JOURNALISTS ON THE MOVE: HOW PROFESSIONAL TRANSITIONS IMPACT A
SENSE OF IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY
A CREATIVE PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTERS OF JOURNALISM
BY
GREGORY J. LUCID
ADVISER: PROFESSOR MARK H. MASSE’
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA
DECEMBER 2013
Acknowledgements:

For the purposes of professional journalism experience, being in Graduate School and/or for the opportunity to conduct this research, I thank God; my family; Ball State University Graduate School and Department of Journalism; Ball State University Department of Journalism Professor Mark Masse’; Ball State University Instructor of Telecommunications, Terry Heifetz; Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) Associate Dean and Professor of English & Communications, Dr. Paul LeSage; MCLA; Ann Gibbons; Ed Golder; the Golder and Striebich families; Kate Goldsmith; Brad and Zach Kendall; Lindsay Lennon; Susan Macura; Jessica Pasko; Matt Rohr; Curtis Schmidt; Sarah Striebich; and all of the researchers listed within this study.
ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Journalists on the move: How professional transitions impact a sense of identity, community and family.

STUDENT: Gregory J. Lucid

DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: Communication, Information and Media

DATE: *December, 2013

PAGES: 65

This paper studies the lives of four current and/or former newspaper journalists who agreed to participate in a literary journalism-style project addressing social and psychological issues involving transitioning into and/or out of journalism jobs and/or journalism careers. The paper draws on oral history reporting conducted from a series of in-depth interviews (phone, email and/or in-person) between January 2013 and October 2013 individually with current and/or former journalist participants. Using primary and secondary research, findings suggest common factors contributing to journalists who make professional transitions include economics; news room burnout; stress; salary and impact to personal and family lives. The objective of the project was to learn about whether or not professional transitions involving newspaper journalists’ careers have impacted a current and/or former journalist’s sense of identity, community and/or family.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................................. 3

Introduction/Rationale .......................................................................................................................... 5

Literature Review .................................................................................................................................. 6-19
   A.) Family Impact ................................................................................................................................. 9-12
   B.) Journalists’ Satisfaction .................................................................................................................. 13-15
   C.) Media convergence, transitions and impact .................................................................................. 13-16
   D.) Occupational/Professional Identity ............................................................................................... 16-17
   E.) Financial and health concerns among unemployed journalists .................................................. 18-19

Methodology ........................................................................................................................................... 19-20

Ed Golder: “Confessions of a former seminarian and former journalist” .............................................. 21-31

Jessica Pasko: “Twice laid-off print journalist goes distance for journalism identity” ......................... 32-41

Curtis Schmidt: “Veteran print journalist moves for work, finds love” .............................................. 42-51

Summary/Conclusions/Implications ....................................................................................................... 52-56

Outside Evaluation #1: Professor Terry Heifetz, Instructor of Telecommunications & News Director, Indiana Public Radio, at Ball State University ................................................................. 57-59

Outside Evaluation #2: Dr. Paul LeSage, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of English & Communications at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts ............................................. 60-62

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................................... 63-65
Introduction/Rationale

This creative project “Journalists on the move: How professional transitions impact a sense of identity, community and family” examines the lives of three current and/or former newspaper journalists who have participated in a qualitative study about the social and psychological impacts of making professional transitions from traditional newspaper journalism positions. These participants represented varied demographic categories. The objective of the research was to determine how professional transitions have affected their sense of identity, community and/or family. Primary and secondary research was collected, and in-depth interviewing and oral history reporting occurred with participants, either via phone, in person, and/or by email between January 2013 and October 2013. Interview data of participants has been analyzed, revealing some reoccurring themes found in each of their stories, such as: love; loss of job; occupational camaraderie and identity; stress; and economic need and/or career uncertainty. The researcher also studied topics including newsroom burnout; journalism and family; journalism workplaces and individual motives related to career. The research is limited in its ability to determine how many newspaper journalists experiencing career and/or job transitions obtain another journalism job, and how many newspaper journalists are underemployed.
Literature Review

Michigan State University journalism professor Joe Grimm, along with other researchers, has studied the development of journalists and journalism in transition. “Journalists tend to transition in one of three ways: people get a new journalism job, find a related job in the specialty they were covering or decide to pursue an entirely new career…” (Grimm, 2010).

“The hardest thing about changing careers in journalism may not be about the software or even the finances… It is about the mindset” (Grimm, 2009).

This is the first year of a negative hiring outlet. Between now and 2020, [the industry is] expected to contract. We have had, if you look back over the last year, more contraction in the newspaper industry. It’s been ramping up with more layoffs and more cutbacks (Johnston, 2013).

“Reporters, correspondents and broadcast news analysts held about 58,500 jobs in 2010” (bls.gov, 2012). In 2008, more than 15,993 journalism jobs at U.S. newspapers were lost as a result of layoffs or buyouts, up from the over 2,293 layoffs and buyouts occurring at U.S. newspapers in 2007. In 2011, more than 4,190 newspaper jobs were cut” (newspaperlayoffs.com, 2013). According to journalist Erica Smith, creator of the website newspaperlayoffs.com, the totals do not include jobs lost through attrition — “a fancy way of saying open positions were eliminated” she says. A total of 58,500 journalism jobs existed in 2010. The projected rate of change in employment for the ten-year timeframe between 2010 and 2020 is a reduction by 6 percent.
The Pew Research Center reports there were about 2,600 fewer full-time professional editorial jobs at newspapers in 2012, a 6.4 percent decline from 2011. The industry is left with 38,000 full-time professional editorial employees and it is the first time that number has been lower than 40,000 since the census began in 1978. Several large newspapers did not complete the survey this year, resulting in missing data from some major outlets. These papers include USA Today, the Los Angeles Times, the Baltimore Sun, the Arizona Republic, the Miami Herald, the (New Orleans) Times-Picayune and several others. In all, 978 of 1,382 dailies responded to the survey” (pewresearch.org, 2013).

Employment of reporters and correspondents is expected to moderately decline by eight percent from 2010 to 2020. Declines are expected because of the consolidation of news organizations, decreases in the readership of newspapers, and declines in viewership for many news television shows” (bls.gov, 2013).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ totals for all newspaper jobs in 2008—from reporter to delivery truck driver – showed a payroll reduction from 336,000 at the start of the year to 313,600 through October 2008, a loss 22,400 positions (Hodierne, 2009). A total of 595 people, who left newspaper editorial jobs in the last decade under circumstances that were not entirely voluntary, filled out a questionnaire. Because it wasn’t a random sample but rather a self-selected group, it is unknown whether the group accurately depicts the entire group of laid-off journalists. Robert Hodierne, who conducted the study, explains: “This is not a scientific poll, because there is no comprehensive list of those who've been laid off from which to draw a random sample.” Instead, AJR (American Journalism Review) posted a link to the questionnaire on its homepage. Hodierne advertised on Journalismjobs.com and posted about it on every online venue he could find aimed at journalists, including Jim Romenesko's web site.
Many of the respondents have found new jobs. For those who did obtain work between 1999 and 2007, the findings report: Fewer than 36 percent said they found a new job in less than three months. Include those who indicated they freelanced full time, and the number rises to 53 percent. Fewer than 10 percent say it took them longer than a year to find work. Only 6 percent found other newspaper jobs. He adds: “The rest are doing everything from public relations to teaching to driving a bus and clerking in a liquor store” (Hodierne, 2009).

Despite finding work, many of the people with new jobs are making less money. The midpoint salary range for their old jobs was $50,000 to $59,000. Those who listed salaries for their new jobs earned $40,000 to $49,000. Of the people who volunteered their old newspaper salary, only two percent made less than $20,000 a year. Of the people who disclosed their new salaries, that number increased up to seventeen percent. The age of those at the bottom of the salary scale has changed as well. The median age of those who made less than $20,000 at their old newspaper job was twenty-four. The median age of those now making less than $20,000 is forty-eight. While eighty-five percent say they miss working at a paper, they are often happier in their new jobs. Sixty-two percent stated they had been satisfied in their old newspaper jobs; seventy-eight percent report being satisfied in their new jobs (Hodierne 2009).

According to Reinardy (2009), “Journalism’s layoff survivors tap into resources to remain satisfied.” He cites Hobfoll’s (1989) conservation of resources theory. It deduces that individuals work to gain and defend valued resources. During difficult times, workers will seek out reserves to ward off stress (Reinardy, 2011). Reinardy researched job satisfaction among more than 2,000 newspaper layoff survivors and the resources of organizational trust, morale, perceived job quality, and organizational commitment. Results show that highly satisfied newspaper journalists have stored the resources trust and morale (Hobfoll’s conditions valued by
individuals), perceived job quality (mastery of a skill), and commitment to the organization (self-esteem). There is an apparent division between those who have adequate resources and those who do not. Journalists who have accumulated trust, morale, perception of job quality, and organizational commitment appear to have adjusted to the new environment and maintained some semblance of job satisfaction. Those with lower levels of job satisfaction consequently are experiencing lower resource levels and indicated intentions to leave journalism.

(Reinardy, 2011, p. 287) adds:

For newspaper layoff survivors, additional workload certainly stresses resources. In addition, survivors are being asked to do jobs outside their area of expertise and jobs they’ve never done before. Newspaper Web sites demand multimedia elements such as blogs, video, hot links, photo slideshows, graphics, and breaking news. The newspaper newsroom has adopted the immediacy components of television and radio news while attempting to maintain the expectation of quality they’ve established in their communities. The transforming, smaller newsroom certainly plays a role in the interpretation of mastery among layoff survivors.

In her 2012 book, Out of the News: Former Journalists Discuss a Profession in Crisis, author and former journalist, Celia Viggo Wexler, profiles eleven former and transitioning journalists who left mainstream journalism but returned to nonprofit or alternative journalism, and those whose lives have been split between journalism and other jobs (Wexler, 2012).

**Family Impact**

“… I just couldn’t be the mother I wanted to be and the journalist I wanted to be” (Wexler, 2012, p. 1).

Celia Wexler left journalism for a “variety of reasons” (Wexler, 2012 p. 3), one being motherhood in December 1987, taking a three-month maternity leave to be with her baby
daughter. Upon her return, she tried balancing being a reporter with motherhood. It proved too difficult for her.

