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The Value of Internships in Radio Broadcasting

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THE VALUE OF INTERNSHIPS IN RADIO BROADCASTING

by
Anthony Mandella

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

THE VALUE OF INTERNSHIPS IN RADIO BROADCASTING

by

Anthony Mandella

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018
Under the Supervision of Professor David S. Allen

The objective of this thesis was to investigate a generally understudied area in media professions – radio broadcasting internships. A survey, which included both close-ended and open-ended questions, was used to measure how internships were valued in radio broadcasting. The survey was distributed to radio station employees and select interns at a six-station conglomerate in the midwestern United States. Results showed that participants generally believed their internship experiences were more valuable than their classroom education. Additionally, participants developed unique skills at their internships which they claimed were not provided by their education. Participants also believed interns should receive financial compensation for their work. Overall, participants believed interns are capable of making positive contributions to a radio broadcasting workplace and should be valued as legitimate members of the workplace.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

What are we doing here? A phrase often muttered by college students, myself included, in regard to anything from what they are studying to what they intend to do following the completion of their degree. As someone who entered the worlds of college, work, and adulthood at the tail end of the United States' "Great Recession" of the late 2000s and early 2010s, I was left with the impression that employment or steady income were not the most reasonable expectations of post-college living. After all, based on what I had learned growing up, the economy stunk. Even the college educated were not guaranteed anything in terms of a job or compensation the way I was led to believe prior to the economic collapse. Consequently, I perceived any opportunity to make money, or gain employment, in the short term to be essential. After all, jobs were scarce, pay was low, and the odds of economically capitalizing on a degree were looking slim. That and I needed to eat, too.

As I learned through my own post-undergraduate experience, classroom education (in some cases) only gets you so far in the professional, working world. In fact, I rarely use the vast majority of (relatively) specialized information I acquired through my undergraduate education in my current line of work. So, again, what are we doing here?

I came to realize (through trial and error) that skills acquired through formal post-secondary education carry little weight in job-hunting without practical, "real-world" experience. Internships are one of several, popular methods employed by college students to gain practical, real-world experience related to their classroom educations. But why would I sacrifice a paid job to gain that (often unpaid) internship experience? A chance at a job in the future, maybe, sounded nice, but eating ramen noodles 24/7 didn't seem like a worthy sacrifice. Furthermore, I

never realized that non-academic experience would be so essential, seemingly more essential, to finding an entry-level job.

In a 2009 study, Michael Hergert studied the perceptions of the value of internships in education at San Diego State University. Specifically focused on business students, Hergert explored themes including, but not limited to, how internships help students make connections between academics and the working world and build career connections. His work explored several questions that I had never considered as an undergraduate student: Does a school requiring or governing an internship impact the value of that internship? How do students apply academic coursework to internships? Can receiving school credit for an internship affect its value? And, perhaps most lacking in my case, what are the *intangible* benefits of internships?¹

Given my personal misunderstanding of internship value when it was most applicable, I wanted to study internships in a similar manner to Hergert. However, instead of business, I wanted to explore how internships are valued by people who have interned or are interning in the media industry. I eventually landed in radio (thanks, in part, to an internship). For that reason, I primarily wanted to gain an understanding of how individuals in radio broadcasting valued their internships. Specifically, how they might have valued them relative to their education and career.

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the radio broadcasting profession employed roughly 84,000 people in 2017.² Television broadcasting, on the other hand, employed roughly 132,000 people in 2017.³ While radio employed far fewer staff, it was still the top weekly reach medium among United States adults in 2017 – ahead of television, smartphones, and computers – according to a Nielsen study.⁴ Yet, the majority of scholarly research about media internships, as covered in Chapter II, does not focus on the radio industry,

specifically. Given the impact of radio in the United States, it is important to recognize radio as its own unique medium worthy of study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

When seeking an understanding of how current or former radio interns understand or value internships, it is important to first understand how an intern might value his or her internship in general. Specifically, how he or she perceives an internship's value relative to two, consistently interwoven factors -- *education* and *careers*. Education value could include completing assignments, receiving college credit, or working with an instructor to set and reach learning goals. It could also mean gaining an understanding of something that could not be fully experienced in a classroom – for example, how to handle workplace conflict. Career value, on the other hand, could include how an internship creates a foot-in-the-door impression for a job, develops professionalism, or promotes skill advancement.

Additionally, any intern may become educated in any workplace, or develop workplace skills in any classroom. It is important to note that internships themselves inherently exist in a role that serves both education and career factors. Additionally, the role of internships in media-related professions, such as radio broadcasting, may differ from internships in other fields. Lastly, while there is intangible value in education and career-building, financial compensation is a critical part of any profession. The value of financial compensation can affect potential interns and their education and career decisions – as was the case with me.

Education

Internships are typically ascribed value in education through what is termed *experiential learning*. James W. Gentry reviewed multiple, pre-existing definitions of experiential learning in his research and found four primary stages, or themes, in experiential-learning processes: design, conduct, evaluation, and feedback. According to Gentry, those stages are as follows:

1. *Design*: the instructor specifies learning objectives, plans learning activities, identifies learning challenges, and creates a plan for the student's success.⁵ This could include outlining a learning objective of critically observing how professionals approach deadlines and a learning activity of writing weekly observation reports, for example.
2. *Conduct*: the instructor maintains and monitors the process, ensuring that it meets the intended criteria outlined in the design stage.⁶ For example, if a student is struggling to understand how to observe professionals, the instructor might modify the activity and ask the student to think about how they would feel in the professionals' shoes, instead. That type of change would occur in the conduct stage.
3. *Evaluation*: students perform the skills assigned in the design and conduct stages, while instructors assess students' learning as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.⁷ This stage is conducted by the instructor, but is dependent on students' ability to demonstrate their level of understanding. This stage can occur both within and after the conduct stage.
4. *Feedback*: the communication dialogue between interns and instructors that incorporates elements of questioning, and the possibilities of success or failure.⁸ This stage is essential to an instructor's ability to evaluate and conduct a students' learning. But, like the evaluation stage, it relies on the students' ability to demonstrate their level of understanding.

Internships are one form of experiential learning. However, internships are not the only form of experiential learning.⁹ Still, it is through this explanation of experiential learning that

internships can then be valued educationally. As Gentry noted, internships meet most if not all of the aforementioned stages, and students can often get school credit as a result.¹⁰

Gentry also noted how internships present benefits and drawbacks. A primary strength of internships, as it relates to experiential learning value, is experience as assessed through in the conduct and evaluation stages.¹¹ However, the feedback stage necessary to complete the conduct and evaluation stages can be difficult for universities to assess due to internships typically occurring outside of the university – a drawback. Consequently, it becomes challenging to definitively assign value to specific internships. For the same reason, it is also challenging to assign value to internships on a standardized, consistent basis.¹²

Elka Jones made the case for internships as a tool that has value outside of the course feedback stage. As discussed by Gentry, that stage can be difficult to assign academic value to because of its inconsistent nature. However, Jones' findings outlined examples in which an external internship can assist formal education not just by teaching or reinforcing skills, but by allowing students to experience environments that cannot be fully simulated or understood in a traditional classroom setting. Jones specifically outlined a hypothetical nursing student. While a nursing student may learn the same, standardized skills in a classroom, external experience could influence that student's further education based on whether he or she prefers the experience of emergency rooms or nursing homes.¹³ Based on this position, an internship that lacks experiential learning structure can still provide value in post-internship considerations. In other words, internships can have supplemental value in ways that course-based experiential learning routines may not.

Based on existing research, an internship's education value can be observed in two ways – how closely it adheres to experiential learning stages, and how deviations from those stages do

or don't result in freeform learning. In both cases, the education value of an internship would be defined by the learning that a classroom education did not or could not provide. With that in mind, it will be important to consider both pieces of the puzzle – how an internship might have met experiential learning stages, and what was learned outside of the experiential learning model – when researching radio internships. For example, some participants may find a direct connection to their classroom education through the experiential learning stages – having received a grade for completing reports or presentations about a certain aspect of their internship as assigned by a school supervisor. Meanwhile, other participants may have only been asked to report on one aspect of their internship, but end up gaining an abundance of knowledge in other areas, too.

