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Abstract

The three-component Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey was implemented to examine burnout among newspaper journalists ($N = 770$). With a moderate rate of exhaustion, a high rate of cynicism and a moderate rate of professional efficacy, journalists demonstrate higher rates of burnout than presented in previous work. Additionally, journalists expressing intentions to leave the profession ($n = 173$) demonstrated high rates of exhaustion and cynicism, and moderate rates of professional efficacy, making them 'at-risk' for burnout. Also, 74.5 percent of journalists 34 and younger ($n = 223$) either expressed intentions to leave newspaper journalism or answered 'don't know'. The most 'at-risk' to burnout appear to be young copy editors or page designers working at small newspapers.

Keywords

burnout, MBI-GS, newspaper journalists

Newspaper journalism is in a state of crisis (Alterman, 2006; Edmonds, 2009; Picard, 2006). Plummeting circulation, declining revenues, new technology, convergence, conglomerate ownership, and layoffs paint a bleak picture for anyone pursuing a career in newspapers. And, along with the quagmire of issues, the readers, the investors, the publishers and the editors want more – more information, more revenue and more forums to present the news.

According to the *State of the News Media* 2009 report (Edmonds, 2009), from 2005 to 2007, newspaper stocks lost 42 percent of their value. In 2008, the scenario grew much worse as newspapers dropped 83 percent of their remaining value (Edmonds, 2009). Also in 2008, 5,000 full-time journalism jobs were lost, advertising revenue continued

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its decline (down 23% since 2006) as did circulation (down 4.6% in 2008) (Edmonds, 2009). Compounding the issue is the ongoing struggle to transition from a paper product to an electronic one without the business model to fully support either.

The transitional burden falls to those working in the trenches who are asked to generate not just a daily product but a 24/7 information flow that accommodates a no-size-fits-all audience. Economic issues have compounded the old journalism stresses of deadlines, competition and work overload. With newsroom cutbacks, the approximately 47,000 remaining full-time daily newspaper newsroom employees (Edmonds, 2009) are being asked to do more in a variety of ways. For instance, at Gannett – the USA's largest newspaper chain with 85 newspapers – newsrooms are now 'information centers' that merge the online and print operations. Information is presented in a variety of ways, including paper, web and mobile devices (Ahrens, 2006).

For those in the newsroom, or information center, ignoring the economic impact on journalism is no longer an option (Alterman, 2006). Along with the traditional journalistic stresses of deadline and competition, news workers must now manage an evolving media and the intangibles that follow.

Journalists are highly committed to their profession and define such commitment as loyalty, pride in their work, getting facts correct, providing multiple sides of a story and playing the role of governmental watchdog (Becker et al., 1979; Gardner et al., 2001; Pew Research Center, 1999). Even though more than 90 percent of journalists are proud to say they are journalists (Pew Research Center, 1999), their commitment has its limits. Surveys indicate that among recent journalism and mass communication graduates only about 20 percent expect to retire in their profession (Becker et al., 2006). So at what point do dedication and commitment succumb to overwhelming burden?

At the turn of the 20th century, 'to burn oneself out' was English slang meaning 'to work too hard and die early' (Partridge, 1950: 111). One of the first modern-day references to burnout is Graham Greene's 1961 best-selling novel *A Burnt-out Case* about a world famous New York architect named Query. Query wrote to a physician:

I haven't enough feeling left for human beings to do anything for them out of pity ... A vocation is an act of love: it is not a professional career. When desire is dead one cannot continue to make love. I've come to the end of desire and to the end of a vocation. (Greene, 1961: 57)

Although in 2005 the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported that among the top 10 most stressful jobs, journalists are listed seventh, only a few stress and burnout studies have been conducted involving journalists (CDC, 2005). In self-reported surveys, journalists have said they have suffered from some stress-related health problems (Gloede, 1983), described their jobs as 'highly stressful' (Fitzgerald, 1995: 11), and said that journalists are susceptible to burnout (Kalter, 1999). Some of the contributing factors to stress and burnout in those studies included meeting newspaper deadlines, pressure to produce good work, low pay, media competition, long hours, implementing new technology, and conflict between work and family (Fitzgerald, 1995; Gloede, 1983; Kalter, 1999; Reinardy, 2008).

Studies have demonstrated that burnout can affect job performance (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Keijsers et al., 1995; Parker and Kulik, 1995; Wright and Bonett, 1997;

Wright and Cropanzano, 1998), job satisfaction (Baruch-Feldman et al., 2002) and work and family relationships (Netemeyer et al., 1996), which in turn can lead to diminished productivity and employee turnover (Eby et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2004; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1996, 2004; Simon et al., 2004).

The three-component Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) was developed to measure the rate of burnout among professionals not working in human services (Maslach et al., 1996). Modifying the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which was established in 1981, the MBI-GS examines workers who do not have direct personal contact with service recipients. Unlike the MBI, the MBI-GS does not emphasize the relationships with clients but instead focuses on work performance in general. The MBI-GS includes the subscales exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy, and signs of burnout are evident if exhaustion and cynicism rate high and professional efficacy rates low (Maslach et al., 1996).