Journalism helped launch Wexler into a new career. She began writing about federal banking agencies for *American Banker*, a trade daily. She worked for twelve years at Common Cause, a nonprofit group, where she became Vice President for Advocacy. While at Common Cause, she had written about fifty studies which followed the impact of big money on politics, and became a reputable source to dozens of journalists throughout the country. She also lobbied for the Union of Concerned Scientists. Wexler enjoyed the lobbying half of her job, the planning involved and working with colleagues in the public interest sector, constructing key messages (Wexler, 2012). Her freelance stories have appeared in *The Washington Post*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Columbia Journalism Review* and *The Nation*. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Toronto and earned her graduate degree in journalism from Point Park University, Pittsburgh, PA.

The time Wexler spent with Common Cause, further sustained her with more purposeful communications work. The Union of Concerned Scientists offered her an opportunity to advocate as a Washington representative for the group’s Scientific Integrity Program. Excited about this offer, Wexler was prepared to make the transition (Wexler, 2012).

While she ultimately enjoyed work in newspaper journalism, Wexler’s outlook on the professional nature of journalism was changing. Newspapers were cutting jobs, and traditional journalism was being replaced by the internet: its websites and bloggers. Wexler also developed skepticism about the accuracy of facts found within news reports from different newspapers. At Common Cause, she instituted a “three-source” rule. Its staff had to find the same fact in three different media accounts from respected news outlets to ensure accuracy” (Wexler, 2012, p. 3).
Upon leaving journalism, Wexler stated: “Being a journalist isn’t something you get over…It’s a way of thinking about things that is forever a part of who you are” (Wexler, 2012, p. 3).

Diana K. Sugg, former reporter at The Baltimore Sun, would agree with Wexler about how journalism job demands, and family schedules, can clash. She worked a total of eighteen years as a newspaper reporter and won national awards for her crime and medical stories, including the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting at The (Baltimore) Sun. She worked for six years at The Baltimore Sun covering the police beat, and later the medical beat.

In the article “From Newsroom to Nursery – The Beat Goes On” Sugg discussess her personal and professional experiences as a way of offering instruction and support for those desiring to learn how to balance journalism assignments while a mother (Sugg, 2010).

“I once described it as the journalistic equivalent of the emergency room, with too many stories, too little time, but a lot of responsibility for getting it right” (Sugg, 2010, p. 13). Sugg’s transition away from journalism and into motherhood required learning by doing. It also required moving to Switzerland with her husband for his job. Sugg later gave birth to their second son. She experienced challenges because of the nonstop parenting schedule involved (Sugg, 2010). “It turned out to be easier to write about other people’s lives than to live my own. It seemed as though the very qualities that had wired me for journalism made it tougher for me to be a mother…” (Sugg, 2010, p. 14).

Powell and Greenhaus (2012) outlined employees’ being in one of two categories, selecting jobs based on its ability to accommodate, or be separate from, family. “While segmenters prefer to keep work and family separate from each other by maintaining impermeable boundaries around their work and family domains, integrators prefer to merge or
blend aspects of work and family by maintaining permeable boundaries around their work and family domains” (Powell & Greenhaus, 2012).

Work–family literature has provided much evidence that supports an assortment of family factors being tied to various work decisions. Powell and Greenhaus (2010, intro.) studied the “association between family factors and three specific work decisions: whether to start a business (a role entry decision), how many hours to devote to one's job or business (a role participation decision), and whether to quit a job (a role exit decision).” They found that family factors have been proposed or observed to be associated with each of these three decisions.

They argued an individual’s work decisions are influenced by a family situation in order to create a positive outcome for the family. Powell and Greenhaus stated it is “an increasingly prevalent phenomenon for organizationally-employed as well as self-employed individuals” (Powell and Greenhaus, 2012, p. 247).

The more salient an individual’s family history is to his self-concept, the more likely he evokes the family identity in a work decision (e.g., whether to accept a job that requires extensive travel or long work hours) to include possible consequences for family life. Organizations with a family-supportive environment send cues that employees’ lives outside of work are respected and that they will not be consistently expected to prioritize work demands over family responsibilities (Powell and Greenhaus, 2012).

…Family role pressures involve broadly construed expectations regarding the importance of meeting the needs of family members. These needs may include the physical and psychological presence of the individual in family activities, tangible and emotional support provided to family members, and the financial well-being of the family unit. Individuals who frame work decisions broadly as having a potential effect on the family domain are likely to be subject to cues that represent explicit, consistent, and strong pressures to meet family members’ needs rather than the absence of such cues (Greenhaus and Powell 2012.)
Journalists’ Satisfaction

In a 2009 study, researcher Scott Reinardy studied the departure of newspaper journalists to other careers. He pondered what leads journalists to make such transitions and what challenges they could face. “What happens to a journalist who embraces the principles of the profession but struggles to balance those obligations with other variables such as work overload, conflict with family, and social support? And when that collision occurs, what happens to job satisfaction?” (Reinardy, 127).

Reinardy’s research examined thirteen attitudinal areas of satisfaction among journalists. Research participants included 223 journalism graduates who had worked at a newspaper between 1950 and 1961. Of the 223 respondents, seventy-two had changed careers. Journalists at larger newspapers (50,000 circulation or more) were less satisfied than those at smaller newspapers; salary did not impact level of satisfaction; those with at least four years of experience were more satisfied in their personal duties; and older journalists (thirty-five and older) with two or more dependents saw more future in the job. The research indicated journalists who left the profession said there was not much future in it as a career, poor leadership in editorial roles and low pay (Reinardy, 2009, p. 127).

In a separate survey he sent in February 2007 to 2,671 journalists, 715 completed the survey for a response rate of 26.7 percent. An open-ended question asked, “If you are intending to leave newspaper journalism, what would be the reason(s) for leaving?” The 381 responses of those considering leaving newspaper journalism were coded into six categories: industry issues/job satisfaction, salary, pressure/stress/burnout, family issues, retirement, and other. Some individuals gave more than one response; therefore, 441 responses were coded. Respondents said “industry issues/job satisfaction” was the primary reason for wanting to depart journalism,
making up 30.2 percent of the comments. Salary was second with twenty-seven percent and pressure/stress/burnout was third at 15.9 percent” (Reinardy, 2009, p. 133).

Results indicate that perceived organizational support and social support create satisfaction, and work-family conflict, role overload, and job demands influence dissatisfaction. In addition, 25.7 percent of journalists in this study said they intend to leave newspaper journalism. In essence, the tangential elements that tend to wear on journalists—deadlines, long hours, clashes between work and family—appear to take their toll and create dissatisfaction but are not driving journalists from the workforce. Primarily, journalists intending to leave the profession are frustrated with fundamental issues that compromise an enjoyable work environment—support and encouragement (Reinardy, 2009, p. 126).

Autonomy and affecting the community rated high among satisfied journalists; however the management policies, low salaries and inadequate advancement opportunities created dissatisfaction. Reinardy cited Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) regarding how diminished autonomy cannot be attributed to corporate ownership, salaries or lack of resources but to “internal, organizational factors” (2009, p. 129).

Reinardy (2009) cited the 2002 Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes and Wilhoit study, which revealed a rise in job satisfaction involving 1,149 journalists. Of the 1,149 journalists surveyed, 33.3 percent said they were “very satisfied” with their work, and more than 50 percent said they were “fairly satisfied.” For the 445 daily newspaper journalists in the study, 82.7 percent were either very or fairly satisfied with the job.

(Reinardy 2009) In this research, journalists’ autonomy to select story assignments and to choose story focus was closely related with job satisfaction. Journalists who said their news organization was doing an “outstanding” or “very good” job of informing the public
demonstrated high levels of satisfaction. Another observation from the 2002 study was the finding regarding intentions of journalists to leave the news media within five years. Weaver et al. (2007) reported that 17.2 percent expressed intentions to leave, which was down about 20 percent from the 1992 study. Reasons for leaving included pay, job security, stress, and burnout.

Journalists in 1992 appeared to want to lead normal lives. They were less willing to suffer the dislocation and unpredictable schedules that were accepted by an earlier generation, especially in a competitive environment in which newsrooms were expected to do much more with fewer resources, and where there was little hope of professional advancement in an era of stalled growth (Reinardy, 2009, p. 129).

**Media convergence transitions and impact**

Technology has caused employees of many industries, including journalism, to be downsized and sometimes forced to change careers or relocate. Lisa Williams, founder of Placeblogger, and of h20town, compared the high-tech industry of the 1980s and 1990s to the media industry of today. Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) laid-off employees by the tens of thousands; these high-tech employees worked for Wang Computers, Data General, and Apollo Computers. IBM and Hewlett-Packard survived. In 1990, there were 565,000 computer programmers. As computer usage grew, the Department of Labor predicted that employment of programmers would grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2005. Instead, employment dropped after the year 2000. By 2002, the number of programmers had dropped to 499,000. (Bartlett, & Steele, 2011).

When high-techs’ central institutions blew up, people asked many of the same questions I hear asked by journalists today. Without these institutions, who will fund the mission? How will we attract the talent we need to make the transition? (Williams, 2007, 70). Today, journalists ask how democracy will fare in our country without the robust free press they’ve been a part of. Back then, technology folks were asking how the United
States could retain its leadership position without big, powerful computing companies (Williams, 2007, p. 70).

Williams (2007, p. 71) cited the social and community impacts of job loss endured by industry workers.

There can be no underestimating the pain of the tech implosion: People who got laid off expected to be out of work for a year or more; people lost their houses, got divorced, or left the industry entirely. The lucky ones took early retirement packages. To make matters worse, many people had deep loyalties to the companies they worked for and spoke with pride of the "HP way" or the "IBM way."

Along with loss of a job might come the loss of one’s occupational identity: their purpose and meaning.

**Occupational/Professional Identity**

Occupational identity refers to cultivation of relationships within the workplace. Charles H. Christiansen (1999, 2000, 2004) was “the first scholar to make an explicit connection between occupation and individuals’ personal and social identity in the occupation-based literature.” Christiansen suggested that participation in occupation contributes to one’s construction of identity and is the primary means to communicate one’s identity, concluding that “when we build our identities through occupations, we provide ourselves with the contexts necessary for creating meaningful lives, and life meaning helps us to be well.” Christiansen advanced four central propositions about occupation and identity: (a) That identity is an overarching concept that shapes and is shaped by our relationships with others, (b) That identities are closely tied to what we do and our interpretations of those actions in the context of our relationships with others, (c) Identities provide an important central figure in a self-narrative or life story that provides coherence and meaning for everyday events and life itself, and (d)
Because life meaning is derived in the context of identity, it is an essential element in promoting well-being and life-satisfaction. (Christiansen, 1999, p. 547).

Jenny Wiik, researcher and lecturer at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication at the University of Gothenburg, studied Swedish journalists for her thesis: *Journalism in Transition: The Professional Identity of Swedish Journalists.* Wiik found: “The common norms of journalism vary between countries, but the existence of an ideological base is a general phenomenon – it is the professional identity that makes the journalist” (Wiik, 2010, p. 11).

