a “product,” one that needed to be “made” every day by news organization. (Tuchman, 1972, p. 662). This meant that organizations and workers could, and often did, develop routine work practices to help them streamline the production of news. Specifically, she argued that we should not categorize news based on topic (hard, soft, spot news, developing stories, etc.) but by how it happens (scheduled or unscheduled) and the material requirements needed to cover it. Thinking about news as a construction also further diminished the notion that news was, overall, an accurate reflection of society. Molotch and Lester (1973, 1974, 1975) argued that news workers are instead an active part of “creating” the news. Additionally, there has been substantial research on routine practices involving objectivity (Schudson, 1978; 2011), news judgment/values (Stephens, 1980), and gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2003).

Bantz et al. (1980) pointed to two reasons why television news in particular is susceptible to routinization. First, television newsrooms are smaller than the typical newspaper newsroom. Therefore, television journalists often must begin their career in smaller markets and then, after gaining sufficient experience, move up to larger markets. This creates a high degree of turnover

in television news, with reporters only staying for a year or two, especially in smaller markets. This high turnover creates an increased need for organizational memory. For example, if the reporter who often covers the local police department leaves the station for another position, it is important that the new reporter assigned to that beat be able to maintain a relationship with sources in the department. The reporter may do this by following routines similar to the previous reporter. Also, the smaller staff size at television stations may increase demand on news workers to produce more content (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006).

Television news work is also more prone to routinization because of its reliance on complicated technology (Bantz et al., 1980, Tuchman, 1973). Compared to newspaper reporters, who may not utilize anything more complex than a telephone or word processor, television news workers rely on the skillful and efficient use of video cameras, editing equipment, live broadcast equipment, and more. Each of these has a set of limitations within which the reporter must work. Knowledge of these limitations and developing routines that ensure news stories are consistently produced *despite* those limitations are essential to successful television news work (Tuchman, 1978). The technological complexity of television news production also makes editorial supervision more difficult. Changing a video news story is more arduous than changing newspaper copy, which leads to an emphasis on “turning a story” quickly and on simplicity rather than depth (Ismach & Dennis, 1978). Technology can also impact story selection. Organizations may have the need to justify the cost of expensive equipment (e.g., satellite remote broadcasting technology) by covering stories that lend themselves to the use of that equipment (Livingstone & Bennett, 2003).

The Organizational Level: New Institutional Theory

As posited by Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) Hierarchical Influences model and the foundational work of March and Simon (1958) and Simon and Winter (1982), routines are unique to specific organizations. Therefore, to understand how certain news gathering routines are developed by news organizations, it is important to have a deeper understanding of how these organizations "behave." Similar to the history of organizational routines, many early scholars of how organizations behave based their predictions on rational-actor and market-based assumptions. These traditions assumed that organizations act based on knowledge, sometimes limited, of their markets and with financial success as their overall goal. However, this did not seem to explain why certain organizations might behave in ways counterintuitive to simple economics. Weber (1947) provided a possible explanation when he argued that for some organizations, legitimacy is just as important as profitability. These organizations were seen as more "institutionalized." Expanding on that premise, DiMaggio and Powell (1983), developed New Institutional Theory which argues that certain organizations look for, and may require, legitimacy from the social realm. This includes social institutions like the government, peer institutions, and cultural institutions. There are two main premises of this theory. First, organizations will adapt to social expectations from various sources and become more similar. Second, if there is some conflict among those sources or with internal efficiency, organizations will make only nominal, or "surface level" changes and maintain an internal status quo.

The first premise, the tendency for institutionalized organizations to become more similar, is known as isomorphism. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983) there are three sources of pressure that lead organizations to become similar or isomorphic. First, there is coercive pressure, which originates from power relationships such as government regulation or

corporate ownership. Second, there is mimetic pressure, which arises from conditions of uncertainty for organizations, often economic in nature. Organizations may no longer “understand” the markets in which they must operate. They may look to peers that are having more success and imitate their actions. Third, there is normative pressure, which originates from a widely held belief that a certain course of action or way of doing things is “proper” or perhaps morally superior (Suchman, 1995). Normative pressure is often found within more professionally oriented organizations because of their similar education and training, which leads to consistency in normative values (Galaskiewicz & Burt, 1991; Mezias, 1990).

The second central premise of new institutional theory involves conflict between various isomorphic or social pressures. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that when this situation occurs, organizations will “decouple” their nominal structure from their actual practice. In other words, managers in organizations may changing their formal policies to respond to some form of pressure (i.e., economic, normative), but the actual organizational practice remains the same, thus eliminating the exterior pressure to change and maintaining their status quo. This premise is predicated on the belief that organizations are “loosely coupled” systems, with parts that are at least partially independent from others (March & Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1979). What is also key to Meyer and Rowan’s theory is a loose coupling between structure and practice in organizations. Organizations that decouple structure and practice run the risk of losing legitimacy and trust from regulators or the public if that decoupling is revealed. They therefore avoid complete transparency.

There are several additional complexities associated with both isomorphism and decoupling that have been explored over the last three decades. Regarding isomorphism, there is disagreement over the institutional environment from which organizations face pressure or draw

influence. Scott and Meyers (1983) argued that institutional environments are based on technical and goal-oriented features. This would mean these organizations have little control over who their peer organizations are. Others have argued that organizations have more agency and create institutional fields that are socially constructed (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). There are also questions regarding which facets of organizations are more susceptible to isomorphic pressures. Some have looked at isomorphism in the structure of organizations (Meyer, Scott, & Strang, 1987), whereas others have examined its impact on practice (Kraatz & Zajac, 1996; Levitt & Nass, 1989).

Regarding decoupling, researchers have mostly looked at explanations for why organizations engage in the practice. Kostova and Roth (2002) argued that if the organization does not trust the source of the coercive pressure (for example, government regulators) they may be more likely to decouple policy from practice. Some have argued that homogeneity in an institutional field leads to decoupling (Westphal & Zajac, 1994; 1997) whereas others believe heterogeneity in a field makes it more likely (Aurini, 2006; Brunsson, 2002). Essentially, this is related to whether early adopters or late adopters of new practices are more likely to decouple. Other research has explored the mechanisms of decoupling. Westphal and Zajac (1998) argued that decoupling is a pragmatic response to financial threats. The idea that decoupling is a strategic response has also been found in branding research (Beverland & Luxton, 2005).

New institutional theory in news organizations.

It is surprising that it took almost twenty years for institutional theory to make its way into the research on news organizations, for which legitimacy and social standing may be just as important as financial success. There are also traditionally less direct, or loose, ties between consumers and producers (Hallin, 1996). There is evidence that news organizations mimic peer

organizations when faced with uncertainty (Boczkowski, 2007; Lowrey, 2005, 2009). News organizations are also linked by their need to work with other institutions (Cook, 1998; Ryfe, 1996) and the adoption and adherence of similar routine practices (Tuchman, 1972; 1973).

Research has also found that news organizations engage in decoupling. Lowrey and Woo (2010) used institutional theory to explain the adoption of certain online and audience research practices by newspapers during times of economic uncertainty. These newspapers displayed classic “decoupling” in their application of new practices. For example, news editors were being pressured to monitor audience input. Though they adopted audience research practices nominally, they decoupled that portion of their work from the actual news decisions being made, thus maintaining the status quo (Lowrey, 2011; Lowrey & Woo, 2010). Additionally, research has found news organizations decoupling their practices regarding newsroom personnel practices (Gade, 2004) and cross-media partnerships (Lowrey, 2005).

The Individual Level: Job Characteristics Theory, Role Theory, and Burnout

As suggested by Shoemaker and Reese’s (2014) Hierarchical Influences Model and other research from organizational studies (Barney, 1991; Hodgson, 2001; Simon, 1976), routines have strong contextual aspects that depend on the individuals who carry them out. Therefore, while it is important to understand the organizational origins of routines, it would seem just as vital to examine how those routines impact the individual worker. According to Shoemaker and Reese (2014), much of the research at the individual level has examined the impact of individual differences (gender, nationality, political affiliation, professional orientation, etc.) on media content. However, this analysis looks at the impact of specific news work routines on the individual journalist. To do this, this dissertation utilizes research from the field of organizational behavior sometimes known as Industrial/Organizational (I/O) psychology. Work in the

organizational behavior field is concerned with how individuals work within organizations and how certain variables (both organizational and individual) influence their attitudes, emotions, and perceptions of their work. Specifically, this analysis draws on three areas of organizational behavior research that have the closest bearing on solo journalism: job design, role theory, and burnout.

Job characteristics theory and task variety.

Hackman and Oldham (1976) developed job characteristics theory (JCT), a foundational work in the field of work design, which examines the relationship between the characteristics of a job and the characteristics of an individual. According to JCT, there are five key job characteristics that influence motivation: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. According to JCT, a job that is higher in these characteristics will create a “self-motivation cycle” in which employee motivation is self-sustaining because employees experience meaningfulness from their work, take responsibility for the outcomes of their work, and have a clear knowledge of the results of their work (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

According to Hackman & Oldham (1975), skill variety is related to the number of specific skills required to complete one’s job and task variety simply refers to the number of different tasks a person is required to perform for his or her job. They are often used interchangeably in the literature. This may not be surprising, as both have been shown to be positively related to job satisfaction and motivation (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007).

Autonomy is another key part of JCT and organizational behavior research in general. Karasek (1979) made it a centerpiece of his job categorization model. He argued that two factors, job demand and decision latitude (autonomy), were important regarding job design and mental

strain. Using those two variables, he created a job strain model with four dimensions: passive jobs (low demand, low decision latitude), low strain jobs (low demand, high decision latitude), high strain jobs (high demand, low decision latitude), and active jobs (high demand, high decision latitude). Active jobs are often the most fulfilling while high strain jobs are the most stressful (Karasek, 1979).

As stated above, task variety, skill variety, and autonomy should be associated with high job satisfaction and motivation. However, a meta-analysis of work design research by Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) found that task variety was related to role overload, itself a form of role conflict. Role overload and role conflict are a part of another, sometimes separate, research stream in the organization behavior literature called role theory. Katz and Kahn (1978) described roles as the social dimension of work. Rarely does a formal job description encompass all that is required of someone. The informal job description, often the more relevant description, is a socially negotiated role. According to this theory, roles are a negotiated concept, communicated to the focal person by both superiors and peers, and accepted, or not, by that focal person. That negotiation can be cyclical, with the behavior and acceptance of the focal person impacting the role expectations of superiors and peers. Additionally, roles can become more complex through the addition of activities, expectations, or other parties within the role negotiation. While many prefer great complexity in their roles, Katz and Kahn (1978) noted that when “the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult” role conflict may occur (p. 204).

Role theory and role overload.

Further research has identified specific forms of role conflict such as role ambiguity and, most relevant to this study, role overload. In situations of role overload, workers feel that they

have too many responsibilities or activities to accomplish and do not have the time, skill, or resources to complete them (Rizzo, House, & Litzman, 1970). Role overload is sometimes conceptualized as a form of role conflict, and sometimes as a distinct concept (Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005; Coverman, 1989; Hecht, 2001; Singh, Goolsby, & Rhoads, 1994). However, there has been significant research that found role overload to be a cause of stress and inefficacy in work situations (Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005; Jones, Chonko, Rangarajan, & Roberts, 2007; Peterson et al, 1995; Sales, 1970).

Some role overload research has examined the concept from a broader perspective, studying the effects of having multiple work and domestic roles, particularly for single mothers (Joag & Gentry, 1991; Robinson & Milkie, 1998; Etaugh & Moss, 2001; Erdwins, 2001). Others have limited them to expanding job responsibilities solely in one's professional life (Jones et al., 2007; Peiró, González-Romá, Tordera, & Mañas, 2001; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004; Boles & Babin, 1996; Bartuner & Reynolds, 1983; Fogarty, Singh, & Moore, 2000). Regardless of their scope, most of the studies on role overload found it to have negative consequences on a number of factors, including stress, job satisfaction, motivation, and even illness (Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005; Jones, Chonko, Jones, & Stevens, 2012; Mulki, Jarmillo, & Locander, 2006).

One interesting corollary to the conceptualization of role overload suggested by Jones et al (2007) is its relationship to work experience. According to conventional wisdom, less experienced workers should have more trouble acclimating to increased role expectations because of less tacit knowledge. But in reality, and according to research in the career-stage field, newer workers are generally more flexible to role adjustments because they are still “feeling out” their roles while employees who have been in their careers for a number of years are “settled” and comfortable with what is expected of them (Cron & Slocum, 1986). Using that

logic, Jones et al (2007) argued that more experienced employees may be more susceptible to the negative consequences of role overload.

Burnout in organizational behavior and journalism.

The findings of JCT and role overload have not been applied to news work specifically. However, one possible outcome of both role overload (Fogerty et al., 2000) and what JCT theorists call “person-job incongruity” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) has been applied to journalism: burnout. Burnout as an area of study has been dominated in the organizational behavior field by the work of Maslach (1976). She and others have identified three dimensions of burnout; exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Exhaustion is the stress dimension of burnout and is the result of depleted mental, emotional, and physical resources. Cynicism is the social dimension of burnout, and leads workers to become more detached and excessively negative. Finally, inefficacy is the self-evaluative dimension, and is related to feelings of inadequacy and lack of achievement. Leiter and Maslach (1988) argued that burnout developed progressively among these three dimensions, starting with exhaustion, then cynicism, then inefficacy.

Research has shown that journalists, in general, are susceptible to burnout. Cook and Banks (1993) used survey measures specifically designed to study burnout and found among newspaper journalists that increased workload and multiple role assignment were related to increased burnout indicators. Additionally, they found that a disparity between what they expected of journalism and the reality was an important predictor. More recently, Scott Reinardy (2011) looked at burnout among sports journalists and newspaper journalists and found similar results. Though no one has specifically looked at television journalists, or solo journalists, regarding burnout, their job characteristics could make them “at risk.” For example, research has

noted several situational factors that correlate with burnout, including increased job demand, workload, and time pressures (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) all of which have been found among solo journalists (Avilés et al., 2004; Blankenship, 2015; Bock, 2012; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedas, 2014). Additionally, they noted that persons working in occupation with higher “emotional connections” with others are more likely to experience burnout (Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, & Mertini, 2001). Television reporters often must interview sources face-to-face, and television’s reliance on crime and accidents in broadcasts usually means that reporters must spend more than their share of time with people who have just experienced a tragedy (Jacobs, 1990; Kanis, 1991).

Chapter 3: Hypotheses and Research Questions

The goal of this research was to examine the antecedents and consequences of solo journalism in local television news. This required a multilevel approach that utilized theories from organizational studies, sociology, organizational behavior, and news production as outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter will attempt to synthesize the concepts from those traditions, as well as the extant literature on solo journalism into a predictive and testable model and present several hypotheses and research questions associated with this model. First, this chapter will detail how and why solo journalism necessitates increased routinization among news workers. Then it will describe why organizational factors may influence how these routines are implemented by management and how successfully these routines are utilized by journalists. Finally, this chapter will detail how those routines may impact the journalists themselves and lead to increased burnout.

Solo Journalism and Routines

Many scholars have argued that technology has a distinct impact on routines (Bantz et al., 1980; Ismach & Dennis, 1978; Livingstone & Bennett, 2003). And while solo journalism has proliferated because the technological constraints of television news work have lessened with smaller and easier-to-use equipment, there are still practicalities associated with the use of that technology (Bock, 2012). And now, instead of that work being distributed across multiple personnel, it is often up to a single person to navigate and apply the creative and physical processes associated with information gathering, story construction, and equipment operation. The uncertainty created by this and the organizational memory needed to complete these

different tasks could lead to the stricter adherence to routines (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Winter 1987).

As mentioned before, there are three factors that lead to the establishment of routines: frequency of application, regularity of application, and increased time constraints (Betch et al, 1998; Narduzzo et al. 2000; Zellmer-Bruhn, 1999, 2003). While the first two may not change, solo journalists may be under increased time constraints because of the design of their work. They cannot rely on the videographer to shoot video or begin editing while they gather additional information or communicate with sources. Also the simple task of allowing one person to drive to a story location while the other completed some form of news work creates added time pressure (Bock, 2012; Blankenship, 2015, R. Malone, 2008).

Based on this research on routines, solo journalists should be more susceptible to routinization and the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: Solo journalists will experience greater routinization of their work practices than reporters who regularly work within news crews.

Additionally, the research on the specific stages of television news production (Bantz et al., 1980; Bock, 2012) provides more specific hypotheses related to solo journalism and routinization. The relevant stages are the story ideation stage, the story assignment stage, and the assembling/structuring material phase. Solo journalists may experience routinization in the ideation phase because increased time and physical constraints encourage them to have a more solidified idea of their stories before reporting actually begins (Bock, 2012). They may not have the luxury of being able to change stories in the middle of the day if one does not pan out or to “find” their story during the reporting process. Also, the physical and technological limitations of

solo journalists may lead them to limit the time spent gathering materials (Bock, 2012; 2011).

Therefore, the following supporting hypotheses are proposed:

H1b: Solo journalists will rely on increased routinization during the story

ideation/assignment phase of news production compared to reporters who regularly work within news crews.

