Socialization as a Determinant of Occupational Commitment:

Do High School and College Activities Matter?

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Supplemental Report

*Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates*

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Commitment to the occupation of journalism has been declining over the past 20 to 30 years. Studies show that a relatively small and decreasing number of journalists plan to retire in the field (Becker, et al., 2001; Voakes, 1997; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). The percent of journalists saying they planned to leave the field nearly doubled from 1971 to 1982, and then nearly doubled again in 1992, as over one-fifth of journalists reported they were likely to change careers (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996).

Commitment levels have been especially low among those who have recently entered the field (Becker, et al., 2001; Voakes, 1997; Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman, 1976). Recent surveys of journalism and mass communication school graduates show commitment to chosen occupation hovering around 20 percent over the last few years (Becker, et al., 2001). While studies have shown that longevity in the field increases commitment, many are leaving the field before longevity becomes a factor.

What are the salient factors causing those new to journalism to drop out? This study focuses on recent entrants into the field of journalism to see if pre-college and college experiences with journalism – e.g., involvement in journalism activities and classes and early socialization to the field – have an impact on later level of occupational commitment. Factors that are specific to journalists’ work places are also examined.

Background

Studies suggest reasons for variability in commitment to journalism, and these reasons derive from a number of levels, including the organization, the individual (training and background) and the profession (involvement). It is important to note that the dependent variable in this study – commitment to occupation – is considered conceptually distinct from commitment to the organization. It is possible to feel strong attachment to a particular organization and less to the overall profession, while the reverse is also possible (Becker and Carper, 1970 [1962]; Alutto, Hrebiniai and Alonso, 1973; Znaniek, 1993; Lee, Carswell and Allen, 2000). This distinction is particularly important to the study of journalism because of its dependency on organizational resources (Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey, 1979).

While commitments to organization and to occupation are distinct, experiences in news organizations have an important impact on journalists’ perceptions of their occupation. News workers often generalize conditions of their field from conditions of their specific work place, a cognitive shortcut pursued because of constraints on time and on wider information (McQuail, 2000; Ettema, Whitney and Wackman, 1987S). Job satisfaction and evaluation of one’s work organization have been found to be highly predictive of commitment to the occupation (Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey, 1979; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996), a
finding that is consistent with studies of occupational commitment beyond the field of journalism (Alutto, Hrebinjak and Alonso, 1973; Brown, 1996; Lee, Carswell and Allen, 2000). Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) and Wilson (1966) found salary to be an important predictor of occupational commitment, while Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey (1979) found salary to be of little importance to occupational commitment but of some importance to organizational commitment. Salary has been an important predictor in studies of other occupations (Alutto, Hrebinjak and Alonso, 1973; Znanieki, 1993; Lee, Carswell and Allen, 2000, but the predictive power of this factor is dependent on occupational type as well as on age, socio-economic status and length of time in field.

Several studies have asked respondents to give their own reasons for wanting to leave journalism. Respondents listed low salaries as a top reason (Becker, et al., 1999; Voakes, 1997; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996), along with work schedule and hours (Becker et al., 1999; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Wilson, 1966), and stress level (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Voakes, 1997). Such job-specific reasons were most frequently given, but respondents also said interest in other fields was important. This factor has been phrased in a variety of ways, such as “opportunities elsewhere” (Voakes, 1997), “need for a new challenge” (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996) and “interests changed” (Becker, et al., 1999), but in each case the respondent has signaled a belief that opportunities beyond the occupation exist and are reasonably within reach.

This factor reflects one of the central tenets of the concept of occupational commitment from sociology of work literature. When alternative lines of action are open, commitment to an occupation becomes less stable. Both availability and attractiveness of other options are important to level of commitment (Ulmer, 1993; Becker, 1970). Availability and attractiveness of alternative occupational courses do not cause occupational commitment to decrease within individuals, but they form a structure within which choosing another career is thinkable (Ulmer, 1993).

