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## Understanding Involuntary Job Loss Among Former Newspaper Staff Photographers

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Understanding Involuntary Job Loss Among Former Newspaper Staff Photographers

by

Ryan K. Morris

A thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

This study examines former newspaper photographers' experience with being laid-off from their staff positions. The purpose was to identify emerging themes within the context of involuntary job loss, job satisfaction, and occupational identity via interviews with 8 photojournalists who experienced the phenomenon of being laid-off. The newspaper industry has long been considered both the starting point for young and aspiring photojournalism careers and the most consistent and stable venue for an income. Yet recent changes in the media landscape, particularly economic stress on traditional business models and rapid adoption of digital technology sway the occupational future of photojournalism within newsrooms. The research method employed for this study includes in-depth interviews with a hermeneutical phenomenology approach focused on involuntary job loss, job satisfaction, and occupational identity.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In recent years, distinctive changes have occurred in the photojournalism profession. This study seeks insight from newspaper photographers laid-off from staff photographer positions about the experience of job loss, individual commitments to the craft of photojournalism as an occupation, and efforts to make a living during an era of significant transition in the field. The ability for photojournalists to expect steady employment and to earn advanced compensation for their work or assignments from newspapers, magazines, and other clients, such as wire services is diminishing. Furthermore, establishing an individual online presence and distribution of work affords contemporary photographers the potential for near immediate recognition and access to potential clients. Yet, the development of models for online financial success challenges the savviest of media companies, and revolutionary digital technologies open photography to the masses more than ever before. Having experienced involuntary job loss, participants in this study, and their occupational counterparts, must negotiate the space between possible self-employment in their chosen profession and employment in another field.

Startling job loss figures across the media landscape illustrate how the field of journalism, as an occupation, is being turned upside down. According to the UNITY 2009 Layoff Tracker Report, one of the few sources working quantitatively to account for journalism layoffs, between January 2008 and September 2009 more than 46,500 journalism workers lost jobs (UNITY: Journalists of Color, Inc., 2009). Unfortunately,

the large number of jobs reported lost at newspapers in recent years combines all workers who report, manage, and deliver the news. Traditional journalists who report the news in words and pictures at newspapers have been especially hard-hit by the reduction of the workforce at small and large papers alike, yet individual accounts of this recent phenomenon are limited in academic research.

For staff photographers, predictions for stability and opportunities at newspapers have been bleak in recent years. Downsizing and closures of entire papers with storied decades of profit and reporting have ensnarled the men and women who comprise American newsrooms. In June 2008, management at the *Daytona Beach News-Journal* released nearly 100 staffers from their jobs (Michalowski, 2008). The photography department at the *News-Journal* shrank from 15 full-time journalists in 2004 to nine in early 2008 and to none by June of the same year. Almost a year later, the *Rocky Mountain News* closed its doors after 146 years of publishing; 15 photojournalists were caught up in the *Rocky* closing. As another potential sign of the times to come, in the summer of 2008, the *Tampa Tribune* and WFLA-TV, a Media General paper and TV station, required 21 TV videographers and 19 still photojournalists to reapply for positions when all staff jobs were reclassified under new position titles (Michalowski, 2008). Via social networks and occupational camaraderie, photojournalists across the country took quick notice of the transitions and resulting make-up of newspaper photojournalism departments. Adding insult to an industry keenly aware of layoffs, *The Washington Times* terminated 13 of the 15-member photography department just days before Christmas of 2009 ([http://nppa.org/news\\_and\\_events/news/2009/12/times.html](http://nppa.org/news_and_events/news/2009/12/times.html)).

Factors contributing to the increasingly unstable job market of newspaper photojournalists and the newspaper industry's uncertain future include outdated methods

of generating income through advertising, consumer expectations that online content should be free, and people using the Internet and digital devices to find news for themselves (Beckett, 2008). In addition to the downturn in advertising revenue and the economy, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2009) reports photojournalists can expect adverse effects from the increased availability of images provided by citizen journalists. The digital age and the affordability and easy use of professional level cameras able more non-journalists to be hobbyist photographers and citizen journalists. Furthermore, newspaper companies now utilize contemporary technologies to solicit, encourage, and prompt the submission of content, primarily videos and still photographs, by non-professionals for publication. Such content providers and engaged audiences, known as citizen journalists, often receive no payment and forfeit their rights to the content. Essentially, and with quality aside, a time has come when others are doing the job of photojournalists, without expectations for compensation.

All these reasons reduce the need for paid staff photographers in American newsrooms. However, the list does not stop there. In some newsrooms, print reporters are cross-trained to shoot video and still images while on scene reporting for print and web stories. Papers can now create more visual content for both print and online with less staff using consumer-level digital cameras, which has led to diminished numbers of photojournalists on staff.

The newspaper, for decades the lifeblood for photojournalists, is no longer the place to spend one's career (Coughlin, 2009). Staff positions are one of the few opportunities for photojournalists to be employed in a traditional sense, with regular paychecks and benefits and compensation for photojournalistic skills and experience. Many photojournalists began their careers at newspapers before moving on to try for staff



positions at magazines or embarking on freelance careers. Yet, over the last few decades, even major magazines such as *Life*, known for a strong commitment to photojournalism, have gone out of print (Becker, 1995) or transitioned to freelancers and, thus, employ no staff photographers.

For the purposes of this project, the term photojournalist refers to an individual primarily using still cameras to produce images for print and online. I am interested in understanding what involuntary job loss from a newspaper means to the participants, ten newspaper photographers who have been laid-off. Exploring how they make sense of the experience of being laid-off, I search for participants' expectations of the future of photojournalism and perceptions of their place in the industry. My purpose is to examine the commitment to the profession and connection participants have with occupational identity as a newspaper photojournalist and to the craft of photography.

This study addresses the void in scholarly literature on downsizing experiences of newspaper photojournalists. As Gleason (1998) wrote, "unlike its siblings in journalism, photojournalism scholarship lacks a self-identity" (p. 3). A phenomenological approach allows for exploration and fluid boundaries of inquiry into involuntary job loss for newspaper photojournalists. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore and interpret photojournalists' experiences and representations of photojournalism as an occupation tied to traditional print-oriented newspapers within the context of phenomenology.

This study uses unstructured in-depth interviews with ten former newspaper photojournalists. The use of in-depth interviews allows participants to relay, in their own words, how being laid-off impacted their lives and uncovers how they perceive the status of the photojournalist. After the interviews were completed, a text analysis was done to identify emergent themes.

I write as a 41-year-old white, Anglo, heterosexual, able-bodied professional photographer with ten years experience. I worked as a staff photojournalist for a weekly mid-sized newspaper before attempting a freelance photography career. I was not laid-off, nor was I employed at a newspaper when layoffs and staff reduction were taking place. Since voluntarily leaving the newspaper business for freelance opportunities, I learned of and spoke with many fellow photojournalists laid off from their staff positions at daily and weekly newspapers. How these photojournalists describe and come to terms with their experience of losing their jobs interests me.

Below, I outline job loss findings at the individual level and at the broader occupational scale. In addition, I cite examples of the impact of involuntary job loss via an assortment of studies both inside and outside mass communications research. Second, the study uses job satisfaction study findings to argue the need for understanding the role and reactions of job loss survivors. In this section, I define “job loss survivors” and discuss their relationship to layoffs. It is important to consider one’s connection with a place of employment and one’s identification with an occupation and the colleagues who identify with the same career choice. Third, I cover the literature on occupational identity that emphasizes the vital role employment and professional belonging have in the value system of contemporary Americans. Fourth, I detail the proposed study method consisting of a hermeneutic phenomenology approach using in-depth interviews and contextual analysis.

#### *Photojournalism and Job Loss by the Numbers (or lack of)*

Employment of full-time professional editorial staff peaked at 56,400 in 2000. It then fell 26.4% through 2009 (Edmonds, Gurskin, & Rosentiel, 2011). The 2011 *State of the News Media Annual Report on American Journalism* found that newsroom

employment decreased by 11,000 between 2007 and 2009, to 41,500 (Edmonds et al., 2011). In 2008, 31% of newspapers reported cutting back on photographers between 2005 and 2007, versus 12% of newspapers that added staff photographers (Edmonds, 2008). At the biggest papers in the United States, this trend was more pronounced, with 52% reporting cutbacks on photographers and just 6% saying they had made net additions during the same 2005-2007 period (Edmonds, 2008). But photojournalism as a profession is not tracked in neat aggregated numbers of workers on payrolls or freelancers. Additionally, no known single source is following the precise number of photojournalists laid-off at newspapers in the United States.

Knowledge of a newspaper photojournalist's layoff typically reaches other photojournalists via shared social networks like Facebook, and through acquaintances and colleagues at sister papers, rather than by traditional news accounts. As a result, I argue, awareness of another staff position lost at a U.S. newspaper by news from friends and colleagues draws attention quickly to one's professional and occupational self. This forced evaluation of one's professional place, either as a laid-off worker or a job loss survivor in an industry in turmoil, creates transitional and significant life experiences, and opportunities for timely research.

Multiple new media sources along with the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), a professional news photographers association with membership open to still and video journalists, report on the decline of staff journalism jobs at newspapers throughout the United States. For instance, in October 2008, the NPPA reported that 3,000 employees faced involuntary layoffs at Gannett-owned newspapers around the country. Eleven additional stories about job losses at newspapers around the country ran in the news section of NPPA website in that month alone.

In 2007, the number of lost newspaper jobs was more than 2,185 (Michalowski, 2008). However, according to Potts (2008), a media consultant and blogger, there were cuts of more than 6,300 newspaper jobs at the 100 top U.S. newspapers during 2007. Blogger Erica Smith (2010) at Paper Cuts, a popular blog mapping U.S. newspaper industry job losses and buyouts, tallied more than 14,000 reported layoffs in 2008 and 2009. In all of these attempts to track downsizing, all news workers are categorized succinctly, leaving the impact and details of position and job titles typically under reported.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature in mass communication and journalism is peppered with studies on job loss research, job satisfaction inquiry, and occupational identity studies. Yet to date, no study has addressed these themes within the frame of photojournalism as a profession or career. The research below considers a variety of secondary sources, including:

1. coming to terms with losing a job
2. job satisfaction in an era of job insecurity and industry uncertainty
3. the concept of occupational identity as it relates to the chosen field of photojournalism and the future of the profession.

**Job Loss.** Along with an income, employment provides an individual structure, creates routines, and often determines social relationships, feelings of self-worth, and in some cases, the role of breadwinner (Bain, 2005). Thus, the experience of losing one's job often entails confronting the losses associated with these benefits. For this study, job loss denotes involuntary termination of employment as opposed to voluntarily quitting, and, thus, directs attention to a transition that the individual neither controls nor desires.

Not surprisingly, job loss is stressful and, on average, has a negative impact on mental health (Gallo et al., 2006; Lattack et al., 1986). The loss of a job can be especially traumatic if it comes at the end of a long period of employment with one company or firm (Moore et al., 2007). Swineburne (1981) argued that the more central the concept of occupational identity in relation to self and purpose of life, the greater the experience of loss. Involuntary loss of employment and any economic and social disruption that

follows is fundamental to understanding relationships among self-identity, occupation, and the social community provided by employment.

A number of qualitative studies examined career uncertainty and layoff experiences for specific and unique occupations. Roderick (2006) identified a “pervading sense of insecurity” (p. 245) of employment among professional (British) “footballers,” known as soccer players in the U.S., due to competitive labor markets, the attractiveness of the profession, excessive supply of football talent, and the prestige associated with the work. Sayce, Ackers, and Greene (2007) examined the struggles of management to upgrade the production practices and facilities as well as adjust organizational structures at a United Kingdom carpet weaving factory. Findings revealed that the specific craft and skilled workers in question, male carpet weavers, had considerable issues with the changes due to long established occupational identities as individuals and as a group, perceptions of self-image in both the weaving and local community, and belief that their skill set was becoming obsolete with new automated weaving technologies. Furthermore, with potential restructuring and job losses, some weavers refused to “adjust their rigid working practices” (Sayce et al., 2007, p. 93). These two examples apply aptly to the study of job loss and occupational identity of contemporary photojournalists. Like footballers, many photojournalists eschew careers with more stability and remuneration in order to belong to a revered group and career coveted by many. As Newton (2010) noted, photojournalists distinguish themselves by the images they make and distribute which communicate “stories significant to people’s lives” (p. 234).

Ragland-Sullivan and Barlow (1981) investigated what happens to a person’s psychological structure during the job-loss and job-transition period when major life plans and ambitions have been frustrated after structured training and preparation.

Change brought about by the undesired removal from a valued career position may be a special subcategory of identity crisis closely related to the kinds of psychological reactions elicited by death or impending death (Ragland-Sullivan & Barlow, 1981). Sayce et al. (2007) found that restructuring established jobs causes confusion of both male and female identities as a result of initiated teamwork by management on positions dominated by one gender over another in traditional manufacturing workplaces. Other studies link job displacement to downward socioeconomic mobility and psychological distress (Brand et al., 2008).

The termination of workers with or without advance notice is a common manifestation of downsizing. In an organization where layoffs have occurred, the layoff survivors may face increased stress to perform their duties in order to escape downsizing (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998). It is anticipated that the effects on displaced journalists and newsroom workers will be the same, and those who remain and experience involuntary job loss through former colleagues must learn to cope with and make sense of how to continue to perform (Paulsen et al., 2005). The experience of witnessing colleagues let go, many times unexpectedly, warrants investigation to evaluate job satisfaction, coping strategies of layoff survivors and the unexpectedly laid-off, and, from a management position, how to carry out layoffs that do not impede productivity and morale.

**Job Satisfaction.** Job satisfaction refers to a worker's overall evaluation of his or her job and involves synthesizing various attributes of one's work and work-related experiences in light of one's values, ideals, and beliefs (Chan, Pan, and Lee, 2004). Workers' job satisfaction can affect the efficiency and productivity of an entire organization (Chan et al., 2004), and at the individual level, job satisfaction impacts a person's life and health both inside and outside the organization (Kalleberg, 1974).

Daniels and Hollifield (2002) found job satisfaction was highest when newspaper workers perceived journalistic excellence as the organization's primary goal over profits and interests of investors. Job satisfaction, perceptions of profit-oriented goals, and the organization's commitment to good journalism vary by job roles, including manager versus non-manager positions within the newsroom (Beam, 2006). When journalists perceive profitability dominating the organization's professionalism and social responsibility considerations, journalists are less satisfied with their working conditions (Pollard, 1995).

Daniels and Hollifield (2002) suggest that, despite having jobs that require a constant reaction to changing events, newspaper professionals respond negatively to changes in their work environments, and organizational change significantly affects newsroom morale. Surveyed workers stated they "nearly quit their jobs in the newsroom due to the organizational changes" (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002, p. 676). Technological changes often prompt organization changes within newsrooms. The rapid increased use of digital content gathering and remote communication capabilities via multimedia phones and computers has flourished in contemporary newsrooms. In their examination of technological transitions in newsroom adoption digital tools and workflows, Russial and Wanta (1998) found that more than half of photo editors surveyed reported an increase in photo department workload as a result of digital imaging. Seeling (2007) found that, although there has been an increase in responsibilities in photo departments, few newspapers reported an increase in staffing to support a heavier workload.

Journalists derive job satisfaction from both tangible rewards (such as salary and fringe benefits) and professional rewards like job autonomy and serving the public



interest (Chan et al., 2004, p. 269). A sense of journalistic professionalism relates to higher levels of job satisfaction (Chan et al., 2004). Gibbons and Katz (1991) argue that in the case of a layoff, the discretionary dismissal of employees acts as a signal of below-average productivity, thus potentially stigmatizing laid off workers as “lemons” (Brand et al., 2008, p. 704).

**Occupational Identity.** Professional identity is one of the multiple social identities that an individual holds. Socialization into the professional community provides a sense of stability, belonging, and values, and it reduces ambiguity (Sayce, Ackers, & Greene, 2007). Furthermore, occupational identity provides a “vision of life” (Kielhofner, 2002, p. 143) and is viewed by researchers as a key means through which people achieve meaning and purpose (Rudman & Dennhardt, 2008). Professional identity clearly fulfills the status need driving social identity attribution (Bain, 2005). Christiansen (1999) presented the concept of occupation as identity by arguing that self-identity is closely related to what one does for work. Christiansen (1999) proposed that identity was an overarching concept based on an interrelationship with other people and one’s interpretations of what one does in these interactions. He argued that identity was central to coherence, meaning, and wellbeing in one’s evolving personal life story. Unruh (2004) argue occupational identity to be conceptualized as the expression of the physical, affective, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of human nature. Pursuing and obtaining a specific and desired position allows a person to interact with and absorb the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the work environment.