H1c: Solo journalists will rely on increased routinization during the “assembling and construction materials” phase of news production compared to reporters who regularly work within news crews.

Inherent in the arguments of Bantz et al. (1980), Bock (2013), and others regarding routinization in the news production process is a concern about a lack of autonomy for reporters. Autonomy from external influence has been a hallmark of journalistic professionalism and ethics, particularly in the U.S. since the early twentieth century (Schudson, 1978, Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). That autonomy has traditionally been viewed as freedom from government regulation or interference from corporate ownership, but it has also been conceptualized at the reporting level through the processes of “making news” (McDevitt, 2003; Singer, 2007). Ideally, reporters should be able to go about their jobs and produce their stories free from outside influences. Specifically regarding solo journalism, Martyn (2003) argued that the increased responsibility and time pressure expected of solo journalists may make them more susceptible to influence from other interested parties, specifically PR professionals. Field observation and interviews by Blankenship (2015) also found that solo journalists felt stories with greater information subsidies (i.e., news events in which interviews and video elements could be gathered at the same location or even pre-arranged by third parties; see Gandy, 1982), were more desirable. Based on that research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Solo journalists will experience decreased feelings of autonomy in their work compared to reporters who regularly work within news crews.

New Institutionalism and Solo Journalism

Conversely, Cummings (2014) argued that solo journalism should move television news production into a post-Fordist stage, away from the routinized, assembly-line method of Bantz et al. (1980) and Bock (2012) by giving reporters full control over almost every aspect of their news story. But as observations and interviews with many solo journalists demonstrate, that has not been the case so far (Avilés et al., 2004; Blankenship, 2015; Perez & Cremedas, 2014). Using the theoretical lens of new institutionalism, we may be able to understand why solo journalism is creating the change predicted by some. New institutional theory posits that certain organizations may not behave based on market logic but rather, from a need to maintain legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Weber, 1947). They do this through two mechanisms; isomorphism and decoupling.

Isomorphism is generally seen as a reaction to uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The journalism industry has certainly seen its fair share of uncertainty over the last few decades, with declining audience shares and evaporating revenue streams (Barthel, 2015; Gelman, 2015). While television news has not felt the same pinch as its print brethren, it has still struggled (Matsa, 2015; Potter, Matsa & Mitchell, 2012). From an isomorphic perspective, it is possible that news managers are being pushed to adopt solo journalism as a cost saving measure. Station managers or corporate executives may see it as a way to avoid paying two or more people (the reporter and videographer) for work that can be done by one (the solo journalist). This would be an example of coercive isomorphism. It is also possible, that faced with increasing economic uncertainty, news organizations are looking to their peers for guidance on how to move forward.

If they see other news organizations, especially those held in high regard, utilizing solo journalism, they may be inclined to do the same, an example of mimetic isomorphism.

Additionally, news directors may embrace solo journalism for more idealistic reasons, believing that it is the way television news *should* be done. This is an example of normative isomorphism.

The other mechanism of new institution theory is decoupling. It assumes that when pressures from outside the organization clash with traditional ways of doing things, organizations may separate, or decouple, their nominal structure from actual practice (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In other words, their formal policies may change, but the way things are really *done* remain the same. From a decoupling perspective, television news managers may respond to the pressure to adopt solo journalism in their newsroom only nominally. Instead of a substantive evaluation of how solo journalism may necessitate a change in news work practices, they simply assume that a solo journalist will or should be able to do the exact same job that a news crew can do. This may lead to the increased routinization that was hypothesized earlier as opposed to the craft-person approach to news production as envisioned by Cummings (2014).

Because there is no previous research on the connection between institutionalism and solo journalism and the arguments made above are more speculative in nature, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1a: To what extent are news managers feeling pressure from stations or corporate management to hire solo journalists (coercive isomorphism)?

RQ1b: To what extent are news managers adopting solo journalism because they see it as a trend among their peers in the industry? (mimetic isomorphism)

RQ1c: To what extent are news managers adopting solo journalism because of a normative belief that solo journalism is better or more correct? (normative isomorphism)

RQ2a: To what extent do news managers expect solo journalists to contribute to their news operation in the same way as news crews (decoupling)?

RQ2b: To what extent do news managers report different expectations for solo journalists than traditional news crews regarding reporting ability (decoupling)?

RQ2c: To what extent do news managers report different expectations for solo journalists than traditional news crews regarding production skills (decoupling)??

RQ2d: To what extent do news managers report different expectations for solo journalists than traditional news crews regarding story assignment (decoupling)??

RQ3: To what extent do the attitude of news managers toward solo journalist's ability and/or skills impact the feelings of routinization among the solo journalists who work for that news manager?

Organizational Behavior and Solo Journalism

At the individual level, it is important to understand how a new work design like solo journalism may impact the actual reporters tasked with adapting to the new routines it necessitates. As noted earlier, several studies of solo journalists demonstrate that they feel overburdened, are not happy with the quality of work they produce, and have a higher intention to leave the business (Avilés et al., 2004; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedas, 2014). These findings are consistent with three concepts from the organization behavior field: role overload, burnout, and “person-job incongruity” from Job Characteristics Theory.

As discussed in chapter 2, role overload occurs when workers feel that they have too many responsibilities or activities to accomplish and do not have the time, skill, or resources to complete them (Rizzo, House, & Litzman, 1970). This concept could help explain why many solo journalists have reported they feel they are not able to produce their best work (Avilés et al.,

2004; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedass, 2014). However, research has also indicated that solo journalists are more stressed and more likely to leave the profession early (Avilés et al., 2004; Bock, 2013; Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedass, 2014; Wallace, 2009). This points to a more serious problem with the work design of solo journalism, burnout. Maslach (1976) and other scholars have identified three facets of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Workers who experience burnout also have less job satisfaction and become less productive over time (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Previous research has demonstrated that journalists, and particularly journalists responsible for multiple tasks, are susceptible to burnout, thus strengthening the possible relationship between role overload among journalists and burnout (Cook & Banks, 1993; Cook, Banks, & Turner, 1996; Reinardy, 2011; 2006).

However, other theories from the organizational behavior literature propose a more complex relationship between solo journalism as a job design and those who practice it. Job characteristics theory (JCT) in the field of organizational behaviors conceptualizes the link between certain aspects of a person's job and their overall job motivation and satisfaction. The five characteristics named in JCT are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. By definition, solo journalists engage in a greater number of tasks and are required to possess a greater number of skills (Avilés et al., 2004; Bock, 2012; Cottle, 1999; Wallace, 2009). Additionally, because they are no longer required to work within the confines of a news crew, solo journalists should experience greater autonomy (Cummings, 2014; Dickinson & Bigi, 2009). Assuming that solo journalists enjoy greater autonomy, one could argue that this specific job design would lead to greater motivation and satisfaction. Further, under the normative conception of television news work, television reporting, and especially solo journalism, would

be described as an “active job,” an ideal according to Karasek (1979) that involves a high level of demand and decision latitude (autonomy). However, surveys and interviews of solo journalists, both in the United States and Europe, have demonstrated that they do not feel that they are producing quality work and are more likely to believe they will leave the journalism field altogether (Aviles et al., 2004; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedas, 2015). According to these findings, solo journalists do not appear to be self-motivated or satisfied with their jobs.

The question remains: why might increased task variety, which is often associated with increased motivation among workers according to JCT, create role overload among solo journalists? The key may involve the level of autonomy among solo journalists. The logic applied in the preceding paragraph works under the normative assumption that television journalism is a profession with a high degree of autonomy. And to be fair, television journalists do have a nominally high degree of autonomy. There are rarely any specific rules they must follow when gathering and writing their news stories. They are free to consult sources that they see fit and structure the story as they wish. But if we return to the work of Bantz et al. (1980) and Bock (2012), we see that, in reality, the workflow of a television news reporter can be very constrained. The need to have each story presented at a specific time every day and the technological resources needed to present that story lead to increased time pressure, increased routinization, and decreased professional autonomy (Bantz et al., 1980; Bock, 2012; Tuchman, 1972; Ismach & Dennis, 1978; Livingston & Bennett, 2003). Using this logic, one could argue that television journalism, and solo journalism specifically, is a “high-strain” job based on Karasek’s (1979) model, because those informal structures and increased routinization create an environment with low decision latitude while still placing a high level of demand on the worker.

This suggests that one important concept impacting the relationship between solo journalism and role overload is perceived autonomy. Workers who experience less autonomy may be more likely to experience greater role overload as a result of the increased task variety inherent in solo journalism. Another possible factor impacting the relationship between solo journalism and role overload is professional experience. As noted in Chapter 2, research regarding role overload has suggested that those with less professional experience are less likely to experience role overload because their roles conceptions are not as “settled” (Jones et al, 2007).

Based on the research on job design, role conceptions, autonomy, and burnout, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Television journalists who experience greater task variety (solo journalists) will experience increased role overload than those who do not (news crew reporters).

H4: Television journalists who experience greater role overload will experience increased burnout than those who do not.

H5: Role overload will mediate the relationship between task variety (degree of solo journalism) and burnout among television reporters.

H6a: Reporters who experience less autonomy will also experience greater role overload as a result of increased task variety.

H6b: Reporters with more professional experience will also experience greater role overload as a result of increased task variety.

Additionally, a visual theoretical model was developed in order to communicate the multilevel research questions and hypotheses proposed above. It shows how the relevant concepts relate to each other. This model can be found in Appendix 1 (see page 99).

Chapter 4: Methods

The bulk of the research on solo journalism thus far has been based on qualitative case studies (Avilés, León, Sanders, & Harrison, 2004; Blankenship, 2015; Bock, 2011; 2013; Dickinson & Bigi, 2009; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Smith, Tanner, & Duhé, 2007; Wallace, 2009). This is not surprising, given that studies of news production in general lend themselves to the richer data available through in-depth interviews and observation (Altheide, 1976; Breed, 1952; 1955; Epstein, 1974; Fishman, 1982; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1972; 1973; 1978). However, it is difficult to draw substantive conclusions about the widespread impact of solo journalism based solely on case studies. Therefore, this dissertation used a multi-method approach that included both quantitative survey data and qualitative data from several in-depth interviews with local television news professionals from across the United States. Additionally, the multi-level analytical design of this study necessitates two survey instruments that target two separate, but related, populations: television news directors (to explore the organizational level research questions) and television news reporters (to explore the routine and individual level hypotheses and questions).

The following chapter will describe the sampling procedures used to ensure a random representative sample from the population of television news directors and journalists. Then it will explain the operationalization of the variables of interest, how the survey instruments/interviews measured them, and how each measure related to a hypothesis or research question. The survey instruments themselves can be found in the appendices.

Sampling

Anyone surveying journalists is faced with several challenges. There is no comprehensive sampling frame of individual journalists from which to draw. Certain companies can provide researchers with lists of journalists, but high cost and the frequent mobility of local television news workers call the utility of these lists into question. Fortunately, with broadcast news organizations, there is in fact a sampling frame to utilize. All broadcast entities must be licensed and registered with the Federal Communications Commission. That list of registered broadcast stations is available through the *Complete Television, Radio, & Cable Industry Directory* (2015). Using the directory as a starting point, this dissertation utilized data collected from a separate research project surveying local television news directors to build separate samples of news directors and reporters.

In this earlier project, a multi-stage stratified sampling process was used to identify a random sample of television news stations ($N = 397$). Then, based on responses from news directors ($N = 141$) at those stations, a sample of news directors who employed solo journalists and were willing to participate in telephone interviews was selected. Additionally, in order to allow multi-level analysis among news directors and reporters, the response sample of news directors from the previous study was used to build the sampling frame for the journalist survey. Because the sampling methods of news organizations utilized in the previous study have a direct bearing on the sampling of news managers and journalists for this dissertation, they are discussed in further detail below.

It is important to consider market size when sampling television news organizations and workers. Each station is placed in a Designated Market Area (DMA), which is defined as the geographic area that their broadcast signal covers as determined by the Nielson Company media

research firm (Nielson, 2013). Because these markets are based on geography, and the U.S. population tends to be concentrated in a few large areas, some markets have substantially more viewers than others. In fact, over 43% of the U.S. population lives in the 20 largest (out of 210) television markets. Therefore, to ensure that the news organization sample was representative of all market sizes, two news-producing stations were randomly selected from each of the 210 US television markets. This created a sample of 396 television stations out of the 717 that produce an original newscast (Papper, 2015). The sample did not reach 420 because some very small markets only had one station that produced a newscast and the smallest market (Glendive, Montana) did not have a news-producing television station.

Once the sample of television stations was created, the names and, when available, email addresses of the current news directors at each station were compiled using various sources including the *Complete Television, Radio, & Cable Industry Directory*, the websites newsblues.com, and tvspy.com (a division of AD Week).

The sample was surveyed using the mixed-modal approach suggested by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2008), though mail surveys are the primary mode for this phase of data collection. Pre-notice letters, paper questionnaires, and follow-up post cards were sent to all news directors notifying them of the purpose of this research and inviting them to participate. Additionally, an initial email and two additional email reminders were sent to those news directors whose email addresses were found ($N= 137$) that included a link to an online version of the survey. A small cash incentive was included with the mail survey. About a month after the last mail and email reminders were sent, follow up phone calls were made to those in the sample who had not participated. Multiple, mixed-mode, contacts and cash incentives have been shown

to increase response rate (Cook, Heath, Thompson, 2000; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008; Eastin & LaRose, 2000; Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004).

Obtaining a significant response rate for this first survey was especially important because responses were used to create the sample for the reporter survey and the news director interviews used in this dissertation. Using the randomly selected news organizations ($N=141$) as a sampling frame, the names and email addresses of each reporter listed on the station website were gathered and used as the sample for the reporter survey. A sample of 1,856 journalists was collected. For this large a sample, the resource-intensive mail implementation of the original news manager survey was not feasible. An email mode that included multiple contacts and a token incentive were used to gather as large a response rate as possible.

The survey was distributed through the Qualtrics survey software package. The first email was sent February 25, 2016, to the 1,856 email addresses gathered from the websites of 141 news organizations. Forty-eight of those email addresses were invalid, reducing the total valid sample to 1,808. Reminder emails were sent five and eight days after the initial contact. Responses continued to come in for the next several days and on March 14, 2016, the survey was closed and results were downloaded. According to Qualtrics, 30% of those who received an email opened it ($N=564$). Of that 30% who opened the survey, 46% started the survey ($N=265$). Of those that started the survey, 222 (84%) completed the survey. This resulted in an overall response rate of 12.28%.

In addition to the quantitative data gathered through this journalist survey, qualitative data were obtained from news directors concerning the organizational level variables. It was determined that the questions relating to organizational variables would be better suited for qualitative data collection because respondents may be less willing to disclose sensitive

information through online or mail surveys (Cooke, Watkins, & Moy, 2009). Additionally, the concepts of isomorphism and decoupling are complex and may not be easily measured by mail/online survey questions that must be brief and easy to understand because there is no opportunity for further explanation (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008).

At the end of the news director survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow up phone interview to expand on certain topics. Of the 141 news directors who completed the survey, 51 news managers (36%) indicated that they would be willing to participate in these interviews. Using email addresses provided by those news directors, messages (one initial email on February 25, 2016 and two follow up emails) were sent explaining the purpose of the follow-up interviews and asking to schedule a time for the interview. Of the 51 news managers emailed, 12 responded and were interviewed over a two-week period. The interviews were approximately 20 to 40 minutes in length. With the permission of the subjects, the interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure proper quotation and attribution.

Measures

As mentioned above, variables associated with institutional theory were measured using qualitative interviews with television station news directors. The interviews of news directors were semi-structured, following a general script but allowing for follow-up questions or completely new lines of questioning depending on the specific interview. The questions in the interview script were developed based on previous research into institutional theory in news organizations and to correspond with the proposed research questions (Gade, 2004; Lowrey, 2005; Lowrey, 2011; Lowrey & Woo, 2010). To measure perceptions of isomorphic pressures felt by news directors regarding the adoption of solo journalism, participants were asked *to*

describe how and why solo journalists were integrated into their news organizations. Next, respondents were asked about three specific isomorphic pressures. They were asked if *corporate owners or upper management strongly encouraged the hiring of solo journalists* (coercive pressure), if they were *influenced by other news organizations to hire solo journalists* (mimetic pressure) and if they *learned about solo journalism from professional conferences, publications or other sources* (normative pressure). The responses to these questions above were used to answer RQ1a-c.

Additionally, news managers were asked if they *believe solo journalism is a significantly different practice than traditional television newsgathering* and if they *have different expectations of solo journalists than traditional news crews*. They were also asked if they had different expectations of solo journalists specifically regarding reporting quality, production quality, and story assignment. These questions were used to measure the degree of “decoupling” that exists between their nominal structure and their actual practice. These responses and the answers to the questions on isomorphic pressure were used to answer RQ2a-d. See Appendix 3 for the complete news director interview script (see page 106).