Studies of journalists’ commitment have found that while most individual and background characteristics generally do not explain variability in commitment very well, length of time spent in the occupation is highly predictive (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Voakes, 1997). Concepts from sociology of work explain this correlation. According to Kornhauser (1962):

*To incur a commitment is to become more or less unavailable for alternative lines of action . . . A commitment consists in the various relations which are formed in the process of acting in a certain direction, so that to shift the line of action requires changing these relations . . . the strength of a commitment can be measured by the number of social spheres for which it enforces lines of action* (321-322).

Commitment involves pursuing a path with consistency to the exclusion of other paths. Such a pursuit results in the accumulation of a number of investments and stakes in this course of action. Action consumes resources, and these resources are perceived as investments “when they are made in anticipation of future returns and the expenditures are not returnable” (Ulmer, 1993). Changing
occupational lines may mean forfeiting considerable time and effort spent learning skills that are of little or no use outside the original occupation. This time and effort will be wasted if one changes occupations. Longer tenure in an occupation also strengthens personal identification with the occupation (Gottfredson, 1977).

The concept of occupational commitment is also discussed in the psychology of work literature. Two specific types of commitment are frequently mentioned. One is “continuance commitment,” which is similar to the sociological concept of commitment discussed above. Continuance commitment is an accumulation of investments and involves a recognition of costs of leaving the occupation (Lee, Carswell and Allen, 2000). The second type of commitment is “normative” or “affective” commitment (normative commitment is sometimes treated as distinct from affective commitment, but they are very similar concepts and will be considered one and the same in the present study). A person with strong affective commitment feels an obligation to the occupation and more strongly identifies with and experiences positive feelings about an occupation (Meyer et al, 1993).

Studies of occupational commitment in journalism have conceptualized commitment as affective. They have questioned journalists’ “loyalty” (Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey, 1979), “sense of mission” (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996) and pride in their work (Pew Research Center, 1999). It is generally believed that journalists show commitment when they have a sense of calling to the field, and when the social consequences of their work outweigh economic gain (Allison, 1996). While this affective approach to the concept of commitment is prevalent in the journalism literature and should be acknowledged, the focus in the present study is on continuance commitment. Occupational commitment is considered to be higher when investments and the stakes are higher, and the costs of leaving journalism are greater.

Becker (1970) suggests individuals gain commitment to an occupation because they place “side bets,” or because they stake things they value in the pursuit. The more side bets at stake, the greater the commitment to the occupation. Such side bets may be made by personal choice, or may be a result of simply passing through the social structures of work and playing by the rules. For example accruing pension plan money over time makes the choice to leave an organization more difficult later on.

Side bets may also be made in the realm of personal interaction. Becker (1970) cites Goffman’s “face-work” theory to show how individuals become attached to a certain role or persona nourished in a particular social structure, such as one’s occupational field. As Becker says, “having once claimed to be a certain kind of person, [individuals] find it necessary to act, so far as possible, in an appropriate way. . . . A person will often find his activity constrained by the kind of front he has earlier presented in interaction” (p. 269). The individual has an investment in this social image and in the consistent portrayal of this image. For example, the individual who has been publicly recognized for achievement in his or her field has an investment in the public perception accrued from such recognition. It would be socially inconsistent and damaging to the individual’s personal investment to drop out of the profession after receiving (and accepting) such acclaim.
It may not be necessary to have longevity in one’s field before the effects of side-bets are felt on level of commitment. Certain investments are made early in one’s career as well, perhaps most notably in the socialization for the occupation that takes place during education and training. Involvement in the early tasks and trappings of an occupation in college or before college are also investments of time, effort and money by the individual and the individual’s parents. Also a particular “role” taken on by a young person may be supported by parents and other mentors, thus creating an interpersonal social structure that constrains (Becker and Carper, 1970 [1956]; Becker, 1970; Karp and Holmstrom, 1998). Attachment to the role of “future journalist,” for example, may be strengthened by support from parents, friends, teachers and school counselors. A young person in such a situation may find it difficult to reject such as persona once it is strengthened through social bonds.