However, burnout does not develop in a vacuum. Stressors that cause stress can lead to burnout, and studies have shown that stress and burnout lead to job turnover. In their 2002 study, Weaver et al. (2007) reported that stress and burnout were among the top reasons journalists expressed intentions to leave their jobs. Dissatisfaction with pay, job security, and an unfavorable work environment, such as deadlines and hours, were some other reasons.

Researching job satisfaction among journalists is nothing new. In their landmark study, Johnstone et al. (1976) examined correlations between job satisfaction and journalistic standards. At that time, satisfaction was high (more than 87% of more than 5,000 respondents said they were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied') and about 85 percent (of that, 8.2% undecided) expected to be working in news media within five years. However, younger journalists (under 25, 25–29, and 30–34) demonstrated lower levels of job satisfaction and higher intentions to work outside of journalism within five years than other groups. At 12.9 percent, journalists 25–29 recorded the highest percentage expected to 'work outside news media' within five years. Also, 15.4 percent of journalists 30–34 said they were undecided about their work in journalism; the highest among those in the study.

Weaver and Wilhoit have spent nearly three decades examining news workers. In their most recent work (Weaver et al., 2007), about one-third of more than 1100 journalists (daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, news magazines, radio, TV, and news service) indicated they were 'very satisfied' with their work. Also, about 83 percent of daily newspaper journalists said they were very or fairly satisfied. Weaver et al. (2007) also reported that nearly 20 percent of journalists, and 19 percent of those working at daily newspapers, expressed intentions to leave journalism within five years or were not sure (2.4%).

Dating to Johnstone et al. (1976) and throughout the Weaver et al. studies (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986, Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996, Weaver et al., 2007) there appears to be a steady decline in job satisfaction among newspaper journalists and an increase in intentions to leave the profession. This study examines specific issues that could be contributing to the declining satisfaction rate and intentions to leave, and builds on the previous work.

Using the MBI-GS, the purpose of this study is to determine the rate of burnout among newspaper employees, which includes reporters, copy editors, page designers, news editors, photographers and executive/managing editors. This study also examines the relationship between burnout and journalists' intentions to leave newspaper journalism.

Previous studies have shown that burnout can lead to a reduction in work quality and quantity, employee turnover and conflict at home and at work. Identifying the rate of burnout among newsroom employees provides an opportunity to minimize or prevent the potential repercussions.

Literature review

The first recognized scholar to study burnout was Herbert Freudenberger when he published his 1974 article 'Staff burn-out' in the *Journal of Social Issues*. Freudenberger's article was initiated by his own feelings of exhaustion, fatigue, frequent headaches, sleeplessness, gastrointestinal problems, shortness of breath and lingering illnesses such as a cold or flu. 'The burn-out candidate finds it just too difficult to hold in feelings. He cries too easily, the slightest pressure makes him feel overburdened and he yells and screams' (Freudenberger, 1974: 160).

Freudenberger (1974) said long workdays, pressure to perform the job, monotony of the job, lack of organizational goals, and minimal social and organizational support can cause burnout. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) described Freudenberger's work as a spark that ignited an interest in burnout research and launched its popularity.

Almost simultaneously to Freudenberger's studies, Maslach and Jackson (1981) constructed three aspects of the burnout syndrome: burnout is an increased feeling of emotional exhaustion; it is the development of negative, cynical attitudes and feelings toward one's clients (depersonalization); and it is the tendency to negatively evaluate oneself (personal accomplishment) – workers are unhappy with themselves and dissatisfied with their job accomplishments. Maslach and Jackson described burnout as a 'syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do "people-work" of some kind' (1981: 99). Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, higher scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization coupled with lower scores on personal accomplishment would indicate burnout (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

Initially, burnout research was regarded as 'pop psychology' by some academics and professionals, and ignored outright (Maslach and Jackson, 1984: 139). When Maslach and Jackson attempted to publish their manuscript that outlined the MBI scales, they were met with resistance. That has since changed. Between 1976 and 1996, 93 percent of 498 journal articles examining burnout referred to the MBI (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998).

In 1996, Maslach, Jackson and Leiter developed the MBI-General Survey to measure burnout in other occupational groups not working in health care. 'The MBI-GS defines burnout as a crisis in one's relationship with work, not necessarily as a crisis in one's relationships with people at work' (Maslach et al., 1996: 20). Unlike the MBI, the MBI-GS does not emphasize the relationships with clients but instead focuses on work performance in general.