Traditionally, professional groups have the characteristics of a high-status group, which explains in part their historical stability (Hotho, 2008). As an institution, professions provide the scripts on which individual professionals find that daily routines

serve to form the practical knowledge that impacts their actions and the basis of self-evaluation (Hotho, 2008). Yet, many staff photographers today do not have frequent work requirements inside the newspaper building, therefore making for reduced chances to work as a professional group in a common location. While on assignment in the field, photojournalists in the digital era edit and submit images electronically to the paper without returning to use the film lab—as was the case before digital cameras.

Bain (2005) compared “visual artists” as a profession to the constructed recognition that artistic labor is seldom viewed as real work (p. 25). Yet occupational identity proves a challenging effort due to often isolated and unregulated environments removed from groups where occupational identities can be learned via shared workspaces (p. 26).

Scrutiny of particular occupations sheds light on the effects of job loss as distinct from the effects of unemployment. To understand the impact of job loss, it is important to consider the role of employment for individuals, families and communities. In describing employment as a social institution that meets many human needs, Jahoda (1979) wrote:

First among them is the fact that employment imposes a time structure on the working day. Secondly, employment implies regularly shared experiences and contacts with people outside the family. Thirdly, employment links an individual to goals and purposes that transcend his own. Fourthly, employment defines aspects of status and identity. Finally, employment enforces activity (p. 494).

The definition of work remains a serious theoretical problem today (Deranty, 2009). Deranty (2009) synthesized a “thick definition” of “work,” suitable for “all disciplines with an interest in work” (p. 70). As examined by Deranty (2009), Dejours (2000) used phenomenology as the direct methodological starting point to explore why there is a motivation to work beyond earning a living. While focusing on the phenomenological content of work, Deranty (2009) followed Dejours’ (2000) thesis that

real work is concerned with the gap between the task to be done and the activity that is actually done to fulfill the task (p. 79). In this sense, real work, from the psychological perspective, consists of the personal investment demanded of the subject to bridge the gap between the real and the perspective (p. 80).

### **Chapter Three: Method**

This study examines how laid-off newspaper photojournalists make sense of and communicate the phenomenon of involuntary job loss as it relates to occupational identity to a chosen career. A phenomenological approach was selected after careful consideration and thorough reading of multiple phenomenological studies. Participant selection criteria for this study includes full-time photojournalists employed as staff photographers who experienced involuntary job loss at a U.S. newspaper. Operationally, involuntary job loss for this study comprises the layoff of a single photographer, the layoff of more than one person from a photography department, the closing of a photography department, and papers that stop publication entirely. In an effort to be as comprehensive as possible, literature reviews were conducted in a broad spectrum of specialty areas, which include business, economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, nursing, public health, phenomenological inquiry, and mass communications.

Phenomenology makes sense for this study because its focus is to discover patterns in the ways people structure meaning from lived experiences. In a broad sense, the purpose of phenomenology is to describe a particular phenomenon as lived experiences (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007.) Lived experiences involve immediate consciousness of life's events prior to reflection, without interpretation, and are influenced by those things that are internal or external to them (Penner & McClement, 2008). Phenomenological research and analysis does not aim to explain or discover causes (Langsdorf, 1994). Instead, its goal is to clarify the meaningfulness of a

phenomenon from lived experiences. In the case of the present study, interpretation of the lived experience as recounted via interviews, provides the researcher the opportunity and tools to present to the individual what is true or real in his or her life and thus give meaning to each individual's perception of the particular phenomenon in question (Giorgi, 1997). Additionally, phenomenology offers an important shift from a positivist cause-effect focus to one of human subjectivity and discovering the meaning of actions (Giorgi, 1997).

The use of hermeneutic phenomenology permits internal reflection by the researcher, more so than in a traditional study. Phenomenology assumes that we all have a pre-scientific natural attitude toward the world around us, to the events we experience, and to the culture we have inherited, as these things appear to our consciousness; this natural attitude gives us a framework for interpreting our experience (Kirby, 2008, p. 23).

**Study Design.** With the need to focus on narratives and experiences of photojournalists as they relate to their involuntary job loss from staff positions, the study design employs an in-depth and semi-structured interview method. This interview approach allows participants to frame and structure responses at their own pace and to the extent desired and to talk freely about their lived experiences and perceptions.

**Sample.** For this study, I recruited eight staff photojournalists formerly employed full-time at newspapers in the United States. Creswell (2007) highlights the recommendations of Polkinghorne (1989) that researchers interview between five and 25 participants that have all experienced the same phenomenon. Participant selection for this study was based on availability to participate. Originally, the intended sample size was set for ten participants, but eight were selected due, in part, to the time intensive task of transcribing each interview and the fact that each interview lasted longer than the one-

hour anticipated. Additionally, the sample size of eight was based upon the purpose of the study, appropriate for this emerging study, and suitable study time line. Study subjects were sought through professional networks and through a snowball sampling method as needed. To identify and obtain participants, a purposeful sampling approach was used for this qualitative study.

A semi-structured interview format was used, asking:

1. Tell me about the experience of being laid-off from your job as a staff photographer.
2. Talk about your overall sense of satisfaction with your job and chosen career.
3. What are your thoughts on your self-image? (Provide explanation of self-image)
4. What are your thoughts on your occupational identity in relation to working as a newspaper photojournalist?
5. What are your thoughts on your occupational identity in relation to the future of the profession?
6. Tell me about your activities or plans to remain working as a photojournalist since being laid-off.

Permission was sought from the Institutional Review Board at the University of South Florida to conduct the study. A waiver of informed consent was granted as a precaution to ensure anonymity of participants.

**Procedure.** After potential participants were identified, they were e-mailed a study recruitment letter and consent form and invited to participate in the screening process for the study. For inclusion in the study, all participants must have worked primarily as full-time photojournalists and been terminated from their staff positions, either because of a layoff or closure of a paper. Conversations were audio recorded

digitally with participants' consent and the recordings transcribed. Identifying details (i.e. name and place of employment) were omitted.

All participants were provided anonymity. Phone correspondence served to identify qualified participants for the study and a telephone screening script was developed (as approved by IRB). Although face-to-face interviews were preferred, phone interviews were conducted when necessary to ensure timely completion of this study. Participants were screened by telephone using standard consent language detailing the following:

- the guarantee of anonymity for all study participants
- the right of participants to voluntarily withdraw
- the central purpose of the study

**Pseudonyms.** Study participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity, but also to provide readers a means to connect with participants' experiences.

**Analysis.** Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis was employed for this study. In this method, transcripts were read several times to obtain an overall feeling for them. From each transcript, significant phrases or sentences pertaining directly to the lived job loss experience were identified. Significant statements and phrases and formulated meanings were clustered into themes. Processing and emerging themes common to all participants' transcripts allowed for results to be integrated into an in-depth exhaustive description of the phenomenon. Once descriptions and themes were obtained, participants were approached a second time to validate the findings.

## **Chapter Four: Emergent Themes and Data Analysis**

The study employed interviews with eight participants, five men and three women, who were laid off from staff photojournalist positions at newspapers within the United States. Analysis based on gender or race was not considered for this study. The participants were selected for the study based on specific selection criteria and availability to participate. Other than the opportunity to talk about their layoff experience, no incentives were provided. Participation was completely voluntary.

All interviews began with questions soliciting information from participants about their layoff experience. Each responded differently, partially joking, Nick said, “I could take an hour to answer that question.” Janet responded immediately with, “The experience was crappy.”

Once I felt each question was thoroughly reflected upon, I moved on to the next question in the interview guide. If a statement or an explanation was unclear or not fully expressed, I asked the participants for clarification before moving to the next question. The set of questions was designed to illicit an understanding of the overall experience, both meaning and process, of the layoff; the satisfaction of being a staff photojournalist, as a career choice and in a time of flux within newsrooms; and the overall sense of occupational identity with having been a staff photographer and now, after being laid-off, no longer having the ability to claim that identity.

### *Analysis Process*



In the first step of Colaizzi's (1978) analysis model, written transcripts of each digital audio interview were created by the researcher. During this step, I worked to more fully understand the participants' lived experiences. I meticulously read and studied each text so that I could arrive at what I believed was an accurate understanding of how the participants viewed their job loss experience.

The meanings and words of their experience were enlightening and familiar to me. I read and re-read the transcripts to the point of near saturation where several phrases could be quoted verbatim. I also returned to the audio versions of the interviews in order to study participant voices and their cadence in responding to the questions. By listening to the participants' voices when recounting the layoff experience I was better able to identify significant statements pertaining to the lived experience. Although differences in their personalities came through as they talked of their experiences, many of the experiences were similar; from how they learned about the layoff to how they have worked to make sense of the experience of involuntary job loss.

#### *Extracting Significant Statements*

The second step in Colaizzi's (1978) method of analysis calls for the extraction of significant statements and phrases that the researcher considers to be important and necessary to analyze the complete experience of each participant and relevant to the phenomenon under consideration. Each statement I extracted related to the study of involuntary job loss in the context of a unique profession—staff newspaper photojournalist. Each statement held equal value in the material analysis at this point in the analysis. Examples of significant statements included:

- “It wasn't a surprise.”
- “You feel like somebody died.”

- “It is a painful thing to deal with on many levels.”
- “Anybody that gets laid-off, you think, I must have done something wrong.”
- “That is the problem that a lot of us have, we identify with what we do and not who we are.”
- “That is what I feel like I am, that is what I am, I am a photojournalist.”
- “You put so much into your chosen profession, your career, that to think of yourself in any other shape or form is difficult.”
- “I wouldn’t trade or give up things or trade what I’ve done as a journalist for anything.”
- “I can’t imagine a career out there that can give me the enrichment that I’ve gotten from journalism.”
- “The problem with it is that you know you are absolutely powerless to do anything about it.”
- “There is a lot to think about when you get laid-off.”

From eight transcripts, 208 significant statements were extracted. With so many significant statements identified and extracted, considerable caution was taken to ascertain that each significant statement was directly related to the phenomenon under study. Upon further analysis, some statements were considered significant to me, but were not necessarily about the involuntary job loss phenomenon of former staff photographers.

### *Formulated Meanings*

The third step in Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis prescribes the formulation of meanings to each significant statement. Moustakas (1994) stated that this is the development for the structural description or "how" the participants experience the phenomenon. Colaizzi observed that this is the most difficult step because the formulated meanings need to reflect the statements' underlying information without distorting the original description. After reading and examining the written text multiple times to extract significant statements, I prescribed interpreted meanings, according to what was described to me by the participants, and what I believed the participants meant. These formulated meanings were input to an electronic document next to the corresponding significant statement. Textual analysis was applied once again by reading the written transcripts and evaluating the significant statements and formulated meanings against the full transcripts of the interviews. This step checked that the original intent of the participants' statements were not altered.

### *Theme Clusters*

The fourth step requires the grouping of the formulated meanings into the clusters that represent the same themes. Arranging the formulated meanings into clusters resulted in eight themes.

Table 1: Examples of significant statements with formulated meaning

Significant Statement-Quotes	Formulated Meaning
"It was a surprise to me when I realized the method they were going to use was not performance, but how recently you were hired."	I had no power or influence over the decision.
"Most of us are hanging by a thread."	Having a staff position means having a steady paycheck and being freelance is the complete opposite.

Table 1 (cont.)

<p>“I had a very unusual job and I was fortunate. And I knew it. I was grateful.”</p>	<p>Being a staff photographer was rewarding and a unique career that many envied and admired.</p>
<p>“Anybody that gets laid-off, you think, I must have done something wrong. I must have been a bad performer or made somebody upset. That is the hardest part to get past. To tell yourself that that is not the reason. That is what we tell ourselves.”</p>	<p>Working to make sense of why the person was chosen to be laid-off causes confusion and self-doubt, despite being told their performance was not a factor in the management decision.</p>
<p>“One positive is that I get to branch out, develop my skills, and learn how to run a business, while the journalism profession figures itself out.”</p>	<p>Staff photography positions at newspapers are still not stable and having been laid-off allows one to learn and negotiate the freelance world or new careers as remaining staff photographers’ work in an uncertain environment within the newspaper industry.</p>
<p>“Just because a particular, or any newspaper, doesn’t need my skills anymore, there are still plenty of outlets.”</p>	<p>Even though my position was eliminated, I still believe there are opportunities to continue to be published.</p>
<p>“I may have to fill myself with doing something else.”</p>	<p>I might not be able to continue working doing what I love to do.</p>
<p>“I got rejected by this job that I loved and sacrificed for.”</p>	<p>I felt betrayed and no longer being a staff photographer felt as if I was not good enough or had not committed myself enough.</p>
<p>“It was a personal loss. It felt like the end of a relationship.”</p>	<p>I was so committed and in love with my job that when it was over, it could be compared to losing a mate (friend or intimate partner)</p>
<p>“I know what I am doing this week, but I don’t know what I am doing the following week.”</p>	<p>The freelance world is so volatile that I don’t know where the job and payment will come from.</p>
<p>“We all enter this thing a little bit idealistically. We want to connect to our community and we have a skill.”</p>	<p>Working at a newspaper is a way to be part of a community and use my storytelling and photography abilities at the same time.</p>
<p>“And the pay checks were every two weeks. Never late. Always enough, for my budget.”</p>	<p>The steady pay allowed me to focus on my work as a journalist so I didn’t spend time worrying about money.</p>
<p>“I’ll always claim to be a qualified photojournalist, but I am not a staff photojournalist anymore.”</p>	<p>Photojournalists retain the ethical code and training practiced as staff photojournalist despite not having that job which requires unwavering ethical standards set by the National Press Photographers’ Association (NPPA)</p>
<p>“When I got the call, I knew I would never work for another newspaper again.”</p>	<p>Resolve to move on either within the field of photojournalism or working as a freelance photographer, participants let go of the identity of staff photographer.</p>

This task involved re-reading each of the formulated meanings and assembling them according to similar categories or themes. For validation purposes, each of the themes that emerged from the formulated meanings was compared to the original transcripts.

From the written text transcribed from audio interviews, I extracted significant statements, interpreted meanings, and generated theme clusters. Using these extractions, I composed an exhaustive description, which lent to the discovery of the essence of the involuntary job loss experience for former newspaper staff photographers.

Integrating these essential themes derived from the significant statements and formulated meanings; an exhaustive description was created as directed by the Colaizzi (1978) method of analysis. This fifth step calls for the reanalysis of all original and created materials from the study pertaining to the phenomenon to verify that the description incorporated the meaning of the experience.

### **Theme 1: Disbelief (mistrust-skepticism) (shock and awe)**

Participants expressed different, yet similar, responses to being laid-off. Many expected the layoff to come at some point since the industry was in trouble economically and solutions at many papers came in the form of layoffs. Three of the participants were laid-off unexpectedly, while the other participants had witnessed layoffs within their paper previously. No matter, all participants expressed a sense of disbelief when dealing with the fact that they had been laid-off.

Nick, a veteran of 27 years with the same paper said, “It wasn't a surprise. We saw it coming for years. They've been going through it for years. I think I was in the eighth-round. I saw friends, I saw coworkers lose their jobs in this so-called workforce reduction. It never stopped, it just kept going.” Despite this, when his phone rang and he

was told his position was eliminated, he said he experienced a moment of surprise at being the one chosen from a mix of still and TV photographers whose department had been combined into one multimedia department.

Janet, the first photographer from a photo department of four said the initial reaction to being laid-off was “one of shock.” Donna elaborated on the feeling of shock and said, “It was frantic and really upsetting. I was shell-shocked.” Others expressed the feeling of not knowing how to deal with the initial experience. Laura, having been laid-off from her first job at a newspaper, and one she had held for more than three years, said, “I don't remember crying, until later. I did when I was home and away from the situation. It is one of those things where you don't quite know what to do with it, so you just kind of roll with it.”

Many comparisons were made to the experience of involuntary job loss and life experiences. Nick equated the phenomenon of being laid-off to a significant life moment and said, “You feel, you feel like somebody died.” Other participants with fewer years invested in the profession talked of experiencing feelings of betrayal, loneliness, and a deep sense of heartbreak immediately after being laid-off. Janet, a former staffer who had taken the typical route to becoming a staff photographer, college, internships, first job at a small paper, then moving up to a larger paper, summed up her lay off experience as, “Suddenly you go from having a newspaper filled with people and ideas, and potential, and then suddenly it is yourself and your shambles of a career.”

Dave summed up his experience of being laid-off and the feelings of disbelief when he said,

I'd be lying if I said I didn't see it coming. But you could. It was a privately owned paper that was easily swayed by consultants. For a while there was a steady trickle of layoffs. Every other week someone was

leaving. The company was shrinking, but it wasn't clear how much and when is it going to stop. And you begin to think, they can't possibly put out a newspaper if they get rid of anybody else. The big surprise when I got laid-off was that they pretty much laid-off all of the photographers all at the same time.

Falling into the disbelief theme was the current business model at newspapers that cut journalists, shrink newsrooms, and continue to publish a paper. Four of the participants mentioned that they didn't understand how a quality product could be published with journalists being laid-off and those left behind in the newsroom "huddled and holding on."