In contrast to findings on low levels of commitment among young journalists, Alutto, Hrebeniak and Alonso (1973) found that commitment among young professionals in teaching and nursing was high. Commitment then dipped in midrange years and increased in later years. Citing Becker and Carper (1956), they speculate that enthusiasm among neophytes in the profession was high because they were fresh from “formal socialization experiences” in their occupations. This socialization, in the form of formal education, has proven to be a salient factor in other studies of occupations (Znanieik, 1993; Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994; Barbour, 1985; Mortimer and Lorence, 1979), and the learning of occupation-specific skills by adolescents in part-time jobs has also proven to strengthen intrinsic orientation toward work (Mortimer and Pimentel, 1996). Early socialization but has proven less important in studies of journalists’ commitment (Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey, 1979; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) found years of education and being a journalism major were positively correlated with commitment, but strength of prediction was weak in comparison to longevity in the field and such job-specific variables as job satisfaction and salary.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to think that initial socialization and education must have some effect on early commitment to the field. Such investments include time and effort spent in journalism classes and media-related school activities, and the social structure of parental and mentor support. Previous studies of journalism commitment look at socialization during educational years in a very general way. Side-bet theory suggests a more detailed look is necessary, especially for those who have recently entered the field.
A simple model explaining level of commitment to journalism among recent entrants to the field is proposed here. Level of involvement in the occupation of journalism during pre-college years should produce a higher level of involvement in journalism during undergraduate years. It also is expected that pre-college investments should have impact directly on level of commitment after entering the field. Level of involvement in journalism during undergraduate years also should have impact on level of commitment. Finally it is expected that conditions in the work place should have impact on level of occupational commitment. It sum, it is expected that level of involvement during socialization (i.e., investments made, or side bets placed, in high school and college) and experiences in the work place should be determinants of occupational commitment.

These expectations can be stated as the following formal hypotheses:

H1: Level of investment in the occupation of journalism prior to college correlate positively with degree of occupational commitment by recent entrants into the journalism profession.

H2: Level of investment in the occupation of journalism in college correlate positively with degree of occupational commitment felt by recent entrants into the journalism profession.

H3: Level of investment in the occupation of journalism in high school correlate positively with level of investment in the occupation of journalism in college.

H4: Factors related to working conditions in specific organizations should correlate positively with degree of occupational commitment by recent entrants into the journalism profession.

RQ1: How important are high school and college investments in journalism to degree of commitment when controlling for factors related to working conditions in specific organizations?

Following Kornhauser's (1962) and Becker's (1970) conceptualizations, occupational commitment is defined in this study as a desire to engage in a consistent line of occupational activity to the exclusion of other occupations. In this case the line of activity is working in the occupation of journalism.

The affective nature of this commitment is not at issue here, as scholars have noted a conceptual distinction between recognition of costs or high stakes and emotional attachment to an occupation (Lee, Carswell and Allen, 2000; Meyer et al., 1993; Morrow, 1993). Justification for focusing on continuance commitment (recognition of costs) rather than affective commitment can be found in the often-cited work of Morrow (Lee, Carswell, and Allen, 2000; Meyer et al, 1993), whose concentric-circle model of occupational commitment posits a closer correlation between recognition of costs of leaving and occupational commitment than between emotional attachment to occupation and commitment. The model suggests social constraints are more important than affect in predicting longevity in an occupational field.
Three sets of predictors of occupational commitment are of interest. Two of the three involve occupational and social investments. As Kornhauser says, “the strength of a commitment can be measured by the number of social spheres for which it enforces lines of action.” These social spheres are similar to Becker’s “side bets” which are investments that constrain behavior and enforce commitment to an occupational direction. The third set of predictors involves job-specific factors.

The first set of predictors includes investments in time, effort and social role attachment made by respondents prior to college. The second set of investments is made up of measures of involvement with the occupation of journalism during undergraduate study. The third set of variables measure characteristics of the work environment itself.

Methodology

Data to test this money come from the Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates, a standardized survey designed to monitor the employment rates and salaries of graduates of journalism and mass communication programs in the United States, including Puerto Rico. The survey also tracks the curricular activities of those graduates while in college, examines their job-seeking strategies, and provides measures of the professional attitudes and behaviors of the graduates upon completion of their college studies.