With the MBI-GS, exhaustion examines fatigue, cynicism examines 'indifference or a distant attitude toward work', and professional efficacy measures expectations and accomplishments (Maslach et al., 1996: 21). In their 2001 retrospective, Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter wrote that while exhaustion is reflective of the stress aspect of burnout it does not examine the relationship workers have with their work. The authors contend that people experiencing exhaustion create distance by becoming indifferent or

cynical. The link to efficacy isn't as clear. Byrne (1994) and Lee and Ashforth (1996) determined that inefficacy was a product of either exhaustion or cynicism or a combination of the two elements. Maslach et al. (2001) argue that a lack of efficacy develops in correlation with exhaustion and cynicism.

However, burnout does not occur without warning. An increase in stressors creates stress, and stress paves the path to burnout. In citing data reported in three studies, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) wrote that 40 percent of workers reported that their jobs are 'very or extremely stressful', 26 percent of workers are 'often or very often burned out or stressed by their work', and 29 percent felt 'quite a bit or extremely stressed at work' (1999: 4). NIOSH defined job stress as 'the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker' (1999: 6).

Emotional and mental stressors are not only associated with unpleasant experiences. Accepting a new job or promotion can be just as stressful as being laid off. Emotional and mental stressors in the workplace include fear (of sanctions), joy (of promotion), anger (over injustice), challenge (of a new position), shock (after sexual harassment or racial taunt), competition (with colleagues), conflicts (with subordinates or managers), contradictory instructions, negative thoughts, time pressure, structural changes, monotonous tasks, night shifts and overtime (Von Onciul, 1996).

Experiences, values, and adaptability largely determine how an individual reacts as stressors accumulate. If a familiar support system falters, a solitary stressor can become exacerbated – for instance, a person rushing to a meeting gets stuck in traffic because of an accident (Von Onciul, 1996). Similarly, a reporter's stress is compounded when he or she is hurrying to post a story on the web and the computer crashes.

Stressors create stress but defining stress has been a challenge. In his book, *The Stress of Life*, Hans Selye (1956), considered by many to be the father of modern stress research, defined stress as:

... *the rate of wear and tear on the body*. Anyone who feels that whatever he is doing – or whatever is being done to him – is strenuous and wearing, knows vaguely what we mean by *stress*. The feelings of just being tired, jittery, or ill are subjective sensations of stress. But stress does not necessarily imply a morbid change: normal life also causes some wear and tear in the machinery of the body. Indeed, stress can even have curative value, as in shock therapy, bloodletting, and sports. (Selye, 1956: 3)

Selye said stress is a necessary part of our lives, and not all stress is bad. He writes: '... it is the spice of life, for any emotion, any activity causes stress. But, of course, your system must be prepared to take it. The same stress which makes one person sick can be an invigorating experience for another' (1956: vii).

Others contend that stress increases when job responsibilities exceed a person's ability to adapt (Lazarus and Launier, 1978), which results in unhappiness, decreased performance and physical ailments (Brill, 1984). While a person suffering high degrees of stress might stabilize and actually improve (Brill, 1984), burnout victims generally cannot (Maslach et al., 2001). Stress-related illnesses take their toll on individuals and organizations. Webster and Bergman (1999) reported that occupational stress sufferers

miss on average 23 workdays a year. Additionally, accidents, absenteeism, turnover, reduced productivity, medical and insurance costs, and workers' compensation caused by job stress cost US businesses between \$200 and \$300 billion each year (American Institute of Stress, 2006).

In two separate Associated Press Managing Editor surveys, 39 percent of editors said they suffer from stress-related health problems (Gloede, 1983) and 47 percent described their jobs as 'highly stressful' (Fitzgerald, 1995: 11). In the 1995 study, nearly 67 percent said their stress levels increased with the implementation of a new pagination system.

Although Maslach and Jackson take minimal steps in defining stress, they recognized its impact on burnout, writing, 'chronic stress can be emotionally draining and poses a risk of "burnout"' (1981: 99). Two stress-related theories emerged in the early years of MBI development (Maslach et al., 2001): one, people who are incredibly dedicated to their work exceed their limit when pursuing their ideals; and two, burnout occurs during extended exposure to job stressors, which would result in burnout occurring later in people's careers. More than 25 years of burnout research has established a direct link from exhaustion to cynicism. 'Burnout scores are fairly stable over time, which supports the notion that burnout is a prolonged response to chronic job stressors' (Maslach et al., 2001: 405).

In newspaper journalism, stress is an acceptable by-product when pursuing deadlines, scoops, and the demands of editors and readers. Stressors are compounded when working long hours, when the job conflicts with family and with the increased pressure to produce not only on a daily basis but perhaps on an hourly basis. Reinardy writes: 'The emotional stressors provide an additional element of fear (of getting scooped), joy (of getting the scoop), anger (of being ignored by sources), competition (with other reporters and other media) and conflicts (when chasing a controversial story)' (2006: 400).