Careers

Kimberly McDonough, Lulu Rodriguez, and Marcia Prior-Miller highlighted the integrated role of interns and their workplace supervisors as it relates to feedback about career progress as opposed to education progress. Specifically, they sought to measure how well interns and their workplace supervisors believed the interns were performing based on standards developed by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). They found that while opinions of an intern's work became more closely aligned by the end of the internship, interns and their supervisors still held statistically significant differences in how the intern performed or was performing.¹⁴

While the feedback dynamic in this study resembles the feedback stage in experiential learning presented earlier, it also presents a few key differences. Notably, the feedback represented by McDonough, Rodriguez, and Prior-Miller's questionnaire does not impact degree progress the way it might in the standard experiential learning model. Furthermore, the feedback

dialogue in experiential learning is not mediated by questionnaires or administered by third-party individuals the way it was in the study. What it does show, though, is that career feedback is also linked with the value of internships. In many ways, understanding a career in a hands-on way is used as an ultimate measure of value in education-based or school-sanctioned internships. In this regard, career feedback – and the value of that feedback – often piggy-backs the education value of internships.

Stephanie Castellano found that experiential learning can impact future career success. Again, this demonstrates the interwoven nature of education and career value. Castellano expanded on findings from a 2014 Gallup and Purdue University study. Gallup-Purdue found that students who engaged in internships or other forms of experiential learning during college were twice as likely to be engaged in their careers relative to students who had supportive, non-experiential learning relationships with university faculty.¹⁵ However, findings did not address whether interns were aware of such significant indicators before, during, or after their internship experience.

Gerard Callanan and Cynthia Benzing offer complimentary findings to the Gallup-Purdue study. While the Gallup-Purdue study focused on career engagement as a result of experiential learning (such as internships), Callanan and Benzing focused on whether an internship led to identifying a career. Their results showed that the majority of students who completed an internship had a career-oriented job upon graduation.¹⁶ Additionally, such students were 41 percent more likely to have secured such a job than those who had not completed an internship.¹⁷

Existing research shows that internships' career value can be related to career engagement or starting a career. However, there is little information on whether the interns themselves are aware of the significance internships can have on starting a career. When

directing these ideas to research on broadcast internships, it will be important to understand whether participants can separate education and career-based value, and also whether they are aware of an internship's impact on future careers. It could be beneficial to understand interns' degree of awareness because their overall perception of an internship or their career could be impacted by

Careers: A (brief) different perspective

Anita Dennis studied the role of interns in small accounting firms. Upon interviewing employees of such firms, she found that highly involved interns/internships proved beneficial to such firms in developing potential future employees, getting meaningful work at reduced (part-time) cost and teaching necessary skills of the job.¹⁸ It should be noted that the study was completed when the talent pool for small accounting firms was deteriorating.

These findings unearth a few things to consider. For example, how an internship supervisor values interns can have a direct impact on the skills they learn, how they are compensated, and whether they are eventually hired. All of these objectives mirror the values presented previously in the education and career value review. It could be beneficial to explore what interns believe their internship supervisors (as opposed to their internship specifically) provided them.

Broadcast Journalism Curricula

With a foundation of how internships can have valued in regard to education and/or careers now apparent, it is important to look at each area more specifically. College can be a starting point for students seeking internships. As explored earlier, a college-based internship exists outside of a traditional classroom setting. For that reason, how curricula prepare students

to intern or how the learning objects of the classroom differ from an internship, are necessary to understand.

Erin Kock, Jong Kang, and David Allen compared broadcast curricula between two-year and four-year colleges in a 1999 article. They found that production courses in television, radio, and audio dominated two-year colleges' broadcast curricula.¹⁹ While four-year colleges included some such courses, they tended to offer a higher volume and variety of conceptual, as opposed to technical, courses compared to two-year colleges.²⁰ As for internships specifically, nearly one-half of all two-year colleges in the study required a professional internship; nearly one-fifth of four-year colleges, however, required a professional internship as part of the degree requirement.²¹

Jeanti St. Clair looked at past course offerings and how experiential journalism curricula affected students. Students in the study believed that experiential learning as curricula was a positive experience.²² Students expressed satisfaction or improvement in several areas, including portfolio development, networking, and experiencing a real work environment – areas the students described as “sometimes a bit daunting.”²³ St. Clair's work also uncovered a challenge that such learning presents. In areas such as journalism, the “extra-curricular” nature of experiential learning projects can cause problems. The intensity of certain journalistic demands, such as event or field reporting that require unique staffing, creates a challenge for students and supervisors alike that can hinder or disrupt the overall learning process.²⁴

While the studies outlined above look at broadcast curricula internally, from the perspective of schools and students, they do not look at it from another key perspective – future employers. Sonya Forte Duhe and Lee Ann Zukowski studied how broadcast curricula and education impact employment and careers in broadcast journalism. Part of their research

compared the perceived value of education and curricula between television news directors and academics. Their results showed that television news directors were more likely than academics to believe that a more educated person is more likely to be a successful broadcast journalist.²⁵ Television news directors also agreed that the more educated a person was, the more likely they were to hire that person at their station.²⁶ Television news directors also expressed that hands-on experience – in the classroom or otherwise – was key when considering a candidate’s likelihood to be hired. About 84 percent of television news directors believed that the more experience a person had, the more likely that person would be a successful broadcast journalist; only 64 percent of academics shared that belief.²⁷ In regard to broadcast curricula specifically, television news directors believed that the most hireable candidates came from educational programs with the most hands-on curricula.²⁸ While most academics agreed that the most hands-on curricula were the best curricula, few institutions actually implemented such curricula.²⁹ However, Duhe and Zukowski’s research only examined the television side of broadcasting – not the radio broadcasting side. As noted in earlier sections, the radio broadcasting industry boasts significantly lower employment numbers than the television broadcasting industry. Additionally, engagement with radio and television as media differ. For both reasons, radio should be examined as its own entity.

The research outlined above provides plenty of information on *what* broadcast curricula are, but little on how they impact students’ perceived internship value. For example, four-year colleges, though less likely than two-year colleges to *require* an internship, may value internships more highly *because* their curricula are less concentrated on production skills. St. Clair noted what students enjoyed and learned from their experiential learning programs, but said little regarding how a journalism internship compared to journalism courses. As for Duhe and

Zukowski's work, it is unknown how radio broadcasting compares to the television-exclusive findings of their research. Overall, the dots between broadcast curricula and internships are there, but not seemingly connected in terms of internship value.

Broadcast Journalism Internships

Existing research reviewed to this point highlights the value of internships in general. It has not, however, covered the value that internships have in broadcast journalism fields, such as radio, specifically.

Michael Hilt and Jeremy Lipschultz examined interns and internships in media programs. They acknowledged both of the previously discussed values (education and career), but concentrated on the balance between the two values as opposed to the prevalence of one over the other. Specifically, they focused on the balance of an internship's education and career value(s) in broadcast newsrooms. Their results showed that newsroom interns and newsroom internship supervisors held statistically significant differences in regard to the internship's value.³⁰ However, unlike the McDonough, Rodriguez, and Prior-Miller study, Hilt and Lipschultz found that the greatest difference in opinion between interns and their internship supervisors was *not* the caliber of work or demonstration of skills. Rather, interns believed their degree and major were far more significant than their internship.³¹ Meanwhile, internship supervisors believed the opposite – that internships and experience were far more significant than interns' degree and major.³² Other noteworthy findings included: both groups agreed that colleges should teach hands-on skills; broadcast managers disagreed with interns that students learned adequate hands-on skills in college; and broadcast managers disagreed with interns that colleges adequately prepared students for careers in broadcast newsrooms.³³

The findings of the Hilt and Lipschultz study are somewhat outdated in regard to career value compared to the semi-related McDonough, Rodriguez, and Prior-Miller article, but there are still relevant points to consider. For example, Hilt and Lipschultz shed additional light on the intern-employer relationship, but still did little to address which skills would actually be beneficial or desired. Furthermore, Hilt and Lipschultz's findings show a difference in opinion between students and future employers as to the value of their education.

Financial Compensation

The United States Department of Labor's (DOL) *Fair Labor Standards Act* provides a legal outline of when an intern is supposed to be financially compensated. However, despite the law, interns are often not compensated – lawfully or otherwise. As outlined by the DOL, there are six criteria in determining whether an intern must be paid:

1. *The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;*
2. *The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;*
3. *The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;*
4. *The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;*
5. *The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and*
6. *The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.*³⁴

If all six criteria are met, the FLSA's minimum wage/overtime rules do not apply to the intern.³⁵

With regard to both education and careers, value is often measured in terms of compensation. Compensation can mean school credit, experience on a resume, or newly acquired skills/training. However, compensation is traditionally thought of in financial terms. While some interns receive financial compensation, other interns do not. The debate surrounding intern compensation presents another idea of value that deviates from the education/career model.