Each year a sample of schools is drawn from those listed in the Journalism and Mass Communication Directory, published annually by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and The Journalist’s Road to Success: A Career and Scholarship Guide, published by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc. Schools list themselves in the AEJMC Directory. Selection of schools is probabilistic, so that those chosen represent the population of schools in the two directories. In 2000, 103 schools were drawn from the 463 unique entries of four-year programs in the U.S. in the two directories.

Administrators at the selected schools are asked to provide the names and addresses of their spring bachelor's and master's degree recipients. A questionnaire was mailed in November 2000 to all spring graduates receiving either a bachelor's or a master's degree from the selected programs. A second questionnaire was sent to nonrespondents in January 2001. A third mailing was sent in March 2001 to graduates who had not responded to the first two mailings.

In 2000, the survey was mailed to 6,670 individuals whose names and addresses were provided by the administrators of the 103 programs. A total of 3,139 returned the questionnaires by the end of May of 2001. Of the returns, 2,880 were from students who reported they actually had completed their degrees during the April to June 2000 period. The remaining 259 had completed their degrees either before or after the specified period, despite their inclusion in the spring graduation lists. A total of 446
questionnaires was returned undelivered and without a forwarding address. Return rate, computed as the number of questionnaires returned divided by the number mailed, was 47.1%. Return rate, computed as the number returned divided by the number mailed minus the bad addresses, was 50.4%. Of the 2,880 usable questionnaires, 2,734 (94.9%) were from bachelor's degree recipients and 146 were from those who received a master's degree.

The respondents to the 2000 survey included respondents working for a wide variety of media and non-media occupations. For purposes of this study, only respondents performing tasks that are commonly thought of as journalistic and who also work for organizations that traditionally have a journalistic function were selected for analysis. Specifically, respondents who said they performed tasks related to editing, writing/reporting, design, graphics, photography, audiovisual production and on-air work, and who also reported working for newspapers, magazines, wire services, radio and TV stations and online publishing organizations were selected. Respondents who reported working in the persuasive media – e.g., PR, advertising and corporate communication – were excluded. Finally, among these respondents only recipients of undergraduate degrees who reported working full-time were selected. The final sample consisted of 440 respondents.

Consistent with other studies (Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman, 1976; Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey, 1979; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Voakes, 1997), Commitment to Journalism is operationally defined by measuring desire to spend one's life exclusively in journalism. Specifically, survey respondents were presented with the statement "I expect to retire in this occupation" and are asked to respond with either agree, disagree or neutral.

Investments in time, effort and social role attachment made by respondents prior to college include involvement in high school journalism classes, and with high school newspapers, broadcast operations and yearbooks. Respondents were asked if they had engaged in these activities in high school, and these measures were scored as dichotomous (1 = participated, 0 = did not participate) and then summed to form the variable High School Activities. The side bet of role attachment is operationalized by asking if respondents received encouragement to pursue journalism from parents, high school teachers and counselors (1 = Encouraged, 0 = Not Encouraged). As Becker (1970) suggests, this identification with the role of journalism also serves as a constraining side bet. These responses were summed to form the variable High School Encouragement.

Respondents were also asked how early they decided to study journalism – in high school, after high school but prior to undergraduate education, during undergraduate education or after their undergraduate education (the variable is named Time to Decide). It is expected that respondents who decided during or before high school to study journalism would have developed a sturdier network of "social spheres" that involve journalism, would have engaged in more concrete journalism activities in high school and would therefore have made more side bets, or investments in the pursuit of journalism.
Accrual of these social connections and investments should lead to a greater desire to stay in the field of journalism.