## **Theme 2: Powerlessness**

Participants talked about having little to no control over the layoff process. Despite their years of service or seniority, salary, education, abilities compared to other on the staff, the fact remained that the layoff decisions were made without their consent. The power to decide was not on the side of the staff photographers.

Carl, particularly in tune with feeling powerless, described the layoff experience as such;

The problem with that is that you know you are absolutely powerless to do anything about it. You can win a Pulitzer Prize for them, but they can still lay you off tomorrow. Because they can't justify that expense anymore. And so it really doesn't have anything to do with the quality of your work it is just whether or not they can afford to have you around. After watching that go on, you really feel powerless.

Janet, employed at a daily mid-sized paper that covered college sports, state politics, and local events discussed how the photo department editor asked for a volunteer to be laid-off. "We were a small staff and none of us could really go anyplace else, so we all hunkered down," she said.

As a means of asserting control in a powerless position, Dave talked about reassessing his commitment to the paper as the layoffs loomed. He said, “I started to slack off when it became apparent that it wasn't going to make a huge difference one way or another. I wasn't going to work my way into keeping a job. It was clear those decisions were way over my head. It had nothing to do with what I was actually doing.”

Other accounts of feeling powerless were described in terms of having to be supervised and escorted out of the office and it was referred to as “a pretty dehumanizing process.” Three participants were told of their layoff over the phone on their day off from work and were required to come in to the paper's office to hand in their gear. Bill said, “You wish that there is something that you can do...you have to realize that there is nothing wrong with you.”

### **Theme 3: Fear**

Many interviews were marked by a refrain of worry regarding participant's capacity to continue to make a living as a photographers at a time when staff jobs were being eliminated and digital technology was making the capture of useable and professional quality images by hobbyist photographers more simple.

Participants made similar references to the stability of having a steady paycheck while employed as a staff photographer. Bill, earned a degree in journalism and had more than 10 years' experience as a photojournalist, said that he had to consider giving up on what he had been trained to do and was doing, working as a photojournalist, because “I've got bills I have to pay.” While Dave simply put it as, “most of us are hanging by a thread.” Carl explained that “(I) was devastated because my job provided the majority of income and health benefits for my (family). So I wasn't able to make that contribution to the family that I had been making, so I had to figure out a way to deal with all of that.”



Additionally, a predominant concern pertaining to the theme of fear was the time, commitment, and pure passion and desire for a career as a staff photographer invested in a distinctive career. And that fear is the possibility that, as one participant put it, “What I did (for work) could go away.” Carl said, “There is a fear that after putting all that work in, that it is all over, just because you lost your job at the paper.”

All participants described the sense that working in a specialty industry that is “dying and disappearing” evoked emotions of “anger, disappointment, and not much surprise.” These feelings were expressed both at a personal level and in regards to the photojournalism profession that is so drastically changing due to technology. “The fact that the industry is disappearing because technology is making it easier for people to do your job,” said Carl. He finished his thought with, “you can’t compete against free.”

At the personal level, participants, both those recently laid-off and those who lost their jobs in 2008 and 2009, expressed fear about not building a career, unknowingly, in an industry that may be going away causes great worry about whether they could find alternative work that was equally rewarding and “fun.” Bill expressed “disappointment” that so much was devoted to building a career and having it “taken away” all the while knowing “there is not many job descriptions like this one.” He continued, “And fear, there is some fear that this just isn’t going to work out for me. That I’m not going to be able to be a visual communicator for the rest of my career.”

#### **Theme 4: I had a career I loved and sacrificed for (Betrayal)**

Exclamations of “love” for the profession of staff photojournalist dominated each interview. The variety of everyday work of the professional staff photojournalist was cited as a major draw to the position. Bill said, “I don’t like to be cooped into doing the same thing day after day. That is why we like journalism. It is something different daily.

A chance to go 100% at something you didn't realize you might be doing that day. The adrenaline, the excitement.” Nick stated, “I wouldn’t trade or give up things or trade the things I’ve done as a journalists for anything. I can't imagine a career out there that can give me the enrichment that I’ve gotten from journalism.”

Beyond the satisfaction of the day-to-day work, which was called “fantastic,” was the opportunity to “make a difference.” Most of the former staff photographers spoke about “contributing to conversations in the community.” Laura, who had been in her first job out of college said, “For me it was the perfect platform for being a photographer. A big part of why I chose to do this type of work (for a publication) was to share the universal truths that all of us are in this community together, it isn’t changing the world but slowly trying to open the eyes so the people around you can be more aware of others.”

The majority of former staff photographers talked, at length, about the “personal loss” of losing a coveted and appreciated job and the feelings that followed. “It felt like the end of a relationship,” Janet said. She continued, “I got rejected by this job that I loved and sacrificed for. I sacrificed lots of personal time and at least one relationship to pursue this profession. And to summarily be shown the door was pretty hard to take.”

Participants talked about the degrees to which they had sacrificed for their jobs as staff photographers by working on holidays and birthdays, often accepting internships and jobs at small-town papers far from family members when careers were first being established. Speaking on behalf of the newspaper photojournalist profession, Janet asserted, “We give so much of ourselves to our jobs and you know we expect them to sacrifice at least a little bit for us as well. And when it is the first sign of trouble they will cut whoever is at the bottom, it feels like a betrayal.”

Two participants made comparisons of the newspaper photographer with other professions. Janet equated the work of newspaper photojournalists to emergency room doctors and recalled debating with a practitioner which profession “does more for the community and who is more of an upstanding citizen?” She instantly noted that she felt “it (was) ridiculous to say, but I felt like a contributor to society at large” by reporting on and visually communicating issues of poverty, or issues affecting the city. As he discussed his commitment and all-consuming connection to the profession by comparing it to the work of police officers, Nick said,

I don't know how most people do it. I don't know if it is a fair comparison, but if you look at a cop, he doesn't turn it off and turn it back on. He is a cop twenty-four seven. That cop is a cop, twenty-four seven, 7 days a week. He doesn't turn it off at night and back on in the morning. Newspaper photographers, more than any other profession, put it out there every day and connect with their work. It is just a more intimate connection with your work. And to be removed from that career has a deeper impact than it would on another profession, like an accountant. If you get cut as an accountant, then you can go get another accountant job doing the same thing.

### **Theme 5: Self-Doubt/Confusion**

The theme of self-doubt emerged in all interviews. “Anybody that gets laid-off, you think, I must have done something wrong,” said Kevin. While Nick, interviewed five weeks after being laid-off talked about a “rambling” that “keeps going” through his head that “doesn't stop” when trying to make sense of why he was the one let go. “I must have been a bad performer or made somebody upset,” said Janet. She continued, explaining that “the hardest part to get past” is to “tell yourself that that is not the reason.” She went on to say, “that is what we tell ourselves.”

Both those participants that were laid-off recently and those that were laid-off more than three years ago expressed having persistent thoughts that the individual was

somehow responsible for being laid-off. Statements were made about understanding that newspapers are a business and that a bottom-line exists which requires management to make personnel decisions based on expenses, still, all felt a sense of confusion about how the final decision was made, why they were chosen, and could they have done anything differently. Janet said about another photographer who had been let go in an earlier layoff, “you know that he did nothing wrong to get laid-off. But there is part of your brain that thinks somehow the photographer is at fault. It makes you question.”

### **Theme 6: Identity under construction**

Participants admitted to tying their overall identity to their staff photojournalist positions. At a time, for many, when it was the only identity they claimed. Since being laid-off, participants have switched identities and even struggled to secure a new professional identity and in some cases, their personal identity is still in flux. Professionally, participants talked about being forced to construct a new occupational identity, often giving up the title ‘photojournalist’ for “photographer,” or “visual story teller,” or “wedding photographer,” or “small businessman.” Kevin participant happily has let go of the staff photographer title for the one of “special education teacher.” Donna is also teaching, journalism at a middle school, but firmly holds onto the “visual storyteller” identity and continues to freelance when possible.

Nick asked about the occupational identity of being a staff photojournalist for twenty-plus years participant and having been laid-off in late 2011, he said,

That is who I am and that is what I do. I don't think I can change that. I'm too far past that. I don't know how I could let go of that and just hang up a camera and become, uhm, you know, a stock boy at the grocery store or go back to school to be a dental hygienist or a refrigerator guy. I don't know what it would take.

Others, much further removed from the immediacy of the initial sting and shock of involuntary job loss, talked about a time when they “couldn’t think of...doing something else.” Whereas Dave said he is “more satisfied” now that he doesn’t consider himself a “photojournalist” because the “idea of being a photojournalist was a little constraining for me personally.”

Out of the need to earn a living, Carl, who has only ever been a photojournalist and has worked for newspapers since leaving college more than 20 years ago talked about needing to be “like a chameleon.” In explaining the need to be flexible and prepared to accept any type of photography job he can get, he has set aside his former staff photographer identity and assumed one of “small business owner.” Carl explained why by saying,

If you get called on to shoot a wedding, you are a wedding photographer, you get to shoot video of a bio-medical company, and then you are something else. And when you are doing a journalism assignment, then you are a journalist for the day. It isn’t ingrained in my identity anymore. And yes, that is bothersome, but it isn’t stopping me.

Having the experience of being laid-off and understanding, first-hand, the volatility of the newspaper publishing industry and the recent fate of photojournalists, many participants talked about needing to be prepared to find another career. Laura, who has been freelancing for more than two years since being laid-off, discussed a pivotal moment where she could not “consider what else” she could do to earn a living other than being a photographer. She went on to say, “but now, I am open to the idea that I could find something else that I am equally passionate about and interested in. I am allowing myself the possibility that as much as I loved it, that I may not love it that much one day.”

## **Theme 7: Relief and Optimism**

Despite the hardships caused by the layoff experience, all participants talked about the relief that comes from not currently working on staff or having to be present in a newsroom. Most commented on the “uncertainty” and “stress” associated with being employed in an industry that has little to no job security, coupled with the ordinary tensions of working to produce a product that has hard deadlines, like a daily newspaper. Once out of the newsroom and having a better sense of dealing with the phenomenon of involuntary job loss, several participants spoke optimistically about “making it on my own.”

“It seems like all of the friends that I talk to that still have staff jobs,” said Janet, “still have that kind of monkey on their back all the time. It seems like they are still on that channel of depression and doom and gloom.” Others described newsrooms, especially ones with pervasive layoffs, as “toxic” and a “negative work environment.” On the flip side of that, many participants found the post layoff setting, although financially uncertain, a more positive and “optimistic” place to be.

When reflecting on the outcomes of being laid-off, Janet views it through an empowering “personal lens of what am I going to do with it from here?” She also noted that, although she would not want to go through the layoff experience again, she firmly believed being laid-off provided her the chance to get “a leg up in the freelance world” and “[she] still is a successful photojournalist.” Dave said the lay off experience was “positive” and allowed him to “branch out, develop (his) skills, and learn how to run a business, while the journalism profession figures itself out.” After being laid-off in 2009, Dave relocated to a major city to seek a larger and different market for photography. Laura simply believed she felt “much more self-assured in myself as a photographer.”

The notion of career development and personal assessment of one's professional identity in the months and years ahead was common in many interviews. Those committed to being a photographer, most of whom did not have families to support or mortgages, said they felt opportunities were out there, but they had to learn how to find the paying freelance jobs and use the many skills they had developed as a newspaper photojournalist in their new freelance role. Janet, again, one who had taken the traditional route to landing a staff job by studying photojournalism in college and working through internships in order to build a solid foundation for a long career as a newspaper photographer said this about no longer being a staffer,

I'd gone through the eye of the storm of it. And on the other side, there was this space where you could move forward. And that is filled with optimism and positive reframing of what it is that you do sort of thing.

In many instances, participants spoke confidently about how the experience of having to reconstruct their identities has benefited them. Laura noted that being laid-off "turned the direction of (her) career development completely inward" permitting a re-valuation of career possibilities. She continued, by explaining how the positive aspects of the newspaper staff photojournalism background helps her keep "the same spirit, integrity of the profession," but now she understands and is confident that "it is up to me now to define what it is I am going to do with it" as a freelancer.

### **Theme 8: Resolve (determination-steadfastness)**

Threaded throughout each interview, participants offered a resounding belief that they were fit and capable of moving forward productively, both professionally and personally. Their experiences and skills of being in-tune and monitoring their communities and multiple industries, including the photojournalism and newspaper sectors, helped them frame the involuntary job loss experience with a wide-angle

viewpoint and realize and rationalize that they “are not alone.” Janet said she coped by placing herself in terms “one of just many industries, one of many people that lost their job” and that she felt “kinship” with others that “got screwed.” Others offered similar descriptions, but all recognized they could not “dwell” in the space of “suspended animation” after being laid-off. “I didn't spend a lot of time beating myself up.... there was no point,” said Bill. He continued stating, “I just had to keep going and figure out a way to make a living.”

Several participants felt so entrenched within their career of choice that they could not visualize or think of another job to go after or where to apply their varied, yet often misunderstood skills. Carl had been the primary bread-winner for his family and was college educated in print journalism with an emphasis on photojournalism, said “when I got laid-off, I didn't have another way to go out and make the same kind of money I was making before when the work was available.” He further discussed how his abilities to work in drastically different environments and situations, ranging from the figurative “pet of the week” assignment to the funeral of a murder victim, did not easily translate into typical job descriptions. With that realization, he felt he didn't have “another skill set to fall back on” and that he needed to “just hang in there and build up a client list.”

While a few talked about searching for other ways to make a living while experiencing the “fear” of the financial implications of being without work, most indicated that, as Bill stated, “it never occurred to me to do anything else.” The reoriented identity and connection to the camera as a means of communicating and “telling stories” was intensely strong for the majority of participants. But the familiar platform of the community newspaper that anchored their “purpose” for telling stories was no longer there for them. Although that connection to the paper was clearly coveted



and missed, many of the participants, mostly the ones without families, expressed confidence in moving forward into the uncertain world of freelance with their education, newspaper know-how, and “eye opening” experience of being laid-off tightly in-tow.

Donna was laid off from her first paper position after graduating college with a degree in photojournalism explained that, after months of self-doubt, she realized that newspaper had taken her “job away” but they had “not taken her skills.” The majority of the participants, six of the eight that are now working solely as freelance photographers, emphasized reaching an empowering, although tenuous, connection to a freelance business approach and embracing the freedom to pursue a variety of opportunities to use their photography and journalism skills.

Others said they derive satisfaction from “running a business” and they accept that “it all rides” on their abilities to sustain a freelance business that is profitable and sustainable. “My satisfaction now, comes from making a living in a very difficult environment,” and “being able to do what I love to do,” said Janet. Bill, who is solely working as a freelancer, said his “only plan is to try and keep doing what I am doing as long as I can keep doing it.”

### *Exhaustive Description*

Each participant described their experience of involuntary job loss in their own words from which I extracted significant statements, interpreted meanings, and generated theme clusters. From these extracted statements and meanings, I worked to shape an exhaustive description, which led to distilling the essence of the involuntary job loss experience from a staff photographer position at a newspaper. The interview transcripts for this study show that, as staff photojournalists, participants were practicing a craft that

they were deeply committed to, and the newspaper, both as an institution and established platform within a community, afforded them the opportunity to “hold a mirror” up to society and provide a necessary and needed service to the community for the greater good of all. As staffers, the participants developed identities that revolved around their being “eyes and ears” of the community and held that identity so tightly that it became a personal identity which brought satisfaction and recognition from peers and others in the community. Losing a staff position forced participants to evaluate their performance and attitude toward working for a newspaper that, in the end, is for profit.

Furthermore, the layoff prompted evaluations of their commitment to photojournalism as a freelancer since the likelihood of landing another staff position was minimal.

The exhaustive description now consists of 4 parts:

1. Former staff photojournalists’ experience of job loss created a situation where they had to negotiate the thoughts and feelings, no matter what reason was provided for being laid-off, of whether they had not performed as well as their colleagues and were therefore picked to be laid-off by management.
2. Former staff photojournalists’ experience of working as photojournalist for newspapers provided the core to constructing their identity, both occupational and personal.
3. Former staff photojournalists now work to gain satisfaction; post layoff, from making a living in a challenging economy without being part of a tumultuous and often stressful newsroom environment and industry.
4. Former staff photojournalists understand that their position at the paper was eliminated, but their skills as photographers and professional abilities were not taken away and are reorienting the dynamic skill set toward civic-minded endeavors such as becoming teachers and working to remain photojournalists, and photographers, when given the opportunity as well as being productive small business owners.

### *Statement of Identification*

The sixth step in Colaizzi's (1978) method of analysis requires the development of a statement of identification. By condensing the components from the exhaustive description into a concise statement that encompasses the essence of the layoff experience of former staff photographers from newspapers as discovered in this study.