RQ3 asked about the connection between the views of news directors and routinization among solo journalists. Because the small sample used for the qualitative interviews did not provide enough data for this analysis, this dissertation utilized some of the existing data gathered in the previous news director survey. That survey asked news directors “*on a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you agree with the following statements: solo journalists produce the same quality work as traditional news crews, I must make accommodations for solo journalists to do their jobs effectively, Solo journalists are never as skilled at the technical aspects of news production (shooting, editing) as dedicated videographers.*” Because the sampling frames for both the

previous news director survey and the journalists survey designed for this dissertation are the same, this allowed for a data of journalists and the news directors to be matched, and facilitated that comparative analysis called for in RQ3.

The remaining variables were measured using the survey sent to reporters. With solo journalism being the key concept of this study, it was important to measure it with accuracy and nuance. After gathering demographic data, respondents were provided with a definition of solo journalism that stated “let’s define solo journalists as reporters who report, shoot, and edit their own news stories.” In addition, other terms used throughout the industry (multimedia journalist, backpack journalists, and one-man bands) were mentioned. Because it is common that reporters may be solo journalists some days and work with a crew on others, “degree of solo journalism” was operationalized by asked the reporters “*How often during a typical work week do you work as a solo journalist?*” with five possible options: *none of the time, some but not a majority of the time, about half of the time, most of the time, and all of the time*. This allowed for a greater range of variability with this concept and more sophisticated data analysis. General attitudes toward solo journalism were also measured by asking all reporters how strongly they agree or disagree on a five-point Likert-type scale with these statements: *solo journalism is the future of television news, the growth of solo journalism is due to mostly economic reasons, the growth of solo journalism is a good thing for TV news, and in general solo journalists are capable of producing the same quality work as traditional news crews*. In addition, those who reported working as solo journalists at least some of the time were given two additional statements: *as a solo journalist I am able to produce my best work* and *as a solo journalist, I am assigned only to certain stories*.

Respondents were asked several questions designed to measure the routinization that may occur due to the technological and physical constraints of solo journalism (Blankenship, 2015;

Bock, 2013; Perez & Cremedass, 2014). The items were adapted from literature on routinization in news production (Bantz et al., 1980, Becker & Vlad, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Tuchman, 1972; 1973) and solo journalism in particular (Blankenship, 2015; Bock, 2013; Perez & Cremedass, 2014). Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed on a five-point Likert-type scale with these six statements: *my job is often repetitive, there are unwritten rules I have to follow to do my job, the stories/reports I produce are formulaic, often my stories turn out the same as I expected when they were assigned, I find I am often assigned to cover the same kinds of stories, and the limitations of technology often prevent me from fully developing my stories*. Responses to these questions were used to answer H1a-c. A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated that there was not a sufficient amount of internal consistency among these six indicators to combine them into a single scale ($\alpha = .442$)

While similar to routinization, professional autonomy is considered a separate construct and was measured using items adapted from a scale developed by Jackson (1993). Reporters were asked how strongly they agree or disagreed on a five-point Likert-type scale with the following four statements: *I do not have much say in the type of stories I am assigned, if something unexpected happens while working on a story I am able to handle those changes well, I have significant freedom in how I do my job, if I pitch a story, I am generally assigned to cover it, and if I want to tell a story in a new way I have the freedom to do so*. A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated that there was not a sufficient amount of internal consistency among these five indicators to combine them into a single scale ($\alpha = .272$). The responses to these questions were used to answer H2.

In addition, the survey measured role overload using five items adapted from Brown (2005): *some aspects of my job prevent me from doing other aspects my job, the amount of work*

I do interferes with how well the work gets done, I do not have enough help and resources to get the job done, I do not have enough time to get the job done well, and I have to try and satisfy too many different people. A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated that there was sufficient internal consistency among these four indicators ($\alpha = .818$). Therefore, the items were averaged into a single item for analysis hereby referred to simply as "role overload," and used to answer H3 and H6a-b.

Burnout among journalists was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey (MBI-GS). The MBI-GS was adapted from the original MBI and the MBI-Human Services Survey to apply to a wide range of professions. It has been applied to journalism in previous research (Cook & Banks, 1993; Cook, Banks, & Turner, 1993; Reinardy, 1996; Reinardy, 2011). It measures the three dimensions of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy with 16 items.² A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicated that there was a sufficient amount of internal consistency among 15 of the 16 indicators ($\alpha = .867$). One indicator was dropped from the analysis because it lowered the overall alpha score and did not fit with the process of television news reporting. The responses to those 15 items were averaged into a general indicator of burnout and used to answer H4.

When analyzing psychological constructs that deal with dissatisfaction and stress, previous research has shown that an individual's overall "affect" can have a strong influence on responses (Brief, Butcher, & Robertson, 1995; Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Slack, 1991). Specifically, people with high levels of negative affectivity are more likely to experience distress and dissatisfaction and focus on the negative side of the situations (Watson & Clark, 1984).

Therefore, to ensure that the subjects' affectivity is not confounding the relationship between

² Unlike many scientific measures, the Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey, is a copyrighted work, the use of which bars its users from publishing the individual items in their manuscripts. Therefore, they are not listed in the main text. The results for each individual item will be provided if requested by any member of the committee.

solo journalism and concepts like role overload and burnout, negative affect was measured in the journalist survey. Respondents were presented with a list of emotions adapted from Watson, Clark and Tellegen's (1988) positive affect/negative affect scale (PANAS) and asked to indicate "to what extent do you feel this way this way, on average." The words associated with negative affect were *disinterested, irritable, ashamed, upset, inspired, nervous, guilty, scared, hostile, jittery, and afraid*. Journalists responded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "very slightly or not at all" and 5 meaning "extremely." A reliability test using Cronbach's alphas indicated a sufficient level of internal consistency among the negative affect items ($\alpha = .840$). Therefore, a single measure was calculated by averaging the ten negative affect indicators together.

The complete journalist survey instrument can be found in Appendix 4 (see page 107).

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter will present the findings of this study in relation to the research questions and hypotheses proposed in Chapter 3. First, the demographic characteristics of both samples, news directors and journalists, are discussed. Then, a few preliminary relationships and important findings not specifically addressed in the theoretical model are discussed. Then, the individual research questions and hypotheses will be addressed, starting with the organizational level questions, then moving to the routine level questions and hypotheses, and ending with individual level hypotheses.

Demographics

News director interviews.

To answer the research questions regarding the organizational level of analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of news directors ($N= 12$) drawn from a larger sample ($N= 141$). Before the results of those interviews are discussed, this section will give some information about the news managers who participated. To ensure that participants felt comfortable discussing their jobs and their relationship with ownership, station management, and their staff, the names of the news directors, the call letters of their stations, and the markets in which those stations reside are not used. News directors are identified by a number based on the order the interview was conducted. All 12 news directors worked in different television designated market areas (DMAs) Two worked at stations located in large-sized markets (DMA rank 1-30), four were from medium-sized markets (rank 31-100), and six were from small-sized markets (rank 100-210). This distribution is consistent with the proportion of large, medium, and

small markets is the United States. Market size categories are based on the research of Carroll (1989).

The news directors interviewed ranged in age from 31 to 52 years old ($M = 41$). These news directors are slightly younger than the average age of the news directors who responded to the survey from which the sample was drawn ($M = 47.33$). Four of the interviewed news directors are female (33%) and eight are male, a larger representation of female news directors than in the original news director survey (26%). The interviewed news directors have between one and 18 years of experience in news management ($M = 10.16$), just slightly fewer than the original sample ($M = 11.76$). They also have between one and eight years of experience at their current news station ($M = 3.16$), again fewer than the larger sample ($M = 8.40$). News directors were instructed to draw on the entirety of their experiences in news management, not just the experiences from their current station. Two of the interviewed news directors, both from the larger markets, indicated that only a few of their reporters would be identified as solo journalists, one news director indicated that about half of his reporters were solo journalists, five indicated that most, but not all, of their reporters were solo journalists, and the remaining four indicated that all their reporters would be considered solo journalists. These demographic characteristics of the news directors can be found in Table 1 (See Appendix 2, page 100).

Journalist survey.

The findings for the next two levels of analysis, the routine and individual levels, are based on the results of an email survey sent to the news staffs at 141 different television stations across the United States. The television stations were selected based on the responses to a previous news directors survey (so that data between news staff and manager could later be

matched). Of the 1,808 emails sent, 222 completed responses were received. This section will discuss the demographic characteristics of those respondents.

The journalists who responded to the survey had a mean age of 33.9 ($SD = 11.39$) and were fairly evenly split among male ($N = 109$, 49.1 % of total sample) and female ($N = 113$, 50.9 %). They averaged about a decade of experience in news ($M = 10.98$, $SD = 10.69$) but only 6.31 years of experience at their current station ($SD = 11.39$). This is not surprising given the high level of mobility in journalism, especially in local television news (Bantz et al, 1980; Kanis, 1991). A large majority of respondents identified as white/Caucasian ($N = 180$, 81.1 %), while only 8.6 % identified as African American/Black ($N = 21$), 5.9 % identified as Hispanic American or Latino/a ($N = 13$), 3.2 % identified as Asian American ($N = 7$), and only one respondent (0.5 %) utilized the “other” category. And because certain questions and hypotheses dealt with psychological concepts like burnout and role overload, general negative affectivity was measured using the PANAS scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Overall, the respondents indicated a relatively low level of negative affectivity ($M = 1.77$, $SD = .57$).

Respondents were also asked about their income levels. Only 1.4 % indicated that they made less than \$20,000 per year, a quarter of respondents made between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year ($N = 55$, 25.2 %), 21.1 % made between \$30,000 and \$40,000 per year ($N = 46$), 11 % made between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year ($N = 24$), 8.7 % made between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year ($N = 19$), and 29.2 % made over \$60,000 per year ($N = 71$). Using the income level categories as the basis for an ordinal scale (range 1-5) in which a higher value indicated a higher level of income, the mean income level of the sample was 3.98 ($SD = 1.66$). Respondents were also asked to indicate the highest degree they held. Only 1.4 % ($N = 3$) said they have only a high school diploma, 87.8 % ($N = 195$) said they have an undergraduate degree, 10.36 % ($N = 23$) said

they have a graduate degree, and less than one percent ($N= 1$) have a terminal degree (PhD, JD, or MD). Again, using the education level categories as an ordinal scale (range 1-5) in which a higher number indicated a higher level of education, the average education level of the sample was 2.10 ($SD= .35$).

Respondents were also asked to identify their job title and, because television news staff may hold multiple positions, respondents were given the option to choose more than one (i.e. some news staff may work as an anchor during the weekends and a reporter during the rest of the week). The vast majority of respondents identified themselves as reporters ($N= 194$, 87.4 % of total sample), while over half also identified as anchors ($N= 119$, 53.6%). A smaller number of respondents identified as sports reporters/anchors ($N= 34$, 15.3%), producers ($N= 32$, 14.4 %), and meteorologist ($N= 22$, 9.9 %).

Respondents were given a unique ID code when filling out their survey which allowed the identification of designated market area in which they worked at the time of the survey. Of the 209 markets that have stations that produce local newscasts, responses from 79 different markets and 94 individual station were received. Responses from as large as market rank 9 and and small as market 204 were received.³ Using the categories developed by Carroll (1989), 26 responses (11.7 %) were received from journalists at large market stations, 104 from journalists at medium-sized market stations (46.8 %), and 92 from journalists at small market stations (41.4 %). The disproportionate responses are to be expected as there are several more medium and small-sized markets than large. However, the larger market stations generally employ more news staff (Lacy, Atwater, & Qin, 1988).

³ Television DMA are ranked in reverse-numerical order, with larger markets ranked lower (ex: New York City is the largest media market and is ranked 1, Glendive, MT, is the smallest and is ranked 210).

Because, as stated in Chapter 4, it is common for a television reporter to work as a solo journalist some days and within a crew on others, solo journalism was operationalized as “degree of solo journalism.” Respondents were asked how often during a typical work week they work as solo journalists (meaning they are expected to write, shoot, and edit their own stories). Of the 222 completed responses, 80 (36%) said they never worked as solo journalists, 24 (10.8%) said they worked as solo journalists “some, but not a majority of the time,” 18 (8.1%) said they worked as solo journalists “about half the time,” 34 (15.3%) said they worked as solo journalists “most of the time,” and 66 (29.7%) said they always worked as solo journalists. The fact that just under 45 percent indicated some variability in the time that they work as solo journalists indicated that there is some grey area when it comes to the practice and it is important to capture this nuance. This information regarding the demographic characteristics of the journalist survey respondents can be found in Table 2 (See Appendix 2, page 100-101).

Attitudes toward Solo Journalism

Though not addressed in the theoretical model or any of the proposed research questions or hypotheses, the author took the opportunity to gauge the attitudes of journalists toward solo journalism with the survey. All respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale (range 1-5) how strongly they agreed or disagreed with four statements about solo journalism, with a higher number indicating stronger agreement. For the first statement, “solo journalism is the future of television news,” respondents indicated a moderate level of agreement ($M= 3.80$, $SD= 1.14$). For the second statement, “the growth of solo journalism is due to mostly economic reasons,” the respondents indicated a strong level of agreement ($M= 4.48$, $SD= .822$). For the third statement, “the growth of solo journalism is a good thing for television news,” the respondents indicated a strong level of disagreement ($M= 1.91$, $SD= .880$). For the final

statement, “solo journalists are capable of producing the same quality work as traditional news crews,” the sample indicated a moderate level of disagreement ($M= 2.00$, $SD= 1.12$).

In addition, respondents who indicated that they worked as solo journalists at least some of the time ($N= 142$) were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with two additional statements. For the first statement, “as a solo journalist I am able to produce my best work,” the respondents indicated a slight level of disagreement ($M= 2.92$, $SD= 1.25$). For the second statement, “as a solo journalist I am only assigned to cover certain stories,” the respondents also indicated a moderate level of disagreement ($M= 2.36$, $SD= 1.32$). The results of these question regarding journalists’ attitudes toward solo journalism can be found in Table 3 (See Appendix 2, page 101).

Variables of Interest

Several variables were also measured to test the proposed research questions and hypotheses. Before the analysis of those relationship is discussed, the properties of those variables should be addressed. As mentioned in the methods chapter, several indicators of routinization of the television news production process were included in the survey instrument. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with six statements on a five-point Likert type scale. Overall, the respondents tended to disagree with the statements “the stories I produce are often formulaic” ($M= 2.89$, $SD= 1.10$) and “the limitations of technology often prevent me from fully developing my stories” ($M= 2.61$, $SD= 1.22$). The respondents tended to agree with several other statements: “there are unwritten rules I have to follow to do my job” ($M= 4.05$, $SD= .90$), “Often, my stories turn out the same as I expected when they were assigned” ($M= 3.26$, $SD= .99$), and “I find I am often assigned to cover the same

kinds of stories” ($M= 3.28$, $SD= 1.20$). Additionally, the respondents, on average, were neutral regarding the statement “my job is often repetitive” ($M= 3.00$, $SD= 1.27$).

Another concept important to this analysis was professional autonomy. Five measures of autonomy were adapted from Jackson’s (1993) scale to apply to the job of television news reporting. Again, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with five statements on a five-point Likert-type scale. The respondents tended to agree with four of the five statements: “I have significant freedom in how I do my job” ($M= 3.86$, $SD= 1.04$), “if I pitch a story, I generally am assigned to cover it” ($M= 3.81$, $SD= 1.10$), “if something unexpected happens while working on a story, I am able to handle those changes well” ($M= 4.49$, $SD= .70$), and “if I want to tell a story in a new way I have the freedom to do so” ($M= 3.91$, $SD= .78$). They generally disagreed with the statement “I do not have much say in the type of stories I am assigned” ($M= 2.43$, $SD= 1.03$).⁴

Role overload and burnout were also measured in the journalist survey. The survey used a scale developed by Brown (2005) to measure role overload and, in general, the respondents indicated a level of role overload slightly above the midpoint ($M= 3.27$, $SD= .86$). To measure burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey (MBI-GS) was used and the journalists sampled for this survey indicated a low level of burnout ($M= 2.29$, $SD= .61$). The descriptive statistics for these variables can also be found in Table 4 (See Appendix 2, page 102).

Preliminary Relationships

Before the specific hypotheses are addressed, a bivariate correlation matrix that included demographics and several variables of interest was calculated. Not surprisingly, age was positively correlated with higher income levels ($r= .64$, $p < .001$), more experience in news ($r=$

⁴ This statement was intended as a reverse measure of professional autonomy and was reverse coded when the scale reliability analysis was completed.

.93, $p < .001$), and more experience at the current station ($r = .75, p < .001$). Older journalists were also less likely to be female ($r = -.14, p < .05$) or work in a larger market ($r = -.25, p < .001$), and less likely to work as solo journalists ($r = -.49, p < .001$). Female journalists tended to have less experience in news ($r = -.17, p < .05$). Journalists with a higher income also had more experience in news ($r = .69, p < .001$), more experience at the current station ($r = .50, p < .001$), and worked at a larger DMA ($r = -.58, p < .001$). Higher income was also negatively correlated with solo journalism ($r = -.62, p < .001$). Working at a larger market was correlated with having more experience in news ($r = -.35, p < .001$) and more experience at the current stations ($r = -.20, p < .01$). Journalists working at larger markets were also less likely to be solo journalists ($r = .37, p < .001$). Working as a solo journalist more often was also negatively correlated with experience in news ($r = -.52, p < .001$) and experience at their current station ($r = -.37, p < .001$). A correlation matrix with the specific correlates for all the variables mentioned above can be found in Table 5 (See Appendix 2, page 102).