The second set of investments—involve with the occupation of journalism during undergraduate study—are measured questions dealing with participation in a number of journalism-related college activities (newspaper, TV and radio broadcasting, online publishing, magazines and yearbook) and a number of journalism-related internships held (newspaper, magazine, TV and radio broadcasting). These measures were scored as dichotomous (1 = participated, 0 = did not participate) and then summed to create two predictor variables, College Internships and College Activities. Role attachment is measured by asking if respondents were encouraged to study journalism by college teachers and counselors (1 = Encouraged, 0 = Not Encouraged). Measures were summed to create the variable College Encouragement.

The third set of variables included Job Satisfaction, Pride in the Organization, and Salary and Work Schedule (extent to which non-reimbursed overtime work was demanded). Job Satisfaction was measured on a four-point scale (4 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Somewhat Satisfied, 2 = Somewhat Dissatisfied, 1 = Very Dissatisfied). Pride in Organization was measured by presenting respondents with the statement “I am proud to be working for my firm/organization” and with possible responses of Agree, Disagree and Neutral/Not Sure. Salary is measured by asking respondents to give their annual salary. Work Schedule is measured by presenting respondents with the statement “I must work beyond a 40-hour week” and with the following possible responses: 1 = “I am not required to do this,” 2 = “I must do this, and I am paid or reimbursed” and 3 = “I must do this, but I am not paid or reimbursed.” Each of these factors has proved to be important in the literature. It should be noted that pride in the organization and job satisfaction are usually considered to be “job sentiments” while salary and work schedule indicate job structure. This conceptual distinction is noted, but all four variables are included in the same “block” because of their chronological relationship and because they all reflect experiences with a particular work organization rather than with the entire occupation.

Bivariate correlation analysis and regression analysis were used to assess relative importance of variables to one another and to the dependent variable, Occupational Commitment.

Findings

Simple bivariate correlations were performed to test the four hypotheses (Table 1).

H1: Level of investment in the occupation of journalism prior to college correlates positively with degree of occupational commitment by recent entrants into the journalism profession.

Hypothesis one received moderate support. The variable measuring when respondents decided to study journalism (Time of Decision) correlated positively and significantly (at the .01 level) with level of
Occupational Commitment. It appears that the longer respondents had journalism as an educational focus, the more likely they were to see themselves staying in journalism throughout their careers. This finding lends support to the notion that accrued investments mount over time and lead to greater commitment. While number of activities (High School Activities) and level of encouragement for journalism received in high school (High School Encouragement) were positively related to commitment, neither were statistically significant.

H2: Level of investment in the occupation of journalism in college correlates positively with degree of occupational commitment felt by recent entrants into the journalism profession.

Hypothesis two received fairly strong support. Two of the three measures of investment in journalism during college correlated positively and significantly (at the .05 level) with Occupational Commitment. Number of internships (College Internships) and encouragement received from college mentors (College Encouragement) both have an effect on level of commitment among those recently entering the field (Table 1). Number of college journalism activities (College Activities) was not a significant predictor, which is consistent with previous findings that journalism major is not a significant predictor of occupational commitment (Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey, 1979; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Voakes, 1997). While simply having an education or a journalism major may not be predictive, it appears specific college experiences such as internships and receiving support from professors and advisors are important within the context of a bivariate relationship.

H3: Level of investment in the occupation of journalism in high school correlates positively with level of investment in the occupation of journalism in college.

Hypothesis three received support. Time of Decision and High School Activities both correlated positively and significantly with College Activities (Table 1). It appears level of involvement with the tasks of journalism at an early stage translates to higher levels of journalistic activity in college. Both Time of Decision and High School Activities correlated positively and significantly with College Activities, indicating that socialization to journalism prior to college has an impact on the decision to actively pursue extracurricular journalism activities in college. All three high-school predictors correlated significantly, and in some cases with high coefficients, with College Encouragement. This may indicate that high-school involvement leads to higher level of involvement with college class work, or perhaps to closer relationships with professors. Perhaps socialization in high school makes students more comfortable establishing relationships with professors and counselors during undergraduate years. There was no significant correlation between High School Encouragement and College Activities. There was also no significant correlation between College Internships and any of the high school involvement variables, which suggests the decision to pursue internships may be more influenced by college experiences. This supposition is supported by the strong positive correlation between College Internships and College Activities.
H4: Factors related to working conditions in specific organizations should correlate positively with degree of occupational commitment by recent entrants into the journalism profession.