The statement follows:

Experiencing involuntary layoffs from their staff photojournalists jobs, former staff photographers were forced to reconstruct long-held identities, both professional and personal, and were required to look inward to evaluate their commitment and assess their passion for photography and photojournalism and evaluate opportunities and barriers to continuing to make a living with a camera in challenging economic times when digital technology and the publishing industries are changing the landscape for photojournalism rapidly.

### *Participant Verification*

The final step in Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis calls for participant verification of researcher's findings. To accomplish this step, I contacted six of the eight study participants by phone to verify the themes identified and a concise statement formulated from the interview transcripts. With each of the six participants, I explained the method of analysis and how formulated meanings were created from significant statements, and how the themes were extracted in order to develop a concise statement.

I read the themes and explained a sentence or two from each, then read the concise statement and asked if "any aspects of their experience had been omitted?" and if they "identified with the themes and concise statement?" Unlike the initial interviews, the participant verification responses were not digitally-audio recorded.

Responses from the participants were strong and are as follows:

- "I like it. It seems straightforward, almost like common sense."

- “That is really great.”
- “It is cathartic to know that my experience resonates with others.”
- “I identify perfectly with most of it.”
- “It sounds right on.”
- “Do the themes remind you of something? It actually sounds like a grief outline.”

While conducting the verification of findings by participants, a conversation developed with the only participant not actively pursuing any paid work with a camera. Kevin’s vocation is now as a teacher, and despite his connection and confirmation of the emergent themes and concise statement, his explanation for not doing freelance was his self-assessment that he was not capable or interested in becoming a small business or an entrepreneur.

After being laid-off, Kevin worked to establish a wedding photography business, but realized the amount of work, long hours, and need to be business savvy beyond his interests. He said, “you can have a bad day at the paper, but you can’t have a bad day shooting a wedding.” He added, that social media websites, like Facebook and Twitter, can put a photographer “out of business” if the bride is unhappy about the images and decides to post about it. Ultimately, Kevin said he didn’t want to work for himself and was “unwilling to take the risks” of trying to be an entrepreneur and photographer. He did not find the process of shooting pictures as a wedding photographer as satisfying or meaningful as working as a newspaper staff photojournalist. He is now pursuing a degree in special education, working in a classroom, and proudly claims the title of “special education teacher.”

### *Summary*

In this chapter I employed Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis to extract and distill the essence of being laid-off from staff photographer positions at newspapers. Digitally recorded audio interviews were listened to several times and transcripts were created. From the printed text, significant statements were selected, formulated meanings generated, and emergent themes identified. The eight themes discussed in this chapter were: disbelief, powerlessness, fears, I had a job I loved and sacrificed for (betrayal), self-doubt/confusion, identity under construction, relief and optimism, and resolve (determination-steadfastness). The exhaustive description incorporated these themes, and from the exhaustive description, I formulated the statement of identification. Once complete, six of the eight study participants verified the statement. No new themes emerged from the participant verification process.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

In this study, persons who experienced being laid-off from a coveted job, that of newspaper staff photographer, talked openly about their personal experiences, facing and dealing with the phenomenon of being laid-off and the potential end of a career. Common themes emerged from the interviews, which allowed for the creation of an exhaustive description that was then interpreted into a statement of identification.

The resulting themes included issues related to the participants' ability to move beyond the occupational identity of newspaper staff photojournalists, the willingness of participants to "stick" with photography as a means of earning a living, experiences of self-doubt, and the future of photojournalism as a profession. As a researcher and former staff photographer at a weekly paper, I was most curious about how photographers, not currently employed by a newspaper or any publication, work to make sense of and construct a professional identity beyond the newspaper at a time when the economic foundations of journalism at U.S. newspapers is being "severely eroded as the internet draws millions of dollars of advertising away from daily newspapers" (Weaver, 2009, p. 396).

There is little doubt that there has been, and will continue to be, a job crisis in the newspaper publishing industry. Attached to this crisis is the professional identity construction of freelance photographers. The uniformity of statements made by each of the eight study participants makes clear that involuntary job loss and the resultant uncertainty about the future had a profound

and painful impact on the former staff photographer's sense of identity.

Consistent with Russo's (1998) review of past literature, job satisfaction was strongly related to the identification with the newspaper. Each participants' self-image seemed to be jeopardized at some point after being laid-off. This struggle was apparent in all of the interviews for this study and lends support to Ragland and Sullivan's (1981) upkeep of Hall's (1971) thesis.

Stressing the centrality of work to identity, Hall says: "An individual's work is often the major input to his total self-identity.... One could...hypothesize that the degree of one's mental health or growth is directly related to the degree of congruence between career work role (what one *has* to do) and his ideal identity (what he *loves* to do)" (Ragland & Sullivan, 1981, p. 52). All but one participant linked their identity to that of being a "staff photographer." The one participant who did not was Dave and he said he realized after earning a bachelor's degree, at one of the preeminent university photojournalism programs in the U.S. and taking his first newspaper position, that the "idea of being a photojournalist was a little constraining" and said now that he was no longer working for a paper, he felt more "self-assured in (himself) as a photographer."

For most participants, the path to a career was envisioned, strategic, and persistent, and for some, would have resulted in landing a staff "dream job" at a large, daily newspaper. At the time of the layoff, four of the study participants were already working at a large, daily paper. As expressed during the interviews, working for a newspaper affords staff photographers the "platform" and local recognition along with improved access to the stories and subjects needing to be photographed. Additionally, "as part of a newspaper team you have an established credential in that community.... you can stand on the shoulders of whatever reputation they have built," said Laura.

Bill established that, “there is an occupational identity of staff photographer.” He continued, with that identity comes “prestige, it is supported, something that is understood, it may not be liked by everyone, but it gets you access and status.” Bill discussed the bigger picture of being a staff photographer, beyond the local community and the reach of a paper in saying, “you are part of a bigger organization. Not just your paper, but the culture of photojournalism.... it is a big thing to step away from...well to be excluded from.” Others expressed challenges of the forced need to build or construct, and in some cases, move between identities now that they are no longer “on staff.” Bill talked about no longer having one, specific, identity. Instead he said he felt “more like a chameleon” and “if you get called to shoot a wedding, you are a wedding photographer, you get to shoot video of a bio-medical company, then you are something else.”

Carl noted that the identity of staff photojournalist “isn’t ingrained in (his) identity anymore.” And when you are “doing a journalism assignment” said Bill, “then you are a journalist for the day.” He added, voluntarily, “and yes, that is bothersome, but it isn’t stopping me.” The feelings of “betrayal” and “anger” were evident in their voices, and listening to the digital audio interviews in order to cull the essence of the experience of being laid-off was an important part of this study. In listening to the interviews the second and third times, the following statement by a veteran photojournalist seemed very poignant and summarized what many of the study participants expressed throughout their interview—the facts that yes, being let go from the newspaper was a painful experience and the uncertainty of the newspaper industry and threats of continued layoffs made an already stressful environment that much more “toxic.” However, the unique experiences of being a newspaper photojournalist outweighed the aforementioned negatives. In short, despite the pain of being laid-off and the uncertainty of the industry, most of the



participants still want to return to that “dream job” of being a staff photographer. In support of Hall’s (1971) recognition of an ideal identity and the desire to do what he loves to do; Bill said confidently;

If I had my choice, I would still be a photojournalist. I'd still be telling stories with a camera for a news organization. If I could wave a magic wand that is what I would still be doing. I felt that is what I am good at. And I believed in it and believed in the purpose of educating and informing the public and being the eyes for the people that couldn't be there. I believe in all of that.

In the case of the laid-off staff photojournalists, many of the signs of career commitment outlined by Hall (1971) were well established at the time they lost their jobs. Goals had been set, ideal newspaper positions had been identified and, in some cases, obtained, and specialty interests and long-term projects were under development. Stressing the significance of career identity, Hall says that “occupational selection is the process of choosing a career role in which a high or satisfactory degree of adjustment and satisfaction can be attained... This process is not simply a matter of selecting a role but also one of choosing an aspect of one’s self which is potentially effective and highly valued” (p. 58-59).

For most participants, the newspaper enabled and supported their attachment to the profession and personal desires driving them to communicate visually. Participants acknowledged benefitting from the newspaper’s position in the community and their accounts reflected the purpose and meaning these ideals brought to the workplace and how they served as the basis for what is, for many journalists, their dominant identity. Being able to identify themselves as a “staff photographer” plainly fulfilled the professional and social identity consciousness of the study participants among their peers and within the communities they covered. Characteristics of professional groups explain,

in part, their historical stability and the profession as an institution provides the scripts from which individual professionals draw their daily practice (Hotho, 2008). Nick claimed that “everyone wants to be a staff photographer” and went on to say “making pictures for a living.... is one of the best jobs to have...to experience the human condition and document it with a camera has been recognized and coveted career for more than 150 years.”

### *Embracing Entrepreneurship*

And that is just it, the “making pictures for a living” proved to be the key to success for all but one of the former staff photographers interviewed for this study. Yet, making a living as a photojournalist has never been easy and, with changing and expensive digital technologies, inconsistent advertising revenue, and corporate practices and responses to shifting market forces, it seems to be getting harder (Dorfman, 2002). As a result of this qualitative inquiry, it is clear that not only are the participants working to reconstruct their identities between such titles as “photojournalist” or “photographer” or “wedding photographer” or “visual storyteller,” they are also, and somewhat most significantly, having to come to terms with now being a “small business.”

The importance and need to become profitable is the main priority now that they are no longer working for a newspaper and are freelancers. Prior to being laid-off, Carl described how he did not fully recognize what employment with the paper and benefits provided him and his family-comprised of a wife and child. He said, “When you lose that job, you lose that salary and approximately another 20-30% on top of that as benefits.” He then referred to himself as a “freelancer” and said, “you go whoa, I need to bill a lot more, and I need to make this sustainable.... this isn’t just something I’m doing on the weekends...this is serious.”

Often photographers approach their work as a passion and set out solely to document human suffering and possibly make change in the world by shooting pictures that make public issues of poverty and the like without regard for making money to support such endeavors (Harrington, 2007). Several participants in this study suggested they were drawn to the profession to bear witness to the human condition and make changes with their camera, not to make money. Yet, the fact that many photography programs, both journalism and art schools, until recently, did not teach even the most basic business skills necessary to run a small photography business or to pay down student loans is “incredibly shortsighted” according to Harrington (p. 3). Whether they like it or not, photographers coming out of college journalism programs or staff photographers getting laid-off, will become freelancers and small businesses if they choose to attempt to make a living with a camera.

Accompanying one of the most anticipated recognitions in the photo industry, The Photo District News’ (PDN) *30 2012 New and Emerging Photographers to Watch*, Conor Risch’s Editor’s Note introducing the awards acknowledges the essential need for current photographers to be business savvy. Risch (2012) writes, “it may seem vulgar to some to talk about business while celebrating creative work, but it is useful to consider that each of these photographers is an entrepreneur” (p. 20).

Just as one of the most dominant industries of the twentieth century is in significant turmoil, creative industries are proving to be one of the most important in the global economy of the twenty-first century (Henry, 2007). With traditional media outlets, both magazine and newspaper industries, current photographers are having to patch together enough paid work from various outlets in order to make a living. In essence, using the “chameleon” approach as one participant expressed.

Defining an entrepreneur in any business sector continues to be problematic in the entrepreneur literature, defining an entrepreneur in the creative sector, such as photographers and gamers and graphic designers, is even more difficult (Henry, 2007). In Henry, Aggestam suggests that entrepreneurs can generally be conceived as holders of “tacit knowledge that is realized as part of human capital and includes individual skills, competence, commitment and creativity based on mindsets” and furthermore suggests that art-creating entrepreneurs are “creative in unique and sometimes unexpected ways rather than simply in conformist ones, and that they possess a harmonious set of skills that enable creative expressible performance” (p.200). Like entrepreneurs do in other creative sectors, the “emerging” photographers recognized in *PDNs* 30, “produce their work by taking substantial risks-personal, financial, creative and otherwise” (Risch, 2012, p. 20).

One last finding I believe worth mentioning that relates to these former staff photographers embarking on freelance careers, post layoffs, and the need to make a living is marketing one’s self and business. When working for the newspaper, staff photojournalists could focus on the story and rely on their editor to tell them where to go and when to be there. Now, study participants described having to find publications, organizations, other businesses, or any potential outlet where they might be able to offer their photography services all before even getting the chance to pick-up a camera. In describing this, Carl said, “now, the taking the pictures is the easiest part of what I do. The hardest part is finding clients that can afford to hire me.” As for the need to market and promote one’s photography, Nick noted that it had been very “difficult” to learn to promote himself. “I’ve been hiding in the shadows as a newspaper photographer and

now I have to push myself out there,” he said, and “there was a lot of comfort in being a newspaper photographer. I like it better when others talk about me.”

## Chapter Six: Limitations and Future Research

### *Limitations*

The primary limitation of this study is that interpretations are solely those of one researcher—my own. Many of the reactions to involuntary job loss of the eight individuals in this study can, of course, be attributed to their particular situations and unique personal constitutions toward life and relationships. In short, the small sample size of this study does not permit these findings to be generalized to a larger population. The study was designed solely to identify emerging themes and did not set out or intend to apply a theoretical lens on the involuntary job loss and occupational identity among study participants. To attempt an analysis of the individuals' differences in response to that of loss would involve psychoanalysis of the life-history of each individual and that is not within the purview, nor the aim, of this study.

### *Future Research*

Opportunities for qualitative inquiry into the profession of photojournalism and the men and women that practice the craft are many. Currently, there is no mass communications research available specific to photojournalists dealing with job loss and occupational identity. Additionally, there is limited qualitative research exploring the profession of photojournalism, both as newspaper staff photojournalists and as freelancers. While there is considerable research available on changing newsrooms cultures, the changing media environment, job satisfaction, and occupational identities of news workers, no research to date focuses on how former staff photojournalists make

meaning of involuntary job loss and occupational identity. This paper seeks to expand the research within mass communications by focusing on a particular profession (photojournalism) that has experienced significant disruption from media business practices and the digital era (publishing and digital photography tools). This study looked at the participants' life-experience of involuntary job loss, yet those left behind in the newsrooms, the lay off survivors, warrant equal, and even expanded, consideration.

No known organization, including the NPPA, is tracking the gains or losses of staff positions at newspapers in the United States. This alone sets the stage for quantitative examination of the actual number of photojournalists laid-off in recent years. And, like me, study participants wonder, what is the future of the profession? Their commitment to photojournalism also causes them to be curious about what aspiring photojournalists and those in college studying to be photojournalists are setting their sights on if not staff positions at newspapers across the U.S.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Informed Consent Script**

Principal Investigator: Ryan K. Morris  
IRB # Pro 4703  
Date: TBD  
Eligible: Y/N

#### **Informed Consent Script**

##### *Freelancing Photojournalism: Understanding Involuntary Job Loss Among Former Newspaper Staff Photographers*

Understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Along with the completion of a thesis requirement for graduate school, findings from this study may be published and/or presented as conferences.

As the principle investigator (PI) I will be the person that has primary access to the data collected. My USF graduate school thesis chair and individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety: This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff.

An in-person or telephone interview will need to be conducted. During the the interview, an in-depth interview method to obtain information for my study will be used. The interview is expected to take between one and two hours and will be recorded by the PI using an audio digital recorder. Your participation in this study will be completely anonymous and names of former employers will not be published. Additionally, there are no expected or known benefits or risks associated with participation in this research and participants are not expected to incur any costs to participate.

If you have any questions about the study topic or need more information about your rights as a participant, you can reach me at 202-210-5279. My email is [rmorris@mail.usf.edu](mailto:rmorris@mail.usf.edu).

If you would like, you can also contact the Institutional Review Board office at the University of South Florida by calling 813-974-5638.

## **Appendix 2: Transcript Sample 1**

That is a huge question right there. I could take an hour to answer that question. It wasn't a surprise. We saw it coming for years. They've been going through it for years. The eighth round. I saw friends, I saw coworkers lose their jobs in this so-called workforce reduction. It never stopped, it just kept going.

I think, this time when I got laid-off...it would be a surprise to anybody when their phone rings. I wasn't totally surprised. What I was surprised about was at that time, our staff had been combined with the TV station photojournalists and there was a multitude of us in the mix. We were no longer still photographers or TV photos; we were labeled as multimedia photographers.

When this round hit, the only guys this hit were from the print (still) side. The TV guys didn't get touched.

We don't know the criteria they used for the layoff. As a guy that had been there for 20 some years, and the skills I'd learned over the last 12-18 months, and they're leaving a guy, to maintain his job that had only been there two years, well it is a little unnerving.

Anybody that gets laid-off, you think, I must have done something wrong. I must have been a bad performer or made somebody upset. That is the hardest part to get past. To tell yourself that that is not the reason. That is what we tell ourselves.

And that is what we were told in the phone call..."first off, let me say this had nothing to do about your performance." But on so and son's behalf, I have to make this call. You feel, you feel like somebody died. Somebody to me be careful, this is like a death in the family. You are going to grieve. I still am. You go through whatever steps, you know, the famous steps of grief.