The MBI-GS has been utilized in a multitude of studies, including the examination of managers, clerks, foremen, technicians and blue-collar workers in multinational companies (Schutte et al., 2000); police officers, air traffic controllers, construction managers and journalists (Richardson and Martinussen, 2005); industrial white-collar and blue-collar employees (Toppinen-Tanner et al., 2002); workers who use technology in their jobs (Salanova et al., 2002); information and communication technology professionals (Kouvonen, 2005); a general population of Finnish employees (Ahola et al., 2006); and a general population of Swedish workers (Lindblom et al., 2006).

Only a few studies have utilized the MBI or MBI-GS to examine burnout among journalists. Cook and Banks (1993) used the MBI to determine burnout among 117 full-time reporters and 43 copy editors from five different daily newspapers with circulations ranging from about 23,000 to about 250,000. Cook and Banks determined that the journalist most 'at-risk' for burnout is a young, entry-level copy editor working at a small newspaper. He or she makes less than the average salary, 'expresses intentions to leave the field, has found journalism to be much different from what was expected and demonstrates a low overall level of job satisfaction' (1993: 116).

Among 120 reporters and copy editors, Cook et al. (1993) also reported that young copy editors demonstrated higher rates of burnout compared to older journalists and reporters. However, journalists at larger newspapers reported lower levels of personal accomplishment than those at smaller papers. Additionally, reporters were more satisfied in their jobs than copy editors. Craig (1999) also found high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among copy editors at the *Daily Oklahoman*.

In comparing human service workers, social work administrators and journalists, Peckham (1983) reported that journalists were less burned out than the service workers and 'slightly more' than the social work administrators.

Reinardy (2006) examined the rate of burnout among sports writers, sports desk personnel (copy editors/page designers) and sports editors. He reported that while all sports journalists score high in personal accomplishment, they rate in the moderate range of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization on the MBI. Desk personnel had a lower level of emotional exhaustion than either sports writers or editors but sports writers had the lowest level of depersonalization among the groups. Sports editors clearly suffered from a higher rate of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and a lower rate of personal accomplishment than the other groups. Also, similar to previous work, younger sports journalists suffered a higher rate of emotional exhaustion than their older colleagues.

In a follow-up study using the MBI-GS, Reinardy (2008) reported that sports editors ($n = 184$) demonstrated a moderate rate of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, but have a high level of professional efficacy. Richardsen and Martinussen (2005) reported similar results among 93 journalists.

Previous studies have demonstrated that young journalists appear to be more susceptible to burnout than their older counterparts. Because there is no cure for burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), the only option for those experiencing high levels of exhaustion and cynicism, coupled with low professional efficacy, is to leave the job. Although this study does not specifically examine job satisfaction, it certainly is a tangential issue, particularly among young journalists who may be working their first full-time newspaper job. Johnstone et al. (1976) reported that young journalists are not very satisfied in their professions but the level of satisfaction increases as the journalists become established. In the Johnstone et al. study, 48.5 percent of journalists said they were 'very satisfied' with their jobs, but of those 25 and younger, only about 35 percent said they were 'very satisfied'. The study also reported that while 14.8 percent of journalists either intended to be out of news media work within five years or were undecided, 15.7 percent of those 25 and younger expected to leave the industry or were undecided. For those aged 25–29, 23.9 percent said they intended to leave or were undecided, and in the 30–34 category, 21.2 percent said they intended to leave or were undecided (Johnstone et al., 1976). Johnstone et al. concluded that between 20 and 25 percent of young journalists question their professional commitment. They wrote: 'Moreover, dissatisfaction within this group does not seem to stem from economic opportunities, but job dissatisfaction for many young newsmen has to do more with professional considerations – discrepancies between journalistic ideals and day-to-day practices' (1976: 154).

During the past three decades, the Weaver and Wilhoit studies have examined job satisfaction and intentions to leave journalism. For job satisfaction, those who answered 'very satisfied' continued to drop from 40 percent in 1982–3 to 27 percent in 1992, but increased to 33.3 percent in 2002 (Weaver et al., 2007). Only about 25 percent of those 34 and younger said they were 'very satisfied' with their jobs.

By 1992, there was a dramatic shift in attitudes. The number of journalists with intentions to leave the industry within five years increased to 21 percent overall – double the 1982–3 study (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). Weaver and Wilhoit wrote:

They were less willing to suffer the dislocation and unpredictable schedules that were accepted by an earlier generation, especially in a competitive environment in which newsrooms were expected to do much more with fewer resources, and where there was little hope of professional advancement in an era of stalled growth. (1996: 118–19).

By 2002 the outlook improved slightly as Weaver et al. reported that 19 percent of daily newspaper journalists intended to be working outside of media within five years. Additionally, 24 percent of journalists with four years or fewer of journalism intended to be working outside of media within five years. For those dissatisfied with their jobs, 59 percent expected to be working outside of media within five years (Weaver et al., 2007).

