



Mobilizing the next generation of media leaders: Social support and social capital building increases job satisfaction and loyalty among early-career employees

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Abstract

The media industry has been disrupted, challenging how young people interact with others in the workplace and develop their professional networks. This study addressed how media managers can support young workers from a social capital perspective. Concepts in the social capital model of organizational socialization were measured through a survey ($N = 136$) of media professionals in the first five years of their professional careers. Results revealed that social support within organizations helps young people build social career capital. Social career capital also predicted career adaptability, professional self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty. Managerial and theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: early-career professionals; social capital; media managers; career development; organizational socialization; social career capital

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Introduction

How young people in media and communication fields experience their organization's culture, and the extent to which media managers are attuned to their needs and growth, has a profound impact on their advancement and ability to make positive change for the organizations that employ them (Erzikova & Martinelli, 2020; LaGree, Houston, Shin, & Duffy, 2021; Lucht & Batschelet, 2019; Neill & Bowen, 2021). Yet, the media industry has been drastically disrupted, challenging how young people interact with others in workplace settings, acclimate to their professional roles, develop their professional networks, and develop paths to leadership (Pandey, 2021; Pendell, 2021). Additional layers to these complexities include the Great Resignation and the Great Discontent where employers are grappling with how to engage and retain this new generation of workers who are continuously exploring other career opportunities and question their long-term value at their current place of employment (Gandhi & Robison, 2021; Hirsch, 2021).

These fast-paced changes in the media industry, coupled with the imperative need for managers to proactively engage and retain young workers, was the inspiration for this study that sought to offer practical answers for how media managers can overcome these challenges. However, this research takes an alternative approach to management best practices, given the vast literature that offers substantial evidence for the roles of social capital and organizational socialization in building career success and satisfaction. Therefore, this study leverages Fang, Duffy and Shaw's (2011) social capital model of organizational socialization. The model posits that organizations play a major role in how newcomers are acclimated to their workplaces; specific organizational tactics used can help newcomers gain access to and mobilize their social

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capital, which leads to improved organizational knowledge and, ultimately, a more fulfilling career and loyalty to the organization. With that in mind, components of the model were measured among early career employees in media and media-related roles to assess its influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Study findings offer initial steps in theory-building for social career capital, and the specific ways in which media organizations can retain, advance and mobilize the next generation of media leaders.

Literature review

Media manager’s support of early-career professionals

How young workers experience the early career phase (the first five years of professional employment) and the support and motivation they receive from their managers influences their future career ambitions and advancement (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998; Kowtha, 2018; Manuel, 2003). Positive early-career experiences are associated with proactive skill development and an expansive professional network (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla). Additionally, research shows that young professionals must receive support and resources during the early career phase to establish the skills necessary for advancement (LaGree & Olsen, 2022). This early career phase is especially formative as it shapes the skills necessary for leadership, and impacts individuals’ perceptions of their personal abilities, career outlook (Manuel, 2003), and proactive skill development (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). A positive early career experience for young media managers benefits the organizations that employ them, providing increased employee engagement, loyalty and retention (Coetze & Stoltz, 2017).

Furthermore, research suggests that for these early-career professionals to successfully transition into their first professional opportunities, they must be adaptable and able to self-manage their career trajectories (Bridgstock, 2009). This adaptability and self-management

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is necessary as the media industry is evolving at rapid speed; entry-level employees in the media field must proactively immerse themselves in technology that is constantly advancing, and they must create a professional network that provides them with vital soft skill development (LaGree & Olsen, 2022). Their leaders and managers should also support activities related to professional development and cultivating one's professional network. Understanding how early-career media professionals perceive these socialization activities will help media managers understand how to support these young workers with the goal of improving retention and creating loyalty.