Research Question and Hypotheses Results

Several research questions and hypotheses were proposed in Chapter 3 about the relationships among solo journalism and several concepts at multiple levels of analysis. Additionally, a theoretical model was proposed that specified how those variables relate to each other. The rest of this chapter will describe the results of several analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, that test those questions and hypotheses. The results will be discussed in the order the model predicted, beginning with the organizational-level research questions, then the routine-level research question and hypotheses, and, finally, the individual-level hypotheses.

The analysis of the organizational-level effects on solo journalism are based on new institutional theory and specifically isomorphism and decoupling and data gathered through the

news director interviews. The first set of questions deal with three specific forms of isomorphic pressure -- coercive, mimetic, and normative - and how they relate to the practice of television news production from management's perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Kraatz & Zajas, 1996; Levitt & Nass, 1989). To explore these pressures, the news directors were asked about the influence of various actors on their decisions to implement and utilize solo journalists in their newsrooms. Decoupling, which denotes a gap between the nominal policies of an organization and its actual practices, was explored by asking news directors about the ways they view solo journalists differently or if they have different expectations compared to news crews. The goal was to explore the difference between what news managers ideally expect for reporters, and the pragmatic realities of utilizing solo journalists.

RQ1a: To what degree are news managers feeling pressure from stations or corporate management to hire solo journalists (coercive isomorphism)?

To examine the impact of coercive pressure on news directors, they were asked if/how ownership or upper management (station management) encouraged them to hire solo journalists. The results were mixed but there was a clear difference in answers among the larger market station managers and the medium/small market station managers. The medium and smaller market station news directors often spoke of a push from ownership and management to hire more solo journalists. For instance, News Director 2 (here after referred to as ND 2) is the news director of a small-market station in the Southwest and described his station's recent transition to what he called a solo journalist model after it was purchased by a new company:

ND2: We just transitioned into the solo journalist model. When I arrived here seven months ago we had a few photographers.⁵ So there were five reporters and five photographers and we were operating that way. We were purchased by a new company

⁵ In the local television news industry, the term photographer, or "photog," is used to describe professional videographers who work in crews or on their own. These are news staff whose primary purpose is to shoot and sometimes edit news stories.

and their model is the solo journalist model. And we've been slowly moving that way. And just through attrition we only have one photographer now, and the rest have moved on.⁶

Others spoke of a "solo journalism" culture at their stations:

ND4: The general manager was the news director before me and she came from a station where the culture was always to have solo journalists, shooting their own things. She and I both did it at some point in our career. That was always just the ingrained culture.

ND10: I don't get a whole lot of guidance from management on how to use solo journalists or why we have the solo journalists. It's just become such an accepted practice that there's really not a lot of discussion about it.

Many of the news directors interviewed saw the push to solo journalism as being about economics, specifically reducing the cost to staff a newsroom:

ND4: Everybody's trying to do more with less. I think that's just the way of the world. Those solo [journalist] positions have definitely grown year after year... [On the difference between hiring one solo journalist compared to a two-person crew] You're talking business. If you're adding two positions, then that's two benefits packages and two 401Ks as opposed to one with a solo journalist.

ND6: The company is going to dictate the budget and what you have to work with and your job as a news manager is to get the most out of what resources you have. Our company basically dictated that we had to move toward hiring more solo journalists but that's not unusual. It's happening at a lot of other stations and companies. One way they dictate that is by controlling your resources, if you only have X-amount of dollars for your budget and you have to fill X-amount of hours on the air and produce X-amount of content, using solo journalists becomes the only way, really.

ND 10: We've only been a [current parent company] station for about two years, before that we were with [another media company] and they were very big on solo journalists. And to some degree that was driven by the bottom line.

⁶ A few notes on the news director interview quotations: As with most interviews, people may use shorthand or make reference to things from a previous sentence that may not be included in the quotation used in this specific instance. Any text in brackets was added by the author to ensure clarity and every effort was made to maintain the original meaning and intent of the interview subject. Also, to maintain anonymity, the author has redacted any reference in the quotation to the station, parent company, or market associated with the news directors. Finally, as mentioned earlier, solo journalism goes by many different terms in the news industry. To maintain consistency in this text any use of the other terms (multimedia journalist, video journalist, one-man bands, etc.) were changed to "solo journalist."

A few interviewed news directors from medium/small markets also talked about less direct ways that ownership and management encouraged a move toward using a more solo journalist-centered model of news gathering, including investments in certain technology:

ND4: But [our parent company] really does push the development of people and cross training, making the newsroom very flexible. The equipment they've provided us, for example the TV-U backpack. They just invested in the latest-and-greatest with that, which means it's smaller and allows our reporters to go live more and be more mobile with their live units. Even the cameras are in this little one-bag kit. So, the stuff they've invested in, technology-wise, shows that they believe in [solo journalism] too.

ND11: [Talking about the elimination of a staff dedicated to operating remote live equipment] The challenge for us is that now I don't have a person to go out and run a live truck. The technology of live shots also has changed. We now have two of the TV-U live backpacks. So a solo journalist can go out and go live shot by themselves, but there's no camera movement. It's just a static two shot which can be boring. I think having a live truck is still important but I don't have anyone dedicated to operating one, which can be a problem. If I could lobby for one [operator] in the morning and one in the evening, I would if they ever let me.

Not all interviewed news directors viewed management's push for solo journalists as limiting. ND 7, a news director in a medium-sized, Midwestern market, described how using solo journalists is helping him cover more news in far-flung areas:

ND 7: When it comes to budgetary issues, it's true of anything you have to spend money on, they're trying to find the best way to get the job done. For instance, I have a bureau and the budget to staff a reporter and photographer five-days a week. But if I have two [solo journalists] I can cover it seven days a week, which is what we've done. In a competitive landscape we are 24/7 and one of our competitors only covers that area five days a week and they have a reporter and photographer. The viewers are better off for it because now we're getting double coverage. When you look at the resources that are given to you by your company, and obviously budget and money is the big one, what's the best way you can treat your people right plus get the job done most efficiently?

While the medium and small market news directors from this sample indicated management had a stronger role in encouraging the hiring of solo journalists, the two larger market news directors, though they both employ only a few solo journalists, said their corporate owners were much less involved in those decisions:

ND 3: I was fortunate with a company that, when we did this [integrating solo journalists], they raised their hand and said our goal is not the elimination of bodies. It's about [the possibility of getting] more content adding the solo journalists as well as having that photographer-reporter pairing.

ND 12: I've never felt pressure to [hire more solo journalists]. I do feel pressure to find ways to work smarter, be more strategic in our approaches and what we're doing. As a coach for a team, I'm looking for different ways to utilize our players in ways that can benefit the overall team. If we have quarterbacks that can run the ball and throw the ball, why not use them as runners as well if it's going to benefit the team. Even though this is the largest market I've worked in, frankly, this is the first place where I've had a real assortment of folks who are [solo journalists] and can do it at a high level.

In summary, several of the news directors interviewed for this dissertation said there was a distinct pressure from station ownership and/or upper management. Sometimes this pressure manifested itself directly, other times in subtler ways, such as investing in technology and equipment that would make solo journalism more viable. In addition, there was a marked difference in the experiences of news managers who worked in larger markets compared to news managers who worked in smaller markets. The larger market news directors reported that their utilization of solo journalism, albeit on smaller scale than some of the medium-small market stations, was driven more by their own desire innovate within their staffing. This may indicate that larger market stations, at least the two included in this research, are less subject to coercive pressure from station ownership.

RQ1b: To what degree are news managers adopting solo journalism because they see it as a trend among their peers in the industry? (mimetic isomorphism)

The next research question asked about possible mimetic pressure on news directors to hire solo journalists. Mimetic pressure is the isomorphic influence of institutionalized organization to imitate peer organizations as a way of reacting to uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). To answer this question, news directors were asked about the influence of other news organizations in the way they hired or integrated solo journalist at their stations.

Only three of the interviewed news directors discussed talking with other news directors.

ND 11, from a small, Midwestern market television station, said: “I’m always curious about what other stations do. I think that stems from the fact that this is the only station I’ve ever worked at. I like to talk to people who have moved on, find out what it’s like to work at that station, about how they do things.” ND 4, news director at a small, southeastern market station, and ND 6, from a medium, northeastern market station, both talked about looking to other stations as models, but within the larger company structure:

ND4: I think one of the benefits of being part of a large company like [parent company] is that we have mentors in bigger markets that have solo journalists and have been doing it longer than we have for quite some time. And we can learn from them. I think that is true in most of the models in TV that experience pays more than what you learn in a class or seminar. I have met and talked with news directors [through professional news director conference] and gotten their take on how they utilize their journalists.

ND6: At [parent company] we have a thing called News Director University where they bring all the news directors from across the company together for a seminar on leadership and a bunch of other things. There was a lot about solo journalist the last several years, they had news directors from stations that had success with solo journalists as featured speakers.

One news director said he felt that the contextual difference of each market makes looking to other stations difficult, especially when it comes to teaching reporters new skills:

ND 7: One danger as a news director is that you don’t want to get up to is [constantly] showing people in your newsroom how things are done in other places. Like “look at this great reporter in Kansas City, or look at this great reporter in Jacksonville, FL”. I try to mix it up by showing them stuff from other stations but I also show them our own work.

But at the same time, he admitted the value of looking to other stations as practical examples of solo journalism at work: “I’ll see a clip from a newscast in Austin and I’ll pull someone aside and show it to them. I’ll go to different websites and show them good journalism and bad journalism.”

However, the rest of the news directors interviewed said they could not recall any instance where they specifically looked to other television stations for information on how to use solo journalists in their own newsrooms. This would seem to indicate that mimetic pressure was not a particularly strong influence on their decision to hire solo journalists or how they utilized them within their organizations. In fact, two of the three managers who discussed looking to peer organizations for guidance admitted that they did so within their larger corporate structure (e.g., attending company seminars, having mentors at stations within the company from larger markets). It appears that the pressure to hire more solo journalists could be described as more “top-down” (i.e. emanating from higher parts of the company) than horizontal, at least among the news directors interviewed here.

RQ1c: To what degree are news managers adopting solo journalism because of a normative belief that solo journalism is better or more correct? (normative isomorphism)

The third form of isomorphic pressure outlined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is normative pressure. This pressure originates from a belief among members of an organizational field that certain ways of doing things are “right” and/or “proper” (Suchman, 1995). To explore the influence of this specific form of isomorphic pressure on the utilization of solo journalism, the news directors were asked if they looked to conferences, publications, or other professional sources for information on how to integrate or utilize solo journalists.

Several of the news directors from this sample spoke about professional organizations like the Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ), the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), and the Poynter Institute as resources they utilize often for a wide variety of topics, including solo journalism. ND 12, the news director of a large, northeastern market station, believed it is important to be informed about the latest thinking on solo journalism:

ND12: I would to think that I am well read on the subject. I follow different blogs and have followed different postings from some of the solo journalism experts, whether it be from Poynter, NPPA, or those that publish articles [in trade magazines]. I tell our guys that are solo journalists that we have to stay on the cutting edge of it and know what is out there.

ND 3, from a large, southeastern market station, also discussed using the resources of a local university to help her staff:

ND 3: This isn't necessarily just for solo journalists but we sent everyone on our staff to digital training at [Local State University]. We hired someone to walk us through how to put together a digital story with an iPhone. The way we look at it, if we're sending a photographer out to do a story on their own, here's these tools that you have available that make your life a lot easier.

ND 7 discussed how he uses social media communities as a source of information, but also emphasized the importance of having experienced reporters at their station that can help younger solo journalists:

ND 7: There's a good Facebook group out there called "Storytellers", with ideas for how to do stories and that most of our folks are on so they're using that. Poynter Institute is a good place to see good journalism. I've sent some people to some NPPA seminars and then we'll do in-house workshops too. It helps when you have people in the building that can serve as good examples.

ND 8, from a small, southeastern market, noted that because of the size of the market in which she works, she often must hire solo journalists who have just graduated. She described herself as a teacher as much as a manager:

ND 8: I love finding resources that can help us tell better stories. I make a big effort to look for things, whether it be webinars from Poynter, I buy those all the time and share the links with my staff. We meet monthly. We do this thing called "pizza and packages" with the solo journalists where they send me links to work they've done, I order them pizza, and we talk about their stuff. We either watch each other's stuff or we watch other stuff. We watched all the Murrow Award winning stories a while back. I have a solo journalist who is in the NPPA and he sends links to their monthly clip contest on YouTube. We're pretty small, and most of these guys are right out of college so this is a teaching newsroom.

Many of these news directors spoke of resources designed for reporters to which they that they can direct their staff, but as ND 6 mentioned, there are few resources specifically for news directors, “I’ve looked at lots of sites and magazines like Nieman, but I’ve never [seen] anything or read anything that really helped me manage solo journalists specifically better.”

As with the discussion of mimetic pressure, normative pressure did not appear to be as strong of an influence on their opinions regarding solo journalists, particularly when compared to the findings regarding coercive pressure. In response to the questions regarding coercive pressure, most of these news directors spoke of their hiring practices. However, in their responses to the questions regarding mimetic and normative pressure, this sample of news directors mostly spoke about how they *utilize* solo journalists: maximizing their efficiency, reviewing their work, etc. This could illustrate that while news directors may be feeling pressure from “above” regarding the financial aspects of managing their stations (i.e., their hiring practices, the equipment they use), management exerts little influence on how the news directors’ actually manage their staff. Therefore, the news managers turn to professional sources (normative) and their peers (mimetic) to deal with uncertainty, sometimes. This also highlights the divide between ownership/upper management, who may not have any journalism background, and these news directors.

The next set of research questions were concerned with a separate aspect of institutional theory, decoupling, which occurs when certain parts of an organization separate their nominal practice (what they say they do) from their actual practice (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Four research questions were proposed regarding decoupling and the various aspects of television news production. These questions asked the news directors if they believed solo journalism was a separate practice from working with a crew and if they had different expectations of solo

journalists compared to reporters who work within traditional crews. Assuming that the general requirements of the news department of a television news station have remained roughly the same in terms of output and quality, if news directors perceive a difference in the capabilities of solo journalists, this may lead to a decoupling of what they say they are providing their audience (the same quality and quantity of news as before) and what they are actually able to produce.

RQ2a: To what extent do news managers expect solo journalists to contribute to their news operation in the same way as news crews?

RQ2a asked about the general expectations news managers have of solo journalists compared to news crews. The broad consensus among these news directors, regardless of market size, was that, they have to treat solo journalists differently than reporters who work with crews. Some of the interviewed news directors were more pessimistic in their assessments of solo journalists and their capabilities. According to ND 6 “you have to lower your expectations for what you are going to get [from solo journalists].”

Many of the news directors from this sample felt that the added duties of shooting and editing expected of solo journalism create stricter time constraints. ND 8, who had recently moved from a station that had an even mix of solo journalist and crews to a smaller market station with a majority of solo journalists, described the difference:

ND 8: Coming here versus working at a stations where they have crews, all the deadlines get backed up. Like in my old market, if we had a 3:00 press conference with a photographer [and reporter], that’s no problem. But here, a 3:00 [press conference] with a solo journalist, that’s not going to be a package. It’s going to be a VO/SOT and that’s ok.⁷ Or, 3:00 press conference, you get the photog today.

⁷ In television news, a “package” is generally a longer-form version of a story that is narrated by a reporter and includes video and audio elements gathered in the field. A VO and VOSOT are edited video montages with a sound bite at the end, usually narrated live on-air by the anchor. It is generally shorter than a package. More important stories are generally told in package format.

ND 10 also expressed concern about the amount of work expected of solo journalists. He specifically discussed how solo journalists must struggle to keep up with the content demands of local television news:

ND 10: As a news director you're still expecting your reporters to come in with stories on a daily basis, expecting to work beats, expecting to set up their stories, to go out and shoot their stories, writing and edit their stories. And we're expecting them to do a package, a breakdown of the package, and maybe another VO and VOSOT in an eight-hour period. And we're expecting them to put it on Twitter and on Facebook and on Instagram, to be constantly feeding a 24-hour machine and at some point something is going to give there that you cannot expect them to do that in an eight-hour day.

A few of these news directors who employed a more even mix of solo journalists and traditional crews, spoke of being strategic in how they used solo journalists:

ND 4: I think that you have to use a solo journalist for what a solo journalist is useful for, probably day-turn content. The more this industry has grown with web, social, mobile, all the different ways to get information out there, we call it "feeding the beast". Solo journalists have to turn that daily content to feed that beast. If you're just trying to fill the newscast, produce content, and do it well, solo journalists can do that. But if you want to do an investigation, you're going to have to take people out of pocket to do that reporting. Making calls, and filling paperwork.

ND2: It's not my favorite thing but it's what we're doing now. It's do-able and the equipment is making it possible, if you have the "mad skills" and the time. I think we're losing some of the quality but I think if you give that person enough time you can get that quality up. I think a lot remains to be seen. I don't think we're done figuring out how to use solo journalists yet.