In 2013, Madeline Schwartz studied interns as employees potentially worthy of financial compensation in the eyes of the law. She considered whether interns even saw themselves as workers. Furthermore, she explored the idea of the "good-worker" mindset. This mindset devalues the idea of employment and leads interns to not perceive themselves as workers. Therefore, they do not demand workers' rights such as fair or legal pay.³⁶

One key lack of understanding looms: There is no scholarly research that assesses whether interns are aware of the legal protections offered by the Fair Labor Standards Act as it pertains to their internships. There is next to no scholarly material on internships' financial value, despite the amount of scholarly work assessing the education and career-based value of internships across industries (including media). This lack of critical understanding may impact current or former students, or interns whose ultimate goal in pursuing education or career experience is economic advancement.

Internships and the Workplace

As just noted, the idea of compensation introduces the idea of interns as part of the workplace among radio broadcasters.

A 2017 paper by DaJung Woo, Linda Putnam, and Sarah Riforgiate explored internships as a type of organizational employment. Their research considered how interns identify themselves within the workplace, and how those identities might relate to satisfaction versus dissatisfaction with the internship experience. Data revealed three areas of tension among interns as part of the workplace: the self-identified role as either an *inexperienced student/worker* or a *competent employee*, the importance of the internship for *now* versus the *future*, and the effects of *close* as opposed to *distant* supervision.³⁷ In regard to their role, most of the interns constructed an identity around learning and training, recognizing the educational aspects of the internship, and expecting to learn something that was not possible at a part-time job.³⁸ However, when assigned to simple repetitive tasks, interns believed their capabilities for work were undermined by their supervisors.³⁹ Interns weighed the “now versus the future” tension to create a “professional identity for a future career”, and used that identity to assess whether they would continue pursuing work in that field.⁴⁰ Overall, interns did not seem positively or negatively influenced by the level of supervision they received.⁴¹ Rather, interns who were satisfied drew positives from both close and distant supervision, and interns who were dissatisfied drew negatives from both close and distant supervision.⁴²

Their results found that satisfied interns typically aligned their tensions into one of two groups. The first group identified as inexperienced student workers who valued the now and close supervision. The second group identified as competent organizational members who valued the future and distant supervision. Dissatisfaction among interns typically occurred when one or more areas of tension crossed groups.⁴³

Woo, Putnam, and Riforgiate's research uncovered three primary ways that interns evaluate their internships as part of the workplace. However, it did not explore how other workers evaluate interns in the workplace.

Part of that process could be explained through the concept of (vocational) anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization is the process of acquiring knowledge about work.⁴⁴ The process can include knowledge gained anytime between early childhood and the entry of a full-time job. It can be acquired from a number of sources and experiences, including: parents, educational institutions, friends, media, and part-time jobs. According to a 2006 article by Kenneth Levine and Cynthia Hoffner, parents, school, and part-time jobs are the primary sources of anticipatory socialization knowledge among adolescents.⁴⁵ As noted earlier, internships inherently straddle the line between education and careers. Relating those areas to agents of socialization, school and (part-time) jobs relate to education and careers, respectively. For that reason, anticipatory socialization might play a role in the value of internships.

Stephanie Dailey researched internships, specifically, as mechanisms of anticipatory socialization. Her results found that internships might provide more realistic perceptions of full-time work than other methods of anticipatory socialization, such as those noted above.⁴⁶ Results showed that internships held statistically significant positive effects on socialization areas such as familiarity with coworkers/supervisors and job competency.⁴⁷ She noted interns becoming socialized in four workplace dimensions – culture, organization, members, and vocation.⁴⁸ Results also showed areas in which internships led to negative or conflicting socialization outcomes. For example, some interns felt that they were members of the workplace while others did not.⁴⁹ Such experiences may taint interns' perceptions of a workplace or career – an outcome

noted as being counterproductive to an organization's goals in incorporating interns into the workplace.⁵⁰

Research Questions

After sifting through existing literature, several shortcomings appear. Most startling, no existing research has answered how radio-broadcasting interns think about internships. In relation to the sections laid out above, there are several new questions I hope to answer that existing literature did not provide answers to in regard to how radio-broadcasting intern think about internships.

Education: In response to education value, I found the greatest lack of understanding to be in the feedback stage of experiential learning. It is also unclear whose feedback would be more valuable, that of the school supervisor or the workplace supervisor. With that in mind:

RQ1: How do radio-broadcast students believe their school supervisor valued their internship experience?

RQ2: How do radio-broadcast students believe their workplace supervisor valued their internship experience?

RQ3: Whose feedback do radio-broadcast students value more: their school supervisor or their workplace supervisor?

Answering these questions would present a clearer indication of how students perceive a) the value of the oft-overlooked feedback stage and b) whose feedback is valued greater.

Careers: Some aspects of career value research included elements of education value and experiential learning. However, it was still apparent that interns' understandings of an internship's career implications were partially understood at best.

RQ4: How do radio-broadcast students perceive the value of internships on future career success?

Finding answers to this question should shed light on whether or not participants understood why they pursued internships, and whether or not they grasp the real-world, career-based results of experiential learning.

Broadcast Education Curricula: Existing research highlights the differences among curricula, how students react to experiential learning curricula, and how professionals and academics alike value experiential learning. However, it is still unclear how curricula impact interns' perception of internship value.

RQ5: How do radio-broadcast students feel curricula prepared them for their internship experience(s)?

Broadcast Journalism Internships: Building on the concepts not explored in career-value research, existing material on broadcast journalism internships definitely supports an enhanced value of internships. In broadcast journalism careers and internships, the overall importance of internships and hands-on skills was heavily noted, but not explored in great depth. Specifically, the experience of working alongside professionals to gain skills, and the requisite skills of radio broadcasting seemed overlooked.

RQ6: How do radio-broadcast internships increase professional-skill training?

Responses to this question would better clarify the workplace skills valued by interns.

Financial Compensation: It is clear from existing material that interns are often unaware of their financial compensation rights or unwilling to demand them.

RQ7: How aware were radio-broadcast interns of their rights?

RQ8: Do radio-broadcast interns believe they should be financially compensated for their work?

Finding answers to one or both questions could add a layer of insight into interns' valuation of education and career internship value.

Internships and the Workplace: Woo, Putnam, and Riforgiate noted two intern-identity profiles of positive internship experiences, but did not explore how non-interns evaluated interns in the workplace. It is also unclear how anticipatory socialization unfolds in the radio broadcasting field.

RQ9: How do radio-broadcast interns believe they contribute to the workplace as interns?

RQ10: How do former radio-broadcast interns believe current interns are perceived as members of the workplace?

These questions apply existing knowledge to an area where it is yet to be explored – radio broadcasting.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

To measure the value of radio-broadcasting internship experience(s), an online survey was distributed among employees of a midwestern radio conglomerate. The conglomerate included two different media markets with three radio stations in each market. Program formats in the conglomerate included: adult album alternative, classic hits, hot adult contemporary, sports, and Top 40. According to Nielsen's fall 2017 radio market survey, both markets ranked within the top 150 radio markets in the United States and one of the markets ranked within the top 50 markets.⁵¹

The self-administered survey was distributed via email to current employees of the conglomerate. Because current interns are not considered employees, they were not included in the conglomerate's email database. As a result, station program directors or internship supervisors were asked in the distribution email to forward the survey to current and/or former interns. The email instructions can be found in Appendix A.

For that reason, it was impossible to know exactly how many individuals received the survey, how many of those individuals were current interns, and how many of those individuals had interned in the past if at all. However, based on personal observation that a station typically welcomes roughly five interns at a time, it could be estimated that roughly 30 current interns (five interns per station times six stations) potentially received the survey if the appropriate individuals forwarded the email request. Combined with a known database of roughly 150 individuals, it was reasonable to conclude that somewhere between 150 and 180 individuals received the survey during the distribution period.

Surveys and questionnaires are an effective research tool when respondents are competent to answer and willing to answer.⁵² Because members of the sample population shared a common experience – radio broadcasting – they were likely competent regarding the survey’s content. A copy of the survey is in Appendix B.