COVID-19 and advancement in the media landscape

Generation Z (Gen Z) is the biggest group to ever enter the professional world, the most diverse, and on track to be the most well-educated generation in history (Bernstein, 2015; Parker et al., 2019). According to Morris (2018), approximately 61 million members of Gen Z are currently entering the workforce. This is the largest group to ever enter the media industry, and they are beginning their careers during an uncertain post-pandemic climate where the industry has been rocked by drastic employment trends.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for all global industries. In order for the media industry to recruit, retain and develop its future leaders in Gen Z, it is necessary to fully understand the climate in which they are launching their careers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), most workers stayed at their positions during the first wave of COVID-19 in early 2020. However, as recovery started and the job market expanded, the voluntary turnover rate in the U.S. surged from 2.3% to 3.0% (BLS, 2021). This period of high voluntary turnover since March 2021 has been referred to as the Great Resignation (Cohen, 2021), and describes the large number of employees choosing to leave their jobs within a short amount of time. The COVID-19 pandemic markedly altered what was considered the normal

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professional life: people’s affective, cognitive and behavior processes changed based on precautionary work-from-home policies implemented by organizations (Malmendier, 2021). COVID-associated lockdowns provided time for people to reevaluate their life purpose and professional identity (Dean & Hoff, 2021).

While the Great Resignation describes the significant dropoff in voluntary departures from organizations, the Great Discontent is another phenomenon media managers face as it emphasizes the shift in how individuals perceive their professional identity. An increasing number of employees across industries are disengaged and discontent with working in general after living and working through the COVID-19 peak (Hirsch, 2021). A 2021 Gallup analysis found that 48% of employed Americans are actively job searching or watching for opportunities (Gandhi & Robison, 2021). Most employees are not engaged or are actively engaged, represented by a global employee engagement rate of 34% in the U.S. and Canada (State of the Global Workplace: 2021 Report). This low engagement rate correlates to a higher turnover rate, further emphasizing the need for managers to use retention strategies that improve upon job satisfaction and create proactive, adaptable professional identities for early-career professionals.

However, despite these major shifts in the global workforce, employment in media and communication occupations is projected to grow faster than all other occupations over the next decade; jobs will increase 14% from 2020 to 2030, resulting in about 151,500 new jobs (BLS, 2022). Importantly, “demand for media and communication occupations is expected to arise from the need to create, edit, translate and disseminate information through a variety of platforms” (p. 1, BLS). These statistics are incredibly relevant for media managers to understand and to utilize as strategic decisions are made to move organizations forward and combat both the Great Resignation and the Great Discontent.

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Organizational socialization to understand organizational and professional advancement

The organizational socialization process (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977) influences how well an individual receives the knowledge, skills and social support necessary to perform an organizational role and effectively acclimate to one's organization. It also directly impacts employee satisfaction, organizational commitment (Bauer et al., 2007) and upward career mobility (Kowtha, 2018; Spagnoli, 2020). Therefore, organizational socialization is the primary theoretical approach that guided this study as it is useful for understanding the role organizations play in acclimating, supporting and advancing early-career professionals.

Organizational socialization is an ongoing process in which employees cross organizational boundaries and adapt from an organizational outsider to an integrated, effective insider (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002). It has also been described as a joint process between the organization and the new employee; the organization implements tactics to facilitate the successful acclimation of the newcomer, and the newcomer utilizes learning behaviors to successfully acclimate (Fisher, 1986). A summary by Bauer, Morrison and Callister (1998) described the organizational socialization process in the following stages: (1) anticipatory, newcomers prepare themselves for entry; (2) entry, newcomers begin work at their organizations, develop relationships and learn its operations; (3) mutual acceptance/adaptation, newcomers are accepted as organizational members. Although the process is ongoing—organizational members continuously adjust to their organizations over time—the organizational entry phase is one of the most critical phases to set an employee up for success as it is during this phase when first impressions are made and employees are able to acknowledge whether or not they will have successful futures within the organization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

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The organizational entry phase is especially poignant for employees in the early career phase. Important socialization experiences occur during the first five years of full-time employment (e.g., personal growth and professional development) that influence the career aspirations of young workers in positive or negative ways (Kowtha, 2013). Additionally, less experienced employees—typically those in the early career phase—don’t have the same resources available to assist with organizational adaptation compared to more tenured professionals because they have less professional experience to reflect on (Cooper-Thomas, Anderson, & Cash, 2012; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Therefore, we argue that the organization entry phase presents the most impactful opportunity for media companies to proactively support early-career employees, ultimately influencing a positive organizational experience, increased productivity, and longer organizational tenure.