Results of the test of Hypothesis four are mixed. Consistent with literature on commitment to journalism and commitment to other occupations, factors assessing job sentiment – Job Satisfaction and Pride in the Organization – were very strong predictors of occupational commitment (Table 1). In fact Job Satisfaction was the strongest of all the predictors, with a coefficient of .335. However, neither of the job structure variables – Salary and Work Schedule (working OT without compensation) – were significant predictors of Occupational Commitment. Work Schedule actually correlated negatively with commitment. This finding is similar to previous findings in the journalism literature that explore the impact of actual salary and work conditions. However, salary and work schedule were listed as important reasons by respondents for wanting to leave the field. Findings here seem to contradict these self-assessments. It may be that salary and work schedule in an absolute context do not predict commitment because they do not measure the perception that pay and working conditions are inadequate, in the context of individual expectations.

RQ1: How important are high school and college investments in journalism to degree of commitment when controlling for factors related to working conditions in specific organizations?

To answer the research question, variables measuring involvement with journalism in high school and college, and variables assessing job sentiments, salary and work schedule, were entered into a regression equation, with level of Occupational Commitment as the dependent variable. Variables were entered in three blocks. The first block consisted of job-specific factors – Salary, Work Schedule, Job Satisfaction and Pride in Organization. The second block consisted of investments in journalism made during undergraduate studies – College Internships, College Encouragement and College Activities. The third block consisted of investments in journalism made before college – Time of Decision (how long ago the decision was made), High School Activities and High School Encouragement. The ordering of block entry is based on the assumption that variables with more recency will have the most effect on occupational commitment. The strategy is to add variable blocks with less recency while controlling for variables with more recency in order to discern whether the former have any predictive power.

The R-square of model 1 is significant at .124, and both job sentiment variables – Pride in Organization and Job Satisfaction are significant predictors (Table 2). When the block of college predictors are added, the model’s R-square is .139, and this increase is significant at the .01 level. In this second model, Job Satisfaction and Pride in Organization are still significant predictors, and both College Internships and College Encouragement are significant predictors as well. Finally, when high school variables are added in the third model, the R-square increases significantly to .146. Job satisfaction is still the strongest predictor, with a coefficient of .301, and Pride in Organization, College Internships and College Encouragement remain significant as well (all at the .01 level). Of the new predictors, Time to Decide is significant at the .01 level.
Findings demonstrate fairly strong support for the proposed model, although there are a few notable contradictions. As predicted, involvement in high school journalism activities, encouragement from parents and mentors and the decision made early to study journalism generally predict higher involvement with college journalism activities and stronger bonds with college classes and mentors (college encouragement). They do not however, predict involvement in college internships – involvement in college activities was a better predictor of this variable, which is not surprising given its greater recency to the internship decision. Level of encouragement received in college and number of internships were significant predictors of occupational commitment, but involvement in college activities was not. Therefore to the extent that high school variables were mediated by college variables, they worked on commitment primarily through the college encouragement variable. However, one high school variable seemed to work directly on occupational commitment – Time to Decide. The earlier the decision was made to study journalism, the higher the occupational commitment. This relationship was significant at the .01 level in correlation and regression analyses. As predicted, job sentiments – especially job satisfaction, but also pride in the organization – were important predictors of commitment, but neither salary nor work schedule mattered to commitment. In general then, job satisfaction, pride in the organization, number of college internships, level of encouragement received in college and early decision to study journalism were the important predictors of commitment.

Arguably the most intriguing of these predictors is the early decision to study journalism. Among those who decide to study journalism before beginning undergraduate work, over 40 percent say they expect to retire in the occupation, while among those who decided to study journalism after entering college, around one quarter say they expect to retire in the occupation. This relationship is not only significant, it is stronger than the correlations with salary, work schedule or pride in one’s organization. Job satisfaction and number of college internships were stronger predictors, but this is to be expected given that these variables have more recency. The theory of side bets would say that making an early occupational decision affects commitment because those who decide early on a line of action have more time to accrue investments in that line of action – investments which increase the costs of getting out of the profession.