As noted above, there were roughly 150 known email contacts in the conglomerate’s email database. While a response rate of 100 percent would be ideal, few studies meet that goal. A study by Yehuda Baruch and Brooks C. Holtom compiled response rates from 1,607 studies that were published in over one dozen different academic journals over a five-year period. They found the average response rate to those surveys was 52.7 percent with a standard deviation of 21.2.⁵³

The survey included a blend of multiple choice, yes-or-no, and open-ended questions. A strength of qualitative research – including open-ended survey questions – is that it can provide depth as opposed to breadth.⁵⁴ Open-ended questions can add to and build on the statistical data generated from related, close-ended questions in the survey.⁵⁵ Accordingly, they can help support answers to research questions with qualitative accounts of internship experiences.

Nobody was required to participate, but a drawing for a \$25 monetary incentive was employed to encourage participation. According to Eleanor Singer and Cong Ye, monetary incentives – as opposed to gifts – have the strongest, positive effect on response rates.⁵⁶ Prepaid incentives are considered the most effective model.⁵⁷ However, due to logistic hurdles, the “lottery” incentive model that selects its “winner(s)” upon completion is perceived as a more efficient choice for opt-in, web-based and/or self-administered questionnaires.⁵⁸

One participant received the monetary incentive(s) – valued at \$25 – by the researcher drawing a random name from a group of participants. For the drawing of the incentive to logistically work, participants needed to provide names and contact information. That information was requested strictly so that the participant could be contacted in the event that his/her name was drawn. However, participants were not required to provide any personal identifying information unless they wanted to enter the incentive drawing. Entering the drawing, and thus providing personal information, was not required to participate in the survey. Demographic information was collected via the survey. Though it did not directly relate to any research question, such information could show trends in internship experiences.

By combining the breadth of statistical data from the survey's close-ended questions with the depth of its open-ended questions, the resultant data would provide both breadth *and* depth to the topic of value in radio broadcasting internships. Research questions related to education, curricula, and compensation (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ7, RQ8) were primarily explored using close-ended questions, while research questions related to careers and internships (RQ5, RQ6, RQ9, RQ10) were primarily explored using open-ended questions. However, considerations for answering all research questions will be incorporated into both methods.

Over a two-week collection period, 28 full or partial responses were recorded. The partial responses included participants who completed some, but not all, of the survey and participants who declined to answer select questions throughout the survey. The data from such responses was included and analyzed among full responses as part of the data set. However, doing so resulted in varying numbers of responses to certain questions throughout the survey. “Participant” and corresponding terms will henceforth be a reference to the total number of responses to the question(s) or result being discussed.

Among those who participated, demographics skewed male. The average age of participants was 35, with 68 percent of participants identifying as age 30 or older. Most participants had at least 6-10 years of experience (60.7 percent) in the radio broadcasting industry. Also, most participants held a four-year bachelor's degree (53.6 percent). Including four-year bachelor's degree holders, 85.71 percent of participants either held or were working toward a two-year associate's degree or four-year bachelor's degree. No participants held or were working toward a graduate-level degree or higher, and no participants reported multiple degrees or education levels. A majority (65.2 percent) of participants who held or were working toward a degree at some point completed an internship to fulfill a course requirement for their degree program. However, only 10.7 percent of all participants identified as current interns.

As noted above, the exact number of individuals who received the survey cannot be known due to the distribution contingency surrounding current interns. However, based on a high-end estimate of 180 individuals who potentially received the distribution email, the estimated overall response rate would be roughly 15 percent. Accordingly, the response rate among current interns would be 10 percent. Efforts were made to improve the response rate. The email was redistributed two days after the initial distribution. It was also redistributed one week after the initial distribution.

Additionally, it is unknown how many individuals who received the survey request had no internship experience; all that was known about the individuals in the conglomerate's email database was that they currently worked for the conglomerate. However, even if an individual did not have any internship experience, they were still able to provide responses about their perceptions of interns in the workplace. For that reason, all participants were able to contribute something of value to this study, regardless of internship experience.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The following reports the results for each of the research questions.

RQ1: How do radio-broadcast students believe their school supervisor valued their internship experience?

Among participants who completed an internship to fulfill a course requirement, 88 percent had an internship advisor or supervisor. All participants who completed an internship agreed or strongly agreed (73.3 percent) that their advisor/supervisor valued their internship experience. Participants agreed that feedback from that advisor/supervisor (93.3 percent) was valuable to their internship experience, while only 6.7 percent disagreed with that statement. It should be noted that not all internships are completed to fulfill a course requirement. However, the number of participants who completed an internship to fulfill a course requirement versus those completed an internship for another reason cannot be determined due to impartial data.

RQ2: How do radio-broadcast students believe their workplace supervisor valued their internship experience?

Among participants who identified as having interned in radio broadcasting, 95 percent reported having workplace supervision from one or multiple individuals. All participants agreed or strongly agreed (61.9 percent) that supervisors valued the work that they did. Additionally, all participants agreed or strongly agreed (76.2 percent) that feedback from supervisors was valuable to their internship experience.

RQ3: Whose feedback do radio-broadcast students value more: their school supervisor or their workplace supervisor?

Among the 15 qualified participants who had both a school and an internship supervisor, participants were more likely to agree that their academic advisor/supervisor valued their internship experience than to agree that their workplace supervisor valued their internship experience. However, the difference between the two was not statistically significant. Conversely, participants were more likely to agree that feedback from their workplace supervisor(s) was valuable to their internship experience than to agree that feedback from their school advisor/supervisor was valuable to their internship experience. Again, the difference between the two was not statistically significant. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to draw both comparisons.

(Table 1.1 Survey results of academic and workplace supervisor value and feedback)

Q6: When completing my internship to fulfill a course requirement, my academic program's internship advisor/supervisor valued my internship.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	11	39.3	73.3
3 = Somewhat Agree	4	14.3	26.7
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
N/A, I did not have a school internship advisor/supervisor.	2	7.1	-
No Response	11	39.3	-
TOTAL	28	100	-
Q7: Feedback from my academic program's internship advisor/supervisor was valuable to my overall internship experience.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	7	25	46.7
3 = Somewhat Agree	7	25	46.7
2 = Somewhat Disagree	1	3.6	6.7
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
N/A, I did not have a school internship advisor/supervisor.	1	3.6	-
No Response	11	39.3	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 1.1 Continued)

Q12: When completing my internship in a professional setting, my workplace supervisor(s) valued the work I did as an intern.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	13	46.4	61.9
3 = Somewhat Agree	8	28.6	38.1
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
N/A, I did not have a workplace supervisor.	1	3.6	-
No Response	6	21.4	-
TOTAL	28	100	-
Q13: Feedback from my workplace supervisor(s) was valuable to my internship experience.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	16	57.1	76.2
3 = Somewhat Agree	5	17.9	23.8
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
N/A, I did not have a workplace supervisor.	1	3.6	-
No Response	6	21.4	-
TOTAL	28	100	

(Table 1.2 Comparison of academic and workplace supervisor value)

Paired-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Academic Advisor/Supervisor Valued Int.		15	3.73	.458	.118
Workplace Supervisor(s) Valued Int.		15	3.67	.488	.126
Statistical Significance: .446	t = .435	df = 14		Sig. (2-tailed) = .670	

(Table 1.3 Comparison of academic and workplace supervisor feedback)

Paired-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Academic Advisor/Supervisor Feedback		15	3.40	.632	.163
Workplace Supervisor(s) Feedback		15	3.87	.352	.091
Statistical Significance: .356	t = -2.824	df = 14		Sig. (2-tailed) = .014	

RQ4: How do radio-broadcast students perceive the value of internships on future career success?

Among the 22 participants who completed an internship, all agreed or strongly agreed (59.1 percent) that the experience was valuable when making future career decisions. When asked whether their internship was more valuable than traditional school/course work when considering careers, 95.2 percent somewhat or strongly agreed, while 4.8 percent somewhat disagreed. No participants strongly disagreed.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to measure agreement to survey question Q20 by education level (see Table 2.2). Participants who had completed a professional training or certificate program were most likely to agree that their internship would aid future success, followed by participants who had a four-year bachelor’s degree in progress. Those with two-year associate’s degrees and four-year bachelor’s degrees showed identical degrees of agreement. However, given the small sample of each, it is difficult to draw a conclusion from the result.