Social Capital model of organizational socialization

Organizational socialization research has emphasized the important utility personal and professional relationships and networks hold during the socialization process (Bauer et al., 2007; Morrison, 2002). The way these relationships are leveraged to access and build one’s organizational knowledge is explained by social capital theory. Social capital refers to “resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions” (Lin, 1999, p. 35). To integrate this perspective into organizational socialization theory, Fang, Duffy and Shaw (2011) conceptualized the social capital model of organizational socialization (Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011), which is the guiding framework of the present study to examine how early-career professionals get access to and develop social capital within their organizational and professional networks. For the purpose and context of this study we conceptualize social capital as social *career* capital and define it as personal and organizational resources embedded in

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professional structures that are accessed and/or mobilized to proactively advance one's career trajectory.

The social capital model of organizational socialization (Fang et al., 2011) posits that socialization factors provide access to social capital, and the mobilization of social capital then leads to career success. More specifically, according to the model, two socialization factors influence social capital access: (1) organizational tactics (formalized training, positive social support, job role education, and role modeling) and (2) newcomer proactivity (sense making, relationship building, positive framing). Social capital network structure and network resources are then mobilized to influence newcomer adjustment in the areas of learning and assimilation. Further, bonding social capital is utilized to sustain relationships within organizational structures, while bridging social capital involves relationships and networking outside of the organization to grow professionally (Gorska et al., 2022).

More recent socialization research offers an opportunity to update the 2011 model. Previous research points to the need for organizational newcomers to be proactive in their socialization activities (LaGree & Olsen, 2002; LaGree, Olsen, & Tefertiller, 2020). [Ashford and Black \(1996\)](#) put forth three dimensions of newcomer proactivity that describe behaviors most frequently performed by newcomers during socialization. These include seeking and acquiring job information (sensemaking), developing relationships with one's manager and general socialization events (relationship building), and constructive, cognitive self-management (positive framing). Additionally, socialization tactics organizations should use to achieve socialization success include formal training, positive social support, job role education, and effective role modeling (Jones, 1986). These tactics offer support to newcomers and provide onboarding guidelines to organizations.

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Therefore, we propose revising the social capital model of organizational socialization by including proactive personality (Crant, 1995, 2000) and hypothesize that proactive personality influences newcomer proactivity.

H1: Early-career media professional’s perceived proactive personality traits will be positively associated with their perceived newcomer proactivity behaviors.

Following the model, the three dimensions of newcomer proactivity and organizational socialization tactics influence social career capital.

H2: Early-career media professional’s perceived newcomer proactivity including (a) relationship building, (b) sense making, and (c) positive framing will predict their perceived social career capital.

H3: Early-career professional's perception of their company’s organizational socialization tactics including (a) formalized training, (b) positive social support, (c) job role education, and (d) role modeling will predict their perceived social career capital.

Another concept worthy of adding to the model because of its impact on career success is career adaptability. The ability to be career adaptable (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and achieve professional self-efficacy (Rigotti, Schyns, & Mohr, 2008) are indicators of long-term career success. To extend the model and further conceptualize social career capital and its outcomes, we argue that social career capital influences these two career success indicators that media managers should be mindful of as they mentor young workers. Therefore, we posit a final hypothesis and a general research question to aid in theory-building of social career capital and its broader impact on career and organizational perceptions.

H4: Early career media professional’s perceived social career capital will predict (a) perceived career adaptability and (b) perceived professional self-efficacy.

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RQ1: What are the broader outcomes of early-career media professional's perceived social career capital on their perceptions of their careers and organizations through job satisfaction and job loyalty?

Finally, previous research also indicates that social capital is necessary for career advancement among women (Lucht & Batschelet, 2019; Metz & Tharenou, 2001). Organizational socialization experiences also differ among men and women; women often experience less support to earn promotions than their male counterparts and are offered fewer opportunities to access powerful people and projects (Lyness & Thompson, 2000; Dreher & Cox, 2000). Therefore, we explored gender differences as they relate to the development of social career capital.

RQ2: How, if at all, does social career capital access and mobilization differ among men and women?

Method

To address the hypotheses and research questions, an online survey was employed. In order to reach young professionals in media-related roles and organizations including digital media production, journalism, advertising, public relations, and marketing careers, several methods were employed. First, researchers utilized a targeted Facebook advertising campaign. Facebook advertising was desirable due to its ability to efficiently target individuals with desired careers that may be otherwise difficult to reach with increased control, and with partial representativeness (Gilligan et al., 2014; Shaver et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Facebook advertising was desirable over LinkedIn advertising due to Facebook's superiority in the size of its user base, monthly users, and return on investment (Gould, 2021). In addition to targeting early-career professionals between the ages of 20-30, a diverse participant sample representative

of different race/ethnicities, geographic locations, and industry sectors within marketing professions was targeted.