It may be that the most relevant “stake” indicated by the early decision variable is the stake placed in the choice of college. Individuals who know prior to college that they wish to study journalism are more likely to select a college because of its journalism program. The family’s money and the student’s college experience become important side bets. For such an individual to consider leaving the field after just starting it is to consider the possibility that family money was wasted, and that a mistake

Conclusions

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was made in an important life decision. In contrast the individual who picked a college on vague criteria and decided to study journalism only after entry has not risked as much. If he or she decides to leave the field after a year or two, the consequences are of less personal significance. This is speculative, but it may be that such individuals knew journalism was not their true calling, and they have already been considering other occupations.

Findings demonstrate the importance of college involvement to occupational commitment. The importance of internships and encouragement from mentors to commitment coincides with side-bet theory. Students establishing stronger relationships with college mentors have invested in role perception (i.e., the role of future journalist), and students must invest considerable time and effort in journalism internships. However, the unimportance of involvement in college journalism activities is puzzling. Perhaps students have some tendency to view college activities as ends in themselves rather than as investments in their work future (unlike internships which have a more obvious connection to future employment). Involvement with college activities may work on commitment through the college internship variable, as there was a strong positive correlation between number of college activities and number of internships received. While involvement in college activities does not directly predict occupational commitment, studies have clearly demonstrated the importance of college activities to the hireability of those seeking work in the journalism field (Becker, et al., 1993; Becker et al., 1999). Clearly those who get on the journalism track prior to college are more likely to be involved in journalism activities in college. Involvement in journalism in high school also strongly predicts degree of encouragement received from journalism teachers and counselors in college, which suggests pre-college socialization makes college students more comfortable establishing relationships with mentors. And as mentioned, level of encouragement received in college was a significant predictor of occupational commitment once in the field.

Findings here also indicate that affect for the tasks of journalism is an important determinant of commitment to the field. Job satisfaction is the strongest predictor, and pride in the organization is significant as well. Yet neither salary nor work schedule register as significant. It seems therefore that commitment is related to some less tangible aspect of the job – for example, enjoying the tasks associated with one’s craft, or appreciating the perceived social benefits of performing one’s job well. For those who have just entered the field of journalism, simple enjoyment of and pride in one’s work may bind individuals to the occupation more than dependency on a certain level of salary or on a particular time schedule. This conclusion seems logical given that salary and work schedule are organizationally bound factors, and the study’s dependent variable is commitment to the overall occupation rather than to a specific company. That salary and work schedule are not predictive of commitment makes sense given that the life decisions of most recent bachelor’s degree recipients are not severely constrained by financial and time obligations associated with family and home ownership. In most cases these particular side bets have not been made. As discussed, the side bets that have been made are the decision to
attend a college based on its journalism curricula, and the money paid (or owed) for attendance of this college.

Of course job satisfaction and pride in the organization say much about the conditions of work in a particular organization – they are not merely measures of contentment with one’s craft. It may be that the importance of job sentiment variables reflect contentment with coworkers and management, or perhaps with the journalistic practices encouraged by management. Respondents may to some degree be extrapolating these positive experiences in their specific organizations to the wider occupation. There are implications from this study for the news industry. Those deciding early to study journalism show greater commitment later on, and therefore industry leaders concerned about commitment should make efforts to increase opportunities for young people to learn about journalism at the high school level, or even before. Clearly college experiences were also important to commitment. Both number of internships and relationships with mentors predicted higher levels of commitment to the occupation, suggesting that the more time and energy students put into experiences that socialize them to the actual working world of journalism, the more likely they are to view their relationship with journalism as a long-term one. Working within the walls of a news organization while in school, and discussing journalism with mentors who have worked in the field engender greater occupational commitment than do tangible job-specific benefits such as salary and work schedule. Doubtless these experiences are perceived as investments, not lightly to be thrown away. It is also likely that actual experience with the craft of journalism makes the career path more concrete and easier to visualize.