Wiik (2012) noted professional identity is a form of social identity linking members of the same occupation. She stated professional identity involves members of the same occupation having common understandings and experiences. Professional identity also involves having a discourse rather than specific objectives. She discussed the relationship between status and professional identity.

The status is a significant aspect of professional identity construction. Knowledge-intensive workers like journalists access powerful symbolic resources based on communicative, technological and information-oriented skills…Status is intimately associated with power and both are crucial elements of professionalism. As the natural authority and exclusiveness of professions fades away, the status surrounding them becomes increasingly insecure. Excessive education of journalists leads to inflation of cultural capital and, together with a general skepticism towards social institutions, a loss of professional status. People who hold knowledge-intensive positions invest more of themselves in their work, which makes their professional identities even more vulnerable to reduced status (Wiik, 2012, p. 59).

Wiik noted in order for journalism to maintain financial stability, it must be a profitable industry.

Journalism is mostly perceived as a highly intellectual activity, but it can only exist due to economic profitability which is why journalists may appear a bit ambiguous in their self-perceptions. (Wiik, 2012, p. 55)
Financial and health concerns among unemployed journalists

Former *Los Angeles Times* journalists continue to struggle with severe underemployment, soon-to-expire unemployment benefits, and worries about retirement, a recent informal survey of seventy-five former staffers found. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents said they had been laid off or asked to leave by the financially troubled Tribune Company; the rest left the company voluntarily. “More than two-thirds were still receiving unemployment checks, though 68 percent expected those benefits to expire within thirty weeks of when the survey was taken in mid-November” (Levy, B., 2009).

Four out of five of the respondents reported earning half – or less – of what they were paid at the *Times*. Thirteen percent of the respondents reported zero income. For others, full-time positions remain elusive. Only eleven of the seventy-five respondents reported landing jobs. Nearly 40 percent of the members were working freelance jobs only, and 28 percent were not working at all. Nearly half of the respondents believed they personally were treated fairly. Some placed blame for the newspaper's failure on the Chandler family, longtime owners of the *Times* who sold it to Tribune in 2000. Tribune then sold itself to Sam Zell in 2007 for $8.5 billion and increased the company’s debt load by $8 billion. The extra debt precipitated the company’s financial crisis. Tribune has been in bankruptcy protection since December 2008. (Levy, B., 2009).

While half of the respondents said they expect to recover financially, 79 percent felt less secure about their retirement. Only two respondents, or 3 percent, expected a better retirement after parting from the *Los Angeles Times*. Reasons for concern over retirement were varied, but
several indicated the stock market’s sharp decline over the past year had a sharp impact on 401k and IRAs. Some of the journalists noted increased health problems, concern over long-term health insurance and heavy reliance on their spouses’ incomes. Only 16 percent expected the Times to survive, and nearly a third said they were uncertain what will happen. The poll was conducted among former Los Angeles Times staffers who are members of a support message group. Seventy-five out of 124 members responded, and only a quarter of them expected newspapers to survive the current economic crisis (Levy, B., 2009).

Methodology

The three research participants of this study, Ed Golder, Jessica Pasko and Curtis Schmidt, were solicited through social media and/or word-of-mouth inquiries to friends and colleagues, for a semester-long study about current and/or former journalists who have made professional transitions in and/or out of journalism.

The researcher selected these individuals, current and former journalists, based on their levels of experience working in print news media, their varied geographic localities and the diversity of each of their stories within, or away from, journalism.

Ed Golder is a former reporter and editor for The Grand Rapids Press, an afternoon daily newspaper in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He worked there for twenty-four years before leaving journalism voluntarily in 2011. The researcher contacted Ed from a friendship he made with one of Ed’s nieces at St. Francis of Assisi Parish and Newman Center in Muncie, Indiana. Ed’s story involves occupational transitions, love and family. Ed currently serves as public information officer for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. He holds a master’s degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University and a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Catholic University of America. He also spent time studying in the
Seminary.

Jessica Pasko was contacted by the researcher through a professional acquaintance through the State University of New York at New Paltz. Jessica was selected by the researcher to participate in this study because of her interesting career involving relocation. She has worked as a reporter for several news publications in New York and California. Laid off twice from daily newspaper publications, the Associated Press and *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, Jessica's story is one of perseverance and commitment to the field of journalism. She holds a master’s degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, and a bachelor’s degree in English from SUNY New Paltz.

Curtis Schmidt is the researcher’s former supervisor at *Northern Dutchess News & Creative Living*, a weekly newspaper in Wappingers Falls, New York. Curtis has worked professionally in print journalism since 1975; he worked four of those years in public relations. He is currently the general manager and executive editor of *The Southern Dutchess News, Northern Dutchess News & Creative Living*, and *The Beacon Free Press* weekly newspapers. He holds a dual bachelor’s degree in journalism and photography from East Texas State University.
Ed Golder: Confessions of a former seminarian and former journalist

Getting out of his car along Monroe Avenue in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Ed Golder reaches into his pocket and pulls out a relic of his Roman Catholic faith. One weekday morning in February 2013, the fifty-year-old holds a silver medal of Saint Benedict on a silver chain. On his way to visit his former employer, The Grand Rapids Press, Ed also holds onto the memories of his twenty-four year career there, believing God continues leading him through personal and professional transitions.

The medal in his possession is one of the Sacramentals of the church (sancta.org). Ed’s affinity toward St. Benedict exists partly because of St. Benedict’s contributions to the rise of monasticism in the West – a religious way of life Ed practices. Monasticism, or monachism, is defined as “the act of dwelling alone…the mode of life pertaining to persons living in seclusion from the world, under religious vows and subject to a fixed rule, as monks, friars, nuns or as religious,” (newadvent.org).

Ed is a former daily newspaper journalist and a former seminarian. Throughout his career he has written about a variety of topics including religion. The way Ed speaks to his family and former colleagues reveals he is a man of faith in himself and in others. Around the dinner table he is known to quip, and he can turn a phrase cleverly. In occupational and personal settings, people have shared meaningful stories with him. Ed holds a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University, and a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Catholic University of America.

“I came from a family that valued the life of the mind,” he says. Born in Texas where his family resided the first three years of his life, Ed’s family then moved to Big Rapids, Michigan
(located about an hour north of Grand Rapids) for his father’s job. His father taught sociology at Ferris State University; his mother, an adjunct English professor at Ferris State University. Ed’s parents, both Catholic, helped shape his faith ideals.

“My dad was sort of a questioning person,” Ed recalls. “He formed who I was in relationship to my faith.” Ed’s mother, from Nazareth, Texas, helped establish a small Catholic farming community.

Ed’s junior and senior years at Big Rapids High School involved a sense of curiosity about religion and philosophy. He loved reading and writing. He and a good friend, with similar intellectual interests, would sit together in the high school library having discussions about meaning and purpose. Around this time, Ed also confided in a priest, Fr. Joe Fix, from his Big Rapids parish. To Ed, Fr. Joe was an “influential, charismatic figure” and “not a priest you’d recognize from any Bing Crosby movie.” He describes Fr. Joe as “a free spirit” and a “very faithful man.” Fr. Joe especially ministered to alcoholics, and to the poor.

“There were a lot of priests in my life,” Ed recalls. He also remembers, at nine years old, now-retired monsignor Gus Ancona, who one day held onto Ed’s hands and said: ‘These are the hands of a priest.’ Ed recalls thinking: I was looking for a vocation that had purpose. In high school, Ed began studying the likes of social activist and co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Dorothy Day, and philosophers Rene Descartes and Thomas Merton. He reflects:

"I guess what I loved about Merton was the expansiveness that I saw in him, in terms of his understanding of spirituality. I think his worldview reached out and grasped a lot of religious faiths. And the contemplative life always appealed to me. So I did frequently make retreats at monasteries.” He mentions about an upcoming retreat he will attend at St. Gregory’s Abbey, an Episcopalian monastery in Three Rivers, Michigan. It is home to a community of men who
follow the life of Saint Benedict (saintgregorysthreerivers.org). Ed has visited the monastery once or twice per year with a friend.

**Higher Education and Seminary**

When Ed graduated from Big Rapids High School in 1980, he experienced multiple transitions involving higher education. He studied at Michigan State University (MSU) for one year taking general education classes.

In his sophomore year, Ed transferred to Aquinas College (a Grand Rapids-based Catholic institution), where he would study theology from 1981 until 1982 and subsequently join the seminary. At that time he had also been discerning becoming a priest for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids. Ed then earned a Basselin scholarship to study philosophy at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy. The Basselin Scholars Program is a three-year honors program in philosophy involving junior and senior years of undergraduate study and one year of graduate work, leading to B.A. and M.A. degrees respectively. It is for qualified seminarians who have a vocation to the priesthood appropriate to their age and level of discernment, and who have completed two years of undergraduate study with a strong level of academic performance. (www.theologicalcollege.org/published/formation/basselin.html)

**Self-questioning Vocation**

Following graduation from college, Ed took two years off from school to travel. This transitional period caused him to question his priestly vocation. He recalls his dating history, in high school, and even one woman during his first year of college at MSU, having an impact on his decision. Ed realized he wanted to someday be married with children. During his last two years of college at Catholic University, Ed also began struggling internally with the “institutional
church” specifically the Catholic Church’s position on women: the way it treated them, especially not allowing them to become ordained priests. From conversations with his parents about the priesthood, Ed knew he had their support. He recalls a time his mother told him they (his parents) would support him whether he became a priest or not. Ed also recalls receiving similar sentiments from fellow priest friends.

In the fall of 1984, Ed moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts to live with his brother, who was studying at Harvard University. During this time Ed went to bartending school. He became a bartender in Cambridge, recalling bartending’s similarities to journalism and the seminary.

“It’s so funny that (bartending) is what I was drawn to because it’s so much like being a priest or journalist,” he says. “You sit there and you listen to their (customers’) lives, you observe their lives. It was really fascinating.” Ed describes the Waltham, Massachusetts, bar where he worked at as a “working-class bar.” On top it was a lunch place and on the bottom it was a country and western bar. Ed also served as a bouncer at this bar. He remembers not enjoying the bouncer gig and not being good at it. He also remembers customers he would see repeatedly.

On a daily basis, Ed would serve drinks to salesmen who worked for Raytheon, a weapons manufacturer in suburban Boston. These customers would “drink their lunch.” They would also be some customers with whom Ed would converse.