(Table 2.1 Survey results of future career value and relative education level)

Q16: My internship(s) in radio broadcasting were valuable when making future career decisions	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	13	46.4	59.1
3 = Somewhat Agree	9	32.1	40.9
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
No Response	6	21.4	-
TOTAL	28	100	-
Q20: Overall, my internship(s) was more valuable than my traditional school/course work when considering careers.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	11	39.3	52.4
3 = Somewhat Agree	9	32.1	42.9
2 = Somewhat Disagree	1	3.6	4.8
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
No Response	7	25	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 2.2 Comparison of relative education value by education level)

Agreement to Q20 by Education Level	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Professional Training/Certificate Program (no degree)	2	4.00	.000
2-Year/Associate's Degree in progress	1	3.00	.
2-Year/Associate's Degree completed	2	3.50	.707
4-Year/Bachelor's Degree in progress	4	3.75	.500
4-Year/Bachelor's Degree completed	12	3.50	.905

RQ5: How do radio-broadcast interns feel curricula prepared them for their internship experience(s)?

When asked whether their education adequately prepared them for their internship(s) in radio broadcasting, 57.2 percent of all participants somewhat (39.3 percent) or strongly (17.9 percent) agreed. Participants who held a two-year associate’s degree were most likely to agree or strongly agree, followed by participants who had completed a professional training or certificate program. Among all degree holders, participants with a four-year bachelor’s degree were the least likely to agree or strongly agree.

An independent-samples t-test (equal variances assumed) was conducted to compare agreement to survey question Q11 based on degree (Table 3.2). The difference in agreement between two-year associate’s degree holders and four-year bachelor’s degree holders was not statistically significant.

(Table 3.1 Survey results of education preparation)

Q11: My education adequately prepared me to intern in radio broadcasting.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	5	17.9	21.7
3 = Somewhat Agree	11	39.3	47.8
2 = Somewhat Disagree	5	17.9	21.7
1 = Strongly Disagree	2	7.1	8.7
No Response	5	17.9	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 3.2 Comparison of education preparation by degree)

Independent-Sample T-Test		N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error Mean
Two-Year/Associate's Degree		2	3.50	.707	.500
Four-Year/Bachelor's Degree		13	2.85	.899	.249
Statistical Significance: .667	t = .972	df = 14		Sig. (2-tailed) = .349	

Additionally, participants had open-ended opportunities to reflect on their time as a student as it pertained to their internship(s) or career experience in radio broadcasting. When granted that opportunity, none of the participants chose to spotlight any positive value provided by their education. Instead, participants chose to expound on their internships. This could have been subconsciously prompted by the language and premise of the survey, but it could also have been prompted by a genuine belief held by participants. Some described ways in which their internship was educational in its own right. For example, one participant noted, “It was a very educational internship where I worked with all facets of the radio station; on-air, production, advertising, marketing, etc.” In other cases, participants opted to discuss ways in which their internship(s) educated them about things that they could not learn anywhere else – presumably including in a formal, classroom educational setting. One participant noted, “This internship has already taught me so much in over a month and gave me a lot of valuable hands-on experience that I couldn’t get anywhere else.” Another participant noted, “There are too many lessons that only a radio studio and live broadcasting can teach you.” One participant went so far as to explain that his/her education has been of minimal value in his/her career thus far. That participant wrote, “I’ve never been asked what classes I took, but instead, what do you know how to do. It’s the hands-on experience that is so valuable.” Another participant stated that their

internship was so much more valuable than their education that they decided to drop out of their degree program.

RQ6: How do radio-broadcast internships increase professional-skill training?

Among qualified participants, 95.3 percent somewhat or strongly agreed (66.7 percent) that their radio broadcasting internship helped them develop professional skills that their formal education did not or has not provided. Only 4.8 percent of qualified participants disagreed with that statement.

Professional skill was also split into two categories – technical kills and soft skills. When asked how their internship helped develop either technical skills or soft skills respectively, participants were more likely to agree that their internship helped them develop technical skills, as opposed to soft skills. This was drawn from a paired-samples t-test and, as the results show (Table 4.2), difference between the two was not statistically significant.

(Table 4.1 Survey results of internship skill development)

Q14: My radio broadcasting internship experience helped me improve or develop professional, technical skills. (ex: using sound-editing software, website use, sound board use, broadcasting skill, etc.)	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	15	53.6	71.4
3 = Somewhat Agree	6	21.4	28.6
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
No Response	7	25	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 4.1 Continued)

Q15 - My radio broadcasting internship experience helped me improve or develop professional, soft skills. (ex: communicating with others, problem solving, time management, emotional intelligence, etc.)	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	13	46.4	59.1
3 = Somewhat Agree	9	32.1	40.9
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
No Response	6	21.4	-
TOTAL	28	100	-
Q18: My radio broadcasting internship helped me develop professional skills that I would not have/did not/have not achieved through formal education such as college or a certificate program.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	14	50.0	66.7
3 = Somewhat Agree	6	21.4	28.6
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	1	3.6	4.8
No Response	7	25	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 4.2 Comparison of soft versus technical skill development)

Statistical Significance: .180		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Soft Skills		21	3.57	.507	.111
Technical Skills		21	3.71	.463	.101
Statistical Significance: .573	t = -1.142	df = 20		Sig. (2-tailed) = .267	

Among those who answered both Q8 and Q19 (see Table 4.3), participants were more likely to agree that their internships were valuable to their development in radio broadcasting than to agree that their academic course work was valuable to their development in radio broadcasting (Table 4.4). Based on the results of a paired-samples t-test, as shown in Table 4.4, the difference in agreement was not statistically significant.

(Table 4.3 Survey results of internship skill development)

Q8: My academic program's course work was valuable to my development in radio broadcasting.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	11	39.3	40.7
3 = Somewhat Agree	8	28.6	29.6
2 = Somewhat Disagree	5	17.9	18.5
1 = Strongly Disagree	3	10.7	11.1
No Response	1	3.6	-
TOTAL	28	100	-
Q19: My internship was valuable to my development in radio broadcasting.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	18	64.3	85.7
3 = Somewhat Agree	3	10.7	14.3
2 = Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
No Response	7	25	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 4.4 Comparison of course work versus internship value to development)

Paired-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Academic Course Work Value		21	3.00	1.049	.229
Internship Value		21	3.86	.359	.078
Statistical Significance: .566	t = -3.697	df = 20		Sig. (2-tailed) = .001	

Participants were also asked to describe how their internship(s) helped them develop professional technical and/or soft skills. Three participants outlined strictly technical skills, four participants outlined strictly soft skills, and six participants outlined both technical and soft skills. Commonly discussed technical skills included references to: operating a sound board, using editing programs, understanding radio tower signaling, and using automation software.

Commonly discussed soft skills included references to: working in teams, handling conflict, understanding work philosophies within the industry, and understanding emotions.

Though a definitive conclusion cannot be drawn from such small numbers, it should be noted that despite data leaning toward agreement that internships advanced technical skills more than soft skills, their open-ended responses leaned toward the opposite – that internships advanced soft skills more than technical skills. For example, one participant wrote, “You got to see how the radio hosts and talent prepare, and you get to hear many different styles of delivery.” Another participant wrote, “There are plenty of conversations that need to be had out of the studio where understanding emotions and critical thinking allows fluid comprehension for multiple parties.”

RQ7: How aware were radio-broadcast interns of their rights?

Among the 15 participants who had an internship, 52.4 percent were either somewhat or very unaware of the criteria outlined in the Department of Labor’s “Fair Labor Standards Act” regarding financial compensation during their internship. Additionally, 85.7 percent of those participants agreed that their internship(s) adequately adhered to the criteria, but only 19 percent were certain enough to strongly agree. However, 95.9 percent of participants who had an internship agreed or strongly agreed (66.7 percent) that it is important for interns to be made aware of those criteria. Surprisingly, 4.1 percent of participants who had an internship disagreed that it was important.

RQ8: Do radio-broadcast interns believe they should be financially compensated for their work?

Three participants were current interns; they were the most likely to agree or strongly agree that interns should be financially compensated for their time/work. Participants who never had an internship held the second highest percentage of participants to agree or strongly agree that interns should be compensated, followed by participants who had previously worked as interns. When comparing any two groups of participants among current interns, former interns, and never interned, the differences in agreement were not statistically significant based on the results of independent-samples t-tests (equal variances assumed) as shown in Tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4. Among all participants, most agreed (57.1 percent) that interns should be paid for their time/work.