ND 3: I'm concerned about it for the stations that only have solo journalists. It's silly to think that if you have an hour long press conference and you can have only one person covering it. There's going to be a point where they have to stop paying attention and start writing.

And while they still felt solo journalism was substantially different and required different considerations, some of the interview subjects were more positive in their assessment of the differences:

ND 12: We just see it as an added value. It's not something that was forced upon me but I've decided it would be a difference maker for the overall team and our approach. I can't understate the point that sometimes folks, in the argument against it, say there's a lack of

quality. But I would say that we've seen some of our best stories here with just one person working on the story. And that person could have been a reporter-type, they could have been a photographer-type. I really do feel like in these times you have to be open minded. You have to be selective and let the content and the situation drive whether or not a solo journalist is appropriate.

ND 3: I think solo journalism allows for a different level of creativity. Because people just work at how they work and don't have to work with a partner. And sometimes people just work better by themselves.

Though in the minority, one news director specifically noted that he felt it was important to maintain the same expectations of solo journalists as any other reporter.

ND 7: I believe the journalism [done by solo journalists] is just as sound [as the work done by news crews]. The discussions we have in our newsroom are the same ones they have in Miami or West Palm. It's about the content, the visuals, how are you going to edit it, how long is it going to be, etc. I don't look up at the TV screen and say "She's a solo journalist today so the fuzzy video is OK because she was working by herself." We don't have that attitude. Viewers have no idea whether they have photographers or not.

The previous quote aside, the overall reaction of the news directors interviewed for this dissertation was that they *do* have different expectations of solo journalists compared to news crews. They often spoke of the quantity of the content that is expected of news reporters; multiple packages each day, shorter broadcast items, social media and web updates, etc. The sense was that they were being pulled in two opposing directions. In one direction there is the need to produce more content, with more newscasts being added and the web and social media creating another medium that they are expected to utilize. In the other direction you have an increased reliance on solo journalists, who may not have the time and/or ability to produce the same amount of content as news crews. This was an issue about which many of the news directors seemed particularly concerned.

RQ2b: To what extent do news managers report different expectations for solo journalists than traditional news crews regarding reporting ability?

RQ2b asked about news manager's expectations of solo journalists regarding reporting ability, specifically. Many of these news directors pointed to solo journalists not having the time to do the proper research, developing contacts with sources, and digging through documents. These are activities that are generally required for more in-depth journalism. According to ND 11, "I think to a certain extent, quality has suffered because you can't always put forth the time it takes to gather all the facts you need or to get everything you need." Similarly, ND 10 compared his time as a reporter who worked in a crew to the solo journalists he manages now:

ND 10: I could be expected to set up more stories myself, to do more digging myself, to work beats myself. With the initiation of the solo journalists, I think that was still a possibility because while you were adding the shooting and the editing to it, you were adding some efficiency. You knew what you were getting when you shot, you knew what your sound was, you knew exactly what video you had so you could come back and get your package done. But now we've progressively added more and more and more stuff to that role.

ND 1: We talk about efficiency a lot. We talk about getting out into the field early, getting your interview early, keeping your interviews short, listening to what [the interviews] you're shooting, really thinking about what you're shooting, so that when you come back you know what you have and you don't have to spend an hour going through everything you shot before you put your package together. Otherwise, you're not going to get it done in a timely manner. So I have to lower my expectations because of that fact that my reporters don't have a lot of time to research their stories, set up stories, and work beats. They're here every day. They're expected to put out content everyday.

Others did not feel that being a solo journalist meant that they should lower their expectations for quality reporting.

ND 4: They don't have the luxury of sitting down and making beat calls and taking people out the lunch. Now good solo journalists will do that on their own time because they want to invest in their work. I've always taken the mentality that when a reporter is passionate about a story and if they think there's a little more here, and as long as we talk about it and plan it out, we put stories on hold. We want to give it the time it deserves

It was important to ask this specific question because when asked simply about their general expectations regarding solo journalism, most of these news directors only spoke of the amount of content solo journalists were capable of producing. But when prompted, some did

admit that they did not expect solo journalists to produce the same quality news stories that a reporter working with a crew could produce. This was not a reflection of the skills of these journalists but, as with most of their concerns regarding solo journalism, a function of the increased time pressure that comes with the multiple tasks associated with solo journalism. The fact that, in general, these news directors had to be prodded to discuss a possible difference in the quality of reporting may speak to one of the more pernicious consequences of solo journalism; in the rush to produce the same quantity of content required of them, solo journalists will produce fewer stories that require more time to complete, such as investigative stories. And if this is the case, stations that rely more and more on solo journalists will produce fewer of these stories overall, a concern expressed by Martyn (2009). This could be seen as a more unconscious form of decoupling, with news directors maintaining the same nominal expectations they had before employing more solo journalists (i.e., producing a certain amount of investigative or in-depth stories) but, in reality, assigning more “easy” stories because they are concerned about solo journalists’ ability to complete those more in-depth stories in a timely way.

RQ2c: To what extent do news managers report different expectations for solo journalists than traditional news crews regarding production skills?

RQ2c asked about news managers’ expectations of solo journalists regarding production skills specifically. ND 3 spoke about the trade-off that she expects when it comes to the proficiency of solo journalists in the necessary areas:

ND 3: We’ve realized this when we hire people, there are just some skill sets that are going to suffer. There just aren’t many people who can be a 1,000% great photographer, and a 1,000% great editor, and a 1,000% great reporter. So, one of those aspects is probably not going to be as [strong] you want it to be. Usually if you are hiring for a reporter that’s the solo journalists, that’s going to fall into the editing and the photography.

Similarly, ND 8 lamented that with the increased utilization of solo journalists, certain production aspects become deemphasized:

ND 8: One thing that I think we are sacrificing as we go to [a solo journalist] model, is just how good something can look when you have a photographer. And I'm thinking specifically about lighting. If you want to do a live shot, that is something that takes time to set up. And solo journalists just don't have that kind of time. I find them to be very efficient in shooting and editing and very competent with framing their shots up but when I see a photographer setting up a live shot with two or three lights, in HD, man, it just looks so much better. And maybe we'll figure that out with technology. But that's just something that when I look at a station that has mostly solo journalists, that's where I can see it.

However, ND 7 believed that technological advances will eventually close the gap between a solo journalist's ability to produce the same quality stories as crew in terms of audio and video, especially with journalism schools emphasizing multimedia instruction. However, he said there are still areas to improve. "Most students come out of schools knowing how to shoot and edit, and that wasn't the case 25 years ago. Now we just have to concentrate on the journalism, and the ethics, and the decision making process."

As with the question about reporting, concerns with the production quality were rarely brought up by the interviewed news directors without prompting. In fact, when asked about "quality" in general, most of the news directors naturally spoke about reporting quality (i.e., investigating stories, developing contacts, fact-checking) rather than production quality (i.e., shooting and editing stories of a professional quality). Many may not consider those skills as vital to producing journalism that is of social and civic value. In addition, research into audience preferences of online videos, an increasingly important avenue for television news organizations, has shown that "production standards" have little impact on audience engagement (Peer & Ksiazek, 2011). Therefore, it is likely that these skills will be the first to be "left behind" as solo journalism becomes more common.

RQ2d: To what extent do news managers report different expectations for solo journalists than traditional news crews regarding story assignment?

Finally, RQ2d asked if news managers treated solo journalists differently regarding the types of stories they are assigned. Many of the news directors interviewed admitted that they felt solo journalists were more suited for covering certain types of stories, but there was some disagreement on what type of stories those were. ND 6 said he often asks himself if “this is a story we can ‘win’ with a solo journalist.” A few pointed to location and time as the key components that they look for in a solo journalist story. Speaking of the daily deadlines that come with the broadcast news cycle, ND 3 said “in the traditional broadcast sense, there are stories where we can’t send a solo journalist to because they won’t be able to get it. It’s not their fault. They can be as proficient as possible but sometimes that’s difficult.” Others had similar opinions:

ND 12: For us, [the stories that work best for solo journalists are] people driven stories or what we call “one-stop-shop” story where a reporter can show up and it’s all-encompassing and there’s usually not a lot of difficulty in doing it. There may not be a lot of reporter involvement; it may be a more subject-involvement kind of story.

ND 10: Our goal in the morning is to get the solo journalists out the door as early as possible. To find a good story that is going to be something we need for our newscast but is also something they can get done that day. We try to be very careful about how long I keep them in meetings and how long we wait for return phone calls before we switch to another story so that we can get them out the door quicker.

ND 8: At my last stations with fewer solo journalists, we would look for stories that were “one-stop shop” or more event-driven stories where everything is in one place. The story that’s going to involve one interview here and then reaction from someone across town or it’s going to involve some document digging that’s going to take some time, we would assign that to a reporter/photographer team. But now that I have almost all solo journalists, I can’t be as picky about what stories I send them to.

ND 2 talked about finding stories that the solo journalist pitched themselves, as opposed to assigning them more “news-of-the-day”-type stories:

ND 2: I think as a solo journalist you are more inclined to want to do an enterprise story rather than be assigned something because it's something you want to do and have already laid some of the groundwork. And at one of our sister stations, someone did a five-minute sweeps piece and they shot it themselves, and edited it themselves and they gave them the time to do it. It was a great piece that could have run at all of our stations and she did it alone. So I think it is possible, but you have to have some "mad skills" to get it done.

Similarly, ND 6 said that the station employs a solo journalist who is dedicated to doing enterprise stories but admitted "if she had a [photographer], could it be better? Probably."

The research question regarding story assignment was asked because if news directors have different expectations regarding the ability of solo journalists to produce certain kinds of stories, they may simply avoid assigning those stories to them altogether. And as solo journalism increases in popularity, those kinds of stories may be produced less often. But as demonstrated above, there is not a consensus among this sample about the type of story to which solo journalists are more suited. Using the traditional categorization of news (hard news, soft news, spot news, etc.), news directors are mixed about which stories solo journalists are best able to produce; some said daily spot news stories, others said enterprise stories. However, recalling that news directors also expressed concern that solo journalists were not as adept as producing more complicated/in-depth stories (RQ2b), a more useful categorization of news stories may be one based on their routine nature (Berkowitz, 1992; Tuchman, 1978). If solo journalists are more limited in their ability to respond quickly, they may have more difficulty covering non-routine stories. ND8, who employs mostly solo journalists, spoke about the difficulty she faced covering a natural disaster:

ND8: We had a flood back in October and that did feel like a challenge without photographers. Because we just needed to be in so many places at one time because it was such a big event. It was happening and it was an emergency situation that we really needed to have live coverage of and that was a situation where I was really wishing I had photographers. At that point it just becomes a safety issue. You have rushing water, you don't want to have people trying to take care of some very expensive pieces of equipment

and trying to go live and get themselves around. We certainly didn't have as much live coverage of that event as we would have if we had a staff of photographers. In our Hurricane plan, my first call is to corporate saying you have to send me, like, five photographers from other stations. Because I can't get it done safely with the resources that we have.

This connection between news directors and the routines of news reporting suggests how variables at one level of analysis (organizational) may impact variables at another level (routine) as described in the proposed theoretical model. The next part of this section will analyze variables at the routines-level of analysis. As stated earlier, routinization was measured using six items in the reporter survey. Two of those items were intended to measure general routinization among journalists: "my job is often repetitive" and "there are unwritten rules I have to follow to do my job." These two items were significantly, but weakly, correlated ($r = .18, p < .01$) and combined into a single measure of "general routinization" ($M = 3.52, SD = .84$). The next two items were intended to measure routinization during the story ideation/assignment phase of production: "I find I am often assigned to cover the same kinds of stories" and "often, my stories turn out the same as I expected when they were assigned." These two items were significantly correlated ($r = .21, p < .01$) and averaged into a single measure ($M = 3.27, SD = .85$). Finally, two more items were designed to measure routinization during the "gathering and structuring materials" phase of news production: "the stories/reports I produce are formulaic" and "the limitations of technology prevent me from fully developing my stories." However, there was not a strong enough relationship between these two items to justify a combined measure ($r = .13, p = ns$). Therefore, they were analyzed as individual items.

RQ3: To what extent does the attitude of news managers toward solo journalists' ability and/or skills impact the feelings of routinization among the solo journalists that work for who news manager?

Specifically, a research question (RQ3) was proposed about a possible link between the attitudes of their managers routinization in solo journalists and (news directors) due to decoupling. To test this link, data from the previous study of news directors discussed in Chapter 4 was used to analyze a possible relationship between these news directors ($N= 79$) attitudes on the skills and abilities of solo journalists and feelings of routinization among the journalists they manage. This analysis was possible because both studies used the same sample of television stations and unique ID codes that allowed the data from the news manager survey and the journalist survey to be matched.

Two items from the news director survey were used to measure these news directors' attitudes toward the skill and abilities of solo journalists. News directors were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement regarding two statements: "Solo journalists are never as skilled at the technical aspects of news production (shooting, editing) as dedicated videographers" ($M= 3.46$, $SD= 1.03$) and "Solo journalists produce the same quality stories as traditional news crews" (reverse coded, $M= 3.06$, $SD= 1.12$). A bivariate correlation analysis indicated there was a substantial enough relationship between these two items ($r= .27$, $p < .01$) to justify creating a single measure of a news director's attitude toward the skills/abilities of solo journalists ($M= 3.26$, $SD= .84$), here after referred to as "news directors' attitudes." To test for a relationship between news directors' attitudes and routinization, a series of linear regression models were created with each measure of routinization used as dependent variables and the news director's attitudes as a predictor. Because this analysis is concerned specifically with the effects on solo journalists, only data from those who indicated they worked as solo journalists at least part of the time were included ($N= 142$). In addition, demographic and market variables were included in the regression to control for their influence.

The results of the linear regression models indicated that the news director's attitudes toward solo journalists' skills and abilities were not significant predictors of the measures of general routinization ($\beta = .119, p = \text{ns}$) or "routinization during the story ideation/assignment phase" ($\beta = -.065, p = \text{ns}$). However, news directors' attitudes were significant predictors of the routinization indicators associated with the "gathering and structuring materials" phase of production: "stories often turn out as expected" ($\beta = -.232, p = .05$) and "the limits of technology prevent me from fully developing stories" ($\beta = .301, p = .01$) even when controlling for the demographic and market variables. The results of this analysis lend some support to the idea that there is a relationship between organizational-level and routine-level variables. These results were particularly interesting because news directors often have the most direct influence over their reporters during the ideation/assignment phase of news production. Reporters are generally "on their own" while gathering and structuring the materials needed for their stories. The results of these linear regression models can be found in Table 6 (See Appendix 2, page 103).

The first set of hypotheses in this dissertation dealt with the effect of solo journalism on the routinization of news workers based on the previous research in both organization studies (March & Simon, 1958; Nelsom & Winter, 1982) and news production (Bantz et al, 1980; Tuchman, 1972; 1973; 1979). Relationships between solo journalism and the different stages of the local television news production process as outlined by Bantz et al (1980) were also hypothesized.

To test these hypotheses, multiple linear regression models were created using the measures of routinization as the dependent variables. Demographic and market variables were included along with "degree of solo journalism" as predictor variables. As stated above, "degree of solo journalism" refers to the amount of time during a typical work week that respondents said

they worked as a solo journalist, with a higher number indicating working as a solo journalist more often. H1a proposed that solo journalists would experience greater routinization in general than those who worked in news crews. However, “degree of solo journalism” was not a significant predictor of general routinization according to this model ($\beta = -.150, p = \text{ns}$). Additionally, a regression analyses of the two components of the “general routinization” measure indicated that solo journalism was a significant predictor of responses to the statement “there are unwritten rules I have to do to follow in order to do my job” ($\beta = -.232, p < .01$). However, the negative coefficient would suggest that working as a solo journalist makes you *less* likely to agree with that statement, which was intended to indicate greater routinization. Therefore, hypothesis 1a, as proposed, was not supported.

H1b proposed that solo journalism would experience increased routinization during the story ideation/assignment phase of news production. However, the regression model indicated that solo journalism was not a significant predictor of routinization during the ideation/assignment phase, as measured ($\beta = .018, p = \text{ns}$). However, as above, regression models using the two indicators of “routinization during the story ideation/assignment phase” found that degree of solo journalism was a significant predictor of responses to the statement “often, my stories turn out the same as I expected when they were assigned” ($\beta = .182, p < .05$) even when controlling for demographic and market variables. Based on these results, hypothesis 1b is partially supported.

H1c proposed that solo journalists would experience greater routinization during the “gathering and structuring materials” phase of news production, in which journalists do the work of producing their stories based on the information and audio/visual elements gathered out in the field. The survey instrument included two indicators of routinization during the production

process: “the stories/reports I produce are formulaic” and “the limitations of technology prevent me from fully developing my stories.” Regression models indicated that “degree of solo journalism” was not a significant predictor of responses to either statement (“the stories/reports I produce are formulaic” $\beta = .008, p = \text{ns}$; “the limitations of technology prevent me from fully developing my stories.” $\beta = -.009, p = \text{ns}$). Therefore, hypothesis 1c is not supported. The results of these regression analysis can also be found in table 7 (See Appendix 2, page 103).