Ed thought: *Wow, these are the guys who are making the weapons for the country.* Ed says what he learned from bartending was ultimately it trained him “to listen, to observe and to ask questions.” And like a journalist -- to be careful when and where you express your opinions.
Seminary or Marriage

Still discerning whether or not he would join the priesthood, at the end of the 1984 school year, Ed moved to Mackinaw City, Michigan. He asked himself: Do I want to have a family, or do I want to live a celibate life? The answer was about to be revealed to him. That summer Ed met Lisa Striebich in Macanaw. Lisa first met Ed’s sister, and his sister introduced the two of them. A graduate student at Ohio State University, Lisa had been working as an intern, studying city and regional planning. Ed knew she was worth getting to know, so he moved to Columbus, Ohio, securing another bartending job, to be near Lisa while she was finishing school.

“I moved for love,” he says.

Lisa graduated college and had taken a job in northwest Ohio. The couple dated two years before Ed proposed. Then in 1987 they moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan because Lisa had taken a job in the nearby suburb of Kentwood. They married in 1988. Together, Ed and Lisa have four children: Erin, fourteen; Zach, twenty-one; Ben, nineteen; and Keegan, fifteen.

Married with Journalism

“I realized I wanted to write, and journalism was a way to make a living as a writer,” Ed recalls. In 1986 he applied and got accepted into the graduate program at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism. He graduated with a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern in August 1987.

Ed believes the value of a journalism degree was beneficial at that time, and helped prospective journalists like him “get their foot in the door.” However, he also had colleagues at his job from various educational backgrounds, including one columnist with a degree in special education.

No matter the position, Ed realized the scheduling demands of a journalist could impact family life. Even before marriage, Ed worked a lot to gain respect from his colleagues as an intern. “I was hungry to impress the people who wanted to hire me at the time.” Ed remembers during his engagement to Lisa having conversations with her about whether he had been spending too much time at work. When married, Ed remembers babysitting assistance he and Lisa received from his sister, Libby. When Libby was young and single, during Ed and Lisa’s first couple years of marriage, she would come over and watch the kids on Tuesday nights – the night Ed spent “putting the paper’s religion section to bed,” and Lisa attended city planning meetings in Kentwood.

Ed says: “There were moments I’d come home and see my kids sleeping and realize I had missed the opportunity to put them to bed and read them a book. And I’d feel guilty about that.”

Ed remembers a time when work life interrupted family life. He received a call one Saturday morning around 10 a.m. from his editor at the paper asking him if he’d write a story on a local congressman. Ed declined. His editor was furious as was Ed.

At that moment, Ed gained the wisdom and perspective that kids are only young once. And every moment is precious. At times, Ed put his work ahead of his family because of his unpredictable work schedule. Ed remembers angrily hanging up the phone.
“It’s always a lot of little decisions that take you away from your family…”

Ed says Lisa had a much more regular job schedule as a city planner. To Ed, Lisa was “wonderfully supportive” as she knew journalism was what he wanted to do and the demands associated with it. He says even Lisa regularly encounters nightly meetings for work.

Ed and Lisa soon realized establishing family time and compromise was essential. In part because of recent occupational transitions, they have been able to do things more regularly as family including eating dinner together, watching movies, traveling and exploring the outdoors. Ed adds the life of a journalist is by no means more unique or more challenging with its scheduling demands than of some other occupations.

“The reality is kids have to be taken to day care. Kids have to be picked up from basketball practice. It was a busy life and, at times, it was a challenging life because of that,” he recalls.

He adds: “In retrospect, I probably spent too much time at work and not enough time with my family, although, my kids don’t have any complaints about that. But going back, I probably would have done things a little differently in that respect.”

Ed recalls the afternoon daily newspaper operation arrangement of the 1980s:

There were a few windows open during the day during which you had to be cognizant the presses were getting ready to roll. When I first started out in journalism, reporters had three deadlines: 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sometimes that got pushed to noon in extraordinary circumstances. And then the day was gone and you were gathering information for the next day’s paper or the weekender. The paper’s Saturday and Sunday newspaper deadlines were 10 p.m. the previous night.

**Professional Transitions:**

Ed remembers what 2011, his last year at the newspaper, felt like: “There was always the understanding that there was no (economic) certainty in the profession. And was this the journalism I started doing when I got into journalism in the first place?”
That year the paper had lain off a number of its employees. Ed’s job was not in jeopardy. He remembers one of his bosses, a female, coming into his office to speak with him. Not every employee at The Press had an office like Ed. Most editors had cubicles. This colleague was someone with whom Ed had a good working relationship. She was going through the process of having to tell employees they were going to lose their jobs. His colleague then broke down crying privately in Ed’s office.

Ed’s reaction to the news he had just been given about the fate of some of his colleagues’ futures with the company was Wow, this is just devastating.

“I was given a job at this new company (MLive Media Group),” Ed recalls. “So that wasn’t the issue.” He says the real issue was “literally half of my colleagues at The Grand Rapids Press were being fired that day (in November 2011). It was a dramatic reorganization.”

“The idea was they (The Press) were forming an entirely new company. Most everybody was being let go, and then you had the opportunity to apply again,” he says.

The new company, MLive Media Group, launched February 2, 2012. It is labeled a “full service media and marketing partner” (mlivemediagroup.com).

Before the layoff news, Ed had already been looking for a new job. This occupational transition was something he had talked about with his wife ahead of time.

The same day Ed’s colleague visited his office in November 2011, Ed also received a call from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Ed had recently applied to work as the agency’s public information officer. The state employee called Ed with a position offer. At that moment, Ed was feeling conflicted: sad that half of his colleagues were losing their jobs and happy for this new opportunity awaiting him to work for the Governor of Michigan.
During this time of transition, media throughout Michigan and much of the U.S. experienced the grim effects of a collapsing economy. Ed recalls: “We (Michigan) were at the forefront of it, because the economy had exacerbated all these other realities of journalism that were being brought on by the digital age.” Ed says two things were occurring in print journalism everywhere causing some to experience professional identity transition: 1.) A dramatic shift in the way newsgathering was occurring, and 2.) The recession that compounded the reality of this new (digital) journalism environment.

One major transition within the newsroom: greater emphasis involving online and mobile media. Reporters were told to interact with their online readership community. Ed began participating in podcast discussions, and communicating more with media consumers; but it was a different type of journalism that also allowed critics to hide under pseudonyms and post anonymously. It was uncomfortable for some, including Ed, but it was part of MLive Media Group’s efforts to engage with its audience.

We allowed people to post (comments to stories) anonymously online. And that just drove the worst in human nature. We did it because we wanted to encourage people to comment. And (when) you start having people put their names on their comments, you lost a portion of that group that is commenting. So that was very frustrating to me – that, part of my job was to interact with these people. I didn’t know who they were.

**Departing the Newsroom**

In November 2011, Ed resigned from *The Grand Rapids Press*. His decision to leave was for economic and family reasons. And it is one he doesn’t regret. In December he began work as public information officer for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in Lansing, Michigan (about an hour east of Grand Rapids.) He works long hours, sometimes from home. “I love the people I work with now,” he remarks. “But I don’t have the bond with them that I had with those at *The Press*. And maybe part of it is I live in one place and work in another. So
maybe if I had the opportunity to go out for the occasional beer with these friends or get our families together, or whatever, I’d feel closer to them.”

In April 2013, the look inside of *The Grand Rapids Press* news room appeared colorfully bright. The office space revealed smurf blue chairs, and laptop computers, resting side-by-side on white tables. Even some bright orange couches were visible nearby. Some staff could be seen but others have gone. The roles of the journalists have changed.

Desks, or even within *The Grand Rapids Press* building itself, are not common areas where reporters work. The company now has its reporters work remotely in the community with a backpack full of needed supplies: such as a cell phone and lap top, so reporters don’t work in the same location daily. MLive Media Group executives label those who work in the same spot as “nesting” and they will be told to move. It is important to be out promoting the company, but more importantly, engaging with the vast number of the company’s supporters, followers and subscribers. It is another way of doing things, speaking to the unavoidable transitions taking place in newsrooms throughout the country.

**Looking Back**

Despite these changes, Ed still remembers the good times working for *The Grand Rapids Press*. To him, the newspaper was like a family. For Ed, that sense of community has now changed. In April 2013, he stated:

You know, these are the people who I was there with when their kids were born; they were there when my kids were born. They were at my wedding. And it’s the people you spend long hours with at night when you’re both working elections. There are people you travel with – photographers. So that whole process (of leaving the paper and seeing fellow employees fired) was definitely a grieving process for me. I don’t want to be overly dramatic about it. It really was difficult to go through. And I still grieve it to this day.
While lamenting his departure from *The Press* and seeing colleagues let go, Ed isn’t bitter.

“I’m not criticizing the company,” he says. “They (the company) were doing what they really thought that they needed to do to survive in this environment.” He says in recent years prior to 2011, staff was seeing salary cuts, changes in benefits structure. The company made a promise that it would never fire anybody except for cause. It would never let anybody go because of economic times. Certain people there for a number of years were incentivized to go and did, but that was a real loss to the newspaper and to the community.

Throughout his career being a part of the media, Ed realizes: “There’s a bond that forms with fellow journalists that I don’t think forms in other work.” Through countless hours spent in his twenty-four years writing, researching and being a voice in his community, Ed still enjoys getting together with old friends, and new ones, at *The Press*.

Reuniting with former colleagues has been an adjustment for Ed. Recalling a spring 2013 editorial board meeting at *The Grand Rapids Press*, he sat in the meeting with his new boss, the governor of Michigan. For Ed, the experience of being on the other side of the news felt different. Ed is becoming more comfortable in his new role as public information officer for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. He’s the guy reporters call for information. He’s also the guy who is responsible to the governor, to strategically message larger issues relating to the department. Ed has enjoyed the level of education the Michigan Department of Natural Resources job affords him including managing personnel, determining the annual budget and its distribution, and understanding Michigan’s natural landscape.

“All of that has been a real education,” Ed says.
Twice laid-off print journalist goes distance for journalism identity

Within the last four years, thirty-year old newspaper journalist Jessica Pasko has been laid-off twice for economic reasons as a result of staff cutbacks. She has even experienced trauma and stress from being on-scene covering the March 2013 murders of two Santa Cruz, California police officers and the loss of her most recent full-time job at The Santa Cruz Sentinel in back-to-back weeks. But the upstate New York native is not giving up on or abandoning the career she loves.

“I’m very stubborn. I really refuse to give up on journalism,” she says. Transitioning out of a full-time journalism job to part-time gigs has been taxing on Jessica’s mental health. She has battled anxiety and depression for much of her life, in and out of counseling, and says part of that is exacerbated by an unstable journalism job market.