In addition, researchers utilized their own social media profiles to reach out to young professionals in their own networks via public posting and private, direct messaging. The most common networks used were LinkedIn and Facebook. To increase recruitment efficiency, participants were offered to enter a drawing to win one of ten \$50 Amazon e-gift cards. As such, the sample was a national convenience sample. While convenience samples are not generalizable to the overall population, their value in social science and psychological research makes them useful tools for testing concepts, especially samples collected online (Leiner, 2016), where they are most useful for recruiting specific populations (Bornstein et al., 2013), as desired in the current investigation. The survey consisted of 76 questions, and data collection took place over a period of five months. The final pool of participants was North American, dispersed throughout the United States; complete participant demographics for the survey are reported in Table 1.

Measures

Career adaptability was measured using a 21 question index (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), utilizing five-point Likert scales ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Items included, “In regards to my career, I’m actively preparing for the future,” and, “In regards to my career, I’m taking care to do things well.” The final measure ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .45$) was reliable, $\alpha = .88$.

Proactive personality was measured using a 17 question index (Bateman & Crant, 1993) utilizing five-point Likert scales ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Items included, “I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life,” and, “I love being a

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champion for my ideas, even against the others' opposition." The final measure ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .47$) was reliable, $\alpha = .83$.

Newcomer proactiveness was measured using a 16-item index (Ashford & Black, 1996) across three dimensions, with items utilizing five-point scales ranging from "Never" to "Always." The measure asked respondents to consider to what extent they engaged in activities during the first six months of their job. Relationship building included five items, such as "worked hard to get to know your boss" ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .81$, $\alpha = .75$). Sense-making included eight items, such as "tried to learn the politics of the organization" ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .74$, $\alpha = .84$). Finally, positive framing included three items, such as "tried to look on the bright side of things" ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .81$, $\alpha = .80$).

Organizational socialization tactics were measured using a 19-item measure (Jones, 1986) across four dimensions, with items utilizing five-point Likert scales ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." One dimension, formalized training ($\alpha = .38$) was not reliable, and has thus been omitted from further data analysis. Positive social support was measured with five items, such as, "I have been made to feel that my skills and abilities are very important in this organization" ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .80$, $\alpha = .73$). Job role education was measured with four items; however, one re-coded item, "This organization does not put new employees through an identifiable sequence of learning experiences," was omitted to improve scale reliability from $\alpha = .67$ to $\alpha = .84$ ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.06$). Finally, role modeling was measured with five items, such as, "I am gaining a clear understanding of my role in this organization from observing my senior colleagues" ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .94$, $\alpha = .76$).

Social career capital was measured using 17 questions (Williams, 2006) across two dimensions, with items utilizing five-point Likert scales ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to

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“Strongly Agree.” Bridging social capital was measured with ten items, such as, “Interacting with people in my professional network makes me want to try new things” ($M = 3.97, SD = .64, \alpha = .85$). Bonding social capital was measured with seven items, such as, “There are several people in my professional network I trust to help solve my problems” ($M = 3.84, SD = .73, \alpha = .81$).

Occupational self-efficacy was measured using six questions (Rigotti, Schyns, & Mohr, 2008), utilizing five-point, Likert scales ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Items included, “Whatever comes my way in my job, I can usually handle it.” The final measure ($M = 4.23, SD = .56$) was reliable, $\alpha = .79$.

Job outcomes were measured with scales utilizing five-point Likert scales ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Job satisfaction was measured with three questions (Hackman & Oldham, 1975), such as, “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job” ($M = 3.94, SD = 1.04, \alpha = .91$). Job loyalty was measured with five questions (Matzler & Renzl, 2006), such as, “I would like to stay with this company in the future” ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.05, \alpha = .90$).

The survey concluded with demographic questions, including age, gender, ethnic origin, location (state), education level, and college major. Demographics are reported in Table 1.