While this study only explores commitment among recent entrants into the field of journalism, assessments of their occupational commitment are important. As previously mentioned, those who have been in the field only a short time are the most likely to leave the field, and research shows (and side-bet theory posits) that those with longevity in the field are less likely to leave it. It follows that those who show early commitment are most likely to become those with longevity – and therefore become those with the highest level of commitment.
Previous studies of journalism commitment have also included demographic and professional-level variables. Because the sample consists of first-year entrants into the field who were B.A. recipients from journalism schools, many of these variables are not likely to be relevant. These include major, age, time spent in the field, marital status, family size and professional network and involvement. Major was not assessed because over 85 percent of the sample had a journalism related major, and the theoretical framework offered no rationale for ranking predictive power among these various journalism majors (i.e., print, broadcast, magazine, etc.). Several of these factors were also not measured in the survey. One variable, gender, because it was suggested as potentially important by sociology of work literature, was entered into the model. It was not a significant predictor and did not fundamentally alter the coefficients of any other predictors. Because gender was not discussed in the literature and was not relevant to the theoretical approach employed in this study, results of this model are not included in the main body of the paper.


### Table 1
Bivariate correlations among dependent and independent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Occupational Commitment (N=437)</th>
<th>When Decided to Study Journalism</th>
<th>High School Journalism Activities</th>
<th>Sources of Encourag. High School</th>
<th>College Journalism Activities</th>
<th>Journalism Internships</th>
<th>Sources of Encourage. College</th>
<th>Job Satisf.</th>
<th>Pride in Org.</th>
<th>Overtime Work Demands</th>
<th>Annual Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occup. Commit.</strong></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When Decided to Study Journalism (N=438)</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Journalism Activities (N=437)</td>
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<td>.435**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Encouragement, High School (N=428)</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.482**</td>
<td>.404**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>College Journalism Activities (N=435)</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.140**</td>
<td>.101*</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Journalism Internships (N=437)</td>
<td>.116**</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.232**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources of Encourage. College (N=428)</td>
<td>.142**</td>
<td>.229**</td>
<td>.160**</td>
<td>.589**</td>
<td>.161**</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction (N=436)</td>
<td>.315**</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pride in Org. (N=437)</td>
<td>.250**</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.524**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overtime Work Demands (N=430)</td>
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<td>.033</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>-.109*</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Salary (N=430)</td>
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<td>.079</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>.189**</td>
<td>.122*</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

aA positive Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient means a high value of the independent variable is associated with high commitment.
b1=Decided to study journalism in high school, 2=Decided to study after HS, but before college, 3=Decided to study in college, 4=Decided to study after college
cThese variables measured by counting number of units (encouragements, activities, internships).
dRespondents given statement, “I must work beyond a 40-hour work week” with responses, 1=Not required to, 2=Must do but am paid for it, 3=Must do and not paid
Table 2

Occupational Commitment ("I expect to retire in this occupation," 1=Disagree, 2=Not Sure, 3=Agree) regressed on job-specific, college level and high school level predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Model 1: Job-specific predictors (N = 444)</th>
<th>Model 2: Job-specific and college predictors</th>
<th>Model 3: Addition of pre-college predictors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R square = .124**</td>
<td>R square = .139**</td>
<td>R square = .146**</td>
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<td><strong>Job-specific predictors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>.310**</td>
<td>.304**</td>
<td>.301**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pride in Organization</td>
<td>.062*</td>
<td>.066**</td>
<td>.067**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overtime Work Demands</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate college predictors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Journalism Activities (number of)</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>-.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journalism Internships (number of)</td>
<td>.103**</td>
<td>.092**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Encouragement, College (number of)</td>
<td>.047*</td>
<td>.065**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Salary High School predictors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>When Decided to Study Journalism (how early)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.082**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Journalism Activities (number of)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Encouragement, High School (number of)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.057</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant at the 0.01 level / *Significant at the 0.05 level