The trajectory of my career has not at all been what I had hoped it would be. It doesn’t feel like it has been on the most upward of slopes at this point. I really don’t think it has anything to do with my talent as it has to do with the economy being crappy. I really, really identify myself as a journalist and by my career. I think that’s a very fundamental part of my persona. So the fact that I feel like I’m not succeeding in it in the way I expected to, is really bad for my self-esteem.

Jessica is addicted to journalism. There’s nothing else she wants to be doing or can imagine herself doing. She describes the highs of the job like a drug.

When it’s good, it’s great, and I feel it’s like an adrenaline rush...It’s kind of addictive. After a good day’s work, I feel good about myself. And I know that I’m a good reporter, and I know that I have a lot of strengths in that.

What motivates Jessica to continue on in the field is people’s need for local news and information. In journalism, she has made a name for herself online and in print, within the East Coast, Midwest and in California. Journalism has been Jessica’s calling since she was a child.

By the late ‘90s, Seventeen Magazine featured a "Queen of the Zine" contest. Jessica applied. Participants had to enter a ‘zine excerpt and Jessica won second place. Jessica’s zine
received as many as 900 requests, for the first issue, from people around the country; something “overwhelming” for a fourteen-year-old. Jessica’s ‘zine was featured in a column in the magazine along with her address where people could send her $1 for a copy. It became too much for Jessica to manage. Not long after creating the ‘zine, Jessica served as editor of her high school yearbook. Beyond high school, Jessica further pursued writing and communications.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism and English from the State University of New York at New Paltz in May 2005. At SUNY New Paltz, Jessica served two semesters as a staff writer and five semesters as an editor for her college newspaper, The New Paltz Oracle.

From January 2005 until May 2005 she interned at SPIN Magazine in New York. Her job included cataloging, transcribing, list-making, fact-checking, and archiving.

From June 2005 until December 2009, Jessica served as a full-time staff writer for The Associated Press, in Albany, New York. She reported on breaking and spots news in upstate New York, concentrating on issues in the state’s capitol. She wrote news stories for print, online, and broadcast divisions. Jessica also assisted with reporting on news and features stories, including Governor Eliot Spitzer’s resignation, the April 2009 shootings at an immigration center in Binghamton, New York, and a 2009 plane crash that killed fifty people. She also wrote stories on upstate New York crime and court cases including murder trials. This particular subject interest of hers came during a time when New York state legislators and activists teamed up to lobby on behalf of pregnant inmates from being shackled.

**Layoff and opportunities**

Despite Jessica’s work efforts, she learned her position at the Associated Press was being dissolved for economic reasons in December 2009. At the Associated Press, Jessica held the title
of editorial assistant, but most of the time she performed the work of a reporter. She remembers the struggle financially during, and after, the layoff period.

In order to get around issues of seniority when it came to the union and layoffs, the company basically decided to eliminate editorial assistants across the board. It was hard because a lot of us were working as a reporter but getting paid at a slightly lower wage. But we still got laid off because we had that classification (editorial assistant).

Upon being laid off, Jessica went on unemployment and received company health insurance through COBRA before later receiving full-time journalism employment in the Albany, New York area. From February 2010 until August 2010, Jessica worked full-time for The Troy Record serving as the health, business, environment and higher education reporter. It paid her a few dollars more per week than she was collecting on unemployment.

From March 2008 until January 2011, Jessica freelanced for a hyperlocal website called All Over Albany. There she wrote brief stories for a new media website focused on interesting people, places, and events from around the Albany area. She also researched the history of local buildings and would interview local musicians and artists.

Following her layoff from the AP, and stints working for other publications, Jessica applied to graduate school to further her education. She had a severance package from the AP, some free time and the desire to make another professional transition.

In September 2010, she began master’s work at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. While there, from September 2010 until May 2011 Jessica served part-time as freelance reporter for the Patch.com website in Evanston, Illinois.

In August 2011, Jessica earned a M.S. degree in journalism with a concentration in media leadership and strategy. She also earned a certificate in media management from the Kellogg
School of Management. Near the end of her graduate school career, Jessica had been searching for full-time employment.

Jessica graduated from Northwestern being able to shoot and edit video and still photos, record and edit audio, and produce print and multimedia work. For job prospects, New York, among other areas, was the media market she wanted.

Jessica interviewed with New York media outlets. After being turned down for a job with WNYC, which she thought she would land, Jessica interviewed with Bloomberg News, but wasn’t offered the position. Frustrated from sending out countless resumes, nothing was working out for someone who was willing to move practically anywhere. She thought of Chicago, Boston and Washington, D.C. as possible places to live. Then she asked herself: What would it be like to just apply to places along the West Coast? For a long time, she has had an affinity for the Bay area.

Jessica heard good things about Santa Cruz, California, and spotted via journalismjobs.com, a full-time cops and court reporter position opening at The Santa Cruz Sentinel. She remembers receiving a call for an interview two days later from someone at the newspaper, interested in her credentials but also unsure about her. Jessica explains:

I think they (The Sentinel) were kind of concerned that perhaps someone moving that far for a small paper might not be happy or might have issues with adjusting. Or it might just be too much, a fish out of water kind of case. But I told them: I’m willing to work really hard and I like exploring new places. And I love learning about new things. And I’m ready for something totally different.

Jessica had a bit of hesitation about accepting the newspaper’s offer, because the company wasn’t going to pay for her moving expenses. But ultimately she was interested in the journalism opportunity enough to move there despite the cost. Jessica’s boyfriend, Brian, decided he would move to Santa Cruz with her. Jessica was willing to make the move whether or
not Brian came along. The couple began dating on June 1, 2010. In August 2011, Jessica was offered the job at *The Sentinel*. Around that time, Brian was told he would be getting laid off working in information technology for the State of New York. Despite not having a job lined up, Brian thought: *Oh, maybe I’ll go with you.*

Jessica and Brian drove to California. A few months after arriving in Santa Cruz, Brian worked for a computer repair business, and then through that he made important connections and was running his own computer repair business for a while.

**Transition to California**

When Jessica and Brian moved to Santa Cruz, they were orientated to the neighborhood by their former downstairs neighbor, Megan, who is from the area. Jessica remembers providing the same level of hospitality to a former colleague from Seattle, while they both worked for the AP in Albany.

Upon arriving to her new reporting job in Santa Cruz, Jessica recalls the diverse culture of new places is something she enjoys, even if she must discover it on her own. “The nice thing about reporting, I feel, as opposed to some other types of jobs, is it kind of forces you to get out and explore,” she says. Jessica comments nobody at *The Sentinel* helped orientate her to the area. She wasn’t offended.

**New York and California**

Including Jessica, *The Sentinel* had a staff of about eight reporters, three editors, copy editors and a sports department. To her, the transition of moving from New York to a surfing destination in California initially was a challenge.

Jessica acknowledges other contrasts between the West and East Coasts. California deadlines (not reporting deadlines) and times are looser than New York.
She explains: “In New York, you expect someone to show up at 2 p.m. In Santa Cruz, it’s closer to 2:30 p.m.” Jessica is still getting used to the differences among people and structure.

“California is way more laid-back than I’m used to. I’m still very East Coast, Type-A,” she says.

**Cop killings and layoff**

Often times, cops and courts reporters, like Jessica, are exposed to the trauma of everyday life. But how does one such reporter recover emotionally from back-to-back weeks of bad news, when it personally impacts them? The week prior to March 6, 2013, two Santa Cruz police officers, fifty-one-year-old sergeant Loren “Butch” Baker, and thirty-eight-year-old, detective Elizabeth Butler, were shot and killed. Jessica remembers arriving on scene to report. Jessica wrote, and co-wrote with fellow reporters approximately six stories on the events. It was a period filled with a news team embedded in a crime being written about from all angles.

The week that followed the murders was personally traumatic and surprising for Jessica. She went into work that Wednesday morning, March 6, 2013, to the editorial meeting noticing nonverbal behaviors from colleagues. She also noticed a change in story assignments. Other reporters were being assigned big stories while Jessica was given smaller assignments. She was being told to cover unusual events for her, like the San Francisco Giants trophy tour. She felt shunned and bewildered. As one of the paper’s crime reporters, she was being taken off of an important event, while everyone was working on big stories that were part of her beat. The editors were being “distant” and Jessica just thought, “maybe everyone’s just stressed out, or frustrated” with her.

Jessica recalls management at the *Sentinel* saying: “We had been told weeks {prior} that we needed to crack down on expenses and overtime or we would lose a person.”
When that happened, she asked her boss “Do I need to be worried?” Jessica was led to believe her job would be spared.

“Even though we were not unionized, my big editor, we figured he would do last hired first fired,” Jessica says. Jessica hoped that her job would be saved, because there was somebody on the copy desk who was hired after her.

One morning in March 2013, Jessica met with her editor-in-chief and some human resources officials from the San Jose corporate headquarters. That day, Jessica was supposed to work the afternoon shift. The editor-in-chief, without Jessica’s direct supervisor present, said to Jessica: “We were all hoping we would go down a position without losing anyone involuntarily.” He told her: “We’re cutting your position.” Jessica says later that statement made by her former boss wasn’t exactly true. Jessica cried in front of those in the private meeting, which is what she didn’t want to do. She was given a termination contract.

Editors had known several days prior to Jessica’s layoff, but reporters didn’t know about it. “We (reporters) never get called into the office like that. So they (fellow colleagues) knew something was weird when they saw that happen,” Jessica says.

Jessica began putting stuff in boxes, and a couple of her former colleagues came over and helped her out. Jessica waved to everyone on her way out and said, “OK, bye.”

Jessica says it was the “most awkward and unceremonious layoff or firing” she has ever experienced. “The last time I left a newspaper job, I quit after six months and they gave me a cake,” she says. And when she was laid off from the AP, they had a party for her and gave her a gift and a card. She has no idea why this company exhibited such behavior. Jessica has friends
who were laid off from journalism jobs at The Hearst Company, and escorted out by a security guard.

Following the layoff, Jessica spent time with her really good friend and former colleague, Bonnie, editorial assistant at *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*. Jessica also planned to see a couple of others from the newspaper in the coming weeks since her layoff. Since then Jessica has gotten together with former colleagues, including a male reporter at *The Sentinel*, who was hired to fill Jessica’s old position three months after she was laid off.

“The days of compassionate companies that actually care about their employees, I think, is unfortunately quickly coming to an end; It’s for commodity, not for people,” Jessica says.