(Table 5.1 Survey results of if interns should be paid)

Q25: Radio broadcasting interns should be paid for their time/work.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	7	25.0	29.2
3 = Somewhat Agree	9	32.1	37.5
2 = Somewhat Disagree	4	14.3	16.7
1 = Strongly Disagree	4	14.3	16.7
No Response	4	14.3	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 5.2 Comparison of if interns should be paid – current versus never interned)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	3.67	.577	.333
Never Interned		4	3.25	.500	.250
Statistical Significance: .707	t = 1.025	df = 5		Sig. (2-tailed) = .352	

(Table 5.3 Comparison of if interns should be paid – current versus former)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	3.67	.577	.333
Former Interns		8	2.38	1.061	.375
Statistical Significance: .191	t = 1.958	df = 9		Sig. (2-tailed) = .082	

(Table 5.4 Comparison of if interns should be paid – former versus never interned)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Former Interns		8	2.38	1.061	.375
Never Interned		4	3.25	.500	.250
Statistical Significance: .093	t = -1.539	df = 10		Sig. (2-tailed) = .155	

Among the eight participants who had completed an internship, 95.5 percent never received financial compensation for the time/work. Only one participant received financial compensation for some, but not all, of their internship(s) work. No participants acknowledged being paid for all of their internships. Participants who had been financially compensated for some, but not all, internship(s) were more likely to agree or strongly agree that interns should be paid for time/work. However, that only included one participant. Additionally, statistical significance between the two groups of respondents could not be calculated; the number of participants who had been paid for some, but not all, internships was too low.

RQ9: How do radio-broadcast interns believe they contribute to the workplace as interns?

Current interns were the most likely participants to agree or strongly that interns made valuable contributions to work place productivity, followed by participants who never interned,

and participants who formerly interned (see Tables 6.2, 6.3, 6.4). Like the results listed for RQ8, independent-samples t-tests (equal variances assumed) were conducted to compare results between any two groups of participants' internship experience: current intern, former intern, or never interned. The difference in agreement between current interns and former interns was statistically significant. Overall, most participants (75 percent) agreed that interns make valuable contributions.

(Table 6.1 Survey results of intern contributions)

Q26: Radio broadcasting interns make valuable contributions to workplace productivity.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	11	39.3	45.8
3 = Somewhat Agree	10	35.7	41.7
2 = Somewhat Disagree	3	10.7	12.5
1 = Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
No Response	4	14.3	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 6.2 Comparison of intern contributions – current versus never interned)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	4.00	.000	.000
Never Interned		4	3.25	.500	.250
Statistical Significance: .052	t = 2.535	df = 5		Sig. (2-tailed) = .052	

(Table 6.3 Comparison of intern contributions – current versus former)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	4.00	.000	.000
Former Interns		8	3.13	.835	.295
Statistical Significance: .038	t = 1.756	df = 9		Sig. (2-tailed) = .113	

(Table 6.4 Comparison of intern contributions – former versus never interned)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Former Interns		8	3.13	.835	.295
Never Interned		4	3.25	.500	.250
Statistical Significance: .280	t = -.272	df = 10		Sig. (2-tailed) = .791	

Participants were asked to describe the types of contributions interns make to the workplace. In terms of specific tasks, responsibilities, or duties carried-out by interns, the most common responses included: screening phone calls/answering phones, editing sound files, and supplemental “behind-the-scenes” projects. As one participant put it, “(Interns) can be the gas that keeps the car running” when they take initiative. Overall, participants expressed admiration for interns who take it upon themselves to learn and contribute to the workplace.

RQ10: How do former radio-broadcast interns believe current interns are perceived as members of the workplace?

Participants were asked whether radio-broadcasting interns are as much a part of the workplace as paid employees. Again, current interns were most likely to somewhat or strongly agree, followed by participants who never interned, and then former interns (see Tables 7.2, 7.3, 7.4). The degree of agreement between any two groups was not statistically significant based on

the results of independent-samples t-tests (equal variances assumed) as shown in Tables 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4. Overall, participants who were current interns or had never interned agreed, but participants who previously interned primarily disagreed (75 percent) that interns are as much a part of the workplace.

(Table 7.1 Survey results of if interns are a part of the workplace)

Q27: Radio broadcasting interns are as much a part of the workplace as paid employees.	N	%	Valid %
4 = Strongly Agree	6	21.4	25.0
3 = Somewhat Agree	6	21.4	25.0
2 = Somewhat Disagree	9	32.1	37.5
1 = Strongly Disagree	3	10.7	12.5
No Response	4	14.3	-
TOTAL	28	100	-

(Table 7.2 Comparison of if interns are a part of the workplace – current versus never interned)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	3.67	.577	.333
Never Interned		4	3.50	.577	.289
Statistical Significance: .576	t = .378	df = 5		Sig. (2-tailed) = .721	

(Table 7.3 Comparison of interns in the workplace – current versus former)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	3.67	.577	.333
Former Interns		8	2.25	.886	.313
Statistical Significance: .621	t = 2.528	df = 9		Sig. (2-tailed) = .032	

(Table 7.4 Comparison of interns in the workplace – former versus never interned)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Former Interns		8	2.25	.886	.313
Never Interned		4	3.50	.577	.289
Statistical Significance: .684	t = -2.532	df = 10		Sig. (2-tailed) = .030	

A comparison was drawn between current interns and current paid staff (regardless of internship experience).ⁱ Because none of the participants who identified as current interns reported having received financial compensation for any internship(s), it can be presumed that the data of the two groups does not overlap. Results of an independent-samples t-test (equal variances assumed) showed that current interns generally agreed or strongly agreed that interns are as much a part of the workplace as paid employees. However, current paid staff generally disagreed with that statement.

(Table 7.5 Comparison of interns in the workplace – current interns versus current staff)

Independent-Samples T-Test		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Current Interns		3	3.67	.577	.333
Current Paid Staff		15	2.27	.961	.248
Statistical Significance: .365	t = 2.401	df = 16		Sig. (2-tailed) = .029	

In an open-ended question, participants were asked to describe how they perceive interns in the workplace. Generally, responses expressed the idea that interns are what they choose to make of themselves. In other words, interns who are proactive and work hard are perceived well,

ⁱ A group of participants identified as current employees declined to identify their level of internship experience. Those participants' level of internship experience cannot be assumed. For that reason, their responses were not included in the select analyses mentioned above in which levels of internship experience were compared.

while interns who do the bare minimum or get in the way are perceived poorly. In one participant's words:

It truly depends on the person. I've been the intern who worked really hard to learn and grow, and not be perceived as "just an intern". However, I've also mentored or worked with interns...that just show up because they have an internship.

Additionally, interns were generally described as helpful, but not necessary, as long as they met an unspecified minimum skill level. As one participant put it, "(Interns) sometimes get in the way, but I usually don't mind having an extra person in the studio to assist with things, but I try not to overwhelm them as they are not, typically, prepared for many of the tasks I may ask them to do." That skill level, and an intern's ability to meet it, could connect back to the feedback relationship between interns and their workplace supervisor(s).

Overall, all participants agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following three statements: that interns should be paid for their time/work, make valuable contributions to workplace productivity, and are as much a part of the workplace as paid staff. Participants were most likely to agree that interns made valuable contributions, but were least likely to agree that interns were as much a part of the workplace as paid employees. The results of the one-sample t-test can be seen in Table 7.6.

(Table 7.6 Comparison of survey results from Tables 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1)

One-Sample T-Tests	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
should be paid for their time/work	24	2.79	1.062	.217
make valuable contributions to workplace	24	3.33	.702	.143
are as much a part as paid employees	24	2.63	1.013	.207

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The less-than-anticipated overall response rate to the survey does not allow sweeping declarations or conclusions to be drawn regarding radio broadcasting internships. Also, only three (10.7 percent) of participants were current interns. For that reason, the research questions had to be viewed as questions asked of all members of the radio broadcasting workplace – including, but not limited, to current interns. However, survey questions were asked “thinking of your time as an intern” or “thinking of your time as a student” which allowed non-current intern participants to still provide valid data and responses. It also allowed those participants to reflect on how their internship impacted their ensuing careers.

The following reviews the findings of this study and attempts to place those findings into the broader context of the academic literature on internships where possible.

RQ1: How do radio-broadcast students believe their school supervisor valued their internships experience?

Participants generally agreed that their school supervisor valued their internship experience. However, in responses to open-ended questions, none of the participants chose to share any thoughts or attitudes regarding the school or education-based value of their internship(s). That inherently includes their thoughts on a school supervisor, advisor, or their overall opinion of their education. A few participants, though, did choose to share that their education was relatively less valuable to them than their internships. While answers associated with RQ1 tells us a little about how broadcast interns think about the role of their school supervisor, more work is needed to adequately address this issue. There was an understanding of how *often* students believed that their school supervisor valued their internship, but the question of *how* they believed that their school supervisor did so was not directly answered.