Results

Hypothesis one

The first hypothesis suggested perceived proactive personality traits would be positively associated with perceived newcomer proactivity behaviors. Utilizing a series of Pearson correlations, it was determined that proactive personality is positively associated with the

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dimensions of newcomer proactivity: relationship building, $r(136) = .39, p < .001$, sense making, $r(136) = .48, p < .001$, and positive framing, $r(136) = .50, p < .001$, suggesting support for H1.

Hypotheses two, three, four and research question one

To address the remaining hypotheses and the first research questions, a series of regressions were utilized. Two hierarchical linear regressions were performed predicting bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Step one entered the newcomer proactivity variables, and step two entered the organizational socialization tactic variables for each regression. Table 2 presents the results of both regressions. In addition, two regressions with both bonding and bridging social capital predicting career adaptability and professional efficacy were performed, as well as two regressions with both bonding and bridging social capital predicting job satisfaction and employee loyalty. No tolerances were below .2 and no VIF exceeded 4 for any regression, suggesting a lack of multicollinearity.

Hypotheses two and three suggested the dimensions of perceived newcomer proactivity and organizational socialization tactics would predict perceived social career capital. For bonding social capital, the introduction of the proactivity variables in step one explained 12.6% of the variance, $F(3,132) = 6.36, p < .001$. The addition of the socialization tactic variables in step two explained an additional 11.8% of the variance, $\Delta F(3,129) = 6.74, p < .001$. For bridging social capital, the introduction of the proactivity variables in step one explained 20.1% of the variance, $F(3,132) = 11.08, p < .001$. The addition of the social tactic variables in step two only explained an additional 2.5% of the variance and was not statistically significant, $\Delta F(3,129) = 1.37, p = .26$.

Only positive framing was a predictor of bonding social capital in step one of the regression, $B = .23, SE B = .08, p = .005$. However, it was no longer statistically significant with

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the entrance of the social tactic variables in step two, $B = .13$, $SE B = .08$, $p = .10$. For organizational social tactics, social support was the only significant predictor of bonding social capital, $B = .38$, $SE B = .09$, $p < .001$. For bridging social capital, positive framing was the only proactivity variable significant in both step one ($B = .21$, $SE B = .07$, $p = .002$) and step two ($B = .19$, $SE B = .07$, $p = .008$) of the model. The addition of the social tactic variables was not statistically significant, and no individual predictors were significant.

To address H2, newcomer proactive positive framing is a significant predictor of both bonding and bridging social capital, though the relationship is stronger for bridging. This hypothesis received partial support. For H3, the organizational socialization tactic of social support predicted bonding social capital, but no social tactics predicted bridging social capital. This hypothesis was also only partially supported.

Hypothesis four argued that [perceived](#) social career capital would predict [perceived career adaptability and professional efficacy](#). Social capital explained 24.3% of the variance in career adaptability, $F(2,133) = 21.3$, $p < .001$. Bonding was not a significant predictor of career adaptability, $B = .01$, $SE B = .05$, $\beta = .02$, $p = .84$; however, bridging was a significant predictor, $B = .35$, $SE B = .06$, $\beta = .48$, $p < .001$. For professional self-efficacy, social capital explained 17% of the variance, $F(2,133) = 13.66$, $p < .001$. Bonding best predicted professional self-efficacy, $B = .22$, $SE B = .07$, $\beta = .28$, $p = .002$; however, bridging was also a significant predictor, $B = .17$, $SE B = .08$, $\beta = .19$, $p = .03$. To address H4, bonding social capital did not predict career adaptability, but it was the best predictor of professional self-efficacy, while bridging social capital predicted both adaptability and self-efficacy. As such, this hypothesis receives partial support.

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Research question one asked what the broader implications of social career capital on professionals' career perceptions, *through perceived job satisfaction and loyalty*, would be. For job satisfaction, social capital explained 17.6% of the variance, $F(2,133) = 14.18, p < .001$. Both bonding ($B = .36, SE B = .13, \beta = .25, p = .006$) and bridging ($B = .39, SE B = .15, \beta = .24, p = .009$) social capital were significant predictors of job satisfaction. Social capital explained 24.6% of the variance in employee loyalty. Bonding social capital was a significant predictor of loyalty, $B = .57, SE B = .12, \beta = .40, p < .001$, but bridging was not a significant predictor, $B = .27, SE B = .14, \beta = .16, p = .06$. To address the research question, career social capital was a significant predictor of job satisfaction across both dimensions of bonding and bridging. However, only bonding career social capital was a predictor of employee loyalty.

