

4-21-2023

## **Ethnographic Analysis of Student Media: Uplifting Creative Young Adults**

Marissa Maldonado  
*Boise State University*

Kendall House  
*Boise State University*

---

## Ethnographic Analysis of Student Media: Uplifting Creative Young Adults

### Abstract

My research will focus on the Student Media Department at Boise State University - a student-run organization aimed at producing hyper-local media for the student newspaper, university radio station, and an independent magazine. Through ethnographic methods, such as contextual interviews and referencing physical artifacts, I will produce a qualitative analysis of how Student Media employees actively gain professional experience. My study will encourage participants to reflect on their personal and career goals within the organization, while also informing the department how they can best uplift students transitioning into professional environments.

As younger generations increasingly prioritize meaningful work in their careers, the results of this research will assist in documenting the social contexts shaping a new workforce of creative young adults. While collecting data, it became evident that the department has provided a level of autonomy such that an employee's personal interests can inform their education and career path. The functionality of the department is dependent on self-directed motivation - which largely reflects expectations within "real-world" professional environments. Across the 3 organizations, a variety of media content is published daily, leading to extensive portfolios reflecting individual skill sets. Their work is often revised by peers in a collaborative process, requiring them to receive and utilize relevant feedback. When asked about sentimental physical artifacts related to their jobs, it revealed a level of intellectual maturity that wouldn't be possible for somebody who didn't have to navigate their opinions so formally and on such a public scale - it was a roadmap for what influences their portfolio.

The analysis also raised valid challenges of the department, including various barriers to recruitment and limitations within university environments; this helped to inform the new-hire process, departmental procedures that need more attention, and improved planning to best support student employees. It is apparent that the Student Media Department acts as a springboard for creative young adults to truly bolster their passions by means of professional development, coursework connections, and portfolio curation.

### Comments

Funded by Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities (URCA) Grant

# Student Media Department

Student-run organization aimed at producing accurate and non-partisan media at a local level

## The Arbiter

- Independent student newspaper reporting articles on news, culture, sports, and opinion pieces
- Publication materials produced by employees, volunteers, and students enrolled in journalism courses

## University Pulse Radio

- Independent, online radio station hosting student-volunteered music shows and podcasts
- Organizes on-campus concerts and provides live coverage of music events

## Creative Hive Group

- Digital content team providing creative and commercial services to campus organizations and the local community
- Offers services in photography, videography, design, and illustration

## Data Collection

- Audience: Student Media employees
- Sample size: 8 out of 24 employees
- 1 freshman, 1 sophomore, 6 seniors

## Data Analysis

- Method: Grounded theory with open-thematic coding in NVIVO
- Recorded semi-structured interviews
- Transcribed, coded, and synthesized emerging themes in data

# Ethnographic Analysis of Student Media: Uplifting Creative Young Adults

Marissa Maldonado, Dr. Kendall House | Boise State University

Younger generations are increasingly prioritizing more meaningful work within their education and career, often searching for intellectual freedom and creative expression.

To what extent do student employees in this department gain professional experience relative to their undergraduate education, career path, and digital media portfolio?

Results will document the social contexts shaping a new workforce of creative young adults and inform departmental procedures to best uplift student employees.