During this transitional time in media, this study examines burnout among journalists, and their intentions to leave the profession. The dynamics of journalism are changing with the demands of a 24/7 news cycle and perhaps creating a more stressful environment for the news worker. That stress could be leading to burnout and creating the intention to leave journalism, particularly among those new to the profession. This study is an attempt to provide more context to the work of Johnstone et al. and Weaver et al. While the previous work has established patterns to job satisfaction and intention to leave issues, this study reaches deeper into the causes that may be creating job dissatisfaction and exodus.

Research questions/hypotheses

This study builds on previous research involving journalism burnout and examines the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: Overall, how do daily newspaper journalists rate on the three-subcales of the MBI-GS (exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy)?

RQ2: Does job title (reporter, copy editor/page designer, news editor, executive/managing editor or photographer) affect burnout among journalists?

H1: Journalists at smaller circulation newspapers will report significantly higher rates of exhaustion and cynicism than journalists at larger circulation newspapers.

H2: Younger journalists will report significantly higher rates of burnout than older journalists.

H3: Journalists who express intentions to leave newspaper journalism will report significantly higher rates of burnout than those who are not intending to leave.

Methodology

The *Editor and Publisher International Yearbook* (2006) was used to extract email contacts at 1,452 US daily newspapers. Most of the contacts were managing editors. An email was then sent to the managing editors in January 2007, explaining the study and requesting the staff email lists of their full-time newspaper employees. If email addresses of managing editors were not available, the recruitment email was sent to a general news mailbox.

Of the 1,452 emails, 338 were dead accounts. Of the remaining 1,114, 74 newspaper representatives responded and provided access to their staffs' email lists. From that list, a database of 2791 journalists was established, which included newspapers from 28 different states, 44 different ownership groups and circulation ranging from 1,000 daily to 2 million.

The 34-question survey consisted of two sections, including job relationship and background. The 'job relationship' section included the 16-question MBI-GS, which uses a Likert-type scale (0 = never to 6 = every day). In the 'background' section, demographic questions such as experience, age, gender, race, job title, newspaper circulation size, salary, marital status, parental responsibilities, intention to leave journalism and work hours per week were included. The section also included questions regarding newsroom staff reductions, online responsibilities and intentions to leave journalism.

An explanatory email was sent to 2,791 full-time newsroom staffers in February 2007. The email included a web link to a freeonlinesurvey.com survey. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Of the 2,791 staffers, 120 were dead accounts, leaving 2,671. A reminder email was sent in March 2007.

Of the 2,671, 770 respondents completed the survey, providing a response rate of 29 percent, which is similar to web survey response rates in other studies (Asch, as cited in Schonlau et al., 2002; Everingham, as cited in Schonlau, et al., 2002; Jones and Pitt, 1999; Reinardy, 2006).

Results

To replace missing values in the data set of 770 respondents, mean substitution was implemented but no more than 1 percent of any variable was replaced during this process.

Descriptive statistics determined that the average age of the 770 respondents was 41.6 years with an average of 17.8 years of journalism experience. The average salary was \$48,493 and the average circulation size of their newspapers was 183,500. A large majority of the respondents were Caucasian (90.9%), 57.6 percent were male, 59 percent were married, 49.7 percent had children and on average they worked 45.7 hours per week. While some demographics were consistent with previous studies (age, race, years of journalism experience), others were not. In the Weaver et al. (2007) study, 33 percent of the participants were women, and the average salary was about \$43,500.

Of the respondents in this study, 648 provided their job title. To better establish overall trends, job titles were collapsed into larger categories. For instance, a business reporter was not distinguished from a general assignment reporter. Reporters (44.8%) made up a majority of the respondents, followed by news editors (23.5%), copy editors/page designers (13.6%), executive/managing editors (9%) and photographers (6.6%).

To answer RQ1 (see Table 1), descriptive statistics were used to analyze the MBI-GS data to determine the rate of burnout among journalists. According to the MBI-GS, a mean score greater than 3.2 indicates high levels of exhaustion, a mean score greater than 2.2 indicates high levels of cynicism, and a mean score less than 4 indicates low levels of professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 1996). Journalists in this study indicate moderate rates of exhaustion (2.92) and professional efficacy (4.90), but high rates of cynicism (2.63). To summarize, journalists are suffering from moderate rates of exhaustion but high rates of cynicism. Efficacy, which is linked to job satisfaction, is also at a moderate rate.

Table 1. Classification of MBI-GS scores among journalists ($N = 770$)

	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional efficacy
Mean	2.93	2.63	4.90
SD	1.47	1.63	0.84

Notes: Exhaustion: 3.2 and above = high; 2.01–3.19 = average; 2.00 and less = low.

Cynicism: 2.20 and above = high; 1.01–2.19 = average; 1 and less = low.

Professional efficacy: 5 and above = low; 4.01–4.99 = average; 4 and less = high burnout levels.