H2 proposed that because solo journalists experienced increased routinization, they would also experience reduced professional autonomy. Though the results above leave little indication that there is a link between solo journalism and routinization, regression analyses were created with the various measures of professional autonomy as the dependent variables. As described in Chapter 3, the survey measured professional autonomy using a five-item scale adapted by Jackson (1993), however a reliability analysis did not suggest that a single measure could be calculated using these measures. The regression models indicated that “degree of solo journalism” was not a significant predictor of any of the professional autonomy measures (“I have a significant amount of freedom in how I do my job,” $\beta = .082, p = \text{ns}$; “if something unexpected happens, I am able to handle those changes,” $\beta = -.130, p = \text{ns}$; “I don’t have much say in the stories I am assigned” $\beta = .033, p = \text{ns}$; “if I pitch a story, I am generally assigned to cover it,” $\beta = .028, p = \text{ns}$; “if I want to tell a story in a new way, I am able to do so,” $\beta = -.066, p = \text{ns}$). Based on these results, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. The results of these regression models can also be found in table 8 (See Appendix 2, page 104).

Of course, routines and routinization are generally developed to help people complete a task more efficiently, reduce stress, and produce at a consistent rate and quality. However, extant research on solo journalism appears to indicate just the opposite; news professionals working as

solo journalists are, in fact, more stressed and do not feel they are producing their best work (Avilés et al., 2004; Bock, 2013; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedas, 2014). Therefore, several hypotheses were proposed that examined relationships between solo journalism and the individual journalists, specifically, variables derived from the organizational behavior literature. Using previous research on work design, role overload, burnout, and solo journalism, a mediated relationship between task variety (solo journalism), role overload, and burnout was proposed (H5). More specifically, greater task variety (degree of solo journalism) is proposed to cause increased role overload (H3) and that increased role overload is proposed to lead to increased burnout among solo journalists (H4). Barron and Kenny (1986) developed a method for testing a mediated relationship involving a few simple linear regression models that first test for the direct effect between the independent and dependent variables (in this case, degree of solo journalism and burnout), then test zero-order relationships between the independent and mediating variables (degree of solo journalism and role overload) and the dependent and mediating variables (role overload and burnout). If those relationships are significant, a multiple linear regression is calculated to test if the relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable is still significant when controlling for the independent variable.

To begin, a simple linear regression was run to test the relationship between degree of solo journalism and burnout, the direct effect. According to the model, there was a significant, though not particularly strong, predictive relationship between degree of solo journalism and burnout ($\beta = .170, p < .05$), confirming the direct effect between the independent and dependent variables. The next step was to test the relationship between the IV, solo journalism, and the mediator, role overload (H3). This time the simple regression analysis demonstrated an effect

($\beta = .128$), but it was just over the generally recognized acceptable significance level ($p = .058$). Based on this result, Hypothesis 3 is not supported. However, for the sake of testing the remaining hypotheses and the mediation model, the analysis continued. The next step was to test the relationship between the mediator, role overload, and the dependent variable, burnout (H4). The simple regression did demonstrate a significant relationship between these two variables ($\beta = .574, p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Finally, to test the mediated relationship among solo journalism, role overload, and burnout, a hierarchical regression model was calculated with burnout as the dependent variable. Solo journalism was entered into the model first, then role overload to determine if role overload was still a significant predictor for burnout when controlling for degree of solo journalism. The results of the model indicated that role overload was, indeed, still a significant predictor of burnout ($\beta = .561, p < .001$) when controlling for degree of solo journalism. This would suggest that there may be some form of a mediated relationship among these variables. However, the weak relationship between solo journalism and role overload should caution the full acceptance of the mediation. Therefore, hypothesis 5 is conditionally supported. The results of these regression models can also be found in Table 9 (See Appendix 2, page 104).

In addition to the regression tests recommended by Barron and Kenny (1986), Preacher and Hayes (2008, 2004) also recommend using a “product of coefficients” approach when testing for a mediation effect. This approach assumes that the product (ab) of the “IV to mediator effect” (a) and the “mediator to DV” effect (b) should be equal to the difference between the total and indirect effects. The Sobel test is one of the most commonly used methods for finding this product and also accounts for standard error (Sobel, 1982, 1986). Using the raw unstandardized regression coefficients and standard error scores from the H4 and H5 regression analyses, a

Sobel test also indicated that the mediation effect between solo journalism, role overload and burnout was marginal, at best ($z = 1.88, p = .06$). As with the regression analysis association with H3, the p value of the Sobel test result was just above the generally recognized significance level of .05.

The remaining hypotheses predicted that two variables, autonomy (H6a) and professional experience (H6b), would moderate the relationship between solo journalism and role overload. There are a few issues with testing these hypotheses. First, the main effect relationship between solo journalism and role overload is weak and does not meet the generally accepted level of significance ($p = .058$). Additionally, there was not a sufficient level of agreement among the multiple indicators of professional autonomy included in the survey instrument. However, a correlation analysis demonstrated that two of the professional autonomy indicators (“I have a significant amount of freedom in how I do my job” and “I don’t have much say in the type of stories I am assigned [reversed]”) did correlate significantly ($r = .43, p < .001$), therefore a professional autonomy measure was calculated using these two items.

Baron and Kenny (1986) also proposed a method for testing a moderating relationship using multiple regression analysis that includes the predictor variable, the moderating variable, and an interaction term of the predictor and moderator. If the interaction term is statistically significant, there is likely a moderated relationship. Before testing the possible moderating effects of professional autonomy and age, interaction terms for both moderating variables were calculated (solo journalism X professional autonomy and solo journalism X professional experience). After these terms were calculated, a multiple regression analysis was conducted for each proposed moderation. H6a proposed that professional autonomy would moderate the relationship between solo journalism and role overload. However, the results indicated that when

controlling for both the predictor (solo journalism) and the moderating variable (professional autonomy), the interaction term was not a statistically significant predictor of role overload ($\beta = .169, p = ns$). Therefore, hypothesis 6a was not supported.

H6b proposed that the professional experience of the respondent would moderate the relationship between solo journalism and role overload. This hypothesis was based on research that more experienced workers have a harder time adapting to new roles (Jones et al., 2007). As with the previous analysis, the regression model did not indicate that the interaction term of professional experience X solo journalism was a statistically significant predictor of role overload ($\beta = .099, p = ns$). Therefore, hypothesis 6b was not supported. The results of both these regression models can also be found in Table 10 (See Appendix 2, page 105).

As demonstrated by the results reported above, the theoretical model and most of the hypotheses proposed for the routine and individual level variables were not supported by the data. However, the relationship between degree of solo journalism, role overload, and burnout is still worth exploring more directly. To that effect, two final regression analysis were conducted with role overload and burnout as the dependent variables. Additionally, demographic and market variables were entered hierarchically as control variables before degree of solo journalism.

According to these models, “degree of solo journalism” was not a significant predictor of role overload ($\beta = -.004, p = ns$) or burnout ($\beta = .002, p = ns$). In fact, the only variable that was a significant predictor for burnout was negative affect ($\beta = .462, p < .001$). The only significant predictors of role overload were ethnicity ($\beta = -.156, p < .01$) and negative affect ($\beta = .593, p < .001$). The results of these regression models can also be found in Tables 11 and 12 (See Appendix 2, page 105).

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation was an attempt to understand the antecedents and effects of solo journalism in local television news. To this end, using the Hierarchical Influences Model (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014) as a framework, a multi-level theoretical model was proposed that explains how organizational factors, specifically isomorphism and decoupling, impact the routinization of solo journalism as a work practice, and how that routinization might impact the individuals who work as solo journalists. This chapter will discuss the findings detailed in Chapter 5, if and how those findings relate to the existing literature noted in chapter 2, and the theoretical model proposed in Chapter 3. It will also offer some broad conclusions and practical implications, suggest future directions for research on solo journalism, and discuss the limitations of this specific dissertation.

Discussion of Findings

Beginning with the organizational level analyses, the news directors interviewed offered some insight into how and why they utilize solo journalists at their television news stations. The theoretical framework used for the organizational analysis was new institutional theory, specifically the theories of isomorphism and decoupling (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1979). Previous research had demonstrated that news organizations often behave in ways similar to other institutionalized organizations because social legitimacy is seen as vital, perhaps more so than economic success (Gade, 2004; Lowrey, 2011; Lowrey & Woo, 2010). This may lead organizations to act in ways that may defy market logic.

Regarding isomorphism, the tendency for institutionalized organizations to become more similar, many of the news directors reported direct and indirect pressure from those above them in their company hierarchy to hire more solo journalists. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), this could be seen as coercive isomorphic pressure.

The most common example of coercive isomorphic pressure is regulatory pressure from governing bodies that exist completely separate from the organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Therefore, the argument could be made that the pressures described by these news directors are not isomorphic, but simply the inner-workings of an organization attempting to maximize efficiency and profitability. This raises an issue that has been debated in the institutionalism literature in general: what constitutes an organizational field? Scott and Meyer (1983) argued that organizational fields are based on the technical and goal-oriented features of an organization (i.e. what are they trying to accomplish). Using this argument, these news departments could be considered separate organizations within the larger media corporate structure, given that, at least ideally, they have a unique set of journalism-oriented goals apart from the overall company's directive to make a profit. Viewed from this framework, the pressure from parts of the media company outside the newsroom to hire more solo journalists as a way to save costs could be construed as coercive isomorphic pressure.

There was a clear delineation, in this particular sample, between news directors at large-market stations and news directors at small- and medium-market stations regarding perceptions of this pressure. The large-market station news directors said the use of solo journalists was at their own discretion and not a product of corporate influence. It should be noted that these two large-market news directors were also the only ones to report that fewer than half their staff were solo journalists. This marked difference between the perceived pressure of the large-market news

directors and the others in this sample suggests that economics may be an important reason for ownership/management to push for the hiring of more solo journalists. Larger market stations often have much higher profit margins than smaller market stations due to the population imbalance of the U.S. television DMA structure (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). Because of these higher margins, it is possible that their ownership sees less need to interfere or find ways to reduce costs. Conversely, medium and smaller market station owners are perhaps reacting to the general economic stress and uncertainty that has impacted nearly all media companies by encouraging news directors to hire more solo journalists, thus reducing staff costs (Matsa, 2015). This is further supported by the fact that many of the medium- and small-market news directors spoke about their station's ownership trying to "cut costs" or "watch out for the bottom line" as reasons they were hiring more solo journalists. This would indicate that the perceived economic pressure may in fact be in line with market forces, which is not consistent with new institutional theory in general (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

However, new institutional theory was designed to explain why certain organizations may act in ways not consistent with market forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Weber, 1947). Therefore, the fact that media companies are encouraging the move to a "solo journalism model" may not be a result of isomorphic forces, but simply a reaction to economic circumstances. As stated in the previous chapter, news directors generally felt this "coercive pressure" in relation to the hiring of journalists and received little guidance from superiors in how they should be utilized. This creates the opportunity for the two other types of isomorphic pressure, mimetic and normative, to have an effect. Mimetic pressure is derived from peer organization and normative pressure comes from a consensus within a profession that certain ways of doing things are "right" or "proper" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Suchman, 1995). However, the findings

indicated that these pressures were not as strong or pervasive as the coercive pressure from ownership/upper management.

The lack of perceived mimetic pressure among this sample could be a function of a lack of uncertainty in how to utilize solo journalists. News directors who employ mostly or only solo journalists may not see much possible variability; they still have to produce a certain amount of content using a certain number of staff members, regardless of what other news stations are doing. It could also be due to a lack of cohesion in news management as an institutional field, because contextual differences (i.e., market differences) are so pronounced. Additionally, the only given examples of communication among news directors given were situated within their parent company. This could indicate that ownership is creating a de facto organizational field among news directors within that company. This could be seen as a challenge to the professional independence of television news directors, as this guidance is likely to promote company goals, which may not always align with the ethical tenets of journalism.

Many of the news directors interviewed did mention looking to professional organizations, an possible indicator of normative pressure, for guidance on utilizing solo journalists. However, all of these resources they spoke of were designed for their staff, not themselves. This may, again, speak to the undeveloped nature of television news management as a field. Normative pressure is often found in more professionalized fields (i.e., law, medicine, education) because of similarities in education and training (Galaskiewicz & Burt, 1991; Mezias, 1990). And while it was not a question explicitly asked of all the news directors, the impression from these interviews was that most were former reporters or producers. In fact, previous studies of television news directors showed a most came from journalism background and lacked management training (Redmond, 1994). Without the common educational thread

centered on the management aspects of their jobs, these news directors may have difficulty coalescing into a substantive professional field.

As with the findings on perceived coercive isomorphic pressure, the results here are mixed, at best. The apparent lack of an organization field specifically among television news directors, independent of ownership, would seem to indicate that the potential for organizations to look to their peers is limited. Similarly, the lack of a field may prevent a professionalized culture from developing, a key aspect of normative pressure. Therefore, based on these results, it appears unlikely that isomorphic pressures are having a significant impact on the growth or utilization of solo journalism in local television news.

The fact that these news directors appear to be receiving little guidance on how to actually utilize solo journalists speaks to the other aspect of institutional theory analyzed in this dissertation, decoupling. Meyer and Rowan (1979) proposed that when institutionalized organizations are faced with conflicting pressures, often the pressure to innovate coming from outside the organization and the pressure to maintain the status quo coming from within the organization, they may decouple their nominal practice and their actual practice in order to appease both forces. They may say they are changing how they do things, but in actual practice, little substantive change is made. And because news directors appear to have little oversight from station management/ownership, there is a greater opportunity to “decouple” (March & Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1979).

To measure possible decoupling, the news directors were asked if they assumed that solo journalists should be able to perform the same as news crews. This would indicate that decoupling was taking place because there is a nominal change (more solo journalism) but no change in actual practice (expecting the same quantity and quality of content). However, many of

the news directors did admit that they have different expectations of solo journalists at multiple levels, especially regarding to the amount of news content they were able to produce. This finding may speak to the increased pressure on news directors to produce more content for multiple platforms (e.g., traditional broadcasts, websites, social media) as much as their perceptions of solo journalists. It may also speak to the relative independence of television news reporters. Traditionally, news directors have exercised less editorial control over the production process in television news when compared to other media (Kanis, 1991).

When pressed about possible differences in the quality of reporting, a few news directors admitted that they felt solo journalists do have difficulty with more complex stories like in-depth investigations or natural disaster coverage, more a function of the increased time pressure associated with collapsing multiple tasks (reporting, writing, shooting, editing) onto a single person rather than the specific skills of that journalist. The news directors spoke of being “strategic” in how they used solo journalists, sending them to more event-driven or “one-stop shop” stories. Of course, this is a luxury not available to news directors who employed mostly, or all, solo journalists. A few of these news directors said they sometimes make concessions to solo journalists so that they may tackle more complicated stories (i.e., holding a story for a day, giving reporters a “research day”), but overall, they said increasing the “efficiency” of their solo journalist staff (i.e., making sure they have their stories set up early, not keeping them out in the field too long, etc.) was their main concern.

The question remains: are these news directors decoupling their stated and actual practices regarding solo journalism? The news directors’ responses indicated that there was some form of decoupling among this sample, but not in the way originally theorized. According to the argument in Chapter 3, news directors would decouple their stated goal of innovating television

news using solo journalism from their actual practice of using the solo journalists the same way as news crews. However, it appears that the stated goals, the amount of content they must produce, are not changing, but these news directors are changing the ways that solo journalists work by sending them to cover certain types of stories or making sure their stories are “set up” earlier in the day. This does not align with the traditional definition of decoupling in which managers say they are going to innovate but, in reality, the practices stay the same (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In this situation, the pressure is not to change but to maintain the status quo of “feeding the beast” and producing daily content. The agents enacting the pressure (ownership, upper management) may not be as concerned with *how* these news directors use solo journalists to produce their content, as long as it gets produced regularly. Therefore, the managers must innovate their practices to compensate.

While that relationship may not fit the typical definition of decoupling, it may still have an impact on the next analytical level addressed by this project, the routines level. While news managers may understand that solo journalists typically are not able to produce at the same quantitative level as news crews, they still must rely on them to produce the content necessary to fill their daily newscasts, websites, and social media accounts. Using research from the organizational studies field, it was proposed that solo journalists would be more susceptible to routinization because increased time pressure, which most of the news directors acknowledged was an issue with solo journalism, is one of the key factors that leads to routinization (Betch et al, 1998; Narduzzo et al. 2000; Zellmer-Bruhn, 1999, 2003). In addition, there has been substantial research on routinization of news practices in general (Schudson, 1978, 2011; Stephens, 1980; Tuchamn, 1972, 1973, 1978) and television news production in particular (Bantz et al., 1980; Ismach & Dennis, 1978; Livingstone & Bennett, 2003).

The assumption was that because television news managers still expect solo journalists to produce stories at the same relative pace as traditional crews, the journalists must routinize their practices to compensate. And while the findings from these news director interviews suggested that they are not as rigid in their expectations of solo journalists, the need to produce a certain amount of content remained. In fact, as stated above, a few news directors talked about “efficiency” when utilizing solo journalists which may be another way of describing routinization.