The denial, the anger...at one point I had the stages in my head and I recognized them. You wish that there is something that you can do. You have to realize that there is nothing wrong with you.

They pulled your name out of a hat, flipped a coin, and threw darts at a board. Who knows how they picked you, but you got picked. And uum, you're gone. It is a painful thing to try and deal with on many, many levels.

That is the \$10K question. I could go on all afternoon If I had the answers, it is this rambling, it keeps going through my head, and it doesn't stop. I'm still going through it. It has been five weeks and I'm still going through it.

## #2 Satisfaction

It is awesome, fantastic. It is a marvelous job. Once it embeds itself into your skin, you can't shake it. An incredible job to have.

Spoke to journalism students--am who I am--That is problem that a lot of us have, we identify with what we do and not who we are. But, that is what i feel like i am, that is what I am, I am a photojournalist.

You put so much into your chosen profession, your career, that to think of yourself in any other shape or form is difficult. I've been trying to do that since i got laid-off. But i don't think I can. I am a visual communicator.

And I enjoy people and I love all of the stuff that goes along with being a journalist. One of the things I tell students is that if you become a journalist, visual or otherwise, you will end up living three or four lifetimes. In other words, you will be experiencing things that 3 or 4 people combined will experience in their entire life. Like travel.

The people you meet and the situations you get involved with. These are things that regular John Q Public doesn't have to deal with, very much.

We experience things from a car wreck, to a natural disaster, to a crime somewhere, but we do that over and over and over again.

I wouldn't trade or give up things or trade the things I've done as journalists for anything. I can't imagine a career out there that can give me the enrichment that I've gotten from journalism.

Question: Being a photojournalist?

Fell into it by default. I was having a hard time paying my bills as an art student. And got the option to apply at the student newspaper and got on it. Got an internship, got one, and the rest is history.

Went to college to study studio art. I am not a journalism student. Learned on the street.

# Self Image/Who you are/What you do/Lay off experience

Another 10K dollar question. I don't know how most people do it. I don't know if it is a fair comparison, but if you look at a cop, he doesn't turn it off and turn it back on. He is a cop 24/7.

That cop is a cop, 24-7, 7 days a week. He doesn't turn it off at night and back on in the morning.

I don't know if that is wrong, and I've been told recently; don't confuse yourself with what you do. That is what you do, not who you are is what they've told me. Well, if you

tried to tell that to any type of law enforcement agent, he would tell you no, that is what I am. And that is what I will be until the day I die.

To some degree, that is how I had to grab ahold of what I did that tight and I became that. That is what I am. I've been shooting pictures for over 25 years, half my life. Before that I was something else, but now I am a photographer. And somehow can't let go of that.

I think some people can pull themselves away from that. Some friends have moved on to PR and such, away from journalism, but they are still a writer.

But all of the photographers (in the recent rounds) are still pursuing photography as a career. I don't know how I could let go of that and just hang up a camera and become, hum, you know, a stock boy at the grocery store or go back to school to be a dental hygienist or a refrigerator guy. I don't know what it would take.

That is who I am and that is what I do. I don't think I can change that. I'm too far past that.

I think my mental health could be better if I could pull myself away from it and try something else in life. I don't think that is going to happen. And if it is going to happen, it is going to have to take a lot longer time than 5 weeks to be able to turn that around. Years perhaps.

#Occupational Identity and working for a newspaper

Just because a particular, or any newspaper, doesn't need my skills anymore, there are still plenty of outlets.

Freelance journalism is still there.

I could go back into broadcast journalism, something I learned recently, but that is a skill, not where my heart is. That is what they taught me to do. I could fall back into that. But that really isn't what I want to do. There is no fire in that for me. I need to be shooting stills. Well, if the newspaper doesn't want it, well then, I think I can still find a niche out there that might need it. I hope.

And even if this particular paper doesn't want it (my skills) that doesn't mean that all newspapers are dying. I don't think newspapers are going to vanish. They might in the form they are in, into some form undiscovered, but what they do will basically be here. There will always be some form of informing the public of the things that they should be aware of.

Question: Thoughts on Occupational Identity

That is what I've been doing for over 20 years. If I need to identify with something else (other than photojournalism), it is going to take years. It is going to take a long time.

Question: Thoughts OI in relation to newspaper photojournalism

It is going to change drastically, and the need for people like me is going to change drastically.

Personally, I don't know how it is going to affect me. I'm trying to find that out. It stands a good chance that what I've been doing for 20 years isn't going to happen any more. Or at least on a limited basis.

I may have to fill myself with doing something else. Maybe what that something else is has something to do with photography. I'm not saying I'm going to become a teacher, I don't have the documentation to become a teacher, maybe there is coach, maybe there is assistant teacher,

What i did could go away. But as long as I am connected to it, I won't grieve too much, and can keep making pictures a little bit, i don't have to do to the level i was, but I'd sure like to do it a little bit, then, well, that is who i am, it is who i am.

Question: Activities to remain working as a PJ since being laid off

Since I can't go from one job to another job, there is nobody hiring full-time photojournalists, at least in this area, making the amount i was making when i was cut, i have to make some major adjustments.

Uhm, activities, I'm doing to stay in the business, include doing whatever i can at home to cut down on my bills, cut down expenses, to the point i cashed in my retirement fund, my 401K, and finished paying for my house.

My retirement is gone in dollars and cents, and i put it into real estate, so i can have to go out an earn X amount of dollars a month.

If I'm jobless, that is one thing, but i don't want to be homeless. I got a family. That is one of the major things I'm doing, if i can get at least one assignment a week, for at least somebody, i believe that will satisfy me mentally and emotionally, and hopefully be able to satisfy me financially as well.

We don't have benefits anymore. We pay for our own health insurance.

The other thing is ---which is really stressing me out, is that i have to buy my own gear. I never had to before. My company always outfitted me. The company gave us all the gear to do our job. Now the company took all of their toys back and now i am without. So in order to stay relevant, along with the others that are out there working, it requires a big expense on my part to get back on an even keel with the guys that are still doing it full time.

So that part of shopping, and pulling my hair out, trying to see how i can afford this stuff. It is not cheap. Outside of that, I've gone to career management workshop, going through endless supply of business cards to see if there is anybody there i can contact to let them know I am available.



Cut back expenses, pool resources, and send out information that i am able to work and here if they need me.

When were you laid off? I got my phone call at 7:02am, December 12, 2011. And you don't need to be much of a mathematician to know that is quite close to Christmas. And that is when it happened.

Does that reflect on the company--what does the timing add- in terms of the experience?

There was a small part that felt that way (the how could they, this close to Christmas), as small part. But I knew, even before I got the phone call, that that company or any other company, can't help when the end of the hits. It hits when it hits. It just so happens that Christmas is there. I don't think they made a conscious decision. It is just the luck of the draw. It is just where Christmas sits. You could put any holiday in there, or no holiday.

Was i extra pissed off? No, I was just regular pissed off. Because Christmas was there, so close, it may have caused a little extra grief, or depression, but i don't hold it against the company. They got no choice when Christmas hits. I don't have a whole lot of love for them, but I don't hold that against them.

What have I learned?

I went from college, to an internship, to freelancing, to a staff job that i held for a very long time, to, at no decision of my own, back to freelancing. Now i didn't have to go to freelancing, I could've done something else. I don't know what else i could've done, but i want to do something else.

I want to stay here and keep doing what I want I'm doing. I don't want to do weddings, God help me please. Shoot me if I do a wedding. Just come up behind me and put one behind my ear, because I do not want to do weddings. That is not who I am.

There are a lot of former journalists going into wedding photography and they can have it. They've got to go somewhere because the market is flooded with journalists, photo and otherwise, and the industry is cutting back. For a multitude of reasons.

I've got to get out of the groove I was in. It wasn't a rut, because I liked it. But I need to make another groove elsewhere. And that is OK. And if it is in marketing, that is ok, but when you are in PJ it is a four-letter word. But when you are not, it is ok. It is the first place they go to see if they can be in PR or a public info officer.

My company is not done yet. I've lived long enough to know that there was life before them and there will be life after them. While I enjoyed immensely the experience, a lot of the job, no matter I how much I enjoyed my job and no matter what effect I thought I had on my community and world around me, I don't do that any more. I'm just going to do something else. I'm going to work to stay in this industry.

There are other things to do. Life isn't over, by any stretch of the imagination.

Layoff impacts on job satisfaction?

We would all say "good enough", with the product taking a nose dive, and all the people getting cut, you're not gonna bleed on this particular assignment, like the charity cat was at the local library, or wherever they sent you too. They're not doing major stories anymore. They are just filling space.

We tried, but we didn't try like we used to, before they started making us take furlough. Hey you gotta take 2 months extra off this year, without pay, because we are broke. That doesn't do anything to make a better product or to make a difference. Honestly, nobody cares. Not your supervisor, not the guy next to you.

I don't know if John Q Public was noticing or not. What difference did i make it make?

Part of being a professional is you make it look so easy. They thought it was easy. I'd been doing for so long, I can come back with something strong, and they say hey that looks easy-anybody could do that. So send the reporter and he comes back with something and they say, hey, that is good enough.

The company disconnected! The TV reporter in Haiti (that never left the airport) and they wonder why they aren't buying the product. Well if you diminish the quality and drive employees to not care, well,

If you start making McDs cheeseburgers with sawdust, well you're not going sell that many cheeseburgers. And they're gonna wonder why people are buying your product anymore, well it is because your product tastes like shit, that is why. And that is what is happening with this company. They weren't thinking about improving the product, they were thinking about saving money. Not working to make people want to buy it.

It takes good quality, hard work. If you come back with a good hard-earned story, it is kind of universal, people are going to look at it and go WOW. But, if you're gonna rely on the report to shoot a picture with his cell phone, well.

People are gonna get tired of chocking on sawdusty cheeseburgers.

What does photojournalism mean to you? Distinction between photo and PJ?

I don't know. I've never tried to answer that question.

I'm a photographer. I'm based in art. I can set something up in front of me, like a plate of food, and that will satisfy me.

The difference is, the photographer can get involved, whereas the PJ cannot. I'm still looking at the light, the composition; I'm still trying to comeback with a good image.

Journalistically, I'm going to miss having an effect, hopefully one positive, on my community. But I can still do that. Go down to the middle school and work with the art students. That is still in my power.

But I'm not going to be able to tell someone's story or enlighten people as much anymore. I'd sure like to though.

I am a photographer and I am glad I am a photographer. Because I can still do what I did. If I were just a photojournalist, I think I'd have to go apply at (regional grocery chain) because there is far less journalism that needs to be done in my community anymore. It is plain when my company laid me off hundreds of people that that requirement is not needed anymore. As much. I think it is still needed. I have positive phone calls coming in that tells me it is still needed, but just not at that level.

PJ: the ability to raise awareness. Bringing awareness to situations in my community and doing it as artistically and as sensitively--even bold, it can be bold and sensitive. Maybe it is a bold subject matter. But making a positive out of something negative. Trying to knock back stereotypes. Trying to show people there may be a different way of looking at things. PJ is a lot of different things.

Them young guys: I kind of feel for them. We all go through the same thing of trying to get where we need to get, but them young guys, they are young enough to recover. Maybe it is hard to say, but they can recover better than an older guy.

The picture doesn't lie. You get out of it, what you put into it. You don't bullshit anybody.

Because it is visual, you might love "hobo with a shot gun and hate gone with the wind" or vice-versa, but it doesn't mean one is better than the other. It is all perspective. It is open to interpretation.

Whew, where did that come from? (laugh)

Final thoughts:

It was an awesome job. But the last year and half was a nightmare. I was forced into a part of journalism that I didn't want to be involved with. And that is TV journalism, and to me, that is nothing but entertainment. I can't tell anybody a story in a minute twenty seconds. I can tell you what this guy thinks is going on, but that doesn't tell you anything about it. It was painful.

Having to edit the morning news cast was like stalking shelves at the grocery store. It was just stalking shelves man, it was pathetic. I hated broadcast journalism. Maybe if I'd been in it long enough I could've found the art or the story telling, but to me, the only thing it taught me was the real meaning of a deadline. In 3,2,1, now that is a deadline. If it ain't there, you got black air.

They told me, this is now your job. Maybe this is one of the things that helped me not stand on the ledge when that call came at 7:02. They'd all ready taken my career away

from me. I wasn't so much a photojournalist as I was a productionist. For almost 18 months. I'd already separated myself and I was trying to save my job and protect my family. I was trying to keep one toe in the door.

Many of us that went from print, kept hoping it would swing back, and we wouldn't have to deal with this anymore.

TV side never accepted us. They just tolerated us. We were like the red-headed step child. I'm glad it is gone and glad I don't have to deal with that anymore. For the last year I've pulled away from it.

It is tough to lose your job, and it is tough to be given a new job that you didn't ask for. But it afforded me the chance to wean myself off. Some of these guys out there are getting flat out cut. I don't know how they deal with it. Maybe there is medication involved.

It is stressful, I'm telling you.

To be 55, back in the job market with skills that nobody wants, it makes you pucker.

You go talk to someone about a job and they say, well we don't need a photographer. Whoa, did you just hear what I am capable of doing?

They brought me into a job I didn't want. And they didn't touch my salary. You're going to put a print photographer in charge of your biggest show? Really???

They didn't touch my salary either. I didn't want to be there and didn't belong there.

I'm smart enough to know I may never get back into it. And I am OK with that. I had my go at it and it was amazing.

1:16:50 I think it is a rich kids hobby. All said and done, I see that it is a rich kids hobby. They get all of this fucking gear that thinks for them. I'm going to wait for the D4 psychro-sync to come out--the one where you just imagine and it appears on the card.

I'm out-lensed.

What makes you a humanitarian? Because you bought a plane ticket? Come on!

How do you come back with shit pictures from Cuba.

Best assignment: 1:20 homeless girl hugging her bed. Little girls should be hugging dolls and puppies. 1:22 To a lot of people it is more about how they look, they're wearing the right clothes, lugging the right gear. When you walk into a room, you don't want everyone looking at you. You want nobody to pay attention to you.

You're in a Haitian slum, lose the fucking scarf! 1:27:32

I know more pompous photographers than I can count. Why, I don't know.

### **Appendix 3: Transcript Sample 2**

Question 1: the experience of being laid off

Our paper had been purchased by Dow Jones. There was talk of people being laid off, but not really in the newsroom. I was laid off with 3 or 4 reporters.

There was no warning. We told right when we came in to the office.

I was really upset, not just because of being laid off, but because I was given the news by the HR director and not my photo director or other immediate bosses.

It was caught of guard. It was my first job out of college. I was 21 and was barely 23 when I got laid off.

Everyone was in the newsroom when I came in-- I was on the afternoon shift-and nobody thought to give me the heads up of what was going on. So when I came in, I was given the news and was told someone would stay with me while I backed up my things and walk me out.

I wasn't even in the office for 45 mins before the whole thing was done.

They were very clear that it had nothing to do with me or my work ethic. I was the most recent hire in my department, so it made the most sense to lay me off.

By the time I walked out of the office and got in my car, I'd already called several photo editors in the area to let them know I am now freelance. So let me know if I can work for you.

I was not able to go thru my hard drive to get photos.

It was frantic and really upsetting. I was shell-shocked. I don't remember crying, until later. I did when I was home and away from the situation. It is one of those things where you don't quite know what to do with it, so you just kind of roll with it.

Question 2#

Sense of satisfaction

I have nothing to compare it to at the time, b/c I was straight out of college. It was my first experience making money doing what I wanted to have a career as.

I was really excited about being part of the community. It took a while to get used to, but It is a medium to large paper.

The community we covered more than 400k people

I became really attached to the area/town.

It forced me into the area instead of just moving there. Half of your job is newsroom politics. (7:25)

I felt because I was significantly younger, that I got treated differently. Armed robbery example in a tough part of town. (8:15)

Our bosses cut us off because we were two women and we were defenseless. It wasn't because we were a liability.

I had lots of days where I wished I'd never taken the job. Overall I was happy. I wanted to stay there for a while. A good start for my career.

I liked the newsroom environment. Discussing stories and what our role was in the community. It felt like it was good to have that around.

I definitely thought that being a photojournalist for a publication was what I wanted to do for my entire life.

Journalism degree with a concentration in photography

I specifically wanted to work in newspapers, even chose the college program, because they pushed working for publications (newspapers or magazines).

(12:10) What did you like about working for NP

The sense of community. I could really get to know what was happening. When you're working for a newspaper is like working in your home, even the most mundane story was a chance to meet someone in my community.

It was nice to see your name in print, but it was all about having that direct line with your community. Not to say that everyone is going to engage you the same way or like what you do, but agree. But that dialogue is there.

I go to the grocery store and my clerk asks me about a story I did in the paper that day. Everyone in the community had a sense of who I was and I owed it to them to do my job and due diligence. That was the biggest part that drew me to the job.