Research question two

The final research question asked if there were differences between men and women for social career capital and career mobilization. To address this research question, t-tests and a chi-square test were performed.

There was a statistically significant difference between men and women in terms of their bonding career social capital, with men ($M = 3.67, SD = .76$) reporting less bonding social capital than women ($M = 3.93, SD = .71$), $t(132) = -1.89, p = .03$. The difference between men ($M = 3.89, SD = .65$) and women ($M = 4.02, SD = .63$) for bridging social capital was not significant, $t(132) = -1.04, p = .15$.

For men, 36.1% ($n = 13$) reported receiving a promotion, while 63.9% ($n = 23$) reported not receiving a promotion. For women, 59.3% ($n = 54$) reported receiving a promotion, while 40.7% ($n = 37$) did not receive a promotion. This difference was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 127) = 5.59, p = .02$.

To address the research question, women reported more bonding career social capital than men, but there were no differences in bridging career social capital. Women reported receiving promotions more than men.

Discussion

Given the media industry’s drastic disruptions and the changing nature of work where young people have fewer opportunities for professional networking and mentorship, the purpose of this study was to understand how media managers can support, retain and mobilize the next generation of media leaders. To narrow the scope, this study adopted Fang, Duffy and Shaw’s (2011) social capital model of organizational socialization to examine how early-career professionals in the media industry get access to and develop social career capital within their organization and professional networks. Concepts in the model were measured through a survey (N = 136) of media professionals in the first five years of their professional careers.

Proactiveness

Through existing research, we know that newcomers must be proactive in their socialization activities and that being career adaptable sets up positive career trajectories for early-career professionals (LaGree & Olsen, 2022; LaGree, Olsen, & Tefertiller, 2020; Jackson & Wilton, 2016). By understanding the importance of managements’ support for early-career professionals, media managers are better equipped to provide the necessary tools for this cohort to proactively manage their careers in a way that sets them up for a forward-moving career trajectory, providing skills and confidence to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the present workforce.

As predicted by H1, survey results showed that the higher one’s proactive personality, the more likely they are to proactively engage in behaviors to acclimate to their organizations and

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understand their specific roles and job responsibilities. For media managers, this shows that training and onboarding should emphasize the importance of proactively engaging in career management. Further, media programs at higher education institutions need to emphasize the importance of proactive career management, in both curricular and extracurricular activities. This builds on existing research suggesting that college graduates must possess career management skills, the “abilities required to proactively navigate the working world and successfully manage the career building process” (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 35). Astin and Vogelgesang (2006) found that building social capital during higher education allows students to actively participate in leadership development that can influence their skills post-graduation and into their early-career stage. Careers in the media industry can vary and career paths may be ambiguous; however, understanding the importance of being adaptable provides students and early-career pros benefits beyond just the technical skills for handling career path navigation (Beatty, Cleveland, & Murphy, 2001).

In addition, we tested whether newcomer proactivity behaviors would positively predict social career capital (**H2**). Interestingly, of the three dimensions of proactivity behaviors (relationship building, sensemaking, and positive framing), positive framing was the only significant predictor of both bonding and bridging social capital. Additionally, the relationship was stronger for bridging social capital. Positive framing involves intentionally engaging in cognitive self-management to reconsider challenging situations as potentially positive opportunities. Perhaps, an explanation for this is that these young workers have not had as many opportunities for in-person networking as previous generations, and therefore have had to put more emphasis on mindset work in order to be comfortable engaging in those opportunities. These findings also provide evidence to support building early-career professional’s external

networking as a means of building their social capital. Many of those early in their careers are not aware of the importance of networking outside of one’s organization, which results in mentorship opportunities, soft skill development and learning to develop self-advocacy (LaGree & Olsen, 2022). From a management perspective, this means that managers should consider mentoring their young employees on ways to embrace challenges and potential setbacks with a positive mindset, as doing so opens doors for building their professional networks.