The analyses specifically designed to test the relationship between news directors at the organizational level, routinization, and solo journalism found mixed results. News directors’ attitudes did not predict routinization in general, or routinization during the story ideation/assignment phase of news production (Bantz et al., 1980). However, it was related to routinization during the gathering/structuring material process, the part of the news process when reporters are out in the field. This was surprising given that the story ideation and assignment phases are where news directors exercise the most direct control over the production process, as they are often present and vocal in editorial meetings where decisions regarding these phases are made (Bantz et al., 1980). However, this finding makes more sense if one assumes that when news managers take more control over the ideation/assignment phases (i.e., making sure solo journalists are assigned to stories they can produce in a single day, etc.), solo journalists may not be aware of this routinization. And because reporters, and especially television reporters, are given a relatively large amount of autonomy while they are producing their stories (Johnstone, 1976; Kanis, 1991), this is the stage in which *they* must routinize their practices in order to meet organizational goals. While those data may lend some support to the idea that organizational-level variables can have an impact on routine-level variables regarding solo journalism, the data

were less conclusive in testing a direct relationship between solo journalism and routinization. Of the six measures of routinization, solo journalists were only more likely to think that their stories often turn out the as they expected when they were assigned.

The literature on routines may explain why the overall relationship between solo journalism and routinization was not as strong as predicted. The study of routines was founded on research of manufacturing, settings much different than television news, in which reporters are tasked with producing new stories on different topics every day (March and Simon, 1958; Nelson & Winter, 1982). While it is true that scholars have demonstrated routines do have their place in news production, that research has focused more on story selection, information sources utilized, and the presentation of news stories (Altheide, 1976; Schudson, 1978, 2011; Shoemaker & Vos, 2003; Stephens, 1980; Tuchman, 1972, 1973, 1978). There has been little research on routinization on the actual practice of producing a news report. In fact, as work processes become more contextual, they are less likely to be routinized (Barney, 1991; Hodgson, 2001; Simon, 1976). And one could argue that producing a television news story is highly contextualized based on the particularities of each story. Additionally, research has suggested that routines can develop among communities of workers, particularly among “epistemic communities”; workers with a common task and or function (Cohendet & Llerena, 2003). The key facet of solo journalism is its “singular nature” (Bock, 2013), which may discourage the creation of these epistemic communities because reporters are consistently working on their own. On the other hand, solo journalists may simply not be aware of or willing to admit routinization in their work practices. Routinization is generally considered antithetical to the espoused professional orientation of journalism (Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972; Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). If news reporters are simply following a set of pre-determined

routines to produce their stories, what separates them from other, less-professionalized occupations? Many of the studies that examined routinization in news utilized interviews and observation, which would, in theory, prevent reporters from providing data that they feel is professionally and socially acceptable, as opposed to accurate (Altheide, 1976; Bock, 2013; Blankenship, 2015; Epstein, 1974; Fishman, 1982; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1972; 1973; 1978).

It was also proposed that possible routinization and decreased autonomy associated with solo journalism could help explain other findings, specifically that they experienced more stress, felt like they were not producing their best work, and were more likely to leave the business at some point in the near future (Avilés et al., 2002; Higgins-Dobney & Sussman, 2013; Perez & Cremedás, 2014). This previous research suggested that solo journalists may be experiencing role overload, burnout, or “job-person incongruity,” concepts from the organizational behavior literature that attempt to explain why certain employees are unhappy in their jobs.

Role overload is a specific form of role conflict in which workers feel they have too many responsibilities or activities to accomplish and do not have the time, skill, or resources to complete them (Rizzo, House, & Litzman, 1970). This concept seemed appropriate given the results of previous work on solo journalism. Therefore, it was proposed that the relationship between task variety (solo journalism) and role overload would be moderated by autonomy. The data did not support this hypothesis. Specifically, the relationship between solo journalism and role overload was weak. There maybe a few reasons this relationship was not as significant as predicted. In the organizational behavior literature, expanding roles have not necessarily been found to be negative. In fact, some studies found feelings of role overload were perceived as a motivating factor for employees to work harder and they may experience a greater sense of

fulfillment from their jobs. These increased roles were perceived as “challenge stressors” as opposed to “hindrance stressors” (Jones et al., 2007; Peiro et al., 2001; Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, 2004; Boles & Babin, 1996; Bartuner & Reynolds, 1983; Fogarty, Singh, & Moore, 2000). It may be that, in aggregate, solo journalists see their expanded roles in a positive way, giving them more control over more aspects of their stories. A few of the news directors in the interview touched on this notion as well, saying that solo journalism enables greater creative control and many reporters simply work better alone, indicating greater “craft-level” autonomy for solo journalists as described in the work of Johnstone, Slawski, and Boweman (1972).

However, how does one account for the findings in previous studies of solo journalism that show increased stress and inefficacy? In addition to role overload, those findings on solo journalism also suggested that they may be experiencing burnout, the unfortunate result of increased stress, cynicism, and inefficacy over a period of time (Maslach, 1976). Because Fogarty et al. (2000) found that burnout could sometime result from increased role overload, a mediated relationship among task variety, role overload, and burnout was proposed, with role overload mediating the effect of task variety on burnout. The initial analysis *did* find a significant relationship between solo journalism and burnout but, as mentioned above, the relationship between solo journalism and role overload was not significant. And, as expected, the mediated effect of role overload between solo journalism and burnout was also weak. This still left a possible connection between solo journalism and burnout. This was not a surprise given that other researchers have demonstrated that journalists can be susceptible to burnout, particularly those responsible for multiple tasks (Cook & Banks, 1993; Cook, Banks, & Turner, 1996; Reinardy, 2011; 2006). However, a separate analysis did not find that solo journalism predicted burnout. In fact, general negative affectivity was the only predictive variable of burnout among

this sample of journalists. If anything, this strengthens the argument that when analyzing stress/dissatisfaction variables like burnout, it is important to control for general emotional states (Brief, Butcher, & Robertson, 1995; Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Slack, 1991).

In trying to explain why solo journalism failed to predict burnout, the existing literature offered few clues. Research on burnout has shown that increased time constraints, job demand, and even emotional connections with others can increase burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Zapf et al., 2001). All these signs point to solo journalism increasing burnout. One possible clue may be found in the research of Perez and Cremedas (2014). They investigated solo journalism with a quantitative survey, similar to this dissertation, but they limited their sample to reporters at larger market television stations. These reporters were more likely to have made a transition from working within a crew to working as a solo journalist later in their career. This may make them more susceptible to burnout. Additionally, some of the earlier works on solo journalism focused on organizations making the transition to a more solo journalism-dependent model of news gathering (Avilés et al., 2004; Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Smith, Tanner, & Duhe, 2007; Wallace, 2009). Therefore, perhaps to find a connection between solo journalism and role overload or burnout, the analysis should only look at reporters who have made the transition to solo journalism from working within a news crew.

An analysis along those lines was attempted in this dissertation based on the research of Jones et al. (2007) and Cron and Slocum (1986) who examined the relationship between work experience and role conflict. They found that more established workers are more set in their roles and, thus, more susceptible to the negative consequences of role overload. Therefore, it was proposed that experience might moderate the relationship between solo journalism and role overload. However, the data did not confirm this relationship. Additionally, age and work

experience were control variables in the direct analysis of role overload and burnout, but were not significant predictors.

Job Characteristics Theory predicts that increased task variety, the number of tasks someone is expected to perform as part of their job, should lead to a more fulfilling and motivating experience for employees (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Because solo journalists actually experience greater task variety but, according to previous research, are not more motivated or fulfilled, the dissertation proposed that a lack of autonomy in television news production, related to increased routinization, was to blame. The argument was made that if television reporters experience greater routinization, they will have less autonomy, which negates the positive impact of task variety on fulfillment and may, in fact, make a job more stressful (Karasek, 1979). However, an analysis that attempted to determine if autonomy moderated the relationship between solo journalism and role overload did not find significant results. As mentioned above, the expectation that solo journalism results in reduced autonomy may be flawed. Working on one's own, while perhaps more stressful, could, by definition, create a more autonomous working environment. A reporter may no longer have to consider the difficulties of coordinating or communicating with photographers/editors while producing his or her story.

Overall, the findings lend little support to most of the proposed research questions and hypotheses and it is suggested that the theoretical model proposed in the dissertation be significantly revised before being used in future research.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the results of the analysis in Chapter 5, as discussed above, suggest few generalizable conclusions about solo journalism. While there were some interesting findings

regarding news directors and solo journalism based on the interviews conducted for this dissertation, the theorized relationships with isomorphic pressure and decoupling were not confirmed as expected. This variability of responses based on market and the many references to solo journalism as a cost-cutting measure indicate that economic considerations are more relevant in this case. In this instance, the simpler explanation is likely the best. The data also provided little support for the hypotheses and research questions regarding routinization, work roles, and possible burnout among solo journalists. Based on the data from this sample, solo journalists are no more routinized, overloaded, nor burned-out than any other television reporter.

There are some other broad conclusions that may be taken from this analysis. The relationship between solo journalism and television news is complex. Some have said it is simply a function of technological growth and will not substantially alter the content or quality of television news (Dickinson, & Bigi, 2009; Drew, 2010; Grant, 2008; M. Malone, 2009; Rosenblum, 2008; “Reporter in a backpack,” 2006; Strauss, 2008; Whitney, 2005). Others have said solo journalism will usher in a new era of television news in which reporters are freed from the confines of the traditional routines of news production and work more as independent craftspeople (Cummings, 2014). And while the results of this analysis did not confirm those ideas, neither did it confirm the more pessimistic view that solo journalism is turning reporters into unprofessional, unskilled, “jacks-of-all-trades but masters-of-none” (Hickey, 2002; Kumar, 2010; Kurtz, 2011; R. Malone, 2008; Stone, 2002).

However, the lack of definitive findings should not dissuade further research on this trend. During the qualitative interviews and in email messages received from journalists who participated in the survey, many expressed gratitude that someone was researching a topic that had become such an integral part of their careers. This would seem to indicate that professionals

see a definite need for further examination of solo journalism. Academics and educators in journalism owe it to those currently working in television news and those hoping to enter the field to better understand the realities that they face.

Indeed, there are some implications for journalism practitioners that can be drawn from this research. For those in management, the findings regarding their relationship with ownership/upper management is unlikely to surprise them. However, the lack of a developed organizational field that could provide managers with useful information on how to best adapt to economic and technological changes, in a way not aligned simply with the goals of the overall company, should be concerning. If news managers in general, and television news directors in particular, want to be seen as a more professionalized occupation, developing networks among other members and utilizing/creating professional organizations are essential. In addition, journalism educators could also take a note from these findings and work to develop a news management curriculum that is more focused on working professionals, as many television news directors begin their work in management well after their time in school.

The inter-level effects of news managers' attitudes and solo journalists' feelings of routinization also point to some practical considerations. News managers should perhaps give more consideration to how their general attitudes might affect how their staffs work out in the field. While many of the news directors in this study believed that they had to make certain accommodations for solo journalists, the effect of those accommodations on routinization may not be as well understood. If news managers want everyone on their reporting staff to be able to find new stories or new angles on existing stories, they should take greater consideration of the unique challenges of solo journalism. In addition, solo journalists, themselves, should also be aware of the possible routinizing effects of solo journalism.

And while the results regarding individual level variables yielded few significant results, there may still be some negative consequences of solo journalism, including burnout, according to previous research. While reporters may have little control over the spread of solo journalism as a work practice, perhaps a greater dialogue between reporters and management about the effect of solo journalism is necessary. If reporters feel solo journalism is hindering them from performing their jobs to the best of their ability, it is in the interest of reporters, news directors, and media owners to understand why and ensure talented journalist are not leaving the profession after only a few years. Similarly, the survey questions on general attitudes toward solo journalism provide some food for thought, for both management and reporters. Reporters indicated that they generally felt that solo journalism is *not* good for television news, it is mostly a result of economic considerations, and that solo journalists are not capable of producing the same quality work. Regardless of whether any of those are actually true, it speaks to a broad-based negative perception of solo journalism among reporters. If solo journalism *is* the future of television news, as the survey also indicated many believed, it is imperative that reporters and managers understand the reason there is such pessimism and find ways to address those concerns.

The finding that the growth of solo journalism is due in large part to economic concerns also indicate some next steps. Some organizational-level variables are predicated on a certain amount of perceived uncertainty, mostly within the market. To truly examine whether news managers are reacting to uncertainty, a more sophisticated analysis that includes ratings data, a more direct indicator of economic uncertainty, is necessary. Unless the U.S. media industry undergoes a significant reorganization in the future, economic considerations will always have an important role. And if solo journalism is an inevitable result of economic circumstances, as

some news directors believed, scholars and educators should also direct their efforts towards better preparing students for this reality. Further research could also incorporate education variables. Teaching students to value the skills associated with reporting *and* production may alleviate some of the stress found in previous research on solo journalism. Consulting with news managers to understand what they need from solo journalists, as well as promoting a broad knowledge of ethics, politics, and history, may produce journalists better prepared for their jobs.

Limitations

The fact that the hypotheses and research questions were not supported may be a result of the limited nature of those proposed relationships and the theoretical model. Future research should perhaps propose more complex relationships among variables and utilize more sophisticated analytical methods. In addition, any investigation of solo journalism is an investigation of particular work practices. Using self-reported surveys and interviews to examine a work practice, while allowing advantages in scope and generalizability, is, in some ways, looking at the issue tangentially. In order to fully appreciate how solo journalists are routinizing their work practices, and develop quantitative measures that can analyze this concept, one must directly observe how they work. Perhaps before more quantitative survey-based research on solo journalism is attempted, more theories grounded in qualitative observations are needed to provide a basis for analysis.

The specific sampling methods of this dissertation also produced some limitations. As noted above, the limited sample of news managers is a distinct limitation. While the qualitative nature of that analysis precludes any notions of generalizability, more participation and perspectives are always better. Additionally, even though the 222 reporters surveyed provided enough responses for data analysis, the relatively small population compared to much survey

research (television reporters in the United States) means that a larger sample is likely needed for truly generalizable results. Specifically, the sample for the dissertation was drawn heavily from small and medium sized markets, which means that the perspective of large-market reporters was missing to a certain degree. The fact that participation in the survey was voluntary could also be problematic. Considering that the stress and time pressure associated with solo journalism was a key concept in the research, it is likely that the *most* stressed and pressured solo journalists simply did not have time to take the survey. This may account for the lack of findings regarding role overload and burnout.

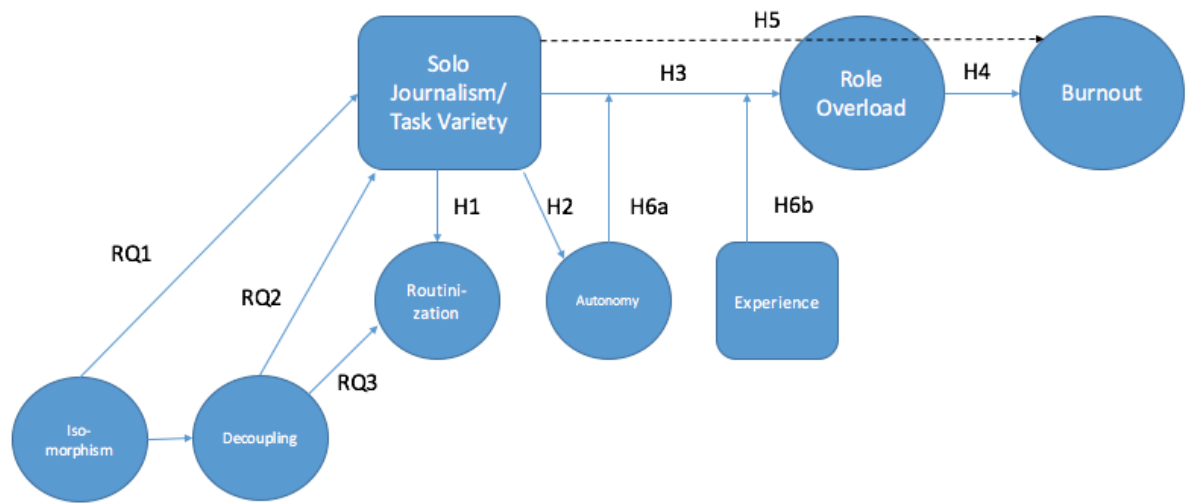
The method of data analysis for the routine and individual level variables also raised some issues. The number of regression analyses required to test the various research questions and hypotheses meant that Type I error (false positives) was possible. However, the *lack* of significant results in the analysis overall could indicate that this is not as large of an issue.

Additionally, the goal of this dissertation was to present a broad analysis of solo journalism, using theories and literature from various intellectual traditions. And while most of the proposed relationships may not have been supported, solo journalism may still in fact have an influence on and be influenced at multiple levels. In fact, one of the strongest findings was a multi-level effect of news directors' attitudes (organizational level) and certain indicators of routinization among solo journalists (routine level). However, there is a tradeoff between scope and detail. Trying to analyze too many facets of a problem could mean that some individual facets will not receive adequate attention. Solo journalism, as conceptualized here, is still a relatively new phenomenon. It may be that scholars still need a greater understanding of the "parts" before understanding the "whole." If anything, more interdisciplinary research is needed

so that theories and analytical methods can become easier to transpose from one level of analysis to another.