In some ways I would have liked writing, and I did write some, writing was never the form for me. With photography you kind of just be there and let people be in front of you and watch. Good writers and photographers will let people be. But there is something so much more satisfying in a lot of ways to capture a moment in a little white rectangular frame. You can come back and physically see what was going on and whom these people are. I felt that was the thing that people always connected with.

(16:00) Funeral example

It was a way more tangible feeling and that I did right by them. All the comments on the web were about the pictures. Positive comments.

Question: What are your thoughts on self-identity?

After the first year, when I was still trying to figure everything out. It felt like I had failed. I felt like I was trying to be this photographer and trying to do my best, and working really hard, but maybe I hadn't done it good enough.

It went from I am too good for them to maybe it just wasn't the luck of the draw. Maybe they just didn't like what I was doing. Maybe I was missing the point. It took along time to get over that. I went into it thinking I am a photographer and I can change the world. But it knocked me way back. When I came out of it, I've found in the last few years, I still identify myself as a photojournalist, that is where I'm passionate and what I think about 95% of the time.

I still identify as a photojournalist, but I don't feel so much that my entire identity is defined just by being a photojournalist.

(19:40)When I started, that is all I was, in my head I was a photojournalist, there is nothing else, I don't need to have anything but the work.

And then getting laid-off threw me for a loop and I thought maybe I needed to reconsider what else I could do. Because I had failed at this. It took a while and I realized it wasn't the whole thing. It played a huge part in my life and my identity.

I still wonder if I can have the same passion for something else, and in 5 or 10 years if it is not viable to do this anymore if I will still have the energy and the passion for it. To continue doing if I couldn't make a living doing it.

It isn't a 100% of my identity now, but it is still a large part of it and I hope it will stay that way. I hope.

Question #3 Thoughts on OI as working as a newspaper photographer

I identify more with being a photojournalist than being a general photographer.

In my head, it is not just about taking a picture, it is also about reporting on issues. I'm not taking pictures for the sake of taking pictures.

(22:45) I have a lot more affinity for photographing

It does throw you a little. When you go out and shoot and work on a project and then put it out there. As a freelancer, half the time I would never see my clip. And never know if it ran. You get paid and that is the end of it. I have no loyalty.

I still have that loyalty to the people I photograph, but not the publication. When I worked for the WSJ I didn't care what they ran. At some point you stop wanting to look at it because, they were just a vehicle to get me in front of the people to photograph and build a report. That publication was just a way, a name to drop, to get me in the door.

At the newspaper, I always felt I was representing the paper. I felt like my whole life was the paper. I am (inaudible) of the paper. And so that identify shifted a lot. So it went from being a journalist for a specific paper to a journalist. It doesn't matter anymore. It doesn't matter who I work for or who publishes the pictures or who is paying me, it is still my job to tell the best story as best as I can tell it. And make sure it gets out there in that way. Afterwards, you don't have that loyalty. Your loyalty is wrapped up in the story, not the publication.

That was a big shift in how I had to think of myself and planned to think of myself. It took a long time. I had a lot of self-doubt. Well, if I don't have this regular vehicle and I'm not connecting to people regular, can I really have a dialogue or am I just shouting information at a bunch of strangers that don't really give a shit at what I am telling them and they don't know who I am and I don't know them. Versus in the community with the newspaper, I was accountable.

Question: Access/Credential

I had a lot of these conversations in my own head and with my peers, if I am going out to photograph someone's story and they are going to open up their lives to me, and they say yes and they let me hang out with them for hours a day, or weeks, or months and I don't have an outlet for that, is it worth doing. Is it worth the time? And if no one is going to see, outside of the journalism community, then is it even worth doing.

(27:00) A big part of why I chose to do this type of work (for a publication) was to share the universal truths that all of us are in this community together, it isn't changing the world but slowly trying to open the eyes so the people around you can be more aware of others.

I know it sounds super hippie and all that stuff.

I felt that not having that publication or avenue to publish the work, then what was the point? For a while I just started doing the work anyways.

I had nothing else to do, so I did two large projects. I'd saved a bunch of money while working at the paper. And I was able to float for about a year and the time was mine. There was nothing else to do. It was every photojournalist's dream come true. I had the money to support myself, so I finally said, fuck it, I'm just going to go shoot it. And I found, that by telling people that, look, I'm not working for anybody, I hope to get this out, and I will put it on my website and show it to people as best I can, and try to get it out, it was my purpose, so that others could show people what was happening. You are not alone in this and others aren't alone, and so that others know what is happening.



(29:30) People really understood. Once I got over this idea of having to tell someone that....I didn't get shout out,

They started to see that I had no life outside of their life. My entire life was shaped with what they were doing and they were ok with the fact that this may not go somewhere.

They were ok with the relationship.

(32:30) The future of the profession

I've talked about this with others and we've realized we are all in the same boat. The way I have chosen to look at the future of this profession and where will I fit in to whatever this turns into, is a lot more relaxed and open because I've got youth on my side, I'm 26, I'm not 50 and I don't have a mortgage or a family to support.

All I have is me and no overhead. It isn't a big deal if it all goes to hell right now. There is no one depending on me.

But others I talk to that are in different positions are so frightened by it. I am ready to adapt to whatever, I was able to adapt from being a newspaper photographer, to freelance photojournalist running my own small business. I choose how much time to spend on everything. Yes, it is less about the photography and more about the business, but the photography is what drives it.

The pie chart going around. The 12% spent taking pictures is the most important 12%. It all rides on me and however hard I choose to work, then is how successful I will be. I don't get to be lazy. I'm running a business.

As long as I can rely on the fact that I can shoot a picture and I know how to write a story, whatever that ends up being in 20 years, or form, then I will be willing to see what that is. I don't have a 10-year plan right now. I can't.

My only plan is to try and keep doing what I am doing as long as I can keep doing it.

I am nervous about what the future holds and that we don't know what.... people are having as open of a discussion as we need

The old guard is holding on too tightly and the forward progress is abysmally slow. I am impatient. I want to see what is next. I want to be working with the people that are setting the tone of what is coming.

(36:51) Holding on to the old model of journalism. You either a storyteller or you take pictures. If you take pictures, that is fine, and there is a whole bunch of stuff you can do. But if you are a story teller, then there is a whole bunch of things you need to do. It is a whole different kind of client you work for, a different approach you take. Both are valid, but they are both accomplishing different things, and when people figure out what side of that they are on, whether they just want to take pretty pictures, if they are trying to tell stories, then you try and figure out a way to.....(37:30)

(40:00) Question:

A big part scary part of going from being attached to a publication to freelance is the only person that is going to toot your horn is yourself. For me I was making my career all about the work, I'm not saying I'm a great photographer, or that I am a great reporter, at a paper, it is about keeping your head down and working your ass off and you will accomplish some good.

But to go to running a business, it needs to be promoted; it needs to be out there. People that run businesses have to promote themselves and network with the people you want to work with. You have to introduce yourself to people. You can't sit back.

So much of what this industry has turned into is interpersonal relationships with other people within the industry. You have to introduce yourself the people you want to work with. Editors are going to hire people that they like and who take amazing pictures. And they are more inclined to hire a photographer that they like a lot and may even have their quality of images be a little bit lower than with a person they don't personally get along with or like as much.

They'll give up on the quality of the work to a small degree, to work with someone they like.

I've been going to photo conferences since I was in college, and people are way more schmooze now. I feel like in the last year, went to Look 3, people are way more desperate, handing out business cards, introducing themselves by their full name, who they worked for and who they knew. It wasn't about the work like years before.

(45:00) There is a machismo kind of thing, with a persona being pushed. It seems that it is more about the people than the work.

The whole industry is about the pictures, not about being cool kids. Especially, the younger kids coming into it that aren't able to cut their teeth in a thankless job at a crappy newspaper. To really hone, not only their skills, but also the reason they are doing this.

You see all these kids coming out of college with huge egos now, they've been marketing themselves, I will know whom they know and things about them, but I can't recall a single picture that they've ever taken.

You never hear about their work anymore, you hear about them. And not necessarily in a good way.

Snobbish, not treating subject respectfully, trying to turn on the charm for editors.

(50:30) Rich boys club

There are too many people acting like assholes, talking the talk and not walking the walk.

Question: Doing something else.

There was a point where I couldn't think of myself as doing something else. But now, I am open to the idea that I could find something else that I am equally passionate about and interested in. I am allowing myself the possibility that as much as I loved it, that I may not love it that much one day. I'm OK to moving on to something else if that makes sense to me when it happens. But, right now, for the foreseeable future it is all I can do.

Even when I got laid-off and had no idea what I was going to do, my first instinct was to tell everyone and try to get work. I needed to support myself, I need to support myself by taking pictures and ride this out and see what happens. It took me like 3 years of working my ass off before I was not scrapping by and I was getting real work. Putting some money away. Making an honest living. It felt successful. I can feel happy with what I am doing in being a photographer, and then I will keep doing it.

I just got hired as a photo editor. Through connections.

(55:05) Gear

They had gear for us. We had a basic kit for everybody. And pool gear.

(1:01) It is a shame for our industry that lots of the good guys are leaving, and we're left with kids who don't get it. It isn't that they are giving up; they are choosing another way to make a living. And we need all of those voices.

We need people to defend what we are doing. We are at this crux. They people that are going to keep doing it are the ones that need to have a say in what it means. And if the people that actually know what they are doing are bowing out, then there is nobody left that knows what they are doing, then it is all going to go away.

(The loss of institutional knowledge)

Question what draws you to photography (1:03:22)

It is the only way I know and feel comfortable communicating with world. I was introverted. I had trouble interacting with others and photography gave me that excuse. I had a good reason to be there. I was justified and as long as I had my camera, it was my safety blanket. It was about me as a person, but I'm here to document. And then that helped me feel comfortable as a person, it forced me into situation that I normally wouldn't have gotten in to.

It pushed the limits of who I was as a person.

I like the interaction and challenge. It isn't like you are good at it and that is the end. You're constantly finding things to bring to the table. Different things, experiences, everyday.

Unlike so many jobs, where you go to the same place everyday and you do the same thing and you are miserable. So many people have those jobs.

### **Appendix 4: Transcript Sample 3**

The experience was crappy. That is a keyword that comes to mind. The initial experience was one of shock. And also one of anger in the way it was done. It was a surprise to everyone in our newspaper that we were downsizing. We got the news maybe 4 days before the news was handed down and they asked for volunteers who wanted to get laid off.

We were a small staff. And no of us could really go anyplace else, so we all hunkered down.

The news was delivered over the phone on my day off. After I'd been traveling to shoot sports for a couple of days. I'd had a long week and shift. I felt that was not classy at all.

The other side is: adding insult to injury. If they were going to do it, there was certainly a better way.

It was a personal loss. It felt like the end of a relationship. I got rejected by this job that I loved and sacrificed. I sacrificed lots of personal time and at least one relationship to pursue this profession. And the to summarily shown the door was pretty hard to take.

We give so much of ourselves to our jobs and you know we expect them to sacrifice at least a little bit for us as well. And when it is the first sign of trouble they will cut whoever is at the bottom, it feels like a betrayal.

Daily

What is came down to was the last hired was the first let go. Our photo editor said he'd approached his boss to make the case why all of us were needed, but ultimately, I think he outsourced the decision to his boss. Which felt like a betrayal? If you are going to claim to be our buddy, it is your department; you're going to have to make hard decisions. I'd rather get the news from him than the managing editor that I had very little contact with on my day-to-day.

They called me on my cell on my day off. "We hate to tell you this..." Bring your gear in right now. Had just been on a three-day mega basketball trip. It was my first day off in like 8 days. I was like, dude, no you didn't. I was just trying to sleep in

Term of layoff: two weeks of severance pay. They didn't pay for my move to or from that job; it was a huge financial hit. This paper was in the middle of (name of state), and there were no other jobs there, so there was absolutely no other way I could stay there and freelance.

I got laid off, so I had to move. I knew I wouldn't be making any money staying there. It wasn't a leisurely decision. I needed to get out of town.

We had four staffers.

One person from every department was laid-off. But I wasn't paying attention anymore. If I'm laid off, screw you guys.

Question: I was the only woman. Three other staffers and photo editor were men. Still an all-male staff. Didn't really feel it was a gender decision. The logic of last hired makes sense, so I wasn't going to make it into a personal issue. But the delivery of the news was what angered me. But I never felt it was a "well, let the girl go" decision.

We had a tight close-knit staff. Had a great camaraderie with team. Nearly the same age and were always pushing one another. I never felt that it was a gender-based decision at all.

Question: Satisfaction with PJ

I loved it. It was fantastic. The hard part was not knowing what town you'd be living in next. Uprooting all of your friends every time, or not knowing how the career ladder was going to be climbed.

The day-to-day work was fantastic and I felt like I was making a difference. And contributing to conversations in the community. For me it was the perfect platform for being a photographer. I liked the teamwork involved.

Having people around to bounce ideas off of. And get excited about a project. Energizing the work every day. (13:06)

The immediate aftermath of being laid-off was heartbreaking. The feelings of betrayal. And feeling very lonely. Suddenly you go from having a newspaper filled with people and ideas, and potential, and then suddenly it is yourself and you shambles of a career.

Most interesting once the "dust settled" as satisfying as I found the staff job to be, it was kind of a negative working environment. Everybody was always worried about the state of the industry. And it seemed to be a constant conversation topic. We get no respect from people in general. Why did the editor pick that photo? We deserve better equipment. There was all of this angst and feelings of being underappreciated that goes along with being a staff photographer it seems like.

I wasn't aware of how insidious it was until I wasn't around it every day anymore. And the doom and gloom of the newspaper industry. I'd gone through the eye of the storm of it. And on the other side, there was this space where you could move forward. And that is filled with optimism and positive reframing of what it is that you do sort of thing.

It was noticeable to others that all of my conversations were positive, forward driven, looking for solutions to problems and not just griping about problems anymore.

Suddenly all of the issues I have with clients anymore aren't a judgment on my profession anymore. It is like it would be great if you could send your invoice in on time. Not about running the wrong photo. I kind of care less what photo they run.

It is less filled with the existential ennui.

It seems like all of the friends that I talk to that still have staff jobs, still have that kind of monkey on their back all the time. Whether it is about their particular newsroom or the industry in general. It seems like they are still on that channel of depression and doom and gloom. I could do that, but it doesn't help me.

Question: Mood in the newsroom?

Thursday to Monday. Text msgs. hey we need to have beers. Photo editor got the news. PE asked if I wanted to vol. I said no. We didn't know if it was real or not. Were they going to layoff two reporters?

Like suspended animation. I was gone on a work trip, so it wasn't really on my mind. It was, but I wasn't in the newsroom in this awkward state of needing to prove myself of every second of everyday. I don't know if that played into the decision, because they hadn't seen my face in several days unless I was getting gear.

(19:30) Question: Thoughts on self-image

These days when people ask what I do, I say photojournalist. Before, I would have said staff photographer. Because that was something I was very proud of. And wanted to invoke that connection with an institution in the community. It is still awkward these days to convince someone of your professionalism if you are not attached to a publication. I try not to take that personally.

Everybody has a camera, everybody is a photographer. I don't feel the need to list my credentials for people. But at the same time, it does feel like an uphill battle to feel like a professional.

The first six months after I was laid-off, I really, really wanted to get offered another staff position. I needed that validation. That it wasn't a personal judgment on me. I'm a good person, photographer, and an asset to the newsroom.

(21:15) And when I finally got that next staff room offer, it sucked. It was horrible. It was less than what I was making. And it was just a terrible deal and it was easy to say no to it. And after the experience of going through several interviews, and evaluating an offer, I was like "huh" this just isn't good enough anymore. From that point forward, my self-image of me as a PJ started to change into the freelance aspect of it. I am my own

publication. I am my own R&D dept. IT person. I think of myself as a small business owner now certainly.

And going along with that, there is a little bit less time for the touchy-feely things I care about. And there is more emphasis on paying rent. And getting enough clients to getting my business running.

Before I felt like, if the paycheck was assured, I could spend my time crafting stories and thinking about the community more. So I think, I am less of a touchy feely PJ than I used to be.

My [REDACTED] is an ER doctor and we had a conversation about who does more for the community and who more of an upstanding citizen. It is ridiculous to say, but I felt like a contributor to society at large. And now i feel like a small businessperson. Keeping myself afloat and less of a contributor to the community conversation about ethic issues, or issues of poverty, or issue affecting the city. I feel less involved in those stories.

It is not at as satisfying as being a staff photojournalist. You know, it is a different kind of satisfying. I enjoy making my own schedule. The longer I do it, the less likely I am to agree accept 9-5 and two weeks of vacation. But you know, it is a fair trade off for sure.

Some days it seems like it would be remarkable to work with a few talented writers and take on a larger issue in the community. Something that is possible for me to do now, but the motivation wise, I can't seem to get on top of those big ideas that I used to have with my photography. Which is kind of sad in a ways, but it could be a phase.