Organizational socialization tactics

Furthermore, we tested whether organizational socialization tactics including formalized training, positive social support, job role education and role modeling would predict social career capital (**H3**). Again, surprisingly, just one dimension—positive social support—was a significant predictor of social career capital. This means that when early-career media employees are involved in common learning experiences with their peer cohort and organizational teams, they are more likely to build their social career capital. Taking a deeper look, positive social support was a significant predictor of bonding social capital, but not bridging social capital. This shows that the more social support survey participants received from their organizations, the more they are bonded with people within their organization. This is of particular interest to media managers because this can improve loyalty and create healthy, proactive mentoring relationships which aid early-career pros as they navigate their growth in the early stages (Erzikova & Martinelli, 2020; LaGree & Olsen, 2022; LaGree et al., 2021).

Career adaptability

We also looked at career adaptability as a concept worthy of addition to the social capital model of organizational socialization (Fang et al., 2011). The ability to be career adaptable (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) leads to professional self-efficacy (Rigotti, Schyns, & Mohr, 2008),

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which, in turn, indicates long-term career success. **H4** tested whether social career capital would be a predictor of career adaptability and professional self-efficacy. According to survey results, nearly a quarter (24%) of the career adaptability outcome variable can be attributed to social capital. However, the bridging dimension of social capital was impacted more than the bonding dimension. This again credits being career adaptable and leveraging influences across multiple groups of people, not just those within the organization. Bridging social capital predicts self-efficacy, which shows that media managers should encourage young workers to build those relationships outside of their organization in order to help support overall career confidence.

Job satisfaction and employee loyalty

In addition, the study's first research question gauged the broader outcomes of social career capital on early career media professionals' perceptions of their jobs and organizations (**RQ1**). Data showed that as social capital increases, so does job satisfaction among early-career media professionals. If media managers want their employees to be satisfied with their jobs, they should seek ways to support the growth of their professional networks. [LaGree et al. \(2023\)](#) reported that this type of leadership empowerment behavior is crucial to employees' perception of job satisfaction. Specific recommendations include financially supporting national organization membership dues to professional associations such as the National Association of Broadcasters, American Advertising Federation, Public Relations Society of America, or the Society of Professional Journalists; this can demonstrate commitment to their development as well as provide the networking opportunities that they may not be able to otherwise due to financial constraints.

Another interesting and robust finding is that bonding social capital is a powerful predictor of employee loyalty. Explaining the data more thoroughly for every unit increase of

bonding social capital, employee loyalty increases by more than a half-unit ($B = .57$). To retain their young workers, media managers should ensure they have time to get to know those on their teams intimately, as it helps them to be loyal to their organization. Internal networking opportunities which build bonding social capital can provide early-career employees with insight into organizational culture, typical leadership paths, and how to understand and utilize certain policies and benefits.

Finally, the results showed that women are more actively building social capital within their close groups than men (**RQ2**). Aligning with existing research on how women are biologically and emotionally different from men (Gorska et al., 2022), this further emphasizes how women are more likely to seek in-depth professional relationships, which can provide support systems for women during critical career-impacting times such as maternity leave and navigating postpartum challenges while working. [Research has shown that women in the media industry have a difficult time progressing in their careers due to male-dominated environments \(Mallia et al., 2013; Windels & Lee, 2012\), and those gendered experiences are positively impacted by peer role models and mentors \(Olsen, 2021\). The media industry should recognize the gains women create by working with close professional groups and cultivate these social interactions in a meaningful way. Allowing for dedicated, focused professional development periods during the work day can help facilitate this and provide an avenue through which women can learn more tools to navigate challenges in their career.](#) A final key result of this study is that women reported receiving promotions more than men. Career equity is a constant focus of the media industry and its organizations, and this shows that perhaps the industry is moving in the right direction in gender and career equality.

Limitations and future research

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As with all research, this study has several limitations. First, the research team was only able to recruit 136 early-career media professionals to complete the survey, due to the narrow niche. A larger sample could yield better implications reflective of a more diverse group of early-career professionals. Additionally, only 28.7% of the sample was male. In addition, the study lacks generalizability due to its convenience sampling methods. Future research should seek a more representative and generalizable sample. Future research should also collect more demographic information, such as salary data, market information, and employer information, as this was also a limitation of the current survey. Additionally, future research should address issues with several measures in the survey, specifically the organizational socialization measures for the dimensions of formalized training and job role education.