Television news is still an important source of information for many Americans, particularly at the local level (Matsa, 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand something, like solo journalism, that may substantially alter the way that news is produced. And while this particular dissertation may not have revealed many substantial conclusions about the effects of solo journalism, it will hopefully lead to further theorizing and research that helps academics, educators, and news practitioners better understand the process of news production and how that news can best serve the community.

APPENDIX 1: THEORETICAL MODEL



APPENDIX 2: TABLES

Table 1 – Demographic Information for News Director Interviews (N= 12)

	<i>DMA Rank^a</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Experience in Management</i>	<i>Experience at Station</i>	<i>Reliance on Solo Journalists^b</i>
<i>News Director 1</i>	Small	43	Male	12	2	4
<i>News Director 2</i>	Small	40	Male	2	4	4
<i>News Director 3</i>	Large	46	Female	16	1	2
<i>News Director 4</i>	Med.	32	Female	3	3	5
<i>News Director 5</i>	Small	33	Female	5	4	4
<i>News Director 6</i>	Med.	48	Male	15	1	3
<i>News Director 7</i>	Med.	52	Male	17	2	4
<i>News Director 8</i>	Med.	36	Female	1	1	5
<i>News Director 9</i>	Small	31	Male	4	6	5
<i>News Director 10</i>	Small	49	Male	18	3	4
<i>News Director 11</i>	Small	39	Male	12	8	5
<i>News Director 12</i>	Large	43	Male	17	3	2

^aMarket categorizations are based on groupings developed by Carroll (1989); large= market rank 1-30, medium= 31-100, and small= 101-210.

^bReliance on solo journalist was measured using the following ordinal scale: 1= none are solo journalists, 2= a few, but not a majority, 3= about half of staff, 4= a majority of staff, 5= all reporters

Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics for Journalist Survey Respondents (N=222)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	33.9	11.39
Education Level ^a	2.10	0.35
Income Level ^a	3.98	1.66
Negative Affect	1.77	.57
Experience In News	10.98	10.69
Experience At Station	6.31	11.39
Solo Journalist ^a	2.92	1.70
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	109	49.1
Female	113	50.9
<i>Job Title</i>		
Reporter	194	87.4
Anchor	119	53.6
Sports Reporter/Anchor	34	15.3
Producer	32	14.4
Meteorologist	22	9.9

^aFor purposes of analysis, ordinal scales of income, education level, and degree of solo journalism were calculated with a higher number indicating a higher level of income, a high degree attained, and more time spent regularly working as a solo journalist.

Table 2 (cont.)– Descriptive Statistics for Journalist Survey Respondents (N=222)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
African American/Black	21	8.6
Asian American	7	3.2
Hispanic American Or Latino/A	13	5.9
White/Caucasian	180	81.1
Other	1	.5
<i>Income</i>		
> \$20,000 Per Year	3	1.4
\$20,000 - \$30,000 Per Year	55	25.2
\$30,000 - \$40,000 Per Year	46	21.1
\$40,000 - \$50,000 Per Year	24	11.0
\$50,000 - \$60,000 Per Year	19	8.7
< \$60,000 Per Year	71	29.2
<i>Education Level</i>		
High School Diploma	3	1.4
Undergraduate Degree	195	87.8
Graduate Degree	23	10.36
Terminal Degree	1	0.5
<i>Degree Of Solo Journalism</i>		
Never	80	36
Some, But Not A Majority	24	10.8
About Half The Time	18	8.1
Most Of The Time	34	15.3
Always	66	29.7

Table 3 – Attitudes toward Solo Journalism

<i>Statement</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Solo journalism is the future of news.	222	3.80	1.14
The growth of solo journalism is due to mostly economic reasons.	222	4.48	.82
The growth of solo journalism is a good thing for television news.	222	1.91	.88
Solo journalists are capable of producing the same quality work as crews.	220	2.00	1.12
As a solo journalists, I am able to produce my best work.	142	2.92	1.25
As a solo journalists I am only assigned to cover certain stories.	141	2.36	1.32

Table 4 – Descriptive Statistics for Conceptual Variables (N= 222)

	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>			<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	
<i>Routinization Indicators</i>			<i>Professional Autonomy Indicators</i>		
“Job Often Repetitive”	3.00	1.27	“Freedom to do job”	3.86	1.04
“Unwritten Rules”	4.05	.90	“Say in assigned story”	2.43	1.03
“Stories Are Formulaic”	2.89	1.10	“Able to handle changes”	4.49	.70
“Stories Turn Out As Expected”	3.26	.99	“Allowed to tell story”	3.91	.78
“Assigned To Same Stories”	3.28	1.20	“Get to cover pitched stories”	3.81	1.10
“Limitation Of Technology”	2.61	1.22			
Routinization: General	3.52	.84	<i>Role Overload</i>	3.27	.86
Routinization: Story Idea/Assign Phase	3.27	.85	<i>Burnout</i>	2.29	.61

Table 5 – Bivariate Correlation Matrix of Demographics and Variables of Interest (N= 222)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Age	1										
2. Gender (1= Female) ^A	-.14*	1									
3. Ethnicity (1= Non-White) ^A	-.07	.20**	1								
4. Income Level	.64***	-.08	-.04	1							
5. Education Level	.07	.13*	.13*	.04	1						
6. Station Dma ^b	-.25***	.02	-.03	-.58***	.03	1					
7. Experience In News	.93***	-.17*	-.05	.69***	-.01	-.35***	1				
8. Experience At Current Station	.75***	-.10	-.04	.50***	-.06	-.20**	.80***	1			
9. Degree Of Solo Journalism	-.49***	.00	.06	-.62***	-.04	.37***	-.52***	-.37***	1		
10. Role Overload	-.22**	.14*	.06	-.23**	.01	.16*	-.22**	-.22**	.13	1	
11. Burnout	-.23**	.09	-.10	-.23**	-.90	.08	-.21**	-.19**	.17*	.58***	1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

^aFor purposes of analysis, gender and ethnicity were dummy coded into dichotomous variables.

^bA higher station DMA number indicated a smaller media market

Table 6 - Linear Regression Analysis of Routinization Measures for Solo Journalists (N= 142)

	Rout: General	Rout: Story Idea/Assign. Phase	Stories Are Formulaic	Limits Of Technology
Age	-.277	-.072	.004	.185
Gender (1= Female)	-.064	-.024	-.040	.001
Ethnicity (1= Non- White)	.034	-.143	-.181	.133
Income	.036	.029	.125	-.230*
Education	-.006	.038	.016	.112
Experience In News	.206	-.089	-.088	.193
Experience At Station	.150	.057	-.078	-.165
Market	.163	-.047	-.068	.169
N.D. Attitude toward S.J.	.119	-.065	-.232**	.301**
R ²	.054	.125	.094	.173
Adjusted R ²	.008	.059	.026	.111

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 7 - Linear Regression Analysis of Routinization Measures (N= 222)

	Rout: General	Rout: Story Idea/Assign. Phase	Stories Are Formulaic	Limits of technology	Unwritten rules	Turn out the same
Age	-.353	-.077	-.331	.179	-.288	.137
Gender (1= Female)	-.066	-.039	.036	-.016	.104	-.027
Ethnicity (1= Non- White)	.068	-.094	-.012	.089	.084	-.087
Income	-.013	.053	.002	-.092	-.110	.078
Education	-.011	.028	-.074	.001	.022	-.036
Experience In News	.232	-.113	.177	.071	.221	.002
Experience At Station	.127	.097	-.049	-.114	.118	.081
Market	.151	-.036	.068	.215*	.103	-.059
Degree Of Solo Journalism	-.150	.018	.008	.105	-.232**	.182*
R ²	.050	.021	.067	.074	.073	.038
Adjusted R ²	.008	-.023	.026	.033	.032	-.005

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 8 - Linear Regression Analysis of Autonomy Measures (N= 222)

	Sig. Freedom	Don't have much say	Able to handle changes	Pitch a story	Tell story in new way
Age	-.248	.363	-.284	-.043	.132
Gender (1= Female)	-.036	-.021	.041	.103	.081
Ethnicity (1= Non-White)	-.083	.053	-.002	-.023	.019
Income	.218	-.166	-.028	-.056	-.070
Education	-.081	-.011	-.008	-.031	.147
Experience In News	.232	-.129	.183	.098	.103
Experience At Station	.098	-.148	-.018	.101	-.236*
Market	.109	-.122	-.079	.028	.112
Degree of Solo Journalism	.082	.033	.130	.028	-.066
R ²	.071	.021	.036	.024	.074
Adjusted R ²	.030	-.023	-.007	-.019	.033

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .05$

Table 9 - Linear Regression Analysis to test Mediated Relationship (N= 222)

	Direct Effect: Burnout	Mediation 1: Role Overload	Mediation 2: Burnout	Indirect Effect: Burnout
Solo Journalism	.170**	.128*		.106*
Role Overload			.574***	.561***
R ²	.029	.017	.329	.341
Adjusted R ²	.025	.012	.326	.334

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Table 10 - Multiple Regression Analyses to Test for Moderation of Solo Journalism - Role Overload (N= 222)

Predictors	Block I	Block II	Predictors	Block I	Block II
Solo Journalism	.114	-.015	Solo Journalism	.020	-.041
Prof. Autonomy	.226*	.135	Experience	-.209**	-.304*
S. J. X Prof. Auton.		.169	S. J. X Experience		.099
R ²	.067	.070	R ²	.048	.052
Adjusted R ²	.059	.057	Adjusted R ²	.040	.038
R ² Change	.067	.002	R ² Change	.048	.003

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 11 – Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Role Overload (N= 222)

	Block I	Block II	Block III
Age	-.032	-.090	-.091
Gender (1= Female)	.051	.061	.060
Ethnicity (1= Non-White)	-.004	.003	.003
Income Level	-.092	-.073	-.075
Education	.025	.024	.024
Negative Affect	.466*	.462*	.462*
Market		.055	.056
Experience In News		.171	.170
Experience At Station		-.131	-.131
Solo Journalism			-.004
R ²	.272	.281	.281
Adjusted R ²	.252	.249	.245
R ² Change	.273*	.008	.000

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .001$

Table 12- Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Burnout (N= 222)

	Block I	Block II	Block III
Age	-.028	-.166	-.163
Gender (1= Female)	.002	.008	.012
Ethnicity (1= Non-White)	-.152*	-.152*	-.156*
Income Level	-.058	-.126	-.098
Education	-.023	-.004	-.004
Negative Affect	.590	.591**	.593**
Market		-.076	-.077
Experience In News		.192	.201
Experience At Station		-.029	-.032
Solo Journalism			.057
R ²	.385	.392	.394
Adjusted R ²	.366	.364	.363
R ² Change	.385	.007	.002

Coefficients reported are standardized beta weights.

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

APPENDIX 3: NEWS DIRECTOR INTERVIEW SCRIPT

[This is an outline for the in-depth qualitative interview. All of these questions were asked, but there were be follow up questions based on individual responses.]

1. Please describe how and why solo journalists were integrated into their news organizations.
2. Did ownership or upper management strongly encourage the hiring of solo journalists? (coercive pressure),
3. Were you influenced by other news organizations to hire solo journalists and if so, how? (mimetic pressure)
4. Did you learn about solo journalism from professional conferences, publications or other sources? Did that have an impact on their decision to hire them (normative pressure)?
5. Do you believe solo journalism is a significantly different practice than traditional television newsgathering?
6. Do you have different expectations of solo journalists than traditional news crews?
7. Do you have difference expectations regarding reporting ability?
8. Do you have difference expectations regarding production skills?
9. Do you have difference expectations regarding story assignment?
10. Are there any other comments or issues you would like to mention regarding solo journalism or the way television journalism has changed?

APPENDIX 4: JOURNALIST SURVEY

[Text within brackets did not appear in survey]

Please indicate which title below best describes your current position? (you may select more than one)

- a. Anchor b. Reporter c. Producer
d. Meteorologist e. Sports Reporter/Producer

How many years have you been working in news? _____

How many years have you been working at your current news organizations? _____

A big trend in television news is an increased reliance on "solo journalists" (aka multimedia journalists, backpack journalists, or one-man bands). I'd like to ask you a few questions about this trend.

Let's define "solo journalists" as reporters who report, shoot, and edit their own news stories.

How often during a typical work week would you fall into that category?

- a. None of the time b. Some, but not a majority of the time c. About half of the time
d. Most of the time e. All of the time

Using the options below, please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the statements below.

1= Strongly disagree ----- 2-----3 -----4 -----5. Strongly agree

Solo journalism is the future of television news.

The growth of solo journalism is due to mostly economic reasons.

The growth of solo journalism is a good thing for TV news.

In general, solo journalists are capable of producing the same quality work as traditional news crews.

[Skip if indicated that they never work as solo journalists]

As a solo journalist, I am able to produce my best work.

As a solo journalist, I am assigned only to certain stories.

Next, using the scale provided, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement below about your work.

1= Strongly disagree ----- 2-----3 -----4 -----5= Strongly agree

My job is often repetitive.

There are unwritten rules I have to follow to do my job.

The stories/reports I produce are formulaic.

I have significant freedom in how I do my job.

If something unexpected happens while working on a story, I am able to handle those changes well.

If I want to tell a story in a new way, I have the freedom to do so.

Often, my stories turn out the same as I expected when they were assigned.

I find I am often assigned to cover the same kinds of stories.

If I pitch a story, I generally am assigned to cover it.

The limitations of technology often prevent me from fully developing my stories.

I do not have much say in the type of stories I am assigned.

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement below about your work.

I feel emotionally drained from my work

I feel used up at the end of the workday

I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.

Working all day is really a strain for me.

I can effectively solve problems that arise at my work.

I feel burned out out from my work.

I feel I am making an effective contribution to what this organization does.

I have become less interested in my work since I starting this job.

I have become less enthusiastic about my work.

In my opinion, I am good at my job.

I feel exhilarated about my work.

I have accomplished many worthwhile things at my job.

I just want to do my job and not be bothered.

I have become more cynical about whether my work contributed to anything.

I doubt the significance of my work.

At my work, I feel confident that I am effective at getting things done.

Next, I have a few questions about your education.

Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed.

- a. High School Diploma b. Undergraduate degree (BA, BS) c. Graduate Degree (MA, MS)
d. Terminal Degree (PhD, JD, MD) e. Prefer not to answer

Do you have an undergraduate or graduate degree in journalism/communication?

- a. Yes b. No

[Skip if indicated no]

Many journalism programs allow students to specialize in a specific medium.
Using the list below, please indicate which term best describes your specialization during your journalism/communication studies.

- a. Broadcast journalism b. Print journalism c. Multimedia journalism
d. Journalism (no specialization) e. Mass Communication

I'm going to list a few features of journalism education. Using the options below, indicate how important each was to your journalism school/program.

1= Not important at all-----2-----3-----4-----5= Extremely important

Teaching good writing skills

Teaching video/audio production skills

Teaching video/audio editing skills

Teaching concepts of journalism (ethics, history, impact on society, etc.)

Integrating writing and video/audio production skills

Encouraging students to participate in internships

Encouraging students to take capstone/practicum courses (in which students produce reports/stories for an audience)

I am going to present a few statements about your job. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each.

1 Strongly disagree ----- 2-----3 -----4 -----5 Strongly agree

I have enough time to do my job.

I never receive an assignment that is too much for me (or my crew) to handle.

I have just the right amount of work to do.

I am provided with adequate resources and materials to complete my job.

I have the necessary skills and training to complete all of my job tasks.

Some aspects of my job prevent me from doing other aspects to the best of my ability.

The amount of work I do interferes with how well the work gets done.

I do not have enough help and resources to get the job done.

I do not have enough time to get the job done well.

I have to try and satisfy too many different people.

We're almost done. Now I will present you with a list of feelings and emotions. Using the scale below, please indicate to what extent you generally experience these feelings/emotions on average.

1. Very slightly or not at all 2. A little 3. Moderately 4. Quite a bit 5. Extremely

_____ Interested	_____ Irritable
_____ Disinterested	_____ Alert
_____ Excited	_____ Ashamed
_____ Upset	_____ Inspired
_____ Strong	_____ Nervous
_____ Guilty	_____ Determined
_____ Scared	_____ Attentive
_____ Hostile	_____ Jittery
_____ Enthusiastic	_____ Active
_____ Proud	_____ Afraid

Finally, I have a few more demographic questions about you.

What is your age? _____ (in years)

Please indicate your gender.

a. Male b. Female c. Prefer not to answer

Please indicate your ethnicity

a. African-American b. Asian-America c. Hispanic/Latin American
d. White/Caucasian e. Other f. Prefer not to answer

Choosing from the categories below, which best describes your current annual salary?

a. < \$20,000 per year b. \$20-\$30,000 per year c. \$30-40,000 per year
d. \$40-50,000 per year e. \$50-60,000 per year f. > \$60,000 per year

Now I'd like to give you the opportunity to add anything else you'd like about TV news reporting, especially if it relates to solo journalism or being a solo journalist.

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