As I do this longer, I'll get better at striking that balance. For the last couple years, I've been able to make ends meet doing freelance. So I'm getting more confident that I am not going to fail at it.

The greater purpose is missing for me in the freelance world and that is why I became a photojournalist anyway, was the greater purpose. I am not one of those photographers that think their poop smells like roses and want everybody to see what an awesome photographer they are.

(27:15) Distinction between PJ and photographer

At least for my own sake, I feel like a PJ is what I am. Photographer is more a generalist. When people ask me what I am, it takes the conversation in another direction. Photog-oh what do you take pictures of. Whereas PJ is like oh cool-do you work for a newspaper, magazine.

I still feel proud and want people to know that I just don't take pictures of pretty flowers. I do go to city council meetings and take pictures of people shouting at each other.

(29:30) Occupational Identity

As part of a newspaper team you have an established credential in that community. You can stand on the shoulders of whatever reputation they have built. And that becomes a higher platform to do important work in the community. So I think you have more of a sense of purpose and responsibility and authority to pursue those ideas for the greater good.

The motivation for pursuing those ideas is built in. It is automatically validated. It is something greater than you. The purpose of the publication is to do these sorts of things.

Question: Access

I feel way more confident if I can go out and say I'm working for this pub or that pub...

I feel more of a sense of purpose and energy and interest. If I'm doing something for myself, I'm one of those people that err on the side of caution. I find that people are way more skeptical when you are not working for a publication. Unless you are really good at telling them what you are doing and why. But I find my personal motivation isn't as great if I don't have somebody I am working for me.

As an individual, you have to spend so much time and energy to just get yourself to the starting line as a freelancer. As a newspaper photographer, you can hit the ground running no matter what. The story is going to take off without you no matter what.

Fun run, not covering like a newspaper shooter would have too. Does this make me a bad photographer or journalist?

I still feel like I should be giving it all.

Interesting dynamic. What is personal and what is professional? It is something that you're making up. As a staffer, the position has been defined for so many decades, and defined by our peers and so many publications; it is easy to know what success looks like as a staff photographer.

It is very different to make up your own career path and define success completely differently. Success to me as a staff photographer was doing stories I cared about, maybe winning a clip contest or two, being able to look my cohorts at the end of a long week and be like "dude that was cool." That sense of pride that comes from furthering the craft.

As a freelancer, contests don't mean much, especially if you are shooting CEO portraits. You are not creating the work that you want to enter in the first place. And success is different. Success is paying rent. Success is still feeling some semblance of purpose and you are going to have to assemble that on your own. It is more of a battle than an easy path you can walk down.

(36:00) The career ladder used to be so defined and reassuring. Surprise, you get to make it up now. Like an Eastern philosophy....., you are in charge of your own happiness and



life now. That is the flip side of getting rid of all of the gripping about the industry. Now what are you going to do with that space. Now you can fill it with whatever you want.

(36:50) Miss seeing work in newspaper

What I love most is doing relevant work. I didn't need to see it get the satisfaction. I wasn't one of those people that didn't care if they cropped it or turned it into a square, or B&W.

The print stuff (I don't miss) so much, but the connection to the community definitely.

Question: (38:00)

Still identify as a photojournalist. Do not expect to transition into any other type of photography. I plan to stay in a story telling, journalism side of photography. If the newspaper crumbled around us, and everyone becomes freelance, I still will cling to the beginning as being a staff photographer.

I think it really differentiates what we do as photographers versus what other people do, having not had that level of commitment. Or don't understand what that path is.

It is an underappreciated thing in American society. I'm proud to have come from a newspaper background.

(43:45) The diversity of the human experience that we got to be a part of as staffers was part of the reward and at least made me humbled to being a staffer. As a freelancer, I don't have that same opportunity.

All my assignments are portrait based and rarely get a day-in-the life assignment. It is not as rewarding and I don't get to experience the human condition as I did as a staff photographer.

I feel an automatic kinship with anyone that has worked in a newspaper in any capacity. With word and print, you experience the same, where you do have to cover the double homicide to some sort of political meeting. You recognize that bizarre thing we are a part of.

And that is why my self-identity as a staff photographer is so strong. And it is hard to completely let go off. You cling to it. I asked another friend of mine that was laid-off (six months prior)--in the recovery phase--and I asked her, at what point do you stop telling people you used to be a staff photographer? When does that wear. She said about 9 months after the layoff. When you stopped saying, I used to work for newspapers, and you start saying, yea, I'm a freelance photojournalist. I thought that was an interesting grieving period where you thought to inform people that you used to work for a newspaper.

I still do, but it isn't the first thing I tell people.

(47:30) Question:

That is the other bizarre part of going freelance. None of us are the hey, look at me people. As a staffer, you want to be that fly on the wall. And now suddenly, you need to draw attention to yourself. And that is the name of the game.

I don't think people make stuff up, but it is this bizarre awkward space where you do have to become way more vocal about what you are doing and what you find your purpose in. It is the squeaky wheel syndrome.

There are fewer trust funders than there are perceived to be. But we are all making this up as we go along.

When I was starting out, you fake it to make. You have to act like who you want to be. And if you want to be--the one that tweets every five seconds about their publication or next big assignment, then that is going to attract a certain clientele. And maybe that makes them feel more successful.

We are all grasping at the straws of what this looks like. I think people that came from a newspaper background can see through all of the noise more easily. Going thru all the crap of contest season. I think we understand the transparency of all of that claimed success.

Over a career is when you build a consistent identity with editors and your peers. (51:19)

It seems to be the prevailing advice, is to tell everybody how great you are. Like with social media, you have to develop this identity that sticks with people and nobody wants to hire the semi depressed staff photographer has been. They want to hire the happy/perky, really interesting photographer that has something to say, even if it doesn't have anything to do with your assignment.

The cult of personality means more now, than the work, sometimes. And that is just another part of the industry.

The playing field used to be a little bit more level maybe. If we all had paper jobs and we all had the same shit to deal with. Fighting deadlines.

Now it is completely up to you. Who cares if your grandmother died and you got the money to buy new gear and fund your trip to Haiti. I don't care how you got there; I just want to see what work you produced. But there is more attention paid to people that (make it known--instagram).

I'm not comfortable applying the term artist to myself, but now as a freelancer, I'm way more in tune of the cycles and feelings of being inspired. As a staffer you're going out every day, whether you are inspired or not.

I feel a little un-moored at the moment; in a good way. Like incase the dream staff job came up. Trying to build my business. Weddings. Doing commercial portrait work. And it just isn't stuff I am interested in. So if I have to do some of that to pay the bills to get the clients that let me do documentary work, then so be it.

The first year was processing what went on.

I still plan on being a community journalist. I don't have any plans to be a war photographer or a travel photographer. I cover my state kind of as my backyard.

I still see myself as a community journalist even though my community is not what it used to be.

Question: (60:00) Professional identity

It is hard and a constant work in progress. Coming from the newspaper world gave me a great head start. But it is a whole new world. It can be easy the sense of just sitting back and seeing what comes your way. But it is a lot harder to do.

Having to do hard thinking and figure out what your passion is and where you derive satisfaction as opposed to being told what to do.

And having everybody else define for you what being a good little photographer means. Or winning that competition every year will make you feel successful. Instead, if those are out of reach, you know, you are looking at your own work; you're judging yourself against you own very personal standard. And I think that is a lot harder than taking society at large criteria for the kind of life you want to lead. And it is always changing too.

That is the moving target part of it. You can't just have one idea about it. When it was, staff photographer as a large daily, that is my goal, I'll get there in 20 years. Suddenly, that is just really insignificant.

(63:05) Staff photographer provided

Practically, it provided me gear and a stable income and a platform to on which to converse with my community about issues that were important to us. It provided a peer group to develop and bounce ideas of off. To find collaborators within your own newsroom on issue that was important to you. It provided a daily kick in the ass--as far as the creative side went. The daily practice of your craft was built in.

No it is not built in. I can sit home all day on the Internet if I want to. There is no requirement that I go out and shoot. It provided a really easy way for people to identify with what I do for a living. People know what staff photographers do. They know what newspapers do.

It was an easy short hand that gave people a sense of my role and commitment to the community and my status of a person of, a person that can be trusted. "Health insurance" that was great.

It gave me, at the time I started this thing, that was the career path, and it gave me a network of friends all across the US, a broader community. I don't think I could build that from scratch as a freelancer now. It gives you an instant kinship with anyone that has ever worked for a newspaper. It gives you an alumnus status with anyone that has ever worked for the same paper.

You're in the in-crowd with them. You get this group hug from people that have worked for newspapers and it is like, you are part of the elite group that has put up with a lot of bullshit and done some amazing work.

It makes you feel like you belong.

(66:30) Do you see yourself doing anything else.

Theoretically yes, practically no. I didn't have the balls to do it in college. I haven't looked back. Teaching is the only other thing that interests me.

I do find myself looking to other things. Before, photography was my job and my hobby. And now, photography is my job and I am looking for other things in my life. I do a lot of running. I'm exploring other sports just to keep the balance.

(68:15) Why photography

Other jobs didn't have enough of the human element.

(69:00)

For me it is the level of curiosity and level of connection. The camera is the excuse to be there. Living vicariously through other people. Having the experiences that I would never have otherwise.

As opposed to writing, I'm more involved in the story, asking questions. As a photographer, you back off and it is like watching your own private movie and you are interpreting that scene to get out the important information.

(71:00) Personal investment

As a journalist, it is through my skill, as opposed to having skills in accounting or research distilling data.

My work and personal connection to those issues. Instead of being a cog in the wheel of an accountant's job, it is personal, but again, I reject the term artist, because I don't feel like I am creating as much as documenting.

We have instincts about stories and issues, but I want to get my hands dirty.

(1:17:45) Impact on communities

The more we cut back the fewer eyes and ears in the community. The coverage becomes routine.

The more generic the coverage becomes the less relevant we become. So I think making decisions based on bottom line instead of the---components of your staff--the different roles the different photographers play---or diff interests and skills; when you treat your staff like a finely tuned sports team, the community benefits, if you treat it like a bunch of button pushers, that have certain numbers on their heads, then you get another result.

(1:20:00)

As the industry makes decisions based on numbers, it pushes us further and further away from our original goal.

(1:21:30) I view it in terms of the larger economy issues. I am part of one of just many industries, one of many people that lost their job. It gave me a great feeling of kinship that got screwed. And the feeling that I am not an elite member of our society. I have many things in common with truck guys at GM. We are in the same boat.

In many ways it turned the direction of my career development completely inward. It is keeping the same spirit, integrity of the profession, but knowing that it is up to me now to define what it is I am going to do with it.

So, the making sense of it has been seeing it as a journey from being outwardly defined, about who I am and what I am doing, and turning that question around to me. A reimagining of how I move forward and what the priorities are in this lifetime.

I view it through the personal lens of what am I going to do with it from here. What can be gained from this experience? And I think going through that personal experience and journey of what defines success, what do I want to do, that simple question, has made the experience worthwhile. I wouldn't say I would want to go through it again, but I couldn't be doing what I do now without it.

I'm not one of those people that would have voluntarily left a staff job.

The former staffers that I used to work with that are still staffers now; think I am some sort of genius. For being a freelancer. It is just one foot in front of the other.

(1:24:11) It is a new fact of life.

So, on my better days, I think of it as a head start. I put things in a larger context.

I come from a good family, I have the social safety net, and I don't have a mortgage or other responsibilities. Things could be a lot worse. I am still do what I love for a living and feel very lucky.

General impression is that we have been thru 2 major waves.

(1:31:30) There is no way to quantify the level of people skills that one needs to get into the situation or the extra hours that they waited for access, or light. The hours/ weeks of time. There is no extra gold star. It really is a personal skill set that the newsroom takes for granted.

It goes unrecognized by the reader.

That is why I think photojournalists, as a group, are so tightly knit, because we look at each other's work in a way that nobody does. We've all been in the same situation and we know what everything that could go wrong. We appreciate more the news image than anybody else in our society, which I think makes us a little bit more bitter sometimes.

Everybody with eyes is a critic. (1:33:26)

## Appendix 5: Significant Statements

1. It wasn't a surprise.
2. You feel like somebody died.
3. It is a painful thing to deal with on many levels.
4. Anybody that gets laid-off, you think, I must have done something wrong.
5. That is the problem that a lot of us have, we identify with what we do and not who we are.
6. That is what I feel like I am, that is what I am, and I am a photojournalist.
7. You put so much into your chosen profession, your career, that to think of yourself in any other shape or form is difficult.
8. I wouldn't trade or give up things or trade what I've done as a journalist for anything.
9. I can't imagine a career out there that can give me the enrichment that I've gotten from journalism.
10. To be 55, back in the job market with skills that nobody wants, it makes you pucker.
11. The problem with it is that you know you are absolutely powerless to anything about it.
12. There is a lot to think about when you get laid-off.
13. It was a surprise to me when I realized the method they were going to use was not performance, but how recently you were hired.
14. Most of us are hanging by a thread.
15. I had a very unusual job and I was fortunate. And I knew it. I was grateful.
16. Anybody that gets laid-off, you think, I must have done something wrong. I must have been a bad performer or made somebody upset. That is the hardest part to get past. To tell yourself that that is not the reason. That is what we tell ourselves.
17. One positive is that I get to branch out, develop my skills, and learn how to run a business, while the journalism profession figures itself out.
18. Just because a particular, or any newspaper, doesn't need my skills anymore, there are still plenty of outlets.

19. I may have to fill myself with doing something else.
20. I got rejected by this job that I loved and sacrificed for.
21. It was a personal loss. It felt like the end of a relationship.
22. I know what I am doing this week, but I don't know what i am doing the following week.
23. We all enter this thing a little bit idealistically. We want to connect to our community and we have a skill.
24. And the paychecks were every two weeks. Never late. Always enough, for my budget.
25. I'll always claim to be a qualified photojournalist, but I am not a staff photojournalist anymore.
26. When I got the call, I knew I would never work for another newspaper again.
27. I was basically training to be a newspaper photographer.
28. You do a couple of internships, you get a slightly better job, you get a better job, then you move up to a bigger paper.
29. For the eight or 9 months I was there I practically nothing to show for it, portfolio wise.
30. In that sense it was good to get laid off, creatively.
31. It was dicey at first. I wasn't sure how i was going to make money. I'm not a great self-promoter.
32. I was the only woman. Three other staffers and photo editor were men. Still an all-male staff. Didn't really feel it was a gender decision.
33. The logic of last hired makes sense, so I wasn't going to make it into a personal issue. But the delivery of the news was what angered me. But I never felt it was a "well, let the girl go" decision.
34. I'm kind of glad I got laid off before I got sick of the place on my own.
35. Coming out of college I was definitely a photojournalist and worked to not impart bias on subjects.
36. I'm more satisfied now that I don't consider myself a photojournalist. I think the idea of being a photojournalist was a little constraining for me personally. I feel much more self-assured in myself as a photographer.



37. Ironically, my wedding photography is probably the closest thing I do to stick PJ.
38. I've consistently marketed myself as a wedding photojournalist.
39. I'm perfectly happy in that niche of wedding photography in taking a hands-off approach and use a documentary approach and use my skills for recognizing moments and constructing a narrative with photos.
40. So getting laid off gave me the opportunity to do all of these other things that I hadn't considered doing. I had regarded myself a strictly a photojournalist.
41. As far as image goes, within the photography world, there is a lot of pressure to appear successful. And so much goes into just constructing an image of being a successful person, even if you are not.
42. The fact is that with freelance, is incredibly volatile.
43. It makes things hard to plan for. But I have to present the image of having my shit together, even when I really don't.
44. I definitely drifted away from that identity. When I got laid off, it was pretty clear freelancing for a newspaper wasn't going to cut it--in terms of making a living. Pretty much for the last three years, I've constructed the image of a wedding photographer.
45. I definitely miss the variety of shooting when working for newspaper.
46. My job bummed me out because it didn't have a lot of variety.
47. But my internship, it involved me being thrown in so many ways, outside my comfort zone.
48. I'm very grateful for that opportunity to experience things that I otherwise would never have. In some regards, I miss that.
49. Now, I'd like to be more proactive with shooting for a newspaper, mostly for the opportunity to drop into people's lives.
50. I graduated right when you had to learn multimedia to get a job and things like that didn't really turn out to be true.
51. I think it has stabilized considerably. But I'm not sure what the photojournalism college photographers are going to do. Newspapers haven't gone away.
52. Yes, being a photographer is the only thing I've ever done.