**Future in Santa Cruz?**

Since March 2013, Jessica has received multiple opportunities for part-time media employment. Having lived in Santa Cruz for two years, she senses the feeling of community she’s built with others.

“I’m not really ready to give up on all that,” she says.

She was however ready to split from her boyfriend, Brian. In May, the couple broke up for many reasons, according to Jessica.

“Journalism is not an easy career to have if you want a relationship and a family,” she says.

When Jessica began working at the *Sentinel*, her schedule was Tuesday and Thursday, 1 p.m. until 9:30 p.m., Fridays 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. It was difficult for Brian because Jessica was gone a lot. When she covered courts, her schedule was almost exclusively Monday through Friday. It should have been 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., but most days she didn’t leave the office until 6:30 p.m. Brian disliked Jessica’s career because of how her unpredictable work schedule interfered with their relationship. He found Jessica’s erratic hours
frustrating, particularly if there was something he wanted to do before 7 p.m. Money was also coming in less frequently. Meanwhile, Brian took another IT job which caused him to relocate.

Since being laid off, Jessica has taken on a part-time job as copy editor for Applied Survey Research, a nonprofit organization (about twenty minutes away from Santa Cruz, in Watsonville, California) that produces research/surveys. The group conducts annual homelessness surveys. Jessica has also served as a freelance reporter for The Register-Pajaronian, a four-day week paper in Watsonville, California. Jessica has also written for an alternative, free weekly newspaper called the Good Times Santa Cruz. In addition, Jessica has freelanced for a magazine called Brooklyn of Distinction, owned by a community newspaper group in Brooklyn, New York. Jessica’s most recent employment application, elsewhere, was for a full-time web producer job. She also registered for the domain: Santacruznews.org. Its slogan is: “An independent source for news, entertainment and more in Santa Cruz County.”

Battling underemployment, Jessica’s finances are of even greater concern, including higher education loans to pay, apartment rent and utilities, gas and food. After the breakup with Brian, one of Jessica’s friends from undergrad moved in with her. The friend is on her way out soon, though, as the California prison system is transferring her job to Stockton, California, two hours away from Santa Cruz. Jessica got on Craigslist and has since found another roommate.

Jessica has wanted to continue working in journalism in the Santa Cruz area, full-time, but sustainable employment with benefits has been difficult to find. And while she realizes moving back East might be the more sensible route to take, Jessica doesn’t want to, nor does she think she can, mentally handle moving to a new place right now.

One other option Jessica had considered was a career in law. As of late July 2013, Jessica had registered the LSAT. Law school was something she had been contemplating for several
years, but realizes it’s not for her. Transition for this young journalist does not come easy, but it has arrived for Jessica like so many others with newspaper employment backgrounds and dreams.

“You know, I’m pretty tenacious. At this point, I just keep being able to bounce back and find something…. We’ll see what happens,” she says.
Veteran print journalist moves for work, finds love

A sixty-two year-old, six-foot tall man with glasses and a short, thin reddish-brown moustache answers the phone revealing his native Texas dialect inside his Dutchess County, New York newspaper office. His desk is piled with paperwork, and his computer screen indicates he has emails to read. Indeed, Curtis Schmidt has been running around, putting stories together, meeting people and deadlines.

“Hi, this is Curtis,” he says, picking up the call, catching his breath, quickly and politely.

Since 1975, Curtis has pursued his passion for journalism as a print and photojournalist throughout parts of Texas, in Monroe, Louisiana and in Dutchess County, New York. He has relocated a total of six or seven times by his count. Throughout his career, he has dabbled in many journalism jobs, in multiple capacities. Since 2004 Curtis has worked in Wappingers Falls, New York as marketing director, executive editor, general manager, reporter, and photographer for The Southern Dutchess News and Beacon Free Press. In April 2009, he helped launch a weekly publication, Northern Dutchess News & Creative Living.

Education

In the early 1970s, attending Texas A&I (now Texas A&M Kingsville) Curtis studied history with the goal of becoming a teacher. But in college he realized he wanted a job that afforded him opportunities to learn about new things and meet new people daily. In his sophomore and junior years, Curtis developed the passion and skills for writing, and switched his major to journalism. He credits one of his professors at Texas A&I, Dr. Joseph Herring, in helping him make the transition into writing and reporting. He says Dr. Herring instilled in his students:
You can write and have fun, but you also have to follow the rules.

Curtis says the journalism department at Texas A&I was not very large:

“Out of a maybe 10,000-student body, we might’ve had about 100 (undergraduate) journalism students.”

The size of the program helped him foster greater ties with Dr. Herring, who encouraged Curtis to become involved with the school’s newspaper. In his senior year, Curtis transferred to East Texas State University (now termed Texas A&M at Commerce) because during that time East Texas State had “a strong photography school.” Curtis’ new plan was to blend photographic skills with his writing. He graduated in December 1974 with a dual bachelor’s degree in journalism and photography.

“It was an obvious marriage – journalism and photography,” he recalls. “A lot of people did that during that time.”

Relocation & Inspiration

On relocating early in his career, Curtis says: “One thing you had to know about newspapers in general back in the 1970s and 1980s was the way you moved up in the industry was to move around. Very seldom did you sit at one newspaper and just stay there your whole life and try to move up the ranks. That might take quite a while.”

In 1975, for one year, Curtis began his career as a general assignment reporter for The Bel Air Texan. From 1976 until 1979, Curtis then worked for The Huntsville Item. His first year there he served as county reporter. The remaining three years he served as sports editor.

On reporting, Curtis remembers some of the best advice he received early on in journalism came while working at The Huntsville Item. His eighty-three-year-old boss, Don Reid, the editor emeritus, taught Curtis valuable lessons when reporting and writing news:
It’s not about you; it can never be about you.

From the late 1970s onward, Reid’s influence instilled in Curtis the reality that journalism is about recognizing “everyday people.”

I think in journalism we (journalists) always had this thing like ‘Oh I’m going to get famous and interview all the politicians and movie stars, whatever.’ But you quickly get this introduction into small town politics. You realize ‘I’m here to do a job. I’m not going to get famous for doing what I’m doing.’ And your goal is to do that job as well as you can.

Curtis adds small town journalists almost try to detach themselves from getting to know local people on a personal level because the journalist is the one telling the community about certain individuals who may be well-liked and respected in town. He emphasizes the main benefit from all of the times he relocated in journalism was being able to build relationships quickly.

“As a reporter, you have to have no fear of starting a conversation and building relationships with just about anyone that you meet --or are forced to meet through coverage of a story,” he says. He notes his long and short-term friendships have developed through all of those meetings. They have even helped Curtis to become successful in advertising sales. He states: “sales is also all about building trust and building relationships.”

In the early part of his career, Curtis expected to stay at a job, at most, for five years. In the mid-to-late 1970s, Curtis recalls initially approaching his jobs as a reporter at arm’s length in a given workplace community. It wasn’t as if he was living there in “third person.” He soon became deeply involved (in local issues) and, because of the ties local citizens had to their homeland, found it sometimes difficult when reporting on those who were from the area.

From 1979 until 1980, Curtis moved to Monroe, Louisiana to work as a reporter for The News Star, and then to Amarillo, Texas, from 1980 until 1984, to work for The Amarillo Globe News. From there, he moved to Abilene, Texas in 1985 to develop a weekly newspaper he and a
couple of friends created called Focus on Abilene, forming out of another newspaper called The Abilene Observer. At that time, Abilene, with about 250,000 residents, already had a daily newspaper, so the goal was for Focus on Abilene to serve as a weekly magazine.

During the mid-1980s, part of the country had been hit by the oil bust. For Curtis, being a reporter connected to his Abilene, Texas community, it was “sad to see the whole town experience a domino effect” of economic catastrophe. Abilene lost everything, particularly its economy, which was all in oil. When the oil companies dried up, everyone left including “four or five banks and two or three malls.”

While Curtis moved often in his career, he always moved for professional reasons, by and for himself.

Hardly any of those moves were where you knew somebody. You basically moved there for the job and made friends along the way.

Curtis remembers the 1980s, when he and the paper’s owner looked at a copy of The Observer from the previous year, realizing the advertisers and individuals featured in the paper had left town. They looked at the paper and realized the difficulty in hanging on to their careers there, and decided it was time for them to move as well. Curtis knew he had to eventually look beyond Texas. So he decided on applying to work in New York. “I always had a desire to check out the East Coast, and I ended up applying to several (papers there),” he recalls. The Poughkeepsie Journal flew him from Texas to New York for a one-week interview “back when newspapers were doing such things.” He was offered a copy editing position in the sports department in November 1988.

Curtis adds: “I didn’t really worry about moving to New York. That was just another move.”
One frightening experience for Curtis after moving to Poughkeepsie happened one evening outside of The Poughkeepsie Journal in November 1988:

I was almost mugged after the first week or so. Twice within the first six months. I remember leaving work one morning at 1:30 a.m. and looking left and right as I pulled out of the parking lot. As I looked one way, my passenger side door was being opened by someone on the street. I gunned the engine and took off and they were laying there in the street.

Being in a team-oriented work environment is important to Curtis. It instills in him a sense of leadership and workplace community. Being in Huntsville, Texas working for The Huntsville Item, from age twenty-five until about age thirty, was a place where Curtis was acknowledged and respected by colleagues.

For his thirtieth birthday, work colleagues threw Curtis a party. They provided him with a card and a few laughs. The card said ‘people over thirty do lots of interesting things.’ On the card were “pictures of old guys playing checkers in the park.” During his last two years working in Huntsville, Curtis made the transition from news to sports, accepting a sports editor position offer. “I had about three positions where I was in the sports department at different newspapers until I was in Amarillo, Monroe, Louisiana and Abilene. I really got back into news when we started our own paper in Abilene, but it was more feature and not the blood and guts,” he says.

In Huntsville, Curtis also reported a lot on the prison system, including a corrupt county judge. “They (the community) were not used to having watchdogs….And they didn’t appreciate it,” he recalls.

In his early career, Curtis buried himself in work and would occasionally write letters and place phone calls to family and friends. But in those days, it was more challenging to stay in contact with them. None of it bothered him.
Impact of journalism on marriage

In the late 1980s while working in Poughkeepsie, Curtis met his wife, Nancy, a nurse, while on a blind date. They married in 1991 and have no children. The couple connected comfortably from the first phone conversation. Both he and his wife are talkers, and Curtis notes he sometimes finishes his wife’s sentences. Curtis appreciates his wife’s passion for her hospital nursing career, and she values his love of journalism. Both Curtis and Nancy realize each other’s occupations have individuals needed to run those institutions. Curtis and Nancy have introduced each other to their job demands, as well as to the employees who work with them.