In general, these findings seem to support research by DaJung Woo, Linda Putnam, and Sarah Riforgiate. School supervisors operate from a distance and are not in the workplace. As Woo, Putnam, and Riforgiate note, however, whether the supervisor is present or distant seems to play little role in the perceived value of the internship. As they noted, interns who were pleased with their internship experience were satisfied with close and distant relationships with their supervisors.⁵⁹

RQ2: How do radio-broadcast students believe their workplace supervisor valued their internship experience?

Like RQ1, participants generally agreed that their workplace supervisor valued their internship experience. But, again, in response to open-ended questions, none of the participants chose to expound on the relationships they had with a workplace supervisor(s) and how that individual might have valued their internship. However, responses from current professionals about interns expressed that they appreciate interns who appreciate their internship. It was unclear from the available data if current interns themselves were aware of that dynamic.

These findings seem to generally support the findings of Woo, Putnam, and Riforgiate described in the discussion of RQ1.

RQ3: Whose feedback do radio-broadcasting students value more: their school supervisor or their workplace supervisor?

Participants were more likely to agree that their school supervisor valued their internship than their workplace supervisor. However, they were also more likely to agree that feedback from their workplace supervisor was more valuable than their school supervisor. Because the internship is carried out in the workplace, it makes sense that an intern would find the workplace

supervisor's feedback more valuable to their internship success. But, it was interesting that the workplace supervisor's feedback was valued more than the school supervisor's feedback despite stronger agreement from participants that the school supervisor valued their internships. Overall, answers to questions associated with RQ3 showed that students more strongly valued feedback from their workplace supervisor.

One of the findings that is interesting in this area is the response that interns believe their school supervisor valued their internship experiences more than their workplace supervisor. Perhaps this suggests that workplace supervisors in the broadcast field need to work to improve their interactions with interns. As research by Kimberly McDonough, Lulu Rodriguez, and Marcia Prior-Miller notes, supervisors and interns often have very different ideas about how well interns are performing.⁶⁰

RQ4: How do radio-broadcast students perceive the value of internships on future career success?

Participants typically agreed that their internship(s) was valuable when making future career decisions. Additionally, participants typically agreed that their internship(s) was more valuable than their traditional education. Though responses were low, there was seemingly no connection between the level of education and career success. If that finding were to hold true with a larger sample, it could imply that education level is a non-essential factor of career success in radio broadcasting. If career success were to be measured by income, it would be a surprising result given that, typically, people with a higher level of education report a higher income.⁶¹ While participants seemingly perceive their education as non-essential based on the survey results, it does not necessarily mean that that is the reality of the situation. Reliance on self-reporting can sometimes fall short of evaluating discrepancies between perception and

reality, and that could be the case in this study. However, confirming whether participants' perceptions of their education are based in reality would require a more in-depth analysis of education – something this survey did not explicitly intend to explore. The lack of responses to open-ended questions associated with RQ4 made it difficult to definitively state *how* students perceive internship value in this case.

As noted in the literature review, research shows that internships are perceived as being very important to career success. However, that research does not clearly look at how current interns view their internships in respect to career success. Interns are not necessarily entrenched in a career, but they are still capable of thinking about their future careers based on their experience. This study found that interns are thinking about the role of internships and the role they play in career success.

RQ5: How do radio-broadcast interns feel curricula prepared them for their internship experience(s)?

Overall, most participants agreed that their school curricula adequately prepared them for their internship. Also, participants who held or were working toward a two-year associate's degree were more likely to agree on the importance of their education than their four-year bachelor's degree counterparts. However, just two qualified participants fit into the two-year associate's degree demographic. What was fascinating were the ways in which participants devalued or shared shortcomings of formal education, and therefore curricula, without being asked to do so. In questions associated with RQ5, participants showed a clear belief that their education prepared them for their internships, but it is not clear *how* that education did so. The lack of positive comments coupled with the abundance of negative comments about curricula and education instead answers not *how* curricula prepared them, but instead how it *did not*

prepare them or prepare them enough. In a sense, they answered the question in the negative as opposed to the affirmative.

This was interesting because participants believed that their education/curricula prepared them for their internships, but also believed that their education was of relatively little value to their career. It was unclear how or why this seeming contradiction exists, but it could involve another discrepancy between perception and reality. It could also have been impacted by how much time a participant had been away from a formal, educational setting. It would make sense that the more time one spends removed from education, the more likely one is to forget specific aspects of that education. Because this study predominately included the responses of former students, it is possible that on-the-job, real-world learning experiences have overshadowed or replaced memories of any value(s) provided by their education. It could be valuable to explore this dynamic further in future research.

As the literature on internships notes, the relationship between internships and education is complex. On one hand, internships can work as a type of experiential learning, connecting the internship to the classroom. But, internships can also be important for allowing students to experience environments that cannot be created in the classroom. Perhaps participants were thinking solely of internships as experiential learning in their responses, leading to the negative comments. It might be important for internship supervisors – both school and workplace – to assist students in understanding the double-value of the internship experience.

RQ6: How do radio-broadcast internships increase professional-skill training?

In answers associated with RQ6, participants overwhelmingly agreed that their internships increased professional skills – both soft and technical – that they would not or did not

achieve through education. Data also confirmed that participants more strongly agreed that their internship was valuable to their development than their education. Participants' open-ended responses also outlined an abundant variety of professional skills that their internships increased, including using software and handling conflict in the workplace.

This again confirms that interns were viewing their internships as a way to learn and acquire new skills and less as an opportunity to broaden their experiences. The responses that suggest that internships allow people to increase their understanding of how to resolve conflicts in the workplace demonstrates that internships are not solely about learning technical skills, but also about learning how to deal with new environments – a soft skill.

RQ7: How aware were radio-broadcast interns of their rights?

Overall, participants were generally unaware of the rights provided to interns by the Department of Labor. In questions associated with RQ7, interns were mostly unaware. It would add a layer of understanding in future research, though, to explore not just general awareness of rights, but an exploration of the depth of understanding. For example, asking questions such as: How many of these rights were you aware of? Do you believe you adequately understand what your rights entail(ed)? Do you believe these rights go far enough to protect interns?

This finding was not surprising. As research by Madeline Schwartz showed, interns often do not see themselves as “workers” entitled to fair or legal pay.⁶² This lack of knowledge might suggest that this is more than just an attitude, however. That the lack of knowledge about their rights might also be influencing what Schwartz called the “good-worker” mindset of interns.⁶³

RQ8: Do radio-broadcast interns believe they should be financially compensated for their work?

Most responses indicated agreement that interns should be paid. Of note, no participants identified having ever been financially compensated for their internship. It would be interesting to see how data compares when some, or all, participants *had* received financial compensation. Understandably, current interns most strongly agreed that interns should be paid. But, former interns were least likely to agree. A good follow-up question for future research would be: *Why* should interns be financially compensated for their work?

It is interesting to note that while current interns believed they should be paid, former interns were least likely to agree with that idea. There are many possible reasons for this and perhaps one of the reasons is that it is difficult for interns to get compensation for their work in some industries. Some of this might be related to an attitude that workers who were former interns came up through a system that did not compensate them for their work. As a result, perhaps they see working as an unpaid intern as a rite of passage toward career advancement. Or perhaps current employees see paying interns as a financial burden on their employer – a burden that might have a negative impact on their own compensation levels.

RQ9: How do radio-broadcast interns believe they contribute to the workplace as interns?

Most participants agreed that interns make valuable contributions to workplace productivity. Current interns, understandably, had the highest opinion of the value of their contributions. Open-ended responses provided a variety of examples of how interns make contributions to overall productivity in the workplace, like answering phones and editing sound files. In answers associated with RQ9, a variety of intern contributions were noted and there was general agreement that those contributions were valuable.

RQ10: How do former radio-broadcast interns believe current interns are perceived as members of the workplace?

In questions associated with RQ10, the majority of former interns disagreed that interns are as much a part of the workplace as paid employees. Open-ended responses showed a general appreciation for and welcoming of good interns, but clear disdain for those who performed tasks poorly or lackadaisically. Open-ended responses also described ways in which interns are lesser than, or incapable of completing the tasks, performed by other members of the workplace. Participants' responses showed a clear separation between interns and staff in terms of perception within the workplace.