To examine RQ2 (see Table 2), which inquires about differences in job title and burnout, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Journalists were divided into five groups – reporters (290), news editors (152), executive/managing editors (58), copy editors/designers (88) and photographers (43). Because of the homogeneity of variance assumption violation (i.e. unequal group sizes), comparison of means was performed using the Games-Howell approach, which is a liberal post hoc test that allows for differences between groups to be significant more easily than other post hoc tests. The results indicate significance between the groups on two of the three MBI-GS subscales – cynicism and professional efficacy. For cynicism, there were significant differences between copy editors/page designers and executive/managing editors, $F(4, 643) = 3.26$, $p < 0.05$. The results indicate that copy editors/page designers report higher rates of cynicism than executive/managing editors. As for professional efficacy, there were significant differences between reporters and news editors, $F(4, 643) = 4.29$, $p < 0.05$, and reporters and executive/managing editors, $F(4, 643) = 4.29$, $p < 0.01$. Results indicate that news editors and executive/managing editors report higher levels of efficacy than reporters. Using a t-test to examine manager (news editors/managing editors/executive editors) versus non-manager burnout, the results indicate that non-managers report significantly higher levels of cynicism (2.73 vs. 2.34) and lower levels of efficacy (4.81 vs. 5.06). There were no differences in exhaustion. To summarize, journalists in non-management positions are experiencing significantly higher levels of cynicism and lower levels of professional efficacy than managers, but the real differences lies in efficacy. While both groups are experiencing high levels of cynicism, non-managers report only moderate rates of efficacy compared to managers' high rates of efficacy.

In determining if journalists at lower circulation newspapers reported higher rates of burnout than those at larger circulation newspapers, an ANOVA was used to examine H1. The newspapers were divided by circulation into three relatively equal groups: small (38,000 and below), medium (38,001–190,000), and large (190,001 and above). Results indicate that there are significant differences on the exhaustion subscale among the three groups, $F(2, 612) = 4.79$, $p < 0.01$. Journalists in the small circulation group reported higher levels of exhaustion than those in the largest group. However, there were no significant differences between the groups and the subscales cynicism and professional efficacy. Therefore, H1 was partially supported.

In examining H2 (see Table 3), which states that younger journalists will report higher levels of burnout than older journalists, an ANOVA was implemented. The journalists were divided into three relatively equal groups: 34 and younger, 35–48, and 49 and older. Results indicate that there were significant differences between the groups on the

Table 2. Mean MBI-GS scores comparing job titles of journalists

		Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional efficacy
Reporters (<i>n</i> = 290)	Mean	2.98	2.74	4.75
	SD	1.45	1.59	0.85
News editors (<i>n</i> = 152)	Mean	2.90	2.42	5.01
	SD	1.40	1.60	0.80
Executive and managing editors (<i>n</i> = 58)	Mean	2.86	2.11	5.20
	SD	1.54	1.64	0.62
Copy editors and page designers (<i>n</i> = 88)	Mean	2.95	2.95	4.92
	SD	1.55	1.65	0.83
Photographers (<i>n</i> = 43)	Mean	2.70	2.52	4.96
	SD	1.25	1.53	0.70

Notes: Exhaustion: 3.2 and above = high; 2.01–3.19 = average; 2.00 and less = low.

Cynicism: 2.20 and above = high; 1.01–2.19 = average; 1 and less = low.

Professional efficacy: 5 and above = low; 4.01–4.99 = average; 4 and less = high burnout levels.

subscale exhaustion, $F(2, 676) = 9.80, p < .001$. The journalists in the 34 and younger, and 35–49 age groups rate significantly higher on exhaustion than those in the 49 and older group. There were no differences between the groups in the other areas, thus H2 was partially supported.

A post hoc analysis indicates that more older journalists in this study are in management positions (news editor/ managing editors/ executive editors) than younger journalists, which may influence the level of burnout. When examining managers vs. non-managers and age, young managers (34 and younger) were experiencing significantly more exhaustion (3.59, high) than young non-managers (3.06, moderate), and older non-managers (49 and older) reported significantly more cynicism (2.72, high vs. 1.96, moderate) and less efficacy (4.81, moderate vs. 5.18, high) than older managers. Additionally, within the groups of manager and non-manager, there were significant differences between ages. Further analysis indicates that younger managers (34 and younger; 35 to 48; $n = 118$) reported significantly higher rates of exhaustion

Table 3. Mean MBI-GS scores comparing ages of journalists

		Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional efficacy
34 years old and younger (<i>n</i> = 228))	Mean	3.15	2.71	4.90
	SD	1.32	1.32	0.82
35 to 48 years old (<i>n</i> = 215)	Mean	3.03	2.72	4.83
	SD	1.50	1.58	0.88
49 years old and older (<i>n</i> = 236)	Mean	2.59	2.39	4.95
	SD	1.48	1.61	0.78

Notes: Exhaustion: 3.2 and above = high; 2.01–3.19 = average; 2.00 and less = low.

Cynicism: 2.20 and above = high; 1.01–2.19 = average; 1 and less = low.