Early on, Curtis and Nancy realized their occupations involved conflicting hours, and the negative impact it left on their relationship. While dating and into part of married life, Curtis always worked nights and Nancy worked days. The couple tried to find ways for their schedules to be more accommodating for each other. Curtis says: “It’s funny, when we first started dating, she made the comment, ‘Gee, I’ve worked my whole career just to get a daytime job. Now I get a daytime job and I’m dating a guy who works nights. Where were you when I was working nights?’”

Managing work and relationship schedules was an initial challenge for Curtis, because it was something he had not thought about balancing for at least the first fifteen years of his career.
Leaving journalism temporarily

Curtis’ jobs at *The Journal* involved editing and layout, serving as copy editor and sports editor in the sports department. “I did it and I was good at it, and it paid more, but I didn’t enjoy it,” Curtis says.

Curtis missed being out in the community, reporting, taking photos and meeting people. As an editor, one is often confined to a desk job having limited interactivity with the public. He became tired of what he saw as *The Journal’s* “very corporate atmosphere.” Gannett, the *Journal’s* parent company, is the United States’ largest media company and newspaper publisher, owning more than 90 newspapers across the United States (www.niemanlab.org/encyclo/gannett/).

Due to the nighttime hours away from his wife, and the nature of copy editing, Curtis eventually left Gannett, and the journalism industry, for daytime hours in another media-related occupation. From 1999 until 2003, Curtis worked in public relations for an information technology (IT) firm in Danbury, Connecticut. The company’s objective was to hire contractors who would work six to eight months in different parts of the country. The firm did everything online, but not news. “I was just marketing and trying to build relationships between our company and other companies,” Curtis says. “The firm had access to thousands of experts in different technical areas.”

As a result of changing careers, Curtis noticed his personality and well-being suffer. On making the transition into the public relations position for the information technology firm, Curtis felt lost and alone. He considers that period a time when he felt like “a fish out of water.” The corporate public relations environment was a situation focused on sales, marketing and
making money. He missed the variety of writing, photography and interviewing he had become so accustomed to doing before.

He felt lonely—personally and career-wise. “When you’re in the newspaper business, you’re basically in tune to what’s going on in the news…And when you don’t work in that field, you feel a loss; like you’re not involved anymore,” he says. No longer was he working in news media, but with the news media. But Curtis soon learned his journalism skills would not go to waste. Instead of writing a news release, Curtis used his journalism skills and would pitch stories to journalists. He knew what types of stories they would want for their front pages or for their section pages. He would supply reporters with the phone numbers to call for the other side of the story. And his company received free publicity. In his PR position, Curtis realized he was becoming even more entrenched in corporate personalities and tasks. He was experiencing what experts call an occupational identity transition.

“It was very tough (to get through it). I was not a happy guy, but I was determined to make a go of the PR venture,” he says. Curtis worked a total of four years for the company. He said the last two years there he began looking for journalism jobs in a management/editorial role. He was comfortable, always, with a smaller (news) operation.

Most evenings, away from journalism, Curtis would return home from his public relations job feeling the loneliness of being without journalism. Not feeling “part of the group anymore,” Curtis felt detached from not knowing what’s news, whether it’s local news, national news or international news.

If the public relations job served one positive purpose for Curtis, it was to help him separate his work life from his home life. Beforehand, in journalism, his business life was his
There was no personal life. In public relations, he would come home without having much to say to his wife.

Curtis’ wife, Nancy, knew how he felt based on the way he carried himself: tired and unhappy. At that time, Curtis could have gone to a larger paper or a different type newspaper organization instead of into the PR position, but he stayed in New York for Nancy. Unlike Curtis, Nancy had never moved. It was much easier for Curtis to adjust than to ask her to adjust for him. Nancy had a good paying position at a local hospital, and Curtis wanted to commit himself to a place as much as to his wife.

In 2004, Curtis spotted an ad for a marketing director position with The Southern Dutchess News, a weekly newspaper company in business since 1959. After having pleasant conversation with the owner and publisher of the paper, Al Osten, the rest was history. Curtis, who has held many positions for the Wappingers Falls, New York-based newspaper company is happier and more confident. Curtis acknowledges there is more autonomy that comes with running a smaller operation. He believes in what he’s doing and who works with him.

Curtis’ work ethic is to enjoy what he does for happiness and satisfaction. He remarks some people can spend their entire careers in a job they dislike, come home and be fine. Realizing not every day is easy, Curtis states there are more things in journalism that he enjoys, such as the variety of the job, which keep him in the field. His favorite type of journalistic writing is general assignment reporting – or the ability to write about different topics, from hard news to features.
In April 2009, the first issue of *Northern Dutchess News & Creative Living* hit newsstands. A few months before that time, northern Dutchess County municipalities received little to no daily and/or weekly newspaper coverage. Curtis and his boss, Al Osten, studied the market and the competition the company might face. They continue to work on strengthening ties with community leaders and businesses.

For Curtis, there’s no slowing down in his journalism career. He wants to follow in the footsteps of his mentor and former boss, Don Reid, and work in journalism at least until age 83. Curtis doesn’t believe in sitting around doing nothing. He wants to continue pursuing what he loves for as long as he can.

“In my philosophy, it’s like if you retire, you die…your mind can atrophy just as your body atrophies,” he says.
Summary/Conclusions/Implications

From conducting primary and secondary research, there are many examples of print journalists who have had to make professional transitions because of their career including family, relationships and the economy. Scott Reinardy has spent his career as a professional journalist and is now an associate professor of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. In his research, Reinardy has studied, among other topics, “burnout and life issues of newspaper and television workers” (Reinardy, CV, 2013).

As noted within this creative project, from a February 2007 survey Reinardy distributed to 715 professional journalists, 381 journalists planned to leave journalism. Participants’ surveys answers were coded into six categories: industry issues/job satisfaction, salary, pressure/stress burnout, family issues, retirement and other. An open-ended question asked, “If you are intending to leave newspaper journalism, what would be the reason(s) for leaving?” Respondents said “industry issues/job satisfaction” was the primary reason for wanting to depart journalism, making up 30.2 percent of the comments. Salary was second with twenty-seven percent and pressure/stress/burnout was third at 15.9 percent” (Reinardy, 2009, p. 133). This data correlates with the notion that journalists are on the move to other occupations and jobs, and have experienced impacts related to their identity, community and family.

Personal stories shared by current and/or former journalists reveal similar themes within each profile as well. Ed Golder, Jessica Pasko and Curtis Schmidt pursued higher education degrees. Golder said he “moved for love” and he moved multiple times, according to transcripts from interviews. Golder secured employment in and out of journalism, with opportunities such as bartending and currently as public information officer for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. His motives at various occupational and job transitions appear to coincide with
Powell and Greenhaus’ categorical description of those who “prefer to merge or blend aspects of work and family by maintaining permeable boundaries around their work and family domains.

Powell and Greenhaus also stated: “The more salient an individual's family identity is to his self-concept, the more likely he evokes the family identity in a work decision (e.g., whether to accept a job that requires extensive travel or long work hours) to include possible consequences for family life.” Based upon in-depth interview material, that description could also correspond with Ed’s occupational and job selection process. For Ed, leaving The Grand Rapids Press proved to be difficult for him personally. He commented it is something he still grieves to this day, and how he misses the positive workplace community connection.

Jessica Pasko’s then-boyfriend moved from New York to California with her. She had a job lined up. He did not. Prior to the couple’s split, Jessica stated in an interview she would have moved to Santa Cruz, California whether or not he followed her in August 2011. In an interview, she describes having built a sense of community in Santa Cruz for two years (as of August 2013) and has been unwilling to give it up so quickly. For Jessica, moving again would be emotionally difficult since the layoff and the recent breakup with her partner happened two months apart from each other. Jessica ended the relationship in May for a number of reasons, including her ex-boyfriend’s decision to relocate to San Francisco for a job in information technology, the same field he has worked in before. Since then, however, Jessica has endured financial challenges since the layoff. She has marketed herself as an entrepreneurial journalist, created the web site santacruznews.org and has the education and skillset to work for a variety of media.

Jessica mentions she has not been given a truthful reason by newspaper management for her March 2013 layoff. A full-time male reporter later replaced Pasko in the cops and courts position. Unlike Ed, Jessica officially lost her job in California; Ed observed others losing their
jobs at *The Grand Rapids Press* in Michigan. On layoffs, research published in 2009 states: “A total of 595 people note they left newspaper editorial jobs in the last decade under circumstances that were not entirely voluntary.”

Curtis Schmidt never moved for love, but upon finding it, decided he could not make another geographic career move due to being in a relationship with someone who had never moved away from New York. Curtis says for at least the first fifteen years of his career, he hadn’t thought about managing work and relationship schedules. From the themes surrounding his story involving career advancement, his career motives initially matched up with research conducted by Charles H. Christansen “when we build our identities through occupations, we provide ourselves with the contexts necessary for creating meaningful lives, and life meaning helps us to be well.” Curtis’ story also supports Scott Reinardy’s research findings:

> Journalists in 1992 appeared to want to lead normal lives. They were less willing to suffer the dislocation and unpredictable schedules that were accepted by an earlier generation, especially in a competitive environment in which newsrooms were expected to do much more with fewer resources, and where there was little hope of professional advancement in an era of stalled growth (Reinardy, 2009, p. 129).

In 1999, Schmidt temporarily left journalism for better hours in a public relations job; his wife, Nancy, had a good job as a nurse at a Dutchess County, New York hospital. While dating, Curtis wanted to see Nancy during the day, since she worked days and he worked nights at *The Poughkeepsie Journal*. Schmidt was good at the PR job, but he didn’t like it. He took it to be able to see his wife during the evenings.

Each research participant articulated a sense of affinity for their respective communities in which they have lived and served. Many of the participants described a sense of community in the journalism workplace, and being in the know which keeps them passionate about and
working within or close to the field. More research must be done on whether or not salary scales impact which next occupation and/or job a current and/or former journalist chooses.

Researcher and lecturer at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication at the University of Gothenburg, Jenny Wiik, discussed in her dissertation “Journalism in Transition: The professional identity of Swedish journalists” how the professional identity of journalists is tied to a sense of commonalities, such as through experiences, knowledge and socially with colleagues and members of the same occupation.

Professional identity is a form of social identity that links members of the same occupation. It hence refers to a wider frame of identification – a discourse – rather than specific objectives and members of specific news organizations. It is tied to a sense of common understanding; experiences and expertise, cultivated through professional socialization at several levels (education, associations, romantic lore etc.) (Wiik, 2012, p. 3).