This was a quantitative study, and the lack of open-ended questions leaves room for additional, in-depth self-reporting on social capital development which could provide new avenues for exploration. Finally, this survey was deployed during an uncertain time. The COVID-19 pandemic peak is over, but many professionals are still facing unprecedented challenges. This uncertainty is a limitation when looking at the context and situation of each survey participant.

Despite its limitations, this study provides a framework for helping the media industry move forward amidst an uncertain time. Facing the Great Resignation and the Great Discontent, media managers have a major opportunity to ensure that the next generation of leaders develops a foundation for long-term career success. Expanding upon this study, a longitudinal examination of these early-career professionals through years five to 10 in the professional workplace could provide a deeper understanding of how they adapted to a post-pandemic work environment. Another avenue for future research would be in-depth, qualitative interviews with a diverse

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group of early-career professionals in order to gather deeper insights into how and why they develop behaviors and perceptions that influence their career trajectories. Furthermore, a content analysis of media organizations’ onboarding procedures and formalized training can add additional, meaningful context to understanding how early-career professionals perceive their socialization experiences and social capital development.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study is valuable as it makes a clear argument for the integration of organizational socialization and social capital theories. It also extends Fang et al.’s (2011) model by incorporating proactive personality as an antecedent for newcomer proactivity, and job satisfaction and employee loyalty as outcomes of organizational environments that support social capital building among younger workers. These research findings will serve as the link between what is already known about younger workers and issues with recruitment and retention of a diverse media management workforce, and what can be done to develop this next generation of leaders. Findings will be beneficial for early-career professionals learning to navigate the world of work; industry mentors and leaders will find conclusions valuable for establishing professional development practices aimed to create a pathway for success for early-career professionals, ultimately building a robust talent pipeline.

Finally, this study fulfills a timely need of the media industry to understand the next generation of media managers. By providing key insights into how this generation of early-career media professionals understands their positionality and development within the media industry, issues of recruitment and retention can be addressed. Strategic plans can be developed and implemented in order to adapt the media industry to this next generation, a generation of media managers who intimately understands the digital native audience and therefore, how to improve the practices and overall profitability of the media industry.

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The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Table 1*Demographics of Survey Sample (N = 136)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Age</i>	24.95	1.97
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	39	28.7
Female	95	69.9
Non-conforming	2	1.5
<i>Ethnic Origin</i>		
White	87	64.0
African American	10	7.4
Hispanic/Latino	11	8.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	18.4
Other	2	1.5
<i>Location</i>		
New England (CT, DE, NH, NJ, NY, MA, ME, PA, RI, VT)	20	14.8
Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)	58	43.0
South (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV)	28	20.7
West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)	29	21.5
<i>Education</i>		
High school graduate	5	3.7
Some college credit, no degree	10	7.4
Associate degree	4	2.9
Bachelor's degree	96	70.6
Master's degree or higher	20	14.7
<i>College Major</i>		
Agricultural Communications	4	2.9
Business - Accounting/Finance	7	5.1
Business - Marketing	30	22.1
Business - Entrepreneurship/Management	5	3.7
Communication Studies	11	8.1
Journalism/Digital Media	10	7.4
Leadership Studies	1	0.7
Strategic Communications (advertising/PR)	41	30.1
Other	21	15.4

Table 2

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions Predicting Career Social Capital (N =136)

	Bonding S.C.			Bridging S.C.		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Step 1 - Newcomer Proactivity						
Relationship Building	.14	.10	.15	.14	.08	.17
Sensemaking	.03	.11	.03	.11	.09	.13
Positive Framing	.23	.08	.25**	.21	.07	.27**
F		6.36 ⁺			11.08 ⁺	
R ²		.13			.20	
Step 2 - Org. Social Tactics						
Relationship Building	.15	.10	.16	.11	.09	.14
Sensemaking	.06	.10	.06	.13	.09	.15
Positive Framing	.13	.08	.14	.19	.07	.24**
Social Support	.38	.09	.42 ⁺	.08	.08	.11
Job Role Education	.06	.06	.09	.10	.05	.16
Role Modeling	-.09	.07	-.12	-.08	.07	-.12
ΔF		6.74 ⁺			1.37	
ΔR ²		.12			.03	

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01, +p < .001. S.C. = Social Capital, Org. = Organizational.