Professional efficacy: 5 and above = low; 4.01–4.99 = average; 4 and less = high burnout levels.

and cynicism than older managers (49 and older; $n = 92$). In fact, the level of exhaustion (3.25) and cynicism (2.63) for the younger managers was in the high range but for the older managers exhaustion (2.43) and cynicism (1.96) were only moderate. But among non-managers there were no significant differences between the younger and older journalists on any of the MBI-GS subscales. To summarize, younger managers appear to experience higher levels of burnout than other journalists, but older managers report less burnout than all other journalists.

An ANOVA was used to examine H3, which states that journalists who express intentions to leave newspaper journalism will have higher rates of burnout than those who are not intending to leave. When the journalists were asked if they had intentions to leave newspaper journalism, 25.7 percent answered 'yes' and 36.2 percent answered 'don't know'. Journalists who expressed intentions to leave the profession had significantly higher rates of exhaustion than those who did not intend to leave, $F(2, 671) = 67.81, p < 0.001$. Those intending to leave also had significantly higher rates of cynicism, $F(2, 671) = 66.35, p < 0.001$, and lower rates of professional efficacy, $F(2, 671) = 19.28, p < 0.001$. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Further examination reveals that 31 percent of young journalists (34 and younger) expressed intentions to leave the profession, and 43.5 percent answered 'don't know'. Additionally, 25.9 percent of those between 35 and 48 years old said they intend to leave journalism and 42.9 percent answered 'don't know'.

For those who expressed interest in leaving newspaper journalism, a follow-up question asked: 'If you are intending to leave newspaper journalism, what would be the reason(s) for leaving?' Of the 223 journalists 34 and younger who said they intended to leave or answered 'don't know', 36 percent said money or salary was the reason, 27 percent said hours or schedule and 19 percent said stress or burnout. Also, a reference to family life was mentioned in 13 percent of the responses.

Many of the responses listed several reasons for possibly leaving the profession. A 30-year-old man said, 'To find a better paying job – or a less stressful job that allows more time for my personal life, even if it pays less money.' A 26-year-old woman said, 'It's too stressful, doesn't pay enough and isn't satisfying.' Another 26-year-old woman said, 'The loooow pay, late hours and lack of perks, few awards, no cash bonuses, work through blizzards when any other city worker stay home really gets to you after awhile.' And a 25-year-old man said, 'Tired of the hours, lack of pay, work overload.'

Some journalists said there were several stresses contributing to their displeasure with the profession. A 26-year-old woman wrote, 'I mostly have only a professional life, and I work in a bureau with very few people. Plus, it's incredibly stressful trying to write well all the time.' A 30-year-old man wrote, 'Stress, not having adequate human and technological resources for work demanded of me, tired of being stuck indoors all day, tired of deadlines, tired of tired news.' A 27-year-old man said:

The majority of mainstream coverage is frivolous and mind-numbing. It seems we're intentionally trying to dumb down the public, rarely tackle real issues that make a difference or expose deceptions of authorities ... I feel my soul being drained every day ... And as soon as the right opportunity presents itself, I'm outta here!

A 27-year-old woman wrote, 'It's an environment where everyone is under constant stress and I think it's very unhealthy for me both mentally and physically.' A 30-year-old woman wrote, 'If I were to leave, I think it would likely be due to continuing pressures to produce more with less resources and less support.' A 27-year man wrote, 'My family life has suffered tremendously. I have almost no free time outside work.' A 33-year-old man wrote:

Poor quality of assignments, lack of planning ahead on management decisions, poor hours, no investment in technology, no recognition from upper management combined with no information provided to employees, lack of job security ... no vision on the future of newspapers.

And a 26-year-old female wrote:

Bad pay; bad hours; not enough co-workers on the copy desk, city desk or sports desks to help read and design; favoritism; bad software; not enough reporters to cover events; no bonuses; bad attitudes due to stress; people with less experience can be promoted; people who are strong and outspoken are treated differently and badly; people who 'kiss ass' are treated with respect and work is never distributed equally.

Discussion

In previous burnout studies journalists have demonstrated moderate rates of exhaustion and cynicism but high levels of professional efficacy (Reinardy, 2006, 2008; Richardsen and Martinussen, 2005). It has been argued that efficacy in a job acts as a counterbalance to exhaustion and cynicism. That does not seem to be the case in this study.

One of the most compelling aspects of this study is that it diverts from previous results. While reporting moderate rates of exhaustion, the journalists in this study demonstrated high levels of cynicism and moderate rates of efficacy. And although the journalists reported 'moderate' rates of exhaustion, the rate in this study (2.93) was higher than previous work conducted by Reinardy (2.45) (2008), and Richardsen and Martinussen (2.62) (2005).

In essence, with high levels of cynicism and climbing rates of exhaustion, journalists are moving closer to reaching burnout as defined by the MBI-GS. And the protective buffer efficacy – a feeling of accomplishment – continues to dissipate. Maslach et al. (2001) have theorized that burnout is sequential from exhaustion to cynicism, and inefficacy develops in concert with the other two aspects of burnout. That does not appear to be the case here where cynicism is developing first.