53. I am now just really understanding how persistent I need to be if I want to do more editorial work (photojournalism)
54. So, that was my initial thing when I started shooting weddings more heavily. I was good at it and I enjoyed doing it and I get paid well, but I didn't have to make that my personal identity.
55. Wedding photography used to be looked down on by photojournalist. Kind of like the province of hacks and shameless self-promoters. With so many photographers getting laid off, it has changed.
56. I needed to get laid off to realize that I was good at it and enjoyed it. I enjoy shooting weddings more than high school basketball. And it is a better use of my skills, in addition to paying better.
57. I usually say freelance photographer. Most people accept "wedding photographer" because I am not one of the hacks.
58. Being a wedding photography is easy to explain. The other stuff is a hobby, but I identify with the work that I don't get paid for more.
59. I still have some detachment from the wedding industry. I get most of my work from word of mouth, so I don't have to put myself in that marketing box.
60. It never occurred to me to do anything else.
61. I always had my parents to fall back on, so I never felt like I was reaching the abyss.
62. Certainly I am passionate, and something I've done for so long, that it didn't occur to me to do anything else. And I'm better at this than anything else that I'm good at.
63. Have to keep up that image of making money even when I'm not.
64. I had to explain it; it wasn't in a sense that made me look bad. It wasn't like I was laid-off from a job of a lifetime. It would afford me the opportunity to do more things.
65. I still have some detachment from the wedding industry.
66. A reimagining of how I move forward and what the priorities are in this lifetime.

67. So, the making sense of it has been seeing it as a journey from being outwardly defined, about who I am and what I am doing, and turning that question around to me.
68. I'm not one of those people that would have voluntarily left a staff job.
69. It is a new fact of life.
70. Things could be a lot worse. I can still do what I love for a living and feel very lucky.
71. So, on my better days, I think of it as a head start. I put things in a larger context.
72. There is no way to quantify the level of people skills that one needs to get into the situation or the extra hours that they waited for access, or light. The hours/ weeks of time. There is no extra gold star.
73. It really is a personal skill set that the newsroom takes for granted.
74. That is why I think photojournalists, as a group, are so tightly knit, because we look at each other's work in a way that nobody does.
75. I didn't have the balls to do it in college.
76. It makes you feel like you belong.
77. Other jobs didn't have enough of the human element.
78. "Health insurance" that was great.
79. It was an easy short hand that gave people a sense of my role and commitment to the community and my statue of a person of, a person that can be trusted.
80. I can sit home all day on the Internet if I want to.
81. There is no requirement that I go out and shoot.
82. It provided a really easy way for people to identify with what I do for a living.
83. People know what staff photographers do. They know what newspapers do.
84. Having to do hard thinking and figure out what your passion is and where you derive satisfaction as opposed to being told what to do.
85. Coming from the newspaper world gave me a great head start.
86. It can be easy the sense of just sitting back and seeing what comes your way. But it is a lot harder to do.
87. I still see myself as a community journalist even though my community is not what it used to be.

88. I feel a little un-moored at the moment; in a good way.
89. As a staffer you're going out every day, whether you are inspired or not.
90. I'm not comfortable applying the term artist to myself, but now as a freelancer, I'm way more in tune of the cycles and feelings of being inspired.
91. I still plan on being a community journalist. I don't have any plans to be a war photographer or a travel photographer. I cover my state kind of as my backyard.
92. The cult of personality means more now, than the work, sometimes. And that is just another part of the industry.
93. We are all grasping at the straws of what this looks like.
94. I think people that came from a newspaper background can see through all of the noise more easily.
95. The playing field used to be a little bit more level maybe. If we all had paper jobs and we all had the same shit to deal with. Fighting deadlines.
96. Now it is completely up to you.
97. Who cares if your grandmother died and you got the money to buy new gear and fund your trip to Haiti. I don't care how you got there; I just want to see what work you produced. But there is more attention paid to people that (make it known--instagram).
98. I don't think people make stuff up, but it is this bizarre awkward space where you do have to become way more vocal about what you are doing and what you find your purpose in. It is the squeaky wheel syndrome.
99. Over a career is when you build a consistent identity with editors and your peers.
100.       And that is why my self-identity as a staff photographer is so strong. And it is hard to completely let go off. You cling to it.
101.       When you stopped saying, I used to work for newspapers, and you start saying, yea, I'm a freelance photojournalist.
102.       It is an underappreciated thing in American society. I'm proud to have come from a newspaper background.
103.       I think it really differentiates what we do as photographers versus what other people do, having not had that level of commitment. Or don't understand what that path is.

104. Still identify as a photojournalist. Do not expect to transition into any other type of photography. I plan to stay in a story telling, journalism side of photography.
105. If the newspaper crumbled around us, and everyone becomes freelance, I still will cling to the beginning as being a staff photographer.
106. What i love most is doing relevant work.
107. I wasn't one of those people that didn't care if they cropped it or turned it into a square, or B&W.
108. The career ladder used to be so defined and reassuring. Surprise, you get to make it up now.
109. Like an Eastern belief.... you are in charge of your own happiness and life now. That is the flip side of getting rid of all of the gripping about the industry. Now what are you going The diversity of the human experience that we got to be a part of as staffers was part of the reward and at least made me humbled to being a staffer. To do with that space. Now you can fill it with whatever you want.
110. As a freelancer, I don't have that same opportunity.
111. It is very different to make up your own career path and define success completely differently.
112. What is personal and what is professional?
113. It is something that you're making up.
114. As a staffer, the position has been defined for so many decades, and defined by our peers and so many publications; it is easy to know what success looks like as a staff photographer.
115. It is very different to make up your own career path and define success completely differently.
116. Success to me as a staff photographer was doing stories I cared about, maybe winning a clip contest or two, being able to look my cohorts at the end of a long week and be like "dude that was cool." That sense of pride that comes from furthering the craft.
117. As a freelancer, contests don't mean much, especially if you are shooting CEO portraits.

118. And success is different. Success is paying rent. Success is still feeling some semblance of purpose and you are going to have to assemble that on your own. It is more of a battle than an easy path you can walk down.
119. As part of a newspaper team you have an established credential in that community. You can stand on the shoulders of whatever reputation they have built. And that becomes a higher platform to do important work in the community.
120. I feel more of a sense of purpose and energy and interest (when working for a paper). If I'm doing something for myself, I'm one of those people that err on the side of caution.
121. I find that people are way more skeptical when you are not working for a publication. Unless you are really good at telling them what you are doing and why. But I find my personal motivation isn't as great if I don't have somebody I am working for me.
122. As an individual, you have to spend so much time and energy to just get yourself to the starting line as a freelancer.
123. As a newspaper photographer, you can hit the ground running no matter what. The story is going to take off without you no matter what.
124. I still feel proud and want people to know that i just don't take pictures of pretty flowers.
125. At least for my own sake, I feel like a PJ is what I am. Photographer is more a generalist. When people ask me what I am, it takes the conversation in another direction.
126. The greater purpose is missing for me in the freelance world and that is why I became a photojournalist anyway, was the greater purpose. I am not one of those photographers that think their poop smells like roses and want everybody to see what an awesome photographer they are.
127. As I do this longer, I'll get better at striking that balance. For the last couple years, I've been able to make ends meet doing freelance. So I'm getting more confident that I am not going to fail at it.

128. Some days it seems like it would be remarkable to work with a few talented writers and take on a larger issue in the community.
129. Something that is possible for me to do now, but the motivation wise, I can't seem to get on top of those big ideas that I used to have with my photography. Which is kind of sad in a ways, but it could be a phase.
130. I feel way more confident if I can go out and say I'm working for this pub or that pub
131. As part of a newspaper team you have an established credential in that community. You can stand on the shoulders of whatever reputation they have built. And that becomes a higher platform to do important work in the community. So I think you have more of a sense of purpose and responsibility and authority to pursue those ideas for the greater good.
132. The motivation for pursuing those ideas is built in. It is automatically validated. It is something greater than yourself. The purpose of the publication is to do these sorts of things.
133. Everybody has a camera, everybody is a photographer.
134. I don't feel the need to list my credentials for people. But at the same time, it does feel like an uphill battle to feel like a professional.
135. They called me on my cell on my day off. "We hate to tell you this.." It was my first day off in like 8 days. I was like, dude, no you didn't. I was just trying to sleep in
136. I got laid off, so I had to move.
137. I knew I wouldn't be making any money staying there. It wasn't a leisurely decision. I needed to get out of town.
138. One person from every department was laid-off. But I wasn't paying attention anymore. If I'm laid off, screw you guys.
139. We give so much of ourselves to our jobs and you know we expect them to sacrifice at least a little bit for us as well. And when it is the first sign of trouble they will cut whoever is at the bottom, it feels like a betrayal
140. The initial experience was one of shock. And also one of anger in the way it was done.

141. I was really upset, not just because of being laid off, but because i was given the news by the HR director and not my photo director or other immediate bosses.
142. I was caught off guard.
143. There was no warning. We told right when we came in to the office.
144. It forced me into the area instead of just moving there. Half of your job is newsroom politics.
145. I liked the newsroom environment. Discussing stories and what our role was in the community. It felt like it was good to have that around.
146. I had lots of days where I wished I'd never taken the job.
147. Overall I was happy. I wanted to stay there for a while. A good start for my career.
148. I specifically wanted to work in newspapers, even chose the college program, because they pushed working for publications (newspapers or magazines).
149. I still identify as a photojournalist, but I don't feel so much that my entire identity is defined just by being a photojournalist.
150. After the first year, when I was still trying to figure everything out. It felt like I had failed. I felt like I was trying to be this photographer and trying to do my best, and working really hard, but maybe I hadn't done it good enough.
151. I identify more with being a photojournalist than being a general photographer.
152. In my head, it is not just about taking a picture; it is also about reporting on issues. I'm not taking pictures for the sake of taking pictures.
153. It does throw you a little. When you go out and shoot and work on a project and then put it out there. As a freelancer, half the time I would never see my clip. And never know if it ran. You get paid and that is the end of it. I have no loyalty.
154. I felt that not having that publication or avenue to publish the work, then what was the point? For a while I just started doing the work anyways.
155. The way I have chosen to look at the future of this profession and where will I fit in to whatever this turns into, is a lot more relaxed and open because I've got youth on my side, I'm 26, I'm not 50 and I don't have a mortgage or a family to support.



156. As long as I can rely on the fact that I can shoot a picture and I know how to write a story, whatever that ends up being in 20 years, or form, then I will be willing to see what that is. I don't have a 10-year plan right now. I can't.
157. My only plan is to try and keep doing what I am doing as long as I can keep doing it.
158. Even when I got laid-off and had no idea what I was going to do, my first instinct was to tell everyone and try to get work.
159. I needed to support myself, I need to support myself by taking pictures and ride this out and see what happens. It took me like 3 years of working my ass off before i was not scrapping by and i was getting real work. Putting some money away. Making an honest living. It felt successful. I can feel happy with what I am doing in being a photographer, and then I will keep doing it.
160. We need people to defend what we are doing. We are at this crux. They people that are going to keep doing it are the ones that need to have a say in what it means. And if the people that actually know what they are doing are bowing out, then the there is nobody left that knows what they are doing, then it is all going to go away.
161. But to go to running a business, it needs to be promoted; it needs to be out there. People that run businesses have to promote themselves and network with the people you want to work with. You have to introduce yourself to people. You can't sit back.
162. I am nervous about what the future holds and that we don't know what.... people are having as open of a discussion as we need
163. All I have is me and no overhead. It isn't a big deal if it all goes to hell right now. There is no on depending on me.
164. But others I talk to that are in different positions are so frightened by it. I am ready to adapt to whatever, I was able to adapt from being a newspaper photographer, to freelance photojournalist running my own small business. I choose how much time to spend on everything. Yes, it is less about the photography and more about the business, but the photography is what drives it.

165. I still identify as a photojournalist, but I don't feel so much that my entire identity is defined just by being a photojournalist.
166. I spent my first several months trying to figure out what was worth fighting for. Is it worth fighting to be a freelancer, was it worth trying to become business savvy.
167. It was such a pivotal point career wise, it doesn't really compare to anything else, it was just a feeling of lose. You don't know really what to do or understand why.
168. My identity definitely shifted.
169. And it has changed in the past five years. Even now, I don't want to go back to staff photographer. Since I became a freelancer, I have had so many different opportunities open up to me as opposed to the single outlet of a newspaper and online journalism that I had at the newspaper.
170. Once I became freelance, some of the best advice I got, was to be your dream assignment editor.
171. I decided very early on that there is no other way other than finding a way to make it with my camera.
172. I got called on my day off and I was volunteering at my son's school. It was the executive editor. The minute he called, I knew, pretty much what was up.
173. I didn't clear my stuff out at my own speed. I was thankful for that. It was upsetting enough losing your job after twenty-some years, but at least I had time to process it.
174. There are challenges at any paper. Any staff photographer has a laundry list of things they can complain about. And I wasn't any different.
175. Started at small paper out of college. Very much had a traditional path. Four years of college, journalism sequence, the only thing that wasn't traditional was that I didn't have any internship.
176. So, it is pretty easy to sit around with a little bit of gallows humor about it. It is what it is and you just need to figure out how to work with what you have and move forward.
177. It is kind of funny. A lot people never really understood what I did anyway.

178. When I got laid off, i didn't have another way to go out and make the same kind of money I was making before when the work was available.
179. I just had to hang in there and build up a client list. I didn't have another skill set to fall back on.
180. You have these skills that you work for years/decades to hone and they aren't immediately transferrable. Or parts are transferable, but I didn't have a second degree when I went to college.
181. And I didn't see a second career path after i got laid off. It doesn't mean I don't think about other things I can do to still make a living, because being a freelancer is a really challenging way to make a living. And it is very stressful. And very uncertain.
182. Now, the taking the pictures is the easiest part of what I do. The hardest part is finding the clients that I can afford to work for me.
183. I continue to keep my eye open for job postings for something that I think I can find fulltime work in, but I don't see a lot of that. And I don't spend a whole lot of time during the day looking for other jobs in online want ads.
184. Because where I live with my family. I am self-limiting on potential.
185. You can't compete against free.
186. If you don't want to cover sports and you are freelancer, that makes your life a lot easier, because you are not trying to figure out how to justify paying for a (400/2.8) lens that costs \$6800-\$11,000 lens. You don't have to figure out how to pay for that with \$250 assignments.
187. You realize, after you get laid off, when you are a freelancer, you've got to make 30% more.
188. You go whoa, I need to bill a lot more, I need to make this sustainable. This isn't just something I am doing on weekends. This is serious. And I'm not there yet, but I'm working hard at it.
189. If I had my choice, I would still be a photojournalist. I'd still be telling stories with a camera for a news organization.
190. If I could wave a magic wand that is what I would still be doing. I felt that is what I am good at. And I believed in it and believed in the purpose of educating

and informing the public and being the eyes for the people that couldn't be there. I believe in all of that.

191. I was able to make a living in that field for a number of years and won a few awards. And after a while I gave up interest in wanting to do contests. I just wanted to the work.

192. That is the other bizarre part of going freelance. None of us are the hey, look at me people. As a staffer, you want to be that fly on the wall. And now suddenly, you need to draw attention to yourself. And that is the name of the game.

193. I don't think people make stuff up, but it is this bizarre awkward space where you do have to become way more vocal about what you are doing and what you find your purpose in. It is the squeaky wheel syndrome.

194. There are fewer trust funders than there are perceived to be.

195. But we are all making this up as we go along.

196. When I was starting out, you fake it to make. You have to act like who you want to be. And if you want to be--the one that tweets every five seconds about their publication or next big assignment, then that is going to attract a certain clientele. And maybe that makes them feel more successful.

197. We are all grasping at the straws of what this looks like.

198. I think people that came from a newspaper background can see through all of the noise more easily. Going thru all the crap of contest season. I think we understand the transparency of all of that claimed success.

199. As a freelance now, like when working with the paper, you have to be perpetually prepared.

200. Dealing with difficult circumstances on a tight timeline in places where you might have to be asking a lot of someone to help you. And they may have no reason to know or assist you.

201. A particular set of people skills and professionalism that you can present an idea to them, give them the confidence that you are sincere about what you are asking and that you are trustworthy.

202. Working in a broad spectrum of scenarios and locations, in life's rich pageant, and the opportunity to take pictures and tell those stories and be privileged and be able to see those things and be able to share them, with others, that is all I wanted to do.
203. That was it. Once I saw the impact that was it. That was what I wanted to do. Photojournalism is the way to do it.
204. I have a tremendous amount of respect for people that have been making a living as a freelancer for a lot longer than i have.
205. I am jealous of the people of that go into the newspaper business, and you don't see this much with photographers, but writers, they'll start out and then move up through the process and move over into the private sector to a PR firm or advertising, and they'll go from making that lower middle class living to potentially making really good money.
206. There isn't as big as an avenue for photographers to do that. The marketplace isn't that big and doesn't reward photography the same way--the word side.
207. When I was in school, I never saw it coming. If I had, maybe I would have thought about it more, reconsidered...
208. And when I graduated college in 1983, I never dreamed of the day where there wouldn't be newspapers, but you look at where they are now and you can see it happening.