It is in being introduced to the stories of current and/or former newspaper journalists, like Ed Golder, Jessica Pasko and Curtis Schmidt that remind others: there are a variety of reasons news rooms are finding its journalists on the move. These individuals are trying to balance not only their checkbooks, but also their time between work life, family life and personal life. Their stories are worth knowing and sharing because each speaks to the uncertainty of full-time journalism jobs.

As a researcher who has been a current and former journalist, I chose to study this topic in part because, within the last 8 years, I have moved a lot. Some of my occupational and geographic relocations have involved journalism. Two of those years were spent doing national service. The motive of some of my occupational or job transitions occurred during a downward economy, to gain new skills and experiences. Two of three weekly newspaper companies I worked for in New York either stopped operation completely or dissolved one of its publications. Having been a full-time and freelance journalist, unfortunately I was one employee personally
affected by such casualities. I set aside whatever funds I could for college loans and gas for my tank. Unlike some employees, at such time I did not have to worry about rent to pay or food to purchase. But many are not so lucky. The stories of those who lose their jobs or leave journalism for other reasons often go unknown. Many go untold. As researchers and media enthusiasts, it is our job to locate such individuals and find out their stories.

Indeed, companies in all professions have the capability to issue layoffs; but how many, including newspaper companies, provide the necessary resources for its members in transition? More research is encouraged on the social and psychological effects to journalists’ social lives including family and occupational identities. Researchers must also find ways to collect raw data on numbers of communities without daily and/or weekly newspapers, and also investigate how citizens of such communities are impacted by underreported news. Ultimately, how might journalists build community for themselves and others when constantly faced with the threat of job and career transitioning? It is an ongoing question in need of answers.
Dear Professor Masse:

It was a pleasure to evaluate the creative project of Greg Lucid as he completes the requirements for a Master’s degree in the Department of Journalism.

Greg requested that I critique his work as an outside evaluator. Below are the requirements needed for the critique.

F. Two outside Evaluations/Reviews of the Project (which must include all of the following)

I. Brief discussion of evaluator's credentials (e.g., knowledge and experience of the subject area)

Terry Heifetz is an Instructor of Telecommunications at Ball State University, teaching courses in news writing, reporting and producing. He has taught two classes that have produced documentaries; one class won a regional Emmy in 2011 for its work. He is also news director of Indiana Public Radio (WBST) and news consultant to student radio station WCRD. Before joining Ball State, he worked in producing and management positions in local and network television.

II. Relationship to the student and subject matter

Greg Lucid successfully completed TCOM 632, one of the courses I teach in the graduate program in the Department of Telecommunications. As part of the class, Greg began work on his proposal and literature review for his creative project. He was able to focus his ideas and flesh out the concepts of his research and approaches.

III. Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor

This topic is completely appropriate for a creative endeavor. Greg embraced an issue that a lot of people talk about, but few have researched. People have conducted quantitative research along the edges of the topic of relocation in journalism careers. Some dealt with careers and relocation in general; others dealt with journalism, but strictly in a quantitative manor. Qualitative work is not nearly as common.

IV. Evaluation of the student's approach

Since there is little qualitative research in this field, Greg’s approach is unique. While career relocation is common across America, those of us who have lived through the trauma of moving for journalism understand what makes it different. It was interesting to see Greg’s research as he followed several journalists and former journalists as their lives took twists and turns. Did they move for their careers, their personal lives, or both? His clear and descriptive writing helps the reader understand what makes his subjects tick.
V. Evaluation of the body of the project

a) Quality
For me, one of the better tests of the quality of a student project is simple; does it hold my interest? The answer to this question is a definite yes. As a journalist and an educator, I had a curiosity about what Greg’s subjects were going to say. Did they have regrets? Do they miss journalism? Or are they still glad they are journalists? Greg answered these questions in a clear and concise way, like a journalist would. However, his style went beyond who, where, what, why, when and how. He brought behind-the-scenes information into the equation. What other things played a factor in the decision to relocate? And what impact did they have? Sometimes a journalist is too close to the story. Greg helps the reader take a step back from the field to see the decision-making process that each person makes.

b) Depth of treatment
This piece goes into great detail, both about the literature that inspired Greg’s study and the personal narratives of the subjects. The literature review helps set the stage for the purpose of the study. The rest of the project examines the details. What would inspire someone to relocate or not relocate? What is more important, career life or personal life? Is it worth moving to a new city for an industry that is contracting? Greg gets answers to these questions. I felt satisfied reading these very personal stories. It left me wanting more. That is the only thing I wish Greg had. I would like even more information about the subjects’ current situations and the ramifications of their decisions. That may be a good thing to explore in future studies. It may also be valuable to explore journalists in electronic media for future works.

c) Coverage
Greg covered this story in a valuable way. Numbers cannot tell the whole story. Greg’s ethnographic approach and descriptive writing really allow the reader to experience the lives of the subjects. That shows the reader what the numbers do not. Journalists also tend to explore the negatives in a story. It is the nature of the DNA of a journalist. We have a dose of healthy skepticism. So it was refreshing to see Greg explore all of the other, sometimes positive events in a person’s life and how those events impact career decisions. Even more importantly for this project, he explored how non-career events affect decisions about relocation. Sometimes we are so focused on careers that we forget that work is only a portion of our lives. Greg helps the reader realize that this is the case. He balanced the stories well so the reader could appreciate the struggle to maintain work and personal lives.

VI. Evaluation of the student's work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)
Greg covered a topic that most people know exists. However, the personal stories often get lost in the numbers and magnitude of the story. He brought some of those personal stories into the spotlight. In his introduction and literature review, he justified why this is a topic that deserves coverage. How does relocation affect the community and how does the community affect relocation? It works both ways. Greg helps the reader understand that. As Greg stated in the literature review, there is a lot of research about changes in the business of journalism and about relocation. However, we often miss the question of why. Greg explores that question through the eyes of several people who have lived through life-altering changes, sometimes not by choice. The qualitative nature is not often explored by researchers. They are often more likely to focus on the data. They look at how many people lost jobs or moved. But that has been done.
Greg’s focus is on what has not been done. Therefore, by creating this study, he effectively advanced the body of knowledge in the field.

Please let me know if you have any further questions about Greg’s project and my evaluation of it.

Regards,
Terry

Terry Heifetz
Instructor of Telecommunications
News Director, Indiana Public Radio
Ball State University
765-285-4002
tjheifetz@bsu.edu
October 22, 2013

Creative Research Project/Professional Project
Greg Lucid’s MA Creative Project evaluation
Ball State University

I. Brief discussion of evaluator’s credentials (e.g. Knowledge and experience of the subject area.

Prior to my recent temporary assignment as Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, I served in the MCLA English/Communications department for 30 years. During that time, I taught a wide range of courses, but my primary focus has been in professional writing, journalism in particular. I served for most of that period as an adviser of our award-winning student newspaper the MCLA Beacon where Greg Lucid served as a writer and editor. Besides the senior editing and production courses, I taught introductory, advanced, and senior seminar journalism classes and a specialty class in literary journalism, an area of great interest to me and one that it is hoped will serve as a requisite credential for Greg’s thesis evaluation. I also teach literature in the MCLA Master’s in Education program.

II. Relationship to the student and subject matter

Greg was my student in Business Writing and Presentation, a course in which he was highly successful. In addition, I supervised his credit-bearing editorship at our award-winning campus newspaper, the MCLA Beacon. During his tenure on the paper, there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of the writing and editing. I have also had the pleasure to follow his career in professional journalism, and I am very proud of the time he has spent working in the state of Washington with those who are in need.

III. Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor

Given the disastrous economic climate of the last half decade years and the devastating effects on journalism as a profession, Greg has ignored many of the more obvious facets of that story and went, like a feature writer and literary journalist, to the heart of it: the personal impact
on people involved, in this case the reporters themselves. It’s a newsworthy story that, when it is
told, it is never told well enough. Greg’s topic here is most appropriate.

IV. Evaluation of the student’s approach

Greg’s approach is dual and complementary. Overall, he approaches his subject as a communications researcher and as a creative journalist. The literature review is extensive for the subject matter and gives the reader a clear view of what has be done so far in the field of the study of transitioning journalists. In addition, he cites appropriately throughout and provides a solid bibliography worthy of sharing with other scholars in the field. With the skills that he honed in the classroom and as a general assignments reporter at several newspapers, he provides solid background materials on his interviewees and lets them tell their story. His approach is most appropriate given the intent of the assignment.

V. Evaluation of the body of the project
a) Quality

Greg’s creative project is solidly researched, well written, and properly documented.
b) Depth of treatment

Greg has conducted in-depth research into an important issue stemming, in part, from the great recession: the impact on working Americans, in these case journalists. It is also a story of corporate America where often downsizing is the key to greater profitability. Greg tells us about three people who have been caught up in similar situations, yet through their tenacity survive and use their skills to move on.

c) Coverage

Selecting three subjects to interview is appropriate for the report. This gives the reader an opportunity to get to know the subjects who trust Greg with their personal feelings. We find three characters in a story: Ed Goldor, a former seminarian (an interesting tale in itself) and a realist about the “uncertainty” in the field; Jessica Pasko who gambles on a move across country who loses her job and her relationship; and a veteran reporter who was nearly mugged and who knows only too well the perils of working for a major newspaper chain and a corporate PR firm, and who finds happiness at a small weekly in New York State. The coverage, from research to reporting to writing is complete.
VI. Evaluation of the student’s work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)

As a researcher, Greg has accomplished what we would want any undergraduate to accomplish at the next level. His literature review is a testament to understanding of the area, but more importantly he focuses on what is not specifically addressed, how reporters in transition are impacted by whatever circumstances led to that sometimes drastic shift in the circumstances, personal and/or professional. He has done well here.

Greg’s compassion for his subjects comes, in part, though his time working with the poverty stricken people in Tacoma, Washington where he served with a faith-based volunteer corps and through downturns in his own professional career. He lived among people who don’t have much and perhaps gave them some hope to continue on. That’s commendable.

Greg’s interviews remind me a bit of Studs Terkel’s and other oral histories we read in my CORE American Great Depression class. Greg makes no judgments, and like any good journalist, lets the audience glance at the human element and make up its own mind.

It was indeed a pleasure to have Greg as an undergraduate, and it is equally gratifying to have the opportunity to review his master’s level work in creative journalism at your excellent institution. Greg has made a solid contribution to the field, and I fully support this project. Your positive consideration would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul E. LeSage, Ph.D.
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of English & Communications
413/662-5140
Bibliography