The most 'at-risk' to burn out appear to be young copy editors or page designers at small newspapers, which replicates previous results (Cook and Banks, 1993; Cook et al., 1993). Interestingly, younger journalists in this study not only reported higher rates of burnout than their colleagues, but are most likely to express intentions to leave the profession. Among journalists 34 and younger, 74.5 percent either answered 'yes' or 'don't know' when asked about leaving newspaper journalism. For young journalists, there clearly appears to be a distinct connection between burnout and career change. The

open-ended responses indicate that dissatisfaction with pay, job demands and high levels of stress are whittling away at the commitment of young journalists. And because there is no clear resolution in reversing burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), leaving journalism might be the only alternative.

What Johnstone et al. (1976) identified in their seminal study, and what Weaver and colleagues (1986, 1996, 2007) have continued to track for nearly three decades appears to hold true here. Younger journalists are more dissatisfied than older journalists, and indicate intentions to leave. What is startling about this study's results is the high percentage of those intending to leave. During nearly three decades, the previous results have generally shown a steady increase in those intending to leave the profession. In 2007 Weaver et al. reported that 17.2 percent intended to quit. This study shows a dramatically different result with 25.7 percent saying they had intentions to leave journalism within five years. An additional 36.2 answered 'don't know' when asked if they intended to leave.

The statistics for younger journalists were even more startling. While previous work has reported lower satisfaction among young journalists, and a higher intention to leave than their older colleagues (Johnstone et al., 1976; Weaver et al., 2007), the results in this study are far more dramatic. In 2007, Weaver et al. reported that 24 percent of journalists with four or fewer years of experience expect to be working outside of media within five years, which was up from 19 percent in 1992. In this study, 31 percent of those 34 and younger said they expected to work outside of media within five years.

The comments lend some insight into the reasons journalists expect to leave the profession. There appears to be a pessimism about the future of journalism, which somewhat replicates the findings of *The State of the News Media* (2009). It reported that 54 percent of journalists and senior executives think journalism is headed in the wrong direction (Edmonds, 2009). In a profession that is viewed by many as a vocation and not just a job, compromising the quality of journalism can be devastating. In previous studies (Johnstone et al., 1971; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986), 61 percent of people said 'helping people' was 'very important' in terms of job satisfaction. By 2002, Weaver et al. (2007) reported an increase in job satisfaction, with autonomy to select story assignments and choose what to emphasize in those stories closely associated with job satisfaction. Perhaps with the additional responsibilities and reduced staff size for those in this study, autonomy is being sacrificed, causing a decline in satisfaction.

This study has several limitations, including the sample. Because managing editors were asked to provide staff email lists, the sample was by no means random. Also, only 5 percent of US daily newspapers were represented, but that included 74 newspapers from 28 different states. Although it was not a random sample, the 770 respondents represented a cross-section of ages, job titles, gender, and size of newspapers. It certainly can be argued that only disgruntled employees would complete a survey emphasizing burnout, but the number of respondents (770) indicates high interest and involvement among all journalists. While it can also be argued that the results cannot be generalized to all journalists, this study certainly raises some serious issues that require further research.

Practical implications

In this study, journalists reported high rates of cynicism but only moderate rates of exhaustion. Cynicism 'reflects indifference or a distant attitude towards work' (Maslach

et al., 1996: 21). So it does not appear that journalists are exhausted in doing their jobs – although they might be heading that way – but perhaps are exasperated with the work. Meanwhile, accomplishment or efficacy continues to decline. Has the mounting journalism crisis – declining circulation and revenues, new technology, convergence, conglomerate ownership, and layoffs – diminished the commitment that has defined previous generations of journalists? That certainly could be a topic of future research.

Journalists are a committed lot and expect the quality of their work to be appreciated. Traditionally, journalism has been a ‘calling’ for those inclined to do newspaper work. In their book, *Good Work*, Gardner et al. write, ‘In a field where good work is frequently marginalized and trashy work is frequently rewarded, it is not easy to sustain a mission that reflects the domain’s best traditions’ (2001: 170). Some participants in this study who expressed intentions to leave journalism have identified the journalistic shortfalls of their newspapers and are prepared to abandon the mission. Here, it’s difficult to speculate as to the correlation between journalistic quality and burnout – which comes first, the burnout and then poor quality, or poor-quality and then burnout – but it certainly could be a topic of future research.

As newspapers attempt to raise revenues, maintain circulation and provide readers with more information in more ways, another crisis might be upon us. Perhaps lost in this evolutionary period of newspaper journalism is the news worker. When he or she is no longer able, or no longer willing, to provide quality journalism, the journalism of crisis won’t be found on Wall Street or in the circulation data. It’ll be found in the newsroom.

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