The findings in response to this question might suggest that broadcast internship sites might want to work on how interns are socialized into the workplace. As research by Stephanie Dailey suggests, an intern who is socialized into the workplace – who feels like a member of the workplace – is more likely to have a successful internship experience.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to add depth to the sparse, understudied area of radio broadcasting internships. Specifically, it sought to understand how internships are valued in the radio-broadcasting industry. The results showed that people in the radio-broadcasting industry generally valued their internship more than their classroom education. Part of that valuation might have been related to their claim that, typically, their internships helped them develop skills that a classroom education did not. This is an important addition to the existing body of research because it points to the idea that a disconnect exists between what industry wants and what post-secondary education gives. Sonya Forte Duhe and Lee Ann Zukowski discussed that idea in their

1997 study, so findings suggest that progress on resolving the disconnect has been minimal or non-existent in the 20-plus years between studies. Overall, participants also generally believed that interns should receive financial compensation for their work and that they were as much a part of the workplace as paid staff. Both of those findings contradict the principles of the “good-worker” mindset that was observed in a 2013 study. That could mean that the mindset no longer applies to interns/internships in general, or that radio broadcasting internships are special in that their participants do not typically subscribe to the mindset. In either case, it marks an important contribution to existing research because the possibility of either had not been discussed in prior research.

There were also findings that were not as significant, but proved interesting. Of the four stages of experiential learning presented by James W. Gentry, feedback between school internship supervisors and student interns was noted as the most challenging stage to assess. However, results from this survey imply that feedback with academic advisors was more evident, at least to students, than the preceding stages of design, conduct, or evaluation. Findings also supported Elka Jones’ research that internships can have non-academic learning value. Existing literature supported the idea that internships piggy-backed, or were secondary to, education. Participants responses, though, argue the opposite – that the internship and real-world experience was more valuable and more influential to their careers than their education was. This also helped connect the dots between broadcast curricula and internships that existing research hadn’t seemingly connected as it relates to the value of an internship. Overwhelmingly, results supported Stephanie Dailey’s prior research on internships as anticipatory socialization experiences that boosted job competency, too.

In the future, more deliberate wording in open-ended questions, more open-ended questions overall, or in-depth interviews could help fill some of the remaining gaps in research. For example, if participants were asked to describe ways in which a supervisor worked with them, it might elicit responses better suited to answering RQ1 or RQ2. Also, expanding the findings of this research with a larger sample could reinforce how meaningful the data were to preexisting literature and research. It would also be beneficial for future research to employ a different distribution method or tool. The primary limitations of this study were due to a difficult to calculate response rate. A more deliberate attempt to target a specific group of participants (for example, current interns only) and cultivate a list of contacts might also help, as opposed to relying on an existing, external email database. Targeting a specific group of participants could else help streamline the survey tool by eliminating the need for certain screening or grouping questions.

Overall, this research successfully explored a few areas that were previously understudied. First, it served as a pioneering study of internships in radio broadcasting internships – something that existing research had only covered in conjunction with other media internships if at all. It also brings attention to the important and unique nature of the radio industry as a whole. The radio industry has often been cast aside or paired with television within scholarly, media research. As the results of this research showed, the radio industry today defies certain aspects of existing literature and deserves to be studied as its own entity within media.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS

SUBJECT LINE: Radio Internships – Help me graduate!

EMAIL BODY: My name is Anthony Mandella and I've been a producer with 105.7 FM The FAN since 2016. I'm also in my final semester of grad school at UWM.

To finish my degree, I need to complete a graduate thesis, and could use your help. I started as an intern before joining the team as a producer, and my research topic is built around that experience – how internships fit into the overall careers of people in the radio biz.

Below is a link that will take you to an online survey for my research that can be opened on mobile or at a computer.

Some things to keep in mind:

1. You'll have a chance to win a \$25 Amazon Gift Card
2. It should take less than 15 minutes to complete
3. You are not in any way required to take this survey
4. No personal, identifying information is collected with the answers you provide

You can click [here](#), or copy and paste the URL below into your browser to enter the drawing for the gift card. After entering the drawing, you will be provided with a link to access the survey should you choose to complete it.

https://milwaukee.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ewYAZu4UG2C8koB

This research process has been cleared with UWM's Institutional Review Board to ensure that you are not at risk by participating.

Thanks for your help,

Anthony Mandella

ATTN Program Directors: As you're well aware, current interns aren't a part of our Entercom email database. If you could help me out and distribute this email to current interns (and any former interns you might still be able to get in touch with) it would be a tremendous help.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Part 1: General Information

Q1: Gender - select the response which best applies to you:

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to answer

Q2: Age - enter your age in the box below:

Q3: Which of the following best describes your total level of experience with radio broadcasting.

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than 15 years

Part 2: Education

Q4: Education - select all that apply:

- I have no formal education beyond a high school diploma/GED [*skip to end of Part 2: Education*]
- Professional Training or Certificate Program (non-degree program)
- 2-Year/Associate's Degree in progress
- 2-Year/Associate's Degree completed
- 4-Year/Bachelor's Degree in progress
- 4-Year/Bachelor's Degree completed
- Graduate Degree or Higher in progress
- Graduate Degree or Higher completed

Q5: Did you ever complete a radio broadcasting internship to fulfill a course requirement in a college or degree program?

- Yes
- No [*skip to Q8*]

Q6: When completing my internship to fulfill a course requirement, my academic program's internship advisor/supervisor valued my internship.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A, I did not have a school internship advisor/supervisor.

Q7: Feedback from my academic program's internship advisor/supervisor was valuable to my overall internship experience.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A, I did not have a school internship advisor/supervisor.

Q8: My academic program's course work was valuable to my development in radio broadcasting.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q9: Thinking of your time as a student in a radio broadcasting or a related academic program, how did or do you perceive the value of your internship(s) on future career success?

Part 3: Workplace

Q10: Which of the following **best** describes your internship experience? Select all that apply:

- I am currently interning in radio broadcasting.
- I have interned in radio broadcasting in the past.
- I never interned in radio broadcasting. *[skip to end of Part 3: Workplace]*
- I am currently working as a paid, radio broadcasting professional.
- I previously worked as a paid, radio broadcasting professional but am not currently.

Q11: My education adequately prepared me to intern in radio broadcasting.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q12: When completing my internship in a professional setting, my workplace supervisor(s) valued the work I did as an intern.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A, I did not have workplace supervision at my internship.

Q13: Feedback from my workplace supervisor(s) was valuable to my internship experience.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A, I did not have workplace supervision at my internship.

Q14: My radio broadcasting internship experience helped me improve or develop professional, technical skills (ex: using sound-editing software, website use, sound board use, broadcasting skill, etc.)

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q15: My radio broadcasting internship experience helped me improve or develop professional, soft skills. (ex: communicating with others, problem solving, time management, emotional intelligence, etc.)

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q16: My internship(s) in radio broadcasting were valuable when making future career decisions.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q17: Have you ever been financially compensated for a radio broadcasting internship?

- Yes, I received financial compensation for my internship(s).
- No, I never received financial compensation for my internship(s).
- I was financially compensated for some internship(s), but not all.

Q18: My radio broadcasting internship helped me develop professional skills that I would not have/did not/have not achieved through formal education such as college or a certificate program.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q19: My internship was valuable to my development in radio broadcasting.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q20: Overall, my internship(s) was more valuable than my traditional school/course work when considering careers.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q21: If you believe that it did, describe how your internship(s) helped you develop professional technical and/or soft skills.

Part 4: DOL (Department of Labor)

The United States Department of Labor's (DOL) *Fair Labor Standards Act* (FLSA) provides a legal outline of when an intern is supposed to be financially compensated. There are six criteria in determining whether an intern must be paid:

- 1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;**
- 2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;**
- 3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;**
- 4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;**
- 5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and**
- 6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship**

If all six criteria are met, the FLSA's minimum wage/overtime rules do not apply to the intern.

Q22: If you had an internship, do you believe you were made adequately aware of the criteria outlined by the FLSA as noted above.

- I was very aware
- I was somewhat aware
- I was somewhat unaware
- I was very unaware
- Does not apply, I did not have an internship

Q23: It is important for interns to be aware of the criteria outlined by the FLSA as noted above.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q24: Overall, I believe the internship(s) I completed adequately adhered to the criteria outlined by the FLSA as noted above.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Does not apply, I did not have an internship

Part 5: General Internship Experience

Answer each of the following based on your total experience in radio broadcasting.

Q25: Radio broadcasting interns should be paid for their time/work.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q26: Radio broadcasting interns make valuable contributions to workplace productivity.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q27: Radio broadcasting interns are as much a part of the workplace as paid employees.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q28: Based on your experience, describe the contributions that interns make to the workplace.

Q29: Based on your experience, describe how you perceive interns in the workplace.
